MIKE SCHNEIDER GETS REANIMATED
Felix Vasquez Jr.

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The latest iteration of "Night of the Living Dead" is not a remake, but a re-visioning, the same classic zombie film from George A. Romero except seen through the eyes of dozens of graphic artists, animators, and the like, all of whom have come together to form a moving painting and ode to George A. Romero and his lasting legacy of a zombie epic involving a group of mismatched survivors in a farmhouse one fateful night trapped wall to wall with the walking dead anxious to feast on their flesh and guts. Combing the talents of many people, Mike Schneider is an artist and curator who speaks about this latest project that brings a new dimension to Romero's film.

Hello, Mr. Schneider, thank you for your time!
No Problem.

Where did the idea for "Night of the Living Dead: Reanimated" stem from?
The concept of reanimation was posed by Winsor McCay nearly a century back. He suggested that instead of recreating something or stretching a work beyond it's limits that it could be given new life through artistic response. Basically, all viewers see things in a work that even the creators might not have noticed or intended. When they respond to it, they are responding as much to their experience as the visual cues. Add in the element of translation which comes from the artist recreating what they see through their own style and media and you have an approach which makes something that is new and exciting while remaining respectful to it's origins.

For those unaware, what is the plot/concept behind "Night of the Living Dead: Reanimated"?
One group rising up to consume another... driven beings coming from all directions in countless masses... grabbing wildly and infecting what was to create more of them. Cannibalism.. Appropriation.. Transformation. The plot of the movie is Night of the Living Dead, but this same description could be used for the production itself. This is Night of the Living Dead (1968) seen through a kaleidoscopic lens of responsive artwork and animation. The story, the audio, dialog and cast all remain the same, only now they are shown as a flickering collection of artwork and animation created by artists and fans alike.

Could you fill us in on the production budget for the film?
Zero. Night of the Living Dead: Reanimated was a labor of love created by and for fans of the movie. Everyone involved did so completely as volunteers and the resulting work is shared without taking a profit. The majority of the artists even leaned heavy on found and recycled materials, freeware applications, and non-traditional media. This project is video, not film, so even in the printing/ assembly no celluloid was harmed in the process. In fact, the lion's share of screeners etc were sent via ISO to the screening locations cutting out mail and tangibility whenever possible.

How many estimated artists were included in the making of the film?
This is a tricky question. We left the option open for artists to remain unaccredited (since some are under contracts etc which would have gotten in the way) and many artists who aren't featured visually helped drive the production along by talking it up, suggesting it to other artists, and even booking screenings once it was completed. There are well over a hundred names accredited in the artist section but that's only a fraction of the artists who helped make this project a reality.

How long was "Reanimated" in development?
Pre-production lasted about 4 hours and we had artists attached within days. By 2 months, we had a website, press and art to show. 2 more months passes and we had our first trailers and had releasers attached to the project (under our terms). By the 1 year mark the website was revamped and we were in post production.

16 months and we premiered the 'complete' first version. 18 months and we were at the final version. 2 years and we had all the supplemental together. and by 27 months in over 2 million people internationally had seen the project and it was out on DVD. This pace is thanks to completely to the horror community and so many of us working together to make it happen.

With the popularity of Night of the Living Dead, did you fear any potential backlash?
No... I was completely confident that there would be backlash... no potential about it. Still we are fans of the film and the fact that so many of us were interested in taking part gave me confidence that there was an audience out there... us. I was surprised that it's found an audience outside of the people involved... even more so that it happened so fast. It's different, experimental, and full of art. Nobody was surprised by the critics... but the praise... now that's terrifying.

I know that sounds weird but as an experimental artist I'm used to criticism and I have my arguments ready for debate... but nobody prepared me for the thank you's. The moms telling us stories of how their husbands and kids started spending their weekends together doing claymation, puppet theater, and backyard horror (entering though the simpler processes) after being marveled at the sheer number of possibilities. The teacher talking about how they've used works from the project side by side with the original film almost like a Rosetta Stone

to teach their students how to decode styles. Not to mention the fans who feel that we've done something for them and given them a new experience with something they love. People will hate it... but people are full of hate so that's to be expected. The fact that it broke through and inspired people is something I wasn't expecting... at least not so fast.

Part Two of Mike Schneider Gets ReAnimated >>

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