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Elite Entertainment presents
Horror (2002)

"Your mother sold her soul to your father. Do you know that, Grace?"
 - Reverend Salo, Sr. (The Amazing Kreskin)

Review By: Rich Rosell 
Published: December 11, 2003

Stars: Lizzy Mahon, Danny Lopes
Other Stars: The Amazing Kreskin, Vincent Lambert, Christie Sanford, Jessica Pagan, Raine Brown, Felissa Rose, Chris Farabaugh, Kevin Kenney
Director: Dante Tomaselli

MPAA Rating: R for (gore, violence)
Run Time: 01h:16m:01s
Release Date: May 27, 2003
UPC: 790594666620
Genre: horror



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Style Grade	Substance Grade	Image Transfer Grade	Audio Transfer Grade	Extras Grade
A	B-	C+	B+	B

DVD Review

About three-quarters of the way through **Horror** (2002), one of the tormented characters screams out "This s*** can't be happening!" That about sums it all up in five words, and with his second film writer/director Dante Tomaselli has concocted a horror tale that does what so few can do, which is to not only create an off-balance, flippy-floppy nightmare where it is impossible to predict where the story is heading, but to scare the crap out of you at the same time.

The less said about the details of the plot the better, but suffice to say it relies on the convergence of two separate storylines, both of which are told with limited backstory or explanation (at least to a point), and as stranger and stranger events unfold the loose ends are tied up, then untied, but by then things have gotten really, really bad for the people in the story.

I made the mistake of reading the DVD backcover blurb, which revealed too much of the plot too soon, so I'll refrain from that same indiscretion here. All you really need to know is the story centers on a disturbing, murderous faith healer (Vincent Lambert, sporting a diabolic Stevie Ray Vaughn moustache), his heavily-masacred wife (Christie Sanford), a girl with weird visions (Lizzy Mahon), an aging faith healer (The Amazing Kreskin), a group of drug-addled teens (led by Danny Lopes), a freaky little ghost girl, and a creepy black goat with long horns. If that's not a cast of characters designed to give you the heebie-jeebies, then you're far more jaded and cynical than I.

I don't mind saying that there are moments of sheer visual genius in **Horror**, something that Tomaselli seems to have a natural knack for. He's still burdened with spotty acting from his cast, but the guy really has a feel for staging and capturing images that are dreamlike, off-kilter, and more often than not frightening, and on low-budget film it is doubly impressive. Even with that big buildup from me, I can see a film like this splitting horror fans right down the middle. No doubt some will find the repeated use of a menacing horned goat to be laughable, but I'll bet those are the same folks who said **The Ring** didn't creep them out.

The specifics of the plot are inconsequential when compared to the visual tapestry and skin-crawling punch of **Horror**. Shrieking jack-o-lanterns, violent thunderstorms, projectile vomiting, mysteriously slamming doors, and paintings that take on a life of their own are a few of things that Tomaselli uses to build the weirdness, and at one point he even hauls out an army of the undead just when things seem to be falling within reason. All of this truly great, atmospheric material makes such things like an overdone scene with Johnny Carson-era mentalist The Amazing Kreskin's character performing an extended version of what is essentially his stage act tolerable.

Tomaselli really nailed it this time. This is great, great stuff.

Note to fans of **Sleepaway Camp**: Cult icon Felissa Rose has a brief cameo near the end, and even gets to do a slight homage to her 1980s horror classic.

Rating for Style: A
Rating for Substance: B-

Image Transfer

	One
Aspect Ratio	1.85:1 - Widescreen
Original Aspect Ratio	yes
Anamorphic	no

Image Transfer Review: **Horror** is presented in a 1.85:1 nonanamorphic widescreen print, and its 16mm roots reveal the limitations of the format. Grain is a frequent nuisance, with some scenes looking pretty blocky. On the other hand, and I really want to stress this point, Tomaselli stages a number of truly gorgeous sequences that don't seem to fall victim to the grain issue, and it is during these moments you will really be scratching your head wondering how one scene can look so good, while others look so bad.

Colors are slightly muted, but remain largely consistent throughout the film. Black levels hold up better than is normally seen on most low-budget films, and **Horror's** couple of pivotal outdoor nighttime sequences show strong shadow delineation.

Image Transfer Grade: C+

Audio Transfer

	Language	Remote Access
Dolby Digital 5.1	English	yes

Audio Transfer Review: For a low-budget horror film, the 5.1 Dolby Digital audio mix is an impressive one. Tomaselli has intentionally built his film as some kind of disorienting, lopsided experience, and the sound mix really reflects that. Granted, much of the glory goes to ambient sounds and sudden music stingers, which move around all available channels to help generate the feeling of a bad dream. The attic sequence, when someone makes the mistake of venturing up there alone, is very, very well done in that regard.

Dialogue is reproduced rather weakly in comparison, and sounds comparatively flat and drab next to the score and unnatural sounds that Tomaselli used so extensively.

A Dolby Digital "show off your sound system" bumper plays before the feature, and is the one with the helicopter circling the movie theater, if you're into that kind of thing.

Audio Transfer Grade: B+

- Disc Extras**
- Animated menu with music
 - Scene Access with 24 cues and remote access
 - 1 Original Trailer(s)
 - 1 Other Trailer(s) featuring **Desecration**
 - 3 Featurette(s)
 - 1 Feature/Episode commentary by Dante Tomaselli
 - Packaging: Amaray
 - Picture Disc
 - 1 Disc
 - 1-Sided disc(s)
 - Layers: dual

- Extra Extras:**
- 1. Photo Gallery

Extras Review: Writer/director Dante Tomaselli offers up a full-length, scene-specific commentary, and though it often becomes one of those "here's character 'X' walking into a room" kind of tracks, his content actually does serve to explain some scenes and clarify the crazy goings-on a little more succinctly. Even with the frequent silent gaps, Tomaselli provides a more focused explanation for his film, and how it serves as the unofficial sequel to his 1997 debut **Desecration**. If you happen to check out **Horror**, you owe it to yourself to give Tomaselli's commentary a listen, if for nothing else to fill in the blanks.

Behind the Scenes (09m:37s) is a typical handheld video collection of footage, and includes fragments of comments from cast members and production crew. No major revelations here, but there are a few comments that do help explain the intent of one of the outdoor scenes that somehow flew over my head. *On the Set with the Amazing Kreskin* (012m:51s) is just what the title says it is, and gives the famous mentalist a few moments to stress that what he does isn't hypnotism, but actually power of suggestion. The segment wraps with footage of Kreskin supposedly actually causing cast members to fall to the floor as if paralyzed, and features comments from the participants to make it seem all the more legit. According to Kreskin, his big mass "power of suggestion" scene during chapter 17 is real. You decide. There is also an eleven minute clip from Tomaselli's creepy looking **Desecration**, from 1996.

In addition to a brief photo gallery and a couple of Tomaselli trailers (**Horror**, **Desecration**), there are a healthy 24 chapter stops, and there are no subtitles.

Extras Grade: B

Final Comments

Writer/director Dante Tomaselli shows himself to be one gloriously twisted individual, and he has brought his own undulating knot of creepy nightmares to life with **Horror**, a film that brings to mind the best moments of Lucio Fulci or Dario Argento.

Dramatically unsettling and laden with scenes that play out like bad dreams, **Horror** rises above its own occasionally clunky dialogue and flat line reads to pummel you with moments of dark beauty.

Highly recommended.

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