

7 must-see Korean zombie movies

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When it comes to zombie films, Hollywood dominates in quantity, while South Korea excels in quality. Over the past decade, South Korean filmmakers have elevated the zombie genre to a new level, making it emotionally rich and unpredictable.

So, if you've never seen a Korean zombie movie, now's the time to give it a try.

7. Train to Busan (2016)

A list of the best Korean zombie movies wouldn't be complete without the all-time classic, Train to Busan. It's one of the most popular zombie films worldwide in the last few years, and it remains a favorite since its release in 2016.

The film's premise is simple: passengers are trapped on a bullet train during a sudden zombie outbreak. What makes the film unforgettable isn't just the intense action sequences, but also how it intertwines themes of family, sacrifice, and class struggle. Gong Yoo's portrayal of a workaholic father trying to protect his daughter is heartbreaking, and the supporting cast delivers emotions far beyond those of typical zombie films.

Audiences enjoyed the relentless intensity of Train to Busan. The film is tense and suffocating, with super-fast zombies tearing through the train and the surrounding scenery. And when the train stops at stations, the level of fear intensifies.

So, if you're new to watching Korean zombie movies, you should start with this one. You won't be disappointed.

6. Peninsula (2020)

If you enjoyed Train to Busan, you'll be happy to know there's a standalone sequel, also set in post-apocalyptic South Korea. However, Peninsula is a different kind of zombie film from the original. Instead of focusing on a single outbreak, Peninsula delves into society after zombies have overrun the country. The film follows a group of survivors tasked with retrieving money from Seoul, but they must confront not only zombies but also ruthless factions of humans.

The film is still full of spectacular action sequences, and in fact, it's perhaps closer to a Hollywood zombie movie than the original. However, many critics argue that it lacks the elements that made Train to Busan special, with less emotional and character development, focusing more on pure entertainment. Even so, it's still worth watching if you want to understand the world of the film better.

5. Seoul Station: The Origin of the Pandemic (2016)

Seoul Station is truly amazing, for a few reasons.

Firstly, as a prequel to Train to Busan, it truly complements the storyline in that world, providing a clearer explanation of how the epidemic initially broke out and the reasons behind the societal collapse. While it doesn't feature many characters from the original, it captures a similar sense of fear and urgency, making Seoul Station a worthwhile watch.

Secondly, there's the animation style. Viewers really appreciate the harshness of some aspects in Seoul Station, which truly breathes life into some action and horror scenes with ferocity and gloom.

If you enjoyed Train to Busan, then Seoul Station is a must-see film that keeps the storyline engaging. You should watch the original before the animated version. That makes more sense, regardless of the timeline in the film.

4. #Alive: I'm Alive (2020)

Leaving the Train to Busan universe, we are now introduced to one of the best Korean zombie films: #Alive.

Part of the reason people love this Korean zombie movie is because it was released right in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic, and like audiences worldwide, it really touched their hearts. The storyline was incredibly profound at the time.

The film's setting evokes a heartbreaking sense of familiarity: A young man (played by Yoo Ah-in) is trapped in his apartment as a zombie outbreak spreads rapidly outside. Isolated from the world, with dwindling supplies and no means of communication, he must find ways to survive on every trip outside.

What makes #Alive stand out is its focus on isolation and loneliness, which is particularly relevant during lockdown. It's not like a traditional zombie action movie, but rather a survival horror film with intense scares.

Once again, due to the timing of its launch, the strong focus on smartphones and social media also created a strong sense of familiarity. Because most of us had experienced lockdowns or quarantines due to viruses, #Alive reflected the reality of life at that time.

3. The Wailing (2016)

Fans of Korean zombie films might wonder why *The Wailing* is included on this list; after all, it's not a purely zombie movie. Some argue that *The Wailing's* premise doesn't even warrant its inclusion in a zombie film list.

While *The Wailing* isn't a classic zombie movie, it tells the story of a mysterious illness that causes unsettling paranormal phenomena and crazed, disturbing behavioral changes. And while the characters aren't exactly zombies, it crosses the line and deserves a place on this list.

At the very least, it's on the list of favorite horror movies and definitely worth watching if you enjoy chilling nightmares and slow-paced plot developments.

2. The Odd Family: Zombie On Sale (2019)

Shaun of the Dead is clearly one of the best zombie comedies of all time. Few can match it. And of course, *The Odd Family: Zombie On Sale* is among them, but it's still an enjoyable film that helps lighten the often gloomy atmosphere of the genre.

The film tells the story of a dysfunctional rural family who discover a zombie lurking among them. Instead of panicking, they plan to exploit it for profit, with moments of humor and wit.

Audiences appreciated how *The Odd Family* shifted the zombie genre from apocalyptic despair to a lighthearted family comedy, revolving around the idea that it was just an uninvited guest, not a mutated, flesh-eating creature capable of killing them instantly.

1. Rampant (2018)

Most zombie films are set in modern times, where the horror of a collapsing society grips everyone's hearts. However, *Rampant* avoids that and brings zombies back to the Joseon dynasty in Korea (specifically the 17th century, as this dynasty lasted for hundreds of years).

The result is a thrilling blend of historical drama, epic martial arts, and zombie horror, telling the story of a disgraced prince who returns to Korea to face a zombie pandemic threatening his kingdom.

Of all the Korean zombie films on this list, *Rampant* is the most visually stunning. It's filled with classic costumes, candlelit palaces, and epic battle scenes, offering a rare sense of grandeur for a zombie movie.

The zombies in *Rampant* are also fast and aggressive, but seeing them go head-to-head with swordsmen is a delightful departure from typical zombie movie tropes.

South Korea is making a name for itself in the world of zombie films. But it's not just movies that are attracting attention and showcasing scenes of cannibalism.

If you want to watch a long, engaging series, you should also check out *All of Us Are Dead* on Netflix, about a group of teenagers trying to survive in a world just overrun by zombies. It's a great show, full of brutal violence, and has two seasons.

If you enjoyed Rampant, you should also check out Kingdom, available on Netflix. It also has two seasons and takes you back to the Joseon dynasty once again. Like Rampant, Kingdom cleverly blends political intrigue with a deadly epidemic that quickly turns people into flesh-eating zombies and intense battles.

And finally, don't overlook Happiness, another South Korean zombie drama on Netflix. This one is darker than All of Us Are Dead, and focuses on the consequences of releasing an experimental drug that fills people with rage – but the plot has a really interesting twist that makes it worth watching.

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