

Horror and humor lurk in 'Evil Dead II'

Since films as social and cultural products reflect the society that produces them, we might ask, "What does 'Evil Dead 2' — Dead by Dawn" (R) tell us about contemporary American values?" One answer: "Graphic violence is fun — and funny."

Certainly there's no complaint about ghost stories, and that's what "Evil Dead 2" is, as Ash (Bruce Campbell) and his girl, Annie (Sarah Berry), head out to a cabin in the woods for a weekend tryst.

But the place is possessed, and Ash struggles to cleanse the woods of dark evil and escape. Several other folks wander through — Jake (Dan Hicks), Bobby Joe (Kassie Wesley), Linda (Denise Bixler) and Ed (Richard Demeier). Naturally they serve as grist for the evil one's gore mill. In the end, Ash, as you might well imagine, beats the ghost and escapes in a neat twist.

You'll never guess where he winds up. That's one of the film's nice touches. "Evil Dead 2" is tongue-in-cheek enough to mitigate the horror of the story, although I wouldn't recommend it for younger teens or sensitive adults. In spite of its humor, it is appropriately rated "R."

There are lots of technically well-done special effects and lots of laughs, but the film remains a nervous horror flick.

"Evil Dead 2" is the work of a number of local fellows. Director Sam Raimi, Producer Robert G. Tapert and co-producer/star, Bruce Campbell, are principals in Forde's Renaissance Pictures. Raimi's younger brother, Theodore, has a major supporting role.



Sarah Berry (left), Dan Hicks, Bruce Campbell and Kassie Wesley are in the cast of "Evil Dead II" sequel to the cult classic. Campbell is one of the team including Sam Raimi and Robert Tapert — all graduates of Birmingham's Groves High School — who worked on both films.

Along with co-scenarist Scott Spiegel, Ted was a student at Oakland Community College's Orchard Ridge Campus in Farmington Hills. Thursday's paper (April 16) will carry a feature on Renaissance Pictures and its principals.

IN "MAKING MR. RIGHT" (PG-13), Susan Seidelman is desperately seeking romantic comedy but she raises the stakes and comes up unfilled, unfocused and largely unfunny.

One major problem in "Making Mr. Right" is that the numerous plot elements never relate intrinsically. They just accidentally bump into

each other from time to time.

Frankie Stone (Ann Magnuson's first starring role) is billed as an "Image Consultant." Whatever that means, Frankie is head of a public relations firm specializing in politicians and rock stars.

Frankie's personal life is in disarray. As the film opens, she locks the door on boyfriend-client Congressman Steve Marcus (Ben Masters), right in the middle of his re-election campaign, because he was romancing a beauty queen. Frankie's personal distress is also highlighted by an obsessive application of lipstick and unconventional driving habits.

BUT FRANKIE is a competent, successful businesswoman with staff that can do anything. Bruce

(Christian Clemenson) and Suzy Duncan (Polly Draper) are always flitting around Frankie or making calls to generate publicity.

Although Congressman Marcus is handsome and charming, he obviously is not Right. Neither is Dr. Hamdus (Harsh Nayyar). Clemenson's head, who hires Frankie to generate public support for Ulysses (John Malkovich), an android built by Dr. Jeff Peters (Malkovich in a double role). Ulysses is designed to man a deep-space probe for seven years.

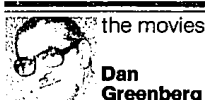
Actually, that's enough plot right there with sufficient potential for humorous discussion of identity, maturation and personality. But Seidelman, the director and co-executive producer, didn't stop there.

Scattered elements litter the film's landscape and de-focus the film. Dr. Peters is a very shy fellow vigorously pursued by a Chemtech employee, Sandy (Laurie Metcalf). To complicate Frankie's personal life, her old friend, Trish (Glenn Headly), moves in after leaving her philandering husband, TV soap actor Don (Hart Bochner).

When he's not chasing starlets, Don wants his wife back and follows her, accompanied by his agent, Moe Glickstein (Mervyn Goldfarb) and his accountant, Manny (Sid Raymond). These two look like refugee-comics from an old-time burlesque show, the kind you see sitting vacantly in the back of shabby delicatessens.

They aren't funny enough to justify their appearances, which only serve as a forced plot device to allow Frankie to return to Clemenson's lab one night and encounter Ulysses.

MEANWHILE, Frankie's sister, Ivy (Susan Bernier), is marrying a Cuban busboy whom their mother,



the movies
Dan Greenberg

Estelle (Polly Bergen), does not find acceptable.

These many disparate elements never come together well and their comic potential is never realized. Even if it had been, the film falls because the distinction between Malkovich as Ulysses and Malkovich as Dr. Peters is never distinct.

The humor of mistaken and double-identity situations arises when

the audience recognizes what the characters don't know — here, who is android and who is man. But Malkovich's two roles are so similar that the distinction is lost.

Finally, since this film largely represents a feminine viewpoint in conception, production and execution, what does it tell us about our society when Mr. Right turns out to be a hi-tech robot?

table talk

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