

# “THEY WON’T STAY DEAD!”

George A. Romero’s *NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD* (1968) is widely acknowledged as one of the most influential horror films of all time. Shot in black and white, Romero produced the film on a meager \$114,000 budget. The film quietly premiered on October 1, 1968, at the Fulton Theater in Pittsburgh. But after a decade of cinematic re-releases, it eventually grossed domestic sales of over \$12 million, and over \$30 million internationally. Romero’s low-budget classic went from being unable to find a distributor to becoming one of the most important horror films of all time.

In the story, seven people are secluded in a Pennsylvania farmhouse trying to avoid savage attacks by zombified corpses seeking to eat their flesh. The group — which includes a married couple and their daughter, a pair of young lovers, and an African-American man — tries to keep its collective sanity as the zombies try repeatedly to enter the house. Through radio and TV reports they learn that radiation from outer space is thought to be responsible for a wave of zombie attacks all over the eastern United States. It seems radiation from a fallen satellite has caused the dead to walk, and now they hunger for human flesh. Once bitten, you become one of them. The only way to kill them is by gunshot or a severe blow to the head.

Aside from the visceral impact, and years before realistic gore became the fashion, the film is also significant for its portrayal of a black man as the protagonist during a time when race relations were a sensitive issue in the United States. The manner in which Romero chose to end his film made a bold and surprising statement about the issue. It’s difficult to imagine how shocking this film was upon its initial release. In large part, the terror is a result of the raw fashion in which it was shot, making it feel more like a home movie. As of October 2, 2008, *Night of the Living Dead* was the Internet Movie Archive’s second most-downloaded film, with 515,561 downloads, a further testament to its lasting impact.

## “THEY KEEP COMING BACK IN A BLOODTHIRSTY LUST FOR HUMAN FLESH!”



Alternate Title: “Night of the Flesh Eaters”

Genre: Horror, Sci-Fi, Cult

Year: 1968

Type: B&W

RT: 96 mins

Starring: Duane Jones & Judith O’Dea

Director: George A. Romero

Writer: John A. Russo & George A. Romero

Producer: N/A

Country: United States

Language: English

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