

## MOVIE REVIEWS



### Laser Disc Reviews MOVIES

#### Army of Darkness(1992)

Theatrical Presentation	Time	SOUND	Aspect Ratio	Cameras	Negatives
Army of Darkness (1992)	87min	Dolby Surround	1.66:1	Clairmont Camera	35 mm

#### Army of Darkness 1993

REFERENCE SYSTEM	PICTURE	SOUND	PLOT/STORY	WOW FACTOR	OVERALL FINAL
Army of Darkness (1993) <a href="#">[41603]</a>	4.0	3.5	4.0	2.5	3.5

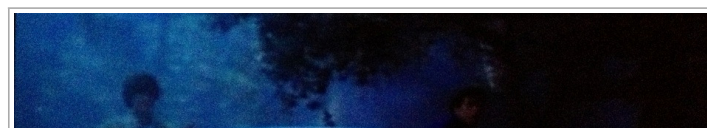
Reviewed by invenio

October 1, 2013



#### PREVIEW

If you are a fan of cult movies then I am sure you are already familiar with the third installment of the Evil Dead series. Sam Raimi is now one of Hollywood's most famous and successful directors but prior to making big budget movies like the Spiderman Trilogy (with Tobey Maguire) and Oz the Great and Powerful, he was getting a niche fan base with the Evil Dead series as well as movies such as Darkman (which proceeded Army of Darkness). Bruce Campbell plays our hero Ash. Bruce Campbell is known for being one of the most famous B movie actors of all time. He has appeared in small roles in just about every Sam Raimi movie ever made, and now stars in the hit series Burn Notice on the USA Network.





I acquired this laserdisc in a larger bulk purchase (actually two copies) and paid a total of about \$1.50 per disc. There are a fair number of these discs floating around and can be had for a few dollars. "So shop smart, shop S-mart. YOU GOT THAT?"

#### ARMY OF DARKNESS AT-A-GLANCE:

	DATE RELEASED	PRICE	LENGTH	SIDES/DISCS	PICTURE	AUDIO
Army of Darkness (1993) <a href="#">[41603]</a>	08-11-1993	19.98	87min	2 Sides 1 Disc	1.66 LTB	Digital Stereo Dolby Surround



#### PICTURE

**Rating: 4.0**

Disclaimer about screenshots: All screenshots were taken with an iphone 4S of either actual playing video or screen paused with CLD-97. The downside (in addition to low light levels) is that with video playing there is blurring due to motion, with paused video, the CLD-97 buffers the frame in digital memory at a significantly reduced resolution. Unfortunately, both methods severely decrease picture quality.

So before we start commenting on picture quality, I should note that Army of Darkness has never looked very good on any format. It was not a low budget film (\$13 million), but does not have the transfer of a typical block buster movie of that era. I also own a DVD copy and that was not an eye pleaser either. On "www.blu-ray.com" the newly released high definition version only scored a 3/5 on video quality. The fact that most of the movie plays in either dark scenes or at night makes the situation that much worse. There is not a lot of background detail and a substantial amount of smearing occurs due to a lot of quick camera movements (Sam Raimi was a pioneer of "shaky cam"). Although the picture is all around soft, it is actually served well via the inherent analog format of laserdisc. In contrast, the DVD version suffers from copious banding, macro-blocking and other digital artifacts that make it painful to watch on a quality display (the DVD version was also a relatively low bitrate single layer pressing).

One should note that the movie is presented in a 1.66:1 aspect ratio (officially widescreen, but just barely). This means that unless you want to distort the picture, you will need to display it in "fullscreen" mode on your 16:9 high definition display. If you put it into anamorphic widescreen mode, the top and bottom of the actual movie frame will be cut.

Overall, it is right in the middle of overall quality, not as bad as early 80's releases, but certainly not as good as most movies released in the late 90's. For this it earns a respectable 3/5.



#### SOUND

**Rating: 3.5**

The disc offers a very pleasant Dolby Surround mix (English). The dialog is centered and surround channels are used moderately but effectively. There are a few explosions which extended to a moderate level into the





low end and overall the mix had a ample dynamic range. The sound of Ash's "boomstick" was substantially prominent. No audio artifacts, dropouts, or errors are present to the best of my knowledge. The movie has a very nice score by Joseph

LoDuca that fits the tone of the movie quite well. The overall quality of the sound is better than the video and thus scores a 3.5.



## PLOT/STORY

### Rating: 4.0

As mentioned before, this is the 3rd movie of the Evil Dead trilogy. However, it is very unlike the previous two films which were geared heavily to an adult only audience. Evil Dead 1 and 2 were rather gory horror movies. Army of darkness quickly pulls our protagonist out of the "isolated cabin in the forest" location and into the 1300's, medieval Europe. Perhaps the only bigger shift than location, is

the tone of the movie. Army of Darkness is more or less a comedy with some dark themes.

Ash is a bumbling idiot that pulls his knowledge, assets from modern day, and a new found courage into a character that ultimately saves the day from a terrible evil (that ultimately he releases due to his lack of ability to remember short phrases). Needless to say, by the end of the hour and half movie, Ash saves the day and gets to kiss the girls,... "Hail to the king, baby."

I should also mention something about the ending, no spoilers so you can keep on reading. Army of Darkness was shot with two endings. The original ending is more creative, but ends on a downer. The studio reportedly made Sam Raimi change this to the "happy ending." This laserdisc is the "happy ending" version. As a fan of the movie, I do not view one as better than the other. Both are entertaining in their own way and are very different. I view this like ice cream, one is vanilla, the other is chocolate. Almost opposites, but both delicious.

Overall, this is a funny, entertaining, and unique movie. It has developed a strong cult following and I will freely admit that I am one of these fans. I give a tempered 4.0 rating for the story.



## WOW/FACTOR

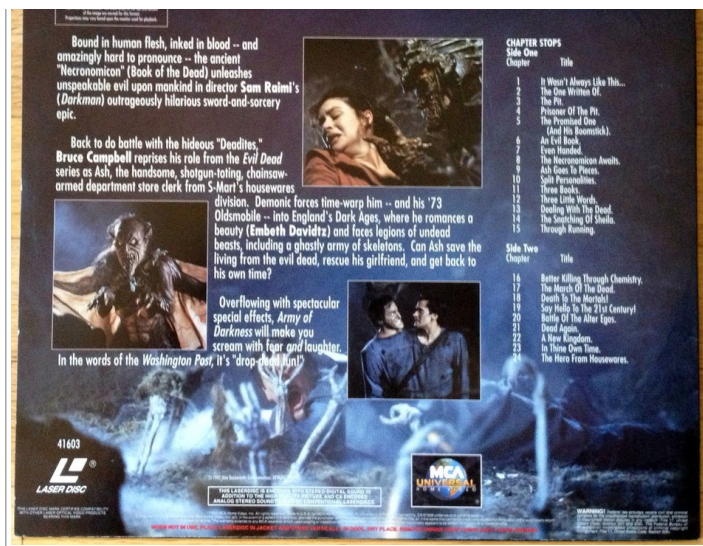
### Rating: 2.5

Army of Darkness is packaged on a single disc. Side 1 is CLV and Side 2 CAV. The cover is simple but effective, featuring our hero and love interest in a stylized drawn image. Nothing fancy, typical single disc release with some nice cover art and back cover with small pictures and descriptive text. I would say this is a "run of the mill" standard release and deserves a mediocre 2.5.

### Overall Final 3.5

In conclusion. This is a funny and entertaining movie that does not take itself seriously. It has a "unique feel" and the overall quality is acceptable. If you are a Bruce Campbell or Sam Raimi fan, this is a must own. If not, it's certainly worth a few dollars that it usually goes for. Overall 3.5.





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