

SHOCK X PRESS

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MORE!! FANZINES! VIDEO REVIEWS!
ABNORMAL READERS' LETTERS! RANTING!
DECAY! DISSOLUTION! MORE OF IT!

Summer 1987

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SAM RAIMI
DAVID
CRONENBERG
JOE
D'AMATO



A STRANGE PERSON

Dear SX,

I enjoyed reading the review of *The Devil in Miss Jones* and was wondering if you couldn't have an in depth article on the films of Gerard Damiano, written by the brilliant Mr. Alan Jones, how about it?

Yours sincerely,
The Sleaze Kid

You're absolutely correct, we couldn't. I swear neither myself nor the brilliant Mr. Alan Jones had anything to do with this letter. Honest.

AND STRANGER STILL . . .

Dear SX,

I recently discovered this really nifty 'zine called *Little Shoppe of Horrors* which specialises in reviewing old Hammer films. Hence the title (?) But as I can't afford airmail to the US I'm writing to you. I recently went to my first '18' film at the local fleapit (no, I'm not but I look it). After seeing some crummy advert for the Chinese shop round the corner as I had countless times before, I settled down to watch *The Fly*. 100 minutes later I came out (of the cinema that is) and wondered why such a fuss had been made of it. The audience I saw it with remained relaxed throughout and there was much guffawing at the unintentionally (?) funny maggots birth. No one fainted. No one brought up their King Kone. I was rather disappointed. This 'tough' hairy-chested horror film was I felt rather tame. The only thing that really 'horried' me was Jeff Goldblum spewing over a doughnut. Quite frankly more 'horrific' things go on at infant school. As a Virgin to the world of splatter, sex/exploitation films, I can only hope 'things' get better.

Simon Colenutt
Mtholmroyd
W. Yorks

Hold on a minute, this is beginning to look like the genre equivalent of The Sunday Sport letter page . . . There's not much I can say about this ('Loud Mouth Editor Struck Dumb Shock Horror!') apart from I reckon you'll be standing in for Derek Malcolm in a few months. Letter of the issue award!

DUCK, HERE COMES ANOTHER!

Dear Chums,

I feel that it would be 'neat' to have a more regular SX and with other outlets etc. - however to do this could well be the end of all that's good about the current content . . . that's to say, you would have to produce an issue, regardless of what's around, filled with the same old round of back slapping, plugging the product etc.

It's a lot better to produce an issue when there's something worth commenting on - or else going for a longer time scale between issues, but coming out at that interval, so that there would be bound to be something worth writing about! In the end, it's all about the wacky world of capital, and how far you want to get recuperated into the world of selling the product, still, I guess it's a living.

Love
Peter
Redland
Bristol

That's it. I quit. Your second paragraph confused me slightly, but I'll probably recover. Or maybe get recuperated. I want a holiday. Now.

ACID BLASTING FREAK

Dear Stefan,

Firstly, I would like to thank all those readers for helping me to obtain a copy of *Blood Feast*, and I would like to thank you personally for printing my letter in SX which was a great help. I am now the proud owner of a copy. Secondly, a friend of mine is very interested in obtaining LSD films on video such as *The Trip*, *Acid Eaters*, *Psych-Out*, *Hallucination Generation* etc. Are there any readers out there who might be able to help?

Finally, have you seen *Salò: 120 Days of Sodom*? I recently saw it at the Scala cinema, and was shocked by the number of cuts. I was, in fact, more surprised than shocked because the Scala was given permission by Camden Council to show the film to the general public - it was classed as uncensored and had not been granted a BBFC '18' certificate.

Mark Crittenden
Royal Berks Hotel
London Rd
Sunninghill
Ascot
SL5 0PP

If you manage to get hold of 'acid on film' let me know . . . The Salò business is extremely confusing - Camden Council works in mysterious ways. There aren't as many cuts as you might think. Having seen a full print, I'd estimate about 60-90 seconds, most in the final sequence. They're all fairly obvious. I don't think the cuts honestly detract too much from the movie, as the essence, like de Sade's original, lies in the dialogue and atmosphere. Obviously, I'd rather it wasn't cut, but better (in this case) a cut print than no print at all. I wouldn't use the same argument for a naff gore movie where the only reason for seeing it is the vomitorama sections . . .

PAR-BOILED IN PARBOLD

Dear SX,

I am writing to enquire whether you would consider doing any articles on up-and-coming special make-up artists.

I am seventeen and have studied special make-up on my own for about four years. I have had many interviews around the country, showing them my work and they have all been impressed but as I am so young I am unable to work anywhere in this country as you have to be over 21. My speciality is blood 'n' guts so it would fit into your fanzine I'm sure. Anyway I hope I might be able to contribute in some way.

By the way, while I was in LA I attended the premier of *Evil Dead II* and it was AWFUL. The audience just laughed all the way through it, and although it was released unrated it had no impact or memorable scenes at all.

Yours sincerely,
Jon Tucker-Bull
47 Burnside
Parbold
Lancs
WN8 7PE

a) No chance. b) I thought Evil Dead II was supposed to be funny. You'd think with Chuck Norris and Sly Stallone around the Yanks would know humour when they saw it . . .

THE SENSIBLE BIT

Dear SX,

I think we are destined to disagree on the merits of hardcore porno (See Letter in SX 6), although I do agree about the ridiculous censorship laws prevalent in this country. Unfortunately though the attitudes relating to pornography are only part of the current 'moral backlash', although the British reluctance to openly come to terms with sexuality is something that's been around for a long time.

Whilst I do think that hardcore porn should be available for those that want it, being a trendy wet liberal I have problems coming to terms with the way that the films/publications actually present women. However, as I said, I think we agree to differ on that point.

Now, it's on to 'bright ideas from a smart-ass'. Have you ever considered running an occasional TV column in SX? I mention this because Channel 4 have been running some very obscure films such as William Castle's *Shanks*. It would also be an ideal forum to slag off the BBC for crud such as their laughable Saturday night Horror Season - I mean to say, *Zoltan*, *Hound of Dracula* AGAIN!! Also, would it be possible for you to have some sort of Classified Ads section or 'Swop Shop' for readers to swop or sell magazines, stills, videos etc.?

Cheers,
David Dunne
7 Prospect Rd
Swinton

Yeah, I think we are destined to disagree on some matters. For once I won't bother to repeat myself . . . Sure, a TV column would be great, so would a nice long book page, more reviews, interviews etc. etc. ad nauseam. At the moment there simply isn't room. Okay, you lot win, I'll see what can be done about a 'small ads' section. Don't hold your breath. But then again . . .

YANKS GET DIRTY

Dear SX,

I've just picked up your great mag at a specialty newsstand for the first time. I'll probably never find another issue but I decided to write anyway. First of all, I must tell you that what makes your magazine special or different from the ones available to me, like *Fangoria*, *Splatter Times* or *Gore Gazette* is two things. One being your great interviews like the Larry Cohen one - it was truly a nice change of pace to read a full, detailed and complete interview for once. The second is the enjoyment of reading the letters page - it's great to see that guys in the UK really enjoy horror films of the truly shocking variety as much as their cousins in the US. Most Americans have the inept idea that because of Hammer films most British only like the Gothic style of film. After seeing some of the titles your readers mentioned that myth is finished. Something, however, that did shock even me was when they mentioned some of the films that are not readily available to



them due to censorship and customs seizures. Films as mild, by US standards, as *Blood Feast*, *Pieces*, *Day of the Dead* etc. You can pick up uncut versions of the above films at any corner convenience store in the US. We always heard rumors that the citizens of the UK and other foreign countries can hear everything from '*****sucker' to 'motherf*****' on their television. We also heard that you are allowed to show a girl's breasts (or tits, if you will) (*breasts is just fine, Frank...*) on all of your TV shows. The examples we have are *Benny Hill*, *Rock Follies* etc. Yet now I read that they even censored a theatrical showing of *Day of the Dead* in England. Why is this? Are violent films considered off-limits? Aside from a bit of difficulty in getting hold of such films as *Salo*, the 'Ilsa' trilogy, XXX rated version of *Caligula*, *Last House on Dead End Street* uncut, all others are a breeze, and yet we can't even say 'shit' or 'piss' on our TV shows.

I would really enjoy hearing from readers of SX, and I'd like to close with a message to the censors of the world: Leave us alone you (13 words deleted) . . . ! (You can censor any of the above that you feel is necessary).

Frank Granda Jr.
2310 Knollwood Place
Tampa
Florida 33604
USA

Sorry about the censorship, Frank, but it was in the interests of the people, honest . . . Christ, if you've got Benny Hill as a positive role model for British TV I can see where you've got those ideas . . . Talk about the corruptive influences of popular culture . . . I actually found your letter interesting, particularly in the light of the Meese Commission . . . Maybe that's why the *Butthole Surfers* were 'Moving To Florida'. I guess we'll never know. Yes, violent films are considered off-limits, but the T&A spreads and rape/atrocities/baby eating stories in *The Sun*, *News of the World* and the astonishing *Sunday Sport* are fun for all the family. Hypocrisy is a wonderful thing, Frank, and together with lies, deceit and treachery should see the Tories run riot for another four years . . .

HOW HIGSONS BLEED . . .

Dear Stefan,

I found issue 5 very disappointing, not in its design, presentation, subject or the talent of the writers – I got the distinct feeling that the

contributors didn't appear to like horror films. They didn't appear sympathetic with the horror genre (yes! I am aware that the 'zine takes into regard exploitation in general, but horror is a key genre in exploitation). Are these people of the mind to review fantasy, horror and sci-fi film. I expect Baz Norman to go about it all wrong and review the likes of *Legend* and *The Stuff* as socially realistic dramas – in a fantasy film people don't necessarily have to visit the loo, worry about catching AIDS, sleeping around on a camping expedition or get sulky about signing on every other Wednesday. They're not even troubled by dirty dishes & cups . . . (*Goes on in similar style for a long time.*)

What's this attack on *Fangoria*. Be careful or you won't be allowed in their pages again. *Fangoria* is as popular as ever, still one of the best. (*Excerpts from Paul's next mammoth epistle follow.*)

Your cover name would have been undiscernible had I now known your name to begin with. And I still maintain that SX has an attitude problem. It comes across as the most unfriendly mag in fandom, issue 5 making me so unwelcome was the reason I took so long in enquiring about the other issues. Unlike *Samhain*, *Pieces of Mary* and *Yeeuch!* I do learn from your 'zine a great deal, which is what counts. You'll note from *Bleeder's Digest* that I am totally opposite to you as I am a kindlier critic. I'm sorry if some of the child has escaped from you, you require the child more than *Peter Pan* or *101 Dalmations*, you know. Paul Higson.

(Address in Fanzine Zone)

I'd diagnose your complaint as clinical insanity, Paul. (Notice how I keep calling people by their first names? Got that from Chuck Norris. Fab, isn't it?) Sorry, lost my mind for a moment . . . Your accusations are so ill-informed that it's a waste of time replying to them. How's that for an attitude problem? Equating us with the other fanzines you mention is an insult to our writers. If any of the SX stable submitted a piece drivelling inconsequentially about how they loved some jumped-up puppet movie because it was fab and, ohh, weren't those rubber monsters cute I think we could safely pack up now. Only I'm allowed to do that . . . I'd actually intended to tone down the rudeness of replies to the letters this issue and go for a more heartfelt, 'profes-

sional' approach, but I've suddenly changed my mind. Next.

IT NEVER ENDS . . .

Dear SX,

Just a few words about going commercial – please don't do it. *Halls of Horror* went out of business by doing the same, and I'm sure SX would. I'd much rather have the present publication, as no one can ban it or stop it. Also, I think b&w has the right blend over colour, and I don't think there is nothing up with the format at all. I know if you went commercial you would get more readers, money, etc. but in time I'm sure they would just drift away and you would probably go bust, so you would be right back where you started again. Also, I wish you would do subscriptions, as it is very hard to get the 'zine. All the best,
John Goldthorpe
Sheffield.

Ug!

FILTH, SMUT, PORNO-CHIC etc.

Dear SX,

I'm delighted that you're reviewing sex-ploitation movies as well as the usual blood and gore fare. I think the last magazines to treat 'adult' films so seriously were *Cinema X* and *Cinema Blue*, courtesy of Tony Crawley. May I beg to differ over your view of the availability of *New Wave Hookers* and other Tracy Lords pictures? I 'picked up' an uncensored German version for £15 last year . . .

Whilst on the subject may I tell reader David Dunne that quite a few porno movies are the equal of anything that mainstream cinema could produce. Henry Paris' *The Opening of Misty Beethoven* could wipe the floor with any gory picture made in the last 12 months.

Finally I hope SX will continue reviewing sex pictures in detail. How about articles on the masters of 'porno-chic': Henry Paris (*Tale of Tiffany Lust*, *Barbra Broadcast*), Henri Pachard (*The Devil in Miss Jones*, Pt II, *Viva Vanessa*) and the great actresses: Marilyn Chambers, Seka, Annette Haven, Samantha Fox (no, not that one!) and Veronica Hart. It could be fun!

All the best,
(name withheld)

Okay, mac, first things first. Get in touch via the editorial address to learn something to your advantage. I never said Tracy Lords stuff was unavailable in Germany – after some of the material I've seen from over there, *New Wave Hookers* is child's play (very funny . . .). Henry Paris is, of course, the ever-reliable Radley Metzger. Sex star filmographies are readily available in French mags such as *Star Cine Video* and *Star Cine Eros*. Both mags are highly recommended, if you can still find them . . . The Tracy Lords stuff was withdrawn from official US distribution pending the outcome of the 'child sex starlets' inquiry. And finally, yeah, a lot of recent porno material has far better production values, photography and conception than equivalent genre product. Funny old world, isn't it?

SPEAK NO EVIL

An Interview with Sam Raimi

By Nigel Floyd



Sam Raimi and Bruce Campbell, director and star of *Evil Dead II* – “the sequel to the ultimate experience in gruelling terror” – arrive several minutes late for our interview. They’ve been having “things too horrible to describe” done to them by the photographer from *The Face*, but they’re apologetic and keen to make up for lost time. So keen, in fact, that even before I can get my tape recorder out of my briefcase, Raimi is asking me questions. Have I seen any good horror movies lately? Did I like David Cronenberg’s *The Fly*? Have I seen *Texas Chainsaw Massacre 2* yet? I grab the tape-machine and catch him in mid-flow.

SR: I just got to meet Tobe Hooper two nights ago, and it was just like I’d always dreamed. As a kid I would look at *Famous Monsters* magazines, and I would always dream about what it would be like to meet all my favourite directors. And I actually got invited to dinner with John Landis and Tobe Hooper, and I talked about all those things that I dreamed I would talk about when I was a kid, like: ‘Hey you know in *Texas Chainsaw* when you did that eyeball shot with Marilyn Burns’. It was very exciting for me, definitely a dream come true.

SX: I had the same thing about Ken Russell, because I grew up with so many of his pictures – *The Devils*, *The Music Lovers*, *Women in Love* – and then I got to interview him about *Gothic*, which unfortunately I didn’t like very much.

SR: But it had some great imagery in it, fantastic nightmare imagery that only he knows how to do, it was completely Russell. I think where it came together the most for him, though I haven’t seen all his pictures, was *Altered States*, which is one of my favourites. I love that movie, all that stuff when he goes into the isolation tank.

BC: It’s really wild stuff, when he’s in control he’s really dangerous.

SX: *Texas Chainsaw Massacre 2*, incidentally, won’t get a release here at all.

SR: You’re joking, because of the nature of it?

SX: The rumour is that it went to the censors, and they said, by the time we’ve taken out what we want to take out, you won’t have a movie left.

SR: That’s a shame, because I thought the best parts of the movie were not specifically the

gore, as is usually the case with horror movies. The lines are so funny, the characters are so funny. These guys who are butchering people with chainsaws and putting them on meat-hooks are concerned about their level of taxation, what’s a write-off and what isn’t. It was just so funny.

SX: Well I don’t think we’re ever going to see it.

SR: Does that mean that it can’t be shown in the theatres either.

SX: Well, video censorship is even worse here, as you know.

BC: And the thing is that everyone has access to video, right? In the theatres you can keep certain people out, but at home, who knows, an older child could rent a cassette and bring it home and the whole family can see it.

SX: That’s their argument, and also that kids would freeze-frame, go through it in slow motion and keeping looking at the gory bits, going over and over the same sequences – which, of course, kids do. But it seems to me that breaking it down like that actually reduces the impact, because you’re then looking at ‘how it was done’. You know, how did they do that when the guy gets his eyeball blasted through the back of his skull?

BC: It’s true. I do that when I get videos, too. The other night we were watching a new film that’s coming out, called *Harry and the Hendersons*. There was this sequence when a character called Big Foot slid off the roof of the car when the guy stood on the brakes, and it was a weird sequence of shots and effects. And I reached for my video thing to replay the scene, but I didn’t have it because I was watching the movie. I just have this strange video reflex now, reaching for the quick rewind button.

SR: I suppose we ought to talk about the new movie. Have you seen it yet?

SX: Oh yes.

SR: What kind of response did it get?

SX: Well, I nearly fell off my chair, and most people seemed to be in agreement with that.

BC: Screaming in terror, right?

SX: Well, no, not exactly – more hysterical laughter.

SR: Were you disappointed that it was of a

more humorous bent this time?

SX: Well, yes and no. It does worry me slightly that all horror movies these days seem to want to be a parody of themselves. Apart from *The Fly* and Romero’s *Day of the Dead*, I haven’t seen any really serious, pessimistic horror movies for some time.

BC: Where it never lets up, you mean?

SX: Yeah, right, like *The Hills Have Eyes*. Do you think there is a danger in this? I mean, there’s always a degree of jokiness in the first *Evil Dead*, but it still scared the shit out of me. The first one made me laugh and scared me rigid, this one just made me laugh.

SR: Well, the first one, we found, offended some people, and that was never our intention – we just wanted to scare the daylight out of them. We decided that what was really offensive was the on-camera gore, so we pulled that, and in its place – so that we wouldn’t end up with something which was just less than the first *Evil Dead* – we put something else, humour.

BC: And a lot of it comes from the bizarre nature of what’s happening, there are very few literal gags. I mean maybe the ‘Farewell to Arms’ is a gag, but the rest of it is portrayed pretty straight. You have a guy breaking plates over his head, and people laugh watching it; but it’s not as if we said on the set, now this will be funny.

SR: I think we knew that would be funny.

BC: Still, Ash is not laughing when it’s happening. I mean he’s still having a terrible time of it.

SX: But the movie is a wind-up, right? I loved it, but it’s just that every now and then I’d like to see a horror movie in which the shit hits the fan, and sticks – like the ending of *Shivers*, say. I don’t want to be too snuffy about it, because it’s a great movie, I’m just worried by this tendency towards self-parody.

SR: I think perhaps it’s just a current phase.

BC: Yeah, I think it will soon wash out.

SR: And then maybe the pendulum will swing back towards raw, straight horror again, I’m sure.

SX: Why make a reprise of the first *Evil Dead*? Why not just pick up where the first movie left off?



Evil Dead II



SR: Well the truth is, although maybe we presented it poorly, that's what we tried to do. At the beginning of the film, you see Ash (Bruce here) and his girlfriend Linda come up to the cabin – but we couldn't get the original actress (Betsy Baker). So we tried to recreate the first *Evil Dead*, to get the people who haven't seen it up to speed. Now, people misinterpret that as, 'Oh, he's going to another cabin now, but that's not what we really meant...'

BC: Or, 'The idiot's coming back to the same cabin'.

SR: What we meant to say was, 'This is what happened in *Evil Dead I*, up to the point where the evil force rushes up and hits him at the end', and from that point on it was going to be a direct continuation.

SX: I didn't follow that in the film at all. I was thinking, 'Is this guy suffering from some trauma-induced amnesia? Why is he going back there? What's wrong with this guy?' So, what you're saying is, the first scenes involving only Bruce and the new Linda – up to the point where the other four arrive on foot – are supposed to be a compressed run-through of the whole of *Evil Dead I*?

SR: Right. So if anyone ever wants to splice the tail of the first one onto the sort of mid-beginning of this sequel, they could play it as one long picture.

SX: The actual Book of the Dead plays a much bigger role in this one, all that stuff about retrieving the pages from the cellar, then going through the two stages of making the spirit manifest and banishing it through the time hole and so on.

BC: We wanted to give a little history of the Book of the Dead for starters, because the book comes pretty much into play in this one, especially near the end, when they have to know what the book is, what it means. So the thing at the beginning is to kind of let you know what the book is about.

SX: I love the scene, too, where the book writes itself, and then flutters off.

SR: Yeah, like a bird, I didn't quite get the effect I was looking for there, but we're still improving, trying to make better pictures.

SX: *Evil Dead II* seems to be much more pared-down, cut to the bone, if you like. In the first one you had the usual nominal horror movie dialogue, but in this one it's down to stuff like 'Workshed' or 'Chainsaw', or throw-away one-liners like 'Who's laughing now'.

SR: (laughing) Well, we all are actually. I think we just basically wanted to get back to the silent picture horror movie style, where the pictures tell the story.

BC: We didn't really need more than what's there. When all the characters arrive at the cabin, you could have got into this whole thing of, 'Who are you?', 'Where are you from?'. But, hopefully, things are happening fast

enough at that point for the audience not to need that sort of stuff. Because before they could really sit down and figure out what was going on, something bad had already happened. And they had other priorities, rather than discussing the situation.

SX: The killer line, of course, is the one in the scene where Ash gets kitted up with the chainsaw and shotgun and everything, and says "Groovy". The whole cinema was laid waste by that one, they loved it.

SR: Yeah, he's ready to deal out some swift and deadly justice to the Deadites, because he's tired of being pushed around. The audience has seen Bruce cower and shake for the whole of the first movie, and for the first part of this one, and now he's decided he's gonna give them a little of what they deserve. So he deals out some punishment.

BC: (with relish) Yeah, let 'em suck on some abuse.

SX: There were moments, though, when I thought Ash was really gone, like when you cut your hand off and say: 'Who's laughing now?'. It's that maniacal quality you have, Bruce. I really thought, 'This is it, this guy has totally flipped, there's no coming back now.'

BC: But you realise that's just what he really felt he had to do. To the average viewer, I suppose, it's quite extreme, but not to Ash.

SR: In fact, we tried to do it in such a way that the audience would be in the frame of mind, because of everything that had gone before, to accept that cutting off his own hand was the most heroic and logical thing that he could do. That's how he wanted to warp their perceptions.

BC: Yes, that it was then the sane thing to do, it was perfectly logical given the situation.

SR: We ran into a lot of opposition from the studio, and even from our producer Bob Tapert, who thought that once Ash cuts his hand off, the audience wouldn't want to have anything to do with him. But my point was that we had to show that the *Evil Dead* really meant business.

BC: Right, I'm one hundred per cent in agreement with that. And also I think it's great to torment the hero like that. It's just wonderful to be able to permanently alter your main character in some way. You have to show that he too is expendable; you don't want people to get too comfortable because then they don't care anymore. Because if you show something really bad happening to the main character, something he's permanently damaged by, then you're never safe – even with this guy.

SR: That's why we introduced the character of Jake – we wanted someone the audience thought they could jump to because Ash may have gone over the edge.

BC: He may be gone, so here's this blond, good-looking guy that maybe they could

identify with. Of course, he's the first guy to go.

SX: That's the best thing about it. You think to yourself, 'He looks like you're typical blond, good-looking hero-type, he's bound to get bumped off'. But with Ash you actually care about whether he survives or not. Unlike those *Friday the 13th* pictures where, after about twenty minutes, you start nominating the characters you'd like to see bumped off first.

BC: Or you'll be going along for about half an hour and some good-looking blond guy will pull up in a truck, and you go 'Alright, he's gone. I give him two minutes.' And he says, 'Hello, anyone home?', and whack!

SX: And one of the great horror movie jokes of all time, in Kubrick's *The Shining*. Scatman Crothers sees the TV news story about people being snowed in, tries to phone the hotel, checks with the phone company, books a flight, gets on the plane, drives as far as he can in the car, ploughs through the blizzard in the snow-cat, walks through the door of the hotel, and whack, Jack kills him with the axe.

SR: I loved that, too, very unexpected. That was shocking when that happened. I love Kubrick's pictures. We even filmed ourselves going to see *The Shining*. I have a Super 8 movie of us all attending the premiere, going up to the theatre, the whole thing.

BC: That film had the greatest trailer I've ever seen – just those two lift doors opening and then that blood flood.

SR: What more need be said, the ultimate horror imagery. It's a nightmare image.

SX: The blood thing is interesting in *Evil Dead II*, because, as you've said, you've cut down on the on-screen gore, and a lot of the things – Ash cutting his hand off, people smashing into trees – happen off-screen. But then right in the middle there's the scene in which the blood gushes through the holes in the wall. It's as if you're saying, 'Ok, you've been a bit disappointed that there hasn't been much blood so far, so here's gallons of it, all at once.'

SR: Exactly, the old blood flood.

SX: And then it disappears back into the wall again.

SR: That was just to keep things clean.

BC: Yeah, tidy up the room a bit, a little demon housekeeping.

SX: In the first film, of course, the demons always possess the humans, and the humans get pretty messed up in the process, but in this one you've taken the risk of having a scene in which the unseen force takes on a substantial form.

SR: Yes, but I look at it as just one manifestation of it, not the ultimate manifestation. So I think there are still a number of possibilities as to how it could manifest itself in different forms. Demons inhabiting humans is one manifestation, and this rotten apple head is another. And I'm sure there could be many more variations on this "spirit made flesh".

SX: One of the things which seems to worry some horror fans, though, is what might be called "the rubber monster syndrome". Have you seen *From Beyond*, for example?

SR: Not the movie itself, but I've seen the make-up for it.

SX: Now, when I watch those kind of movies, I often find myself caught between two responses: on one hand, 'Oh my God this is really scary', and on the other, 'How the hell did they do that?'. Like in Carpenter's *The Thing*, when I was thinking, 'Wow, these special effects are incredible', rather than, 'Oh my God, this thing is really evil and terrifying'.

SR: They really got me in *The Thing*, though, I was thinking, 'Oh my God what is this?'. It did frighten me in that one, as well.

BC: I think, perhaps, people like us are perhaps hyper-aware of this whole special effects and make-up thing, because we see such extensive coverage of how they do these things. But I think a guy who just walks in off the street would say, 'Aagh, look at that head, it's crawling by itself'. I think it would still be effective, for him. Sometimes I wish I could put on the hat of a guy just coming in to see a movie, without having any idea how they do anything. I'd love to have that ignorance again.

SX: OK, let's talk about doors. In both the *Evil Dead* movies, the evil force, represented by the camera, spends a lot of time rushing through the house, chasing people and crashing through doors – and this cabin has a lot of doors. And in *Crimewave* you have an elaborate door joke in the Parade of Protection chase sequence. I'm sure Freudians would have a field day with this door fetish of yours.

SR: There are a lot of doors aren't there? Well, doors are basically very cheap and easy things to break. And I think we used them a lot in the *Evil Dead* because people feel they're safe behind doors, and we just wanted to show them that how ever many doors they close, this thing will still get them.

SX: You're famous for your fluid camera movements, of course, the way the camera almost has a life of its own. But there was one shot in this movie where I thought, 'Hang on guys, this is just too much'. It's the one when Ash wakes up in the forest: there's a close-up of his face, laying partly in a puddle of water then suddenly the camera screws back and up, very fast, to an overhead position. And I'm thinking, 'Well this is all very clever but what is it all about, what does it mean?'

SR: Well, you know, that particular shot, when the camera roars away from Bruce as he awakes, was designed to convey a very special feeling. It's that momentary experience I've sometimes had when I wake up in a strange hotel room as if from a nightmare. And then I calm down, thinking: 'That's right, I'm in a strange bed, but I came in here last night, I checked into this hotel, it's OK'.

I wanted to capture that feeling of waking, almost from a nightmare, and not knowing where you are, and then deciding everything is calm and peaceful. So I decided the best way to do that was with a startling camera movement the moment he opened his eyes, then ending on a more serene frame. That's why we pulled up and span the camera, to try to capture that

momentary sensation. I think maybe it would have worked slightly better if Ash's gasp, on the soundtrack, had been a little louder, sort of a (demonstrates startled gasp).

I don't just start moving the camera around for no reason. I always go for the clearest, most comprehensible way of telling the story, and then I think, 'How can I complement that to make it a little more exciting, juice it a little?'

SX: You obviously spent a lot of time perfecting the music and sound effects for the film? For example, you often alternate periods of furious action and deafening noise with eerie silences, which nevertheless don't allow the audience to relax, because it knows this quiet calm will soon be shattered.

SR: That's true. The soundtrack in this picture, we thought, was very important. Because, as you pointed out, this is not a movie of dialogue, or of dramatic situations developed through character and dialogue; but rather one in which the visuals and the sound which accompanies them combine to create the most powerful feeling.

BC: And it's important, in order to get louder, to start from being quiet. You can't be loud and then get louder because then people can't take it anymore, they're just no longer interested. But if you can make everything stop, then you can go crazy again.

SR: Bruce, in fact, was our supervising sound editor, and we tried lots of new things on this picture. For example we had the rocking chair that rocks by itself. But instead of just recording the wooden creaking sounds and dubbing them onto the soundtrack, we took a creak and then we used a computerised recording system to digitally sample a human scream. Then we digitally combined the rocking creak with the human scream, to get the duration and cadence of the rocking chair but the timbre of a human shriek. (Mimics human-sounding creak). This is gonna be tough for you to write.

BC: Mixing in the sampled vocal accompaniment just sort of brings it alive.

SR: It also gives it an extra edge, so you think, 'That's a rocking chair but there's something human about it'.

SX: Was the ending something that was in the script right from the start, or was that something that you came up with as the film evolved?

SR: No, we knew it would end like that. There was an alternate ending, but that one was always scripted, the idea that he went back through time to battle the *Evil Dead* for all eternity. And we brought it to England, because the first *Evil Dead* was most warmly received here. In fact, England was the place that really made it a hit. Palace gave the film a big push and that helped us to get an American distributor. And we love English horror movies, I wish some English film-makers would get together and try that again. Where are the modern Hammer pictures? I mean, England made the best horror pictures in the world.

BC: They did. They were kind of hokey, but they were great. They had the fog rolling in, and the moon behind the clouds...

SR: Right, where do you think the fog in *Evil*

Dead comes from? English horror pictures.

BC: Yeah, graveyards and women in nightgowns, it's all from Hammer.

SX: Well, maybe the new Clive Barker film, *Hellraiser*, will be the movie you've been waiting for.

SR: Yes, I hope so.

SX: Speaking of which, would you ever consider making an adaptation of a horror novel or story – something by Clive Barker, for instance, or Ramsey Campbell, or Iain Banks?

SR: When I read *The Shining* I really wanted to make that picture, that just blew me away. And Kubrick took such a different route from the book itself that I think it's possibly still available to be made into a different film, one that holds true to the novel. It was really a brilliant picture, but I think the book is somewhat untapped. There's also a short story by Saki I like very much, *The Open Window*. It's a really funny and scary story, with a very logical and simple twist at the end.

SX: Do you know what you'll be making next?

SR: I think we'll be making a short film that is part of an anthology for Twentieth Century Fox. It's called *Tales of Manhattan*, and it's a re-make of the original 1942 film, which follows a set of tuxedo tails through different stories. Fox have five different directors – Joel and Ethan Coen, Spike Lee, David Byrne, myself, and someone whose name I don't remember. I think that's due to go into production this summer.

SX: Can you say a little bit more about what your particular segment of the story will be?

SR: My story is a Harold Lloyd type of comedy about a young Englishman who comes to Manhattan for a wedding, and his goal is to raise a certain amount of money from his wealthy relatives for this wild grouse preserve north of Manchester. As soon as he arrives, he meets this young lady he's immediately attracted to, but he loses sight of her in the big city. Then he gets to the wedding, but it turns out that it's actually a funeral. Fortunately, it also turns out that he is entitled to a very large proportion of the will, exactly the amount he needs for the grouse preserve, but only if he's married by midnight. So the young Englishman goes on these five-minute courting sessions, all the time hoping he will find the beautiful woman he saw when he first arrived. But as the hour of midnight approaches he's still not married, so it looks like he will have to forfeit the fortune. But there's a twist and a happy ending – it should be a sweet little tale.

SX: There's a rumour that you might be making *The Fly 2*.

SR: Actually, I'm not sure we're going to do *The Fly 2*, we don't know at this point. Twentieth Century Fox have certainly been talking to us, but I'm not sure it's going to happen. A script is being written by a young writer called Mick Garris – who wrote the script for the new Spielberg picture, *Batteries Not Included*, and who was story editor on the *Amazing Stories* TV anthology. And if I approve the script, there's a chance we may do it.

I really loved *The Fly*, in fact I thought it was the best love story of the year, strangely enough. Cronenberg is a very intelligent

film-maker.

SX: But there's no guarantee you'll be directing the sequel?

SR: No, not by a long shot.

As Raimi says this, a tower which he has been constructing from match-sticks, destabilised by crowning cigarette packet and match-box, topples over. I for one hope this was not an omen.

EVIL DEAD II. USA 1987. Dir: Sam Raimi. With: Bruce Campbell, Sarah Berry, Dan Hicks, Kassie Wesley, Theodore Raimi. Renaissance/Palace.

Lest anyone be misled, *Evil Dead II* is a comedy. Demented, grotesque and completely crazy, but a comedy nonetheless. In fact, judging from the bemused response the film received in the USA, 'Who's laughing now?' (Campbell's quip to his renegade severed hand) might be more apposite a subtitle than *Dead By Dawn*, which appears nowhere on the print... Considering that parts of the film approach remake/remodels of *The Evil Dead*, this is an almost unqualified success. Almost because some of the re-shoots are dangerously close to self-plagiarism (though Raimi does explain the reasoning in Nigel Floyd's interview), and with a concept with as much apparent scope as *Evil Dead II* offered, it's a pity that Raimi thought it necessary to duplicate sequences.

That said, here we have a movie which rarely lets its manic pacing slacken off. The continuing misfortunes of Ash (Campbell) are chronicled in such a slapstick, black-humoured fashion that only the most recalcitrant miseries will not be moved to laughter.

So what do we have in *Evil Dead II*? We have possessed hands; we have multi-coloured blood flowing in torrents; we have eyeball swallowing, chainsaws, the metamorphosis of Ash from spineless wimp to the definitive monster-mashing Man of Action, and we have comic-book ultraviolence on an epic scale. And in amongst are some sublime set-pieces - Ash's flight to the woodshed and the subsequent battle, his chainsaw graft, and the chase through the house (the same tiny cottage as the first, whose labyrinthine corridors totally defy logic). Photography is nothing short of audacious, the 'shaky-cam' technique refined to include passing through car windscreens, whirling up into the air, and hurtling through the woods at faster-than-breakneck speed.

What *Evil Dead II* does lack is a scene of wildly graphic horror, but the nature of the film (closer to *Crimewave* in execution than *The Evil Dead*) and the continuous wanton brutality negate both the need to observe such acts and the belief that comedy and horror cannot be successfully blended. Again, like *Crimewave*, we have violence so absurd it resembles the excesses of the golden age of Warner Brothers cartoons (specifically the never-ending travails of Wile E. Coyote and the gormless antics of Foghorn Leghorn), and humour so malicious it can't fail to win you over.

A necessary Evil...

Stefan Jaworzyn

VIDEO COMPETITION

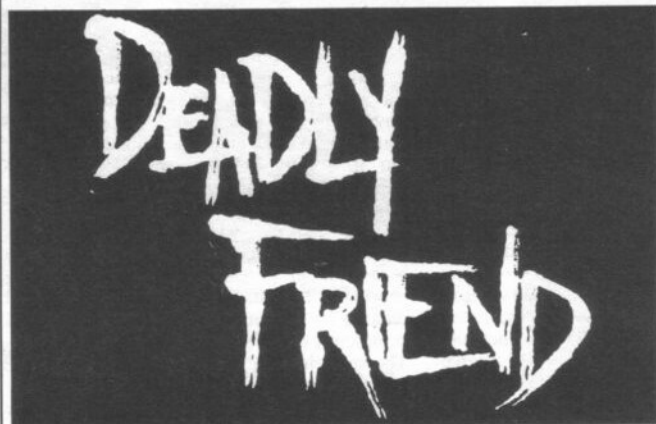


Courtesy of PALACE VIDEO, we have SIX copies of Sam Raimi's "ultimate experience in gruelling terror", *THE EVIL DEAD* released on video on July 16th to give away as prizes. Worth around £40.00 (retail price), all you have to do is answer the following three questions correctly. The first six correct replies picked out of the editor's dustbin will receive a copy of this ferociously original horror film.

1) What was the title of the short film *THE EVIL DEAD* was based on?
2) What was the name of the character played by Bruce Campbell in Sam Raimi's *CRIME WAVE*?

3) In a rare acting performance, Sam Raimi once played a notorious Californian hippie psychopath and mass murderer. Name the murderer.

Closing date for entries is September 1st, 1987. Winners to be announced next issue. When entering please indicate whether you require a VHS or BETAMAX copy. This competition is only open to UK residents - sorry...



Courtesy of WARNER HOME VIDEO, we have SIX copies of "suspense master" Wes Craven's *DEADLY FRIEND*, his first feature film since the highly successful *A Nightmare on Elm Street*. Released on video on August 28th, it retails at approximately £70.00! All you have to do is answer the following three questions correctly. The first six correct replies chosen by the editor's pet aardvark (Fang), will receive a copy of this tale of teenage necrophilic angst...

1) Who wrote the original book on which *DEADLY FRIEND* is based?
2) Which Wes Craven movie, based on a comic strip, recently received its British premier on Warner Home Video?
3) Name three Wes Craven TV movies.

Closing date for entries is September 1st, 1987. Winners to be announced next issue. Please indicate whether you require a VHS or BETAMAX copy. This competition is only open to UK residents - tough luck...

the closeness could only have been meant to titillate. The word "bastard" was now being used in programmes shown when the family (that's to say, children) were viewing, and if this was allowed to continue "it'll soon be heard in the school playground." Well, it certainly was when I was a child. "If we let them [the BBC] get away with this kind of thing at family viewing time . . ." but the prospect remained undefined, perhaps because "this kind of thing" ("homosexuality, prostitution, verbal aggression") was too various for the effects to be summarized with recourse to facts. For a moment Mrs Whitehouse seemed actually to defend bad language, since she claimed that if it was no longer kept in reserve to express anger, only violence would be left. A point worth discussing, but she had already moved on. "There's so much more to all this," she said ominously, and in a remarkable coda she suggested that "anarchists" intended to destroy the language on which Christian society was based. "Destroy the word and you destroy the system," she warned. "All this [the call for censorship] isn't just a matter of taste, it's a matter of the whole structure of society."

Debatable, all that, I should say – but there was to be no debate. That seemed odd, because the reporter who had claimed beforehand that the issues "will be hotly debated" was identified from the stage as a founder member of the local branch of VALA. I must assume she would not have misled her readers unless she had been misinformed herself, but either case needs explaining. Instead of a debate, there was question time, but first VALA was treated to a hard sell by Steve Stevens, founder of the Festival of Light and member of the VALA executive committee: "obviously you're all here because you're concerned" (well, yes) led to the assumption that any of those present who weren't already members would join before they left. This assumption of agreement (presumably an aspect of their claim to represent the silent majority) persisted into the question session, which was mediated by a minister from the Christian Centre and which proved to be more revealing than the organizers might have wished.

In answer to one supporter Mrs Whitehouse quoted an Australian study of violence on video. Some of my readers may remember the British report, "Video Violence and Children", widely used to whip up the panic about horror films on video, a report from which the Methodist and Catholic churches withdrew their support when they learned that the conclusions had been written leaving gaps for the research to be inserted later, and I wonder if the Australian report may be as eager to reach its conclusions. Mrs Whitehouse quoted the claim that the video sequence most popular among Australian youth is the one in which "the girl pulls off her father's head and eats it for a birthday cake." One of the more extraordinary aspects of the present censorship panic is that no matter how inaccurate or even plain fictitious a description of a (usually unnamed) film may be, it will be claimed as further evidence of the need for censorship. Now the scene Mrs Whitehouse quoted seems

to be either a plagiarism or, I suspect, a misrepresentation of the episode in *Creepshow* in which an irascible patriarch returns from the grave in search of his Father's Day cake, and I think it's worth pointing out that the episode is meant and played as a black joke. Indeed, laughter (this time not only from me) greeted the synopsis Mrs Whitehouse quoted, but this was immediately quelled. "It's no laughing matter," said Mrs Whitehouse with a frown.

Otherwise the audience hardly needed to be told how to react. When a Church of England clergyman suggested that Mrs Whitehouse was acting as a propagandist for the Tory party just before the general election, since she'd stated at some length that only the Tories had included tighter control of broadcasting in their manifesto, his point was drowned by groans. Another dissenter was told by the mediator "Everyone has come to hear Mrs Whitehouse, not you" – a curious notion of debate. All the same, lengthy statements by members of the audience were allowed so long as they were supportive, while other speakers were required to restrict themselves to "one simple question only". Disagreements tended to be dismissed by Mrs Whitehouse on the basis that the speaker's point was "not thought through". Potentially the most fruitful confrontation was with a young man who'd fought in the Falklands and who wanted the reality to be shown. "Would you take your young children to the battlefield to see the dead and wounded?" Mrs Whitehouse demanded, and having extracted a reluctant no, said triumphantly "Then don't expect television to do your job for you." I might have asked whose job she wanted it to do, but the selection of speakers was becoming increasingly calculated: one attractive teenager, her face made old by hatred, was selected by the wielder of the roving microphone before she had even raised her hand. She wanted to know what they could do about blasphemy and sexuality in children's programmes such as *He-Man*. What indeed! "If you don't have promiscuity in your family you shouldn't watch it as entertainment," declared a speaker who apparently followed Mrs Whitehouse from meeting to meeting. "The BBC should be frightened of us," she shouted, but it occurred to me that an organization which felt the need to exert so much control over a debate must be pretty scared itself deep down – maybe scared that the images of children and the family which it tries to use to discredit any disagreement wouldn't stand up to examination. (This concentration on what's suitable for family viewing means that VALA can't condemn theatrical screenings of films from which children are barred, but this can be used to make VALA seem more reasonable – for instance, Mrs Whitehouse wrote to the *Evening Standard* to deny press reports that VALA had commented on *Monty Python's Life of Brian* – while her friends in the Festival of Light can be relied upon to attack the films.) The very last question of the session mentioned censorship, to general restlessness and groans. "Ah, there's that word," Mrs Whitehouse cried. "That's a dirty word these days. You can use any word except that word." And so the evening petered out in silliness.

I bought several pamphlets published by VALA, and they saddened me even more than the evening had. Here is Mrs Whitehouse telling the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly that research denying a link between television and social violence is "inadequately financed and rapidly produced" (shades of "Video Violence and Children"! Here is a claim that because a scene in the dramatization of *I Claudius* was not in Robert Graves' book, "if ever there was violence for violence's sake, this was it." Here is a standard form used by VALA members to monitor television programmes for violence, which includes the ominous instruction "Please list the advertisers DURING and immediately AFTER each [commercial television] programme." Here is an arts programme about Kurosawa monitored: "A film maker talking to another man about films he had made in Japan . . . A man stood against a wall whilst arrows were shot at him, he staggered away with all these arrows sticking out from various parts of his body, – very sickening for viewers to see." Here is an account of the Alistair Maclean movie *Fear is the Key*: "First half hour non-stop fighting, car chase and abduction of woman threatened with violence. Rest of film included hits of heads, close up of dead man in a pit, three further fights, skeletons on a plane at the sea bottom, further shooting and goody and bad characters choking to death in bathyscope. Goody rescued and baddies arrested. Terrible example of violent driving." And here is part of an analysis of a programme cited in the VALA pamphlet *Television Programmes and AIDS*: "'Jesus' four times, 'shit' eight times, 'piss off' three times, 'wanker' three times, 'sod off' twice . . ." But I can't go on: the thought of these obsessed folk crouched before the television, pencils at the ready, is too much. I said I was saddened, and I am. Is it naive of me to expect religion to be about largeness of vision? All I seemed to be offered that night at the Christian Centre was the spectacle of small minds snapping shut.

