

ARMY OF DARKNESS

The title 'ARMY OF DARKNESS' is rendered in a large, black, gothic-style font. The word 'OF' is smaller and positioned between 'ARMY' and 'DARKNESS'. On either side of the text is a black silhouette of a dragon-like creature with wings spread, facing outwards.

PRODUCTION NOTES

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It is a time of great evil.

Frightened peasants cower behind castle walls. Brave knights with earthly weapons prepare to do battle with the malevolent forces of the undead. It is a battle they know they cannot win.

The army of darkness is rising.

But as the final hour approaches, a leader appears, one from another time and another place, one with a different magic entirely his own.

A bizarre conflict of man versus demon comes vividly alive in the comically cryptic "ARMY OF DARKNESS," suspense master Sam Raimi's first film since his highly-successful chiller "Darkman."

Dino De Laurentiis Communications presents "ARMY OF DARKNESS," directed by Sam Raimi from an original screenplay by Sam Raimi and Ivan Raimi. The film stars Bruce Campbell and is produced by Robert Tapert and co-produced by Bruce Campbell.

Ash (Bruce Campbell) is an innocent man from the modern-day 20th century. Dragged by forces beyond his comprehension to the Dark Ages, he must lead an army in quest of the ultimate prize -- their souls.

His Excalibur is a chainsaw, a shotgun (his lance) and a '73 Oldsmobile (his steed).

Ash's opponents have all the deadly magic in hell at their disposal, and the odds

against his makeshift army are long. But Ash has a few surprises of his own, the most important of which is a mind that is centuries wiser.

Sam Raimi's creativity and unique sense of black humor has never been more exemplified than in his new project, "ARMY OF DARKNESS." It is a visual tour de force that tells a witty tale enshrouded in sweeping medieval landscapes, armies of skeletal monsters, demons that sour the skies and time which is twisted and turned upon itself.

The creators of "ARMY OF DARKNESS" use a visual effects technique called Introvision which creates its own kind of magic. This process allows almost anything within the human imagination to be put on film. Its visual trickery far outstretches the colossal demands of this apocalyptic story -- the kind of tale that could only originate in the mind of Sam Raimi.

"There is a definite comic edge with a lot of science fantasy," says producer Robert Tapert. "It's different than any of our previous pictures. We use a lot of stop motion animation and techniques that people haven't seen used in this way. The biggest challenge for us is to integrate a variety of these technologies."

To give "ARMY OF DARKNESS" the authentic look and feel of a journey to the year 1300 A.D., a variety of aesthetic and technical elements were made integral to the script, playing a major role in the shaping of the film's visual concepts. Introvision, a production technology that allows live actors to be placed in three-dimensional replicated environments, was essential to making that possible.

"We could not shoot this picture without the matting techniques of Introvision," says director Sam Raimi. "It's a system by which you can create what you can't afford to create

in real life. It's very important to us because we're working on a limited budget and we simply could not afford to shoot the picture without the fakery involved. Introvision is a visual effects process which allows filmmakers to transport actors to settings limited only by the imagination."

Principal photography began on May 20, 1991 in Hollywood where cast and crew spent the first two weeks filming on the La Brea Stage. With a crew that ranged from 50-75 people, the company traveled to Acton, California, in the high desert, where they shot for approximately five weeks. It was there that production designer Tony Tremblay created the film's main set: a medieval castle. One of the more elaborate sets, the castle was to represent a massive battle installation of 13th century England.

"The requirements were high but only a portion of the castle was budgeted so we had to build just the sections that were pictured in the practical story boards," says Tremblay. "Since the courtyard had to be big enough to accommodate the Deathcoaster sequence, the castle began to grow. The biggest challenge was to make what we had appear like much more. Fortunately, Sam Raimi and the director of photography, Bill Pope, took advantage of every portion of the set to create the sense of being within an even larger structure.

"What impressed me the most about working with Sam is his ability to proceed to exactly what he wants," Tremblay continues. "When designing for him you can use any means at your disposal, be it illustrations, models, even verbal direction. He takes a genuine interest in all ideas and beautifully integrates them into the story."

"The desert has its own logic," says Raimi. "It's a very strict boss and determines when you start shooting and when you stop. When the sun goes down you start and when

the blue gels come up in the morning, you finish." Terrible whirlwinds of devil dust storms plagued the production but provided a great effect for the sweeping wide shots surrounding the formidable army of darkness.

Sam Raimi and his brother Ivan, who is a practicing physician in Youngstown, Ohio in addition to being a successful screenwriter in his own right, wrote the script in about a year and a half. "When Ivan and I write, there's never a shortage of ideas," says Raimi. "It's just a question of selecting the ideas which best suit the story or character and then paring the ideas down so that the overall affect is greater than the sum of the parts."

"'ARMY OF DARKNESS' is really the story of one man's character," says Raimi. "If he is weak, the evil will know it is again time to rule -- if he is strong of character, brave of heart, then it will know it must again sleep for a number of centuries and awaken at some later date."

The hero, Ash, played by Bruce Campbell, is a normal man. He believes he has courage but he's also somewhat selfish. Ash subdivides, and like an amoeba, splits in two. One side contains his good qualities and the other side his evil qualities, and essentially he does battle against himself.

"This picture has a black humor element that runs through it which comes from the contrast of a 20th century man being brought to this place in time," continues Raimi. "Ash is a modern man who never had to stand up and fight for anything. These people in 1300 A.D. have a completely different code of honor."

"Bruce is the perfect Ash," says Tapert. "He's really a comic genius in his own way. He has great body language and a very unique acting style. He's got incredible physical

coordination so he can make almost anything happen."

"Our challenge was to create a believable and yet fantastic walking army of the dead by utilizing the most sophisticated techniques applied to special effects -- make-up for film," says Howard Berger, a member of KNB EFX Group.

"We have a number of extremely talented make-up effects teams on this picture," says Raimi. "KNB EFX Group and Alterian Studios combined with a number of sub-make-up effects groups work together to create this look."

Creating the unforgettable physical appearance of Evil Ash and Evil Sheila was the job of special effects make-up artists Tony Gardner, Cindy Gardner, John Henry and their team of FX make-up artists. Gardner's previous efforts include "Darkman," "Raiders of the Lost Ark," "Aliens," "The Terminator" and "Ghostbusters."

Embeth Davidtz, the beautiful young actress who plays Sheila, Ash's love interest in the film, falls to the dark spirit and becomes Evil Sheila, replete with wild white eyes and skin the texture of cracked leather. "When this dark spirit possesses individuals, their whole demeanor changes into foul creatures and the make-up is the visual information that lets the audience know the external manifestation of this evil," says Raimi. "It's an important story device we use to communicate to the audience that they are bad and the people without make-up are good."

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