

## "PLAY DEAD" (Short Film Review)

Written by Dave Pace

Thursday, 09 August 2012 14:28

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We all know it doesn't usually end well for the humans when a zombie outbreak strikes, but what about another important part of society, our pets? From the minds of directors Andre and Diego Meza Valdes comes PLAY DEAD, a surprisingly poignant short about how the creatures who normally depend on us to survive learn to move on when we are becoming food for the undead. It all sounds like MILO AND OTIS meets 28 DAYS LATER, and it kind of is, yet it manages to work a lot better than you'd expect from using that kind of premise as a jumping off point.

PLAY DEAD follows the antics of several dogs who are "orphaned" by an ongoing zombie apocalypse. With their owners devoured, or turned into ghouls, they are left to fend for themselves on the streets of Miami, banding together as an oddball pack of sorts. Along the way, they encounter and sometimes even appear to contemplate the senseless horror that is befalling their former masters. It's oddly disturbing to watch the collapse of our civilization through the eyes of what used to be man's best friend.

The strength of the film is largely in the unique perspective on the well-worn road to zombie ruin and in some of the gags. Where the dots don't quite connect for me is that, as interesting as it is to explore the genre in a novel way, the stakes are pure survival as the animals don't really comprehend the implications of the zombie plague. I like dogs, I want them to survive but it's hard to create deeper dramatic tension with protagonists who don't really grasp what is being lost. Events mostly just happen around them. Their ability to impact what is going on in the world is limited. That said, the brothers Valdes do manage to make me care about the dogs making it through to the end and provide some insights into the world along the way.

Overall, I enjoyed PLAY DEAD and admire the accomplishment, both in terms of giving some new vision to the zombie genre and the challenge of working with canine actors. I love my dog, but I have no illusions about the situation. When the shambling hordes arrive, I have little doubt he'd just as soon chow down on my rotting corpse as he'd eat the ridiculous corn-free, gluten

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free diet food we have to feed him.

*You can see PLAY DEAD in its entirety, below.*



{vimeo}46627975{/vimeo}