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THE DEAD DON'T DIE

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If you love Jim Jarmusch's films, you will not be disappointed in his unique version of Zombie land. It's not that he turns over gravestones to discover anything new in this genre; it's where he takes it tongue and cheek. Remember, Jarmusch is a master of cinema verite, neither quirky, nor indie. He's serving up reality as horrifyingly as it can be. So how does his zombie become a symbol of today's humanity? The unreal becomes real.



In dead-pan style, Bill Murray as Chief Cliff Robertson and Adam Driver as his clairvoyant deputy Ronnie Peterson, must respond to a peculiar shake-up of the earth thrown off its axis by fracking. It never gets dark, night becomes day. Normally zombie flicks begin in the dark with the animated undead reaching out of their graves under some curse or voodoo magic, as they were first invented in Haitian folk lore, grabbing at our ankles with voracious gnashing.

In Jarmusch's version there are two ironies. One is that the living are dead-pan inactive, unable to react to what's going on around them - comfortably numb.

The second irony is that these zombies not only consume flesh, they return to their favorite stores on a shopping spree - whether it's for a music track, a video, tools at a hardware store, or cell phones.

There's a perfect role for Steve Buscemi as Frank, who sits in the diner with his "Make America White Again" hat next to his buddy Hank, played by Danny Glover, as if to say they are bound together through a standard racial divide that unites them oddly. After being consumed and turned into zombies, Cliff and Ronnie must behead their old pals as a matter of routine. Tom Waits as the hairy troll Hermit Bob, narrates an end-of-world global feast through binoculars from his bush in the surrounding forest, with pithy comments on the subjects before him as they consume each other. Quickly we learn the only way to kill a zombie is to "kill the head." And so an all-out head-lobbing begins with hedge clippers, machetes, and clouds of dust spewing forth from the headless. The dynamic duo in the style of Butch Cassidy and the Sundance kid decide, when covered by ghouls in their police car, to come out blazing machetes and shot gun, until they are overwhelmed. Chloe Sevigny, as officer Mindy Morrison, relays messages from the jail house and is perhaps the only one unable to respond in deadpan fashion. But truly horrified she ends up a juicy flesh pile. Only Tilda Swinton as Zelda, the Samurai mortician from outer space is air lifted by a UFO back home after swiftly beheading everything in her path and leaving this planet to the stupid humans that inhabit it.

When Chief Cliff questions deputy Ronnie on how he knows so much about how all of this is going to end, Ronnie admits dead pan, that it's all in the script. For a moment the fourth wall is broken and we get on board Jarmusch's mystery train through Zombie Land all the way to the end of the world with Tom Waits narrating our own demise through a cannibalistic shopping spree like it was a mad house orgy of hungry flesh eating zombies that we have all turned into.