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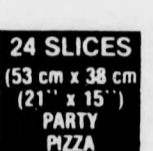
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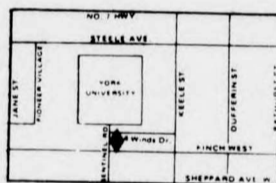
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Living Dead's sequel should return to grave

By NORMAN WILNER

Things were so simple in 1968. If a reanimated corpse came at you, all you had to do was shoot it in the head. Destroy the brain, George Romero said, and you destroy the ghoul.

In 1985, Dan O'Bannon changed the rules: the brain didn't die. Zombies created by the mythical chemical 234 Trioxin were virtually unstoppable; the only way to destroy them was to burn them, but that just released more of the chemical into the atmosphere.

And now, in 1988, writer-director Ken Weiderhorn changes the rules again. It doesn't work.

The zombies in Weiderhorn's new film *Return of the Living Dead Part II*, are comical walking deadheads, and they seem more interested in the 20 Minute Workout than in eating brains. There's an inherent humour in zombies, to be sure (how scary can something be when its arms fall off as it reaches for you?) but with *Return II*, the horror is secondary to the comedy.

When Lorimar Pictures bought the sequel rights to *The Return of the Living Dead* two years ago, they decided that the one thing that made the punkers-vs-zombies epic so memorable was its sense of dark—if not disgusting—humour. The heads of the company started looking for a director who could carry on that style of filmmaking.

When I heard about their decision, my mind filled with potential candidates. Woody Allen, in a change-of-pace role? Spielberg? Perhaps even Romero himself, who created the *Living Dead* series with the original *Night of the Living Dead* (and its sequels, *Dawn of the Dead* and *Day of the Dead*) back in the '60s? Or possibly even O'Bannon again, in a return to the *Return*?

No. The Lorimar people went to someone completely unqualified to work on such a hallowed film as a *Living Dead* sequel. They hired Ken Weiderhorn, whose biggest credit prior to *Return II* had been *Meatballs Part II*. Would someone please tell me what summer camp acne-comedies have to do with rampaging, brain-eating zombies?

It pains me—it really does, 'cause I'd had such high hopes for it, to deliver the autopsy report on *Return of the Living Dead Part II*.

It stinks. It really stinks. The sense of fun so evident in *Return I* is utterly

lost here. The performances are all below par, with the exception of two *Return I* veterans, Thom Mathews and James Karen. (Fans of the *Living Dead* series will remember Mathews and Karen as Freddy and Frank, the Laurel-and-Hardy workers at the Uneeda Medical Supply Warehouse who spent most of *Return I* dying horribly and returning as zombies after exposure to the reanimating chemical. At the start of *Return II*, Mathews and Karen are exposed to the reanimating chemical, spend most of the film dying horribly, and return as zombies! What an innovative way to bring back familiar faces!)

Okay, okay. In deference to director Weiderhorn, there are some noticeable innovations in *Return II*. The most noticeable one is the budget. The original *Return* was made on something very close to a shoestring; some reports have it as just over a million dollars. *Return II* ran six million, and somehow manages to look cheaper than its predecessor. After Weiderhorn's trumpeting about more money, the look and feel of the film are a staggering let-down. The make-up effects are uniformly bad (with the sole exception of a neatly severed head) and the editing horrible (two major characters simply disappear from the proceedings, with no hint as to their fate).

Most ludicrous of all, though, is the Final Solution for the dispatching of the zombies. Whereas the resolution of the first *Return* was somewhat drastic (the nuking of Louisville, Kentucky), *Return II* offers a much simpler answer: the zombies can be electrocuted. Remember when I said Weiderhorn had changed the rules? Well, there it is . . . nobody ever said they could be zapped, and since the brain runs on something very close to electrical current (I'm a film student, not a biology major . . . sorry), why should a massive dose of AC power take the buggers out? If anything, it should have shifted them into overdrive!

With all of these lapses in story and logic, added to the idiocy of putting a twelve-year-old boy in the central role of the film, it's not a surprise that *Return of the Living Dead Part II* is such a turkey.

Of course, it's not hard to dislike a film that glorifies in the slow electrical death of a kiddie zombie.

ARTS CALENDAR

GALLERIES

"The Diary Exhibition/Journaux Intimes" an exhibition of diaristic works by 16 contemporary Canadian artists. AGYU (N145 Ross). Until Mar. 18.

The OCA Exchange Show at the IDA Gallery (102 Fine arts Bldg.) Until Feb. 26.

The Alumni Homecoming Show at the IDA Gallery (102 Fine Arts Bldg.) from Feb. 29 to March 1.

DANCE

Dancer's Forum with guest artist Paul Andre Fortier, artistic director of Montreal Danse. Studio One (Fine Arts Bldg.) from 2-4 pm on Feb. 26.

MUSIC

Student Recital Series features soprano Deborah Bilokrely at McLaughlin Hall (Dacary). All welcome on Feb. 25 at 7:15 pm.

Percussion Arts Society Convention, York's music dept. hosts a day long event of clinics and an evening concert on Feb. 28. Activities begin at 9:30 am and end with an 8 pm concert which features T. Visvanathan on flute and Prof. Sankaran on Mrdangam. All welcome to McLaugh-

lin Hall for the concert. Clinics will take place in McLaughlin College, 2nd floor.

FILM

Dept. of Humanities presents "The Man in the White Suit" at Nat Taylor Cinema (Central Sq. N.) at 7:30 pm on Feb. 26. Tickets at the Dept. of Humanities office.

"Small Happiness: Women of a Chinese Village" and "Global Assembly Line," two films about lives of women in the free trade zones will be screened at Oakdale Jr. High School Cafetorium (315 Grandravine Dr.) on March 2 at 7 pm. Co-sponsored by Atkinson college. Free admission.

Calumet College Fine Arts Association presents a foreign film series on "The Arts: Films about Art and the Artists." Films T.B.A. in the Calumet Common Room at 6 pm on March 2.

Hey, if you've got an arts event that you want everyone on campus to know about, drop us a few lines outlining what, when, and where your event is happening in the Arts Calendar envelope in the Excalibur office (111 Central Square)