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## [Night of the Living Dead: Reanimated](#)



George A. Romero's zombie classic *Night of the Living Dead* has seldom been left alone in the 42 years since its release. It has been parodied; it has been remade (twice, once in 3D); it has been colorized; it has been subjected to a wisecracking overdubbed soundtrack à la *What's Up, Tiger Lily*; it has had scenes taken out and inane new scenes added by original cowriter John Russo. It's hard to think of another film that has inspired so much riffing, probably because it's in the public domain. Well, *Night of the Living Dead: Reanimated* is the latest riff. "Curator" Mike Schneider has corralled over a hundred animators, whose wildly disparate work illustrates the original film's soundtrack and dialogue.

How does this experiment work for viewers who don't already have Romero's original committed to memory? Funny you should ask; my viewing companion, who hadn't seen the Romero film but enjoys animation, commented that "it's interesting to try to figure out what's going on." 'Tis true; some of the animation and artwork are pretty abstract. And for me, who's seen the original umpty-ump times? I dug it on the same level that I dug the aforementioned overdub, only in reverse. It's a visual jam project, clearly a labor of love, one that Romero himself would probably approve of (at least moreso than the colorized version — and all the work here is appropriately in black and white).

*NOTLD:R* is an ideal midnight movie for film geeks who don't mind the animators occasionally taking some liberties or tweaking the material. Sock puppets, Barbie dolls, cat-and-mouse cartoons, Second Life captures, rotoscoping; at one point, little stick figures superimposed over the original footage help board up windows or produce a keyring referenced in the dialogue. At certain points it's also like flipping through a sketchbook devoted to a hundred different takes on the hero Ben (Duane Jones), the hysterical Barbara (Judith O'Dea), and all the other characters.

It's a testament to the power of Romero's film that it lured so many talents to contribute (for free) and that the stark simplicity of the story still comes through. This, after all, is the movie that launched an entire subgenre, the zombie flick as we know it today, and was a landmark in independent film. In a way, *NOTLD:R* confirms and re-establishes the scrappy DIY spirit of the original — it's a bunch of people working for nothing, united by dedication to the material. And, paradoxically, the cruder the artwork or animation is, the better it works; a slick patina of rendering wouldn't work for this low-budget, one-location film. By the time a lumpy claymation Ben fights a lumpy claymation Harry (Karl Hardman), and the iconic image of the zombie girl killing her mother is re-enacted mostly with Barbie dolls, this experiment's charm is hard to deny.

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