

1983 Los Angeles International Film Exposition

The Evil Dead

Evil Dead, USA, 1982, 90 min.

Directed by Sam Raimi

Saturday, April 30, Midnight

PRODUCTION NOTE:

The Evil Dead has the simple, stupid power of a good campfire story-but its simplicity is not a side effect. It is something carefully crafted by Raimi, who is anything but stupid. Five college students on a holiday, two boys and three girls, find a deserted cabin and an ancient book-a Lovecraftian Book of the Dead-that turns them into unkillable zombies, one by one, until only the film's star, Bruce Campbell, is left. The only way to get rid of these zombies --the evil dead--is by dismemberment. Luckily a chainsaw is handy, and...

And it doesn't sound like much. Well, neither does Hansel and Gretel or Bluebeard in the hands of an untalented teller. What Raimi achieves in Evil Dead is a black rainbow of horror. The makeup of his zombies is derivative of Dick Smith's in The Exorcist, his plot is derivative of Romero's Dead movies (even dismemberment as the antidote is derivative of these-remember the idiotic sheriff in Night intoning that you had to "burn 'em or shoot 'em, but they move slow...they're dead, they're all messed up"?), and his small troupe of actors ranges from the merely adequate (Ellen Sandweiss and Betsy Baker) to the fairly good (Bruce Campbell and, in particular, Hal Deirich, who brings the happy beer-swilling fraternity scuzzo to gruesome life). So, what's going on here?

Mostly what's going on is Sam Raimi, who is so full of talent that somebody unable to get it together might be tempted to wonder if gobbling the man's fingernails could possibly do any good.

In Evil Dead the camera has the kind of nightmarish fluidity that we associate with the early John Carpenter; it dips and slides and then zooms in so fast you want to plaster your hands over your eyes. The film begins and ends with crazily exhilarating shots that make you want to lead up, cheering. (At Cannes, French cinema-freaks did exactly that.)

--Stephen King, Twilight Zone Magazine

This film will be released in the United States by New Line Cinema

BACKGROUND NOTE:

Samuel M. Raimi was born a writer and filmmaker since the age of 13, and is now the creative force behind Renaissance Pictures. After writing the screenplay for The Evil Dead, he condensed the script into a 30-minute version and filmed it as Within the Woods. The audience reaction to this horror short provided Raimi with solid critical support and the acceptance of several exhibitors, encouraging him to finish the feature-length version. This is his first feature.

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