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THEATER
JUNE 28 - JULY 4

THE DEAD DON'T DIE
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REEL WORLD



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A loose star-studded experiment from Jim Jarmusch

OK. So there's this small town in Pennsylvania where Bill Murray is chief of police, Adam Driver and Chloë Sevigny are his only officers, and something Very Weird—a zombie uprising maybe?—is already starting to happen.

by
**Juan-Carlos
Selznick**



**The Dead
Don't Die**

Starring Bill Murray,
Chloë Sevigny, Adam
Driver. Directed
by Jim Jarmusch.
Pageant Theatre.
Rated R.

The chief is named Cliff Robertson, and the officers are Ronnie Peterson and Mindy Morrison, respectively, but I give first mention to the names of the actors playing them because *The Dead Don't Die*, the Jim Jarmusch film in which these people appear, plays amusingly fast and loose with matters of movie genre, deadpan drollery, social commentary and all-star casting.

There is an adequately generic horror story in play here, but the special virtues of this oddly compelling film have mostly to do with the manner of its telling, the panoramic

bounty of its many fleeting characterizations, and its teasing glimmers of social commentary. This is a film that can at times be an excursion into escalating dramas of social and moral paralysis, and at others a self-reflexive goof in which Driver's character and others keep up a running commentary on the film's "theme song," which we (and they) have first heard during the opening credits.

Apart from the three police officers, the most significant character just might be "Hermit Bob," a hirsute wild man (Tom Waits, of course) who has long since

taken up permanent residence in the wooded areas on the outskirts of the little town of Centerville ("A Real Nice Place") whence he spouts, with equal authority, prophecies and violent threats. He's a kind of framing character who impacts the opening scenes and then returns only at the end. His is the last voice we hear in Jarmusch's film.

Steve Buscemi plays the fatally irascible Farmer Frank Miller. Danny Glover is working man Hank Thompson, who makes common cause with counter-cultural store owner Bobby Wiggins (Caleb Landry Jones). Eszter Balint (who starred in Jarmusch's 1984 breakthrough film, *Stranger Than Paradise*) plays Fern, everybody's favorite café waitress. Drunken Mallory O'Brien (Carol Kane) dies in Chief Robertson's jail, but of course doesn't stay dead for very long.

Iggy Pop and filmmaker Sara Driver play a pair of "coffee zombies." Selena Gomez, Austin Butler and Luka Sabbat play Zoe, Jack and Zack, a trio of "Cleveland hipsters" whose stopover in Centerville comes at exactly the wrong time. Two young women (Maya Delmont and Taliyah Whitaker) and a whimsical young man named Geronimo (Jahi Winston) flee a local detention center with similar results.

The jokey name games (Murray named after a well-known actor—Cliff Robertson—etc.) continue elsewhere: Rosie Perez plays a TV news anchor named Posie Juarez. And Tilda Swinton is superb in the role of the town's otherworldly undertaker, whose name is Zelda Winston. Meanwhile, Sturgill Simpson, author and performer of the film's thematically apt and perfectly listenable theme song ("The Dead Don't Die"), appears briefly as a guitar-dragging zombie. □