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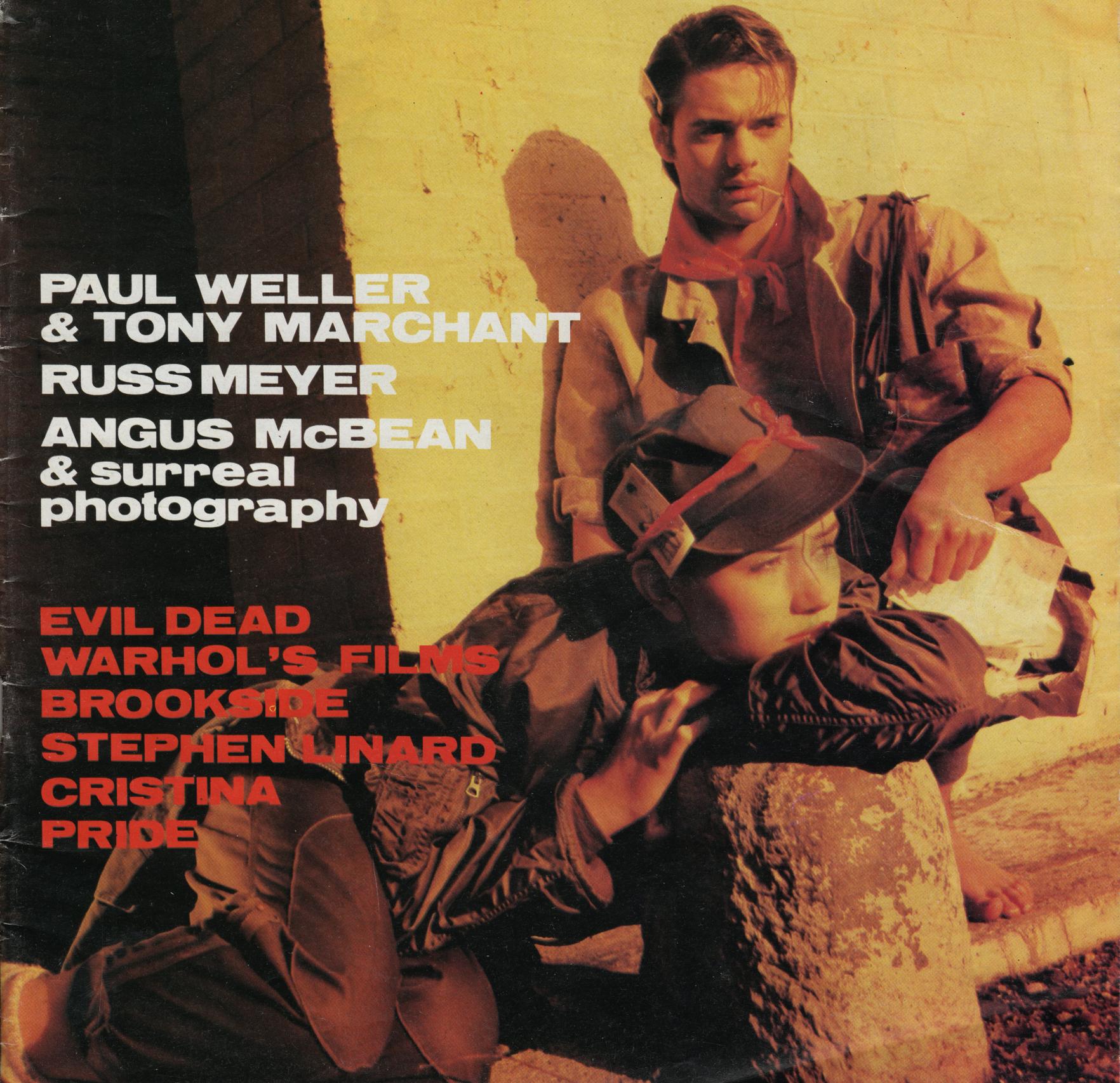
INTERVIEWS PREVIEWS OPINION PEOPLE DESIGN MUSIC FILM FASHION VIDEO ART BOOKS THEATRE

**PAUL WELLER
& TONY MARCHANT**

RUSS MEYER

**ANGUS McBEAN
& surreal
photography**

**EVIL DEAD
WARHOL'S FILMS
BROOKSIDE
STEPHEN LINARD
CRISTINA
PRIDE**



PRIDE

■ **DON'T** worry, we can think of at least another ten reasons to be jealous of 23-year-old SADE ADU, not least of all her soulful, flexible and all-powerful voice that will sooner or later turn into pound notes in one hand and history in the other. It immediately elevates her to comparisons with "yesteryears' greats" rather than today's "rivals", of whom basically she has none. It is together with Stuart (sax), Paul (bass), and Paul (drums) that she performs the set that borrows her name, mixing their own sophisticated and loosely jazz orientated sound with some older songs personified by their near perfect performance of Timmy Thomas' *Why Can't we all Live Together* which would crush even the most sceptical of critics.

Exciting as they are SADE are in fact a microcosm of the equally professional 7 piece collective: PRIDE, who are almost a "physical" extension to SADE, with their aims rooted more firmly in moving your feet around the dance floor, while SADE spend more time hypnotising the remainder of your musical senses. The links between the two sets however remain strong: "As it's basically the same people performing, they can't be that different. It's just the difference between seven people and four people and there is obviously more room for expression with only four; consequently the SADE set probably does hold fewer compromises".

Whichever way they choose to perform, their presence never fails to seduce the varied audience that they consistently attract. London and Hull (the band's home towns) are already familiar with their respective sounds - they performed to Ronnie Scott's die-hard audience one week and headlined one of the ICA's recent Press Gang nights the next.

Manchester and Leeds should be recovering from recent debut visits, while New York's Danceteria has already admitted them to their select fold and during the early summer they are billed to appear with Aretha Franklin in Stockholm.

So with some ambitions achieved and the record companies already on their trail they have no intention of blowing a hard year's work: "We'll just keep a tight hold of perspective and concentrate on our performance... at least we really are at the controls and are responsible for whatever we might turn out. Like most things it's down to you at the end of the day and you can only hope to do your best and rise above the situation".

For a true definition of their sound, or a safe category, or whether they will change the face of the world, they wouldn't be as naive as to either know or care, and one can only suppose that for a fitting and accurate answer we shall have to wait and see what Peter York makes of this cultural fireball. Better still, see them yourself!

PHILIP SHARRATT/SIMON MILLS.

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EVIL DEAD



A light-hearted moment from Sam Raimi's *Evil Dead*.

Evil Dead has been described as the most terrifying film since *The Exorcist*. TRACY HOFMAN talked to the two mid-twenty year-olds responsible for this blood 'n' guts extravaganza.

BASICALLY the cheapest picture you can make is a horror film or a soft porn picture, so I suppose the real reason we set out to make a horror film was out of economic considerations." Sam Raimi is the twenty-three-year-old director and writer of *Evil Dead*, which opens at The Scala cinema this month.

The film is a lavish blood and plasma fantasy which manages to incorporate almost every stock cliché from the horror film maker's bible. Echoes of *The Exorcist*, overtones of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* and memories of Hammer horror tradition flesh out the film. The plot is as taut and sketchy as the genre allows. Five college kids set off for a vacation in a house in the Backwoods of Tennessee. When a shaky bridge – the only link with the outside world – collapses once the car has crossed it, the audience knows that the bumpy ride through gory flesh and dismembered limbs is about to begin.

"If you put over the question in a flat sense, such as, 'Where's the humour in blood and gore?' well, then it's very difficult to see where any enjoyment might lie. I mean it's very difficult for me to defend *Evil Dead* when someone talks about it in those terms, but I think it's the attitude, how it's portrayed on film, which is funny". Raimi certainly has no pretensions about the film. Neither does he make any claims for it as anything but a shrewd piece of entrepreneurial activity. When he and producer Robert Tapert were evicted from their Detroit apartment, they decided it was time to put their keen amateur knowledge of film making to a more lucrative end. *Evil Dead*, now billed as "the ultimate experience in gruelling terror", began as a short story written by Raimi, metamorphosed into a screenplay

and will now, no doubt, become a fully fledged cult film.

RAIMI'S only previous experience with film had been with Super 8 movies, and a keen interest that would occasionally persuade him to present films in place of college papers, when studying at Michigan University. Yet there's nothing tacky or incomplete about his first feature. Suspense is tightly controlled and the narrative leads us down quite a few quiet cul-de-sacs on the road to decomposing flesh. During the first meal in the haunted house, the women are presented as the timorous creatures we all recognise from the prototype horror film. Suddenly, one of the men, Scott, hears noises from a previously unnoticed trap door and with the stupidity natural to all characters in such films, sets off to investigate. When his friend Ashley displays the naivety of a two year old child and disappears underground to follow, we all expect the bloody worst. This is, after all, the cheapest trick in the bag of blood and guts: lure all your characters down into a deserted cellar and have them dismembered by an axe wielding ghoul.

"Sure the people in this are pretty stupid. They make the mistake of going out into the woods when they've been told not to. They're all pretty stupid, especially the guy who goes down to unlock the trap door. He's the one who runs around screaming the whole time." But the film's strength is that Raimi doesn't rely on these universally accepted plot principles: Scott is found hiding in a cellar full of bones, his idea of a practical joke. There are, of course, the statutory few clues which direct us into the maze of nightmare land: A violent thunderstorm

lashes the house, a window flies open, noises are heard from the cellar and a woman finds herself drawing the gruesome face of one of the undead. Against this background, Ashley and his girlfriend are occupied with the homely student – well, homely rich student – activity of snorting coke. Despite all the intimations of evil foreboding, Raimi tightly retains the sense of a routine normality.

But of course, when Linda ventures out into the woods, the pattern is broken. The dormant primaeval forces of another power, with which the trees are imbued, seize their opportunity. There follows one of the most impressive scenes of the film, Linda's horrific arboreal rape. Branches whip out from trees and wind themselves round her limbs like coiling snakes, a ghostly fog rolls towards the house and her screams go unheard. Roped securely to the ground, she can only struggle helplessly against the moving forest. If Bertolucci has gone down in film history as the man who found a new use for butter, then Raimi will be remembered as the man who offered the tree trunk as an alternative for a dildo.

"I really love Shakespeare, particularly *Macbeth*. The witches, the rhymes, the poetry and the emotion are all beautiful. In fact I like it so much, I ripped the woods scene right off and took that for the film".

With Linda's terrified return to the security of the house, the evil which has contaminated the woods, finds a means of infiltrating it. The ritual of a carefree student vacation is turned upside down. The three women – querulous girlfriend, timorous female and all American blonde – change into venomous cackling spirits, hell bent on destroying the two men.

"The women's parts grew out of my strong feeling for the women's movement. I really believe in equal rights. For some reason, I feel that if you make a horror film, because of the women's movement now, you can't have the women scared out of their wits as they usually are in horror films. So I tried to put the shoe on the other foot for a change and make the men terrorised."

No doubt, film semiologists who know their Christian Metz from their Colin McCabe will see in these ravaging faces of female destruction, an embodiment of the male psycho – sexual fear of women. Yet there is something rather splendid in Raimi's depiction of the women as female monsters, intent on destroying their lovers. Fortified with a slaving sulphuric strength, the possessed women battle in unequal combat with the men. Chainsaws, stakes and holy burial are all tried and yet the ghouls live on. "Look, she's your girlfriend, you take care of her." Scott screams as he runs towards the door, where a demonette with decomposing flesh and wicked talons proceeds to tear his leg off. Raimi offers us an excellent suggestion on how to halve the divorce rate and also makes a tongue in cheek gibe at the male habit of making self preservation an overriding priority.

"I think the film is funny really because of its super excess, it goes far beyond the realistic into the

super realistic. I don't think people can really see it as terrifying because it has no basis in reality. Sure there's violence in *Evil Dead*, but in all cases it's only in self-defence, as a last resort. It's not presented in a pretty light at all and I'm not sure that the evil spirits do win out", says Raimi with a maniacal laugh.

Yet as Mary Whitehouse has pointed out, horror films are all very well if you know the audience can swallow the special effects with a pinch of salt. Although the products of this particular genre are securely confined within the conventions of a cult tradition, there is always the chance that the film will influence the audience. According to producer Robert Tapert, horror films in America are the opium of the thirteen to sixteen year olds, who pay their money for the thrill of being scared into a catatonic trance. Raimi and Tapert hope that most of the budget will be recouped on college campuses where students' jaded sophistication with celluloid has turned horror into a super cool cult. *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* for example, a film which Raimi admires, made Tobe Hooper a millionaire because it was such a success with American colleges.

"After the kids, the most on crowd for horror is the Forty Second Street crowd in New York; they're the people who are waiting to go to prison. They pay their four dollars and they're entitled to do anything they want. If they don't like your picture or they don't like what a character is doing or they just want to say something, they say it. That's the kind of response you really want, those people have a good time watching and when they get mad at the characters they'll scream out: 'What the fuck you doing that for, bitch?'"

This is the type of response which Tapert thinks *Evil Dead* merits. The film is a somewhat visceral experience and it's meant to be kind of physical. You just scream and laugh but it doesn't attain to higher levels of thinking and it certainly doesn't stimulate your intellect."

TAPERT, a smooth-voiced American in his early twenties once wanted, ironically to work for the government as an economist planning the conservation of natural resources. Raimi, whose first desire was to become an airplane pilot, was told by his school that he'd be better off as a trouble shooter. "When I asked them for a clarification they said I was best off at fixing washing machines and dish washers when they had a problem." Raimi adds wistfully that at one time he also wanted to be a meteorologist: "They had this course in weather that I liked".

Yet life has a strange way of frustrating the most mundane of daydreams. Growing up in Detroit, home of America's vast motor industry and a city with a lethal crime rate, gave Raimi and Tapert few cinematic opportunities. So they decided to bring Hollywood to Detroit, and persuaded lawyers and doctors to put up the five hundred thousand pound budget for their first feature. Yet sadly, response in

Raimi's home city has been unenthusiastic. "We couldn't even get a local paper to cover the story", says Tapert.

Their parents too, were slightly taken aback by their children's encounter with commercial mutilation: "When my parents saw it, well my mother said it was O.K. and my father said it was good. But my mother thinks it's good now: she's seen *Poltergeist*". Tapert is slightly more honest about his parents' reaction. "My mother and father won't see it again. They've seen it twice and I'm their son and all that, but basically they're revolted."

Having made a commercially successful feature film at twenty-three, Raimi would seem to be the next heir to Steven Spielberg. Like the latter, Raimi is the child of American suburbia; he believes that film is principally a means of telling a story and he prefers to tell that story through the form of a thriller. Raimi himself is surprised by his comparison with Spielberg. "I really admire him as a film maker but I don't want to be the next Steven Spielberg. I'm not so much interested in box office entertainment but in making a film that people will like. I guess they should be one and the same but they aren't always." Although Raimi took several courses in film criticism at university including a whole paper on Fellini, his favourite film makers have come out of the American commercial mainstream. The success of *Evil Dead* hasn't changed his attitudes. "Recently Robert and I have been going to two dollar specials – that's mostly porn and horror films".

Despite Raimi's feeling that films shouldn't be born out of pure commercial enterprise, he admits that he does have an idea for a sequel to *Evil Dead*. "I hate to admit it but I do have this idea where the character gets sucked into a time warp of the year 1300 A.D. I'm not sure that I can say at this point because to tell you the truth, that poor bastard's future is riding on the box office. He's praying to god that he's going to make some money because if not, he's had it." Raimi may give the impression of a quiet well-mannered post-adolescent who puts morality above financial reward, but he's also obviously a shrewd operator who knows the value of a sequel when he sees it.

He insists however that his next script is a thriller which is set in Detroit. "It's a crime movie called *The Relentless* which I suppose is influenced by the Film Noir genre and because Detroit was built in the twenties and thirties, it's really a perfect location." Once again, Tapert hopes to raise money from private investors so that he and Raimi can retain complete control over the picture. With distribution deals signed for *Evil Dead*, here, and in America and Canada, finance may not be too much of a problem in future. So what next? Isn't Raimi interested in making a film about real people doing real things in the American present? "No, that doesn't really interest me. I love Fellini, but I don't think I'd ever be tempted to make something like *8½* – I don't think I'm that interesting."



Robert Tapert and Sam Raimi

