Written by Michael Gingold Monday, 22 October 2012 11:10



It wouldn't be an EVIL DEAD movie without Bruce Campbell involved, and though he's not on screen in the remake opening next year, he was personally involved as a producer. Fango caught up with the original Ash at the recent New York Comic-Con to learn what to expect from the new take on EVIL DEAD—and found out a bit about his next book as well, and his thoughts on EVIL DEAD: THE MUSICAL.

There's no Ash anywhere to be seen in the 21st-century EVIL DEAD, which hits theaters from TriStar Pictures April 12, 2013. The protagonist this time is Mia (Jane Levy), a recovering alcoholic who travels to that cabin in the woods as part of her attempt to keep off the sauce, only for her and her friends to fall under the demonic sway of the Book of the Dead. Possession and severe bloodshed result in what Campbell describes as "a brand new EVIL DEAD story about five new kids having a really bad night with a book that they should have left alone."



Unlike many past big-screen horror updates, in which the original creators have had no say or control, this EVIL DEAD was fully backed by Campbell, original writer/director Sam Raimi and producer Rob Tapert. At the helm is a young man who, just like Raimi on the first film, is making his feature debut: Uruguayan Fede Alvarez, who grabbed lots of Hollywood attention with his short film PANIC ATTACK! He also caught Raimi's ear with his ideas about a new EVIL DEAD, and wound up hand-picked to helm the film, from a script he wrote with Rodo Sayagues Mendez (with dialogue contributions by JUNO Oscar-winner Diablo Cody, "to make sure middle-aged men like us know what 20something people sound like, because we don't know how those youngsters talk anymore," according to Campbell).

The result, as opposed to the humor-tinged EVIL DEAD II and ARMY OF DARKNESS, is a film that Campbell says plays straightforward and serious: "If you're laughing during this movie, that's only because it's nervous laughter." The ambition was clearly to live up to the line that appears in the first EVIL DEAD's closing credits: "The ultimate experience in grueling terror"—and just as its shoot was apparently a trying time as well, actress Levy has said that

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the same was true on the remake. "But she's still talking to us," Campbell says. "It was the worst experience of her entire life shooting this movie—and I was so glad to hear that, because it meant that her character went through hell. Audiences love it when a character goes through hell. I really believe that."

Although he, Raimi and Tapert godfathered the project, they adopted a hands-off approach once cameras rolled and the cast went through their paces. "This is Fede's movie," Campbell asserts. "As producers, the only time we corralled him was to make sure that it's a well-done, scary movie. Fede made it all his own; he worked with [the actors]. [Producers] don't direct actors. If a producer told me how to act, I'd punch him in the face. That's not their job. Their job is to get the money, and protect [the filmmakers], and make the movie good."

Not only that, but Campbell never considered making a cameo appearance himself. When it comes to homages to the previous movies, "We're gonna have little things. There'll be a line here, a shot there, something to do with the old ones. But I'm not in the movie, and I was never intended to be. We realized it would be a horrible distraction if I was the guy in the ice cream shop: 'Here's your change, pal!' It's just not appropriate, and I didn't want to do that."

The result, Campbell promises, is a movie that will stand out not only among the overcrowded field of genre remakes, but in the contemporary horror scene in general. "We've seen a lot of bad filmmaking there," he says. "We've seen a lot of overediting, because producers and directors are nervous. But if you're confident in your ability, your material and your actors, you don't have to do that. You can have a very well-edited 90-minute movie that will still freak people's shit in a very professional way. This movie is just done better than most of your average horror movies out there. Not because we're geniuses, but because we found two geniuses. And also, Shiloh Fernandez is sort of the co-lead, so between Fede and those two actors and the other actors supporting them, we're good to go. I'm happy to be here because of it. They not only didn't screw it up, they made it their own beast. I'm tickled pink."



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Back when the first EVIL DEAD hit theaters in 1983, the MPAA was clamping down on screen gore, meaning it had to be released unrated. Nowadays, the ratings board is much more lenient where blood and guts are concerned, so assuming Screen Gems will want an R for this EVIL DEAD, will audiences be getting an equivalent splatter show? "We're gonna find out!" Campbell says. "The first two EVIL DEAD movies went around the MPAA, but with ARMY OF DARKNESS... Come on, folks, that had talking skeletons. That's not NC-17. I'm not an expert, but when you cut their heads off, dust comes out. That's NC-17, really? In GOODFELLAS, the opening sequence, a guy is tied against his will in a trunk, and they've already tried to kill him. They thought he was dead, and he's come back from the dead. So they park, open up the trunk and Joe Pesci takes a knife and stabs him probably 15 times. "You f\*\*king guy!" He's swearing at him the whole time while he's stabbing him. That's an R-rated movie. Are you f\*\*king kidding me? 'Dear MPAA, you *suck* so bad, you have no idea.'

"And it's because, 'Oh, it's historically accurate.' 'Oh, OK, well maybe there was a demon that ate everybody's face off that you didn't know about! Maybe that's historically accurate!' I mean, come on—give me a f\*\*king break. So I don't know [about the remake]. I think [the MPAA] is going to be antagonistic because we shot 'em the bird two out of three times. And we asked them with ARMY OF DARKNESS, 'What would you cut out?' 'It's the cumulative effect.' 'Well, why don't you eat it?' What does that mean, seriously? What frame do we cut out? I mean, we need practical information here, not some PTA mentality."

One place where Campbell hasn't had to deal with any censorious nonsense is in the realm of the written word, and he's got a new book project in the works to follow up his popular IF CHINS COULD KILL and MAKE LOVE! THE BRUCE CAMPBELL WAY. "That's coming out within the next couple of years: VAGABOND: AN ACTOR'S GYPSY LIFE. It's about all the travel I had to do to work on all these strange jobs, so it's the weird stories of things that happened while not on film sets. It's another ridiculous adventure, like going to Iraq to visit the troops in '09 with the star of BURN NOTICE. I figured that was a story that not many...like, civilians can't just say, 'What's going on in Iraq?' and show up!"

The influence of the original EVIL DEAD and its sequels has spread far and wide as well, and Alvarez's film isn't the only re-envisioning it has had. EVIL DEAD: THE MUSICAL, which combined the first two movies into an uproarious spoof with songs, garnered an enthusiastic fan base of its own, including the films' creators. "Whenever something [like that] comes up, Sam Raimi, Rob Tapert and I, as partners, discuss it just like we would a filmmaker. If someone has a project, 'What's your angle on it? Is it funny? What is it?' And the musical sounded like a blast. Just the title, EVIL DEAD: THE MUSICAL, is awesome. The great thing about that musical is that if it's done well, it's incredibly fun and entertaining, and if it's not done well, it's incredibly fun and entertaining. It's virtually audience-proof, because I've seen it in small towns, and it's just the worst version ever, and I'm laughing my ass off the whole time. So

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we got behind that because it was an original take, and they were enthusiastic about it enough to keep bugging us and bugging us and bugging us. It takes a lot to get everybody's attention. Sam Raimi is making the largest movies in motion-picture history now, and it's hard to get his attention. So we were really happy and delighted with that."