

"SICK: SURVIVE THE NIGHT" (Movie Review)

Written by Dave Pace

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At heart, great zombie films are never really about zombies. The mythos of the living dead always works best when the creatures are ciphers for bigger ideas about society and mankind. Director Ryan M. Andrews understands this well and as a result, SICK: SURVIVE THE NIGHT (World premiering at the [Blood in the Snow](#) Canadian Film Festival) is less about staggering undead hordes and more about the human drama of life in a world decimated.

SICK finds a world two years into a devastating illness which kills and resurrects its victims as highly aggressive carnivorous monsters, who then continue to spread the plague through bites. Public order has collapsed and bands of survivors cling together, either in protected communities of scavengers attempting some form of civilization or as the craven Vultures, roving gangs of thugs willing to prey on their fellow humans to meet their survival needs.

There remains a government presence in the world, but its impact is barely felt. Research is continuing into possible treatment and a cure for the disease, but it is naturally hampered by the conditions of a collapsed environment. As a scientist specializing in the disease, Dr. Leigh Rozetta (Christina Aceto) is among the last hopes for humanity. Embarking on a mission outside her protected compound to gather samples, Rozetta begins a dangerous journey where her life will become entangled with those of two other survivors, Seph (Richard Sutton) and McKay (Robert Nolan), who were part of a larger party out seeking medical supplies for children at their camp.

Their worlds collide and we see the human toll of this nightmare, and how individuals find ways to cope with it all. There are harrowing and touching moments where people try and maintain themselves and their dignity in a world which is crumbling and where Seph may argue there is no more room for humanity, if survival is the concern.

The film is sadly hampered by some flaws, both technical and story-wise. None are terminal, but worthy of note regardless. Focus issues and some unsteady camera work mar a few scenes, and while the film generally looks very nice, some of the action sequences lack drama and engagement. It's also sometimes challenging to draw a line from scene to scene that follows a consistent plot progression. Sometimes it seems things just happen. Which, I guess is a good simulation of life in a zombie post-apocalypse, but some tighter story construction is needed.

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Performances fare well, including a great cameo from scream queen Debbie Rochon as Dr. Fehmi , who helpfully gives us a lot of the science behind the plot. A nice thing about this, besides seeing Rochon on screen, is that the science of the film is well researched, as opposed to simply throwing around irrelevant jargon.

Despite the cracks in SICK, there is a film here that rises above the veritable sea of zombie schlock currently being churned out.

