Three years after creating the score (as well as acting as assistant direcror) on CREEPSHOW for George A. Romero, John Harrison would once again team up with the ringmaster of the unearthed in 1985 on DAY OF THE DEAD. In addition to again helping with directorial duties, Harrison was asked to revisit his role as composer on the third in the by-then-legendary DEAD series.

What started out as a much grander and wide-ranging follow-up to the 1979 smash DAWN OF THE DEAD ended up taking a page from 1968’s NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD, and what resulted was a much more confined and claustrophobic picture than its predecessor. Harrison (pictured below in red on the DAY location) revisits the origins of his unique score for the film, which is now considered a genre classic, in the second part of this Fango chat—the first section of which (covering CREEPSHOW) can be read in issue #298, on sale now.

**FANGORIA:** How did you end up with the scoring duties again on DAY OF THE DEAD?

**JOHN HARRISON:** George called and said, “I have this film up, so come on and do it with me.” I was his 1st assistant director again, and he wanted me to do the score. It was the same kind of thing as on CREEPSHOW. Once we finished the film, I moved my things back into the editing room in Pittsburgh and had my own place downstairs. I had a little better equipment at this point.

**FANG:** Did Romero have any direction or guidelines for what he wanted in the music for this entry in the DEAD series?

**HARRISON:** There was originally a different script for DAY OF THE DEAD that was much bigger. Some of the concepts ended up in LAND OF THE DEAD, in fact. It involved the same military and scientists, but there was going to be this big Caribbean fortress where they all hung out and were being attacked by the zombies. I started thinking that I didn't want to write another horror score; I had spent some time in the Caribbean, and I wanted to have that kind of steel drum and marimba thing going on to contrast the horror of what was happening. I sketched out a couple of themes for George that he ended up really liking.

We didn't make that movie because of budgetary reasons, but because we were starting off in that southern Florida area with the underground caverns and so forth, it seemed like those themes would work, so I just stuck to them. We wanted it to be much more rock 'n' roll, kind of like a rock opera. It's wall-to-wall music, almost from start to finish.

**FANG:** Your compositions are obviously very different from what Goblin, Simonetti and others did for DAWN. Was this a conscious effort? Were there ever discussions about revisiting some of the themes from the previous movie?

**HARRISON:** There is that one iconic piece of music called "The Gonk" that George used a lot in DAWN. There a re a couple of places in DAY where you hear it, but other than that, no.

**FANG:** In addition to the score, the film had several vocal pieces ("If Tomorrow Comes," "The World Inside Your Eyes")—which is rare in a Romero film…

**HARRISON:** That was because the record company that put out [the DAY soundtrack] wanted to do some songs based on my music. That was their deal. I didn't have anything to do with that production, other than writing the music.

DAY OF THE DEAD
Original Motion Picture Soundtrack