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# EVIL DEAD II



Director Sam Raimi is out to shock and amuse audiences with *Evil Dead II*,

follow-up to his successful release *Evil Dead*. He talks to Bob Eborall...

**D**etroit filmmaker Sam Raimi caused waves with his horror film *Evil Dead*, which went on to become an even more controversial video release. The film's success, however, ensured that he would get a lot more money to make the follow-up, *Evil Dead II*, for which he received \$3.6 million as against \$380,000. I caught up with Raimi while he was on a quick trip to Britain, before his return to the States where he is considering an offer to direct *Fly II*.

Raimi's luck following *Evil Dead* wasn't all good. He made a film called *Crimewave*, and found it a very unhappy experience, especially as *Evil Dead* star Bruce Campbell "was pulled from the lead a week before shooting. We did

*Evil Dead II* because what we wanted to do was to make a picture where they could not remove Bruce from the lead," revealed Raimi.

He added that "since *Evil Dead* was greeted warmly, especially in England, we decided, 'let's make a follow-up' to a movie people seemed to enjoy. That turned out to be the attraction of the follow-on story." At this point in the interview actor Bruce Campbell injected a note of finance by saying that another reason was that the investors in *Evil Dead* had not gone into profit. "With *Evil Dead II* they have started getting profit from it."

There were a lot of laughs at a press screening of the new film, and Raimi admitted that they purposely increased the humour: "The first picture

seemed to offend some people. It was never our intention to offend anybody. With any continuation of the *Evil Dead* story we thought let's not end up with something less. Let's replace with a little more black humour."

Was *Evil Dead* more of a Sam Raimi film than the follow-up? "I think they are both pictures by a group of people and I directed. I was more closely involved with *Evil Dead* as we had not enough money and I had to do the camera work myself. We made the new picture to entertain and thrill, while the first was to terrify and frighten. Now we are more interested in people having a good time after work. This is our personal desire: to entertain."

With more money to spend on *Evil Dead II* Raimi explained that "this

time we had the money to dream up ideas." They certainly did in an incredible tale of an ancient book of the dead creating mayhem. There's also a lot of blood, and Raimi explained that they had 50 gallon drums of liquid to resemble it. "And we went for turquoise, too. To offend people is not what we are about. It's too hard to make a movie to bother to offend people."

I wondered what was the difference in the horror this time, as Campbell reprises his role of Ash, the clean-cut hero who proved too much for the forces of evil. "I think specifically on camera gore," considered Raimi. "We tried not to show that any more. We tried to make the violence even less realistic. I think the first *Evil Dead* was very unrealistic. This is further from reality."

## the lighter side





Raimi was surprised *Evil Dead*, a top rental title, was on the video nasties list. "I was shocked. Any time that a government tries to repress art, which is not to say that *Evil Dead* is specifically a piece of art, I think it's very, very dangerous. It's thought-control, and we have to be on guard otherwise our freedoms will be taken away from us."

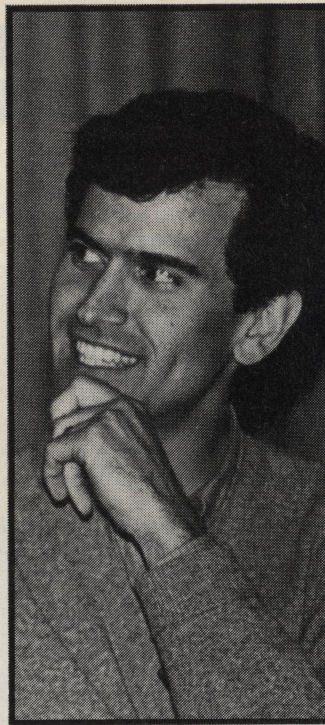
Raimi has been making films since he was 12, and has to his credit films with titles like *The Bogus Monkey Pignut Swindle!* While at Michigan State University he and roommate Robert Tapert, who produced *Evil Dead II*, formed Renaissance Pictures with Bruce Campbell as the third partner.

While on the subject of youth, I asked the director what he feels about under-18s seeing horror films. Raimi reckons they are alright for anyone who is able to tell the difference between reality



**Sam Raimi**

and a motion picture. "I would watch horror movies as a young child. I hope I have not been



**Bruce Campbell**

affected. I think I am a stable individual!" He had some good advice for budding young film

makers, remembering his own youth when his father made 16mm home movies and he became fascinated with the process and began making his own films. "You can shoot on Super 8 and show to an audience and get their response and improve your films from there." He agreed that there are a lot of advantages today in making your own video movies, with all the flexibility video offers, but pointed out that it's a much more expensive medium.

What next for Raimi? "I am writing a thriller, 'The Dark Man', and a short, 'Tales of Manhattan'. There's a possibility of directing *Fly II*, and I'd actually like to now do something with more realistic characters and try to create something that will uplift an audience. That's what I am trying to do next. I am wary of *Fly II* because I don't know if it will uplift the audience," he smiled.

**A night of fright for Bruce Campbell in *Evil Dead II***







Bruce Campbell — Ash to ashes?

## EVIL DEAD II

Bruce Campbell  
Palace Video  
85 minutes, 1987,  
Certificate '18'  
VHS, Beta



Sam Raimi's 1983 horror hit *Evil Dead* was the story of five clean cut college kids who got much more than they bargained for when they decided to spend a weekend in a remote Tennessee cabin. The final scene had sole survivor Ash (Bruce Campbell) staggering out of the cabin at dawn only to be confronted by an awesome unseen force. Ash to ashes, you might have said.

But you'd have been wrong, because Bruce Campbell's character is back leading a Rambo-like assault against monsterdom in this spectacular sequel that really delivers the goods for those who like their gore to come in five gallon cans. Last time out Ash was a cowering milksop, but here Raimi and his co-scripter Scott Siegel have turned our jut-jawed hero into a Dirty

Harry type character who is not afraid to get stuck in with a chainsaw and sort out those demons once and for all.

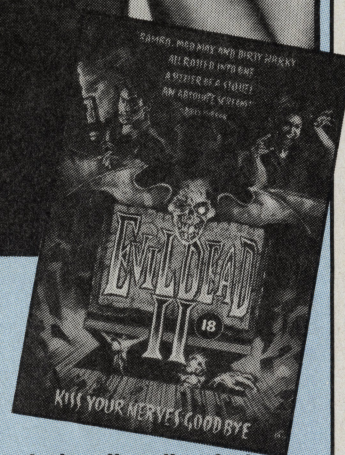
It's a bit confusing at the start, because rather than picking up where the last movie left off, this one treats the events in the original like a bad dream and begins instead with Ash arriving at the remote cabin for the first time with his girlfriend Denise Bexler. The latter starts playing around with a tape recorder on which has been recorded the incantation that sets in motion the evil forces lurking in the woods outside, and straight away the place is once again infested with a variety of nasty creatures.

Of course the storyline isn't all that important. It only serves as a loose framework on which Raimi and his enterprising team can hang a series of eye-popping special effects. And I really do mean eye-popping. At one stage a monster's eyeball is forcibly ejected from its socket and hurtles at high speed across a room to land

PLOP! in a screaming girl's mouth. Yech!

Also of note is a startling sequence where a decapitated body does a devilish pas-de-deux with its own severed head — accomplished with the aid of clever Ray Harryhausen-like animation — and there's the bit where brave Bruce has to deal with his own demonically possessed hand. It scrabbles for a meat cleaver to split his noggin in two, but he pins it to the floor and reaches for a chainsaw — 'Who's laughing now?' he grimaces as he starts slicing...

Obviously it's the audience who will be laughing at the audaciousness of it all. In a determined effort not to have his latest movie branded a 'Nasty' (a problem that plagued the video distribution of the original), Raimi has taken it further into the realms of parody. Frankly, I think he's gone a little too far: *Evil Dead II* could do with a bit more chainsaw and a few less chuckles. And much of the humour is a little too juvenile to hit the mark anyway — perhaps



echoing the director's admitted fondness for the silly slapstick of The Three Stooges. There is some wit on offer though. Look at the pile of books that Ash pins his hand down with — the top one is Hemingway's *A Farewell To Arms*!

The original was both funny and frightening, whereas the sequel is more likely to tickle your funnybone than send a chill down the spine. And as such it may disappoint hardcore horror buffs in search of another 'ultimate experience in gruelling terror'. But don't let that put you off seeing it, because it's undoubtedly still one of the most exciting and entertaining horror movies to come along in simply ages. It's all grand gory fun, and the film's nifty surprise ending ensures that there will almost certainly be an *Evil Dead III*, which will probably be shot in England!

Allan Bryce