

Last Call For Haunted Houses!!

This weekend sees the last of the Halloween season of 2010. I always try my best to do as much Halloween and fall-related things as possible; I just love the season. This year I've been lucky enough to have gotten to try THREE haunted houses, and I will rate them here in case anyone has time to check any of them out. I would really like to fit in a few more or even a repeat visit to one I've already been to, but I have a jam-packed weekend planned with other fun stuff like Halloween parties and Trick-or-Treating.

A few weekends ago, we visited the Chicago area and were able to get to two haunted houses, both in the area where we were staying – Aurora. We would have liked to check out some other of the MANY haunted houses in the suburbs (as well as other entertainment offerings), but alas, we quickly ran out of time. So the haunted houses visited were:

[BASEMENT OF THE DEAD](#) – 42 W. New York St. Aurora IL 60502 - This is by far the best haunted house that I've ever been to. I've been able to visit here 2 years in a row, and it's gotten better with time. The makeup on the creatures is incredible – horror movie caliber – and the characters waiting to scare people waiting in line are great. They ALWAYS stay in character, which is very important, and they are creative in their scariness – much more than the typical monster or “BOO!” yelling psychopath. I tried to get video of the ultra-impressive 7+ foot tall monsters that hang around outside, but Basement of the Dead is located in downtown Aurora, so I had to help my husband navigate around the tricky one-way streets instead. A MUST SEE for any haunted house enthusiast! We will probably be making the trip next year, if not just for this haunted house alone; it's that good! 4!'s for fright out of 4.

MIDNIGHT MASSACRE – 3440 Odyssey Court Naperville IL 60540 – Well, there really isn't much to say about this lame attempt at a haunted house. I don't even think it was made less scary by our visit to Basement of the Dead before this one – it wouldn't have been any better even if we hadn't just visited a spectacular haunted house first. The scariest thing about Midnight Massacre was the hour and a half we waited in line, which was hidden from view when you buy your tickets. We got a bad clue when we saw a snack stand in line – you know they won't want you taking food or drink into their haunted house, so if they let you buy food and drink in line, you know you're going to have a long wait. And in this case, a long wait for what? The haunted house was not scary. This one did consist of actors (?) yelling cheesy things like "BOO!" There was a guy dressed like Freddy from Nightmare on Elm Street, and his "scare" was jumping up from a bed and yelling "Freddy!" We even had one actor apologize to us and say, "Hey, I tried." Talk about breaking character! But in a haunted house as bad as this one, it didn't really matter that he broke character, that wasn't the only thing wrong with it. The first part of it was a black light maze that was so obviously part of a lazer tag course – they didn't even try to hide it. But there weren't any monsters in it or anything. They had a couple of cool robots and animatronics, especially this one large dinosaur thing, but it was just a head, and they didn't do anything to cover up the robotic looking body. And the actors were terrible. Enough said about this one, not recommended – well, maybe for a kid's first haunted house. One ! (for effort I guess) out of 4!'s

[Leader's Family Farms](#) – near the intersection of Ohio State Route 24 and Henry County Rd. 16 near Napoleon, Ohio – I got to go into this haunted attraction with one of my youth group girls, and she was a screamer. It was a lot of fun, especially since the ghouls and monsters focused their attention on the screamer and left me alone! We did not have the time to check out their new haunted attraction,

PanDEMONium, but Screamacres was a nice haunted attraction as always. 3! out of 4! – Lots of the same old haunted house effects, but being outside and in the middle of nowhere certainly adds to the effect. I should also note that Leader's has activities for the entire family, every age group. Great fall fun to be had here.

Well, there you have it – those are the 3 I've gotten to this year. If you have the time and are looking for a good scare, I highly recommend Basement of the Dead in Aurora Illinois or Leader's Family Farm's Screamacres in Napoleon Ohio. I wish I had more time to visit more and get some reviews. Maybe some day I'll be able to get down to Columbus Ohio to go to [Dead Acres Haunted Hoochie](#); it looks very scary and really cool!

Anyone else think haunted houses should extend their seasons into November for those of us who are very busy in October taking kids trick or treating and to fall parties, etc?? I sure wish they would!!! Have a GREAT Halloween!!

In The Eleventh Hour, Evil Intentions In The Basement Of The Dead

As you may have read in my previous post, we took a trip to Illinois to visit with family and also tour the area's haunted houses. Well, I'm done whining about my painful mouth, so here's a run-down of the fun parts:

Got to visit with lots of family in the short time we were there. We had nice visits with one of my husband's father's only living blood relatives, his niece Lilly. Lilly is a

really sweet person who has been going through a few tough life experiences lately. We don't get to see her often, so it was great to see her on Saturday. We hope to be able to get her out to Ohio for a visit soon! We stopped by my mother-in-law's house where we also got to see my husband's sister and her family. Our kids had a ball playing with each other; there are 7 of them altogether! After that, we also got to see where my Grandpa moved; it's a very nice place with a cute little main street area for visiting, complete with ice cream shop. We discussed the Chicago Bears (no comment as of the game's unfortunate status right now in the 2nd quarter – poor hubby!) with my grandpa and told my grandparents of things like the kids' awesome grades at school. Afterward, we had a really great 40th wedding anniversary for my parents at my sister's house. The kids had such a great time that they refused to leave – literally. My sister's family had to literally lock out my kids, which was slightly embarrassing, but mostly just a humorous result of their incredible come down from their awesomely fun weekend – also known as a fun-down.

The family stuff was Saturday, so Friday night we were lucky enough to be joined by 4 friends (3 all the way from Ohio!) for some haunted house fun! We went all over the 'burbs, with a goal to complete a huge square if you plotted our stops on a map. Because of an hour-long line in a cramped basement tunnel in Elgin, we did not make it to the Aurora stop, but we cajoled my mom (even though it was her anniversary party) into watching all 6 kids on Saturday so we (along with fellow tangenteer derek who made the drive south for the second consecutive night) could go to the haunted house with my sister and her husband, who hadn't been to a haunted house in probably about a decade – FUN! Here is a run-down / rating of the Illinois haunted houses – haven't made it to any Ohio ones this year, don't know that there will be time for that!

[Haunted Mansion and Asylum 13](#) – Bolingbrook IL – Saving the

best for last would mean the worst is first, right? This haunted house was definitely the worst of the lot. It had lots of actors, not much else. Average costumes, not much scenery, blasting music not relevant to the theme of the haunted house... the only noteworthy and the most enjoyable part of the entire thing were the live chickens in the 'crazy hicks' scene. Seeing [Drew Peterson's](#) house in Bolingbrook might have been creepier. Grade: C-

[Eleventh Hour](#) – Elk Grove Village IL – This haunted house is located at Berthold's, a family-owned plant nursery and is actually 4 attractions in one. The corn maze is small but succeeded in losing us, even if for a short time. The haunted house was actually a string of 3, but it wasn't really clear when one ended and another began. Eleventh Hour had some really cool haunted house concepts, along with the obligatory chainsaw guy and spinning tunnel to walk through. The scenery was REALLY cool, complete with (SPOILER ALERT!!!) moving staircase and refrigerator door that both actually became passages to walk through! And, they had a live zombie band performing in a separate room while we viewed them through little windows – now that is something I haven't seen in a haunted house before. A very cool haunted house, and without all the same old tiresome gore. Prize moment when an extremely creepy little girl made my husband scream like a... well, that seems like a mean thing to say about a guy who's been doing nothing but wonderful things to help out during my illness. It was hilarious, that's all I'm going to say.

Grade: B+

[Evil Intentions](#) – Elgin IL – This one also had a few very unique fright concepts, but they really need to work on the wait time – we waiting in a dingy narrow basement hallway for over an hour! After that, they separated our group of 3 guys and 3 girls into individuals and put us each into a casket! Mary and I lucked out and got to share one since there were 6 in our group and only 5 caskets, but it was still terrifying

knowing that they were probably going to do something sudden and scary to us in the casket. SPOILER ALERT! They pretended to show us a movie on a screen in the casket, but the screen went to colored bars and made the high-pitched beeping noise, which was creepy, but that's all that happened. They really should have lengthened the movie or banged on the casket or something, anything. This, like a few of the other concepts in this haunted house, really needs to be better developed in order to heighten the fear factor. You take a bunch of people and put them in a haunted house with only 5 caskets for them to queue thru, and of course you're going to have a huge long wait to get in. The makeup in here was average, there seemed to be a relatively low number of actors (all of whom seemed to have the same mannerism of getting right up in your face – how many times can that be scary?), and I would consider the scenery downright bare – they definitely could have highlighted the building's casket company history in the scenery as well as they did in their marketing. The guide ghouls are particularly fond of separating the groups of patrons, especially isolating the women from their men, a concept I sort of hated and also really enjoyed at the same time – it was weird. If I factor in the wait time for this one, you don't want to know the rating, so we'll just pretend I'm rating this as if I walked right in like I did in the previous two rated houses. **Grade (not including wait time): C+/B-** (hard to forget that awful wait time!)

[Basement of the Dead](#) – Aurora IL – Because we had to wait an hour for Elgin on Friday night, this one had closed and we didn't make it. But as I said earlier, my mom, dad, and uncle graciously agreed to watch the little ones so that us sisters, hubbies, and a friend could venture to downtown Aurora – a frightening experience in itself, haha. Seeing the line outside was daunting, and one character said the wait would be at least an hour. We were about to leave since my brother-in-law had just come off a double work shift and hadn't slept in 36 hours, when intrigued by the totally

awesome looking makeup on the characters wandering outside, my husband inquired about the wait time at the ticket window. We took the gamble, and it paid off when we were admitted after only about 15 minutes. During our stay in line, we were entertained by a few of the haunted house escapees; including a super-tall, slow moving dude who had a habit of very creepily and slowly inhaling the scents of patrons of his choosing. The guy's build kind of reminded me of an Ohio friend, but I won't mention who, even though I know he's not a reader of my blog. There was a KISS rocker meets clown guy who succeeded at making his makeup and mannerisms really creepy also, and a blank face guy (a nylon stocking on his face, I would guess?), and a guy who moved quickly through the bushes on all fours, kind of like an ape. When it was our turn to go in, the scary clown slob manning the door burped and blew it in my face which was not scary, just stupid and rude, and if I get his H1N1, I will consider a lawsuit. Kidding, but it was still gross. He made me go first into the haunted house. Whatever, I would just let my husband ahead of me when we got in the door anyway, except that when I got in the haunted house, they shut the door on me and someone came running up and told me to go through it alone. I flat out refused – I'm not going to PAY to do something I don't want to do, and they reluctantly let in the rest of our group. Sorry I foiled their plan, but I would not enjoy the experience alone; that's not really my thing. It was fun to see my sister and her husband in the haunted house since they hadn't been in one in years, but we quickly lost them in the dark mazes and didn't bother trying to find them. We figured they wanted to hang back and enjoy the startles they would get if they weren't so close to us. When we got back outside, we waited and waited, but two groups emerged before the rest of our group, and when they came out, my sister was white as a ghost. Hilarious, and I think they had fun – most people can benefit from venturing into a haunted house once in awhile, especially parents who can go without their kids – it's nice to just have only yourself to worry about for a little bit ☐

The makeup in this one was stellar, best I've ever seen. Scenery was good, if a little dark for my taste since it was difficult to see some of the blood and guts. Also a few good animatronics and lots of blood and gore, which was actually a change of pace from the others we've seen this year. Grade: A