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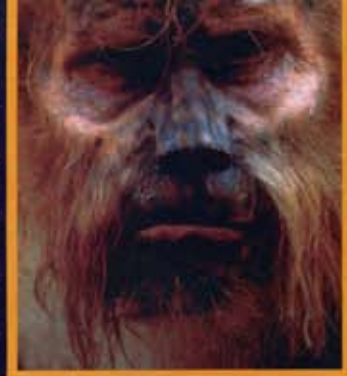
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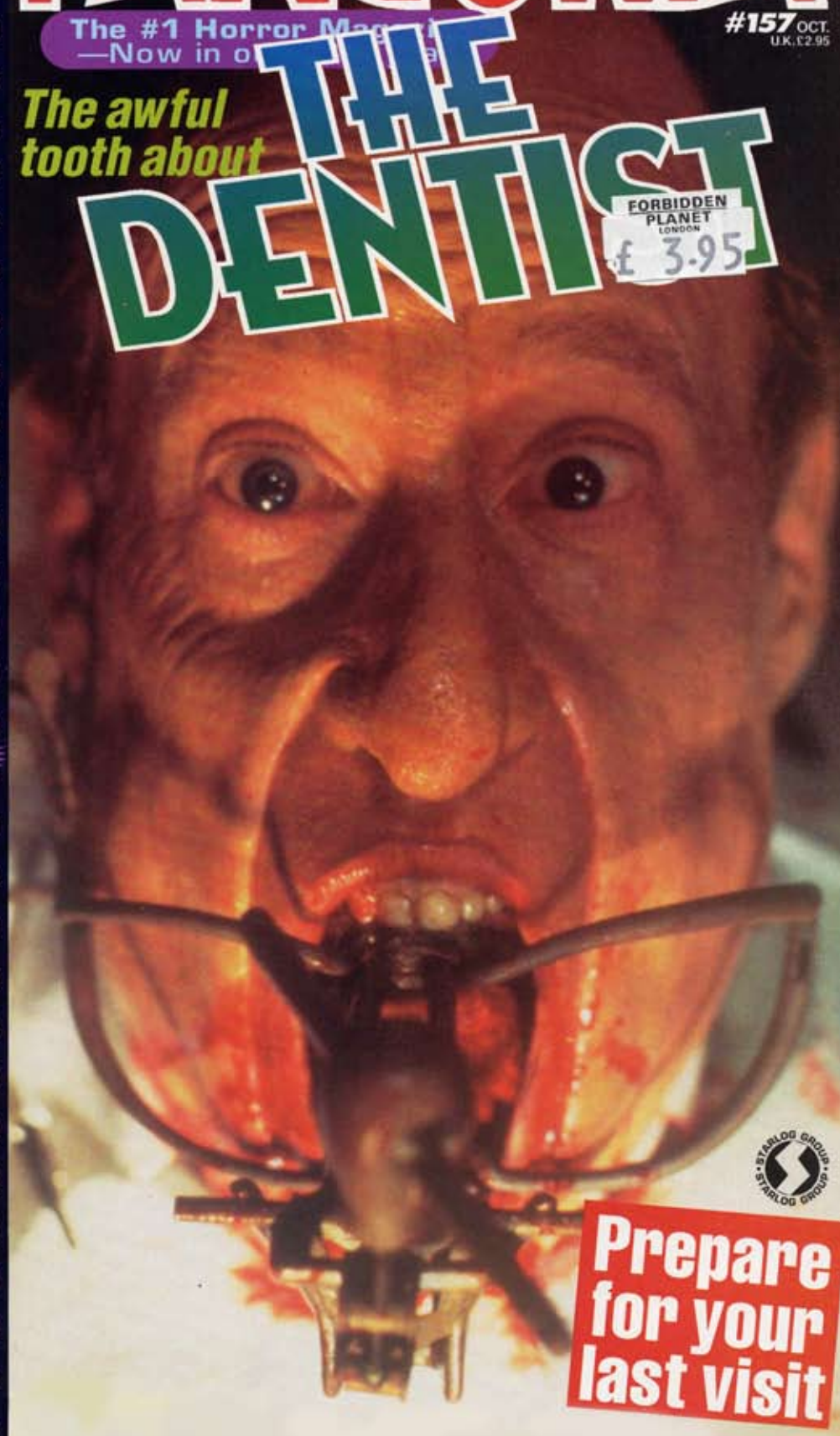
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EVIL ED



"You mean I was only supposed to cut the director's film?" stammers Evil Ed (Johan Rudebeck).

Here's a switch—a movie that says taking the violence out of horror films can lead to madness and murder.

During the early '80s in Sweden, a rather strange event occurred involving a film censor and a few graphic horror movies. After spending days and days snipping all the cool, gory parts out of those films day after day, the censor slowly went insane.

Some may say the bloody flicks corrupted this man. Others may argue the censor had a few screws loose already. But the one thing good friends Anders Jacobsson, Göran Lundström, Anders Ek and Kaj Steveman knew was that this tale would one day provide a great starting point for a horror movie.

"There's been a long-term movement in Sweden against censorship—they've destroyed a lot of good movies," says Jacobsson. "Things have gotten a little better recently. *Casino* only had to have two cuts, but it was much worse in the '80s. They cut everything. You didn't go to the cinema because everything was missing. You had to see the stuff on videos from the black market."

Jacobsson and his crew knew they could strike a very raw nerve with this subject and also have a lot of fun in the process. Gathering some loose money together, nabbing a 16mm camera, utilizing their collective video and filmmaking knowledge and embellishing that true-life story to the extreme, the team created *Evil Ed*, a very creepy and funny gross-out horror movie that pays homage to the very films they grew up worshipping.

"We're big fans of Sam Raimi, so this movie is a celebration of him and other filmmakers like John Carpenter and Wes Craven," says Jacobsson, who took on the roles of director, co-writer, cameraman and editor of the film. "We had been working on another movie we had been trying to do for several years, and shot about 10 minutes of it before we ran out of money. So with *Evil Ed*, we tried to make it very simple. We

wanted to do a film where it would just take place in a house with only three people in the cast. We got our friends together, and every actor and crew person did the movie for free." Mixing the graphic outrageousness of the *Evil Dead* and *Re-Animator* films, *Evil Ed* (originally titled *The Censor*) took nearly three and a half years to complete. True to its video inspiration, the movie makes its U.S. debut this month on tape from A-Pix.

"We had to make a horror film—it was the easiest thing for us to do," says Jacobsson, who is also a longtime Fango reader. The result of his and his cohorts' efforts is a refreshing, tongue-in-cheek fable of an editor of art-house films, Edward Svensson (Johan Rudebeck), who is hired by sleazy movie producer Sam Campbell (Olof Rhodin) to cut out all the graphic scenes from his successful horror film series *Loose Limbs*, which chronicles the misadventures of the diabolical Dr. Wrench. As Edward works

By ANTHONY C. FERRANTE

the UNKINDEST CUTS

diligently cutting the film to shreds at Campbell's small, reclusive house, the incessant onslaught of violence he watches over and over (along with some occasional "beaver rape scenes") soon starts to take its toll. Slowly Edward begins to let his vivid hallucinations get to him, sending him into a blood-hungry madness where he wants to give everybody "final cut."

"It's completely impossible to do a film like this in Sweden," says Jacobsson. "They only make really bad comedies or extremely serious stuff like Bergman's movies. Those are the only two things that work; everything in between they don't touch. So it's very funny in some ways to be in the middle wanting to make this film."

Since the money was coming out of their own pockets, Jacobsson and friends were savvy enough to realize that the market for a subtitled Swedish horror movie would be incredibly limited, so they took the daring step of trying to make the entire film look American. "We didn't want anyone to notice," he says. "If you see the movie, it looks like we filmed somewhere up north or in Canada."

Limiting the exterior locations was one of the ways they were able to control and create this more "American" look. "The house we shot in wasn't a typical Swedish house," notes Jacobsson. "It's this crazy building some guy built. We also avoided road signs and, because we

shot it in the wintertime, it was always cold and snowy outside. We tried to shoot most of it indoors anyway."

Another important tactic was having the Swedish actors perform their lines in English and then hiring American actors from a local radio station to dub more convincing dialogue later on in postproduction. "It took a long time to dub the movie," says the director. "It was funny, because everybody wanted to be in this film even though we couldn't pay them. So we were able to get the voices dubbed for free from this radio station. We lucked out, because we don't really have many American actors in Sweden." *Texas Chainsaw Massacre 2*'s Bill Moseley also makes a "special voice appearance" in the movie.

As with most of the production, which the filmmakers knew had to offer a feast for the eyes, a great deal of detail went into the

special makeup and creature FX, which were created by Lundström, who also produced and co-scripted the film. Inspired by Tom Savini's *Grande Illusions*

Therese Malmer fills the stereotypical bimbo role for the film-within-a-film, *Loose Limbs*.



For a Swedish movie, *Evil Ed*'s carnage is surprisingly convincing, and no one's more shocked than actor Dan Malmer.

book, Lundström had always wanted to create special makeup but also had the desire to make films—which, he observes, gave him the best of both worlds on this project.

"Being one of the writers, I was able to actually sit down and figure out what had or hadn't been done before and try to get it into the story," says Lundström. "It was a weird challenge. I would decide what I wanted to do and if

"Fridge Fritz" never has to go far for a midnight snack.

it was something like an animatronic puppet, I would just put it in there. Also, because I knew how the effects would work, Anders let me direct all those shots. In Sweden, everything comes down to makeup effects, and it comes out badly because they don't know how to get the effects right. It was actually interesting just to prove to people here in Sweden that you could do big effects on a movie and make them look really good."

Evil Ed certainly offered some refreshing opportunities to do both creature and splatter FX,

though Lundström acknowledges that he could have done without all the gore. "I didn't like the idea of doing splatter in the film," he says. "When we first started the project it didn't have any splatter, but ultimately I was convinced to put it in." This included one major scene where a character gets his head completely blown off with a shotgun in a gruesome display perhaps only matched by *Dawn of the Dead* and *Scanners* in terms of sheer over-the-top gore.

"That was thrown into the film at the last moment and was a real simple effect," says Lundström. "We had to get to the ending of the movie. It was getting larger and larger, but we needed to finish the movie and wanted to do something really big, exaggerated and fun. So we made this head that we could shoot from one angle; we made a cast of the actor's face, decided which angle to shoot from and poured dental acrylic into the alginate cast of his head, resculpted the eyes and put a wig on it. Then we blew it up."

A few of the other FX Lundström is particularly proud of include a mischievous little gremlin Ed finds in his refrigerator ("It looks really expensive



The doctor's here—but now it looks like you'll need a priest.



instead of some silly kind of animatronic"), a mouthy female doctor in the mental hospital with exaggerated vampirelike teeth ("That one surprised me, because I didn't expect it to look that good on screen") and a character simply called Bandage Face. "That's actually me playing that character," Lundström notes. "It was a makeup I did years before that Anders wanted me to put in the film. I think that's the best effect, because it looks very different and original."

The biggest dilemma faced by *Evil Ed*'s makers was time, when both Jacobsson and Lundström realized that the project was becoming the movie that would never end. "It took so long because we weren't able to work on the film all the time," says Jacobsson. "Everybody had other jobs on the side, so we were doing it on weekends and holidays."

Initially shot over a period of four weeks in late 1992, the movie was subsequently edited and then rethought nearly a year

Director Anders Jacobsson (left) and producer/FX creator Göran Lundström wonder what's so complex about the White Demon role that performer Kelly Tainton has to read the script again.



"Being one of the writers, I was able to sit down, figure out what hadn't been done before and try to get it into the story."

—Göran Lundström, producer/FX creator

later in order to beef up the ending. This resulted in extensive reshooting, as well as creating a great new *Re-Animator*-esque pre-title sequence. "We wanted to put more action in," says Jacobsson. "We thought this movie should be crazier. It's a funny movie. When we cut it together, though, it wasn't as funny as we wanted it to be, and it was even a bit slow."

Thus, an elaborate 10-minute sequence in which *Evil Ed* indulges in a little standard stalk-and-slash through the house, terrorizing his wife and daughter, was drastically reduced in the final cut. The new second half takes on a *Terminator*-style quality as the character is brought to the mental ward of a hospital and wreaks havoc, leading to a battle with several gun-toting, military-minded folks.

"The original ending just felt a little boring," admits Jacobsson. "There's a lot of action and violence in there, and we just felt it went too far. It didn't work. We thought it would ruin the whole picture. Actually, it wasn't even that the sequence was bad so much as it was the only part we

could cut down where the movie would still make sense."

This kind of kamikaze filmmaking did take its toll after awhile. Lundström had relocated to Los Angeles for a year to work at other FX shops after completing the first round of shooting. Upon returning to Sweden, he was surprised that there was still more work to be done on the film. Nevertheless, the experience proved more educational for everyone involved than any expensive film school could have been. According to Jacobsson, very often the fact of not knowing how to do something or having the money to do it right resulted in creative problem solving that gave the film its distinctive look.

"We had to do everything ourselves, even the pyrotechnics," the director says. "We didn't know anybody who could do squibs either, so instead we used powder. When you see people getting shot, lightning shoots out of their bodies, which is more interesting because it's a horror film."

Of course, sometimes they found themselves dealing with crew members who were ready to

go to extremes with their gung-ho attitudes. "We had a stuntman who was really crazy," Jacobsson recalls. "He wanted to jump from this window that was 20 floors up and land on a little box with a pillow. It was totally nuts. Then he wanted to burn himself up by covering himself in rubber cement and lighting it. He told us that if it would work better, 'Maybe I can use gasoline instead.' We told him no for both of those, because of course we didn't want a dead man on our hands."

One of the most enjoyable aspects of *Evil Ed* was actually creating the movie-within-a-movie segments of *Loose Limbs*, a classic parody of every bad slasher cliché you've ever seen. "The great thing about shooting those was that we didn't have to be so perfect," says Jacobsson. "If Dr. Wrench was using an ax in one direction and it didn't cut so smooth to the next scene, it was OK, because it was supposed to be a bad film with a lot of mistakes."

Ultimately, the success of *Evil Ed* (which cost 500,000 Swedish crowns—the equivalent of \$80,000 in American currency) lies in its love of the genre, a fact that didn't go unnoticed by England's Smart Egg Pictures. They picked it up for distribution, took it to the American Film Market in Los Angeles this past spring and received a great response from foreign buyers, selling it off to



Forced to censor others' splatter footage, Ed decides to shoot some of his own.

it. It's hard enough to make a good movie, and I think we can make really good films in Sweden.

"Besides, when I first visited America, I felt like I was walking in a movie," he continues. "Everything felt familiar because I had seen it before. I know that if I were to do a film in the U.S., every place I go would have already been shot. You can't find a new environment."

As *Evil Ed* heads into release throughout the world, the question inevitably comes up: Will it inspire the same type of censorship and violence-trimming that the movie successfully parodies? "We really haven't thought about it," admits Jacobsson. "It's pretty hard to cut anything away. Besides, if you're doing a horror or fantasy movie, it can't really be all that dangerous for people

most of the major territories.

"The film did very well," says Tom Sjöberg, director of international sales for Smart Egg. "The reason is that this movie has a hook, which many of the mainstream horror movies really don't

And even though Ed is dead by the end of the film, Jacobsson notes that this small story problem can be remedied rather easily. "We have various solutions to that, and one of them is that we don't have to explain it," he

"It's impossible to do a film like this in Sweden. They only make really bad comedies or stuff like Bergman's movies."

—Anders Jacobsson, director/co-writer

have. Some countries are naturally worried about the violence in the movie, but we'll have a softer version for those territories. Everyplace else really doesn't object to it. They call it entertainment violence. They see it as part of the story and not there for its own sake."

The response was so good that by the time the market was over, the money generated from foreign sales covered the entire budget of *Evil Ed* and then some. With this money on the way, Jacobsson says it will be used for another film, possibly a sequel to *Evil Ed*. "We would do a better movie with the sequel, because we'd have more money," says the director. "It would be too boring to tell the same story over again, so we would probably make it much more of a monster-action movie."

points out. "It's a horror movie. Ed will wake up, put himself back together and go from there."

While many filmmakers who start off in the no-budget filmmaking realm often want to move on to bigger Hollywood fare, Jacobsson notes that he's a little more realistic. Much like New Zealander Peter Jackson, he's more interested in staying in his native land to continue making films than venturing out just yet. "It's so much cheaper to do it in Sweden," he says. "When you're shooting on the streets, you don't have to have permits. Besides, what we would like to do is have a small group of friends and make movies all the time if we have enough money to do it. I don't think I want to try to get into the big business of Hollywood, because you lose the fun aspect of



Rudebeck wonders if Lundström will let him get a drink of that stuff.

who watch it. It's crazy. It's fantasy. You can't be destroyed by it. I think a *Die Hard* movie is probably more dangerous than something like *Evil Ed*. It actually makes no sense that they go after splatter movies to censor. They're so far over the top anyway. Only if you're really crazy, maybe you might get inspired by it—but that's not really our problem, is it?"