Howard J. and Jonathan Ford, two horror fans with plenty of behind-the-camera experience, fulfilled their childhood dream of paying sincere tribute to the zombie movies of yesteryear with THE DEAD. Shot on life-threatening, never-before-filmed locations in Burkina Faso, West Africa and Ghana (including the Sahara Desert) on 35mm film, THE DEAD (opening in theaters this Friday, with a free NYC Fango screening tonight; go here for details) is the first flesheating road movie set against those spectacular vistas, where the Dark Continent becomes a dead zone.

Known in the United Kingdom as the new Ridley and Tony Scott, due to their similar backgrounds directing high-profile commercials, the Fords use the living-dead apocalypse as a social and political allegory for the difficult integration between Africa and the world’s leading economic nations, emphasizing the extreme poverty in many living on that continent. At the same time, it’s a heartfelt homage to the movies of George A. Romero and Lucio Fulci, with ghouls who walk the deserted lands slowly and groggily, according to the old rules.

The story follows American Air Force engineer Lt. Brian Murphy (Rob Freeman), sole survivor of the crash of the last evacuation flight out of wartorn Africa, and Sgt. Daniel Dembele (Prince David Osei), whose village has been torn apart by the reanimated dead and is now desperately searching for his son. The two, coming from very different cultures, have to reluctantly join forces to escape the zombie-infested region alive. The eight-week shoot, employing many actual natives, was plagued by many obstacles of its own, like malaria and the stealing of some cameras, but the filmmakers’ deep genre love shines through. The Fords spoke to Fango during the Sitges film festival.

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