

You'll die laughing at these zombies

C part 2



LIVINGSITE PHOTO

*** **FIDO** (R): Night of the Living Domestic: Post-nuclear paranoia meets "Father Knows Best" in a hilarious fable about '50s conformity and civil rights. With Billy Connolly, Carrie-Anne Moss, Dylan Baker, Henry Czerny, K'Sun Ray and Tim Blake Nelson. Written by Robert Chomiak and director Andrew Currie. 131 (gore, zombie violence). At area theaters.

BY JOHN ANDERSON

Special to Newsday

An organza-and-chiffon-shrouded nightmare of June Cleaver proportions, "Fido" is ostensibly a film about a boy and his dog, except the dog is a zombie ("Is Timmy in trouble?" "Arrrghhhwwaah"). But the real story is about Mom and her rotting house servant: In a world where conformity is currency, Mom would prefer a sensitive corpse to a live conservative. Therein lies a lesson for us all.

Carrie-Anne Moss gets swept off her feet by zombie Billy Connolly in "Fido."

Scottish comedian Billy Connolly, normally out of verbal control, is essentially playing Lassie in this Andrew Currie comedy. That is one of the many inside jokes in a film by a director who clearly knows physical, visual comedy. Connolly has no lines in the film, unless you count grunts, but his performance is nonetheless effective, and affecting.

In a world where a cloud of astral dust has somehow awakened the dead and given them an appetite for human flesh, "Fido" is a bit flippant with its variation on the concept of human rights — unlike PETA, which would like to extend civil rights to animals, "Fido" would simply expand them to include the flesh-eating undead. Is "Fido" a parable that promotes open-mindedness, or that assails liberal extremism? Arrrghhhwwaah.

The family Robinson — Helen (Carrie-Anne Moss), Bill (Dylan Baker) and young Timmy (K'Sun Ray) — live in what could be a Technicolor Five Towns. They are beneficiaries of a slave-based economy: the Zom-Con Corporation — personified by Henry Czerny's

beautifully repellent Mr. Bottoms — has perfected (almost) a way of making homicidal zombies into passive workers through the use of control collars, which must be monitored, or the crazy zombies will start cutting loose.

Bill harbors a deep-seated fear of the undead; Helen, wanting to keep up with the Joneses, brings home Fido (Connolly). The socially awkward Timmy, looking for a father figure (Bill doesn't count), gets attached to his new pet, and has to save him after Fido inadvertently eats a neighbor. Helen, looking for a soulmate, finds one in a man whose soul, spiritually speaking, has already departed.

"Fido," which feels original despite borrowing from a half-dozen genres, shouldn't be taken too seriously. The performances, though, are dead-on: Moss, in particular, shows the same post-"Matrix" flair for sly, comedic roles that she's lately exhibited in "Mini's First Time," "Snowflake" and "Disturbia." Baker could play Bill in his sleep. And Connolly? He gives one of the best silent performances since the advent of talking pictures.

NOW PLAYING