



GEORGE A. ROMERO BIO

Born on Feb. 4, 1940 in New York City, Romero became interested in filmmaking at a young age when he borrowed an 8mm camera from a wealthy uncle. Inspired by Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger's musical opera, "Tales of Hoffmann" (1951), Romero began making his own short films and was arrested at 14 years old after he threw a flaming dummy off the roof of a building while making "Man from the Meteor" (1954). While attending Suffield Academy in Connecticut, Romero made two 8mm shorts, "Gorilla" (1956) and "Earth Bottom" (1956); the latter being a geology documentary that won him a Future Scientists of America award. After graduating high school, he attended Carnegie-Mellon University in Pittsburgh, PA where he earned his bachelor's in art, theater and design in 1960. Romero continued making shorts like "Curly" (1958) and graduated to 16mm films with "Slant" (1958), both of which he made with sometime collaborator Rudolph Ricci. Following work as a grip on Alfred Hitchcock's "North by Northwest" (1958), Romero shot the feature-length "Expostulations" (1962), a satirical anthology of loosely-connected shorts that showed hints of his later social consciousness.

After forming the commercial and industrial production company, Latent Image, in 1963, Romero cobbled together \$114,000 in order to direct his first feature film, "Night of the Flesh Eaters." Renamed "Night of the Living Dead" (1968) after landing a distributor, the unrelenting film - which was criticized at the time for its onscreen excesses - became a landmark cult film and significant social barometer that forever changed the horror genre. With no heroes or redemptive meaning - only unstoppable nihilistic evil rampaging through small town America - the movie popularized the zombie apocalypse subgenre of horror, spawning numerous imitators throughout the ensuing decades. Though decidedly cheap in production values, "Night of the Living Dead" nonetheless stood the test of time as an innovative cult film that attracted new fans every generation and became Romero's signature work. He next directed "There's Always Vanilla" (1971), his one-and-only romantic comedy that saw an Army veteran-turned-aimless drifter (Raymond Laine) fall for a model and TV actress (Judith Streiner), only to find himself unable to make amends with his military past. Touching on issues like the Vietnam War, abortion and working for corporate America, Romero was becoming unequivocal in expressing his views.

Romero's next film was "Season of the Witch" (1973), a horror thriller about a suburban housewife (Jan White) who starts practicing witchcraft. He next directed "The Crazies" (1973), a horror/action thriller about a government-made virus that is unleashed on an unsuspecting small Pennsylvania town, killing or driving the inhabitants insane. "The Crazies" was well-made and respected in the years since its release. It also spawned the hit remake in 2010. Romero soon followed by securing his cult status with two remarkable films: "Martin" (1978) and "Dawn of the Dead" (1979). The former - later remembered by Romero as his favorite - was a lyrical and deeply disturbing tale of a shy boy (John Amplas) who is convinced that he is a vampire. It also



began an important collaboration with Tom Savini, a brilliant special makeup effects designer who provided astonishing gore effects for many of Romero's subsequent features.

His next project, the expansive sequel "Dawn of the Dead" was primarily set in a deserted suburban shopping mall where a hardy band of survivors are beset by zombies, bikers and their own personal demons. A powerful apocalyptic action film leavened with pitch black comedy, "Dawn" critiqued bourgeois culture, consumerism and machismo while spraying the screen with outrageous comic-book carnage. It became one of the most profitable indies in U.S. film history. Romero took a brief detour from horror with "Knightriders" (1981), a quirky, leisurely paced take on the Arthurian legend with Ed Harris as the leader of a jousting motorcycle gang. He next directed the Stephen King-scripted "Creepshow" (1982), a more blunt and commercial work featuring higher production values and a cast of seasoned professionals, including Hal Holbrook, Adrienne Barbeau and Ted Danson. This smart and boldly stylized homage to EC horror comics also contained a sly critique of patriarchy. "Day of the Dead" (1985), the ostensible conclusion to the "Living Dead" trilogy, was brutally undermined by last-minute budget cuts, but still emerged as one of Romero's strongest horror films to date.

Romero also worked in television as the creator, co-executive producer and occasional writer of "Tales from the Dark Side", an anthologized supernatural series about various people finding themselves on the dark side of reality. The thematic and stylistic concerns of "Creepshow" helped shape the early episodes, while frequent Spike Lee collaborator Ernest Dickerson photographed the first season of this visually striking syndicated horror/fantasy series. Romero's first project after "Day of the Dead" was the psychological thriller, "Monkey Shines: An Experiment in Fear" (1988). The film won critics choice awards across the globe. For his next feature, "Two Evil Eyes" (1990), Romero and the celebrated Italian horror filmmaker Dario Argento each wrote and directed a story inspired by Edgar Allan Poe. Romero teamed up with Stephen King again for his adaptation of King's novel, "The Dark Half" (1993). The film again enjoyed enthusiastic reviews for Romero's screenplay and directing. Hailed as a return to form for the horror master, this well-crafted film featured a strong dual performance by Timothy Hutton.

After a hiatus from the screen to do writing, Romero returned with the unusual thriller "Bruiser" (2000), the lurid tale of a meek, rule-following man (Jason Flemyng), who wakes up one day to discover his face transformed into a smooth, featureless mask. Empowered by his new anonymity, he sets out on a path of revenge against everyone who has wronged him. In 2004, Romero returned to familiar territory with "Land of the Dead" (2005), a continuation of his zombie franchise long thought to be finished with "Day of the Dead." This time, however, Romero increased the energy with a fast-paced actioner that was not shy on the gore and violence, pleasing both fans and the uninitiated. "Land of the Dead", ended up being one of the best reviewed films of the 2005 summer! He continued his zombie revitalization with "Diary of



the Dead" (2007), which was more of a reboot than a sequel to the other four movies in the "Dead" series. He then made the sixth in the series, "Survival of the Dead" (2010), which saw the inhabitants of an isolated island off the coast of North America conflicted whether to kill their own relatives rising from the grave, or try to find a cure. Romero's dead films continue to inspire such hits as "Shaun of the Dead" (2004) and "Zombieland" (2009).

In 2013 George A. Romero's Empire of the Dead was announced by Marvel Comics. It was a 15 issue limited comic book series that began publication in 2014, and ended in late 2015. Empire features zombies similar to those in his "Living Dead" film series, but differs slightly because vampires are also part of the story.

Dubbed the "Grandfather of Zombie Films," George A. Romero was a pivotal figure in the development of the contemporary horror film and the progenitor of the zombie apocalypse subgenre. Beginning with his first feature, "Night of the Living Dead" (1968), Romero not only upped the ante on explicit screen violence and gore, but also offered a satirical critique of American society that reflected the cultural upheavals of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Most importantly, Romero ushered in a fascination with zombies and spawned numerous imitators over the ensuing decades. It's very safe to say that AMC's, "The Walking Dead" would never have existed without the Romero influence. "Night of the Living Dead" is still considered to be one of the most influential independent films ever made. Romero's awards and honors in recent years have stacked up to an impressive amount. And his standing ovation at Cannes Film Festival in 2005 would make any A-list celebrity jealous!

Filmmakers to consider Romero as one of their influences include, Frank Darabont, Guillermo Del Toro, Robert Rodriguez and Quentin Tarantino to name just few!!

Sadly, Romero passed away on July 16, 2017 from a brief, but aggressive battle with lung cancer. He slipped away listening to the score of, The Quite Man, one of his all time favorite films, with his family by his side. He leaves behind a filmmaking legacy that has endured, and will continue to endure, the test of time!