



THE FILMS OF GEORGE A ROMERO

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The allegorically-inclined George Andrew Romero was born in New York in 1940 and began making films as a child with his uncle's 8mm camera. In 1957 he moved to Pittsburgh to study commercial art but was soon drawn back to filmmaking, working as a runner on Hitchcock's *North By Northwest* and dropping out of college to start a commercials business.

Romero's films explore the dark side of American life as he sees it, each Dead film in particular (the original trilogy especially - *Night of the Living Dead* and then *Dawn of the Dead* and *Day of the Dead*) reflecting the age in disillusioned subversive fashion. A racist gun obsessed society tearing itself apart, mindless consumerism in the seventies, the gung ho uncommunicative America of Ronald Reagan. "Zombies are the real lower-class citizens of the monster world and that's why I like them," said Romero.

Along the way there have been fascinating detours like *Martin* and *Knightriders* and seemingly endless frustration as many cherished Romero projects fell by the wayside through lack of funding. Romero has largely existed outside the confines of the studio system and while this hasn't always made life easy his fans probably wouldn't have had it any other way. Think of the classics we might have lost out on if George had disappeared somewhere in Hollywood.

His blue collar monsters are the proletariat - threatening the hierarchy and natural order in a naturalist tradition of class insecurity. Romero films are characterised by a lack of optimism, a willingness to look at the hard truth of reality, and a sense that victories may be ephemeral. Romero was a product of the Easy Rider spirit of the sixties and seventies when American cinema was bold and produced *Chinatown*, *The Godfather* and a horror renaissance. He is an auteur who has worked at the margins of the mainstream. Zombies existed long before as a generic of horror but it was Romero who tore up their voodoo trappings and dragged them into the modern age. As far as this genre goes, he truly is the Knight of the Living Dead.

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