ROMERO SLAMS BIG-BUDGET ZOMBIES

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How do feel about the recent wave of big-budget zombie productions?

That’s why I got out of it. I did Land of the Dead, which was a bigger budget movie with Dennis Hopper. I really didn’t like the experience. I loved Dennis Hopper, by the way. But one of the line items was Dennis Hopper’s cigar budget. I would have liked to have bought two extra days of shooting instead.

Did you have to make a lot of compromises on that film?

Yes, the first three [zombie] films had African American lead males. The first time was an accident. Duane [Jones] was just the best actor available.

Then it got such a reaction and I honestly think that it’s one of the reasons that that film was so widely played. People interpreted it as a racial message. I decided to keep doing it.

First of all, to give a chance to those actors who couldn’t get work. But [the studio] shouldn’t let me. I cast an African American lead on Land of the Dead. They blamed the Europeans. They said Europeans wouldn’t accept it. I had to concede, so what I did was I made the main zombie black and they really fought me on that two.

And you returned to lower budget productions after that?

I did two more films then all of sudden along came The Walking Dead and World War Z. This whole idea of zombies who swarm like army ants – I don’t find it frightening or entertaining, I just find it stupid. Now you can’t do [zombie movies] any more for a low budget, so I decided to do a comic book. It’s very traditional. It’s got zombies and vampires. It’s set in post-apocalyptic New York City and the vampires are basically the ruling class and zombies are used for entertainment or ignored.

You’ve collaborated on video games too. You make an appearance in Call of Duty: Black Ops. I’m the guy that you have to kill! I think video games really are what kept zombies alive, not movies. I was almost the only guy doing zombie movies for a long time.

If you had unlimited funds, what sort of movie would you make?

I’d like to do Tarzan the way [Edgar Rice] Burroughs wrote it. That’s just a childhood fantasy but if I had an opportunity that’s what I would do.

Do you enjoy how you’ve come to be seen as the godfather of the zombie genre?

Not so much. I never wanted to make zombie films but I found out that’s why we’re in it. We had an open panel Monday morning and we’ve also just held a closed panel talking about what’s been happening in the last month in Europe. We cooperate with journalists, working or articles informing about distribution in different countries. We also share our experiences with each other.

And why are you at KVIF?

Because we are a European organization, we need to be in several regions of Europe. This area of Europe is important to us. The reason why we’re in KVIF is because we have an open panel Monday morning and we’ve just held a closed panel talking about what’s been happening in the last month in Europe. We cooperate with journalists, working or articles informing about distribution in different countries. We also share our experiences with each other.

Can you tell us a little bit about your organization?

It was set up nearly 10 years ago by distributors. It’s an association and a network. We represent independent film distributors, mainly European, but also from outside Europe. The idea behind it is to create a network – a place where they can talk to each other. We do this through organizing panels and workshops. We also inform them about what is going on in our area and we cooperate with journalists, working on articles informing about distribution in different countries. We also share our experiences with each other.

Christine Eloy
General Manager, Europa Distribution
www.europa-distribution.org

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