

Darkest before dawn

[Entertainment](#), [Movie](#)



Darkest Before Dawn September 1, 2012 “ When there is no more room in hell, the dead will walk the Earth (Romero, 1978). From shuffling corpses to gallons of fake blood, the 1978 “ Dawn of the Dead” and its 2004 counterpart, demonstrate the vast difference in horror films of today and those of the 1970's. While the original was a catalyst for a paradigm shift in the world of horror cinema, the 2004 remake is a bold reminder of how far the genre has come. While sharing a title and an overall basic plotline, the similarities stop there. Separated by more than two decades, these two films are a prime example of the speed at which technology and society are advancing. If horror films have said anything about society, it is that society’s fascination with violence and gore transcends generations. When George Romero released his sequel to his classic “ Night of the Living Dead” in 1978, it was considered extremely graphic and horrifying to audiences, to the point of controversy (Triggs, 2006-2012). Today, the original film does not have the same effect on viewers and is thought of as campy and almost funny. The 2004 film shows that as time moves on, the same techniques used in the original will no longer captivate the imaginations of audiences. With the rapid advancement of technology and how readily available it is, movie-goers expect more from films. Movies as a whole have become extremely violent and graphic. This shows a change in what society considers acceptable entertainment. The horror genre as a whole has shifted toward visually frightening audiences instead of inducing fear on a psychological level. During the time frame of the original, technology severely limited what could be put on the big screen. Blood was cornstarch and red dye. Explosions were elaborate special effects that were often

expensive, dangerous and required skilled technicians to execute. Graphic effects such as CGI were almost non-existent, and with a relatively low production bankroll of \$650, 000, special effects had to be budget friendly and minimal. This made shocking the audience with smoke and mirrors difficult. Despite its low budget the film managed to gross 55 million dollars worldwide, more than 84 times its cost (" Dawn of the,"). Because of the lack of available technology, 1978 version was forced to focus on character attachment, music cues, and clever cinematography to build suspense and fear. The remake, with the help of today's far more advanced technology, does it with gratuitous gore, terrifying realism and phenomenal picture quality and sound. With the advent of Computer Generated Imagery (CGI) through software such as Maya and Adobe After Effects, the 2004 remake was able to startle the audience with monumental scale, painstaking detail, and stunning visuals. These factors allow the audience to feel more immersed in the film. The 2004 remake shows that modern horror movie fans have different desires than that of the previous generation or at least what filmmakers feel are the desires of modern audiences. The development of characters and story has all but faded into irrelevance with intense displays of violence and terrifying computer generated ghosts, ghouls, and monsters taking the lead role. The 1978 film better developed the characters and utilized the zombies as more of a tool to move the story along than as a cheap scare tactic. When the two main characters realize they are going to have a child in this post apocalyptic wasteland, it causes a sense of dread that's hard to shake. The idea of a child being born into that nightmare and the fractured relationship between the two of them, allows the audience to

feel sympathy for the characters and ask themselves what they would do in that type of situation. On the reverse, when another main character steadily declines into madness, the viewer may feel uneasy, even frightened that his actions are detrimental to the group of survivors and might compromise their safety. This heavy interaction between the audience, and the characters is the mark of a well crafted story and an area where the 2004 remake seriously falls short. The 2004 version leaves the audience just waiting for the next gruesome death or the next ridiculous zombie attack. Without a doubt Zack Snyder's 2004 film is far more visually driven. The emphasis of the film is more about how it looks and sounds with character development and cohesive story telling falling by the wayside. Whether or not the social change these two movies plot is for better or worse is a matter of opinion; what is not is the stunning advances in filmmaking technology that the 2004 remake showcases. The 1978 film was shot on 35mm celluloid film, which was the standard for the time (" Dawn of the, "). Editing film before digital non-linear editing software was arduous and time consuming. The editor would have to physically cut the film with scissors and piece the movie together by hand, while using a Moviola, (a device that allows a film editor to view film while editing), to see if the frames fit together (Soriano, 2010). The physical nature and linear fashion of this type of editing severely limited the type of effects that could be added during the post production process. The 2004 remake was shot on a modified version of 35mm called Super 35mm and edited using modern non-linear editing software such as AVID or Final Cut Pro on a high powered modern editing bay. The possibilities when using this type of software and computer hardware are virtually

endless. Cinematic errors erased with a mouse click. Things not possible in the physical world can be added with a few keystrokes from a trained hand. CGI has made the impossible possible in film and this is clearly displayed in Snyder's version. These films have shown that even though society is continually changing some things are constant. Our infatuation with the brain-eating undead or our desire to push the envelope has been persistent since the beginning of film. " Dawn of the Dead" can be used to show the vast advancement of filmmaking technology over the past 30 years and also comments on the change in modern movie-goers. Though these films are vastly different, one thing is for sure, Dawn of the Dead as a franchise is a cultural milestone and will have a continuing impact on the horror genre for years to come. References Dawn of the dead. (n. d.). Retrieved from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0077402> Romero, G. (Director) (1978). Dawn of the dead [DVD] Soriano, R. H. (2010). School Film Editing Machines: Moviola and Steenbeck. Retrieved from <http://voices.yahoo.com/old-school-film-editing-machines-moviola-steenbeck-6438352.html> Triggs, M. (2006-2012). Dawn of the Dead. Retrieved from http://movies.lovetoknow.com/wiki/Dawn_of_the_Dead