

# STEPHEN KING ON SCREEN



**Week Six**

**Different Seasons**

## Welcome to *Stephen King On Screen*

### Week Six

We pick up where we left off last week and begin with George A Romero's (creator of *Night of the Living Dead*) take on *The Dark Half*, which takes *imposter syndrome* and *nom de plumes* to their inevitable conclusion. Their inevitable conclusion in Stephen King's world, at any rate.

As King moved into the 80s and 90s, now a well-established writer of bestsellers, there was inevitably some bleed between his actual published work and the perception created of him by not only the books but also the movies based on them. Often, he did little to ward off the perception of himself as a creepy guy writing creepy stories – in fact, leaning into that persona in front of the cameras and in interviews.

But he was also a man who took writing seriously and had been slowly branching out into different types of stories, which as *they* made their way to the silver screen, began to complicate the picture.

Take the collection of novellas *A Different Season* (1982) for instance. Three of our films this week are drawn from the four novellas contained in the collection. *The Body* became Rob Reiner's *Stand By Me*. *Rita Hayworth and the Shawshank Redemption* appeared in 1994 as simply *The Shawshank Redemption*, adapted and directed by Frank Darabont. And *Apt Pupil* was brought to life in 1998 by the – not yet controversial – director Bryan Singer, after several abortive attempts.

Only *The Breathing Method* has yet to see the inside of a cinema, although at the rate of new Stephen King adaptations being optioned daily, I wouldn't be surprised to eventually see the set completed.

Each of the stories in the collection push the Stephen King universe in unexpected directions, not least of which is the concentration on drama over horror, of human experience over supernatural threat.

King had not abandoned horror, nor the supernatural, but he had proved that he could do other things equally well – and the films based on these

stories – especially *Stand By Me* and *Shawshank* – reinforced this to cinemagoers.

The films and books that followed would continue to expand – there are still those stories and adaptations that might fall under the handy umbrella of *classic* Stephen King – hewing to the genres in which he first made his name. But now there were King stories that were being taken seriously by those who might not otherwise have picked up a King novel or seen a King film.

In many ways, this seeming detour was simply a parallel road, underlining what attentive readers and viewers already knew: Stephen King's stories were not – at their heart – *about* the supernatural. They were about extraordinary events forcing themselves on ordinary lives and, in the process, illuminating something about the human condition.

A body in the woods or a vampire in town, it's very much the same storytelling engine and it has the same result:

It tells us who we are when the chips are down.

## FILMS WEEK SIX

*The Dark Half (1993) – Dir. George A Romero*

*Stand By Me (1986) – Dir. Rob Reiner*

*The Shawshank Redemption (1994) – Dir. Frank Darabont*

*Apt Pupil (1998) – Dir. Bryan Singer*

*Creepshow 2 – Dir. Michael Gornick*

*The Mist (2007) – Dir. Frank Darabont*

*Needful Things (1993) – Dir. Fraser C. Heston*

*Gerald's Game (2017) – Dir. Mike Flanagan*

*Dolores Claiborne (1995) – Dir. Taylor Hackford*

TV

*Creepshow – Survivor Type (2019) – Dir. Greg Nicotero*

*Tales from the Darkside – Word Processor of the Gods (1984) – Dir. Michael Gornick*