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Night Of The Living Dead: Reanimated

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By Noel Murray September 22, 2010

Because George Romero's 1968 horror classic *Night Of The Living Dead* fell into the public domain almost immediately—due to a slipup by the film's original distributor—it's been subjected to cruddy home-video presentation, colorization, 3-D-ification, and even one infamous attempt to “revise” the film by adding new scenes and a new score. But the movie has never been repurposed as radically as it is in *Night Of The Living Dead: Reanimated*, in which more than a hundred artists illustrate and animate scenes from *NOTLD*, using the original's audio track. It's an ambitious project, created under the auspices of Creative Commons, and it comes from a spirit of homage, not exploitation. As *NOTLD*-lovers draw their versions of Romero zombies—or render them in stop-motion CGI, or puppetry—they express what about this elemental story of the dead rising and feasting on the living still creeps people the hell out.

If only *Night Of The Living Dead: Reanimated* were as fun to watch as it must've been to make. Several of the individual artists do strong work: anything with puppets or dolls is striking in its contrast of three-dimensionality and expressionlessness, and the more abstract efforts—like Calum MacAskill's, which reduce the action in any given scene to rough shapes and squiggles—recreate the disorienting effect of Romero's original, which shocked audiences at the time for the way it subverted cheesy B-horror with docu-realism and buckets of gore. But too many of the fragments of *NOTLD:R* consist of little more than static drawing or very limited animation, and because the film cuts between multiple renderings within a single scene, the movie never develops any flow. It's more like a slideshow of an art exhibit inspired by *Night Of The Living Dead* than a proper reinterpretation. As such, it's best experienced the way zombies experience humor in pieces.

Key features: A few extended scenes rendered in a single style, plus an artists' gallery, some “how I did it” featurettes, and two commentary tracks.

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