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Fido

Reviewed By Scott Weinberg

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"Play dead, Fido! Oh wait... you are dead."

★★★★★ (Worth A Look)

SCREENED AT THE 2006 TORONTO FILM FESTIVAL: My illustrious pal James Rocchi called it "George Romero meets Douglas Sirk." I called it a mixture of "Norman Rockwell, George Romero, and The Iron Giant." We're both right. Andrew Currie's "Fido" is an ingratiatingly strange, undeniably off-kilter, and strangely sunny tale of domesticated zombie-hood.

The setting is a 1950s Everytown -- with a difference. Pieces of "space dust" have inspired the recently-demised to shuffle out of their graves and commence doing what zombies do well: Chomp the living and create more zombies.

Fortunately a company called Zomcon is on the case, and they've created a collar that turns the ravenous undead into docile and domesticated servants. (The collars malfunction only occasionally, albeit with precisely the results you'd expect from zombies.)

So picture this: A wonderfully nostalgic vision of 1950's Americana (or perhaps Canadiana) ... only the neighborhood is rife with sedated zombies who've been trained to mow the lawn, serve drinks, and basically cover all the mundane chores that the living can't be bothered with.

It's a pretty funny picture.

Populating this exceedingly colorful and amusing farce are a handful of game performers: Carrie Anne-Moss as the typically doting '50s housewife, Dylan Baker as the golf-loving absentee dad, newcomer K'Sun Ray as little Timmy, Tim Blake Nelson as the semi-creepy neighbor who has a decidedly sexy zombie-friend, and Henry Czerny as the square-jawed head of Zomcon security. The actors are well-aware of the tone and pitch of their freaky little flick, and frankly there's not a weak performance in the whole batch.

Ah, and the brilliant Scottish comedian Billy Connolly as Fido, the domesticated zombie who befriends little Timmy, thaws his icy mom, and threatens dad's place in the homestead.

Call it an indictment of 1950's "conformity at all costs," a satire on the desperate need to "keep up with the Joneses," or just a plain old wacky combination of zombie horror and unquestionably askew comedy, but I say *Fido* is a winner. Although clearly a relatively low-budget production, director Andrew Currie fills his lenses with eye-tickling colors and kitschy sights, components that are only occasionally invaded by some flesh-chomping craziness.

And I know what you zom-com fans are thinking: The genesis of this project may have been partially inspired by the instant classic known as *Shaun of the Dead* -- but the similarities pretty much end right there.

"Fido" opens with an amusing little newsreel that sets a perfect tone for the tasty genre cocktail that follows. Much more of a comedy than a horror-fest, "Fido" should find fans on both sides of the genre fence. It's a strange, sly, oddly subtle, and rather weirdly satisfying little tale - and it's easily one of the most entertaining Canadian films I've seen in some time.