

WFMU's Beware of the Blog

September 20, 2010

Fall Tips for Fashionable Zombie Hunters



Nobody's ever complained that zombie movies are too realistic. And they've probably never really been criticized for not being realistic enough, either. But a couple of recent independent pictures, taking George Romero as spiritual godfather and *Sean of the Dead* as role model, have presented about as reasonable a take on facing the undead as can be imagined. Meanwhile, another new feature takes the comic book angle just as far to the polar extreme.

Make Out With Violence, being released on DVD in October, is the story of a group of high school friends shaken by the death of one of their group. made all the more difficult by the fact that her corpse is never found after the suspected drowning. "It was like a funeral with no body," says a younger brother who serves as narrator. "I wondered if Wendy came back if they'd put her in the coffin."

The tensions between those who pined for her, were jealous of her and just missed her are only upped when she's found alive, or at least not dead. Following the rule Romero has held to ever since 1968's *Night of the Living Dead*, there's no explanation given for the reanimation. But in this case, Wendy seems to be the only one — at least the only one they know of — and she makes Romero's undead look like the Bolshoi Ballet. (Unlike Wendy Darling of *Peter Pan* - where the name first appeared - this Wendy never grows up.) She can barely stand and can't sense living flesh unless it's inches from her mouth. Keeping her alive is an act of love — and we all know how confused teenagers in love get.

The Deagol Brothers' *Make Out With Violence* is hardly a horror movie. It's gruesome, but it isn't scary. What

makes the Romero model of zombie flick (read: slow and stupid — how exactly could a corpse run?) so compelling is that there really isn't much danger unless you lose your cool. With Wendy there's really no danger at all, unless you surrender to the temptations of her cold flesh. What it is, really, is one of those indie flicks full of characters who talk a lot but don't really know what they're trying to say. Except this one has a really excellent living dead girl (not to mention a band at a party playing an Eno cover).

Watching *Make Out With Violence* rekindled in me the excitement of going to the premiere of Romero's *Survival of the Dead* with Dark Master William Berger back in May, and getting to interview the director on my show. (Hear the whole undead blow-out [here](#).) *Survival*, out last month on DVD, stands up to the best of Romero's films, where it's actually people who are the problem and the dead (Romero, as well as the Deagols, doesn't use the word "zombie") merely the irritant.

In my enthusiasm I went looking for other takes on the deceased rising again and found the 2009 short film *I Love Sarah Jane* (linked above). It's a mere quarter of an hour, but it's a great scene. As in *Make Out*, the dead coming back seems merely a fact of life. Having to kill your zombie dad sucks, but that's the world we're living in. You might be inclined to say it's the world they're living in, but can you say with certainty you don't see dead people walking to work, or leaving bars, every single day? Because I'm not convinced. There are, no doubt, those who think this is all fiction, who think that the earth is populated only by the living, who think that this is all the stuff of comic books. To them I offer *Night of the Living Dead: Reanimated*.

It's a remarkable project (out on DVD from this month), creating a scene-by-scene remake of the film that started it all as realized by close to 150 visual artists. Set to the original soundtrack (music and dialogue) of the original film, *Reanimated* is brilliantly insane with delusions of cogency. The play-by-play is manifested using Barbies and Muppets, stop-motion and CGI, comic book panels, sock puppets, woodcuts, HR Giger stylings, Clutch Cargo mouth superimpositions and Furbies. Watching this scattershot retelling, one thing is made clear: With the characters, the setting, the everything changing every couple seconds, it would be impossible to follow if the story itself didn't move so slowly. Bald man, blonde woman, black man, brunette woman, all look different every few seconds. Their basic characteristics stay the same, but it's only courtesy of the escargot pace of the original that we can keep it all straight. And there's a lesson to be learned here. *Zombies move slow. Jaws was slow. Slow leaves you alone with your imagination. Slow is scary.*

There was one question I forgot to ask Romero when I interviewed him, but the answer's more than evident anyway. He grew up in Pennsylvania and shot his first movies there, but now makes his home in Toronto. At the end of *Land of the Dead*, the survivors head for Canada. There's less people there, so there's less zombies.

I didn't really need to ask, though, did I?

Posted by Kurt Gottschalk on September 20, 2010 at 01:42 PM in [Music](#), [Video Clips](#) | [Permalink](#)

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I think there was a reason given for the reanimation of corpses in Night of the Living Dead. Something to do with possible radiation from an exploding satellite, if I recall. Pretty vague, and said by a sheriff or something on TV.

In 1968, I didn't care. That movie scared the hell out of me. Couldn't go near a cemetery for years!

Posted by: [dark1p](#) | [September 21, 2010 at 11:12 AM](#)



14+ minutes of zombie flick is about all I can take. The times in my life I've been unfortunate enough to be in actual danger don't scare me as much. I think you hit upon it in the lead sentence, there is something uncanny. For me these movies won't stop being scary until people in real life stop behaving like jackasses and creating risk where no good can come from it.

Posted by: [bartleby](#) | [September 21, 2010 at 08:02 PM](#)



hey dark -

yeah, there's a scene in notl where there are experts on tv arguing about the cause of the dead coming back to life, and the satellite thing is one of them. my favorite speculation, though, is the famous line from the second movie "dawn of the dead": "where there's no room left in hell, the dead shall walk the earth."

Posted by: [Kurt Gottschalk](#) | [September 21, 2010 at 08:41 PM](#)



bartleby - if you get a chance, check "make out with violence." it's intense to see a zombie movie that isn't trying to be scary.

Posted by: [Kurt Gottschalk](#) | [September 21, 2010 at 08:48 PM](#)



Maybe, but i regretted the last time i followed someone's advice to see a zombie movie

Posted by: [bartleby](#) | [September 21, 2010 at 10:17 PM](#)



eh, maybe so then. i saw "get low" last night. quite good. about a guy who plans his funeral before he's dead because he wants to attend. pretty much the opposite of a zombie movie. you might try that instead.

or, you know, stay home and listen to wfmu!

Posted by: [Kurt Gottschalk](#) | [September 21, 2010 at 10:22 PM](#)

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