

## “DYLAN DOG”: movie vs. comic

Written by Jorge Solis  
Sunday, 08 May 2011 13:18

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Now that DYLAN DOG: DEAD OF NIGHT is out in theaters, the time is right to look back at the comic book series that started it all. DYLAN DOG (published by Sergio Bonelli Editore) is an Italian horror comic that follows a private investigator as he takes on supernatural cases. In true film noir fashion, the case is always much bigger and far more dangerous than originally expected. Dylan Dog, the clarinet-playing private eye, always finds himself thrown into a situation where monsters lurk in the shadows.

What the film version successfully manages to do is capture the essence of the protagonist. Dylan Dog has and always will be the antihero. Most of the times, Dylan doesn't want to take on the supernatural cases and only takes them because he is strapped for cash. Sometimes he jumps at the new job because the client happens to be a stunning vixen. In the film's plot, Elizabeth (Anita Briem) is in need of Dylan's services to find a missing artifact from her dead father's collection. This mystical artifact happens to attract the unwanted attention from vampires, werewolves and zombies.



After appearing in two comic book movies (SUPERMAN RETURNS and SCOTT PILGRIM VS. THE WORLD), actor Brandon Routh carries the movie in the title role with droll wit and cynicism. In capable hands, Routh fits comfortably into the iconic wardrobe; the red shirt, black jacket and blue jeans. In his portrayal, the actor presents someone who is at odds with himself and with the rest of the world. During his investigation, Dylan reluctantly confronts past acquaintances, a vampire gangster (Taye Diggs) and a werewolf crime lord (Peter Stormare). In order to find the answers he wants, Dylan will go even further as to torture his enemy. Along

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with Routh, Diggs and Stormare trade places to chew up the scenery.

While getting closer to the truth, Dylan’s partner Marcus becomes a number on the death count and reawakens as his undead sidekick. This is the major difference between the comic book and the movie. In the comics, Dylan’s cohort, Felix, is an actor who thinks he absolutely is Groucho Marx. During the development of the film, the producers learned that Marx’s likeness and style is owned by a different estate, so the Felix got nixed. Like Felix, Marcus is the comic relief and played by BEING HUMAN’s wisecracking Sam Huntington. Thanks to the chemistry between Huntington and Routh, the comedic banter between Marcus and Dylan is played charmingly.

Another major change is the use of color in the film. The DYLAN DOG comics were drawn in black and white by artists Angelo Stano, Andrea Venturi, Giampiero Casertano, Luigi Piccatto and Bruno Brindisi. Though the location has switched from London to New Orleans, the cinematography by Geoffrey Hall keeps the stylish conventions of shadows and low-key lighting usually seen in traditional noir films. The use of green and blue hues add to the nightmarish world Dylan finds himself living in.

Surprisingly, screenwriters Thomas Dean Donnelly and Joshua Oppenheimer expand the social commentary that creator Tiziano Sclavi wrote about in the comics. Sclavi depicted the penniless Dylan clashing mostly with the wealthy and upper-class London society. In the film, zombies belong to the blue-collar, working class of America. Dylan still has very little money, and will take check or credit card from any client who’s willing to pay.

Overall, director Kevin Munroe has an appreciation for the DYLAN DOG comics. Whenever Dylan finds himself weaponless in a predicament, Felix always jumps in and throws his revolver. In a split-second, Dylan catches the gun in midair and quickly starts shooting. The panels are like storyboards to a well-executed action sequence. In the climax of DEAD OF NIGHT, Dylan breaks into the vampire gangster’s hideout and starts shooting. While walking in slow motion, Marcus keeps handing Dylan gun after gun, which keep getting bigger and bigger. This is a major fun but short sequence in the movie!

As a comic book fan, this critic was hoping for a complete and utter faithful adaptation, much like SIN CITY was. But even in that film, significant changes were made for the big screen. Though disappointing when compared to the comic, as a moviegoing experience DYLAN DOG: DEAD OF NIGHT still entertains.

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