

The sequel from hell

By NORMAN WILNER

Call him Pinhead now.

Last year, when Clive Barker released his directorial debut *Hellraiser* on an unsuspecting world, the needle-brained minion of Hell was referred to only as the "Lead Cenobite", a mysterious torturer who seemed to enjoy being tortured. In fact, all of *Hellraiser's* demons ("though some would call us angels", the lead Cenobite remarked with an evil smile) enjoyed various horrors enacted upon themselves.

But they were all horrors with honour, mystic monstrosities that lurked just out of sight, adjacent to our world but not actually in it. They weren't even the real threat of *Hellraiser* just the pursuers of the human monster of the plot.

When *Hellraiser* was released, to a terrific box office reception (even some of the critics were nice to it), the film's North American distributor, New World Pictures, realized



Kirsty (Ashley Laurence) goes through hell to find her father.

that the viciously mutilated Cenobites were the real draw. Audiences looked past the twisted Gothic love triangle which made up the backbone of the film and waited for the appearances of the Cenobites.

Surprise! When New World commissioned a sequel, they wanted more of *Hellraiser's* ashen-faced villains, and decided to loosen up the Cenobites' attitude, and lighten the depressing ambience of the first film by giving us a look at the care and feeding of Cenobites in the new sequel, *Hellbound: Hellraiser II*.

It doesn't work.

As an audience, we might not want to know how the minions of Hell are born; the insinuation — put forth in *Hellraiser* — that they have

always been is enough. In the first five minutes of *Hellbound*, after the obligatory recap of *Hellraiser*, we find out that the Cenobites are in fact made, not born. And worse, we find out that the leader, now referred to in the credits as Pinhead, has only been around since World War II.

Hellbound starts out promisingly, with an update on the first film's only survivor, Kirsty (Ashley Laurence, who makes revulsion and shock an art), now in a mental hospital just a few hours after the events depicted in *Hellraiser* took place.

The chief surgeon, Dr. Channard (Kenneth Cranham), soon proves himself to be a few bricks short of a load. It seems that the Lament Configuration, the puzzle box that summons the Cenobites (and the *Hellraiser* of the title) is only one of several. Channard is interested in these puzzles and has another patient, young Tiffany (Imogen Boorman), devoted to solving them (she never speaks, but otherwise appears to be completely normal). With her help, and some grotesque manipulation of one of the first film's dead, Channard manages to unleash the forces of Hell.

The last half of *Hellbound* is on the Cenobite's turf. Kirsty is involved after seeing a vision of her skinned father (killed at the end of *Hellraiser*) appear in her room, writing a cryptic message on her wall: "I am in hell. Help me."

So Kirsty goes to hell, just as executive producer/story writer Clive Barker promised when interviewed last year. It's an interesting, fast-paced trip, directed with competence by first-timer Tony Randel. But without Barker at the helm (the screenplay, by Peter Atkins, was based on Barker's outline), *Hellbound* doesn't have quite the same look as *Hellraiser*, rather important to a sequel that follows the original as closely as this.

Hellbound looks like it was thrown together in a hurry (as it must have been, to be ready for release exactly a year after the original's debut) by creative talents who didn't have much understanding of what made the original so successful. The mystery of the Cenobites made them so engrossing that when they practically hand you an autobiography, they go from being enigmatic demons to people who happen to be heavily (and I mean heavily) into S&M.

When *Hellbound* is released to the Ontario public, it will most likely be

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Love, madness, gaspacho and Seconal

By MICHAEL REDHILL

Pedro Almodovar's latest film about the world of relationships deserves all its awards, including the John Labatt's Award for Most Popular Film, and second place in the Four Seasons Critics Award.

In *Women on the Verge*, Almodovar puts love and related diseases back into the realm of the irrational.

The story is about Pepa (Carmen Maura in a flawless performance), recently abandoned by her playboy

lover, Ivan. Heartbroken, Pepa tries to track him down, and when that fails, holds his luggage hostage and lies in wait for him with his favorite gaspacho spiked with Seconal. Her blue idyll is interrupted first by a frantic friend who has accidentally bunked down with a Shiite terrorist, and then by a couple who want to rent her penthouse. The couple turn out to be Ivan's son and his bovine fiancée, who, distracted by all the bickering, retires to the kitchen to

relax with a glass of cold gaspacho. The plot uncoils like a sleeping snake and uncovers all manner of mania, and in the process, actually manages to reaffirm the beauty in the madness. Almodovar's skill lies not only in drawing paroxysms of laughter from his audience, but in his ability to dig into the middle of us, directly to the parts that share the sickness, the parts that cannot deny we have felt the same kind of desperation.

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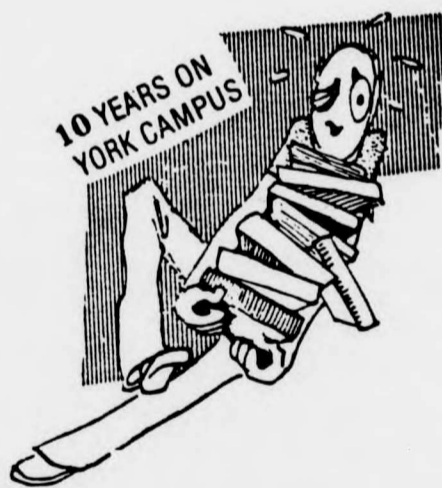
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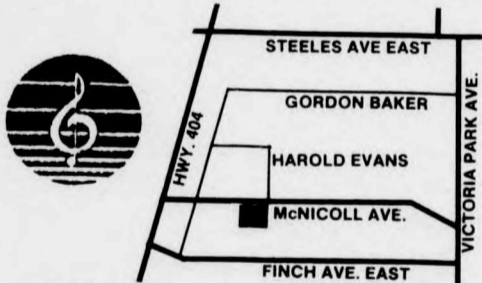
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