

MONTHLY

FILM

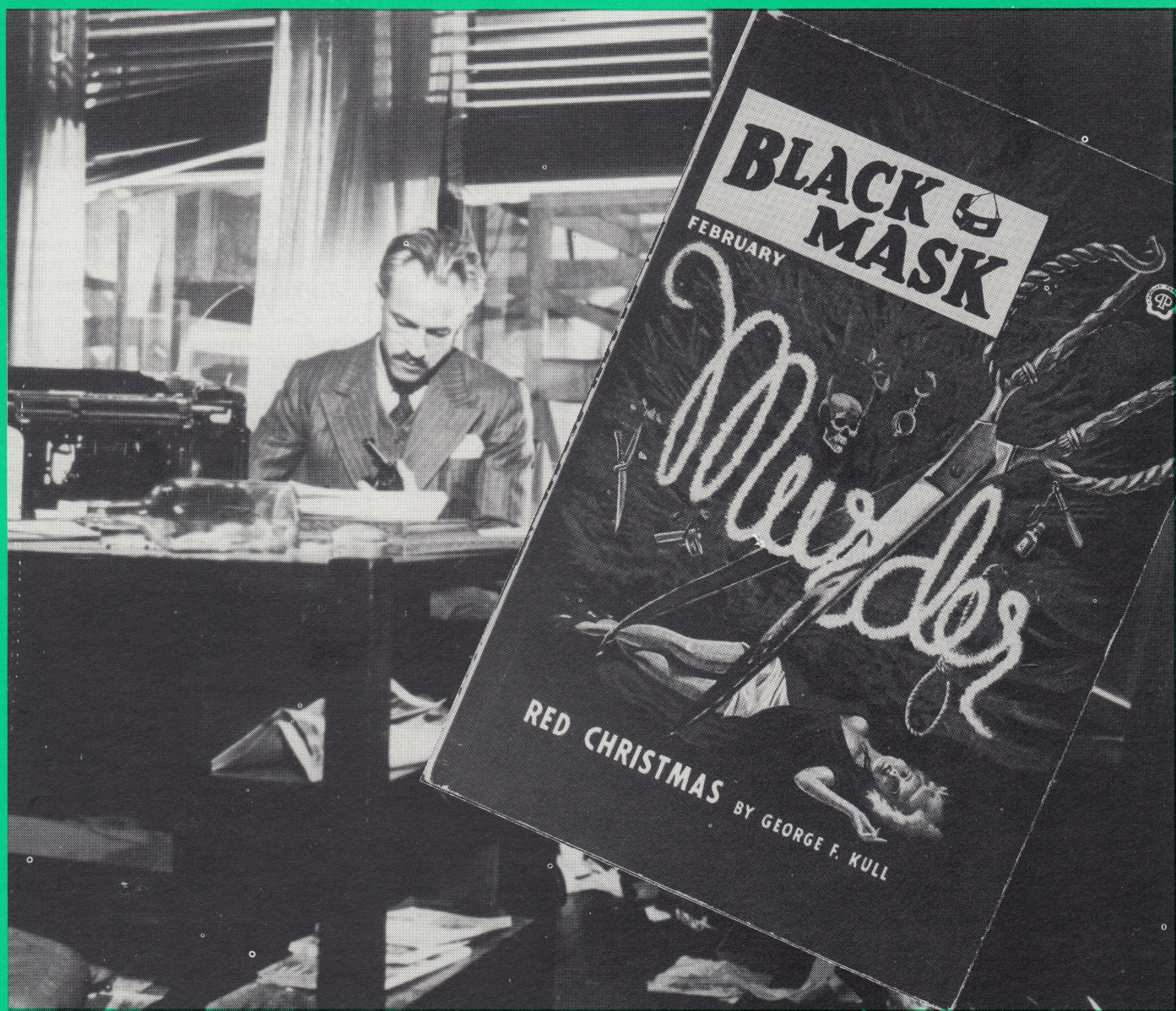
BULLETIN

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**DURGNAT ON DWOSKIN
HAMMETT AND WENDERS, HAMMETT AND COPPOLA,
HAMMETT AND THE HARD-BOILED
THE DRAFTING OF THE DRAUGHTSMAN'S CONTRACT
STORM OVER THE FALKLANDS**

MONTHLY FILM BULLETIN

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On the Cover:

The author considers his calling:
Frederic Forrest in *Hammett*
(photograph courtesy of Artificial Eye)

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**Editor: Richard Combs
Associate Editor: Steve Jenkins
Assistant Editor: Jo Imeson**

Credit Abbreviations:

Cert—Certificate.
dist—Distributor.
p.c.—Production Company.
exec. p.—Executive Producer.
p.—Producer.
assoc. p.—Associate Producer.
p. sup.—Production Supervisor.
p. manager—Production Manager.
2nd Unit d.—2nd Unit Director.
asst. d.—Assistant Director.
sc—Script.
adapt—Adaptation.
dial—Dialogue.
ph—Photography.
col—Colour Process.
camera op—Camera Operator.
anim—Animation.
sp. ph. effects—Special Photographic Effects.
sup. ed—Supervising Editor.
ed—Editor.
p. designer—Production Designer.
a.d.—Art Director.
set dec—Set Decorator.
sp. effects—Special Effects.
m—Music.
m.d.—Music Director.
cost—Costumes.
choreo—Choreography.
sd—Sound.
sd. ed—Sound Editor.
sd. rec—Sound Recording.
comm—Commentary.
l.p.—Leading Players.
f.p.s.—Frames Per Second.

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Given the story's claim to a basis in truth (though what self-respecting horror movie can nowadays dispense with such a claim?), *The Entity*'s formulary aspect is doubly disturbing, as though the thing itself had been observing trends in the movie market and come up with a combination guaranteed to get it on the screen: an invisible macho rapist violating a single working mother in Southern California. Frank DeFelitta's screenplay, taken from his own 'true' novel, dutifully surrounds Carla with a supporting cast from any B-horror flick: a psychiatrist who argues earnestly for a rational interpretation (Sneiderman may look modern, object to smoking, say "fuck" a lot and drive a late-model Volkswagen, but is otherwise straight out of the 1950s); a boyfriend who sees the attacks as rendering Carla unfit to be his wife; and a team of daffy parapsychologists who look as though they may at any moment decide to play it all for laughs, but are nevertheless on hand to provide the requisite note of religious awe ("Hang in there, Joe", comments one as the experiment gets under way. "And pray" adds Dr. Cooley thoughtfully).

The plot is equally full of loose ends: how, for example, does Carla manage to hide from

Jerry the appalling bruises she shows to Sneiderman? Why is the total destruction of Cindy's apartment never referred to again, since it is plainly the work of a force infinitely stronger than Carla? And would the parapsychologists really walk out on Carla pre-midnight, muttering, "If you'll excuse us, Mrs. Moran . . ."? The nature of the attacks is also a highly ambiguous, not to say exploitative, approach to certain areas of sexuality, notably wife-battering and the implication that Carla may encourage and even, in some way, enjoy her defilement. But leaving aside such niceties of interpretation, the film barrels its way through events, helped by a finely understated performance from Barbara Hershey and a highly skilled construction along the lines of basic cinematic effect. DeFelitta's screenplay has much of the genuine chill of his earlier *Audrey Rose*, and *The Entity*, despite all its formulary ingredients, actually works rather well. The attack in the bathroom, building from an ominous series of strange angles of Carla relaxing in the tub, via a door quietly closing, to her being jerked round the room by her invisible assailant, is neither very profound nor very pleasant, but it is well put together.

NICK RODDICK

The Evil Dead

U.S.A., 1982

Director: Samuel M. Raimi

Cert—(not yet issued). *dist*—Palace Pictures. *p.c*—Renaissance Pictures. *exec. p*—Robert G. Tapert, Bruce Campbell, Samuel M. Raimi. *p*—Robert G. Tapert. *asst. p*—George Holt. *sc*—Samuel M. Raimi. *ph*—Tim Philo. In colour. *2nd Unit ph*—Joshua M. Becker. *sp. ph. effects*—Bart Pierce. *post-opticals*—Dynamic Film Lab. *ed*—Edna Ruth Paul. *asst. ed*—Joel Cohen. *a.d*—(not credited). *m*—Joe LoDuca. *m. ed*—Sheb Wooley. *sp. make-up effects*—Tom Sullivan. *sd. ed*—Joseph R. Masefield. *asst. sd. ed*—Dolores Elliott. *sd. rec*—John Mason, (m.) Ed Wolfrum. *sd. re-rec*—Mel Zelniker. *p. assistant*—Don Campbell. (There is evidence to suggest that many of the above credits may be spurious.) *l.p*—Bruce Campbell (*Ash*), Ellen Sandweiss (*Cheryl*), Betsy Baker (*Linda*), Hal Delrich (*Scott*), Sarah York (*Shelly*). 7,616 ft. 85 mins. *Original running time*—86 mins.

Tennessee. Ash, Linda, Scott, Shelly and Cheryl, planning to spend the weekend in a cabin, travel to a remote area where an unseen demon lurks in the woods. In the cabin's cellar, the youngsters discover an ancient book bound in human skin and a tape-recording left by an archaeologist. The latter had unwittingly used the book to summon a pack of Sumerian demons, who possessed his wife and could only be exorcised by dismemberment of the host. Venturing into the woods, Cheryl is molested by possessed vines and hysterically persuades Ash to drive her to a town. But a vital bridge has been wrecked in a storm, and Cheryl, now possessed, attacks her friends, forcing them to confine her in the cellar. Shelly also comes under the demonic influence and tries to kill Ash and Scott, who kill her with an axe and bury the apparently still living remains. Scott tries to escape on foot, but Ash remains

with Linda, who is herself infected. Thinking he has killed her in a struggle, Ash buries Linda, but she erupts from the grave and has to be decapitated with a spade. Scott staggers back to the cabin and dies, only to be resurrected. Cheryl escapes from the cellar and the two demons repeatedly assault Ash. Noticing that the demons smoulder when the book is near the open fire, Ash throws it into the flames. Cheryl and Scott disintegrate as the demons burst out of them. At dawn, Ash steps out of the cabin and is overwhelmed by the unseen demon.

Although the screeching possesseees here recall Dario Argento, and their messy,

startling fates evoke the dread Lucio Fulci, *The Evil Dead* is more successful than its Italian precursors. Acknowledging that narrative economy is as important as spectacular putrefaction, Samuel M. Raimi has turned his mish-mash of horror-comic familiars, *Exorcist*-style levitation and possession, and undigested chunks of Lovecraft lore into an enjoyable, catch-all rollercoaster ride through the splatter genre. The film opens with a flourish of omens that clearly signpost horrors to come: the dangerous old bridge that connects the characters to the outside world crumbles as it is crossed; a subjective-camera demon crashes through the woods; a torn poster for *The Hills Have Eyes* decorates the cellar; and endlessly swirling dry-ice fog gives way to a crackling storm which punctuates the archaeologist's tape with ominous rumbles. Raimi continues to pander to genre cognoscenti throughout, with deliberately flat dialogue ("I know now that my wife has become host to a Kandarian demon") and specific borrowings from sources as unlikely as *Orphée* (the rippling mirror) and as obscure as *Quatermass II* (a burst pipe disgorging blood).

Such knowingness might prove irritating if *The Evil Dead* were nothing more than the sum total of its *hommages*, but Raimi displays a distinct talent for organising his shock effects. The film's EC-style sick humour fully emerges in its reversal of recent genre clichés: the macho Ash is reduced to a display of whimpering collapse in the Jamie Lee Curtis manner, while the womenfolk change from vulnerable victims into giggling witches, as much given to high-pitched, infantile taunts ("We're going to get you!") as actual murderous attacks. After the final display of special effects (which goes as far beyond the similar finale of *The Devil's Rain* as that had surpassed the comparatively tame dissolution of Hammer's *Dracula*), the film provides a headlong, last-minute shock which neatly caps the more graphic arboreal rapes and cannibal gnawings hitherto inflicted on the doomed intruders.

KIM NEWMAN



Intimations of mortality in 'The Evil Dead'.