

Living dead walk onto screen near you



Daily Columnist

Peter Young

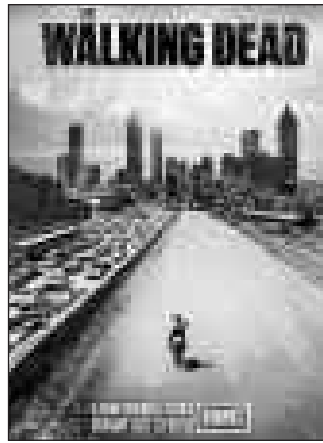
ONE of the hottest new shows from last year's US television season is sadly yet to find a broadcast home on Australian television.

The Walking Dead has been universally acclaimed by both critics and viewers, with strong ratings both in the US and the UK. Developed by Frank Darabont, director of *The Shawshank Redemption*, *The Green Mile* and *The Mist*, and co-produced by Gale Ann Hurd of *The Terminator*, *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* and *Aliens* fame, the series is based on a popular comic book series of the same name.

So why isn't *The Walking Dead* sitting in our TV guides alongside *Hawaii Five-O* and *Blue Bloods*? Probably because it is a post-apocalyptic drama focusing on a small band of survivors following an outbreak of zombies.

Zombies are nothing new to popular culture. Originally appearing in films such as *I Walked with a Zombie* (1943), zombies were originally intertwined with voodoo and witch doctors. It was George Romero's landmark black and white feature *Night of the Living Dead* (1968) that introduced the idea of zombies being the flesh-eating undead.

Romero continued his zombie series with five further Living Dead films: *Dawn*



of the Dead (1978); *Day of the Dead* (1985); *Land of the Dead* (2005); *Diary of the Dead* (2007) and *Survival of the Dead* (2010).

Each film features civilisation falling apart as the world is overrun by zombies but none are direct sequels to each other in terms of characters or storylines. The entire series is gore-tastic and gets two half-eaten thumbs up from me.

Romero's co-writer on the original Living Dead film, John A. Russo, wrote a book, *The Return of the Living Dead*, which was also made into a film in 1985. This time, the zombies have a taste for human brains, and a further four sequels were spawned, all of variable quality. A scene in *Return of the Living Dead Part II* (1988) depicts a zombie dressed in Michael Jackson's Thriller costume being electrocuted and hilariously recreating the iconic choreography.



ZOMBIE FEVER: A promo for *The Walking Dead* (left) and a scene from *28 Days Later* (above).

Of course, Jackson's famous long form music video, directed by John Landis in 1983, has probably been seen by more people worldwide than all zombie movies put together. In the video, the living dead arise from their graves to dance and sing to Jackson's music. That's far more frightening to me than any brain-eating zombie.

The zombie world is not without controversy. Fans were upset when Zack Snyder's remake of *Dawn of the Dead* (2005) featured running zombies. The argument is that as reanimated corpses, zombie ankles are probably too decomposed and unstable to sustain running. I guess that rules out my Zomba™ latino dance exercise program for the undead.

The excellent post-apocalyptic films *28 Days Later* (2002) and *28 Weeks Later* (2007) also feature zombie-like creatures. A debate still rages over the internet about

whether these films can be considered of the zombie cannon. In my opinion, they can't be included, as the creatures depicted are actually infected living people who can starve to death if they don't feed.

Zombies have also slowly made their way (walking and moaning) into other motion picture genres. The action horror franchise *Resident Evil* (2002-2010) features Milla Jovovich fighting hordes of zombies. Peter Jackson's *Braindead* (1992), Andrew Currie's *Fido* (2006) and *Zombieland* (2009) are laugh out loud comedies. Even the romantic comedy isn't safe. The excellent *Shaun of the Dead* (2004) was the world's first "zom-rom-com."

Reportedly in pre-production, Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* should hit our screens in 2013. I can't wait to see literary heroine Elizabeth Bennet and her sisters battle the walking dead.

My favourite zombie movie title has to be the rather subtly named *Zombies! Zombies! Zombies!* (2007). Surprisingly, it focuses on an unorthodox speech therapist helping King George VI overcome his stammer.

But seriously, zombies are now firmly a staple for modern film audiences. Why shouldn't they be on our small screens too, especially in a dramatic series as acclaimed as *The Walking Dead*?

With the plethora of free-to-air and pay TV channels out there, surely someone should purchase the rights and air it before some of the more technically gifted amongst us obtain it by "other means."

<http://peterayoung.com>

ADVERTORIAL

ORANGE TO BENEFIT FROM PROFESSIONAL TRAINING INITIATIVE

One of Australia's most dynamic registered training organisations (RTOs), Upskilled, is offering Orange residents the chance to boost their career prospects, as part of a new campaign to upskill Australia's workforce.

Orange is one of the first areas chosen by Upskilled for their **Upskilling Australia** initiative, which will see free professional training courses provided to individuals in 50 different locations across Australia.

The campaign aims to give something back to the community by offering professional training to individuals who might not have had the support or opportunity before. Whether it's someone who's been out of work for a while or someone who wants to help a friend get the career break they deserve, Upskilled is looking forward to hearing from local residents. One deserving local will be awarded a fully-funded training course in a subject of their choice from Upskilled's extensive list of courses, from Business Administration and Human Resources to Management and Project Management. Upskilled provides training solutions for both individuals and businesses - all courses are staffed by highly qualified teachers and trainers who design tailored training plans to meet specific needs.

Upskilled Managing Director, Joel Gage, says: "It's easy to get stuck in a career rut but we're hoping that our Upskilling Australia initiative will really help Orange residents, and those across the country, to recognise and achieve their work-related

goals this year. Here at Upskilled, we're committed to providing flexible professional training in regional areas across Australia, not just in metro hubs, giving everyone the chance to benefit from improved skills and increased confidence."

Anyone wishing to benefit from this opportunity - or knows a friend or family member who they'd like to put forward - should describe in no more than 150 words why they should be offered an Upskilled training course and send to entries@upskilled.com.au before midnight on Friday 11th March, 2011. Judging of the entries will take place later in March.

For further information, visit: www.upskilled.edu.au

For news on courses and other exciting competitions, follow Upskilled on Twitter www.twitter.com/upskilled or become a fan on Facebook <http://www.facebook.com/pages/UpSkilled/146732582047266?v=wall>



STRINGS SING IN GARDEN

MUSIC lovers were swept away by the sound of strings at Music in the Gardens on Friday at Orange Botanic Gardens.

Friday's performance was the second in the five-part series.

The next concert, *Blossoming Ensembles*, will be held from 6.30pm to 8pm.

Entry costs \$5 for adults and children under 16 are admitted free.

The series finishes up on March 4 with the final concert, *Botanic Jazz*.

Photos: JUDE KEOGH



Katarina Galle-Barrett, Kate Zanolla and Molly Black. 0211music2



Diane and Dave Hedges. 0211music3



Alanna and Fiona Williamson, Robyn Thomas and Noelene Lang. 0211music4