

TV'S GOT NO FEAR OF CLOWNS. THEY'VE BEEN DELIGHTING AND TERRIFYING AUDIENCES FOR DECADES.

Send in the CLOWNS

Who doesn't love a good clown?

Well, lots of people. From the first toddler who screamed in terror at a greasepaint leer to the horrors John Wayne Gacy perpetrated as "Pogo," clowns have long given kids of all ages the willies — and worse. Not all clowns set out to be unsettling, but there's something about

these guys that just creeps people out. And TV has, increasingly, played on that.

Leave it to Ryan Murphy to take scary clowns to a whole new level. If you've dared to watch his *American Horror Story: Freak Show* on FX, you've already met *Twisty the Clown*, a gruesome character played by John Carroll

Lynch. Murphy says he set out to create "the most terrifying clown of all time" but now he's "worried about people being too afraid of our clown." Before *Twisty* resets the bar, it's time we honored the most memorable clowns ever to caper, kill or croak on the airwaves. —Barak Zimmerman

BOZO THE CLOWN (1946–2001)

TV's longest-running clown may be gone, but his name remains a synonym for dopiness: "What a Bozo!" Larry Harmon was no dope, though — he bought the rights to Bozo in 1950 and franchised them to local stations in the U.S. and overseas, which is how Bozo became TV's best-known clown.

Show: *The Bozo Show*

Played By: Pinto Colvig (1940s), Larry Harmon ('50s), Willard Scott ('59–'62), Bob Bell ('60–'84) and others, including more than fifty guys who played local Bozos. Before he was Big Bird on Sesame Street, Carroll Spinney played Bozo in Boston.

Known For: Longevity, ubiquity and red wings of lacquered yak hair

Signature Line: "That's a Bozo no-no!"

Creepiness: 

CHUCKLES THE CLOWN (1970–75)




Chuckles appeared twice on the show before making TV history off-screen. He was leading a parade dressed as a peanut when, in Lou Grant's words, "A rogue elephant tried to shell him." Writer David Lloyd won an Emmy for "Chuckles Bites the Dust," which topped TV Guide's 1997 list of best-loved comedy episodes.

Show: *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*

Played By: Richard Schaal (1970), Mark Gordon (1973)

Known For: Dying
Signature Line: "A little song, a little dance, a little seltzer down your pants!"

Creepiness: 

FLUNKIE THE LATE NIGHT VIEWER MAIL CLOWN (1983–87)



A piece of viewer mail addressed to "Dear Dave (and Flunkie Who Actually Reads These Letters)" inspired this recurring character. Like so many *Late Night* bits, Flunkie took deadly aim at a cultural trope — the cheery clown — by upending expectations.

Show: *Late Night with David Letterman*

Played By: Writer Jeff Martin (who went on to write for *The Simpsons*)

Known For: Deadpan delivery, extravagant clown suits and sloppy makeup. Also chain-smoking, self-pity and assorted health issues.

Signature Line: "Yeah, right." It's not what he said, but how he said it: his defeated monotone could turn any frown upside-down.

Creepiness: 

RONALD MCDONALD (1963–present)

Can a shameless pitchman of fast food rightfully stand among the titans of television clown-dom? We could debate it over a burger and fries, but there's no question that Ronald has logged tons of TV time.

Show: TV commercials

Played By: Willard Scott (who says he created the character), plus several others on TV and hundreds of actors who made in-store appearances

Known For: A poofy red wig, striped stockings and that baggy yellow jumpsuit.

Known Affiliates: Mayor McCheese, Grimace and the Hamburglar, a convicted felon

Creepiness: 



KRUSTY THE CLOWN (1989–present)

As Bart's favorite entertainer, Krusty has been central to several episodes. Creator Matt Groening says he named Krusty after Rusty Nails, a Christian clown who was popular on TV in Portland, Oregon, from the late '50s to the early '70s.

Show: *The Simpsons*, *The Tracey Ullman Show*

Voiced By: Dan Castellaneta (who says he based the raspy voice on Bob Bell's version of Bozo)

Known For: Licensed brand extensions, addictions, mafia ties, disgruntled ex-wives and swings of mood and fortune. Also, *Itchy & Scratchy*.

Signature Lines: "Hey, hey, kids." "Instead of feeling sad and blue, keep a Krusty smile on you." "Hooohahaha!"

Creepiness: 



HOMEY D. CLOWN (1990–92)

This surly ex-con dressed like a clown to fulfill his parole requirements but refused to clown around. Homey routinely hit people with a sock full of tennis balls for asking him to entertain them, and he liked to blame "the Man" for keeping him down. Like Letterman's Flunkie, Homey had zero clowny mojo.

Show: *In Living Color*

Played By: Damon Wayans

Known For: Unclownly attitude and a signature line that became a catchphrase

Signature Line: "I don't think so.... Homey don't play dat."

Creepiness: 



PENNYWISE (1990)

Leave it to Stephen King to spawn the creepiest clown ever to caper across our nightmares in *It*. Leave it to TV — and the genius of Tim Curry — to make *It* real. An even bloodier big-screen remake is in the works, so if you liked *It* once, you may love it again!

Show: *It* (miniseries)

Played by: Tim Curry (as a murderous alien)

Known For: Balloons, shape-shifting, gutter-dwelling, intermittent fangs

Signature Lines: "I'm everything you ever were afraid of!" "You all taste so much better when you're afraid." "See you in your dreams!" "Beep-beep!"

Creepiness: 



FIZBO THE CLOWN (2009–now)


Long before Eric Stonestreet won an Emmy for playing a clown on TV, he was working parties and events as Fizbo, a character he created at age eleven. He mentioned Fizbo to *Modern Family* co-creator Christopher Lloyd (David Lloyd's son), who wrote the clown into the show. Stonestreet brought his own costume.

Show: *Modern Family*

Played By: Eric Stonestreet (as Cameron Tucker)

Known For: Balloon-sculpting, a giant pocketwatch, being a "bad-ass" with a gas station bully

Signature Line: "Apologize to my boyfriend right now!"

Creepiness: 



POGO THE CLOWN (1992)

Most clowns only seem creepy. As the alter ego of a convicted serial killer, Pogo turned out to be the creepiest clown ever, hands down. There's no comforting veil of fiction: more than thirty young men actually died at the hands of the psychopath people called the Killer Clown.

Show: *To Catch a Killer* (television film)

Played by: Brian Dennehy, who was nominated for an Emmy for his portrayal of John Wayne Gacy

Known For: Burying bodies in the basement and the clown paintings he did on death row, famously collected by edgy celebs like Johnny Depp and Marilyn Manson

Signature Line: "I'll show you a rope trick" — what he said before he tying up his victims.

Creepiness: 

DR. BLAKE DOWNS (2008–present)

Dr. Downs — clown name Dr. Bojiggles — believes "the healing power of laughter" is more powerful than medicine. His patients might disagree... if any of them ever survived. (Hey — it's a comedy!) Downs believes clowns are a separate race, which sort of makes sense when you see his brother's makeup.

Show: *Children's Hospital*

Played by: Show creator Rob Corddry (as actors Cutter and Rory Spindell)

Known For: Bloody scrubs, minimal Gacy-inspired makeup, terrified kids, a high body count

Creepiness: 



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