

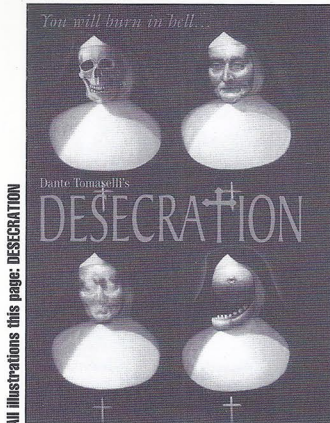


DESECRATION (1999)

Directed by Dante Tomaselli.

88 mins., approx.

DESECRATION is a surrealistic ghost story that concerns the severed relationship between a sixteen year-old boy and his long-time dead mother who committed suicide when he was a nipper. A hideous freak accident, in which the boy's remote controlled aircraft embeds itself into a nun's head (!), triggers a trail of weird paranormal happenings at his doomed Catholic boarding school, causes the undead Sister Madeline to rise from the earth on a wheel to drag the boy back to his mother and into eternal damnation. Along the way this beautifully shot first-time feature by writer/director Dante Tomaselli pays homage to likes of Argento and Murnau with stylised lighting, a very powerful soundtrack and impressive splattery effects. Highlights, apart from the awesome performance by the ancient Irma St. Paule as the boy's Italian Grandmother (who can also be seen in the likes of **12 MONKEYS**, **BAD LIEUTENANT**, **CUL-DE-SAC** and **THINNER**), include a jolting possessed scissors attack in which a nun is repeatedly hacked and slashed in painful detail, some blistering burn make-ups, the aforementioned frenzied model-plane attack and some bizarre sets that depict a nursery in Hell,



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complete with cages and a demonic jack-in-the-box. The zombieified nun make-ups are pretty cool too.

The film was shot on 16mm and Digital Video for a measly \$150,000 and has a high quality professional look - Tomaselli has film-making in his genes as he is the cousin of **COMMUNION** (aka. **ALICE SWEET ALICE**), (see UC6) and **TANYA'S ISLAND** (see this issue!) cult director Alfred Sole (who helped in securing part of the location shoot). Like Sole's **COMMUNION**, **DESECRATION** also deals with guilt-ridden Catholicism and repressed feelings - the pill-popping priest is a blast. The source for the movie came from Tomaselli's own 23 minute short also entitled **DESECRATION** which he made in 1996 (and part of it is included on the DVD). Just because the budget is low it doesn't mean that the dialogue has to be cheap - far from it, this is a great script with plenty of good lines and great delivery, "Some people are blessed, other are cursed" and an Italian take on **POLTERGEIST**, "She's-a-her-er!".

On the outside this has an arthouse feel and horror film collectors may have passed it by as such. They should, however, give it a chance as it is indeed a classy and damn scary piece of film-making with the kind of red stuff that even Fulci would've been proud of!

Where **DESECRATION** triumphs over most recent horror offerings is the fact that it depicts everyday people caught up in strange circumstances and doesn't feel the need to pose a bunch of vacant Beverly Hills teens as heroes and heroines.

Image's no-frills DVD release offer superb visual



and aural quality with a non-anamorphic 1.85:1 print and Dolby Digital stereo. The main score is handled by Tomaselli's brother, Michael who also provided over one hundred weird noise effects (his inspiration coming from the likes of John Carpenter and Devoche Model). **DESECRATION**'s dream-like look is the stuff of pure nightmares and Tomaselli has recently completed **HORROR** (2002) (demonic goings-on with a drug rehab group) and **SATAN'S PLAYGROUND** (2003) (involving the Jersey Devil in the Pine Barrens). I'm keen to see how he develops as a director. Both these projects feature returning cast members and the latter has Michael Berryman on board!

Paul J. Braun

Source Print: Image Entertainment DVD (USA)

DIVERSIONS (1975)

(aka. **Sex Express / Gefangenen Express**)

Directed by Derek Ford

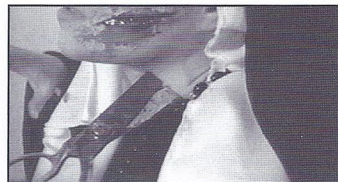
87 mins., approx.

Derek Ford's **DIVERSIONS** first reared its demented little head in London on a late 1975 double-bill with popular import **ANITA - SWEDISH NYMPHET**. In **ANITA**, doll-faced pin-up turned actress Christina Lindberg played a voluptuous but tormented nymphomaniac driven to dangerous sexual encounters with the rank, ageing businessman that she picks up at a train station. The film's most appalling scene shows its group-sex addled heroine as being so desperate as to offer herself to a gang of winos and drug-addicts in an abandoned warehouse. Compared to what her English counterpart gets up to in **DIVERSIONS** however, Anita's lifestyle looks positively healthy.

Just as Ford's other 1975 film **THE SEXPLORER** (see UC5p1) seems to have been conceived as an opportunity of turning little known starlet Monika Ringwald into the hottest, newest star, **DIVERSIONS** offered a chance of the spotlight to 19 year-old Heather Devey. And as far as 1975 was concerned the cute and sexy Miss Devey was too good to be true. Kitted up in a French maids uniform she headed up the screen in the threesome centrepiece to Joe McGrath's raunchy mini-movie **GIRLS COME FIRST**, did nude bit parts in **SECRETS OF A SUPERSTUD** and **I'M NOT FEELING MYSELF TONIGHT**, while her performance as a bisexual flirt in the cruelly driven **EROTIC INFERNO** showed promise as an actress. And she did all this in the space of twelve months. Graduating to leading lady status with **DIVERSIONS**, Heather proved herself the extremist of Britain's Sex Queens taking on everything that Ford could throw at her.

Heather plays a prisoner travelling by train, accompanied by two guards, a woman (Jacky Rhee) whom she's handcuffed to, and a man. The male guard is played by one time club bouncer and current 'Eastenders' actor Derek Martin. Bored by staring out of the window at fields and dreary suburbs, Heather starts dreaming up a series of wild fantasies, most of which involve her fellow train passengers. In the first one she's being chased around a barn by a poetic longhaired stud, who seems more interested in apples than our heroine. Giving up on Heather's game of hide and seek he gives a long, utterly ridiculous speech about apples. Before Heather comes out of her hiding place to have sex with him ("look at me I'm a bloody woman not an apple"), he's even considering making it with a bunch of apples arranged in a female form, what a hork! Afterwards he admits his fruity monologue was just a ruse so she'd have sex with him. She responds by throwing a crate of apples over him.

The second fantasy scenario, inspired by one of Heather's fellow travellers leering at her while reading a 'Vampirella' comic is the one that made **DIVERSIONS** notorious. In this Heather plays a worrime nurse in what appears to be Vietnam, depicted by a bunch of extras in soldier's uniforms riding down what is obviously an English country lane. Treating an injured patient in the back of a medical truck,



Nurse Heather is set upon by a bunch of mean-looking soldiers who shoot her patient to death agonising slow motion then proceed to gang-rape her over a jeep. The experience leaves her totally deranged to the extent that back in London she takes to picking up one night stands and murdering them. Timothy Blackstone (a smirking perennial of 1970s hardcore loops) and Heather make love on a couch, but the sex only triggers Heather's memory back to that gang rape. She produces a dagger and stabs Blackstone in the back. Timmy screams and drops to the floor dead. The accompanying sight of Heather rolling about on the couch naked while sensually rubbing blood over herself is perhaps the film's definitive image of eroticism uncomfortably mixed with grotesqueness. With an excited look on her face Heather starts masturbating with the murder weapon, then without missing a beat cuts off Blackstone's cock and begins licking and sucking it. After having a shower to get rid of all the

