So long Lady Sylvia Marsh (Amanda Donohoe) of *The Lair of the White Worm*. Lori Cardille of *Day of the* Dead moves onto the semi-finals. The votes weren’t there for Donohoe (although there were several heartfelt pleas for her win). Final vote count – Lori Cardille: a rocking 56. Amanda Donohoe: a sad 15. And that means, the first of our five villainesses in the competition bites the dust. I shall miss you Lady Sylvia Marsh. However, I now proudly proclaim that my personal vote was cast for Ms. Cardille.

Just as a quick reminder, the three ladies so far in the semi-final round (get into shape for your next big bout, ladies): Sigourney Weaver of *Aliens*, Amy Steel of *Friday the 13th Part 2* and obviously, Lori Cardille of *Day of the Dead*.

And onward we go.

Two women who at one point in their respective films, find themselves in a maze – searching for escape – brandishing a deadly weapon and beholding sights which will surely leave them damaged and paranoid, yet clearly stronger (if they haven’t totally lost their minds, that is).

Will you vote for the contestant in the hotel/hedge maze – helping her through her obstacles, eventually finding that ultimate voter love? Or will you direct the other contestant through a virtual maze of a filthy abandoned amusement park?

Welcome voters, to the bout known as “An A-MAZE-ing Fight!” Snicker.

Let’s meet the awesome ladies for this next battle.

First up, the leading lady of Stanley Kubrick’s legendary *The Shining*. Shelley Duvall’s Wendy Torrance is not what I would consider a “beloved” character. She’s wimpy, whiny and many times, useless. But she’s a heroine nonetheless, making her way from the confines and the dangers of The Overlook Hotel, and saving her only child in the end.

As far as prime acting scenes, I have to again look to a more subtle moment, very early on in the film – long before the blood-soaked elevator and a lifetime before “Here’s Johnny!” We’ll get to that in a moment.

Immediately after Danny (little Danny Lloyd) has his first vision in the film, a doctor pays a house-call to the Torrance home. As Danny rests in his bedroom, Wendy and the doctor (played by Anne Jackson) discuss Danny’s problem, at which time Jack’s (Jack Nicholson) drinking problem and history of violence is revealed. Danny’s shoulder was dislocated in this previous event and the doctor asks, “How did he manage to do that?” It’s this following moment which always thrills me. Wendy is clearly uncomfortable with the prying, but she continues on, explaining that Jack had too much to drink one night and came home in a rage – taking it out on Danny. This stumbling rationalization is a gem of an acting moment from Duvall. Watch those wide-eyes as she continually looks away from the doctor during the exchange. And it’s all capped off with her slurred delivery of “alcohol” and how Jack hasn’t had a drop in three months. Oh, Shelley! You are a delight!

And what discussion of Duvall in *The Shining* would be complete without a mention of the “Here’s Johnny!” scene in the tiny hotel bathroom? The screaming, the sobbing. The lashing out with the knife. And along with this sobbing glory, Duvall’s other moments (similar to one another in the last third of the film) include the bat/staircase sequence, and particularly the immediate aftermath of that scene, as she locks Jack in the walk-in pantry. Jack calls out to her, “Wendy?” to which Duvall turns back to the door, blurting a barely understandable and wet, “Yes?” Duvall must have lost at least ten pounds of tear-water while filming *The Shining*. I could go on and on when hand-picking all of her great acting moments. But I won’t. Wait, what about when she is paging through Jack’s manuscript? Or checking out the radio which Jack has destroyed? Or the – You get my point.

But I will take the time to choose one more reactionary moment in the film to make the ultimate case for Duvall. In the rigamarole that is the epic, final chase scene through the hotel – she turns the corner of one of the labyrinth halls, and enters the hallway with that iconic elevator door at the other end. As in all of Danny’s visions, the door opens, letting that flood of blood spill out and rumble toward her. Kubrick cuts back to a shot of Duvall’s pale, sunken face – reacting to this incomprehensible horror. Goosebumps every time!

And while Duvall’s Wendy can be quite irritating, she’s also someone we do feel for when the danger erupts in the Overlook. With those buggy-eyes of hers, it’s a case of Duvall wearing her heart on her sleeve. She can’t hide any emotion. She’s transparent. Sure, Wendy’s a whiner, but seeing her in this situation is no picnic in the park. I suppose there are her detractors – hating the character so much that they cheer for her panic and peril. Not me. And yes, Duvall has her fair share of screaming in the picture – which rightfully puts her in “scream queen” territory.

One assumes that Duvall had to dig deep to bring Wendy to slobbering, sobbing life.

Speaking of digging deep, Ms. Duvall’s competitor also had quite a task to portray her tortured character. Let’s give her a moment, as she prepares (check out that meditation and ***stretch***-ing) to take the ring with Ms. Duvall.

Caroline Williams is our beloved Stretch in Tobe Hooper’s fantastic sequel, *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre Part 2*.

To choose a best moment for Ms. Williams would be a book upon itself. However, as is now the norm in these battles, we must search for her more subtle, less “scream queen” moments. I would choose her impassioned plea to Lefty (Dennis Hopper) in his hotel room, where after she makes her case to help him out, thus giving her the chance to “do something real”, he simply states, “You’re gonna get in my way.” But there’s no stopping Stretch. Even when things go horribly wrong in the radio station, and Lefty is nowhere to be found, she bites the bullet and follows the assailants. Frankly, in the hands of another actress with less spunk, this awful character choice might not have worked. But we’re dealing with Caroline Williams here, so she is able to sell Stretch’s insane chase.

And as far as true scream queens, Williams will give anyone on such a list, a run for their money. She screams often and she screams well – why the dinner scene with the family and eventually good old Grandpa – practically hurt your vocal chords while watching. On top of that, there’s the maze chase with Leatherface. It must have taken 3 weeks to film just these two scenes -- simply based on how much screaming she had to deliver.

As I recently revisited the film to make sure I got just what I needed, I was greatly intrigued by another sort of small moment which Williams provides. She’s giving the “tour” of the radio station (“It ends at the exit.”) to ChopTop (the great Bill Moseley). She keeps her eyes on him and his ragged hanger the entire time. Of course you can see the heavy breathing, the wild panic in her eyes, but pay close attention to her face when she shows ChopTop the little shark toy. Effing brilliant! Her face curls up in disgust. Again, it’s one of those eensy-teensy little moments that will generally go unnoticed. But for me and for the purposes of this competition – it’s a big deal in making the case for Ms. Williams. As I said in other battles, I can’t imagine that reaction was thought out beforehand or discussed at great length during any possible rehearsals. It’s just a reminder that Ms. Williams is the real deal. And her ease in front of the camera as well as her true choices for Stretch – confirm it again and again.

Other great bits which show off Ms. Williams talents – the “sex” scene on top of the ice bin at the radio station. Her proclamation of love over LG’s butchered corpse. And yet another tiny moment – while talking to the obnoxious callers at the beginning of the film, she hears LG say, “Sounds like a buzz-saw” as the two high school kids are being murdered. Her desperate plea of, “Hang up! Hang up! Hang up! Hang up!” is definitely note-worthy.

But it’s that final moment as she stands atop the amusement park’s highest point – the chainsaw roaring over her head – recalling Leatherface’s final moment in the original film – a guttural primal scream screeching from her mouth. Her eyes tear-stained and wild. Damn, that’s some good stuff. She’s gone off the deep end, and boy howdy, do we believe it!

I’ve always wondered what became of Stretch. And with that thought, it becomes clear how much Ms. Williams brought us on board for Stretch’s journey. Once the house lights come up, and you long to know the fate of your heroine – well then, someone did something right.

And by the way… do you remember the intro article for these battles – when I explained how my best friend and I made up our own Horror Films of the 80s awards – when we were kids? My friend’s final choice for best actress was Ms. Williams.

So who will get your precious vote? The put-upon wife and mother in a maze of hedges and hotel hallways? Or the spunky DJ trying to get ahead, but instead falling far down (figuratively and literally) to experience the depravity of humanity – trapped in an “abandoned” amusement park?

Remember, you can vote right here on the site, check out our Facebook page and cast your vote there, or if you’re on Twitter – just put “Ultimate Horror Lady” and then #shelleyduvall or #carolinewilliams – depending on your heartfelt choice.

Three days from now, we’ll announce the next bloody battle! Stay tuned!