I've been making a passable living lately shooting corporate videos, commercials and news footage, all of which require an enormous amount of effort to pull off successfully. I've also been moonlighting as a horror director, which takes enormous effort to keep myself from ruining takes with my excessive maniacal giggling.

The skill set required on commercial work seems diametrically opposed to the anarchic attitude essential to horror filmmaking, but the two styles aren't a million miles removed from each other. Each is dependent on how effectively and quickly a closed-to-interpretation visual illusion can be communicated quickly and directly to the viewer, whether it's "this is a shot of a typical day at this company," or "that meathook just went into her back." Which is why directing a commercial for FANGORIA didn't seem as incongruous as you might expect. If anything, it felt like I introduced my parents to the crazy girl I love so much and then watched them hit it off like old friends.

The whole production team refers to the commercial as ZOMBIE'S DAY OUT, although the concept is probably closer to "Zombie's Typical Day." Shot over a couple half-days across several different locations in downtown Richmond, VA, the ad features the titular walking corpse watering his lawn, slaving at the office and getting stuck in commuter traffic, among other things. The concept came from actor Ben Hill, who plays the eponymous zombie. Ben's a charming, handsome guy and we probably would have just given him the part since it was his idea and everybody likes him anyway, but in hindsight Ben is why the spot works.

At this point I think every horror fan has a zombie inside them lined up and ready to go when the occasion arises. We've all got our own walk, face and mental image that we picture while in character. Ben came in with all of that, but he was able to embellish his prepared zombie with minimal direction, handily shaping his performance to the tone of the commercial. While he was getting made up, I told Ben that I preferred my zombies to be "blank but mournful," appearing convincingly undead but also pitifully cursed.

[redacted]

[redacted]