George A. Romero’s NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD has been remade, officially or unofficially, countless times, almost always with disappointing—if not disastrous—results. But Douglas Schulze’s MIMESIS (on DVD and Blu-ray tomorrow from Anchor Bay) adapts that classic in original and intriguing ways. FANGORIA spoke to the Michigan-based director about his horror homage.

MIMESIS’ story begins with friends Duane (Allen Maldonado, pictured below) and Russell (Taylor Piedmonte) enjoying a horror convention. While Russell is excited to meet Alfonso Betz (Sid Haig), his favorite director—who, during his panel, warns the audience about the alleged link between violence in movies and in real life—Duane is just there to try to hook up with girls. They meet Judith (Lauren Mae Shafer), a sexy Goth babe who invites them to an exclusive after-party that only a select few know about. The site is a remote farmhouse (where, in the film’s prologue, the farmer—played by CHILDREN OF THE CORN’s Courtney Gains—and his wife are slain by ghouls), and certain guests are served tainted beer. They wake up the next morning dressed in clothes straight out of the ‘60s, and soon find themselves struggling to survive a real-life version of NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD.

At a time when so many studios and filmmakers are unimaginatively remaking old films, Schulze has managed to do something new, using a genre classic as the basis for a fresh story which is also a love letter to Romero and may well prompt fans, especially younger ones, to rewatch or discover for the first time the picture that invented flesheating zombies. Made on a

similar low budget, MIMESIS recreates the sets and the atmosphere of NIGHT, with Lon Stratton’s cinematography giving the picture a dark, grayish tone reflecting the original’s black and white of the original. Fans will notice the main characters named after Romero’s stars—Duane (Jones), Judith (O’Dea), Russell (Streiner), Keith (Wayne), Karl (Hardman)—and original cemetery zombie Bill Hinzman even has a cameo. MIMESIS turns an all-time horror favorite into a real-life nightmare, forcing its characters to experience a fright flick from the inside…

FANGORIA: Many people may not know what “mimesis” means; can you explain it?

DOUGLAS SCHULZE: In its simplest terms, it means imitation. More specifically, it’s the imitation of life in art. I believe a Greek philosopher is credited with coining the term. It’s a very fitting title for a film about people imitating the movies.

FANG: Did you choose NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD because it’s in the public domain?

SCHULZE: No. NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD was selected because I couldn’t think of a more disturbing film to “mimesize” than one about flesheating zombies. In a way, the fact that NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD is in the public domain was discouraging, because there have been about a dozen unauthorized remakes, and we feared being compared to them. We have credited the Internet archive for the few seconds of clips from the original film we used, and there’s a token credit at the end mentioning that our film was inspired by Romero’s.

FANG: Was it difficult to recreate the original location and costumes?

SCHULZE: Yes, actually. We spent several months looking at farmhouses in remote areas of Michigan, and we found several that worked, but the problem was that most people didn’t want us filming on their property. We eventually found an abandoned farm that had the perfect look; our costume designer Cheryl Freeman was instrumental in discovering it.

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