MEATGRINDER STUDIOS, LLC.
PRESENTS

A FILM/GRAPHIC NOVEL CONCEPT
BY
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'68

GENRE: Military Horror

TAGLINES: Welcome to 1968 and the end of the world
There are zombies in the razorwire

LOGLINE: Friday the thirteenth, February 1968, Lieutenant Tommy Blake and the soldiers of US firebase Aries witnessed the birth of the apocalypse. In the hollow eyes, rotting claws and hungry mouths of the reanimated dead lies the indisputable evidence of the end of civilization as we know it. From the steaming jungles of Vietnam to the turbulent streets of your town, USA, the rise of the cannibalistic dead has opened the door to hell on earth...and the zombies are ravenous.

THE ORIGINAL ONE-SHOT COMIC BOOK: A five-man fire team, tasked with investigating the sudden silence of a deep cover listening post on the Cambodian border, leaves firebase Aries via chopper and is inserted into the jungle. Led by Tommy Blake, the team includes machine gunner "Bronto" Jackson, medic Billy "Band-Aid" Kirk, radioman extraordinaire, "Bonnie" Benitez and mysterious, nervous grunt, Eddie "Dixie Dawg" Mann. All are veterans and comfortable with one another, except Mann, who is a recent replacement to the squad. Mann is the source of some dark speculation and rumors abound concerning his questionable activities during the recent Tet offensive.

The fire team, initially unnerved by the silence of the jungle and the obvious lack of enemy troop presence, proceeds cautiously toward their objective. When they are suddenly signaled by Bronto on point, they move forward for their first glimpse of horrors to come. In a clearing, a growling, ragged Viet Cong guerilla is stuck, it's foot caught in the vicious stakes of a Punji stick trap. Mann prepares to shoot the trapped enemy, but at a word of caution from Blake, Bronto takes the thing out instead, hurling his Bowie knife into its chest. The squad stands in wide-eyed horror as the thing on the stakes picks itself up from the ground, knife still fully embedded in its heart and snarls at them.

Though shaken, the squad manages to destroy the zombie and upon examining its remains, is forced to come to the realization that they weren't the first to kill this thing. What lies dead in the reddening jungle grass is not quite human. From this point on, they will continue, deeper into this new heart of darkness and discover their own fates. Amidst the rise of the hungry dead and the screams of napalm bombs from the sky, Tommy Blake and his band of brothers learn the blurring difference between the living and the dead.

'68 EXPANDED: The concept of the living dead rising in 1968 broadens, encompassing not only the conflict in Southeast Asia, but spreading and expanding to grip the whole world in its rotting embrace.

From US firebase Aries, a patrol must leave the relative safety of sandbags and razorwire to destroy a mortar pit that harasses the base daily. Among the grunts in the patrol, an unhappy Chinese-American soldier named Kuen Yam will face not only rude comparisons to the enemy on the part of his commanding officer, but the dark confines of a warren of zombie infested Viet Cong tunnels as he assumes the role of "Tunnel Rat".

In Cambodia, a deep cover CIA agent is tasked with babysitting a young, anti-war actress as she travels Southeast Asia gathering propaganda footage. Posing as a newsman, special agent Declan Rule will leave her to her own devices and travel to the nearest US military installation, firebase Aries, following leads connected to his real mission in Vietnam.

FIREBASE ARIES: Captain Joe "Dunk" Duncan, field surgeon Doctor Sam Russo and seventy-five other defending souls go about the business of holding a tiny fortress in the heart of enemy territory. This task becomes more difficult and more dangerous as enemy snipers, killed hours before, take up their rifles again, body bags containing the remains of fallen soldiers begin to sit up and twitch and growling, rotting hungry wraiths begin to emerge from the jungle all around.

HOME: In Oakland, California, an anti-Vietnam protest rally turns into a slaughterhouse as a young girl is accidentally killed by a stray bullet. What rises from the blood stained streets is no longer human, no longer rallies to a cause, right-wing or left and hungers only for the taste of human flesh. Riot cops and hippies, stoners and suits...all become unwilling allies in a slashing, tearing, biting battle for survival.

All these disparate stories collide as the dead rise in impossible numbers. Firebase Aries becomes the focal point, holding back the ravenous tide with seventy-five guns, aided only by the addition of Declan Rule and several straggling Viet Cong who have decided to make their last stand next to their sworn enemies rather than running for their lives through a jungle infested with hungry, contagious demons. It's Custer's last stand in the age of Aquarius as Claymore mines explode, 50 caliber rounds shatter the trees and the sounds of men being eaten alive fill the air.

Welcome to 1968. Welcome to hell.

'68-ORIGINS: The concept for the comic series '68 was born from an idea marrying the concept of the rising, hungry dead to the darkening reality of American life in the 1960's. As a country, we were quickly leaving behind the "Donna Reed" mindset of the 50's and thanks to widespread television coverage, treated to daily, full color footage of life and death in a foreboding theatre of operations called Vietnam. For the first time, war was not a world away. It was as close as our living room. We could hear the explosions, the pop of the M-16, the screams of the wounded and dying. We saw the blurry shapes of helmeted men crouching as they ran across decimated urban streets, crying children with their heads swathed in bloody bandages or missing limbs and jet airplanes dropping steel eggs that turned hillsides to walls of flame. War wasn't pre-packaged anymore, wasn't pretty and clean. Victory and defeat both meant more devastating letters home and nobody was clear on just who the good guys and bad guys were.

At the same time, a new generation of young Americans was coming of age, filled with self-righteous opinions, free love and drugs. It was the time of flower power, the Dali lama and the Beatles. The establishment was out and nobody bought the bullshit anymore. At least nobody under the age of 30. The country was a powder keg, waging a "cold" civil war between parent and child, policeman and protestor, politician and citizen. These were uneasy times with a soundtrack of rebel's rock and roll, a hit of blotter acid and hair to your waist. The rules were out the window and reality, somewhere between the sunshine on your shoulders and a deep purple haze, had started to fade.

Through exhaustive research and an acute attention to historical detail, the world of '68 includes all these things and adds the match to the fuse in the form of a nearly endless army of the hungry living dead. The resulting explosion will signal the end of the world.

'68-FUTURE: The world of '68 offers nearly inexhaustible storytelling potential. While the original and current expanded mini series dwell on the conflict in Vietnam, the overarching concept of a zombie plaque in the 1960's can be applied to nearly any situation. Any country, any city, any set of characters can be explored, keeping historical detail in the forefront and using the horror setting as a backdrop. The zombies are us and we are the dead...the more we kill, the more we have to kill. It's a self-fulfilling prophecy and the world is caught, frozen in time. Even though the calendar progresses, the times don't change. Bell-bottoms are here to stay. Love bugs emblazoned with flower decals and crudely painted peace symbols can be armored and mounted with machine guns. Nixon could become the next Castro and mount a coup, taking Washington by force and installing a shaky paramilitary regime that encircles the capital with land mines and razor wire.

It's the 60's forever-it's hippies with bazookas-It's the Manson family, dead and loving it, rising from the grit and filth of the desert to bring Helter Skelter down a bit early. It's the world of '68 and it is endless.

THE CREATORS:

MARK KIDWELL: is the author/illustrator of dozens of comic books representing genres from horror to western to sword and sorcery heroic fantasy. His work has been published by Image Comics, Fangoria Magazine, Cryptic Magazine, IDW and others. He has written multiple screenplays including BUMP, based on his splatterpunk comic series from Fangoria Comics. BUMP is in pre-production as a motion picture, and his full prose novel based on the story will be published in 2010. In 2009, Mark began designing special FX makeup and creatures for Robert Kurtzman's Precinct 13 Entertainment group, working on projects from such horror luminaries as Stuart Gordon, Dee Snider and Don Coscarelli. Mark considers his collaboration with co-creators Nat Jones and Jay Fotos on '68 a high water mark in a career of producing dark, intelligent horror fiction.

"The first '68 book was a bit of horror magic, born from the absolute strongest efforts of everyone involved. To see the same team come together again to expand the story with the same level of commitment and passion is like catching lightning in a bottle. A big, zombie filled bottle."

NAT JONES: is one of the industry's top horror artists and has lent his talents to an impressive array of titles alongside many of today's most recognized creators including Guillermo del Toro, Steve Niles, Rob Zombie, Jovanka Vuckovic, Joe Hill and Todd Mcfarlane. Working primarily in motion pictures and comics, Nat's credits include 28 Days Later, 30 Days of Night, Spawn, Frank Frazetta's Death Dealer, The Nail, The Devil's Rejects, Fear the Dead and the original '68 one-shot just to name a few. Known for his dark and moody pen and ink work, Nat has also established himself as an accomplished painter and horror writer.

"At it's core '68 is an extension of our love for horror and a prime example of why we do what we do. I hope everyone out there enjoys the ride, I know we will."

JAY FOTOS: has worked with nearly every major comic book publisher on hundreds of projects for more than a decade. To name a few, from Spawn to Beowulf, Transformers to Clive Barker's The Great and Secret Show, Rob Zombie's The Nail, Sam and Twitch, 30 Days of Night and the Eisner nominated series Locke & Key.

Not limited to just the comic medium, Jay also works in other creative media, ranging from animation, video games, album art, TV, motion pictures, and toy design.

In 2006, Fotos and fellow collaborator and friend Nat Jones founded Frazetta Comics, and along with writer Joshua Ortega, created the #1 selling Image Comics title for 2007, Frank Frazetta's Death Dealer, also holding a record for the fastest sellout for issue #1 in 6 hours! With the success of the Death Dealer series, and by keeping true to the Frazetta name and legacy, helped launch a new variety of Frazetta inspired comic titles and hard cover books like Swamp Demon, Dark Kingdom, Neanderthal, Moon Maid, Freedom, Creatures, Dracula Meets the Wolfman, Sorcerer, Frazetta's Death Dealer: Shadows of Mirahan Collected Slip-cased Edition and The Fantastic Worlds of Frazetta Volumes One & Two.

"The concept of '68 is so strong, combined with great talent and our love for the craft it's one of the highlights to my career"

IMAGE COMICS COMPANY PROFILE:

Image Comics is a comic book and graphic novel publisher founded in 1992 by a collective of best-selling artists. Image has since gone on to become one of the largest comics publishers in the United States. Image currently has five partners: Robert Kirkman, Erik Larsen, Todd McFarlane, Marc Silvestri and Jim Valentino. It consists of four major houses: Todd McFarlane Productions, Top Cow Productions, Shadowline and Image Central. Image publishes comics and graphic novels in nearly every genre, sub-genre, and style imaginable. It offers science fiction, romance, horror, crime fiction, historical fiction, humor and more by the finest artists and writers working in the medium today. For more information, visit www.imagecomics.com

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