

The Brief History of *The Evil Dead* (1981)

The Evil Dead (1981) was created by childhood friends Sam Raimi and Robert Tapert, who wanted to fulfill Sam's lifelong dream of becoming a filmmaker. Production was announced in December 1979, after it became news to Morristown, Tennessee, citizens that a horror movie was to be filmed there. The film was initially titled *The Book of the Dead* in the articles about it and was to be a film inspired by *The Omen* (1976) and *The Exorcist* (1973). Governor Ray Blanton was promoting "The Tennessee Film Board" at the time in hopes of bringing some of the then-blooming film industry to their state. Raimi has previously remarked that the townsfolk of Morristown were some of the kindest he had worked with at the time. By 1980, production had commenced. This 16mm, 85-minute-long film ended up costing \$400,000 to make. Before its success in the United States, *The Evil Dead* (1981) achieved great success in England. There was even praise from Stephen King, who said that it was "ferociously original." It premiered at the Cannes Film Festival in France on May 16, 1983, and was widely released in the United States on April 15, 1983. The film grossed an impressive \$2.4 million in the United States and Canada, and earned \$2.9 million worldwide. While *The Evil Dead* was not in the top ranks of the domestic box office, it had become an instant horror film cult classic. The year 1983 was not a particularly popular year for independent films; yet, this small-budget horror film managed to persist. The success of *The Evil Dead* (1981) opened doors for Raimi, leading to opportunities such as directing sequels, including *Evil Dead 2* (1987) and *Army of Darkness* (1992), and later, more mainstream projects, such as *Spider-Man* (2002), *Spider-Man 2* (2004), and *Spider-Man 3* (2007).