

# Zombie Flick ‘Warm Bodies’ Resurrects the Undead

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on February 1, 2013 - 4:57pm

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Rating: **4.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – For the one millionth time in movie history, zombies walk among us in “Warm Bodies.” But this isn’t an ordinary entry in the undead genre, this has a load of romance, symbolism and John Malkovich. “It” couple Nicholas Hoult and Teresa Palmer give a whole new meaning to going steady.

This is written and directed by the odd Jonathan Levine (“50/50”), who never met a movie theme he can’t deconstruct. “Warm Bodies” is a trenchant allegory in the mold of George Romero – using the undead as symbol for modern humanity – and doesn’t disappoint in showing the humorous and warm fuzzy side of the slow moving undead. With some sly winking at the camera, Levine formulates a Valentine’s Day treat which should be the go-to movie for the big night, for it is both romantic and unromantic, which pretty much defines the expectations for V-Day. What is a relationship but a slow moving body that keeps moving despite being shot in the heart with the bullets of reality?

The narrator is a zombie nicknamed “R” (Nicholas Hoult), who explains the post-apocalyptic circumstance of his universe. Disease has spread through humans, converting a large percentage of the population into the undead, zombies who roam looking for brains to devour. R’s “friend” is “M” (Rob Coddry), and their unspoken connection is a precursor to the next chapter. It involves the normal humans, walled-off in a city to protect themselves from the plague of the undead.



Feed Dating?: R (Nicholas Hoult) and Julie (Teresa Palmer) in “Warm Bodies”  
*Photo credit: Summit Entertainment*

It is a military city/state ruled by Grigio (John Malkovich), whose daughter Julie (Teresa Palmer) enjoys straying outside the wall. She and her boyfriend Perry (David Franco) encounter some zombies while on the outside, and in the attack R eats Perry's brains. This gives him the memories of the fallen, and it includes the love for Julie. When that connection is made, R forces Julie to his apartment, the inside of an abandoned jetliner. This puts into motion a healing process that might change things, but Grigio is on the trail to rescue his daughter. It becomes a race against love and a revived heart.

The scenario is constructed perfectly, but the film itself never takes it seriously. The production design of this post-apocalyptic world is precisely rendered, especially R's "apartment," an abandoned jumbo jet. To have wacky romance in a world that is lost and separated by walls, amid a dark atmosphere of destruction, is to have ultimate faith in the optimistic principles of love. This theme is delivered, even though the premise includes the ragged bloodiness of the zombie culture, lots of gunplay and the eating of yummy brains.

The zombie world most likely has been deeply defined, but what was impressive about Levine's script is that he proposed explanations that added plausibility to the journey of the undead. It was particularly interesting to note that eating brains caused the ingesting zombie to gain the thoughts and memories of the victim's mind, thus giving R a motivation to pursue Julie. Also as attractions deepened, life started to flicker in R, and all of his colleagues that could see the benefit. What defines evolution better than that?

It's much easier to play a zombie than the human enemy and all the undead performances were more fun than the humans. Teresa Palmer had too much of an ingenue quality to effectively deliver the girlfriend. Her girlfriend Nora (Analeigh Tipton) had a fire that was much more interesting. John Malkovich, surprisingly, plays it pretty straight as a megalomaniac general. Nicholas Hoult does a decent carrying of the film as R, but it's his buddy M – portrayed by Rob Corddry – who seemed to have a better understanding of projecting the zombie within and evolving to a healing point. His characterization, with the delicate combination of humor and pathos, was positively Chaplin-esque.



Nicholas Hoult Has Another Day in Paradise in "Warm Bodies"

*Photo credit: Summit Entertainment*

Levine can't help but extend the enemy – there are ultra-zombies who are stripped of skin called "Bonies," and they become the scapegoat, the opponents of the humans with the undead in the middle. This is the least interesting part of the story. But the narrative is also rich with symbolism. Levine does a quick cut flashback within an empty, abandoned airport to the "better days," when humans were more "connected," and that had a nice flash of irony. The walls between what is not understood between the two categories of existence are both physical and moral, with love being the power that breaks the barrier.

This is a zombie movie for everyone, with the exception of the weak stomachs for the gross parts. It is definitely a great date movie, for if those two nutty kids can make it, separated by their life and un-death, than any couple looking to come together beyond the confines of the movie house should follow suit. Wherefore art thou, indeed.

*"Warm Bodies" opens everywhere February 1st. Featuring Nicholas Hoult. Teresa Palmer, John Malkovich, Rob Corddry, Analeigh Tipton and Dave Franco. Written and directed by Jonathan Levine. Rated "PG-13"*



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