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# Interview with Mike Schneider

January 5, 2011 by [Mike Gencarelli](#)

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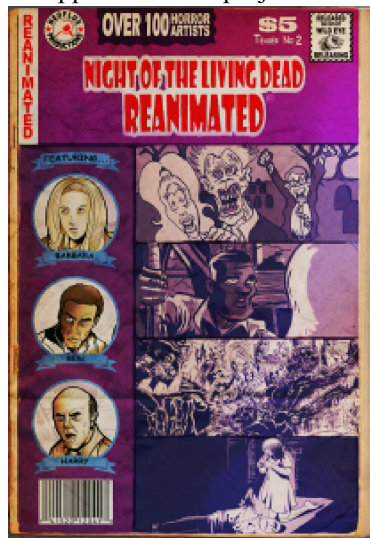
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Mike Schneider is the man responsible for creating the film “Night of the Living Dead: Reanimated”. He not only was one of the many many animators on the project. Mike was also the curator, director, producer, cinematographer and editor on the project. Movie Mikes had a chance to chat with Mike about his work on the film and the million of other projects he is currently working on.

[Click here](#) to purchase "Night of the Living Dead: Reanimated"

**MG:** "Night of the Living Dead: Reanimated" is like nothing I have ever seen before, tell us about how it became?

**MS:** Reanimation, posed by Winsor McCay, was the idea that things develop a new life when translated/ responded to by artists (as opposed to being copied/ remade). McCay, a pioneer cartoonist, quit animation once he observed the field was drifting from artists to industry. As is often the case with pioneers, many of his ideas were left unexplored. Without something tangible to illustrate them, even great ideas are too abstract for most people to grab onto... so I put this one into action. A dead process called 'reanimation' would make anyone's mind flash to the undead... but for a horror fan, like myself, it fixated there and we had our theme. Fine arts or otherwise, I work method ( having the approach speak directly to the subject matter.) Imagining I was searching for the cure to remakes, I followed the lead of Dr. Morgan and locked myself away with supplies, movies and, of course, my work. "Last Man on Earth: Reanimated" was conceived as a solo project that would have taken me little over 20 years to complete. In isolation, I worked day after day, watching videos while media dried, things set, or files rendered. On one such break, I put on "Night of the Living Dead" and it was about where Cooper made his point 'there's not going to be 5 or even 10' that it struck me. I was on the wrong side of the boarded window. Artists aren't the holdouts... we're the other... the outsiders banging on every window and door trying to grab an audience. Within hours, the project was restarted as the mass collaborative, "Night of the Living Dead: Reanimated". The entire production was modeled after the ghouls. Countless numbers approached this project from every direction. As they banged away at it,



others would hear the noise and move in to join them. No choreography was needed with everyone driven by a shared goal, to cannibalize and transform what once was into their own image. With bare hands and simple tools we ripped and teared at the film until what was left was the shell of it's former self... staggering across the screen with new life. "Night of the Living Dead: Reanimated" was open for artists and animators to come in, grab their favorite scene(s) and respond to it/ them with their own artwork and animation ( in whatever form that might take ). The results were then hung in the timeline (directly on top of the original film) and assembled, those thousands of pieces show 'Night of the Living Dead' through a kaleidoscopic lens of responsive art and animation.

**MG:** Tell us how many animators actually worked on this film?

**MS:** That's a good question but one more complex then you would think. Some only assisted and since they did not submit their own art, they opted out of being accredited. Other who did submit their own work also opted out of being accredited to avoid conflicts with other contracts they are/ were under. ( Making your art your way for a project you believe in that celebrates a movies you love is a beautiful thing. Trying to explain love and beauty to a manager or agency... not so much. ) There ever even more who wanted to take part but due to schedules etc were unable to, however, they passed along word to others drawing in both press and many of the artists who did take part. When credits roll you'll see between 100 and 150 names pass the screen but in reality there are well over 500 which helped in one way or another throughout the project.

**MG:** Is "Night of the Living Dead" your favorite horror film? If not what is?

**MS:** Picking a favorite reminds me of that 'Twilight Zone' episode, 'A Nice Place to Visit'. The thrill of winning is beating the odds of losing... so my favorite is always the one I haven't seen that will offer something new to think about. That said, in terms of storytelling, I'm drawn to movies where isolated autonomous groups of individuals face a infer-ably omnipresent situation. Small groups allow for strong character development while wide spread events allow you to imagine yourself in those circumstances (without specifically being one of those characters or in that particular location ). In terms of film production, I appreciate when a production can find smart ways around their budgetary and technical limitations. On both accounts Night of the Living Dead is a masterpiece that blends the minimal and epic in a way which I find incredibly appealing.



**MG:** How long did the whole process take to complete? Did it have a budget?

**MS:** “Night of the Living Dead: Reanimated” took 1 year from concept to post, 6 months from post to final version, and 9 months from final version to fully produced DVD. So 2 years 3 months from idea to shelves. As far as budget goes, this project was done 100% by volunteers without money touched at all during it’s production or profits taken from it’s release. Most of the artists used found objects and left over materials, the majority of the work was either done by hand or in freeware software, submissions were sent digitally via free file transfer sites, the project was never edited on a tangible film or video stock and editing was done on a computer made predominately from salvaged parts. Even most of the screeners were submitted digitally as DVD ISOs ( avoiding shipping ), guests at events were whichever artists were close by ( avoiding travel ), festivals we screened at were by invitation ( avoiding submission fees ), the majority of supplemental were self-produced and submitted by artists from the project, and the terms set with Wild Eye prohibit either of us from taking any profits from the release so anything that comes in either gets rolled back into the project (giveaways, promotions, etc) or gets donated to a charity of our choosing at the end of the release contract. A few times during the production, I was offered a budget and despite being broke (and really needing the money) I declined. All too often a little bit of money comes at too high of a price...particularly when the person offering it assumes that their wallet buys them a say in how the project is handled. With future projects, we will be open to non-monetary sponsorship (companies pledging materials, equipment, and/ or services to facilitate the production in exchange for credit, plugs in interviews and promotional space on the release) but money complicates things and these



projects are complicated enough on their own.

**MG:** Any plans to make any more films like “NOTLD:R”, perhaps “Dawn of the Dead: Reanimated”?

**MS:** Considering the rights issues relating to Dawn of the Dead, there are better odds of the dead walking than us getting the freedom needed to do this kind of project. That said, if the dead do walk, nobody will care about copyright so I’ll have a nice project to keep busy during the final days before our resources run out or homes become compromised. The added bonus there is I’ll be able to use live(-ish) models as a point of reference. I would be interested in trying out the process with another film but it would be nice to have the original film maker somehow involved. Though not based on a film, the truest sequel to ‘Night of the Living Dead: Reanimated’ will be ‘Unseen Horror’. With ‘Unseen Horror’ we are inviting artists and animators to join us in visualizing old time horror radio dramas. TV before TV and independent film before independent film, these radio programs paint a picture in your mind and we seek to let it out. Not only are these some of the best horror stories of their era, they are voiced by a star studded cast including numerous genre favorites from the silver screen. Since there aren’t existing visuals to keep the project grounded, most of these dramas are being approached in 2 passes with the first establishing designs and a loose but present visual continuity ( just enough the audience can follow the characters from one work to the next ). To keep things interesting, the rules and dynamics for each drama will be tailored to the specific drama and the artists involved in it... but as a whole the project is open to artists of all styles and media. If you’d like to take part, drop an email to [mike@unseenhorror.com](mailto:mike@unseenhorror.com) and we’ll get you started.



**MG:** Tell us about your work with animator Bill Plympton?

**MS:** In fact, I recently participated in Bill Plympton's "Guard Dog Global Jam", where-in Plympton assigned scenes from his award winning short "Guard Dog" to 70 different animators. We each approached our scenes in our own style. My style just happened to be turning the scene into it's own group project and having a different artist work on each and every frame. In the end, we had over 100 artists in about 4 seconds! ... and that's just 1 of the 70 submissions. "Guard Dog Global Jam" will start screening at festivals come spring but in the mean time you can check out our scene [here](#).

**MG:** What do you have planned next?

**MS:** Besides the aforementioned, 'Unseen Horror', there is always plenty in progress. "What is the Use of a Book without Pictures" is a paragraph by paragraph mass collaborative illustration of 'Alice's Adventures in Wonderland'. Artists email me ([shenlon@hotmail.com](mailto:shenlon@hotmail.com)) to request a paragraph (paragraphs are handed out in order from front to back cover). They then have 3 weeks to create a 6"x9" black and white image to illustrate that paragraph. In the end, we'll have between 500 and 1000 pages of artwork which tells the entire story without words. We're nearly 2 chapters in, so if anyone would like to claim a page, they should drop me a line soon. We have "Creatures of the Night School" which blends the traditions of educational television and late night horror hosting. Basically artisans, crafters, technicians, chefs, musicians, performers, mechanics, etc are invited to do demonstrations of their process in full horror hosting regalia ( vampire, werewolf, zombie, etc with bad puns and dark humor ). At the end of each demo, while the paint is drying, plaster/ epoxy is setting, food is cooking, file is rendering, etc... they throw the viewers back to the movie. In this show, I am the creature teacher, Vincent Van Gore, and assisting me in the art room are the exquisite corpse ( a lovely female assistant who is frequently offended or killed and, as such, is played by a different women all the time ) and Count Erfeit ( who steals the plot from the featured movie, swedes it and tries to pass it off for his own idea). Anyone with a love of horror and something to teach should drop me a line ([shenlon@hotmail.com](mailto:shenlon@hotmail.com)). I recently had 2 comics featured in the holiday themed zombie anthology, '[The Undead that Saved](#)



[Christmas](#)". This is a charity anthology with 100% of the proceeds going to the Hugs Foster Family Agency ([hugsffa.org](http://hugsffa.org)) which will use them to buy Christmas presents for children in foster care. They have already announced doing a second volume next year ( 2 books, in fact, with one being zombie and the other vampires). I'm already getting a jump on my submissions for next years volume. The details and call for submissions are available [here](#). "Destroy All Monster Movies" is a monster mash-up which adapts mythology and classic horror tropes into dai-kaiju stories. Launching first as a series of posters (appearing in the



1/26/2011

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background of numerous independent horror movies), this series will eventually cross-platform into comics and other media. Since DAMM centers around a complex universe of interweaving stories, real world meetings are required. Artists interested in participating must have strong communication and be within reasonable traveling distance of the Poconos (NEPA) so they will be able to attend semi-regular meetings. Finally, I'm constantly collaborating with different artists on short sci-fi/ horror comics. At 1-4 pages they are small enough to be included in a portfolio, submitted as a sample to a potential publisher, or printed in a magazine (being not much longer than an article). All stories are one-shot stand-alones so the characters begin and end in those pages and with non-exclusive printing/ posting rights for each artist involved, you will be able to print, submit, or post the comic wherever you see fit. Again, drop me a line at shenlon@hotmail.com. My inbox is always open. All and all, I'm having a blast working with a myriad of talented individuals on fun and interesting projects. The rest is just details.

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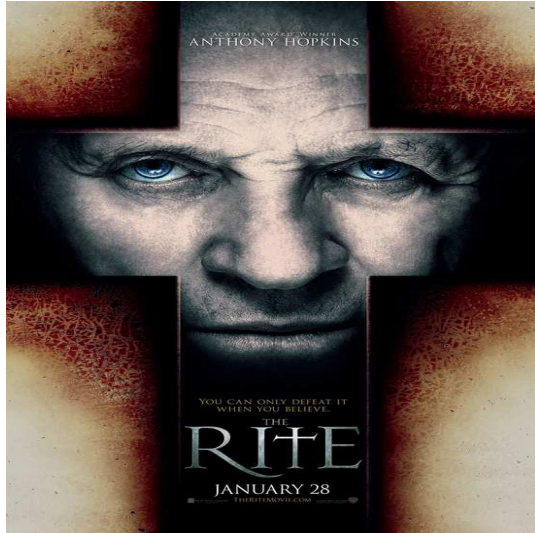
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