

SPECIAL ISSUE FROM THE TEAM BEHIND **DAILY DEAD**

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HORROR MAGAZINE



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ASH vs EVIL DEAD

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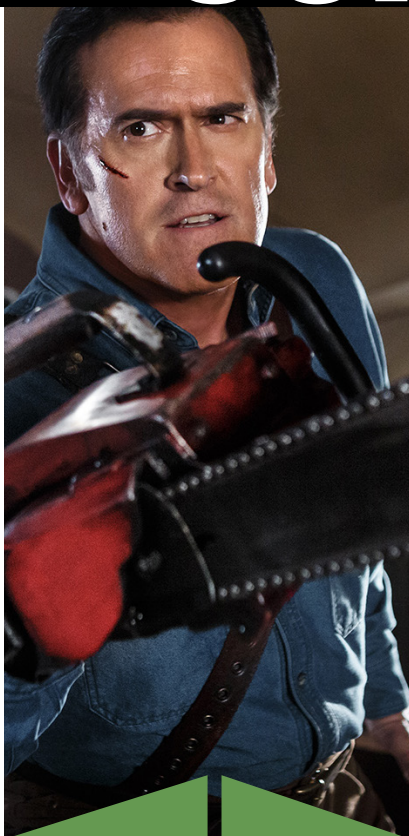


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EVIL DEAD:

THE BIRTH OF A FEAR FRANCHISE

BY SCOTT DREBIT

THE
EVIL
DEAD

When we talk about the roots of horror (in this case, modern) it helps to be specific, as there are so many knotty branches to investigate. What is now a franchise (with three films, a well-received remake, a musical, and now a hit TV series, natch) started out as a mere short film by a group of young, enthusiastic filmmakers hoping to get investors for a feature. Now, this is a tale that has been performed for generations; from kids shooting Super 8 movies in the backyard to filming on a smartphone. Usually, the story ends in sweet memories and faded dreams. But every once in a while, the movie gods clear the brush and bestow upon the moviemakers (and the viewers) a first-rate classic. Of course I'm talking about the O.G. cabin in the woods, *The Evil Dead* (1981).

The short film in question was *Within the Woods*, put together by future genre legends: director Sam Raimi (*Spider-Man*), producer Robert Tapert (*30 Days of Night*), and star/producer Bruce Campbell (*Bubba Ho-Tea*). Short films were old hat to these budding filmmakers; they were itching to make another movie after putting together their first

feature-length film, 1977's *It's Murder!*, so they used *Within the Woods* as a calling card to gain benefactors. It worked, and off they went to Tennessee to shoot their gritty masterpiece. Following further financing and months of grueling shoots, the film had a local premiere in Detroit in '81, before a connection of Raimi's afforded them the opportunity to dance at the 1982 Cannes Film Festival. A fortuitous (and rapturous) viewing at the festival by one Stephen King ramped up the buzz on this frantic terror ride, and New Line Pictures picked up the film for distribution in the States, soaking screens with its blood-drenched story in early '83. The film's reputation spread like wildfire, and it ended up bringing in \$2.4 million; amazing, since once distribution costs, etc. were figured in, the film cost a grand total of \$375,000.

But *The Evil Dead* really took on an undead life when it was released to home video in '83 by Thorn EMI and then aired on HBO. The timing was perfect; VCRs were humming across the nation, and eager horror lovers lapped up everything that came their way. The film received the dreaded NC-17

rating in its theatrical release, guaranteeing that a large, fleshy chunk of its intended audience wouldn't be allowed to see it on the big screen. Home video afforded cultheads and casual fans alike to savor every bit of delicious grue—unless, of course, you lived in the UK, where *The Evil Dead* shot to the top of their government-mandated "Video Nasties" list, effectively banning it there until January of 1990, and that was after several cuts.

For those who haven't seen it (yes, you way in the back—I see you), a quick recap of the story. Five college friends (Bruce Campbell, Ellen Sandweiss, Hal Delrich, Betsy Baker, and Sarah York) head out to a remote cabin in Tennessee. Once there, they discover the Sumerian *Book of the Dead* (my favorite version!), as well as a tape recorder left behind by an anthropologist. Of course, they play the recording, which leads to hordes of demons, some unseen, infesting and terrorizing the group until only one remains. That's it. It really is a basic, backyard, grab-your-friends-and-make-a-movie plot. Except the boy behind the camera was Raimi, who was very intent on making the biggest splatter splash for the



horror community to embrace. Barely out of his teens when filming commenced on *The Evil Dead*, Raimi and his posse came from a place where all great cinema lives: passion. That, and determination, went a long way towards seeing the project through. But the most important aspect, the tangible quality that built this horror empire? Talent.

When true talent is involved, the budget becomes a secondary concern; in fact, lack of budget can cause the imagination to soar—it has to, in order to circumnavigate the myriad production issues—and create something truly special, which they did with *The Evil Dead*.

So why does this scrappy little bugger still terrify new viewers and keep the jaded horror veteran rapt with delight? First, the premise is so simple it almost hurts. Five people, one location, demons, and... go! Very much a “don’t bore us, get to the chorus” proposition, and without the talent to back it up, it could have been a disaster (and not even a plot to wave in front of the viewer). But Raimi does something absolutely brilliant that bypasses any concerns over plot or dialogue: he makes the camera a character, and it’s the best one in the movie.

The camera (aided by Tim Philo’s riveting cinematography) acts as the unseen evil lurking in the woods; well, *lurking* would be wrong—rather, it circles, roams, and races through the

trees at a heart-stopping pace. Very low to the ground, the unseen force ensures that the people in the cabin stay in the cabin—otherwise its full hellish nature will be unleashed on the misbegotten. (They have enough demonage to deal with *inside* the dilapidated structure, anyway.) A low moan accompanies the



outside camera wherever it goes, adding another layer of personality to what is normally a passive tool. Once inside, the camera behaves no less dramatic—extreme close-ups, Dutch angles, anything to keep the viewer invested—and before long we’re swept along breathlessly. This is truly what sets *The Evil Dead* apart from the rest of the Class of ’81—the damn thing **WON’T STOP**.

Interestingly, the Ash who has become the figurehead (not to mention punching bag) of the entire series isn’t really present here; sure, he’s put through the wringer physically and emotionally, but Campbell

and Raimi hadn’t developed the character into the over-the-top más macho blowhard who’s endeared himself to millions over the decades. (That Ash is born in 1987’s *Evil Dead 2: Dead by Dawn*.) Rather, this Ash is just another one of the group, a college kid trying to stay alive; as the film progresses, the mantle of hero is thrust upon him, but there were no expectations of stardom this early in the game. (How could there be?)

The other factor that solidifies the stature of *The Evil Dead* is the very splattery effects of Tom Sullivan. Besides the usual dismemberments and blood orgies, Sullivan creates a league of demon makeup that nods heavily in the direction of Italy; grey, wizened pancakes with searing white eyes emphasize a desire to scare, and these ghoulish designs still mesmerize.

It was important for Raimi to come out swinging; and in the horror world, well-placed (and -played) carnage will get you noticed. With effects that are by turns crude and clever, *The Evil Dead* is painted wall-to-wall red with a paintbrush as wide as it is thick.

As different and frightening as the rest are funny, the franchise starts *here*. And while the lighter, whimsical yet ghoulish hijinks of TV’s *Ash vs Evil Dead* may seem far removed from this electric backwoods die-o-rama, make no mistake that a Deadite’s blood runs deep. Very deep.

Following up a popular horror film is no easy task (*Exorcist II*, anyone? Anyone?), but the odds for success are increased if the same creative talent are involved. And if they're left alone, they can follow through with whatever their vision entails. Case in point: 1987's *Evil Dead II*, aka *Evil Dead 2: Dead by Dawn*, which not only solidified Sam Raimi's status as a horror titan, but also gave him some clout and respect away from the genre. However, the leap wasn't instantaneous; in-between, he and the usual suspects (Bruce Campbell, Robert Tapert, et al.) created *Crimewave* (1985), a film that displayed the same wit and dexterity that would transform the *Evil Dead* series from pure horror to the "splatstick" hybrid we know today.

Crimewave is a comedy thriller about a man in the electric chair, falsely accused of murder, who recounts how he ended up there while waiting for the switch to be thrown. Co-written by Joel and Ethan Coen, it's a frantic, frenetic jumble of an old Three Stooges short mixed with a 1940s crime saga, shot with heaping doses of visual surrealism. Wildly funny and offbeat, with really strange performances by Brion James and Paul L. Smith, *Crimewave* tanked hard. Raimi had been pressured before he made this one to do a sequel to his debut, but he plowed ahead anyway. He did write a script while filming, though, and even brought in another childhood friend, Scott Spiegel (*Intruder*), to help out.

Finding financing for *Evil Dead II* was difficult after the box office disaster of *Crimewave* (and I implore you to check it out—it's a blast). Enter Stephen King, apparently the series' guardian angel, to help out. He convinced Dino De Laurentiis (who he was working with



EVIL DEAD II:

REBOOTED & GROOVY

BY SCOTT DREBIT

on *Maximum Overdrive*) to back the film, allowing Raimi the chance to play with much shinier toys on a budget nearly ten times the amount of the original. That kind of coin buys a lot of Karo syrup.

With money in hand, the gang

films. Released in the States in March of '87, it pulled in nearly six million dollars, which is damn good for an X-rated movie that doesn't have "Deep" or "Throat" in its name. When it was released on home video later that same year, everyone had a chance to

embroiled in a fight for survival alongside him.

I know what you're saying: isn't this the same story as the first? Well... sort of. Raimi wasn't allowed to use footage from the original; so to recap the first, he just made it Ash



headed out to Wadesboro, North Carolina to shoot. The cabin interiors were shot at a local junior high school and the production was just far enough away from De Laurentiis' offices in Wilmington to avoid too much meddling. A much smoother ride than the first film, production wrapped in December of '86, and off they went to the ratings board in hopes of getting an R rating because they changed the color of the blood to *anything* but red. (The film is very moist.) Nice try, guys! Stamped with an X, the fictitious name Rosebud Releasing Corporation was used instead of De Laurentiis' DEG, because he wasn't allowed to distribute X-rated

see it, and then the franchise *really* took off.

Where are my manners? The plot! Ash (Bruce Campbell again) and Linda (Denise Bixler) head to a remote cabin for a getaway. Upon arrival, Ash discovers the *Necronomicon Ex-Mortis*, aka *Book of the Dead*, and a tape recorder with findings by an anthropologist. He plays the recording, and he and Linda are immediately besieged by demons. Later on, the anthropologist's daughter (Sarah Berry) and some traveling companions (Dan Hicks, Kassie Wesley, and Richard Domeier) arrive at the cabin, not expecting Ash, but nevertheless becoming

and Linda and changed some details. Besides, to bring all the cast back for the recap didn't make sense financially, since he was introducing four more characters later on in the film. The general consensus is that the story moves forward when Ash is attacked outside the cabin (which is how the original ended). On the other hand, it's not a true continuation if most of the original gang isn't even mentioned in the new story, is it? I personally prefer to think of it as a reboot; a way for Raimi to show how he could really play in the sandbox with a nicer shovel and finer sand. For me, the true spirit of the franchise as we know it begins *here*.

Take Bruce Campbell (please!), for example. In 1981's *The Evil Dead*, he is seen as an everyman, and although he is the lone survivor, he isn't given any traits that would earmark him as such (I mean, Scotty is set up as the hero for awhile—RIP Scotty). In *Evil Dead II*, right from the start, Ash is seen as confident, brash, outspoken, and more than a little goofy. As the film goes on, the insanity is constantly ramped up by Raimi, and Campbell's Ash matches him beat for beat. *This* Ash is assertive; he needs to get things done in order to survive. Alas, with Raimi's sadistic streak in full bloom, he puts poor Ash (and Campbell) through the proverbial ringer—thirty seconds don't go by in the film without Ash being punched, spewed on, thrown, or possessed. His cockiness and exasperation act as the through line for the rest of the franchise; a workaday dude over his head in blood, guts, and confidence. Again, one could look to Campbell's performance as Renaldo in *Crimewave* as a stepping-stone to the new, improved Ash—a smarmy heel with way more bravado than necessary.

Raimi structured *Evil Dead II* differently from its predecessor as well. After Ash



and Linda arrive at the cabin, she is given short shrift and sent off for a demon fitting. Then we have a good portion of the film that is just Ash versus Linda, versus himself, versus his hand, versus laughing, anthropomorphous lamps, and trophy elk. It's an ingenious maneuver by Raimi; it allows the audience to soak in Ash and his (in)glorious fight against the beyond. It also showcases Campbell as the consummate physical performer he is; flipping himself, fighting his possessed hand, going mad at the increasing lunacy unfolding around him. And just when we think we're about to tire of the one-man show, Raimi sends in the anthropologist's daughter

and her posse. This actually succeeds in upping the fun; poor Ash gets only a few seconds to recoup, as the demons are equal opportunity offenders.

I can only assume that Raimi and friends thought that by changing the beats and the tone to a more comedic nature, they would

receive some clemency from the ratings board, but I'm so glad they stuck to their guns. *Evil Dead II* is a funhouse of carnage; no limb is safe, no head secure, all filmed in a gloriously garish mix of primary colors for maximum enjoyment. There is an unfettered glee to the film that was only hinted at in the first; it's like Raimi had his learner's licence the first time around, and after he passed the exam, he peeled from the DMV in a new car, careening off of every post and pedestrian before ramping it off a cliff into the great beyond.

Which isn't to suggest that this is uncontrolled mayhem; on the contrary, *Evil Dead II* is lovingly planned and luxuriously staged (and hats off to effects wizard Mark Shostrom and company for delivering the gross-out groceries). After the letdown of *Crimewave*, this was a reminder from Raimi to the film world that he had no plans of leaving—and if he





did, it wouldn't be quietly. The ending has Ash time-warped and landing in 1300 AD, where he is hailed as a conquering hero (destroying a Deadite with your sawed-off shotgun does wonders for your reputation).

It would be nearly six years before the release of the third film in the franchise, 1993's *Army of Darkness*, which keeps the comedic aspects, tones down the horrific grue, and lands as a demented Ray Harryhausen tribute. *Army of Darkness* was the end of the *Evil Dead* line for many years, as Raimi went on to helm features outside of the genre; *The Quick and the Dead*, *A Simple Plan*, and *For Love of the Game* showcase a strong sensibility regardless of subject matter. He then directed three hugely successful *Spider-Man* films, which put him squarely back in the land of the spectacular, as well as a welcome return to horror with the criminally underrated *Drag Me to Hell* (2009). Interest in the *Evil Dead* franchise never waned over the years; kept alive at conventions by co-conspirators keeping the corpse warm in case the master came home. And you know what? He did. He produced 2013's very well-received *Evil Dead* remake, and then brought the gang home with him for the ongoing *Ash vs Evil Dead* TV series on Starz, which is doing better than ever. Over three decades long, the franchise has never been in better shape, which I'm sure is more than some kids making Super 8 films in their backyard could ever have dreamed.



A dramatic promotional image for the TV series 'Ash vs Evil Dead'. It features a close-up of Ash Williams' face, looking upwards with a grimace, his mouth open. Above him, a large, grotesque, and bloody zombie head looms, its mouth wide open in a menacing roar. The background is dark and blurry, suggesting a chaotic environment.

ASH vs EVIL DEAD

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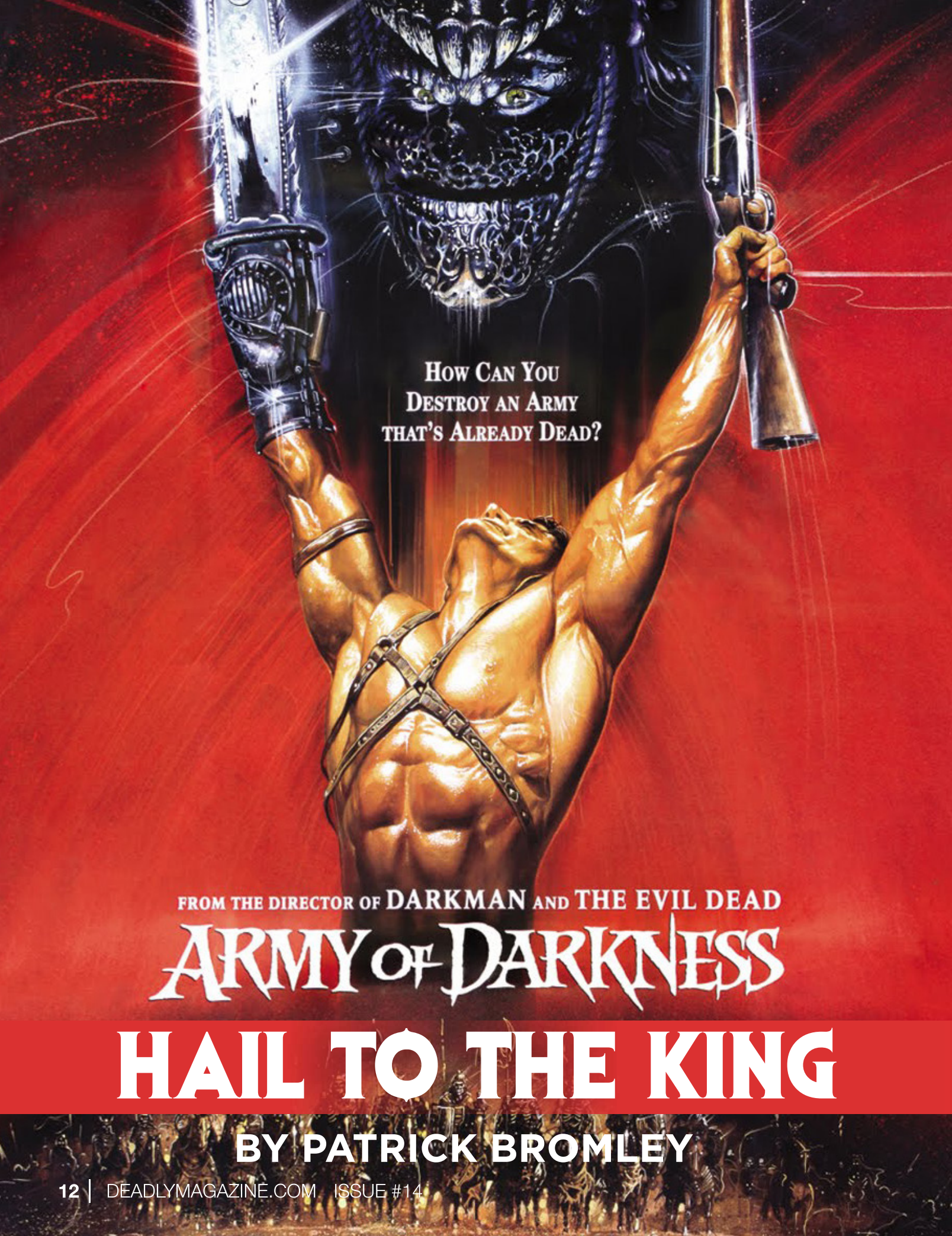


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HOW CAN YOU
DESTROY AN ARMY
THAT'S ALREADY DEAD?

FROM THE DIRECTOR OF DARKMAN AND THE EVIL DEAD

ARMY of DARKNESS

HAIL TO THE KING

BY PATRICK BROMLEY



Has any horror film switched gears harder than *Army of Darkness*, the third entry in Sam Raimi's *Evil Dead* franchise? Sure, the films had already changed course between the original *Evil Dead* and its 1987 sequel, *Evil Dead 2: Dead By Dawn*, morphing from grisly, relentless terror to broad, bloody comedy. *Army of Darkness*, on the other hand, offers not just a change in tone, but a completely new genre. It's part slapstick comedy, part adventure film, part horror, part fantasy, all Sam Raimi. There's not even another film it can be compared to or a single genre in which it can be classified. It is its own singular thing. It's *Army of Darkness*.

The particular genius of *Army of Darkness*—besides being ceaselessly fun and entertaining—is that it's arguably the most “Sam Raimi” movie ever put to film. Yes, his later work would prove to be more ambitious, more challenging, and more technically polished, but *Army of Darkness* (aka *The Medieval Dead*) plays like 100% pure Raimi id injected right into 35mm celluloid. Everything he's ever wanted to put into a movie, he puts into this one: giant battle scenes, *Three Stooges*-inspired slapstick, castles and horses and

murderous witches, stop-motion skeletons right out of a Ray Harryhausen production, and not just one, but two Bruce Campbell performances, providing Raimi with twice the opportunities to torment his favorite leading man.

There is a special joy in the way Raimi insists that Bruce Campbell is a movie star, even if mainstream audiences in 1993 didn't really know who he was. Raimi doesn't wait for permission from Hollywood to do the things he wants to do. When he wanted to direct a feature, he didn't wait for a deal to come along. He and his friends went into the woods and made *The Evil Dead*. He wanted to make a superhero movie, but in the early '90s, no one was giving him the keys to the kingdom at Marvel or DC, so he just went ahead and created his own hero, and thus *Darkman* was born.

The 1990 film was successful enough for Universal to set aside money for Raimi to finally make *Army of Darkness*, and not only did the mostly unknown (outside of horror nerd circles) Bruce Campbell become the star of a Universal production, but his likeness was also immortalized front and center in a Frank Frazetta-esque painting on the theatrical

one-sheet. Raimi wasn't going to wait for Campbell to become a huge movie star, so instead he just acted like his friend already was one.

It is in *Army of Darkness* that Campbell's most iconic creation—one Ashley J. Williams, head of housewares at S-Mart (“shop smart, shop S-Mart”)—really becomes the version of the character we remember. The iteration of Ash that exists in the memories of fans, as well as on the Starz series *Ash vs Evil Dead*, doesn't even surface until the third entry in the franchise. He gets a handful of classic moments in *Evil Dead 2*, whether it's equipping himself with the chainsaw arm or, most famously, uttering “groovy,” but *Army of Darkness* finds Ash going full Ash. He's a blowhard and a fool, insanely overconfident and woefully incompetent. He's Jack Burton, only without a Wang Chi to make him look good. He has the looks, the chin, and the swagger. Now if only he could remember those magic words...

Though it failed to find its audience at the box office—I can remember being in the theater on opening night, half surrounded by fans who knew to cheer when Ash got

his chainsaw back and half encompassed by confused newbies who had no idea what to make of the film—*Army of Darkness* has gone on to become one of the most beloved cult films of the last 30 years.

This success is due in part to the countless home video releases and multiple versions made available, most famously a “director’s cut” that offers an alternate ending in which Ash oversleeps through his own time and wakes up in a post-apocalyptic future. It’s yet another example of Ash screwing up and being punished for it, which might explain why both Raimi and Campbell have gone on record as preferring it to the more traditionally heroic theatrical ending shot at the behest of Universal. While it may be an unpopular opinion, I prefer the theatrical S-Mart ending, if only because I’ve been through enough with Ash over the course of three films that it’s nice to see him finally get a win. Besides, by the time of the massive final battle in *Army of Darkness*, he seems to finally have become the hero he’s been pretending to be all along. The S-Mart ending embraces that Ash.

Army of Darkness was not an easy movie to get onto screens: there were budget overruns, forced reshoots, a delayed release, and problems with the MPAA, who wanted to saddle a mostly bloodless movie with an NC-17 rating. The passing of more than twenty years has erased the production problems and the initially lukewarm reception, earning the movie its well-

deserved classic status. Every horror fan has a favorite *Evil Dead* movie, but I suspect *Army of Darkness* is named more often than any of the others. It’s old-fashioned movie magic at work—the special effects feel handmade and truly special, the jokes

land, and the action is thrilling. More than anything, though, the film is Bruce Campbell’s finest hour. It’s his funniest, cockiest, most physical performance, making both Ash and *Army of Darkness* the stuff of legend. Now that’s groovy.





EVIL DEAD'S BLOOD-SOAKED RETURN TO THE BIG SCREEN

by Kalyn Corrigan

A dark-haired girl in a ruby-red dress. An atrophied cabin weathered from years of neglect and battered from recent battle, moist with sticky blood and hot from the fire currently consuming its walls. As Mia (Jane Levy), our lady in red, backs away from the door and out into the night, the hot red flames lick up the windows and engulf the cabin. Mia believes she has won. All of the Deadites are now trapped within the blazing inferno, unable to get her, to change her into one of them. She believes she's safe. That is, until the Abomination, an unholy creation manifested from that horrible book they found in the basement, reaches a bony hand through the bloody ground. As Mia watches in horror, the abhorrent creature pulls its twisted body out of the Hell from which it came, and begins crookedly crawling towards her. Just when it seems that our heroine is irrevocably doomed, director Fede Alvarez calls "cut" on the set, and the

crew behind the new *Evil Dead* movie take a five-minute break to recuperate before shooting their next ambitious scene.

On July 13th, 2011, Ghost House Pictures announced that newcomer Fede Alvarez would be co-writing and directing a remake of Sam Raimi's beloved cult classic, *The Evil Dead*. Original producers Bruce Campbell, Rob Tapert, and Raimi himself would be joining ranks again and coming onboard to oversee the production. *Juno* and *Jennifer's Body* screenwriter Diablo Cody would be brought in to do script revisions, and above all other details, the film would not bring back the icon who had become the face of the franchise, the one and only boomstick-wielder, Ashley James Williams, aka "Ash."

To say that the reaction from fans was negative would be a bit of an understatement. At a time when news of myriad remakes, reboots, prequels, and sequels was already

flooding the film world, the fact that Sam Raimi—a man who created one of the most original and innovative genre films of all-time with nothing but a low-budget and a team of determined dreamers—would dare to recreate the down-and-dirty, blood-soaked independent splatter movie that made him an inspiration in the first place, was downright detrimental to horror fans' psyches. Tempers flared, fanboys claimed hysterically that the filmmakers they once loved were performing unfair cash-grabbing tactics—it was a time not unlike the current state of cinematic affairs, with the recent *Ghostbusters* reboot and the instantaneous rejection of said reimagining. It's understandable to a certain degree, but that doesn't make it any less rash.

Luckily, new *Evil Dead* director Fede Alvarez, along with veteran Raimi, were able to soothe fans' fears by promising them three specific things: that the new installment would be



overflowing with buckets of gore, that it would serve as a passing of the torch to worthy new independent filmmaker Alvarez, and that the film would be one-hundred percent filled to the brim with nothing but practical effects.

In the film, five friends travel to a remote cabin in the woods to help Mia rid herself of her demons. Hooked on heroin, Mia has promised to kick her dirty habit many times before, but she has never quite made it past the breaking point. Hopelessly addicted and helplessly seduced by the sadistic brown liquid, Mia has become a slave to its possessing power. But this time around, Mia's distant but blood-related brother, David (Shiloh Fernandez), and her old friends Eric (Lou Taylor Pucci), Olivia (Jessica Lucas), and Natalie (Elizabeth Blackmore) plan to take away the keys to her freedom, and even restrain her if need be, until she finally sweats out all of the poison eating up her veins. Little do they know, there's another evil entity out in the woods coveting Mia—but it's not her body that it wants to feast on, it's her soul.

It's easy to get caught up in the debates. Is the remake better than the original? Concerning the merits of the plot, how successful of a reimagining is the 2013 version? Does the addition of a recovering drug addict add or take away from the overall impact of the possessions? Are the villains in the film truly Deadites by definition? As fascinating as these topics are to discuss, what makes this *Evil Dead* entry so significant is its use of old-school, messy, inconvenient, but ultimately more convincing practical effects. In the end, no matter how patrons feel about the overall quality of the film as a whole, Alvarez's dedication to the tangible throwback is ultimately what makes all the difference when it comes to the strength of this initially reviled remake.

Going up against the indie wonders and practical effects legends that worked on the original *Evil Dead* franchise is no easy task. Names like Howard Berger, Robert Kurtzman, and Greg Nicotero are credited with giving the franchise its iconic look through purely practical effects, imbuing the *Evil Dead* films with an infectious DIY spirit.

Considering this standpoint, it's understandable why so many fans would be wary about big studio-backed Alvarez coming in and attempting to conjure up the same cinematic magic as the opportunistic Raimi. How could someone working with \$17 million achieve the same level of gritty, grounded gore and passionate balls-to-the-wall filmmaking that touched horror



fans' hearts on a budget of under \$400,000? The answer: sticking to practical effects.

The original film had a drastically smaller amount of money to work with, and much of that already depleted budget went to the 300 gallons of fake blood used during shooting. However, as staggering as that number sounds, it was washed away by the roaring rapids of over 70,000 gallons of flowing crimson on Alvarez's ambitious set. According to the go-getting director, 50,000 gallons of that total amount were used in the final twenty minutes of the film alone. The movie was so drenched in thick, fake red blood that the majority of the runtime was actually shot in the order that the story plays out—a very unusual route to take, but one that ultimately became necessary because the walls grew so coated with the cherry-red paste that it became impossible to shoot the scenes out of order for fear of noticeable inconsistencies.

Cameras covered in plastic containers sprinkled with specks of blood. Shelves filled with mutilated prosthetic limbs and silicone head casts. Applied burns, hours spent caking on dirt and grime in the makeup chair, and massive rigs pumping rosy-red liquid

into the air, turning the place into a literal bloodbath. These are just a few of the things one would find behind-the-scenes during the making of Fede Alvarez's ruthless, plasma-injected joyride.

Through rigorous determination, Alvarez tried to make every prop and set piece as realistic and palpable as possible. He wanted to ensure that each component could be witnessed while it was being shot, not altered later on in post-production—a key detail that not only made the scenes look more real for audiences, but also for the actors. The final twenty minutes of the movie look like the sky is raining blood because the shiny red droplets are actually falling down similar to how rain is handled on a movie set: with a giant rig.

The scenes when Mia is chased through the woods by an evil entity were executed simply (and dangerously) by a camera operator sitting on a wire construction literally flying through the trees in close pursuit of the actress. Everything looks like it's really happening because it is, in fact, really happening. There's no green screen here. No cheap gimmicks and half-cocked action scenes polished

later on. It's clear that this movie was made with a lot of heart because of the strenuous efforts of every single person on set.

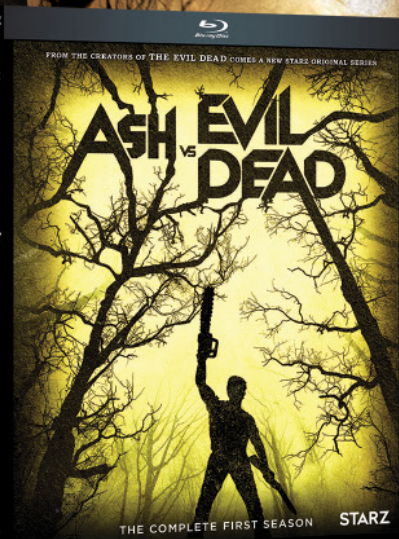
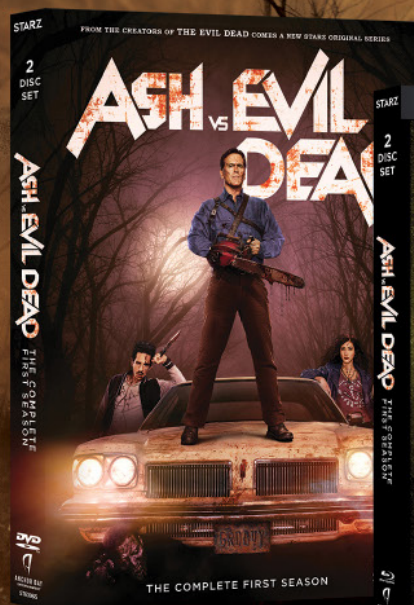
Ultimately, in the end, the most important thing to take away for future remakes and new entries in older franchises is the heavy use of practical effects. Fede Alvarez's *Evil Dead* sets the standard for what a modern-day horror movie remake should look like, providing a firm example of how to do a beloved franchise justice. Alvarez harked back to the old-school approach, and in return received the old-school reception and innately loyal followers. While many other recent reboots have disappointed at the box office, Alvarez's \$17 million flick churned out over \$25,000 in its opening weekend, and went on to receive \$54,239,856 domestically and \$97,542,952 worldwide—not to mention, it was extremely well-received by critics and audiences alike. While diehard fans might have been reluctant at first, Alvarez won them over and earned a place in their hearts—a place that he no doubt carved out with a blood-stained chainsaw dripping with innards and pulsating with life.

ASH vs EVIL DEAD

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"Rare horror comedy"**
- Matt Roush, *TV Guide Magazine*

**"Everything longtime
fans could hope for"**
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EXCLUSIVE: SAM RAIMI TALKS ASH VS EVIL DEAD, POSSIBLE EVIL DEAD SEQUEL

BY JONATHAN JAMES

It's been more than 30 years since you first created the world of *The Evil Dead*. How did it feel to get back behind the camera with Bruce Campbell to continue the story of Ash?

Sam Raimi: It was like old times. It was very comfortable and easy returning to my buddy and the character that I've made three movies together with. It was nice because we were doing it for the right reason: because the fans asked us to make another *Evil Dead*. We would have jumped to it years ago if my dumb brain would have listened and said, "Sam, they want to see Ash. This is all they're asking for... just give the audience what they want."

What do you see as the major benefit to going with the TV format versus a feature film?

Sam Raimi: The challenge for me was that I don't know TV very well and we had written a feature script, my brother and I. There have been many variations of feature scripts for a new *Evil Dead*. We realized we probably wouldn't be able to get the money for this because some of the *Evil Dead* movies have never been major financial successes.

Cable seemed to be the way we could get it made and it seemed like a way where we could seize creative control, which is absolutely

important. I needed to have complete creative control because—this is not about my ego—the reason we're making this is because of the fans. If I had to compromise even in a reasonable way with studio executives, it would not be what the fans wanted. They want outrageous gore. They want the main characters to be incredibly stupid and unappealing at times. A coward, a blowhard, and a braggart... all these things that we would have probably run into trouble with if we had to share creative control.

It's amazing how many people are now watching horror TV shows. The audience for this type of show has really grown in recent years.

Sam Raimi: I didn't think a lot of people would like it because *Evil Dead* movies have never pleased big crowds. It's always been the weirdo here and there. Now there is a bunch of weirdos. Times have changed such that the weirdos moved into the mainstream. So it's really weird. An army of geeks now rules the world.

I thought the first episode had a great mix of humor, character chemistry, and also plenty of blood. Like you said, it feels like it was made just for the fans. It's a return of everything they're looking for and I'm happy to see that practical effects are still a big part of the show. Can you talk about

your use of practical and digital effects on the series?

Sam Raimi: *Evil Dead* has always been an old-fashioned horror movie with practical effects and we thought that style should continue for this. Even though practical effects are our primary goal, with this TV shooting schedule, we've got to knock out these shots one after another, but primarily our recipe is the old recipe of doing these practical effects with good old-fashioned makeup geniuses and artists. It's great being around teams of artists.

It's an exciting place to see these makeup artists and mechanical effects engineers working side by side with actors and great photographers and cinematographers. I love sets. It's such a cool combination of craftsmen and artists. It's a very invigorating and exciting place to be. Makeup effects-wise, I hope it can continue with the practical effects as much as possible and as much as time will allow.

Our last run-in with Deadites was in the Fede Alvarez movie in 2013. Do you see it interacting with the TV series, whether Mia shows up or the events are simply referenced?

Sam Raimi: I opened my big mouth at the last San Diego Comic-Con and said, "We were making this show and I said I'd love to see Bruce and Jane [Levy] side by side battling the Evil Dead." The truth is, I have learned a

lot in a short amount of time. Maybe that was too bold of a thing for me to say, because I'm not really in control of the writing room. The writers have to have control of their own stories, led by showrunner Craig DiGregorio, and it's very complicated to know where they're going to end for a season, and simultaneously be working on a movie where Bruce meets Jane and still have to fit into their storyline.

I don't quite know where their storyline is going. They're figuring it out. I would love to see it, but I don't quite know how to engineer it at this moment.

That makes sense. That brings up something that many fans seem to debate about the Fede Alvarez version. I always saw it as taking place in the same *Evil Dead* universe. Is what's happening with Ash and what's going on with Mia taking place in the same world?

Sam Raimi: Absolutely. I would love to see a feature... maybe Fede and me could direct it together sometime, if it was ever possible. We brought Bruce into the modern world. I know he was at a cabin in the '80s, and then in the '90s he was running up in search of the *Necronomicon*. Now he is back and this is the world that he'd have to fit in. His world was a little goofier. [The Fede Alvarez version] is very straight. We can find the middle ground in a world that would host both realities.

Originally appeared on DailyDead.com, October 2015





EXCLUSIVE:
ASH VS EVIL DEAD
SEASON 1 RETROSPECTIVE
& SEASON 2 TEASE
FROM SHOWRUNNER
CRAIG DIGREGORIO

BY JONATHAN JAMES

First of all, I wanted to say congratulations on putting together such a fantastic first season of *Ash vs Evil Dead*. It's amazing how seamlessly you were able to transition the world of *Evil Dead* to television.

Craig DiGregorio: Thank you, I really appreciate it. A lot of people worked very, very hard to get this one to where it is. I'm glad fans have had such a positive response because we really love it and it's been a really fun, crazy ride.

Bruce Campbell has a creative role on the show, but how far did that extend into story planning and dialogue? When it came to these scripts and writing Ash, how much of it was he involved with episode to episode?

Craig DiGregorio: Bruce is very involved with his character. From a very early stage, he was pretty happy with what

we were writing. He'll throw something in here and there, but it's a collaboration where he will say, "Oh, I really like that," and, "Can I toss this in?"

I know this sounds like a sports cliché, but he is a complete team player and is always ready to help. He's just a great collaborator and a great person to have there. He likes the Ash stories and he likes the 2% character growth we've given Ash. He's just been fantastic to work with.


It seems like you guys were creatively able to do whatever you wanted with not being censored, which must have been pretty freeing. Can you talk about your relationship with Starz and their reaction to some of these episodes?

Craig DiGregorio: They don't tell us to pull back at all. The show has such a strange, fun tone and Starz never told us to pull back from that. I

even remember a couple of instances where they actually said that we could go further with it if we wanted to. One of the examples that sticks out in my head is during that diner scene in episode six. There were a couple of things we wanted to clear with them and they said, "You can do that and more if you want." They never tried to pull us back.

That's a great example of one of those scenes where you played with the preconceived notions people have about what can and can't be done on a TV show, such as children being killed.

Craig DiGregorio: We don't want it to feel like any TV show you've seen before. Even with the ending of the season, that's not the conventional way that a show would end, but they were all for it because it is a different, fun, crazy way to end something. We had a plan for why we wanted to do that and they just let us do it.



Let's talk about those last few episodes, because it really felt like you gave us what could have been the next *Evil Dead* movie.

Craig DiGregorio: From the very get-go when I was breaking the season with Sam [Raimi] and Ivan [Raimi], I had said that it would be great to go back to where it all began, and they agreed. We laid out the big signposts of the season and the last three episodes were always "we get back to the cabin." Things shifted along the way as far as certain locations or certain characters that pop in and out, but those three episodes were always slated to be cabin episodes. We wanted to go back to where it all started and it was the right way to tell the story, but also it felt like a great thing to give the fans again.

[Spoiler Warning] A big surprise in those final episodes was Amanda's death. After all of these years, it looks like Ash might find some happiness and it's taken away. Was that always the plan and can you talk about why

you felt it was the right move?

Craig DiGregorio: Yes, that was always the plan. If there has been anything established in the movies, it's that the people closest to Ash die, especially love interests. It allowed two things: to catapult that story into a more emotional place for Ash to remind him what happened there, and to show true value of Pablo and Kelly. So hopefully that death helped highlight what he thinks about those two people who have been at his side the whole season.

[Spoiler Warning] As much as people were excited for Bruce Campbell as Ash, a lot of people were also really excited to see Lucy Lawless. We didn't see her a lot in the start, but you set her up as a major force to be reckoned with in season two. Can you tease what's in store for her character in season two?

Craig DiGregorio: I also want to say how great Lucy is and how much we wanted her in the show and how hard it was to have that character hiding who she was for that long, because it doesn't really allow you to show as much of her as you'd like. It didn't really allow you to get to know her until episodes nine and ten. It worked as far as what we wanted out of the story arc, but as far as the character was concerned, I wish we got to see her a bunch more in the first season.

But as far as the story went, it was just impossible to show her too much more without giving away who she was, and then as far as who she becomes, Lucy has a gigantic part in season two.

I will say if you have any preconceived notions about what a big bad does in a show, you're

going to be surprised as far as what she becomes. Her motivations for what she does in episode ten—what she says she's trying to do—are genuine, and that plays a big part into where she ends up in season two. So when she says she's trying to rule over evil and control the chaos, that's genuine and we will see what becomes of that.

[Spoiler Warning] I just wanted to leave our readers with as much of a tease as I could get from you on the status of Ash. Where do we find him in season two after he takes the deal?

Craig DiGregorio: He definitely starts in a place where the fishing's good, and where he progresses from there, we'll see, but a thing I realize about this show is people just want to know more about Ash.

People want to learn about his past and when we went into his mind for the ayahuasca trip, people loved seeing which shows he watched

when he was younger. They're starved for info about this character that didn't have a lot of information given about him in the movies, and then was parceled out very carefully during the first season. We will find him in a place where the fishing's good and then we will move him to a place that will shed a lot more light on his background.

That's one of the big takeaways when I read reviews or see people post comments or talk to people that like the show. It's really interesting to—with the help of Sam and Ivan and the writers—create and talk more about the person that Ash is and the person that he was and the person that he maybe would have been if he had never read the book.

What would he have done? What was he before he read the book? It's such a fun process to think about that stuff and that definitely informs a bunch on this next season.

Originally appeared on DailyDead.com, January 2016





BRUCE CAMPBELL ON THE BLOOD-SPLATTERED EXPECTATIONS FOR **ASH VS EVIL DEAD** **SEASON 2**

BY HEATHER WIXSON


Throughout his decades-spanning career, Bruce Campbell has portrayed numerous iconic characters, including Jack Forrest in *Maniac Cop* 1 and 2, Briscoe County Jr., Autolycus in both the *Xena* and *Hercules* series, Jack Stiles in *Jack of All Trades*, Sam Axe on the long-running USA show *Burn Notice*, and even The King himself, Elvis Presley, in *Bubba Ho-Tep*. In 2007, Bruce Campbell even played a heightened version of himself for *My Name is Bruce*.

But to most, Campbell will always be best known as Ashley “Ash” J. Williams, the lovably smug anti-hero of the *Evil Dead* franchise as well as the titular star of the hit Starz series *Ash vs Evil Dead*, which returns for its second season on October 2nd. Campbell, who previously only had the opportunity to revisit the role whenever a movie came into production, saw both seasons of *AvED* as a way to really get to know his iconic character in ways he could have never done before.

“We did a movie in the ’70s, one in the ’80s, and

one in the ’90s, and then we skipped a whole decade, so yeah, this has been awesome,” said Campbell. “I wish we could have done this a long time ago, because that’s the only way you can really inhabit a character. It’s not making a movie every decade, it’s working at them every day for weeks and weeks and weeks, season after season. I hope we get five seasons out of this, because there’s so much we can do with the character of Ash that fans have yet to see from him.”

So what exactly will viewers see from his character once *Ash vs Evil Dead* returns this October? Campbell provided some info on the upcoming season, saying, “Well, this season it gets personal. Ash has to go back home. The Evil Dead, they are like the Mafia, because they hit you where you live. They go after your family. He’s got to go clean up this town of Elk Grove, Michigan, which is why we’re introducing the character of Ash’s father, Brock Williams, played by the great Lee Majors, and Ash’s high school buddy Chet Kaminski, played by Ted Raimi. You know, Ted plays an



idiot because he's so good at it, and I always use Ted because that way my acting looks subtle [laughs]."

Something else *Ash vs Evil Dead* fans can look forward to in the second season is even more record-breaking blood. Campbell promised that a lot more goo and gore awaits us this fall and discussed how new additions to the cast gave them more opportunities to go wild with the franchise's signature over-the-top plasma showers.

"We topped season one, because there are more characters to get it this time around," explained Campbell. "In fact, Lee Majors had his first experience with blood, and he's like, 'What the hell is this?' You can't predict what it's going to be like if you've never done it before. I know what it's like to get slimed, so it's a big eye-opener that first time you get nailed. We had more characters, more opportunities to bloody them all, so we went for it."

But for as much fun as *Ash vs Evil Dead* has with its blood, the one thing they always take seriously is the horror aspect of the show's story. Campbell discussed walking the fine line and avoiding veering off into making something too campy for fans. "Darkness has many shades in Ash's world. In the show, we do have to treat the horror seriously. Weird shit's going to happen, before long, and it'll all go crazy on you. But we have to treat the horror as something real, because otherwise it's just camp. Then you've got a whole different show and that's not us. That's the fine line we've always ridden. The horror is real, but there's comedy, too. It's a tough thing to balance."

Campbell also discussed how Ash isn't a guy who will ever find his happy ending, even when the season two premiere of *Ash vs Evil Dead* kicks off with him finally living out his dreams in Jacksonville.

"Ash is God's tormented character; why does he need to find happiness? The audience would get bored if he did. The beginning of this first episode back, you see he's as happy as he's going to get, and you go, 'Okay, is that it? How much beer can you drink?' The answer is a lot, but you know what I mean."

"He's the chosen one," Campbell continued. "He's the average schmoe, but he is foretold in the *Book of the Dead*, so there's more to Ash than meets the eye. His job isn't necessarily to be the guy lying on the lounge chair. His job is to be the guy that saves the world."


Even though a second season was green-lit even before the premiere episode of *Ash vs Evil Dead* aired last October, Campbell explained that instead of alleviating any pressures they had going into this latest season, it actually heightened the expectations for everyone involved with the production of the show. "It's worse, actually, because now there are expectations. It's one thing to put out a show for the very first time. You close your eyes and go, 'Okay, I hope you like it.' It was very well-received. The fans were very nice to us. The critics were pretty nice to us, too, which was shocking, because the *Evil Dead* movies don't always get good reviews. That was the big leap."

"Now with season two, they're sitting there, arms crossed, going, 'What are you going to do now?' Meaning, 'Is it worthy of a show? Do you have enough story that you can tell? Where are you going to go with it? Do I like the way you're going with it? Do I like the characters you're adding, or how they're changing?' That remains to be seen, but our premiere is a strong episode. I tore my hamstrings, even. We all worked our butts off this season, so if you don't like it, screw you all, then [laughs]."



ASH VS EVIL DEAD

NEW SEASON OCTOBER 2ND
STARZ

A promotional image for the TV series 'Ash vs Evil Dead'. It features four main characters standing in a dark, industrial setting. From left to right: Kelly (Dana DeLorenzo) in a light-colored, blood-stained shirt; Ash (Bruce Campbell) in a blue button-down shirt with a leather strap across his chest; Ruby (Lucy Lawless) in a dark leather jacket over a red top; and Pablo (Ray Santiago) in a tan jacket. The title 'ASH VS EVIL DEAD SEASON 2 PREMIERE IS AN ABSURDLY FUN RETURN FOR BRUCE CAMPBELL & HIS COHORTS' is overlaid in large, bold, cyan letters. The author's name 'BY HEATHER WIXSON' is in white letters at the bottom right.

ASH VS EVIL DEAD SEASON 2 PREMIERE IS AN ABSURDLY FUN RETURN FOR BRUCE CAMPBELL & HIS COHORTS

BY HEATHER WIXSON

by Heather Wixson

When it was first announced, I wasn't wholly sure how *Ash vs Evil Dead* was going to work as an episodic series, but by the end of the first season, I was all in for whatever Ash Williams (Bruce Campbell) and his trusty team of Pablo (Ray Santiago) and Kelly (Dana DeLorenzo) had in store for me as a fan. As it went on, I enjoyed how the series managed to flesh out Ash as an anti-hero, but also made his cohorts just as integral to the overall *Evil Dead* story as well, giving us a few new favorite supporting characters to follow week in and week out.

Thankfully, all of that carries over into the season two premiere episode of *Ash vs Evil Dead*, which takes the Deadites' mythology in a much more personal direction for our titular warrior, while also amping up the series'

signature blood and effects in some impressively absurd ways. It's safe to say that if you enjoyed season one, then you'll be pleased by what this new premiere episode has to offer. And for those of you who may not have loved the Starz series, but still dig the *Evil Dead* universe, I'd recommend giving this episode a chance, as it's evident that producers Rob Tapert and Sam Raimi seem laser-focused on raising the bar in season two, especially in relation to things from the original film series (this was a key talking point that came up numerous times over SDCC weekend). I had a blast with the premiere that screened at Comic-Con, and I'm excited to see where they take things this time around.

Ash vs Evil Dead Season 2 picks up right in the aftermath of Ash's decision to call a

truce of sorts with Ruby (Lucy Lawless), who promised to keep her new demonic children under control if Ash and his friends headed to Jacksonville for some peace and quiet far from her supernatural family. We see "El Jefe" enjoying his idea of paradise, cutting open kegs and living out his life Deadite-free at a local bar that both Kelly and Pablo work at (even Eli, Ash's lizard and spiritual guide, gets a fun moment in the opening).

Of course, this being *Evil Dead* and all, Ash's tranquility is expectedly short-lived. When Ruby's children begin run amok, she's forced to call upon her rival for help in handling her demonic spawn before it's too late for all of humanity. So just when he thinks he's out, Ash has to hop right back into the game—along with Kelly and Pablo, of course. The

trio heads up to Elk Grove, Michigan to figure out just what Ruby is up to, ultimately forcing Ash to confront his complicated past, as well as his estranged father, Brock Williams (Lee Majors).

From the moment it starts, *Ash vs Evil Dead* dives right into the action and keeps things moving at a swift and energetic pace. In fact, as much as I loved the opening scene of the first season, season two's opener is absolutely brilliant and has outdone its predecessor in

almost every single way—and that's a rather tall order. Before the opening credits even hit, we get an insane amount of blood that is astounding, but yet somehow doesn't feel gratuitous. Campbell showcases his killer delivery from the get-go, letting loose on a beer keg with his chainsaw appendage as he's cheered on by folks nearly half his age. Ash then gets propositioned by a mother and daughter for a little bedroom dalliance, to which he quips, "I'm not drunk enough to know if this

is good weird, or bad weird, but I'll get there." It's easy to see that our favorite Deadite-fighting scoundrel is truly living out all of his ultimate, sleazy fantasies.

But Ash is a character that can never escape his past, and it's clearly evident that he's in for a much more personal war during *Ash vs Evil Dead*'s second season, giving us a more fleshed-out version of this character than we've ever seen in the nearly 35 years since he first showed up in the



original *Evil Dead*, including some hints as to who he was before he headed out to that ill-fated cabin years ago. We learn early on that his entire hometown suspected Ash of some horrible misdeeds, which of course came with some steep consequences for his father, who was left behind to deal with his son's mess. Upon his return, Ash's immediately considered an outsider by almost every single person in Elk Grove, providing Campbell with an entirely new dynamic to play around with.

Don't get me wrong, seeing Ash throw out smug-filled quips is a huge reason why I have long adored this character, but it's interesting to see our hero uncomfortably squirming when he realizes he can't charm his way out of what happened decades prior (they allude to the event, but I'm not going to mention it directly for fear of spoilers, although it does add an intriguing twist to just why Ash is so tortured). And so we see how Ash reacts to being the odd man out, regardless

of what he says or does to try and smooth things over.

We also see that Pablo is going to be dealing with the ramifications of having the *Necronomicon* plastered to his face by Ruby, and how that affects his mental state going into this new war with the Deadites. Kelly has also come through the events of *Ash vs Evil Dead* Season 1 a changed woman, transitioning from someone with a strong and centered sense of balance to a gal who is just ready to throw down with evil forces at a moment's notice. I'm curious to see if this new semi-reckless attitude will come with a hefty price for Kelly down the line, but I love seeing DeLorenzo come at her character with an unbridled eagerness.

Of course, I'd be remiss if I didn't mention the addition of Ash's dad into the mix this season, as his introduction into the series is a lot of fun (including a great nod to one of Majors' famed TV series from the past). I also enjoyed that,

for the first time ever, Ruby feels more like a real character, especially when we see her conflicted over just how to handle her demon spawn that have become too unwieldy to control. There's a softness to Ruby in this episode that we have never seen from Lawless' character before, and I hope this is only the beginning in making her feel like more than just another villainous archetype.

Suffice to say, I loved everything about the season two premiere of *Ash vs Evil Dead*, as it really hit all the perfect beats for me. The story is clever and feels more in line with the films than anything we've seen previously from the series, the cast members are all infectiously engaging, and the effects are downright marvelous (I honestly can't wait to watch this episode again just to get a better look at the work on Ruby's demon spawn, as it might be the best practical effects work I've seen on TV all year long). October 2nd can't get here fast enough.



ASH vs EVIL DEAD

THE COMPLETE FIRST SEASON



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ASH VS EVIL DEAD CAST MEMBERS DISCUSS THE BLOOD, BONDS, & MAYHEM OF SEASON 2

BY HEATHER WIXSON



During the *Ash vs Evil Dead* press event held at this year's San Diego Comic-Con, Daily Dead sat down to chat with returning co-stars Dana DeLorenzo, Ray Santiago, Lucy Lawless, and the iconic Lee Majors, who joins season two of *AvED* as Brock Williams, Ash's estranged father.

With season two of *Ash vs Evil Dead* taking a more personal turn for its titular anti-hero, the cast discussed how their characters fit into what's to come when they all head to Ash's hometown of Elk Grove, Michigan, to deal with more Deadites and gore-soaked action this time around. Lawless, Santiago, and DeLorenzo also talked about the evolution of their characters after the events of season one, and Majors chatted about what fans can expect from his character as well as his reaction to his first experience with blood effects during filming.

Be sure to catch the season two premiere of *Ash vs Evil Dead* when it airs exclusively on Starz on October 2nd.

Lucy, your character essentially let Pandora's box be opened upon the world last season. How will we see that decision affect this upcoming season?

Lucy Lawless: Well, things get away on her. She's basically forced Pablo to birth these demon spawn and it all goes to shit. She needs to get things back on track, so she works her way into Ash's crew and at a certain point, even teams up a little bit with Kelly. They go on a rampage—it's a little girl power.

So she's brought into the fold, which means that you get shot with a lot more mucus, a lot more blood, and you get vomited on repeatedly. That means you're in the game and you're in the family. We'll see how that goes, but she does become a real character this season.

Ash kind of saved the day, but at the same time, things got pretty screwed up by the end of season one, so things didn't wrap up so perfectly. How do we see your characters respond to the events of the finale in season two?

Dana DeLorenzo: I can say from Kelly's point of view, yes, it's great that he saved Pablo

and Kelly, but he made a deal with the devil. My character says at the end of season one, "Okay, great, well, evil's going to take over the world... but let's go to Jacksonville, have a great time!"



So at the beginning of season two, Kelly is just ready to pop, where she's a jack-in-the-box. She's been wound up, she's anxious, because they've just been sitting there in Jacksonville. Pablo and Kelly are working at a bar while Ash is cutting open kegs with his chainsaw and parties it up. Kelly wants to stay on the mission and be out for revenge for her parents and what she went through.

Also, it's her purpose. Ash just keeps pulling the reins and avoiding responsibility, so she starts to struggle with, "Should she keep

following Ash or should she forge her own path?" Eventually she teams up with Ruby, because at least Ruby has a plan and Ruby admits that maybe Kelly was the one she should have been looking for all along. We'll see where that goes. It's a very interesting journey.

Ray Santiago: I'm just glad that he made the deal to save my face [laughs]. At the start of season two, we find Pablo still dealing with the trauma of having birthed demons out of his mouth. He's still undeniably connected to the *Necronomicon*, and he's happy that the deal was made so that he's alive, but he's still struggling to make it through the day, and he

knows that this isn't over. What happened is going to come back around, it's just a matter of time. We'll just have to see what happens, then.

Lee, this seems like a perfect fit, with you as Ash's father.

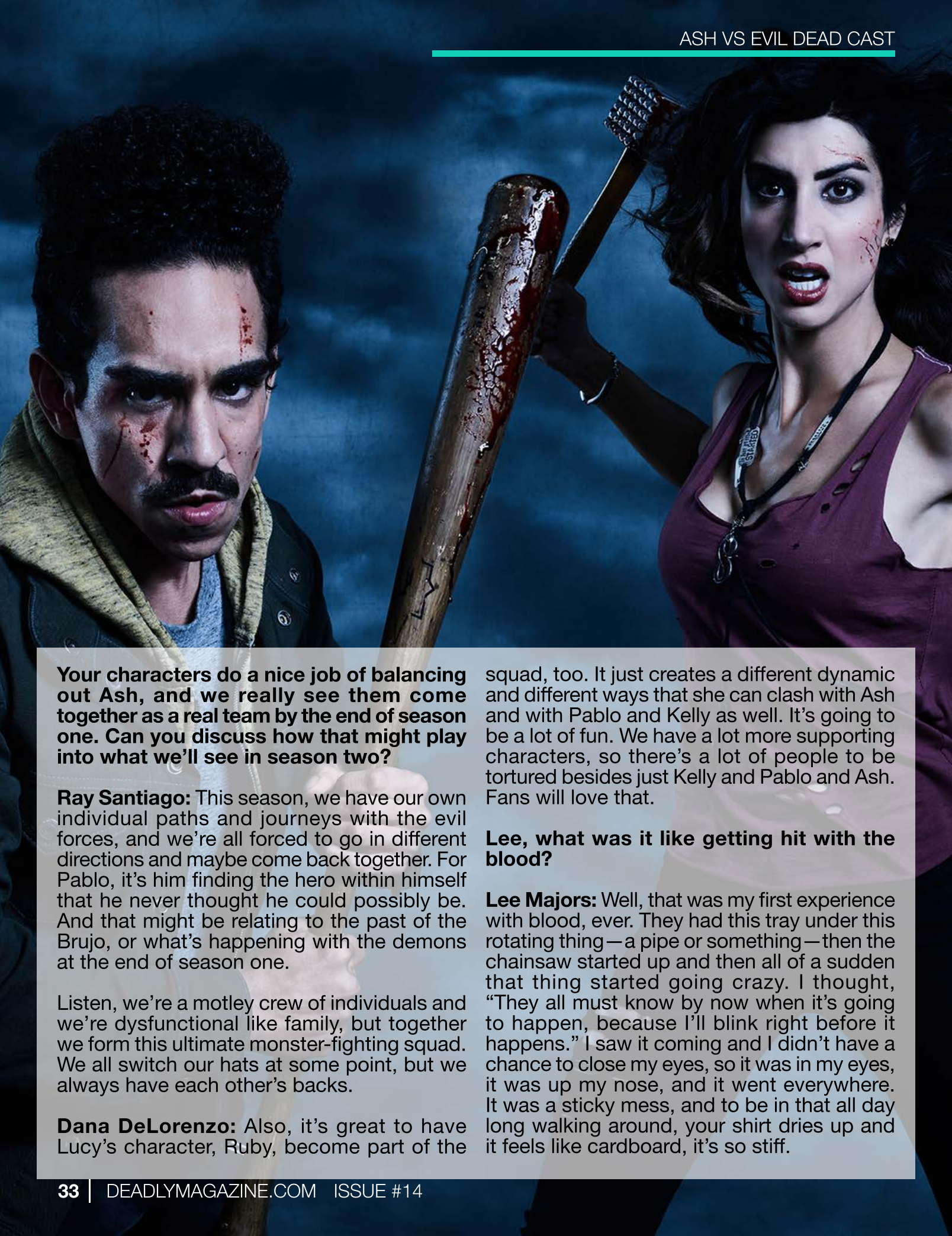
Lee Majors: Yeah, it's been great. The chemistry is very good between us. Bruce [Campbell] is a very underrated actor and he's really pretty good at everything he does. We get along great.

How privy is Ash's dad to everything supernatural going on and the role his son plays in it all? Is he oblivious?

Lee Majors: He doesn't know anything about it. He thinks that Ash was responsible for the death of his daughter, Ash's sister, and he [Ash] left in a lurch when that happened in the town. He left his dad to clean up the mess, so to speak. Of course, he lost his business because nobody wanted to do business with the father of "Ashy Slashy," so there's an animosity they have against each other. He doesn't really like him. When he shows up, he doesn't want him around. He says, "Do your business and do what you got to do and get out."

Then he stays around and we get a little more competitive, and then it goes into a little more softness, where I'm kind of understanding what he does, but I don't believe him at first. I have no idea what he's doing there.





Your characters do a nice job of balancing out Ash, and we really see them come together as a real team by the end of season one. Can you discuss how that might play into what we'll see in season two?

Ray Santiago: This season, we have our own individual paths and journeys with the evil forces, and we're all forced to go in different directions and maybe come back together. For Pablo, it's him finding the hero within himself that he never thought he could possibly be. And that might be relating to the past of the Brujo, or what's happening with the demons at the end of season one.

Listen, we're a motley crew of individuals and we're dysfunctional like family, but together we form this ultimate monster-fighting squad. We all switch our hats at some point, but we always have each other's backs.

Dana DeLorenzo: Also, it's great to have Lucy's character, Ruby, become part of the

squad, too. It just creates a different dynamic and different ways that she can clash with Ash and with Pablo and Kelly as well. It's going to be a lot of fun. We have a lot more supporting characters, so there's a lot of people to be tortured besides just Kelly and Pablo and Ash. Fans will love that.

Lee, what was it like getting hit with the blood?

Lee Majors: Well, that was my first experience with blood, ever. They had this tray under this rotating thing—a pipe or something—then the chainsaw started up and then all of a sudden that thing started going crazy. I thought, "They all must know by now when it's going to happen, because I'll blink right before it happens." I saw it coming and I didn't have a chance to close my eyes, so it was in my eyes, it was up my nose, and it went everywhere. It was a sticky mess, and to be in that all day long walking around, your shirt dries up and it feels like cardboard, it's so stiff.

DEADITES IN DEARBORN: REVISITING EVIL DEAD: A FISTFUL OF BOOMSTICK

by Brian Smith

Since we're celebrating all things *Evil Dead*, I thought this was the perfect chance to dive deep into the franchise and pull out a little gem: the 2003 PlayStation 2 game *Evil Dead: A Fistful of Boomstick*. Taking place after the original film trilogy, the game follows anti-hero Ash, who must once again stop the Deadites from being unleashed on the world. We first hear Bruce Campbell's snarky tone as Ash recounts his story to an unknown man, telling the tale of how things went to hell... again.

A flashback takes us to a bar in Dearborn, Michigan, where we see Ash watching the TV talk show *Mysteries of the Occult*. The show's guest is Professor Eldridge, who explains to host Trisha Pettywood that he is the colleague of Professor Knowby, who wrote a book about the *Necronomicon*, but has since disappeared, leaving behind

his notes and a recording of himself reading from the *Book of the Dead*. Insisting that the *Necronomicon* is pure mythology, Eldridge plays Knowby's recording on national TV. Good one, professor.

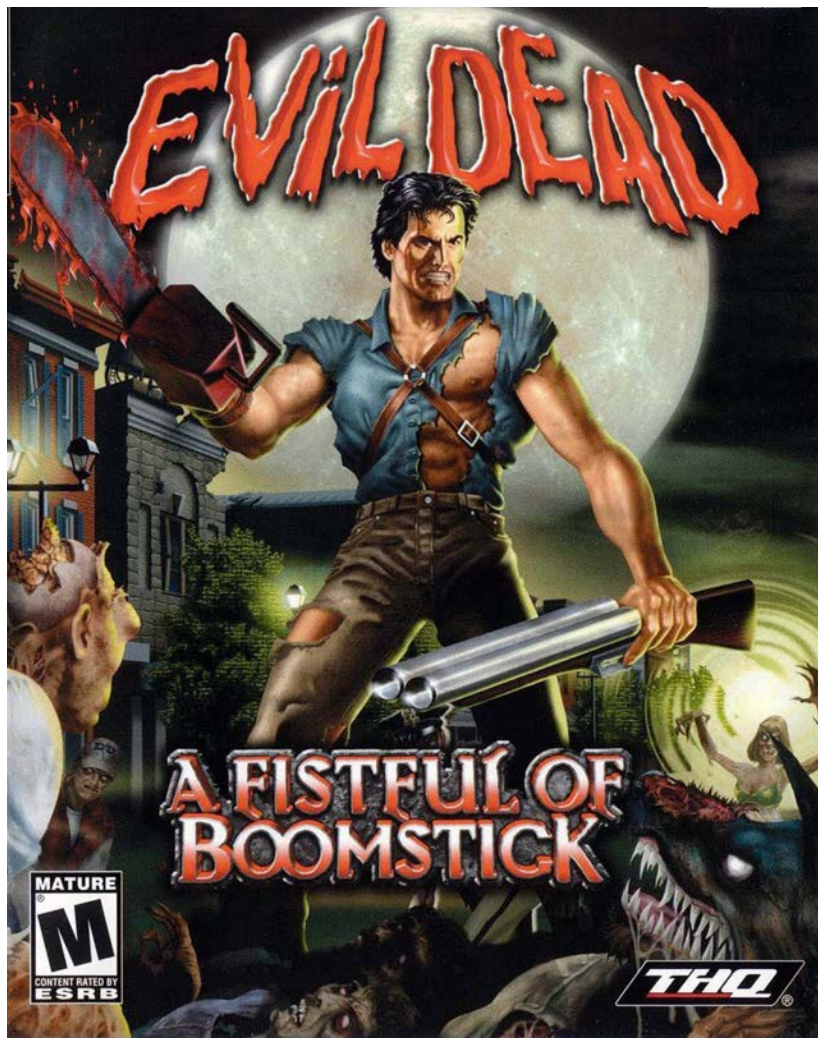
Needless to say, this is where the game begins, as you and your trusty boomstick are off

ammo and health make for quick thinking scenarios, and using the right weapon for your situation is key. Collecting things and figuring out puzzle mechanics are major components of the game, too, as you are often tasked with acquiring a series of items to unlock a certain area or ability. The amount of time you are allowed to save people is even limited, and you are only able to do so after finding a "save" token hidden within the world.

Starting off the game with only your shotgun and a small amount of ammo, your first task is to find a way into the TV station where the broadcast originated. Being accustomed to the enormous environments that modern games like *Grand Theft Auto V*, *Skyrim*, or *Witcher 3* provide, I had actually forgotten what it's like to play a PS2 game. Needless to say, the Dearborn map is small and very easy to

navigate.

Once inside the TV station, I meet Eldridge and Trisha from *Mysteries of the Occult*. They are central characters to the game, as we encounter them throughout the story. When the professor played the recording on television, it caused a series of vortexes to open around



to defeat an army of Deadites that the professor has just unleashed on the unsuspecting town of Dearborn.

At its heart, *Evil Dead: A Fistful of Boomstick* is a straightforward hack-and-slash game, but it also has survival horror elements peppered throughout. Limited

town. These huge spinning columns of evilness create passageways that spit out Deadites. They need to be sealed up, which can only be done with an item made of pure silver. Not to worry, though. In Dearborn, items made of pure silver are surprisingly easy to come by, you just have to get them from frightened biker gang members around town—because where else would you look?

Progressing through the story reveals more weapons, modifications, and abilities all the way through to the end. Each hand or lack thereof can hold one weapon. Besides your trusty ol' chainsaw, which is useful for cutting through fences and taking out low-level Deadites, hardware like a flamethrower or a Gatling gun can be attached to your wrist as a replacement, while your left hand can carry guns and melee weapons. Most guns have different types of ammo: regular, shrapnel, and explosive. Weapons for either hand can always be swapped out on the fly by pushing the L2/R2 bumpers, which pause the game and allow you to select your weapon.

Killing Deadites is not only fun, but useful, too! Dispatching of the undead produces "Mana," which fills up a meter onscreen. After finding a spell book early in the game, you can use Mana to cast spells by holding R1 and pressing

a combination of the face buttons. Spells like "Extra Strength," "Lightning," and "Possess Deadite" are found throughout the world, most of which are needed to complete some kind of task. To cast a spell takes a second or two and leaves you undefended, though, as Ash needs to raise the spell in the air and read an incantation. Additionally, the amount of Mana needed to cast a spell depends on the level and power of the spell.

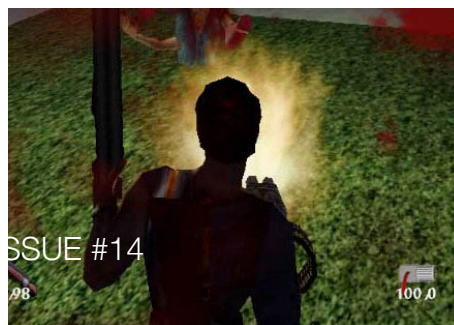
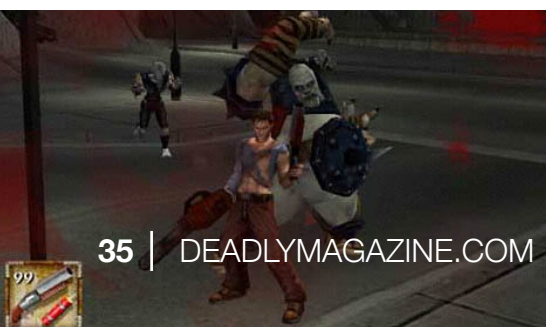
The entire game takes place in the same town on the same map, however, as time travel is involved, we see Dearborn in various stages of history. After clearing the city of all Deadites in the present, Ash is sent back in time to wander a colonial-era Dearborn in the year 1695. After being repeatedly mistaken for the local blacksmith, we finally meet Williams, the town's *real* blacksmith, who bears a striking resemblance to Ash.

After once again clearing the town of Deadites in this time period, Ash is sent forward in time to the year 1863: Civil War-era Dearborn. While the map is essentially the same throughout each time period, there are small variations within each era. Certain landmarks of the town remain in the same location and always come into play when completing quests. Through circumstance, we come across another man who seems to look a lot like

Ash, this time a Union Army general. The general tells us how his great-grandfather, a blacksmith, would tell stories of a one-armed man from the future—a nice touch in connecting these different levels together.

The last battle of the game takes place after we arrive back in the present time, only to find that Dearborn has completely gone to hell, and that it's up to Ash to save the world by defeating the final boss, a Queen Deadite. It's an epic showdown, and considering the scope of *Boomstick*, it all ties together nicely in the end with a few things I don't want to reveal just in case someone reading this is thinking of visiting this one any time soon.

Evil Dead: A Fistful of Boomstick definitely isn't a perfect game, but it still has the spirit of the original *Evil Dead* films and Campbell's vocal talents certainly add some charm to the game, too. With *Boomstick* being thirteen years old at this point, the game's advanced age does show—in terms of graphics and the wonky camera system at play, there is a lack of fluidity throughout. However, fans of the *Evil Dead* franchise will definitely appreciate the fun storyline as well as the humor Bruce Campbell brings to the voice of Ash, making this a groovy game to revisit.





THE STRANGE HISTORY OF THE LA CASA SERIES & ITALY'S FIVE UNOFFICIAL EVIL DEAD SEQUELS

— by Patrick Bromley —

While their contributions to horror and exploitation cinema in the '70s and '80s can never be understated, the Italians had a funny habit of co-opting unrelated movies and branding them as sequels to one another despite the fact that they were never designed as such. When Lucio Fulci made his classic *Zombie* in 1979, it was released as *Zombi 2* in Europe despite having nothing to do with George A. Romero's *Dawn of the Dead*, originally released as *Zombi* overseas. In Italy, Sam Raimi's first two *Evil Dead* films played under the titles *La Casa* and *La Casa 2*, which wouldn't be unusual if there weren't five more totally unrelated *La Casa* movies released after the fact. The implication was that these movies were sequels to the *Evil Dead* series. They were not.

In *Danse Macabre*, his 1981 treatise on horror, Stephen King identifies genre archetypes that he labels "tarots": The

Vampire, The Werewolf, The Thing, The Ghost, and The Bad Place. All of horror falls under one of these categories, King argues, be it in one form or another. It is the archetype of "The Bad Place" with which we will concern ourselves in examining the *La Casa* movies, as it is the organizing principal the entire series is built upon. There are no recurring characters (outside of Ash showing up in *Evil Dead* and *Evil Dead 2*, the only proper sequel in the series), no continuity, not even a consistency of tone across the seven entries in the makeshift franchise. The only thing *La Casa* movies have in common is that each film features a house that is, in one form or another, haunted or possessed by an angry spirit.

But that's not entirely accurate, because even renaming the original *Evil Dead* to *La Casa*—translated as "The House"—is misleading, as it's not actually the house that is inherently evil in Sam Raimi's horror classic.

It's reading from the *Book of the Dead* that incites all of the demonic possession and bloodshed; the famed cabin in the woods is just the place where everything goes down. Ditto the 1987 sequel, which is far more comedic and silly than its relentlessly grisly predecessor.

When both *Evil Dead* films managed to do quite well at the Italian box office, however, the incredibly prolific Italian filmmaker Joe D'Amato, who never met a film he wouldn't shamelessly borrow, co-opt, or just rip off, and who has over 200 credits to his name, saw Raimi's success as a branding opportunity. Intent on keeping the money rolling in, D'Amato produced a string of completely unassociated films billed as sequels to *Evil Dead* and *Evil Dead 2*, most of which were at least slightly more faithful to what King coined "The Bad Place."

The first of these unofficial

sequels, 1988's *Ghosthouse*, had powerhouses of Italian exploitation horror behind it, as it was produced by Joe D'Amato and directed by Umberto Lenzi (of *Nightmare City* and *Cannibal Ferox* fame). Director Lenzi built a career on imitating that which came before him, and *Ghosthouse* is his Fulci film. There are specific shots and moments in the movie that feel ripped right out of Fulci's "Gates of Hell" trilogy, whether it's a deliberate zoom-in to a tarantula crawling across a dust-covered coffin or the floor of the haunted house giving way to reveal a pool of milky white acid littered with decomposed corpses. While never as effective, mean-spirited, or gory as a Fulci film, *Ghosthouse* does manage to capture some of his tone. It sets out to sequelize a pair of American horror films, but is quite distinctly Italian in its lack of logic and nightmare imagery.

Released the same year, 1988's *La Casa 4* is better known in the US as *Witchery*, which is a good indication of who the real villain of the film is (hint: it's not the house, despite the implication of its Italian title). David Hasselhoff and Linda Blair are among a group of strangers who gather at a Massachusetts hotel, only to become trapped and

systematically killed off by an angry witch. Though D'Amato is once again credited as a producer, directing duties this time fall to Fabrizio Laurenti (1993's *The Crawlers*). *La Casa 4* is a nastier movie than *Ghosthouse*, but not a better one, and its positioning as the fourth movie in the *La Casa* series actually makes it seem even more of a generic afterthought than if it had been released as its own entity.

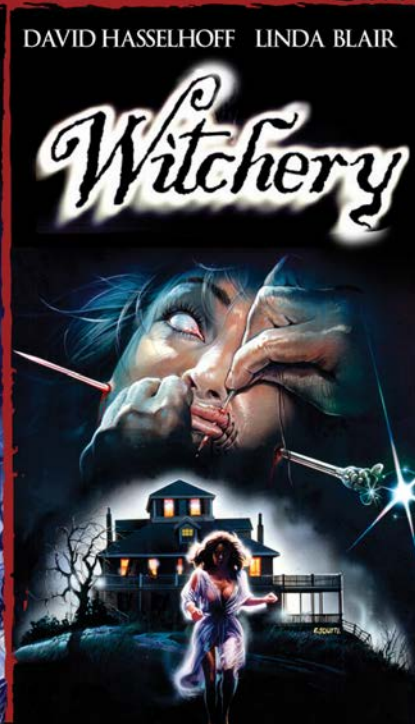
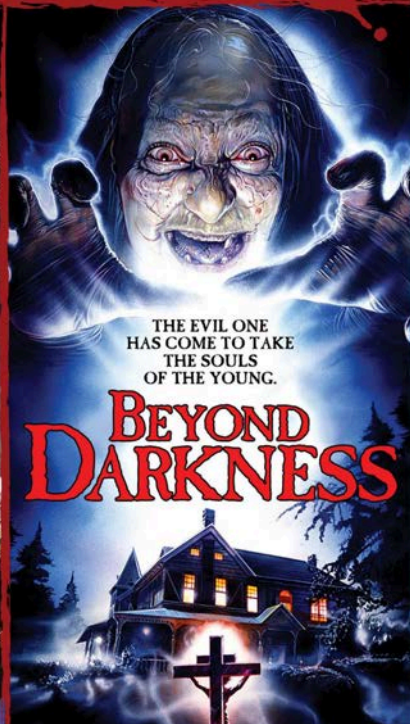
Another of the unofficial *Evil Dead* sequels released in Italy, 1990's *Beyond Darkness*, aka *La Casa 5*, was co-written and directed by Claudio Fragasso, the auteur who in the same year also released *Troll 2*. Like in *Witchery*, "The Bad Place" of *Beyond Darkness* is a house built over the site where a bunch of witches were burned years earlier. Whether because it was made to be the fifth movie in the series or because a general sense of fatigue had settled into the Italian horror scene by the start of the '90s, the scares in *Beyond Darkness* don't conjure up the feeling of a bad dream, only memories of seeing other, better movies.

Things got even weirder for the series after *La Casa 5*, as the next two installments weren't produced in Italy as *Evil Dead* sequels. Instead, producers and distributors

returned to their roots of renaming American films with the *La Casa* brand—in this case, 1987's *House II: The Second Story* and 1989's *The Horror Show*, both of which were released in the US prior to other entries in the *La Casa* series. Complicating matters more is the fact that *House II* was put out as *La Casa 6*, while its actual predecessor, the 1986 horror comedy *House*, was left out of the *La Casa* franchise. *House II* is actually more broadly comic than horror, which had to be completely confusing to Italian audiences looking forward to seeing the follow-up to the nastiness of *La Casa 3, 4, and 5*, only to find a silly movie with crystal skulls, baby pterodactyl puppets, Royal Dano playing a zombie cowboy, and the presence of Bill Maher.

As confusing as this renaming act may have been, it wasn't just the Italians who took part in the practice. The rest of the world got in on the act when 1989's *The Horror Show*, in which Brion James plays a murderer who is sent to the electric chair and returns from the grave to seek revenge on Lance Henriksen's detective, was released everywhere but the US as *House III*. Italy then reclaimed the movie and released it as *La Casa 7*, the final film in the series. So





what we essentially have is a movie called *The Horror Show* being released as the second sequel to *House* everywhere but Italy, where it was released as the sixth sequel to *Evil Dead* despite not being a sequel to *Evil Dead*. Talk about a personality crisis.

Whether it was because audiences had finally caught on to the gimmick and stopped supporting these fake *Evil Dead* sequels, or simply because the Italian horror boom of the '70s and '80s was finally drying up (Fulci was making his last few films, while Dario Argento moved over to television), the *La Casa* series came to an end in the early '90s. Ironically, 1993's *Army of Darkness*—the only real movie sequel to *Evil Dead* and *Evil Dead 2* ever produced—was never co-opted as part of the *La Casa* series. After five bait-and-switch rip-offs were released for Italian horror fans, they never did get an actual sequel in the franchise they had unwittingly supported for a decade. *Army of Darkness* did get a release in Italy, but

it was titled *L'armata delle tenebre*.

So what does all of this mean? Ultimately, not much. The seven films that make up the *La Casa* series exist, more or less, as seven separate films, many of which are available on Blu-ray from Scream Factory. If someone didn't know that they all belong to the same series in one part of the world, it wouldn't change anything. The fact that there are six sequels to *Evil Dead* in Italy (one official, five unofficial) is mostly just a piece of trivia, albeit one that speaks to a phenomenon specific to the horror genre.

By branding a bunch of unrelated movies as sequels to Sam Raimi's *Evil Dead* films, Italian producers increased the likelihood of them finding an audience. It was a tactic that worked—for a while, at least—because we horror fans are suckers for the known quantity; it's why we stick with countless *Friday the 13th* and *Saw* sequels long after they've worn out their welcome, or

why we'll support direct-to-video *Hellraiser* sequels when we know they were made just to retain the rights to the property. But hey, they have Pinhead in them, right?

Italian filmmakers understood this trend and capitalized on it, in the process creating one of horror's most fascinating footnotes. The goodwill of the horror audience goes a long way. Once we find a film that we love—for example, *Evil Dead* or *Evil Dead 2*—we continue chasing the dragon long after we've been burned. When the goodwill is exploited, it results in something like the *La Casa* movies. They're not necessarily bad films in and of themselves, but they're also not *Evil Dead* movies.



THANK YOU FOR READING!

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