Given how drastically overcrowded the zombie field is, writer/director John Geddes’ EXIT HUMANITY (out today on DVD from Vivendi Entertainment) merits appreciation for trying something different, providing a fresh take on a somewhat tired genre. Canadian filmmaker Geddes (who also edited) leads us through an undead saga set in the days following the real-life horrors of the American Civil War.

EXIT HUMANITY is the diary of veteran soldier Edward Young (Mark Gibson), who, after returning from the conflict, finds his family turned into the undead and embarks on a journey to take his son’s ashes to a waterfall, struggling with his own sanity and acceptance of humanity. Young’s personal mission becomes intertwined with that of Isaac (Adam Seybold), a man who asks Edward’s help to save his sister (Jordan Hayes) from the clutches of General Williams (Bill Moseley). Williams is a crazed ex-Confederate general leading a small band of soldiers hell-bent on finding a cure for the plague, employing a weary surgeon (Stephen McHattie from another inventive Canadian zombie movie, PONTYPOOL) to experiment on kidnapped humans—letting them get bitten by the undead in order to test the doctor’s dubious cure.

EXIT HUMANITY presents an alternative approach to American history, with Edward’s journal entries narrated by Brian Cox, enriched by beautiful cinematography by Brendan Uegama and animated sequences by Snezhan Bodurov, and effective living-dead makeup by Jason and Jeff Derushie (a.k.a. the Gore Brothers)—whose ghouls, in tribute to George A. Romero and Lucio

Fulci, stalk the forests of Tennessee (actually lensed in Ontario) slowly and groggily. With strong performances by Gibson and its charismatic supporting players (also including Dee Wallace), it’s a compelling tale of hope and survival. And it was brought in on a modest budget of under $300,000 by Geddes and his Foresight Features partners/producers Jesse Thomas Cook and Matt Wiele, the team also behind this month’s MONSTER BRAWL. FANGORIA spoke with Geddes at last year’s Sitges festival in Spain.

**FANGORIA:** What was the genesis of EXIT HUMANITY?

**JOHN GEDDES:** I’ve always wanted to make a period film and I’ve always wanted to make a zombie film, so I thought it would’ve been cool to combine the two, but make the story dramatic and poetic. I love classics like JEREMIAH JOHNSON and wanted to do something performance- and character-driven. I have always said this is not a zombie film, it’s a dramatic fantasy story with zombies in it. This is not the kind of movie where hordes of the undead corner our characters every 10 minutes, or the kind with loads of guts and blood. It’s a character-driven story that delves into the history of the zombies and how they have impacted these people, in a world already in so much pain from the Civil War. So many movies today have to be fast-paced and jumpy; I wanted to go back to some of my ’70s favorites and make it slow and real. EXIT HUMANITY is the kind of film you can watch more than once and take in. The zombies are certainly there—and when they are, they look amazing.

**FANG:** Did you intend to use the undead to comment on the Civil War?

**GEDDES:** Not really. I just always thought: What if there were zombie attacks years and years ago; would any of us know about them today? The Civil War was a bleak time in American history, and I felt it would provide a good foundation for the story. I also love fantasy, and that’s really what is unique about this film: It has more magical curses involved, such as true voodoo.

**FANG:** Where does your passion for Civil War history come from?

**GEDDES:** The Civil War was a fascinating time. So many men were fighting for what they believed in, and there was an incredible amount of politics and drama throughout those years. It was an incredible time in American history, where so many lived in despair, yet showed

amazing resilience and kept hoping for a better world ahead. My dad is an expert on the War, so I grew up with books lying around the house and also started to develop a passion for it. There are endless stories to learn about; I would love to make a real Civil War drama one day, but I would need a proper budget!

**FANG:** Even with that small amount of money you had, EXIT HUMANITY looks amazing. How did you manage to get the best out of so little money?

**GEDDES:** We made this film on a microbudget with a group of best friends. We really busted our asses to get magic-hour light, meaning we shot many scenes during sunsets and sunrises. We shot on the RED camera with the Mysterium-X chip, and the results are gorgeous. We all really tried to achieve the best production value possible at every turn.

**FANG:** Where did you shoot the movie?

**GEDDES:** In Kimberley, Ontario. It’s close to our hometown, so we knew the area and knew we could call on lots of friends to help out. We shot mainly outdoors and in daylight so we could avoid lots of equipment and work with a small crew, and did it during the fall season to capture the dying trees and cloudy skies.

**FANG:** What is the situation with cinema in Canada? Is it difficult to get movies financed?

**GEDDES:** Canada is tough for sure, though I assume it’s tough to get financing everywhere in the world. For EXIT HUMANITY, we raised money privately, which took us two full years. Many

filmmakers seek government grants and backing, but there are no guarantees with that, and we wanted to create a company so we were in control of our creative choices and our own destiny.

**FANG:** You cast some great genre veterans in EXIT HUMANITY; how did you get them involved?

**GEDDES:** We fought hard from the start to secure a great cast. It was always our desire to work with strong actors who could create a real sense of drama. I think the screenplay spoke for itself, and the challenges in the roles were appealing to the actors. Once the script was finished, I started to approach agents, and Bill Moseley and Dee Wallace were at the top of the list. I was persistent in making sure they would read the script, and I think that was what got us in the door with them. They both loved the roles and the story, and then one thing led to another. The conditions were hellish—Dee had to trek up a mudslide just to get to the set—but it was an amazing experience working with these actors who have inspired me through so many great films. All their performances are outstanding.

**FANG:** Mark Gibson is perfect in the lead role. How did you cast him?

**GEDDES:** Mark has been acting for over a decade; he has done many plays in Toronto, and we’ve been great friends. We spoke for years about making a film together, and when that time came, Mark put years of experience and passion into the role. I can’t put into words how hard he worked and how amazing his performance is. He truly put in 150 percent every day, and it’s really a personal film for both of us. We also have an insanely good supporting cast. Adam Seybold is striking on all levels; I like to call him a sleeping giant of talent. Jordan Hayes, Ari Millen and Jason David Brown are also so gripping. The great thing was that the actors respected my vision, and understood how far they were going to have to go to achieve the right mood. The location made it easy for us all to feel like we were living in the 1800s; if it wasn’t mud covering our sets, crew and gear, it was freezing cold with rain. A big shout-out to Jordan, who never once was the “female” on set; she was first to sprint through forests and fall into mud and get soaking wet, and all that makes the film feel real.

[redacted]