



Rancher rounds up stray zombie in Romero's western-style scare sequel **Survival of the Dead**.

**PHANTOM** Can you tell us a bit about the genesis of *Survival of the Dead* and its underlying themes?

**GR** Because *Diary of the Dead* was produced on a low budget, it wound up making a great deal of money worldwide. So the producers wanted me to make another one...quickly. In the past, all five of the *Dead* films I'd made had been, at least to some extent, inspired by current events—by a perception of what the world looked like (to me)—when each of the films were made. Now I was faced with having to make a sixth film without any immediate stimulation. So I decided to use a more universal theme: War. The idea that humankind seems incapable of “burying the hatchet”—age-old angers and enmities prevail even when the world as we know it is on the brink of total disaster. I also decided that I'd try to have some fun stylistically. In my mind, the theme was a timeless one, so I wanted to give the film a timeless feel. I'd always wanted to make a western, so I set out to do it. I took a minor character from *Diary of the Dead*, a sergeant in the National Guard who appears, in *Diary*, for only a minute or so, and took him and his three buddies off on their own adventure. In an attempt to escape the chaos on the mainland, the Guardsmen take a ferry to a small island off the coast of Delaware, the assumption being that there will be fewer of the dead to deal with. The problem is that there are two families on the island that have been feuding for as long as anyone can remember. The Guardsmen end up having a very larger problem on their hands. The dead are controllable. The living can't be controlled. I had all of my department heads watch an old western called *The Big Country*, in which Burl Ives and Charles Bickford fight a feud to the death. We set out to model

*Survival of the Dead* after *The Big Country*, in order to give it that timeless feel that I mentioned. I think it works quite well. And I was able to indulge myself even more by throwing in some real *Loony Tunes* moments—broadly comic moments that come close to slapstick. Then, as we were working on the film, headlines started to appear over how anger—rage—was becoming regrettably acceptable. Entertainers, sports figures, politicians were suddenly unable to disagree without being disagreeable. The two-party system in the United States has high-ranking members of the Senate sniping at each other in the foulest of ways, and the public, taking license from the bad behavior of their leaders, has begun to behave badly in very dangerous ways. So, purely by accident, *Survival of the Dead* is quite current, I think, in its socio-political criticism.

**PHANTOM** What projects are you currently working on/planning? I've heard titles like *Diamond Dead* and *Solitary Isle* mentioned.

**GR** Don't believe anything you read on IMDB. *Diamond Dead* and *Solitary Isle* were never more than distant possibilities and both have been dead for years. If *Survival* makes as much money as *Diary*, I'll probably be doing another *Dead* film next. I already have a script started. It takes another minor character from *Diary* off on his own adventure. And I have sketched out even a fourth, with yet another of *Diary*'s minor characters. But who knows what will happen? My partner Peter Grunwald and I are working on two other script ideas and I have been working on a novel. As of now, no deals are in place.

**PHANTOM** Do you have a favorite among the zombie films you weren't involved in?

**GR** *Shaun of the Dead*, hands down. ☿

*Phantom Fave!*  
**NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD  
REANIMATED!**

**NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD: REANIMATED** (2009) ☿☿☿☿

D: Mike Schneider. Voice cast: Duane Jones, Judith O'Dea, Karl Hardman, Marilyn Eastman, Keith Wayne, Judith Ridley, Russell Streiner, Kyra Schon. 101 mins. (Wildeye Releasing) 7/10

*Night of the Living Dead* attains a new level of iconographic recognition with this inspired interpretation crafted by over 150 artists working in a wide range of animation styles. While the original soundtrack plays unedited, said artists illustrate the action from their own POVs, with styles and perspectives constantly shifting, often within a matter of seconds. We see Ben, Barbara, the Cemetery Ghoul and the rest of the **NOTLD** gang represented via charcoal sketches, claymation, flash animation, stop-motion, rotoscoping, puppetry, Muppetry, thumbation and even **Ren and Stimpy** style, without mocking or compromising this ultimate primal nightmare tale, even with the addition of welcome in-jokes (e.g., when the farmhouse TV shows advisories urging viewers to report to designated shelters, we see such locations as “Monroeville – Monroeville Mall” and “Pittsburgh – Fiddler's Green,” references to *Dawn of the Dead* and *Land of the Dead*, respectively). Credit goes to multiple hat-wearer Mike Schneider, who assigned, coordinated and edited the resultant massive output. Wildeye's DVD brims with compelling bonus material, including an intro by contempo horror host Count Gore De Vol, a making-of commentary track, a second track by horror author Jonathan Maberry, alternate/deleted scenes, short films and animations, and several demonstration featurettes focusing on the artists at work. **Night of the Living Dead Reanimated** demands repeat viewings and a treasured place in every dedicated *Deadhead*'s archives. ☿

