

# War and Social Upheaval Cause Spikes in Zombie Movie Production

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There's been a huge spike in the production of zombie movies lately, and many of them seem to be inspired by war. Everything from *28 Days Later* to *Zombie Strippers* make explicit reference to wartime, as did seminal 1968 zombie flick *Night of the Living Dead*. Is there really a connection between zombie movies and social unrest? We decided to do some research and find out.

The result? We've got a line graph showing the number of zombie movies coming out in the West each year since 1910 — and there are definite spikes during certain years, which always seem to happen eerily close to historical events involving war or social upheaval. Mostly we've focused on movies from the U.S. and Europe, and we've included the living dead among zombies — so mummies are included, but vampires and ghosts aren't.

Obviously as you look at this chart, you have to correct somewhat for the fact that more movies are being made as we get closer to the present, and (more importantly) there are better records of those movies with better tagging. So it's easier to research movies with zombies in them if you're looking at productions from the 1980s onward. In addition, there's been a huge boom in indie and low-budget horror movies over the past ten years, and that undoubtedly accounts somewhat for the giant spike you see during the last 8 years or so.

Still, even correcting for the fact that there are more movies being made today, you can see that there are distinctive spikes in zombie popularity - and they always seem to fall slightly after a huge political or social event has caused mass fear, chaos, or suffering. That's why World War II, Vietnam, and the current Iraq War are all followed by a zombie rush at theaters.

Obviously, if you're going to look at these historical correlations, you have to consider that movies inspired by a real-life event aren't going to show up in theaters for at least six months to a year, so we've accounted for that. You can see that most of these spikes in zombie popularity do seem weirdly close to periods of historical trauma like wars or the AIDS epidemic. Is there a causal connection, or is it just coincidence? You be the judge.



Vindicators Creators Sarah Carbiener and Erica Rosbe on Their Rick and Morty Spin-Off

Sabina Graves

00:00 / 00:00

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### **Sleepy and ethical.**

The Canadian Down & Feather Company can check a few people off your holiday shopping list: cozy connoisseurs or family who just needs better sleep.

*Chart by Stephanie Fox. Additional reporting by Katharine Duckett.*

### **Appendix: Zombie movies we included in this study**

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1910: 1 Frankenstein 1911: 1 The Mummy 1919 J'accuse! 1931: 1  
Frankenstein 1932: 1 White Zombie 1933: 1 The Ghoul 1935: 2 The Lost City  
Bride of Frankenstein 1936: 4 Revolt of the Zombies Ouanga Midnight Blunders  
The Walking Dead 1938: 1 J'accuse! (Remake) 1939: 1 Son of Frankenstein  
1940: 1 The Ghost Breakers 1941: 1 King of the Zombies 1942: 1 Bowery at  
Midnight 1943: 4 Dead Men Walk I Walked With a Zombie Revenge of the  
Zombies Frankenstein meets the Wolf Man The Mad Ghoul 1944: 1 Voodoo

Man 1945: 1 Zombies on Broadway 1946: 1 Valley of the Zombies 1952: 1  
Zombies of the Stratosphere 1953: 1 Scared Stiff 1955: 1 Creature with the Atom  
Bain 1957: 3 The Zombies of Mora Tau Voodoo Island The Unearthly 1958: 4  
Womaneater The Revenge of Frankenstein The Brain Eaters Misterios de la  
magia negra (Mysteries of Black Magic) 1959: 6 Invisible Invaders Teenage  
Zombies The Mummy Plan 9 From Outer Space The Four Skulls of Jonathan  
Drake Night of the Ghouls 1960: 1 Creature of the Walking Dead 1961: 3  
Muñecos infernales (The Curse of the Doll People) The Dead One Dr. Blood's  
Coffin 1962: 2 Carnival of Souls Santo contra los zombies (Invasion of the  
Zombies) 1963: 1 They Saved Hitler's Brain 1964: 7 Roma contro Roma (War of  
the Zombies) The Curse of the Living Corpse El Secreto del Dr. Orloff (The Secret  
of Dr. Orloff) The Last Man on Earth Monstrosity Zombies The Incredibly  
Strange Creatures Who Stopped Living and Became Mixed-up Zombies Der chef  
wünscht keine Zeugen (No Survivors, Please) 1965: 2 Earth Dies Screaming  
Terrore nello spazio (Planet of the Vampires) Cinque tombe per un medium  
(Terror Creatures from the Grave) 1966: 2 The Plague of the Zombies The Death  
Curse of Tartu 1967: 2 They Came From Beyond Space Dr. Terror's Gallery of  
Horrors 1968: 6 Night of the Living Dead Dr. Satán y la magia negra (Dr. Satan  
Versus Black Magic) The Wild Wild West: Night of the Undead Astro-Zombies  
Blue Demon contra cerebros infernales (Blue Demon vs. El Crimen) Autopsia de  
un fantasma (Autopsy of a Ghost) 1969: 2 Frankenstein Must Be Destroyed  
1970: 4 Night Slaves Dream No Evil El mundo de los muertos (Land of the Dead)  
Santo el enmascarado de plata y Blue Demon contra los monstruos (Santo and  
Blue Demon Against the Monsters) 1971: 4 La muerte viviente (Island of the  
Snake People) La noche del terror ciego (Tombs of the Blind Dead) Escape The  
Resurrection of Zachary Wheeler 1972: 7 Gli orrori del castello di Norimberga  
(The Torture Chamber of Baron Blood) L'Etrusco uccide ancora (The Dead Are  
Alive) La Notte dei diavoli (Night of the Devils) Blood of Ghastly Horror Children  
Shouldn't Play With Dead Things Tales From the Crypt (Las momias de  
Guanajuato) The Mummies of Guanajuato 1973: 15 El espanto surge de la tumba

(Horror Rises From the Tomb) La invasión de los muertos (Invasion of the Dead) La orgía de los muertos (Beyond the Living Dead) El ataque de los muertos sin ojos (Attack of the Blind Dead) Christina, princesse de l'érotisme (A Virgin Among the Living Dead) El castillo de las momias de Guanajuato (Castle of the Mummies of Guanajuato) Horror Express Dead People La noche de los brujos (Night of the Sorcerers) La rebelión de las muertas (Vengeance of the Zombies) Psychomania Flesh for Frankenstein Santo contra la magia negra (Santo vs. Black Magic Woman) House of the Living Dead Vudú sangriento (Voodoo Black Exorcist) 1974: 13 Dead of Night (Deathdream) Garden of the Dead Corpse Eaters House of Seven Corpses House on Skull Mountain Legend of the 7 Golden Vampires Non si deve profanare il sonno dei morti (Let Sleeping Corpses Lie) Shanks Sugar Hill El buque mandito (Horror of the Zombies) El pantano de los cuervos (Swamp of the Ravens) Young Frankenstein Kung bakit dugo ang kulay ng gabi (Night of the Zombies) 1975: 7 Macchie Solari (Autopsy) The Dead Don't Die Frozen Scream La noche de las gaviotas (Night of the Death Cult) Lord Shango Shivers La Perversa caricia de Sántan (The Wicked Caresses of Satan) 1976: 1 Gou hun jiang tou (Black Magic II) 1977: 3 The Child Shock Waves La fille á la fourrure (The Porno Zombies) 1978: 4 Dawn of the Dead Les raisins de la mort (Grapes of Death) Salinnabileul ggotneun yeoja (Living Dead Girl) Within the Woods 1979: 4 Zombi 2 Io Zombo, Tu Zombi, Lei Zomba (I Am a Zombie, You Are A Zombie, She Is A Zombie) Phantasm The Day It Came to Earth 1980: 10 Zombi Holocaust John Carpenter's The Fog Alien Dead The Children Blood eaters Paura nella città dei morti viventi (City of the Living Dead) Fiend Virus Incubo sulla città contaminata (City of the Walking Dead) Más allá del terror (Further Than Fear) 1981: 13 Night of the Zombies L'aldilà e tu vivrai nel terrore (The Beyond) Heavy Metal Quella villa accanto al cimitero (The House Outside the Cemetery) Le notti del terrore (Burial Ground) Dawn of the Mummy Dead & Buried Le Lac des morts vivants (Zombie Lake) Frankenstein Island L'abîme des morts vivants (Bloodsucking Nazi Zombies) Kiss Daddy Goodbye Evil Dead Rosso Sangue (Absurd) 1982: 9 Aftermath Creepshow Raw Force I was

a Zombie for the F.B.I. Wu long tian shi zhao ji gui (Kung Fu Zombie) O segredo da Múmia (The Secret of the Mummy) Pengabdi setan (Satan's Slave) The Curse of the Screaming Dead Revenge in the House of Usher 1983: 5 Nightmare Natas: The Reflection One Dark Night Sole Survivor Zeder 1984: 6 Surf II Night Shadows Night of the Comet Zombie Island Massacre Frankenstein 90 Rocktober Blood 1985: 12 Hard Rock Zombies Return of the Living Dead Re-Animator The Midnight Hour The Dark Power Attack of the Beast Creatures Dead End La mansión de los muertos vivantes (Mansion of the Living Dead) Day of the Dead Lifeforce Warning Sign Cementerio del terror (Zombie Apocalypse) 1986: 12 Zombie Brigade Zombiethon The Supernaturals Loves of the Living Dead Diamond Ninja Force Deadly Friend Nightmare Weekend Goremet: Zombie Chef From Hell Night of the Creeps Raiders of the Living Dead Zombie Nightmare Abracadabra 1987: 14 Bad Taste Evil Dead 2 I Was a Teenage Zombie Dak Bangla The Gate Zombie 5: Killing Birds Redneck Zombies Killing Spree La revanche des mortes vivantes (Revenge of the Living Dead Girls) Zombie High Video Dead Zombie Vs. Ninja Night of the Living Babes Una notte al cimitero (Graveyard Disturbance) 1988: 11 The Serpent and the Rainbow Return of the Living Dead Part II Dead Heat Waxwork Phantasm II Zombi 3 FleshEater Zombie 4 Pet Semetary Meng gui xue tang (The Haunted Cop Shop II) Curse of the Blue Lights 1989: 17 The Laughing Dead The Dead Next Door The Vineyard Curse of the Zombie Beverly Hills Bodysnatchers The Chilling The Dead Pit Blood Nasty Zombie Rampage Hellgate Zombie Party Working Stiffs The Nutzoids at Cannibal Cove From the Dead of Night Ginseng King Monster High Night Life 1990: 5 Bride of Re-Animator Night of the Living Dead Voodoo Dawn Demon Wind Linnea Quigley's Horror Workout 1991: 9 Chopper Chicks in Zombietown The Boneyard Demoni 3 Nudist Colony of the Dead Teenage Exorcist Zombie ja Kummitusjuna (Zombie and the Ghost Train) Zombie Army Zombie Cop Zombie '90: Extreme Pestilence 1992: 11 Brain Dead Batoru garu (Battle Girl) Netherworld Waxwork II Zombie Rampage 3 Pet Semetary II Death Becomes Her Army of Darkness Urban Scumbags vs. Countryside Zombies Dead

is Dead Zombie Rampage 2 1993: 7 My Boyfriend's Back Return of the Living Dead 3 Zombie Bloodbath Space Zombie Bingo!!! The Killing Box Zombie Genocide Drag 1994: 7 Mary Shelley's Frankenstein Shatter Dead Shrunken Heads Phantasm III: Lord of the Dead Twilight Zone: Rod Serling's Lost Classics Dellamore Dellamore Gore Whore 1995: 6 La Cage aux Zombies Legion of the Night Zombi I Zombie Bloodbath 2: Rage of the Undead Voodoo Zombie Holocaust 1996: 4 Living a Zombie Dream Zombi vs. Mardi Gras Avaruuden teurastajat (Space Butchers) Frankenstein and Me 1997: 10 Plaga Zombie Premutos: Lord of the Living Dead Uncle Sam The Necro Files Night of the Living Le Zombi de Cap-Rouge Zombie Ninja Gangbusters Striker Bob Bryllupsnatten (The Wedding Night) The Viscious Sweet 1998: 9 Bio Zombie I, Zombie: A Chronicle of Pain Zombie Cult Massacre Laughing Dead Tale of the Mummy Into the Woods... The Cabin Hollywood Mortuary Zombie Toxin 1999: 5 Hot Wax Zombies On Wheels The Mummy VS3: Infantry of Doom Mutation The Collegians Are Go!! 2000: 12 The Dead Hate the Living! Flesh Freaks Junk: Shiryô-gari Meat Market Prison of the Dead Versus Wild Zero Zombie Bloodbath 3: Zombie Armageddon Teenage Zombie House Massacre Reign of the Dead Heavy Metal 2000 The Horrible Dr. Bones 2001: 15 Cremains Mulva: Zombie Ass-Kicker! Biohazardous Dead in America Stacy Meat Market 2 Zombie (zero) Biker Zombies Children of the Living Dead Plaga Zombie: Zona Mutants The Mummy Returns Zombie Chronicles Night of a Thousand Screams R.I.P. The Resurrection Game 2002: 9 Bubba Ho-Tep Deadline Cremaster 3 Mark of the Astro-Zombies Necropolis Awakened Resident Evil Zombie Campout Roni vs. Lincoln Evil Night 28 Days Later... 2003: 22 House of the Dead Beyond Re-Animator Cadaver Bay Flesh For the Beast Maplewoods Mummy's Kiss Xombie: Dead on Arrival Undead Graveyard Corpses Are Forever Noctem Zombie Beach Party I'll See You in My Dreams Gory Gory Hallelujah Zombieddon Night of A Thousand Screams 2 Necro Files 2 Zombie Night Exhumed Wiseguys vs. Zombies The Mental Dead 2004: 29 Jigoku kôshien (Battlefield Baseball) Dawn of the Dead Dead and Breakfast Shaun of the Dead Choking Hazard Les

Revenants Resident Evil: Apocalypse Vampires vs. Zombies Beaster Zombie  
 Vegetarians Dawn of the Friend Corpses Angry and Moist: An Undead Chronicle  
 Bad Friend Bone Sickness Curse of the Maya Dead & Breakfast Feeding the  
 Masses Ghost Lake Hide and Creep Hunting Creatures Night of the Living Dorks  
 Rotten Shaolin Zombies Khun krabii hiroh (SARS Wars) Shadows of the Dead  
 Shao Lin jiang shi (Shaolin Vs. Evil Dead) Zombie Honeymoon Zombie Nation  
 Zombie Planet 2005: 29 Day of the Dead 2: Contagium Land of the Dead The  
 Wicked's Zombiez Boy Eats Girl Bubba's Chili Parlor Day X Dead at the Box Office  
 Dead Creek Dead Life Dead Men Walking Die You Zombie Bastards! Die  
 Zombiejäger Le divan vert Doom Hood of the Living Dead House of the Dead 2  
 Livelihood Living Dead Lock Up Pot Zombies Raiders of the Damned Return of  
 the Living Dead 4: Necropolis Return of the Living Dead 5: Rave to the Grave  
 Rise of the Undead The Roost Severed The Stink of Flesh Swamp Zombies (Tôkyô  
 zonbi) Tokyo Zombie 2006: 34 After Sundown Awaken the Dead Automaton  
 Transfusion Awakening City of Rott Dead & Deader Dead in the Water The Dead  
 Live Deadlands: The Rising Die and Let Live Doomed to Consume Dorm of the  
 Dead Electric Zombies Enter the Zombie Fido Gangs of the Dead L'isola dei  
 morti viventi (Island of the Living Dead) Last Rites of the Dead Meat Market 3  
 Mortuary Night of the Dead: Leben Tod Night of the Living Dead 3-D The Plague  
 The Quick and the Undead Shadow: Dead Riot The Slaughter Slither Special  
 Dead Storm of the Dead Stoned Dead War of the Dead Wicked Little Things The  
 Zombie Diaries Zombies by Design 2007: 33 28 Weeks Later American Zombie  
 Awaken the Dead Beneath the Surface Brain Blockers Days of Darkness Dead  
 Heist Dead Moon Rising The Dead Undead Evil Keg Flight of the Living Dead:  
 Outbreak on a Plane Forest of the Dead Forever Dead Living Dead Lock Up 2:  
 March of the Dead The Mad Motocross Zombies from Hell Mutation-  
 Annihilation Otto; or Up With Dead People Planet Terror The Rage REC Resident  
 Evil: Extinction Risen Street Team Massacre Undead or Alive Undead Ted  
 Wasting Away Z: A Zombie Musical Zibakhkhana-Hell's Ground Zombie Farm  
 Zombie Town Zombies Gone Wild Zombi: La creazione (Zombies: The



Beginning) 2008: 9 Quarantine Day of the Dead Diary of the Dead Outpost  
Sabbath Retardead House of the Damned Zombie Strippers Zombies! Zombies!  
Zombies!

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