

'Evil Dead' Gets the Blood But Misses the Pulse

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on April 5, 2013 - 11:16am

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Rating: **3.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – When the trailer for Fede Alvarez’s remake of the Sam Raimi classic “Evil Dead” hit the net, horror fans giggled with glee. A gore fest with no CGI made in the spirit of the flick that made Bruce Campbell a star? Sign me up. With the weakened state of the genre overall (last year was a rough one for horror fans), we were kind of banking on this one. And that hope for a creative spark has allowed audiences to overlook the notable flaws of Alvarez’s film. I get it. I want to love it too. But there are times where it’s so hard to do so.

“Evil Dead” sets out to rattle you from the very beginning. A group of terrified people tie an equally-shattered girl to a wooden beam in the basement of an old cabin. She screams, she cries, she begs the man about to burn her alive, who turns out to be her father, not to light the match. Of course, she’s not the victim you first suspect. She’s been possessed by something truly evil. And that force of malevolent power is trapped in The Book of the Dead, which is then conveniently left on a table for the next idiot to find in the first of a few too many head-scratching moments in the plotting of this “Evil Dead.”



Evil Dead

Photo credit: *Tristar Pictures*

Mia (Jane Levy) is trying to kick an addiction to drugs. She’s failed before. What better place to avoid the trappings of the real world than a cabin in the woods? Mia arrives at the barely-standing wood structure ahead of brother David (Shiloh Fernandez) & her bro’s girlfriend Natalie (Elizabeth Blackmore), and friends, Eric (Lou Taylor Pucci) & Olivia (Jessica Lucas). After some truly horrendous dialogue and plotting about estranged siblings and the perils of kicking drugs, the action kicks in.

And it kicks in hard. Eric reads from the Book of the Dead and unleashes the evil within. Mia is overtaken by an evil force that essentially becomes contagious, passing itself to other people in the cabin and forcing them to commit horrendous acts, often to themselves. The devil needs five souls to take over the world. What a lovely coincidence that there are five people in the cabin.

I do fully respect how far Alvarez is willing to push the envelope in terms of gore and straight-up horror in “Evil Dead,” a film that is made

significantly better by its complete lack of CGI. All of the effects are practical, creating a much more visceral response when someone saws off a body part or licks a blade. There are moments of hard-R insanity in "Evil Dead" that have a gut-punch effect that's simply undeniable and the final ten minutes practically justify seeing the film on their own. I wouldn't dare spoil how we get there (even if many of the stills and previews do) but the straight-up insanity of the climax is the kind of thing I respect in horror. Too many of the films in the genre pull back at the end. "Evil Dead" puts the pedal to the floor and ends on such a strong note that I think that's why so many critics and audiences have left satisfied. Horror films are often remembered by the quality of their last kill.



Evil Dead

Photo credit: Tristar Pictures

It's the getting there that's tough. Levy is great. I think she's going to be a stellar actress and has already shown in an interesting range in just a few roles. However, she's turned into a possessed creature of the damned early on and so much of the plot of the film is left to the rest of the cast and they simply lack the charisma needed for a movie like this. Fernandez is a dull lead and both girls are mere victims.

They're not helped by a script that practically plays like a parody of these things with the kind of stupid behavior mocked in "Cabin in the Woods." The "pretty people doing stupid things" structure has been a core part of horror for years but the dialogue and plotting here is particularly, abrasively bad. The exchanges reminded me of a "Friday the 13th" SEQUEL and this movie just needed a smarter script to work. You might argue that "Evil Dead" wasn't exactly a model of character development but Raimi didn't try. The attempt at emotional hooks through Mia & David's dead mother and Mia's drug addiction open the door for characters that simply feel way too thin.

We don't go for the characters. We don't go for the plot. We go to a movie like "Evil Dead" for the carnage. And, for the most part, it delivers. However, I would argue that "Evil Dead" only delivers when you're in that seat. It's not something that sticks with you. It's not smart enough. It's a rollercoaster ride instead of something that gets under your skin, lingers with you, and makes you want to see it again as soon as possible to exorcise it from your mind. "Evil Dead" doesn't do any of that. It provokes on a purely surface level. Great horror gets underneath.

"Evil Dead" stars Jane Levy, Shiloh Fernandez, Lou Taylor Pucci, Jessica Lucas, and Elizabeth Blackmore. It was written and directed by Fede Alvarez. It opens on April 5, 2013 and is rated R.



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