

# A twist and tribute to a revived genre

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Forget about vampires and go see "Zombieland," a movie packed with laughs and screams.

When going into any zombie film in theaters these days, it's best not to have any expectations. Having no expectations means less disappointment, and "Zombieland" was unexpectedly great.

The satire starts with having the two male lead characters as polar opposites. It's the classic case of survival bringing opposites together; it's sort of like "The Odd Couple" with undead cannibals. Played by Woody Harrelson, Tallahassee is a modern day, loud-mouth cowboy persona while his sidekick, Columbus, played by Jesse Eisenberg, is smart, quiet, socially awkward and seemingly wimpy. The two bust out the gag jokes and one-liners and make it look entirely too easy to have a good time while fighting for survival.

This particular zombie film goes with the concept of post-zombie outbreak theme. The

zombie apocalypse is in full effect. The biggest critical details of all zombie movies are the zombies.

This movie breaks out of the typical mold for zombie movies. It's the first zombie flick I've seen which has incorporated the essential rules for survival. While other movies of the genre drop advice here and there — "aim for the head", "never go alone" — "Zombieland" presents the audience with a long list of rules. These rules pop up continuously throughout the film and are very reminiscent of the *Zombie Survival Guide* by Max Brooks.

Most surprising was the lack of gore. Generally with horror satires the writers and directors are generous with the gore and zombie slaying. When there is gore, it's spectacular. Also, expect a stellar zombie killing montage "Natural Born Killer's" style by Harrelson.

Highlighting one of the greatest



Photo courtesy of IMDb.com

moments in movie history are the scenes features Bill Murray. Nothing more can be said without completely spoiling the scene. Seriously though, zombies and Bill Murray... Does anything else need to be said?

In the genre of zombie horror comedy films, this movie is definitely funnier than "Fido,"

but not funnier than "Shaun of the Dead," in terms of recent horror comedy zombie flicks.

"Zombieland" is incomparable to "Shaun of the Dead," and that's that. Comparing these two movies is like comparing apples to oranges. The premises of the two movies are totally different. Shaun of the Dead involves

before the zombies attack and the dealing with the initial zombie outbreak, whereas Zombieland is well past that point. The film falls into the category of being hilarious and gory like Shaun of the Dead but they're different enough to be equally appreciated. However, if you enjoyed Simon Pegg and Nick Frost putting up the good fight against the undead, you'll love watching Woody Harrelson and Jesse Eisenberg have a go.

"Zombieland" was directed by Ruben Fleischer and written by Rhett and Paul Wernick, all three of whom worked executive for Jimmy Kimmel Live (but don't let that deter you).

This movie certainly has zombie cult classic potential. It is an instant classic that hardcore zombie enthusiasts are sure to love. "Zombieland" strikes at the heart of horror, catches you off guard and scares you into laughing hysterically. It's an all-American shotgun blast to the face of a film, just in time for the Halloween season.

# Letterman left with uncertain path

BY FRAZIER MOORE  
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David Letterman had his Hugh Grant moment. The question is whether his personal embarrassment will help fuel further professional triumph.

How he deals with the situation at hand on Monday, and the nights ahead, could prove to be a defining chapter in his long TV career. With any luck, it could clinch his recent ratings victory in late-night TV.

The intensely private Letterman surely didn't want to be swept up in this maelstrom, which he dropped on "Late Show" viewers last Thursday with his startling revelations of having sex with women on his staff — a disclosure prompted by a \$2 million blackmail threat against him.

But for a celebrity the caliber of Hugh Grant, publicity — including speculation of career suicide — was certainly unavoidable 14 years ago, when he was arrested

with a prostitute on Hollywood's Sunset Strip. Very embarrassing. But then he retreated to NBC's "The Tonight Show" for image rehab. Host Jay Leno wasted no time before asking his instant classic of a question: "What were you thinking?!"

Grant's appearance vaulted ratings runner-up "Tonight" past Letterman's CBS "Late Show," a leadership position Leno held through his retirement from late night earlier this year.

Since then, Letterman has reclaimed a ratings edge over new "Tonight" host Conan O'Brien.

And now, Dave may have truly sealed the deal. With his masterful monologue last Thursday, he took control of a dicey situation. He promised his audience "a little story" and delivered in spades. He acknowledged his own past "creepy" behavior. He reminded everyone that he's a guy "motivated by nothing but guilt."

Seated at his desk, he single-handedly gave a TV performance to equal the Jay-and-Hugh

moment. Implicit in everything Dave said about his own behavior was the unspoken question: "What was I thinking?"

It could be that Letterman's carefully calibrated act of self-disclosure has put him in the best spot possible to weather the situation — and even to milk it. Beloved by viewers and critics for decades, he has abruptly freshened the vintage David Letterman brand.

A humorist who mocks the world while holding it at arm's length, Letterman has demonstrated he still has the ability to surprise even fans who thought they knew him thoroughly.

And he has everybody talking. Consider the women of ABC's "The View" on Monday. Joy Behar said Letterman "jumped the gun. Politicians should take a page from his book. He was smart, PR-wise." Fellow co-host Sherri Shepherd called Dave "a standup guy." But guest co-host Lisa Ling declared, "When you're the boss, you should keep your thing in your

pants."

Then Shepherd suggested that maybe his workplace sex partner "really liked him."

"Come on," Ling scoffed.

Most of the audience members waiting to enter the Ed Sullivan Theater for Monday's "Late Show" taping were excited about being there and not so troubled by Letterman's personal life.

"He did a really classy job of announcing it to everyone," said Keely Ahearn, who came from Minneapolis with her friend Adam Melchert. "I don't think he should have to say that much about it."

Melchert said he understood that such attention is part of being in the spotlight, but said, ultimately, "it's his business. I didn't ever watch the show because he was a moral compass for me."

Meanwhile, a legendary late-night host has nothing but praise for Letterman's crisis management.

"To me, it seems Dave Letterman's handling of this is impeccable," Dick Cavett said in an e-mail. "Brave, direct, and — dare I say

it? — manly. He has set a real example here of exactly how to behave when assaulted in such a sleazy operation."

It isn't the first time Dave has shown finesse in managing a firestorm.

In June, he had a run-in with former Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin over jokes made at the expense of her teenage daughter. He emerged from a tumultuous few days of protests and demands for his dismissal with a ratings jolt. And thanks to the dumb-luck timing of the flap, he also handily upstaged his much-hyped NBC rival just as O'Brien was taking over as "Tonight" host.

In another of his memorable TV performances, Letterman apologized to Palin and her family. But he has never stopped making jokes at Palin's expense.

To judge from last week's tour-de-force confessional ("I know what you're saying: 'I'll be darned, Dave had sex'"), Letterman will now be making more jokes at his own expense.