

Indie Horror Films

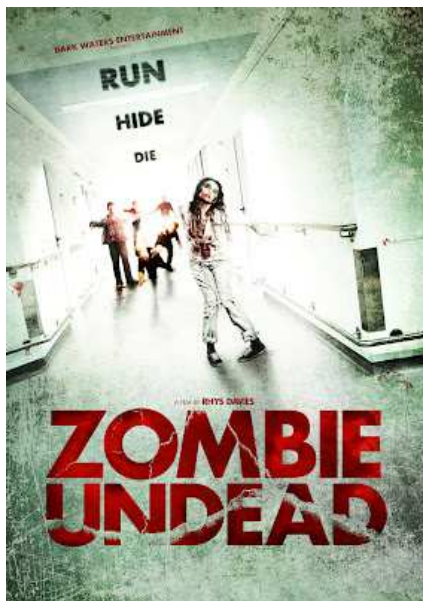
All genres of suspense, terror, and horror will be reviewed by Richard Gary. His address to send preview copies supplied upon request to rbf55@msn.com.

Saturday, August 25, 2012

Review: Zombie Undead

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Images from the Internet



Zombie Undead

Written and directed by Rhys Davies

Hive Films

83 minutes, 2010

Hivefilms.co.uk

Zombieundead.com

MVDvisual.com

May I start by saying that when I saw the title of this film, I thought that it is redundant.

I would have the same comment about something called *Undead Vampires*. But then I started to think about it a bit...

Generally speaking, there are three major turning points in the modern zombie film: the first is the *Night of the Living Dead* (1968), where zombies went from Haitian victims to flesh-eating undead. Then there was *28 Days* (2000), where the maddened were not really dead, but rather rabid-like, yet it is still considered in the zombie genre (perhaps we need a plague subgenre?). This also started the ongoing and occasionally heated "fast vs. slow zombie" debate. The last was the addition of a comedy / absurd element with *Shaun of the Dead* (2004). Sure there was some overlap (e.g., *Return of the Living Dead* [1985] had some comedy elements) and even some *borrowing* (e.g., it could be argued that *28 Days* was more *The Crazies* [1973] than *NotLD*, both directed by George A. Romero), but basically they revolutionized how we looked at the creatures.

Of the three, it could be noted that the latter two were British, who have been leading in innovation in the zombie field (though I would arguably say that some American low-budgeters deserve some more focused attention, such as *Aaah! Zombies!!* [aka *Wasting Away*, 2007; my evaluation [HERE](#)] and the recent *Zombie A-Hole* [2012], to be reviewed in this blog soon). *Zombie Undead* is also from the British Isles.

This film, directed by Rhys Davies and written by Kris Tearse, both first-timers, borrows liberally from predecessors, including others not mentioned above, such as *Dawn of the Dead* (1979; e.g., mostly it takes place in a single building, and there are many *debowelings*).

What sets it all off – and I won't give away much, I promise – is a biological terrorist's bomb in a hub train station. From there, of course, things deteriorate as people who were killed by the blast rise up, and *slowly* and inevitably, of course, *chomp*.

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We meet the heroine, Sarah (Ruth King), who has brought her father into a hospital after he is injured and bloodied. She passes out at the stress at some point, and wakes up alone in a corridor of the hospital (shades of *The Day of the Triffids* [1962]). She is quickly rescued by the hulking Jay (played by writer Tearse), with machete in hand, and they are joined by the sympathetic-yet-cowardly cab driver who took Sarah and pop to hospital, Steve (Barry Thomas). From there, they work their way to the top of the building to search for relatives – and to have an excuse to hang around the single structure set – where they meet others who have survived (for now), passed on, and who have returned to join the search for – er – food.

Considering that none of the core actors in the film have any previous experience listed on the IMDB, they do a truly splendid job. Yes, there is the occasional wooden reading (I'm assuming that it is supposed to be them being in shock more than anything else), but each one holds their own both in solo pieces and in a group. I'm hoping if Davies continues, he will have the opportunity to use the cast again, as indie filmmakers tend to use a cadre of talent repeatedly. There is usually a large range of emotion that is needed when these kinds of films go serious, as does this one, so with a novice film crew, it's ever more impressive, even on a repeated viewing (hey, I hadda show it to my zombie-lovin' hombres).

As with most British core cities, the one used here, Leicester (a 100-mile drive north-northwest from London), looks like a series of rundown row-houses and brick buildings with some parks (mostly golf courses, according to the maps I've seen). Actually, a perfect setting if one wants to do the geographical / cultural analysis of what the zombies mean (you know, how critics talk about *Dawn of the Dead* being about consumerism, etc.), but I like to take these stories for what they are, rather than find the commies-in-the-pea-pods, if you get my drift.

While I commented before about how there are borrowed elements here and there, it should be strongly noted that there are some really fine touches, as well, such as a tragic case of mistaken identity, which is all I will divulge here, because the film is worth checking out. Yes, there are the occasional holes, but it could easily have been far, far worse. Just know that while this is a compelling film, it is a relentlessly grim story with no respite from beginning to end. It may not always be action-packed (thought it often is), but it will still keep your attention righthere.

Lastly, there is the gore element. The effects are mostly prosthetic, from what I can tell (kudos!), such as said intestines and other assorted body parts, and the blood is among the best in viscosity I've seen in a while: not too thick, not too thin, not too light or dark. Really good, considering the sheer abundance of it. And, do I really need to go into the question of a body count considering the subject matter and the aforementioned tone? Didn't think so.

There are no extras on this DVD, be it commentary, bloopers, deleted scenes or even a coming attraction for this film, never mind others on the brand. Zip. Zero. Zlich. But I won't disappoint you. Here is the trailer.

Posted by Robert Barry Francos at 6:30 PM

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