SPECIAL ISSUE FROM THE TEAM BEHIND DAILY DEAD



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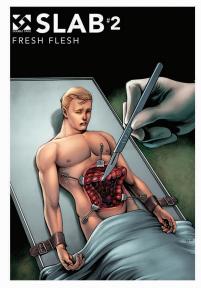
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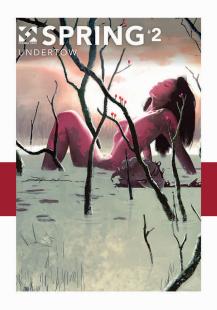






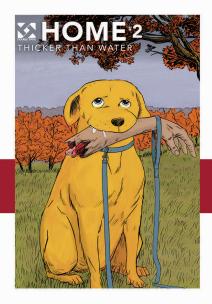






IN-STORES

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30 YEARS OF FEAR WITH RE-ANIMATOR

by Scott Drebit

1985. Horror was going through a sea change on the film front, as slashers were shown the door and creature features became the cool kids on campus again. People lined up to see vampires (*Fright Night*) and werewolves (*Silver Bullet*) and zombies (*Day of the Dead*), oh my—but my favorite subgenre, the Mad Scientist, came roaring back to life with director Stuart Gordon's (*From Beyond*, *Dagon*) manic masterpiece debut, *Re-Animator*.

Released in October, *Re-Animator* proved once again that when properly executed, horror and humor are delightful bedfellows, co-conspirators with the noblest of intentions: to entertain. Horror, while certainly not easy to do well (scroll through Netflix on any given day), has it made in the shade compared to comedy. Humor is more subjective, and what rubs me as funny may chafe you as stupid or insipid. Most people will agree that *The Exorcist* is terrifying, but not everyone likes *The Three Stooges* (personal disclosure: I do. What about it?). So, how does *Re-Animator* pull it off? Why, 30 years later, do the laughs resonate as much as the blood-soaked scrubs?

Part of the reason is tone—*Re-Animator* starts at over the top, pulls up a chair, leans back and stays there for 90 minutes of pure, elevated Theatre of the Absurd. Nothing is subtle in the realm of the Mad Scientist, nor should it be. From the time Frankenstein's monster hopped off the operating table, bigger than life was the deal of the day. The monster was usually the straight man back then, eliciting sympathy and terror in equal doses, while the doctor was portrayed (rightly so) as insane, profane (a righteous God complex), and delightfully highoctane. Re-Animator has energy and chutzpah to spare, qualities that were sorely lacking in horror when it rolled out to an unsuspecting audience back in '85. As well, the two elements never step on each other's toes, but rather dance beautifully together to the same song. It's a marvel to behold.

Adapted from a series of (obscure at the time) short stories by acclaimed early 20th century horror fiction author H.P. Lovecraft, the tale goes something like this:

The film opens at the University of Zurich with—appropriately enough—screams, as

our protagonist (antagonist? Both, I'd say—a very intriguing character), medical student Herbert West (Jeffrey Combs — From Beyond) stands over the flailing and wailing body of his professor, Dr. Hans Gruber, with the officials entering the scene assuming Mr. West has brought harm to Gruber, while on the contrary, West proclaims he "gave him life."

Following animated opening credits, Mr. West relocates to Miskatonic University in Massachusetts to continue his studies, where he immediately clashes with Dr. Carl Hill (David Gale—The Brain), as both men profess to be the leading expert in brain regeneration.

Anyhow, one dead pet later, Herbert shows Dan what a little fluorescent serum (the reagent used for revival) can do to put some pep in the deceased feline's step. Amazed and excited, Dan tries to impart the news to Dean Halsey, but suspecting that Dan and Meg are together, he pulls Dan's student loans and kicks Herbert out of school. With nothing to lose, the boys decide to up the ante and work on a human subject from the morgue. During a less than pleasurable encounter with the cadaver (imagine someone hiding Schwarzenegger's protein bars from him), Dean Halsey is killed in the melee, only to be brought back (sort of) with a more manageable dose of the green



Seeking lodging, West rents a room from fellow student Dan Cain (Bruce Abbott — Bad Dreams), who is having a clandestine romance with Meg (Barbara Crampton – We Are Still Here), daughter of Dean Halsey (Robert Sampson -Robot Jox). Meg takes an instant dislike (and distrust) to West—if your cat doesn't like someone, there's usually a reason. Well, besides the fact that it's a cat.

stuff. After Halsey is put under Dr. Hill's "care," Hill realizes that Halsey isn't hurt, but rather re-animated. Confronting him for the formula, Hill is decapitated by West, who proceeds to inject Hill's head with a helping of his go-go juice. From here on out, things get weird(er)...

So how and why does a story like this come to be? I recently spoke with director Stuart Gordon, who had this to say about ReAnimator's origins, as well as making the leap from the stage with his legendary Organic Theater Company to the world of film:

"It started with a discussion I had with a friend, and I was complaining about the fact that all they were making at the time were vampire movies. So I said, 'Why doesn't someone make a Frankenstein movie?' And she mentioned these serialized stories called "Herbert West—Reanimator" by Lovecraft, and I'd never even heard of them. I finally was able to find a copy at the Chicago Public Library, and after being put on a waiting list for six months, I was able to go in and read them.

"We had done a television adaptation with PBS of one of our plays, *Bleacher Bums*, so I went back to them and asked about doing a miniseries based on these Lovecraft stories, and they were not at all interested. I was working on it with Dennis Paoli and William J. Norris, and people kept saying it should be longer, so we put the first and second stories together, until finally someone said, 'Make it a feature.' And that's when I met Brian Yuzna (*Re-Animator*'s producer), and he said, 'Put all six stories in.' And I said, 'What about a sequel?' And he said, 'You'll be lucky if you make a movie that people want to buy a ticket for [laughs]."

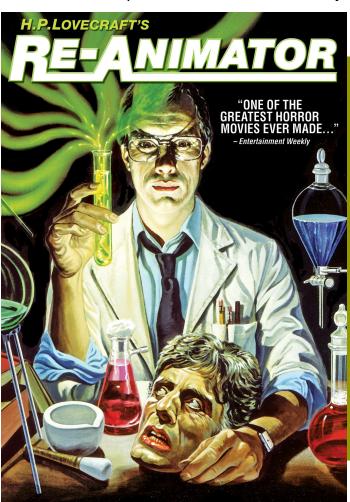
The script that they ended up with walked a fine line between the camp and the carnage. "Yeah, because if you do both at the same time they cancel each other out," the director said, "so you really do have to build up tension and then relieve with a laugh. It is a tightrope act, really." Casting a wide, multicolored net below the high wire is the look of the film, a lurid landscape fleshed out by Gordon's ingenuity and an artist's inspiration.

"When I was in high school, I was majoring in commercial arts, so I could draw—I did a lot of the storyboards for the movie. I was very influenced by some of the great comic book artists—the one I really love is Bernie Wrightson," said Gordon. "He did Swamp Thing, Tales from the Crypt, Eerie—and he's got this very distinctive look with great angles, so a lot of times I was mimicking Bernie. Later on, I got to work with him on several things as a conceptual artist for me. We got to be friends."

One of the most remarkable things about *Re-Animator* is how assured of a directorial debut it is. Gordon shows great poise behind the camera, creating a carnival-like atmosphere, gracefully juggling all the elements for our amusement. However, to help achieve this, Gordon became a student of the modern horror film.

"Brian Yuzna screened just about every movie that had come out in the last five years so I could catch up with what was being done in horror. I saw Sam Raimi's stuff, I remember seeing *Driller Killer* and a bunch of other films, but the one that really grabbed me was *Rosemary's Baby*. I was just knocked out by how it was shot. I ended up watching that film over and over again. I think of that as my film school. Polanski had such a great way of shooting that movie. He made it so subjective, you really feel like it's happening to you. And I tried to capture that with *Re-Animator*."

Of course, without the right cast, the whole affair would fall apart under its own incredulity.



Luckily, he picked the right ensemble. Abbott and Crampton have an easy rapport as the young lovers, and Gale exhibits a stuffy fanaticism played perfectly against Combs' bombastic performance as West. All of the performers ride the same ridiculous wavelength, finding the wit in the wreckage. Ever resourceful, Gordon was able to use his theater background to not only assist with finding the right actors, but ensure the smoothest production.

"I had a casting director who used to go see a lot of plays and that's how he found Jeffrey Combs. And as soon as Jeffrey walked in and started reading, I knew this was the guy. My feeling is that if you do theater, you can do anything. It really separates the men from the boys.

"We rehearsed for a week or two before we started shooting and that was really helpful. Which I discovered later is something very seldom done in film, they don't rehearse—that just is amazing and kind of appalling to me. It can help you so much, especially on a tight schedule like we were. So it was very helpful that they had strong theater backgrounds."

Re-Animator was that rare beast at the time of its release: a horror film with rave reviews

from mainstream critics, from Roger Ebert to Janet Maslin praising the ghoulish hijinks and blood-soaked mayhem. The film made its money back at the box office, but really flourished on home video where adolescents (and more than a few adults) could indulge in a soon-to-be genre staple that may have been low on class, but possessed more than enough classic grue and gags to fill the tank. Finally, I asked Mr. Gordon to reflect on the legacy of his debut.

"Well, I'm really very grateful that audiences are still enjoying the film, and watching it at all. I think part of it is the movie is so outrageous, it really hasn't dated all that much. It's shocking to people. That's one of the reasons it hasn't been remade. They're afraid to remake *Re-Animator* because it would never get an R rating [laughs]. My feeling is that people can still enjoy this movie, and why not? Let them see the original."

Between West's preening bon mots, Dr. Hill's leering instability, and plenty of outrageous effects and lascivious behavior, *Re-Animator* proves that horror is always waiting to be reborn—it just needs the right mix of serum.





The zombies from George A. Romero's classic 1960s horror film rise once again in ten separate first issues of Double Take's *Ultimate Night* of the Living Dead comic book series. Daily Dead recently chatted with Jeff McComsey, writer of *Z-Men* and *Rise*, who discussed expanding on Romero's living dead world, further exploring the characters of Johnny and Barbara, and much more.

Do you have fond memories of watching Romero's Night of the Living Dead in your formative years?

Jeff McComsey: I saw it at a pretty young age, probably in the mid-'90s. I remember we rented it on VHS and watched it a couple of times. It wasn't until I was in college and we watched a bunch of old movies when we really got into it. And now, since I've watched it professionally, I'm still impressed with what Romero did. I love people who do a lot with a little, and he certainly did that. You can just take away its cultural impact and just look at the film and how it stands by itself. He did a lot of really cool stuff without a whole lot of money, which I totally admire.

Double Take's overall *Ultimate Night of the* Living Dead series contains ten separate story arcs in one shared universe. What was your experience working with that type of interconnectivity and attention to detail?

Jeff McComsey: Knowing that it was going to be a big, shared universe, it was exciting to be there at the beginning and come up with some of the rules and the stories we had. Our initial goal was to establish these characters in their own right and then have them cross over into these different worlds so that it feels like this big cohesive universe. And they came up with a lot of cool devices for that. There's a big hospital that crosses over in a bunch of different stories. Obviously, if a crisis happened like in Night of the Living Dead, it's not hard to come up with a reason for people to check into the hospital. To me, it felt like a really good novel that jumps around to a lot of different points of view that all coalesce at the end.

Many readers will be drawn to *Rise* because it focuses on two key characters from Romero's film: siblings Johnny and Barbara. What was your experience writing new takes on these beloved characters?

Jeff McComsey: It's funny because even though Johnny is known as one of the main characters, he's really only on the screen for about five minutes—first when he gets killed early on and then when he shows up as a zombie.

And Barbara, she's a main character, but she doesn't really have many real lines—she's pretty much scared shitless throughout the entire movie. Because these were main characters. it was a lot of fun—I had free range to develop their personalities and their characters, because we don't even know what their last names are [in the film]. It was fun knowing that they're brother and sister—it made for a much more fun couple than a romantic lead. It's a very fun dynamic with the brother and sister team.

We really don't know what happens to Johnny in the film, so that was a great way to get the readers who are familiar with Night of the Living Dead onboard, to follow Johnny and see what's going on around the events that we see in the movie.

Originally, we had done a lot of different story meetings about Johnny and Barbara. At first it was challenging to figure out what their real motivation was, and we decided that they were in town just to visit their father's grave. So if you go somewhere and the Night of the Living Dead happens, the only thing you want to do is get the hell out of there.

So early on we realized that would be their initial motivation, to get the hell out of there as fast as they could. But once we start throwing things at them, there are obstacles to achieving that and it just felt really natural.

Z-Men, your other miniseries in *Ultimate* Night of the Living Dead, takes a governmentcentric approach to the zombie uprising. How did that story originate?

Jeff McComsey: Z-Men was a pitch that I submitted very early on. We didn't have a title for it at the time (Z-Men was Double Take's

idea, which I liked). Initially, they wanted me to do *Rise*, which is the one we were definitely doing because it followed Johnny and Barbara from the original, so we had to have that story. In addition to that, I pitched them this Z-Men idea about two bumbling Secret Service guys set in the middle of all of this.

It ended up working out because through *Z-Men* we could do these Washington D.C. scenes that really helped encapsulate the whole world and the initial response. D.C. makes a lot of decisions that really dramatically affect characters in this world, so it was cool that we get insight into that. We get to watch the decision process.

Both of your stories, *Z-Men* and *Rise*, take place in 1966. Did you have to do a lot of research to properly portray that era?

Jeff McComsey: Definitely in *Z-Men*, because there are a lot of times in *Z-Men* when we're sitting in the Oval Office with LBJ [Lyndon B. Johnson] and they're getting information and deciding what to do. I'm a big fan of historical fiction, so I definitely had some starting-off points for these characters. And just being a big film guy, one of the things I love about watching old films are the little turns of phrases you pick up on. So it was really just a culmination of stuff that I've been back-braining for years.

I did do some direct research with LBJ. Robert McNamara, and Curtis LeMay—all three are very interesting characters in and of themselves. It was funny, though, because it was actually very easy to put words in LBJ's mouth, which surprised me. He's kind of a caricature of himself. With LBJ, there's a lot of stuff that has come out just in the past few years that give you a sense of what he was like and what he sounded like.

Z-Men and Rise are going to be three-issue miniseries, essentially. What you're reading now is the first issue and there will be two more issues, and LBJ definitely plays a huge part in those three [issues of Z-Men]. There's a big event that happens at the end of the third issue and after that we'll come back with the next three-issue miniseries and we're going to jump ahead. But LBJ will definitely be a very big character for these first three issues.

Z-Men features a great back-and-forth between an *Odd Couple*-esque duo of Secret Service agents, Clancy and Stuart. Did any partner pairings from pop culture influence you while writing those characters?

Jeff McComsey: Whether it was intentional or subconscious, I thought of Murtaugh and Riggs from Lethal Weapon, especially when they first meet and they don't get along. I like how they're two different characters. Imagine the difference between Johnny Unitas and Joe Namath back in the day. Clancy is very much a straight-edged guy, spit and polished with a high and tight haircut and horn-rimmed glasses. Whereas Agent Stuart—we wouldn't consider him liberal nowadays, but at the time [1966], he's much more liberal than anyone he works with. He's kind of an oddball at the Secret Service, while Clancy is your reserved, standard issue Secret Service agent.

Stuart has a bit of a drinking problem and it probably got him in trouble in his job. With Clancy, I felt like he was a Secret Service agent under Kennedy, who hated J. Edgar Hoover's FBI and a lot of times they were at odds with each other. So in my mind, there was something that happened where on behalf of Kennedy, Clancy did something that ran afoul of Hoover, and instead of getting rid of him they buried him in the motor pool.

They've both been relegated to the motor pool for things we don't cover in the story, but they muffed up and this is their sentence. They're no longer in the field. So when they get the opportunity to do something directly for the President, they jump at it.

Did any historical horror comics influence the style of *Ultimate Night of the Living* Dead?

Jeff McComsey: I'm a big fan of the EC Comics and all that kind of stuff from back in the day, different horror comics like *Eerie*. They [Double Take] have handled *Ultimate Night of* the Living Dead really well so that it will blend in nicely with those. The idea is to—after those first miniseries—jump ahead, so I think it's also

going to change—not drastically—but there will be some slight style changes that will help reinforce that jump.

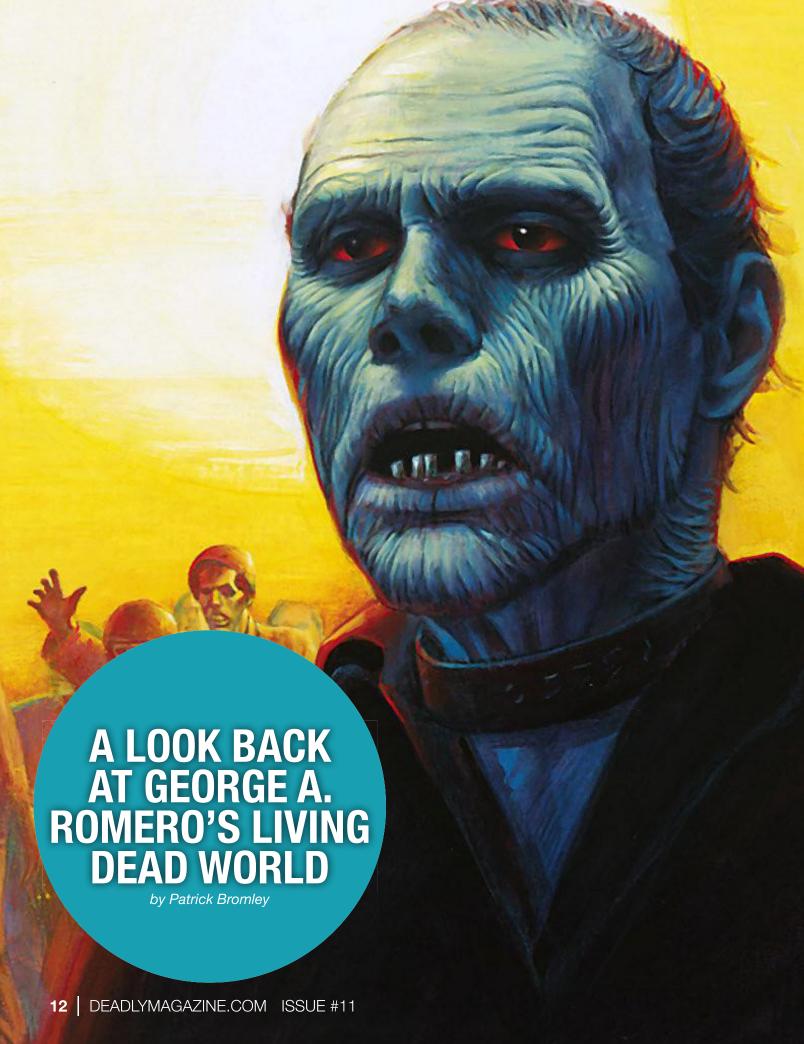
What would you tell people who enjoy Romero's Night of the Living Dead but are hesitant to revisit that world in *Ultimate* Night of the Living Dead?

Jeff McComsey: If they enjoyed the original film, there are so many aspects that we've exploded out here that they can play with and

see if they like. The thing that I like the most about the original Night of the Living Dead is the scene at the end where you've got all the news reports and all these pictures of people in Washington D.C. and the interviews with all of the generals and scientists—I love that kind of stuff and they just tease it out to you in Night of the Living Dead. In this series, we really expand upon it and give you the background.







In their 1993 essay "Monster Fan 2000," authors Lint Hatcher and Rod Bennett make a case that George A. Romero's 1968 debut feature film, Night of the Living Dead, is the most influential horror film of all time—or, at the very least, changed the face of the genre for every movie that came after it. Unlike the horror films of the past in which monsters were created by science experiments gone wrong, atomic radiation, or ancient gypsy curses, there is no explanation for the legion of undead that rise from their graves to feast on human flesh. True love does not find a way and the good guys do not win. The film is bleak and nihilistic in a manner that has since become commonplace but which was revolutionary at the time. This was the introduction of what film scholar Steve

Neale dubbed "paranoid horror," a changeover in the genre identified by, among other things, the failure of human intervention and the introduction of an internal threat versus external ones.

For this reason and a host of others, there may be no more important horror franchise than Romero's "Living Dead" series, though even calling it a franchise is somewhat misleading. Yes, Romero has written and directed six zombie films over the course of the last five decades, but none of them are proper sequels to one another. Each movie stands on its own; each movie has something new to say about the period in which Romero made it.

Made on the cheap by Romero and his friends (who were previously making commercials and industrial films) because they wanted to shoot a feature that was commercially viable, the director didn't realize at the time that Night of the Living Dead would change the horror genre forever and invent the modern zombie-now the biggest monster phenomenon in contemporary pop culture. All the rules we horror fans associate with zombies. whether it's their need to feast on the flesh of the living or that the only way to kill them is with a shot to the head, has its genesis in Night of the Living Dead.

Though Romero hadn't written the lead with any specific race in mind, casting Duane Jones as Ben at a time when it was rare for black actors to play the lead role in an otherwise white



cast gave Night unexpected resonance in commenting on racial tensions and violence. It also began Romero's trend of casting black actors and/ or women as the heroes of his zombie films—a tradition he would carry through the mid-2000s. Night is an angry, paranoid, timeless classic of then-unparalleled intensity. Like all of Romero's zombie films to follow, Night establishes that the living dead are only guilty of doing what comes naturally to them. It's the living people who are the real monsters.

While every horror fan has his or her pick for the best in the series-Romero himself cites Day as his personal favorite-1978's Dawn of the Dead lends itself most easily to the title of Romero's masterpiece. Building on the relentless intensity of Night of the Living Dead and adding a thick streak of savagely funny social commentary, Dawn is a big, splashy comic book—a zombie epic told on a much larger scale while still maintaining the claustrophobic desperation of the original. The setting itself may be considerably larger—this time a vacant shopping mall instead of a farmhouse—but our inhabitant heroes are no less trapped and no less alone.

It's hard to pick a favorite moment in a movie so packed with iconic images, but one that has always stood out features two of the four main heroes (Ken Foree and Scott Reiniger) visiting the mall's bank and still taking the time to walk through the velvet ropes. Yes, the world may be in the throes of a zombie apocalypse, but we are all still creatures of habit. It's what makes Romero's consumerist commentary so brutally funny—the zombies return to the mall because. as the screenplay says, it was 'an important place in their lives." While much of the social commentary in Night was the result of happenstance, Dawn marks the first time Romero used a zombie story as a way of addressing a larger concern about contemporary society and the human condition. It would not be the last.

Dawn also sees the addition of makeup effects legend Tom Savini to Romero's crew, both behind the camera and in front of it as the leader of the biker gang who invades the mall in the third act. His gore gags are groundbreaking, and though he had a few credits to his name when he was hired to work on *Dawn* (including a previous collaboration with Romero on *Martin*), it was these zombie effects that made Savini a household name and led to more work on films such as Friday the 13th, Maniac, and The Burning.

Savini's greatest effects work—and still the high-water mark for gore effects on film came when he reteamed with Romero for the final film in his first zombie trilogy, 1985's Day of the Dead. The story behind Day is now the stuff of horror legend: Romero wrote a massive zombie epic but could not get the funding to make it unless he cut down the violence to receive an R rating. Romero, wanting his film to go out unrated, opted to scale back the scope of the film and moved the story underground, where scientists and the military were living in disharmony while hiding out from the zombies that had now inherited the earth.

Romero confronts the militarism and class divide of the Reagan '80s, essentially giving up on mankind by film's end: the contained human conflict of the first two films has now been writ large, while the most sympathetic character is actually a zombie named Bub (Sherman Howard), who is being "taught" by a mad scientist. Day is arguably the bleakest and most nihilistic of all Romero's zombie films: it's also the one that has aged the best, getting better with every passing year.

For some fans, Romero is considered the George Lucas of horror: he created a trilogy of classic films which changed the face of the genre forever, then years later returned with a second trilogy that was less well-received. But whereas Lucas' second set of Star Wars films close off his universe, answering unasked questions and making his world feel smaller by tying every corner together, Romero's 2000s trilogy expands his living dead world further and brings the series into a new millennium. These films don't diminish the legacy of his first three zombie movies. If anything, they make it richer.

Land of the Dead, Romero's return to the zombie genre he created after a 20-year absence and his first (and only) made for a major studio, is the director's examination of post-9/11 fears and the increasing class disparity in America. The wealthiest 1% have barricaded themselves in towering high-rises while the rest of the country is forced to fight for scraps amidst the zombie apocalypse below. Though he was once again forced to make concessions on the film (Romero had written the lead role for a black actor but wasn't allowed to cast one, so he cast a black actor as "Big Daddy," the lead zombie: the film also had to go out in theaters with an R rating), Romero's commentary on the world is as bleak and savage as ever. Here, the ruling class simply ignores the problem while both the rest of the population and the zombies themselves organize an insurgency. In many ways,

1990s. While that would have undoubtedly changed its thematic concerns, it would have meant that Romero made a zombie film for each of the last six decades. No other horror filmmaker can come close to touching that.

Two years after Land, a seemingly reenergized Romero released Diary of the Dead, in which a college film crew captures the early days of the zombie apocalypse as part of a documentary project. This is the film referred to as Romero's "found footage" film, a label that's not entirely accurate: it does use the firstperson POV aesthetic, but the conceit is that the footage has been edited together as a finished documentary, not rescued from the cameras of

and the introduction of some dodgy CGI effects, there are too many good ideas in the film for it to be written off or lost in the "found footage" shuffle of the 2000s. The conceit may feel overly familiar, but Romero being Romero, it's brilliantly used to make a larger point: every major event or tragedy for the rest of time, whether it's a plane crashing into the World Trade Center on September 11th, 2001, or the outbreak of a zombie apocalypse, will be documented not by traditional media but by regular citizens armed with cameras. It's these cameras, Diary argues, that act as a filter for reality—things exist only to be filmed and because they are filmed. The world is no longer experienced firsthand, but through the removal of a lens and a screen.



Land predicts major events like the economic collapse and the Occupy Wall Street movement just a few years later.

Perhaps the greatest tragedy of Land of the Dead is that it wasn't released in the

a dead or vanished film crew.

While *Diary* contains some of Romero's most thuddingly obvious dialogue ("Mornings... and mirrors. I despise them. Mornings and mirrors only serve to terrify old men.")

By 2010, Romero was expressing frustration that he couldn't get a film financed unless it had zombies in it—he had become trapped by the monster of his own making. So he decided to make a Western and incorporated zombies as

a way of smuggling his true intentions into Survival of the Dead, Romero's sixth and, for the time being, final film in his zombie cycle. An old fashioned Hatfields-versus-McCoys story transported to an island off the coast of Delaware, Survival is the first movie of the six to directly follow the one that precedes it, focusing on a few soldiers (led by Alan Van Sprang) who appear for one scene in Diary.

Survival is also the first film in the series in which the zombies are mostly a nuisance, acting as little more than a threatening distraction while two camps of humans attempt to work out their problems. These characters, like Romero himself, have accepted their fate. Zombies are a necessary part of the equation but not their primary concern, perfectly capturing Romero's approach to Survival of the Dead. The zombies are there because they have to be, but are no longer the story he's interested in telling.

By 2015, AMC's *The Walking Dead* has become one of the largest-rated series in cable history. It owes everything to George A. Romero. Not only is it utilizing his established "rules" of zombies, but it even repeats many of Romero's

exact images: a human torso torn apart by zombie hands in Dawn, or a pack of undead feasting on a horse in Survival. It's all just further proof of the influence Romero's zombie series has had and continues to have in the American zeitgeist. He did, as "Monster Fan 2000" posits, revolutionize horror in 1968, dropping a flesh-eating bomb on the genre. But he has continued to reinvent the zombie movie for almost 50 vears, in the process creating the most important and lasting series in horror history—one with guts and a whole lot of brains.





PRESENTS

RELEASES

ING HOME THE BEST OF HORROR

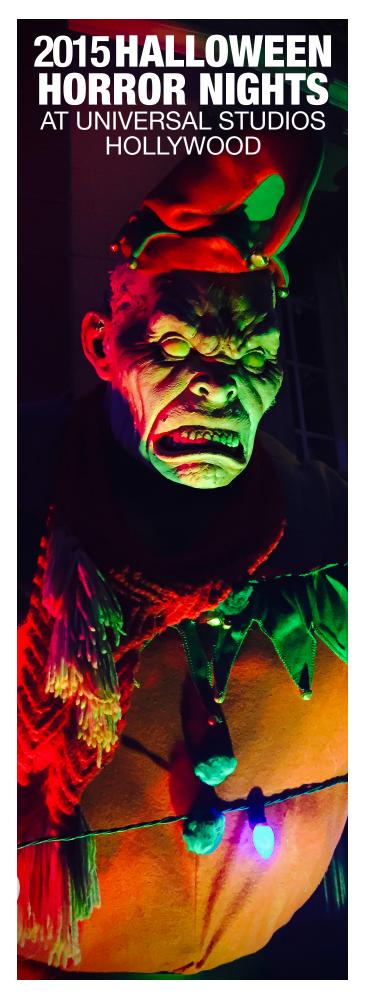
- We Are Still Here (Dark Sky Films, Blu-ray/DVD)
- Tremors 5: Bloodlines (Universal Home Entertainment, Blu-ray/DVD)
- Insidious: Chapter 3 (Sony Pictures Home Entertainment, Blu-ray/DVD)
- Burnt Offerings (Kino Lorber, Blu-ray/DVD)
- Sharknado 3: Oh Hell No! (Asylum/Gaiam, Blu-ray/DVD)
- Bram Stoker's Dracula Supreme Cinema Series (Sony Pictures Home Entertainment, Blu-ray)
- Taste the Blood of Dracula (Warner Home Video, Blu-ray)
- Dracula Has Risen from the Grave (Warner Home Video, Blu-ray)
- Air (Sony Pictures Home Entertainment, Blu/DVD)
- The Mummy (Warner Home Video, Blu-ray)
- Eli Roth Presents The Stranger (Scream Factory/IFC Films, Blu-ray/DVD)
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- Final Girl (Nasser, Blu-ray/DVD)
- Gravy (Scream Factory, Blu-ray/DVD)
- The Brood (Criterion Collection, Blu-ray/DVD)
- The City of Lost Children 20th Anniversary Amazon Exclusive (Sony Pictures Home Entertainment, Blu-ray)
- The Gallows (Warner Home Video, Blu-ray/DVD)
- Mosquito: 20th Anniversary (Synapse Films, Blu-ray/DVD)



BLU-RAY & DVD RELEASES

BRING HOME THE BEST OF HORROR

- Manos: The Hands of Fate (Synapse Films, Blu-ray/DVD)
- The Phantom of the Opera: Two-Disc Collection (Kino Lorber, Blu-ray)
- Count Yorga, Vampire (Twilight Time, Blu-ray)
- The Return of Count Yorga (Scream Factory, Blu-ray)
- Jurassic World (Universal Studios Home Entertainment, Blu-ray/DVD)
- Tales from the Crypt Presents: Demon Knight (Scream Factory, Blu-ray)
- The Oblong Box (Kino Lorber, Blu-ray/DVD)
- Z for Zachariah (Lionsgate, Blu-ray/DVD)
- Tales from the Crypt Presents: Bordello of Blood (Scream Factory, Blu-ray)
- The Vatican Tapes (Lionsgate, Blu-ray/DVD)
- The Larry Fessenden Collection (Scream Factory, Blu-ray)
- Army of Darkness Collector's Edition (Scream Factory, Blu-ray)
- The Gift (Universal Studios Home Entertainment, Blu-ray/DVD)
- The Fifth Element Cinema Series (Sony Pictures Home Entertainment, Blu-ray)
- Dr. Terrors House of Horrors (Olive Films, Blu-ray/DVD)
- Them! (Warner Home Video, Blu-ray)
- The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms (Warner Home Video, Blu-ray)
- Stephen King's Sometimes They Come Back (Olive Films, Blu-ray/DVD)
- Flying Disc Man From Mars (Olive Films, Blu-ray/DVD)
- The Human Centipede 3 (Scream Factory, Blu-ray)



EVENT REPORT & PHOTO GALLERY

– by Heather Wixson *-*

On Friday, September 18th, Universal Studios Hollywood kicked off the haunting season in grand fashion with their annual Halloween Horror Nights, which celebrates everything we love about this time of year-monsters, mayhem, unexpected frights, and ghouls waiting to terrorize you at every turn. This is my seventh year attending HHN and I can say this may very well have been one of the best years yet, featuring creepy creations by designer John Murdy and his entire team that worked tirelessly to bring all the gruesome festivities to life.

While I enjoyed everything about the experience at Universal Studios overall, the three standout attractions for me at this year's Halloween Horror Nights were the Halloween, Crimson Peak and This is the End 3D mazes, and all for very different reasons. With the *Halloween* house, attendees get immersed into the world of the first three films from the series, which was an enjoyable twist for me, especially since Halloween III generally exists outside the Michael Myers universe. Doctor Loomis is also a central figure to the maze, as his famous "Devil's Eyes" monologue greets you at the entrance, with his epic showdown against Myers featured later on as well. You also get tormented by "monster kids" who wear the iconic Season of the Witch masks, and one of my favorite bits involved walking through a funhouse-style maze of mirrors stacked with endless Michaels from start to finish.

The Crimson Peak maze overall was a thing of horrific beauty. I've managed to stay away from most of the trailers and teasers for Guillermo del Toro's upcoming ghost story, so thankfully the Horror Nights attraction didn't really give away too much in regards to the details of the plot. Some of the creatures were so magnificently twisted-looking, though, that I really just wanted to spend hours wandering around and I thought the design of the actual maze itself was stunning, dripping with a creepy gothic aesthetic. *Crimson Peak* cannot get here fast enough.

The biggest surprise for me, though, was the This is the End 3D maze, which did a fantastic job of blending together laughs and real scares, something that's not easy to do with haunted attractions. I'm a big fan of the film itself, and Murdy and his collaborators found some really clever ways of using specific set pieces from the film to throw attendees right in the middle of the apocalyptic chaos from *This is* the End, offering a few chuckles to boot (a personal favorite moment of mine was the guy dressed like Craig Robinson, who greets you at the Pearly Gates with a "welcome to heaven, mutha f----s," which had me cracking up). On a side note, there is a gimp included in the maze as well, but to my dismay, it was not Channing Tatum.

This year's *The Walking Dead* attraction was also a blast, as the maze is probably one of the biggest featured at Halloween Horror Nights

and effectively took us through some of the major events from season five. A nice bonus to this maze was that before you even entered Terminus, there was a gaggle of walkers positioned outside the entrance, so you had to be on your toes even before entering. The *Insidious* maze was also really cool but sadly, it was the worst-paced event of the night as we ended up being jammed in each room with at least 20 other folks at every turn, making it hard to enjoy all the creepiness going on inside.

The Purge Terror Tram was another highlight for me at the 2015 Horror Nights, as you are forced to survive by making your way through the backlot area, fending off hordes of Founding Father supporters on the hunt for new victims for the annual purging. This year's Scare Zones were also a lot of fun—Dark Christmas was an area I really dug from 2014 and due to popular demand, it was brought back again this year (much like last year's Alien vs. Predator maze), and I thought the concepts behind both the Exterminatorz and Corpz areas were really well-executed, too.





If you're in the Los Angeles area or are planning on being out here sometime before Halloween, I cannot recommend Horror Nights enough. By and large, this is truly one of the best years for the event and some of the tweaks Murdy and his cohorts have made to this year's celebration make it a truly spectacular time all-around. I do always recommend picking up Front of Line passes since the wait time for general admission can eat up the bulk of your evening (most wait times last night hovered around

the 80-minute mark) and getting through the lines faster only ensures that you can enjoy all the mayhem for yourself without wasting too much of your time.

For information on the 2015 Halloween Horror Nights at Universal Studios Hollywood or to grab your tickets early visit:

www.halloweenhorrornights.com





THE DARK HALF

by Patrick Bromley

In the vast pantheon of Stephen King movie adaptations, there tends to be a pretty clear demarcation between those films widely accepted as "good" and the rest, which are either dismissed as being bad or else forgotten altogether. The accepted wisdom is that George A. Romero's 1993 adaptation of *The Dark Half* falls into that latter camp. That's a mistake.

Despite being one of the greatest horror filmmakers of all time, Romero has never had an easy career. He redefined horror several times over with his first two *Living Dead* films but was cheated out of the royalties for directing one of the most successful independent films ever made. He had big commercial success working with a major studio on *Creepshow*, but he couldn't get his next movie financed the way he wanted

to make it. The late '80s-'90s were particularly tough for Romero, with two difficult experiences making movies for the failing Orion Pictures and project after project falling through. The Dark Half is the second of a pair of films Romero made for Orion, shot in 1991 but shelved for two vears as a result of the studio's financial woes. Is this what unfairly put the stink of failure on the film? Or were Stephen King adaptations simply out of vogue by the early '90s?

Whatever the case. The Dark Half has never gotten a fair shake despite being one of Romero's classiest and most commercial pictures. He captures the overcast autumnal skies of King's New England better than most who came before him and gives the film a very literary feel — fitting, as it's a movie entirely about the writing process, showing who an author sometimes becomes in the process of creating immersive fiction. Timothy Hutton plays against type as both nice guy author

Thad Beaumont and his "dark half," George Stark—a former pseudonym turned corporeal being looking to survive by forcing Beaumont to take up his pen name again. The novel on which Romero's screenplay is based was one of King's most autobiographical, as he had published a handful of books under the pseudonym Richard Bachman.

As an adaptation of King's novel, The Dark Half is among the most literal of films made from the author's work. There are a handful of minor changes—the gender of Thad's colleague is switched, a character who survives the novel is killed onscreen, and George Stark's appearance has been altered to accommodate the double casting of Hutton—but they're mostly cosmetic; it remains, for the most part, entirely faithful. That means there's less of Romero on display than in most of his films. The angry social commentary is absent, as is Romero's wicked sense of humor. It's a well-directed



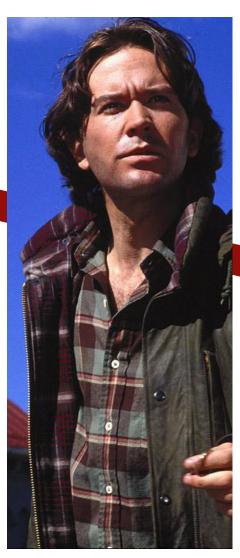
film—moody, atmospheric, and downright classicaldemonstrating that Romero had the stuff to make it as a mainstream studio filmmaker. He just didn't want that for himself.

Though he won an Oscar for the first film in which he ever appeared (1980's Ordinary People), Timothy Hutton has always been underrated as an actor. His work in *The Dark* Half is among his best. It's not because he plays a dual role, either. Though Hutton's portrayal of Stark is colorful and threatening, the character is mostly obvious as a villain. It's instead Hutton's work as Beaumont that impresses

the most: he's likable but increasingly desperate, decent with enough of an edge to be capable of conjuring up the kind of darkness to create a George Stark. The stunt of Hutton's double casting works well, too; though written by King to be different types. Romero understood that for the conceit to be effective visually, we needed to see them as two sides of the same coin.

Visually, *The Dark Half* may look like atypical Romero due to its slick studio polish, but it's a Romero film through and through. His work has primarily examined the dark side of human nature, and The

Dark Half takes that idea and makes it literal. It's rough in spots—Romero himself has expressed dissatisfaction with the effects added to the climax after an early test screening but it remains an exceptionally well-crafted film that faithfully brings King's prose to life in a way so many adaptations of his work fail to do. As we get further away from the 1990s—a decade notoriously difficult for horror-there's hope that *The Dark Half* starts to be recognized as both one of the better Stephen King adaptations and one of George Romero's most overlooked films-maybe even his most.







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5 QUESTIONS

WITH

THE WALKING DEAD'S ANDREW LINCOLN

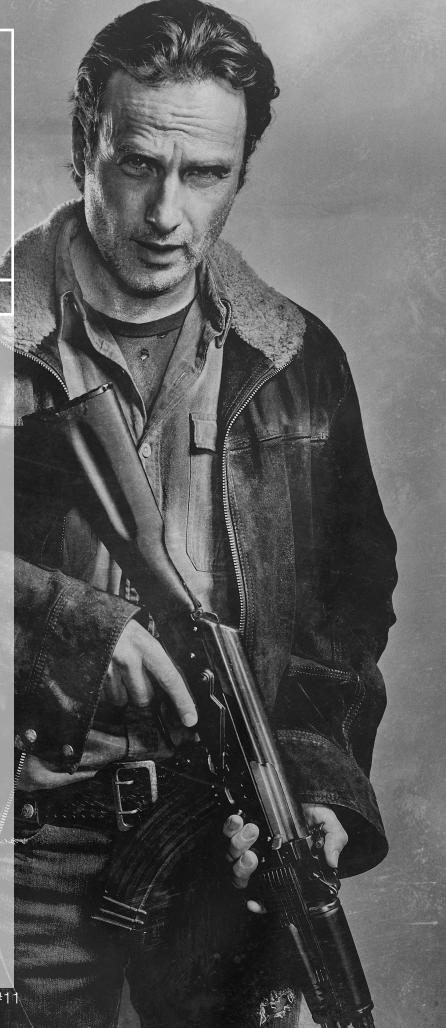
by Jonathan James

I know fans are really excited about the return of Morgan. Since the first episode they have been waiting to see how his story would play out, and now he seems to be a big player in this season. Can you talk about working with Lennie and spending more time with him this year?

Andrew Lincoln: Yeah, it's wonderful. We have such an extraordinary relationship. He was there for the first ever episode and every 18 months he seems to pop up for an episode, kill it, and then leave again.

There is something incredibly powerful about having two men with such history, and he is a great counterpoint to Rick. This is a man who is incredibly independent, strong, determined and confident, and seems to be at complete odds with Rick's ideology.

Having more space to work with Lennie is such a joy, he's a phenomenal actor. What he has done with this role is magnificent, and you'll see this season that blanks will get filled in and a lot of the dots will be joined as to what has happened to this guy, where he's from, and how he's reached this enlightenment.



Every season has a different theme, usually a different location, and a different enemy. What can you say about this season's underlying theme? What differentiates this season from the past seasons?

Andrew Lincoln: Outside of Alexandria, we face three or four huge threats—completely different threats. You have a very good indication about one of them, but this season is also a very hopeful season. It's more hopeful than I think we have ever been. It almost feels like everybody's eyes have been so insular, and then we suddenly start lifting our gaze up to the horizon. The show opens up in a way that we have never explored before which is very, very exciting.

The Season 6 premiere has more walkers than we've previously seen in a single episode. What can you tell me about filming this walkerfilled episode?

Andrew Lincoln: Yeah, it was thrilling. They did a very intriguing thing with Rick, and that's why he was so much a part of it in pretty much every scene. It was an endurance test because it was a huge episode with a lot of zombies. I spent most of my time running around through the woods, seven days solid, sweating. And Norman just gets the coolest shot of the episode and that only took him minutes. That's pretty much the story of me and Norman's relationship.

What I love about this show is that the cast keeps reinventing itself. It's still the most painful aspect of what is the greatest job of my career to date, that we lose such great friends and good characters, but the added bonus is that the show just keeps changing. As with locations, and you'll see some new locations this season as well.







A LOOK AT JANINE LISTER'S HELLRAISER CUPCAKES

by Jonathan James

Looking for something to really set your Halloween party offerings apart from the pack? Janine Lister has such sights to show you...

Combining her love of horror movies and cake decorating, Janine has created a set of Hellraiser cupcakes that are worth risking a visit from the Cenobites to obtain.

"I set up my sinister selection to provide cakes for those of us out there who want a change from the mainstream cakes and want macabre, bloody and, as people have said, "sick" cakes.

I decided to make Hellraiser cupcakes because when I was younger it was one of the films which scared me and introduced me to horror. The imagery in Hellraiser perfectly adapts itself to cupcake design and is easily identifiable. I have previously made cupcakes for many other films, which were simple images from the films on discs of icing atop a delicious layer of buttercream, but I wanted to make something even more unique."

Janine was kind enough to share one of her recipes, so you can make your own Pinhead cupcakes at home. As she said, making a Pinhead cupcake "is a little simpler than you would think, but is extremely effective."

- 1) Taking your favourite cupcakes (handmade or bought) and some buttercream, spread a thin layer of buttercream over the top of the cupcake.
- 2) For extra flavour, you can also fill the cupcake with more buttercream.
- 3) Roll a thin layer of fondant and cut a disc the same size as your cupcake.
- 4) Place the disc (or as my son says, "dicks") on the top of the cupcake and smooth to the edges to create a nice domed cupcake with no cake showing.
- 5) Emboss the icing with squares to make a grid.
- 6) For the nails, roll fondant icing (ideally colored grey) into thin sticks. Make some small discs to glue onto the end of the sticks and leave them to dry and harden.
- 7) After a few hours, the nails will be hard enough to push into the cupcakes at the corner of all the squares. I painted my nails with edible silver paint to give a better finish.

Thankfully, this isn't the last we've seen of Janine's "sick" creations and she isn't just focusing on Cenobites:

"Earlier this year I had the honour of meeting and presenting a Leatherface bust cake to Gunnar Hansen himself. This cake was signed by Hansen, Tom Savini, Bill Moseley, Caroline Munro, Ken Foree, Martine Beswick, and Dani Thompson. Hopefully, this interest will grow and there will be more cakes and cupcakes to appeal to the horror fanatics in all of us."

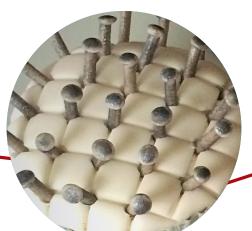
To learn more about Janine's creations, including her "sick" cakes, visit:

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http://janinemakessinistercakes.weebly.com/

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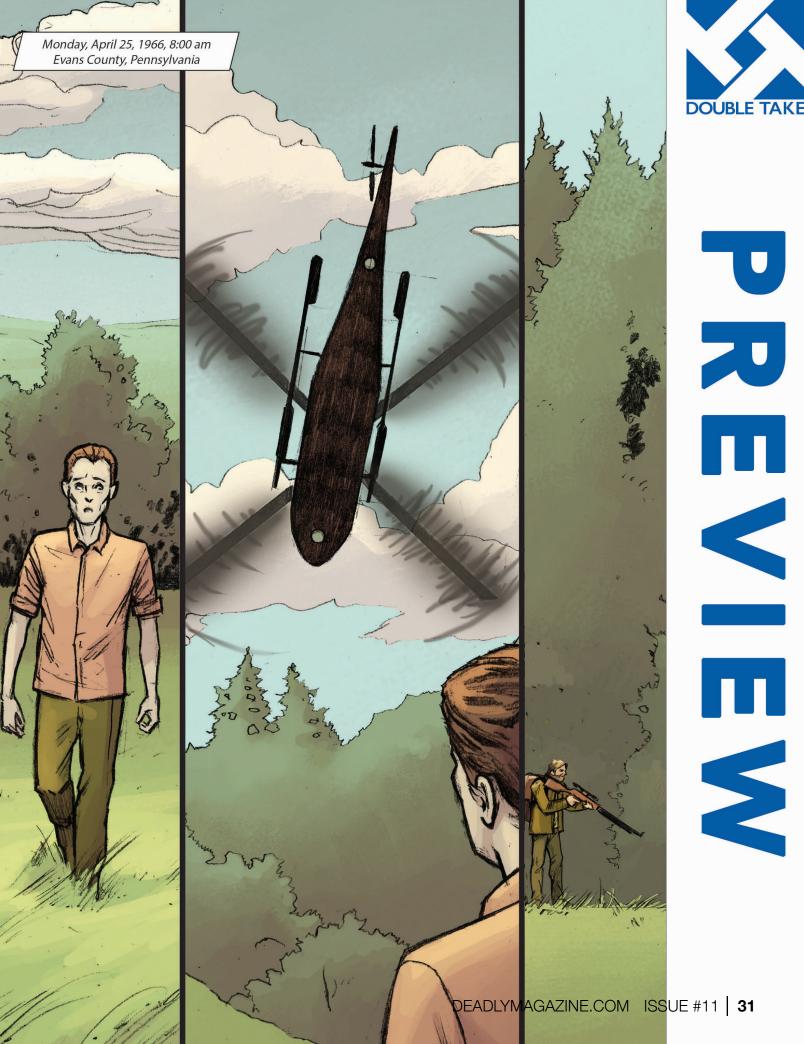




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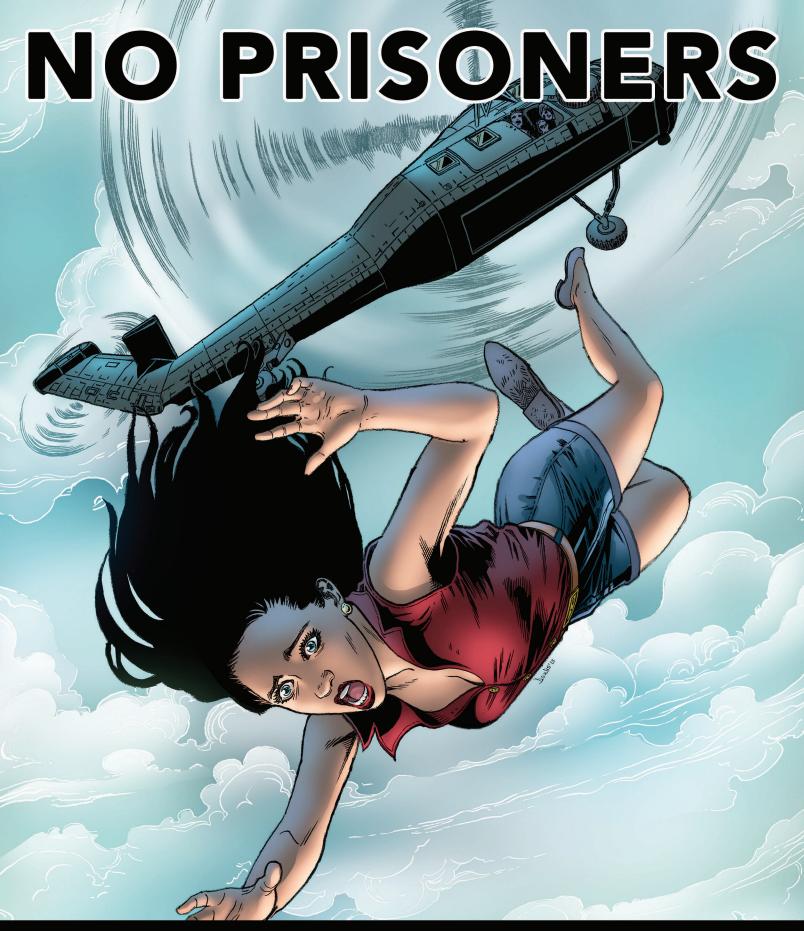


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