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LITTLE SHOP OF

HORRORS!

**LYLE CONWAY—
THE EFFECTS GENIUS
BEHIND AUDREY II**

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DIRECTING FANTASY**

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\$5 MILLION ENDING
YOU DIDN'T SEE**

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for swiping script ideas

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could be a sleeper hit

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**STAR TREK:
THE NEXT GENERATION**
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Lyle Conway
poses with
the film's
other special
effect, star
Ellen Greene



Mark Shostrom on the makeup effects of EVIL DEAD 2

By Jim Clark

When makeup effects expert Mark Shostrom saw *THE EVIL DEAD* in 1984, he was so impressed he got in touch with producer Rob Tapert and let him know that he would be enthusiastic to work on any sequel. Tapert agreed to contact Shostrom if an *EVIL DEAD 2* ever materialized. "This is the only time that I've made an effort to work on a particular movie that's panned out," said Shostrom. "And I'm really glad it did."

Shostrom began creating special makeup effects for *EVIL DEAD 2* in March, 1986, taking six weeks to prepare for a May shoot, working with a crew of eleven. According to Shostrom, of the 700 shots in the film, over 120 are special makeup effects shots.

Shostrom has created impressive makeup effects for a number of horror films, including *NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET*, *PARTS 2 & 3*, *FROM BEYOND*, and *ANDROID*. Shostrom's crew on *EVIL DEAD 2* included Greg Nicotero, Howard Berger, Mike Tricic, Aaron Sims, Shanon Shea, Robert Kurtzman, and stop-motion animators Rick Catizone and Doug Beswick.

Shostrom's main makeup task was the creation of Henrietta, the corpse of the professor's wife that comes back to life in the cabin's cellar. The makeup was applied to Ted

Henrietta's "Pee Wee" head style, sculpted and painted by Shostrom, with mechanics by Dave Kindlon.



Makeup supervisor Mark Shostrom (l) and assistant Robert Kurtzman with Ted Raimi, brother of the director, in makeup as the possessed Henrietta.

Raimi, younger brother of the director. The costume consisted of twenty-eight separate pieces and covered 100 percent of Raimi's body. It took seven hours to apply. Then Raimi would have to act in front of the cameras, often for an additional twelve hours. When the cameras stopped rolling, Shostrom would begin the laborious, and delicate, process of removing the Henrietta makeup. Those were long days! For the scene where Henrietta's neck grows to the unseemly length of six feet, Shostrom designed and built a mechanical neck and head, combined with stop-motion effects.

Howard Berger created the demonic, Mr. Hyde-like makeup seen by Ash when he looks into a mirror. The effect was achieved entirely in-camera, using a photo double of actor Bruce Campbell. Mike Tricic did the makeup for Linda, Ash's girlfriend who rises headless from her grave and does a dance, a stop-motion segment by Doug Beswick.

Shostrom designed and built a creepily lifelike radio-controlled hand, for the sequence where Ash cuts off his own hand. After Raimi was through shooting Shostrom's electronic hand, stop-motion animator Rick Catizone used the same sets to film an animated hand. Footage of both effects were intercut in the final picture.

A "Pee Wee Head" effect for the film was named by Shostrom after the scene in *PEE WEE'S BIG ADVENTURE*

in which female truck driver Large Marge suddenly transforms herself into something unspeakable. When the illusion was added during the final days of production, Shostrom had to call in associate Bryant Tausek, who flew down to the North Carolina locations from New York. With Shostrom, Tausek designed and manufactured two heads which were made out of gelatin. Tausek rigged the heads with explosives for the erupting "Pee Wee Head" effect.

Summing up the philosophy of special effects on *EVIL DEAD 2*, Mark Shostrom noted that, "There is actually very little blood in the film. But there's a hell of a lot of green vomit." In fact, one of the special effects crew's favorite pastimes was testing the picture's many vomit effects. "We tested the vomit out on each other," he laughed. "We were all very fond of Bruce Campbell, but I think the crew's favorite moment came when they got to shoot a four-quart syringe of bile straight at him. He realized, of course, that he had to suffer for his art and took the entire experience very well."

After their work for the day was finally complete, Shostrom and his crew shot *EVIL DEAD* parodies with a super Beta video camera. They would edit footage from the original film and shoot their own takeoffs. A few times, they were able to persuade Bruce Campbell to reprise his role as Ash for what Shostrom affectionately called "our stupid movies." □

Avoids the dry rot which curses many Part Twos

EVIL DEAD 2

A Rosebud Releasing presentation of a Renaissance Pictures production. 3/87, 85 mins. In color. Director, Sam Raimi. Producer, Robert G. Tapert. Screenplay by Raimi & Scott Spiegel. Director of photography, Peter Deming. Night photography, Eugene Shugleit. Special makeup, Mark Shostrom. Art directors, Philip Duffin & Randy Benett. Set decorator, Elizabeth Moore. Set dresser, Wayne Leonard. Sound, Tom Morrison. Assistant director, Joseph Winogradoff.

Ash	Bruce Campbell
Annie	Sarah Berry
Bobby Joe	Dan Hicks
Posessed Henrietta	Kassie Wesley
Linda	Theodore Raimi
Ed	Denise Bixler
Professor	Richard Domeier
	John Peaks

by Thomas Doherty

"Slaphappy splatter" is the best way to describe the Cinema of Gore in its baroque phase. Tension and terror are subordinated to a free-form gross-out featuring modest innovations in prosthetics, more flesh than the meat locker in *ROCKY*, and the improvisational spirit of an adolescent boy considering a cat, a lawnmower, and the possibilities. Funny thing, though: for all their blood-stained *grand guignol* theatrics, the comic book horror and cheap humor of a *RE-ANIMATOR* or *TOXIC AVENGER* seems somehow wholesome compared to some of the more, shall we say, documentary items at the videostore. At heart, gorehounds are like those ditsy matrons who always show up in Hitchcock movies clucking over the best way to kill a husband. This brand of Dead Heads cheer the special effects work and gags appreciatively at a clever evisceration, relinquishing the market for real-life fatalities to the *FACES OF DEATH* sickos.

Very much in this ghouls-on-film mold, *EVIL DEAD 2* is a real hoot. In 1983, filmmakers Sam Raimi, Robert G. Tapert, and Bruce Campbell came out of nowhere—well, Detroit actually—to concoct *THE EVIL DEAD*, a low-budget, high-grossing gore-fest that gave George Romero good reason to look over his shoulder. The current follow-up, wryly billed as "the sequel to the ultimate experience in grueling terror," is blessed with a bigger budget and a more seasoned crew, but it avoids the dry rot which curses so many

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Co-producer and star Bruce Campbell on the making of EVIL DEAD 2

By Paul Gordon

Actor and co-producer Bruce Campbell, who plays the lead in EVIL DEAD 2, a sequel to independent filmmaker Sam Raimi's horror sleeper, THE EVIL DEAD, said that the trick in making the new film was getting people who loved working in the genre. Why not hire the best, like makeup artist Tom Savini (MARTIN, DAY OF THE DEAD)? "Well, first of all, he is too expensive," 28 year-old Campbell said. "He's not as hungry as the other guys are."

"You can get those big name guys, but what they do is cruise through," he said. "They don't do as much personalized work nowadays. They're big shots. They will only do design work. We wanted someone who was dying to cut his teeth on it. And Mark Shostrom, who did NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET 2 and FROM BEYOND, was really pumped up about it."

During production, the filmmakers said that the DeLaurentiis Entertainment Group, the film's financier, had stipulated that the film had to be shot for an R-rating [17:34:92]. Though the filmmakers obviously chomped at the ratings bit during filming, Campbell said they also wanted to do some toning-down from the first picture. "That really gory stuff in THE EVIL DEAD would chase people out of the theatres," he said. "This time we wanted to try to keep everybody in, to push it to the edge, but still have viewers be able to recommend it to their friends."

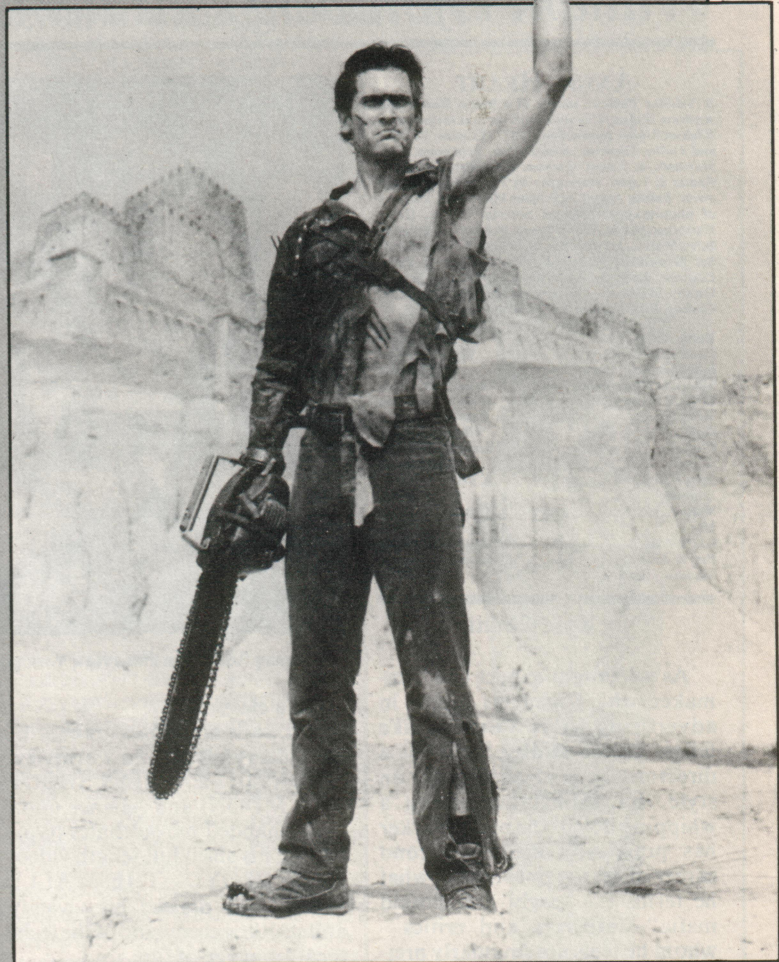
Though the gore was sup-

posedly toned-down a bit, EVIL DEAD 2 still had to be released without a rating, like its predecessor. DEG was unable to handle the film's distribution because they are members of the MPAA and thus duty-bound to submit their product to the ratings system. Rosebud Releasing Corp., a thinly veiled DEG subsidiary, handled the film's regional distribution because Campbell and his Renaissance Pictures partners, director Sam Raimi and producer Robert G. Tapert, didn't want to deal with the ratings board. DEG president of Marketing and Distribution Larry Gleason indicated that the decision was mutual.

"We didn't have the time or the money, based on the scheduling, to play the ratings game, to keep submitting it and submitting it," said Campbell. "When you submit it you have to cut this so you can show it to them again so you can cut that and go back and forth to get an R-rating. What's bad about it is that some newspapers and other media won't handle advertisements for an unrated film. You can't do a national, 1,300 theatre blitz. But your advertising channels open up as soon as you get better word of mouth."

Campbell said the cast and crew of the film worked like dogs, spending two years preparing it for release. Many of its complex visual effects required extensive changes during post production. "We have a scene where the cabin floods," said Campbell. "There's a blood flood, where it's gushing from the walls. It didn't have the impact we wanted initially." So

Ted Raimi in makeup by Mark Shostrom, poses on the set with his brother, director Sam Raimi. Dark glasses protect from the glare of white contacts.



In the sequel, Ash (Bruce Campbell) becomes a kind of shotgun toting, chainsaw wielding, superhero styled on the Spaghetti westerns of Sergio Leone.

the set was rebuilt on its side.

Raimi and Campbell were dissatisfied with the monstrous creature seen at the film's finale. Doubts didn't surface until they got the creation on the set. They felt it didn't look hideous enough to be in harmony with the rest of the production. Raimi devised an unusual cinematographic solution on the spot to make it look weirder. "Raimi had this anamorphic lens which warped and stretched-out the image," said Campbell. "Since the projection system isn't anamorphic, you get this squished image. Of course, sound effects helped too."

The complex effects work slowed the film's postproduction and made for a hectic workload in editing the film and dubbing sound for its scheduled release. "Often times we were putting sound effects to blank images because the effects weren't done yet," said Campbell. All of the monsters' voices were replaced or somehow

altered with other vocalizations, many of which were done by Raimi, himself. "Sam played a lot of monsters because he's such a ham," laughed Campbell.

Though the film was made for DEG, technically a "mini-major," Campbell said that the production was left pretty much to its own devices. Working independent of the studio system has always been a treat for Campbell. "You have more of an opportunity to pretty much relish the making of the picture," he said. "You don't have people on the set telling you what you can and can't do."

Campbell is rightly proud of what he and his Renaissance Pictures partners were able to accomplish on the film, working with a small budget. "This sequel is definitely glossier, more consistent and the lighting is better," he said. "Director Sam Raimi's much more familiar with cameras now. He's much more astute and his angles are wilder than ever." □

FILM RATINGS

of a house and two children slowly being taken over by evil forces, saved by some interesting special effects work by Randall Cook and Craig Reardon. Directed by little-known Canadian, Tibor Takacs with an eye toward a slow, steady development until the special effects action starts coming fast and furious.

Supervised by Cook, the effects include Reardon's zombie-like Workman, strongly reminiscent of Peter Cushing in *TALES FROM THE CRYPT* (1972). Cook's stop-motion Demon Lord is technically terrific, with 4 eyes, 4 arms, and snout-like face, but exudes no real menace. Like the giant beasts of Ray Harryhausen it just sits there, flapping its tentacles and winking its eyes.

More interesting are Cook's and Reardon's imp-like "minions." Comical at times, violently malicious at others, they seem possessed with more *joie de vivre* than their boss. One scene stands out memorably from the rest. When the Demon Lord first appears his slew of nasty, mischievous devil's helpers leap and cavort with gay abandon. Aaahh, the sheer thrill of it, "he's finally here" they seem to be saying.

● Patrick Hobby

GOthic

Directed by Ken Russell. Vestron Pictures, 5/87, 90 mins. With: Gabriel Byrne, Julian Sands, Natasha Richardson.

Ken Russell's freakish supposition about what happened at Lord Byron's Italian castle in 1816—the stormy night when Mary Shelley conjured up *FRANKENSTEIN*. Personally, I'll take James Whale's subdued, laconic treatment of the event depicted at the beginning of *THE BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN*.

Although Russell's hallucinatory images seldom bore, many play like leftovers from TOMMY's acid queen sequence. This wildly uneven onslaught may escape even the most dedicated Russell fans. The elaborate production values and head-trip effects sustain interest for a few minutes. However, sitting through this excessive ordeal for the shocking "breasts with eyes" is not worth the time or the eye strain.

● LPR

HARRY AND THE HENDERSONS

Directed by William Dear. Universal, 6/87, 110 mins. With: John Lithgow, Melinda Dillon, Don Ameche.

E.T. for the umpteenth time. But this tale of a lost and lovable bigfoot doesn't stumble over its prepackaged storyline, its surface gloss character development, or its failure to fully realize a "Let the Animals

	●●●●	●●●	●●	●	○			
	MUST SEE	EXCELLENT	GOOD	MEDIOCRE	POOR			
FILM TITLE	VJB	FSC	DG	JPH	BK	LPR	DS	
ALLAN QUATERMAIN...GOLD/Gary Nelson Cannon, 2/87, 99 mins.	●				○	○	●	
ANGEL HEART/Alan Parker Tri-Star, 3/87, 113 mins.	●●	●	●●●	●	●●	●●	●●	
THE BELIEVERS/John Schlesinger Orion, 6/87, 114 mins.	●●	●●●	●	●	●●	●●	●●●	
CREEPSHOW 2/Michael Gornick New World, 5/87, 89 mins.	●	●●	●	●	○	○	●●	
DEAD TIME STORIES/Jeffrey Delman Bedford Ent., 1/87, 81 mins.	○		○	●	○	○		
EVIL DEAD 2/Sam Raimi Rosebud Releasing, 3/87, 85 mins.	●●●	●●●●	●●●●	●	●●	●●	●●	
FROM BEYOND/Stuart Gordon Empire, 11/86, 85 mins.	●●●	●●	●●	●	●	●	●●	
THE GATE/Tibor Takacs New Century, 5/87, 92 mins.	●	●	●	●●	●●	●		
THE GOLDEN CHILD/Michael Ritchie Paramount, 12/86, 93 mins.	●●	●	●	●●●	●	●	●	
GOthic/Ken Russell Vestron, 5/87, 90 mins.	●●		●	○	●	●	●	
HARRY & THE HENDERSONS/ William Dear, Univ., 5/87, 91 mins.	●●	●●	●●●	●●	●	●	●●	
THE KINDRED/Jeffrey Obrow F/M Ent., 1/87, 91 mins.	●●	●		●●	●	●	●	
LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS/Frank Oz Warner Bros, 12/86, 88 mins.	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●	●	●●	●●●	
MAKING MR. RIGHT/Susan Seidelman Orion, 3/87, 95 mins.	●●	●	●	●	●		●●	
MANNEQUIN/Michael Gottlieb Fox, 2/87, 89 mins.			○	○	●	○		
MAX HEADROOM/Philip DeGuere ABC-TV, 4/87, 60 mins.	●●			○	●●●		●	
MONSTER IN THE CLOSET/ Bob Dahlin, Troma, 1/87, 87 mins.	●	○	○	●●	●		●	
MY DEMON LOVER/Charles Loventhal New Line, 5/87, 86 mins.	●	○	○	○	●	○	●●	
NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET 3/ Chuck Russell, New Line, 2/87, 97 mins.	●●	●●	○	●●	●●	●	●●●	
PREDATOR/John McTiernan Fox, 6/87, 106 mins.	●●	●	●	●	●	●	●●	
PROJECT X/Jonathan Kaplan Fox, 4/87, 108 mins.		●●	●●	●●	●		●	
RETURN TO HORROR HIGH/ Bill Froelich, New World, 1/87, 95 mins.	○			○	●		●	
STAR TREK IV/Leonard Nimoy Paramount, 11/86, 119 mins.	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	
THE STEPFATHER/Joseph Ruben New Century Vista, 2/87, 98 mins.	●●●●	●●●●	●●	●	●●●	●●●		
WITCHBOARD/Kevin S. Tenney Cinema Group, 1/87, 98 mins.	○	●●	●	●	●	●●		
THE WITCHES OF EASTWICK/ George Miller, Warner Bros, 6/87, 118 mins.	●●●	●●●	●●	●●●	●●	●●●	●●	

VJB/Vincent J. Bossone FSC/Frederick S. Clarke DG/Dann Gire JPH/Judith P. Harris
BK Bill Kelley AM/Allen Malmquist LPR/Les Paul Robley DS/Dan Scapperotti

Live" theme. Instead director William Dear clears a path through beautiful scenery, GREYSTOKE-era makeup effects, with superb directing, timing, editing, and a sense of humor which, if far from ingenious, is still consistently clever and well-staged. An enjoyable sitting.

●● AM

INNERSPACE

Directed by Joe Dante. Warner Bros., 7/87, 118 mins. With: Dennis Quaid, Martin Short, Meg Ryan, Kevin McCarthy.

This film is to FANTASTIC VOYAGE what THE INCREDIBLE SHRINKING WOMAN was to THE INCREDIBLE SHRINKING MAN. It's a hip, modern update that tries

to replace the sense of wonder of the somewhat flawed original with weak humor, killing what awe and grandeur the story could have possessed. Made for Steven Spielberg's Amblin company, the film resembles nothing more than a \$25 million episode of AMAZING STORIES. Director Joe Dante seems more adept at the quick bit than the sustained character humor the film needs.

● Dennis Fischer

MAN FACING SOUTHEAST

Directed by Eliseo Subiela. U.S. Film Dallas (Argentina), 3/87, 105 mins. With: Lorenzo Quinteros, Hugo Soto, Ines Vernengo.

Eliseo Subiela's often mysti-

cal film, an Argentine MAN WHO FELL TO EARTH, is about a mental hospital patient who insists he's an ET. The patient, Rantes, possesses a high IQ, has no past, and wants not to be "cured," only "understood." The sympathetic doctor treating him breaks that ethical barrier of maintaining a degree of distance between himself and his patient.

A brilliant film that raises all kinds of questions, perhaps some too blatantly, about the nature of faith, science, and religion. Rantes is compared to the second coming of Christ, while the doctor becomes a modern day Pontius Pilate, leaving the final solution up to

the hospital director as he effectively "washes his hands" of affairs. Hugo Soto as the visitor possesses remarkable spirituality as he stands facing southeast in a courtyard, waiting for some form of instruction from beyond.

MAX HEADROOM

Directed by Farhad Mann. ABC-TV, 3/87, 60 mins. With: Matt Frewer, Amanda Pays, George Coe, Jeffrey Tambour.

Though hailed prior to its opening by such bastions of public taste as *People Magazine* as a breakthrough in adult television, the pilot for this new futuristic ABC series offered little evidence to support this. The plot revolved around blipverts—30 second commercials compressed into 3 seconds—which cause sedentary couch potato viewers to explode—a device SCTV made passe long ago. Passed over in the exposition was the more interesting notion of 2-way TV—while you're watching, it's also watching (and recording) you.

The show seemed padded at an hour to delay the initial appearance of Max Headroom, a computer-generated person, with a teeth-grating speech defect, created from the mind print of a boring news photographer played by Matt Frewer. Use of computer graphics was much better integrated in *THE HITCHHIKER'S GUIDE TO THE GALAXY*, and editing between the subjective camera point-of-view of Frewer and the objective viewpoint of the rest of the show was irritating.

The high point of the opening episode was actually a commercial featuring Max Headroom for Coke. Aside from the wit of casting Charles Rocket (who was fired from SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE for saying the "F" word) as the ruthless head of Network 23, the pilot had nothing much going for it. The series is on ABC's September schedule.

○ JPH

MONSTER IN THE CLOSET

Directed by Bob Dahlin. Troma Inc., 4/87, 89 mins. With: Donald Grant, Denise DuBarry, Henry Gibson, Howard Duff.

An affectionate parody of '50s monster-on-the-loose pictures that thinks it's funnier than it is. Which is not at all. The film is directed by Chicagoan Bob Dahlin, who won a student Oscar for his Hitchcock parody NORMAN NURDLEPICK'S "SUSPENSION," which was much funnier. Though Dahlin reprises some of the same material, he hasn't progressed much as a filmmaker from his student days. Only the money that built a decent man-in-suit monster

EVIL DEAD

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Part Twos. Raimi and company are not about to let professionalism and taste run a sure-fire High Concept or rein in their gruesome inventiveness. Indeed, *EVIL DEAD 2* delivers so spectacularly on the blood and guts that the filmmakers formed their own company, Rosebud Releasing Corporation, to bypass regular channels of distribution and avoid a certain "X" rating from the MPAA. As it is, the film's advertising warns of "scenes which may be too intense for persons under the age of seventeen." Right.

The plot is some nonsense about calling up evil spirits from a vaguely anthropomorphic Book of the Dead, but as long as the special effects kick in real good, who really cares? Ash (Bruce Campbell) and Henrietta (Lou Hancock) intrude into a remote backwoods cabin at night and soon find their relationship, not to mention major appendages, torn asunder. With perhaps undue speed, Henrietta is possessed by demons and the design crew at Doug Beswick Productions. Now played by directorial sibling Ted Raimi under six hours worth of head and body molds, Henrietta performs a cute ballet in ethereal stop-motion, delicately bouncing her Undead Head up and down her arm.


Poor Ash is thus left to fend for himself, which first means fending off the clinging remains of his decapitated ex. As Ash, Bruce Campbell, the dolt-victim in *THE EVIL DEAD*, is the principal target of evil dead vengeance, and he's even a *better* bad actor here than he was in the original. Campbell's sharply etched features are perfect for his role: he looks for all the world like an EC Comics character made flesh. In that spirit, Raimi keeps Campbell's screen presence fairly one-dimensional in order to prevent anything so disconcerting as audience identification. This guy, after all, is really going to be put through a meat grinder.

As in *THE EVIL DEAD*, the decision to inflict a male protagonist with the worst the nether world can serve up is one of Raimi's more intriguing narrative choices. After watching dozens of Jamie Lee Curtis replicants shriek and run, it's refreshing to watch a guy try to get a grip on himself after chainsawing his girlfriend's head in two—the occasion, incidentally, of a wonderful sight gag. Otherwise, sexually and politically speaking, not much else is going on, certainly nothing like the infamous tree-stump rape in the first outing. The second act

entry of a quartet of fresh victims, including two cuties, offers the promise of either romance or sexism, but (perhaps reacting to feminist outcries) Raimi quickly squelches any purient assaults. Interestingly, when the lithsome Bobby Joe (Kassie Wesley) is strangled and stretched by foliage and vines after the fashion of her predecessor in *THE EVIL DEAD*, her torture is far less offensive and sexually suggestive.

Throughout, Raimi's imagination is up to his budget. *EVIL DEAD 2* is a virtual catalogue of the cinematic techniques available to the contemporary gore-monger, including animation, stop-motion photography, matte and miniature work, sculpting, molds and casting, and mechanical design. The production notes assert that of some 1200 shots in the film, 250 demanded special makeup, most of which was supervised by Mark Shostrom of *NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET II*. The technical virtuosity and manic pace of the action is thrilling, but no more so than the film's blithe violation of generic norms. The Gothic potential of the cabin is exploited to the full—walls gushing torrents of blood, creepy crawlers in the morgue of a basement—but the extra-household space is where danger really lurks and Raimi's steadicam-like marauding camera zooms after Ash like a predator. In the film's extraordinary coda, the landscape stretches beyond real space and time and zaps the besieged hero to another time, another place, safe but horrifyingly stranded.

Not least, the film is wildly funny. Comedy may be the last refuge of the failed horror director, but Raimi has a rich repertoire of visual and verbal punchlines. In the standout "Hand Amuck" sequence, evil spirits take possession of the hero's right hand and Ash finds himself in the grip of himself. Campbell does a hilarious bit of business, battering his head with plates and punching himself out. He finally defeats his uppity appendage by chainsawing it off. ("Who's laughing now?!" he gloats.) Campbell declaims his punchlines without a trace of irony, scoring laughs where a knowing, tongue-in-cheek delivery would fall flat. Typically, even in this *tour de force* sequence, Raimi ups the ante—detached from the body, the hand is still animate, running around the cabin like a Senoir Wenches on speed, scurrying through mouse holes and flipping off its former owner for good measure. That's the kind of playful spirit gore-hounds expect from a severed limb. □



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MONSTER SQUAD

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any respectable vampire turn over in his grave. Recalled Dekker, "There was one unnamed Universal executive who didn't like the script, or didn't think it was what the studio wanted to do. Otherwise, I think they would have made it because they have since seen it and been very supportive." Supportive to the point where Universal is now handling the film's overseas distribution.

Despite the usual warnings about working with child actors, Dekker insisted his cast was wonderful. They had no preconceived walls which adult actors sometimes erect in a director's path, he said. The characters portrayed are all normal kids—but just a little screwy—as Dekker was as a child, spending hours indoors watching old Universal horror movies on television, or listening to "9th Street Bridge" on the family phonograph.

Dekker described a scene in which the Mummy comes and visits Eugene, the club's youngest member, in his bedroom closet. He cries to his father and dad says: "No more monster books for you, young man. You can't read *CFQ* anymore."

The plot device which gathers all the monsters together borrows

the concept of *ABBOTT AND COSTELLO MEET FRANKENSTEIN* (1948), making Dracula the real heavy. "One hundred years ago, Professor Van Helsing, arch-nemesis of Count Dracula, discovered an ancient amulet which could control the balance between good and evil," said Dekker, describing the plot hook. "Dracula possessed the valuable icon back in 1888. But, Van Helsing's descendants stole the amulet and brought it to America to a small town in the South. Now every 100 years, what goes around, comes around. The balance of good and evil becomes vulnerable and the amulet is the key to controlling the scales. Dracula has come seeking the amulet to tip the scales towards evil so his children of the night can rule forever. The kids have 48 hours to stop him."

Although *THE MONSTER SQUAD* is a comedy to a certain degree, Dekker takes his myths and his monsters very seriously. "I firmly believe in counterpoint and contrast," he said. "Steven Spielberg is my idol and what I've learned from him is that, if you're going to scare people, it's much scarier to have a joke on both sides of the scare. And if you're going to make people laugh, it's much funnier if you have something serious on both sides of the joke." □