While hanging out at scrappy Canadian horror/cult film convention Shock Stock, FANGORIA met up with the enterprising Chris Harrison and Phil Pattison of Nictophobia Films (DEVIL’S NIGHT, VS. THE DEAD) who were promoting one helluva concept: a live, faithful while at the same time irreverent stage version of NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD.

The idea of reconceiving George A. Romero’s inimitable 1968 horror masterpiece as bizarre theater is interesting enough, but even more exciting is that these lads are planning to light and design the entire show in source-faithful black and white! Now, ideas are a dime a dozen, but unlike those legions of daydreamers who shoot for the moon but can’t get off the couch, Harrison, Pattison and co. are actually doing it. In fact, they were in Toronto recently to meet with Romero and his old pal Russ Streiner in the flesh to work out the details. This *will* happen, and Fango will be faithfully following the story as it evolves, starting here with our exclusive chat with Harrison.

FANGORIA: Why NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD? Do you have a personal connection to it?

CHRIS HARRISON: I have always loved NIGHT, but I would say my connection is more with Romero as a filmmaker than to one of his films. I have followed his career since I was a young boy, and continue to admire his body of work. I still watch films like CREEPSHOW, DAY OF

THE DEAD and THE DARK HALF weekly. That may seem a little extreme, but there’s something about these films that reminds me why I do this for a living. George Romero, Stephen King and Tom Savini are the reason I love horror and continue to work in the industry. Life would be boring without those guys!

FANG: When did the lightning strike to take this iconic picture and warp it?

HARRISON: I saw a picture of a friend who was dressed as a NIGHT zombie for Halloween. He had made himself up completely black-and-white, and it looked wicked! The motors were instantly fired up, and I thought, “Wow—the whole movie takes place in a house; that could actually work as a stage play.” I immediately told Phil Pattison, my partner at Nictophobia, and he got it right away. We both knew we were onto something here, and started writing a draft. As things progressed, the idea got bigger and bigger, and we realized this was something the original creators should be involved in. Our friend Dave Daniloff introduced us to Russ Streiner and John Russo. They were very keen on the idea, and since then we’ve become friends, and they’re the executive producers of the show along with Romero.

We didn’t stop there; with the legends on as executive producers, we needed to make sure the script and direction were executed by the right people. So we chose to have Chris Bond [co-creator and director of EVIL DEAD: THE MUSICAL] to direct the play, and co-write it with Trevor Martin [of the new indie film A LITTLE BIT ZOMBIE] and Dale Boyer. They have come up with some great ideas, and I think fans new and old are really going to enjoy the show we’re putting on!

FANG: Talk about how you are planning to light it and stage it.

HARRISON: We’re in the preliminary stages, so I don’t have much info for you on this right now, but I can tell you that we are trying to light it as similar to the film as possible. We love all of the big shadows and rawness of the original film, so we’re attempting to try and keep the integrity of that as closely as we can. The staging is also difficult to discuss at this time, as we’re still debating the venue, but I can assure that there will be a cool farmhouse set.

FANG: Who’s doing the music?

HARRISON: That’s still up in the air, but we would also like to keep that as close to the original as possible. New music would rule, but we all love the film’s score and would like to keep it close, or entirely the same. Our first thought was to just use the soundtrack from the movie and cue it, but if someone was interested in collaborating with us to create an original version of the music, we would be willing to meet with them.

FANG: How involved are Romero, Russo and Streiner?

HARRISON: I deal mostly with Russ Streiner; he’s an amazing guy and has been incredibly generous and helpful through this process. George, Russ and John are all involved and comment on ideas, but they have given us creative control and assured us the show is ours to run with. We really try to keep them as involved as possible, but they have very busy schedules, so they are not on it full-time, but they are around and give us advice and suggestions on anything we need. They’re all really great and talented men.

FANG: Where are you going to premiere the show? Toronto?

HARRISON: The show is going to open in Toronto in spring 2013, with the hopes of it playing in Pittsburgh in October 2013 for the film’s 45th anniversary. We’re taking our time to make sure the show is great, and from what I know right now and as a fan of the film, I can assure it is going to rule!

Of that, we have no doubt. Stay tuned to Fangoria.com and FANGORIA magazine for more details as they come. And be sure to brush up on your Romero education by purchasing our new, limited-edition FANGORIA Legends Presents George A. Romero magazine, available only at our store .