

Spate of Living Dead Flicks May Prove Dracula's Lost his Bite

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Are zombies the new vampires? Not exactly, but they could be the country's monster crush du jour, says Texas Tech University pop-culture guru Rob Weiner.

Not that horror buffs don't still love spending quality time with Nosferatu's spawn; it's just that vampires have gone glam in recent decades, given a sexy makeover by the likes of Stephanie Meyer – author of the popular Twilight series – and Francis Ford Coppola. They're more sex than scare anymore.

To put it simply, Dracula's lost a bit of his bite.

Meanwhile, America's zombies are faster and angrier than ever, thanks to movies such as "28 Days Later" and the 2004 remake of George Romero's "Dawn of the Dead."

So, in an era where moviegoers are craving darker themes and plotlines, perhaps it shouldn't come as a surprise that there's been more brain eating and less blood sucking in theatres.

"Vampires have been portrayed as being sensual and sexy – appealing," Weiner said. "They've lost a bit of their edge. But zombies? I can't think of anything more terrifying."

Whether born of voodoo, radiation or a leaked virus, these swarms of mindless eating machines may symbolize deep-seated fears of mob

mentality or impending apocalypse. After all, they can sniff out the outcasts hiding in their midst while their very bite perpetuates their infection.

Yet Weiner, who describes himself as a “slow zombie” man, notes that this current crop of more gruesome flicks is nothing new.

The Italians have been doing it since the ‘80s, re-envisioning the living dead just as Sergio Leone did the western. He points to such bloody thrillers as “Seven Doors of Death” and “Zombie Holocaust” as examples.

“What the Italians did, they took an American genre and turned it on its head. They made it better,” Weiner said. “The movies were darker, grittier. It’s much the same thing that happened with the Spaghetti Westerns.”

Weiner is a Texas Tech author, librarian and instructor with expertise on topics ranging from the Grateful Dead to American presidents in film.

He can speak about horror in movies, literature and comic books – his forthcoming book about Captain America actually has an essay on zombies in Marvel Comics and Colonel America, which is the zombie version of the star-spangled hero.

He can also discuss on a range of Halloween-themed topics including Alfred Hitchcock and the sinister imagery employed by metal bands such as Black Sabbath and Iron Maiden.

Provided by Texas Tech University

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