



## This Week:

### Army Of Darkness

You know how it is. Sometimes, the T.V. commercial for a movie is so great that you feel you'll ruin your underwear if you don't go see it. But you know what theatre prices are like. High. Pricey. Exorbitant. Astroeconomical. But you've gotta see that movie!

So you make excuses. The movie can't be that good. All the good parts are in the commercial. That works for a little while... then you see a new commercial with even better clips...

You can handle it though. Momma didn't raise no moronic linstanding theatre junkies. You can wait until the video comes out.

But then you see Regis and Kathie Lee talking to the star. And they show even more clips.

And Siskel and Ebert give it two thumbs up.

It's on *Entertainment Tonight* every night.

And the Six O'clock News reports that riots broke out when some people couldn't get tickets.

People are talking Oscar.

People are buying the lunchbox.

People are eating the cereal.

People are driving you crazy.

Before you even know it's happening, you're standing in front of the theatre's cash register on cheap (yeah, right!) night in last week's underwear wearing a bloodstained trenchcoat and are choking up that last five bucks that you pawned your left kidney to get and taking the ticket and

going into the theatre and sitting down to watch...

And you die of a stroke before the opening credits finish.

Sometimes, life just ain't fair.

That's the moral of this week's film, *Army of Darkness*. It stars Bruce Campbell as the heroic Ash, an ordinary guy, gets sucked into a timewarp for no apparent reason other than it being a cool premise for a movie.

More adventurous B-movie fans will recognize the character of Ash from those immortal horror-comedies, *Evil Dead* and *Evil Dead II: Dead By Dawn*. But if you've never seen either of those movies, don't worry: a helpful flashback at the beginning of the movie fills you in on all you need to know. Ash was once a mild-mannered, square-jawed hardware department clerk, whose most important contribution to society was his advice that you "Shop Smart! Shop S-Mart!"

Then one day he took his girlfriend out to a cabin in the woods to soak up some nature and maybe get naked for a while. Unfortunately, an evil demon had other plans. It killed Ash's girlfriend. Then (I love this line) it got into Ash's hand and it "went bad", like a three month old yogurt. Ash, ever the cool, logical thinker, cut off his hand with a chainsaw and vanquished the de-

mon. To replace the hand, he modified the chainsaw to fit snugly over the stump of his wrist. A perfectly reasonable solution, when one is surrounded by rampaging zombies.

Then he gets sucked down the timewarp, a great big whirlpool of a special effect that vacuums up Ash's car, Ash's chainsaw, Ash's shotgun, and of course, Ash.

Lost in a time of warring knights and steaming hot days, Ash is first forced to prove he's not one of the bad guys by killing a zombie. Then he's forced to prove he's the hero of legend... by killing a zombie. Then, as hero, he is forced to retrieve the Necronomicon (an evil book, inked in blood and bound in flesh, that the evil forces want and the good guys must keep from them) from a graveyard. To get it out, he must defeat... Skeletons! Fooled you, didn't I?

Okay, enough about the plot. This is a real fun movie. It's a great way to spend an evening with drunk friends, or sober ones if that's more politically correct. It's arguably the best of a recent wave of movies (including *Leprechaun*, *Beastmaster II*, and the ever-popular *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*) made to cash in on the fascination we B-movie fans have for slapped-together, slapstick B-movie schtick. So it's commercial... So what! It's great!

So what makes *Army of Darkness* better than, say, *Hot Shots!*? The difference here is that *AoD* (there's that generation X laziness again...It's not my fault, they should make movie titles shorter than three words) doesn't bother to spoof everything, instead just concentrating on tearing the Sword-And-Sorcery genre to bloody rags.

All the old stock characters that populate the average fantasy are here. There's the generic

nobleman, the generic princess, the generic evil force trying to strangle all life from the planet so it can be remade in its image, and the generic hero from the future with a shotgun full of ammo and a chainsaw for one hand.

It's the slapstick that makes this movie, not the plot. Slapstick like the fight in the Zombie Pit (playset available soon!), where Ash leaps what looks like ten or fifteen feet straight up to catch his chainsaw. Or when he cuts the zombies up after catching the saw, and various zombie parts fly up in the air. Or when the

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