



## Warm Bodies blurs the line between romance and horror

### FILM REVIEW

#### Warm Bodies

**ADAPTED BY** Jonathan Levine  
**DIRECTED BY** Jonathan Levine  
**STARRING** Nicholas Hoult, Teresa Palmer, John Malkovich, Dave Franco and Rob Corddry  
**WHEN** In theatres Friday, Feb. 1

**Ryan Stephens**

ARTS & CULTURE STAFF • @STEPHENSJRYAN

The teen romance genre has spent the better part of the last decade infiltrating what appears to be its polar opposite: the monster movie. And after flirting with vampires and werewolves, teen fiction has made its inevitable move to zombies with the film *Warm Bodies*, creating an insightful and philosophical blend of two very different genres while raising the bar for the future of both horror movies and romantic comedies.

This bizarre love story is set in an alternate time in which humankind has been annihilated by a zombie apocalypse of unknown origin, leaving the few remaining humans to retreat behind a giant wall in a nameless American metropolis. On one side, the story focuses on Julie (Teresa Palmer) as she butts heads with her overbearing father (John Malkovich) and non-committal boyfriend (Dave Franco). On the other side of the wall, teenage zombie R (Nicholas Hoult) wanders aimlessly, mostly consumed by zombification but

maintaining the personality of a modern-day self-deprecating teenager. While out scouting for supplies, Julie crosses paths with R and his group of zombies, who immediately attack. When Julie and R's eyes meet through the bloodshed, it's love at first sight for R, causing him to fight against his instincts to keep Julie safe.

Atypical of both the romance and horror genres, *Warm Bodies* prides itself on a lack of backstory. We're told very little about what caused the outbreak or even about the lives of the main characters — but this works in the movie's favour. We're not encumbered with the drama of broken families or the necessity of finding a cure for mankind. The characters are simply left alone to establish their eccentricities in a dating game made even more awkward by the fact that one of the lovebirds is dead. Although that very premise seems absurd, it plays out with such heart that even the biggest killjoy will find the growing affection believable, a testament to the strong writing and increasing strength of Hoult and Palmer's performances.

Since this is first and foremost a teen love story, some of the genre's cheesiest clichés are in full force in *Warm Bodies*. R, who was obviously a hipster when he was alive, utilizes his aimless wandering to gather collectibles — from quirky ornaments to vinyl records to horror Blu-rays — and bring them to his pad: an abandoned airplane. When asked why he collects vinyl, he even manages to moan, "Better sound." Oddly, it's pretentious quips like this that make the zombie romance so lively and humanistic,

allowing us to forget about his decaying skin and lurching gait to focus on the legitimate and convincing feelings within.

Perhaps the most exhilarating aspect of *Warm Bodies* is how it allows horror and romance to pull unexpected philosophical ideas out of each other, rather than simply mashing them together half-heartedly. Themes of hope and memory give the film emotional weight all too uncommon in monster movies. R can't remember the details of his life before death, though the act of eating brains provides him with the ability to experience and digest others' thoughts ingrained in the pink matter. This vicarious experience provides him with an emotional outlet that he wouldn't be able to achieve otherwise. As R notes early on, zombies don't sleep, therefore they're unable to dream.

In exploring this relationship between the biological and spiritual worlds, the movie asks the existentialist in all of us to consider the revitalizing nature of our own memories, which we often take for granted and shove back into our subconscious in favour of the brain-consuming tendency to focus only on our present and future.

As with the explosion of the *Twilight* series, conversation will inevitably turn towards the death of yet another classic monster. But *Warm Bodies'* romantic screenplay asks deep philosophical questions about what we take for granted in our sadly distracted lives. Sometimes, it takes some clichéd romance to encourage us to wake up from our daily undead fugue and learn to live again.

## fashion streeters

COMPILED AND PHOTOGRAPHED BY Selena Phillips-Boyle



**Mike Johanson**  
 PHD COMPUTING  
 SCIENCE V

**GATEWAY:** Describe what you're wearing.

**MIKE:** I'm wearing wool pants (and) I have a suit jacket that goes with them, a cobalt blue top and a scarf I knit myself.

**GATEWAY:** How do you stay warm in the winter?

**MIKE:** Lots and lots of layers. (I'm wearing) a sweater, a shirt, an undershirt, the scarf and I have a sweater back in the lab.



Check out [thegatewayonline.ca/fashionstreeters](http://thegatewayonline.ca/fashionstreeters) for more photos.

### ALBUM REVIEW



#### Ra Ra Riot Beta Love

Arts & Crafts  
[rarariot.com](http://rarariot.com)

**Adela Czyzewska**  
 ARTS & CULTURE WRITER

Ra Ra Riot's latest album, *Beta Love*, signifies a dramatic change for the band and fans alike. A follow-up to their 2012 album *The Orchard*, *Beta Love* finds the group a little more sparse in the wake of the departure of cellist Alexandra Lawn, and also marks a shift from indie baroque pop to electronic synth pop — a change that mostly works in their favour.

*Beta Love* manifests a weird

combination of robotic autotune and nostalgic '80s synth pop beats fused with classical strings. However strange the sound, this combination generates feel-good, foot-tapping tracks that grow on you the more you listen. It may be difficult for Ra Ra Riot fans to adjust to the synthesizers and change in style, but credit should be given where credit is due.

Frontman Wes Miles showcases a

serious range in vocals as well — one of the album's strongest points — and expertly displays his high falsetto on tracks like "When I Dream" and "Beta Love." The band still makes use of classical string instruments towards the end of songs like "Is It Too Much," though the instruments aren't as evident as on previous albums.

The digital effects paired with hand claps and guitar riffs make for a great dance album that imitates the effect of being trapped in a retro computer game and a cheesy '80s flick. Overall, it may not be an exceptionally memorable album, but *Beta Love* displays the band's capability to successfully experiment with new genres and styles while providing an upbeat soundtrack that deserves a listen.