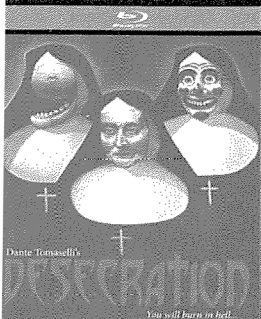


DESECRATION

Directed by Dante Tomaselli
(1999) Code Red Blu-ray



Industrious filmmaker/composer Dante Tomaselli followed the independent examples of John Carpenter and Sam Raimi before him by expanding his well-received short horror film "Desecration" to feature length for his full-fledged debut release. Code Red (with distribution by Kino Lorber) now debuts this micro-budget nightmare

on Blu-ray in its original form and with the option of an intriguing viewing alternative.

The story of *Desecration* quite deliberately functions as the merest of obligatory frameworks on which to hang a string of unsettling visions and incidents (cue Lucio Fulci: "It's a film of images . . ."), commencing with the mysterious bloody death of a young mother in front of her infant son Bobby; as discovered by Bobby's grandmother Matilda (Irma St. Paule). Cut to the future. Bobby (Danny Lopes) is now sixteen and still under Matilda's devoted care, but life in a strict Catholic school is pure hell to him. Except Bobby has no idea what Hell really is . . . yet. The delirium commences when an unlikely mishap involving a remote-control toy airplane results in Bobby inadvertently killing a nun: the priest at hand wastes no time (seriously—including actually *checking* on the nun in question) in haranguing his young charge about the eternal torment he's sure to be in store for. Sure enough, someone or something certainly seems eager to have Bobby take its place in the Inferno, and damned be anybody who gets in the way.

Desecration, as suggested, plays out as a dream, despite the efforts of others (most notably Bobby's crusty Italian grandfather, well played by Salvatore Paul Piro) to keep things down to earth. Tomaselli effectively indulges in set-pieces previously explored in the arena by the aforementioned Sam Raimi (vegetation grows wildly out of control and threatens to engulf a sleeping Bobby; various sharp objects rise of their own accord to impale unsuspecting cast members; etc.), but the aura of Catholic guilt and the violation of sacred iconography stake out their own territory in this familiar ground. It should come as no surprise that Tomaselli thanks his cousin Alfred Sole in the credits (Tomaselli was recently attached as director to an upcoming remake of Sole's earlier Catholic horror show *Alice, Sweet Alice*). Further benefiting *Desecration* is a remarkable performance by St. Paule as the devout steel will of Grandma Matilda endures a brutal supernatural beating.

While Kino apologizes for using an up-res video master for its Blu-ray transfer (due to the condition of the surviving materials), *Desecration* looks and plays more than appropriately for a project of its origins. As noted, the film is offered in its theatrical version with its original soundtrack intact (the director's 23-minute student version is also included as a bonus). But in between his subsequent films (*Horror*, *Satan's Playground*, *Torture Chamber*), Tomaselli composed and released a series of acclaimed electronic horror "soundtrack" albums; and the most popular among these ("Witches") is offered as an alternate soundtrack to *Desecration* itself. Of course this experiment does away with all of the spoken dialogue, but given the already surreal nature of the feature, many viewers may see this as an enhancement. A feature audio commentary by Tomaselli, a biographical featurette, a trailer and various stills round out the package.

Shane M. Dallmann