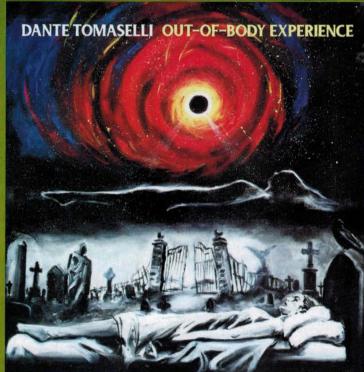
The Terror of Tomaselli

By CHRIS ALEXANDER

or nearly two decades, New Jersey-born horror multihyphenate Dante Tomaselli has been steadily creating a series of surreal. expressionist horror films that favor bizarre imagery and all-encompassing sound designs over traditional narrative structure and logic. That's what makes them so special: pictures like HOR-ROR, DESECRATION and TORTURE CHAMBER. And when Tomaselli isn't making movies, he's releasing movies-for-your-mind with his unique conceptual auralhorror CDs like THE DOLL, WITCHES. NIGHTMARE and OUT-OF-BODY EXPERI-ENCE. DELIRIUM caught up with Tomaselli (who, incidentally, is the cousin of ALICE, SWEET ALICE director Alfred Sole) to find out what makes him tick.



DELIRIUM: What was your first creative passion, sound or image? DANTE TOMASELLI: I think it really started around 1974, when I was 4-with me playing the family's electronic organ in the dining room. I'd sit on the floor, in a trance, and press different low and high notes, creating a gloomy, ominous mood. All the while, there was this chalkboard right above the organ, and I'd instinctu-ally draw haunted houses on rolling hills with graves, ghosts, flying bats and light-ning storms. My passion for both picture

and sound has always been completely equal. I can't imagine not scoring one of my films. Impossible.

While drawing haunted-house landscapes, I was probably unconsciously influenced by the classic Halloween soundscapes album SOUNDS TO MAKE YOU SHIVER, which I listened to endlessly. Of course, my mother bought me that LP. Mom knew I loved mysterious sounds and imagery and nurtured this love. My childhood room was decorated like a funhouse. Dad was dead-set against it and said I was bringing the house bad luck. I remember sitting at the electronic organ for hours on end, swirling in a whirlpool of images and sounds. Time would just melt away.

DELIRIUM: Your films are indeed very sensual, and as you say, the music is key. Do you ever build a film out of the music

phers; DESECRATION and HORROR had

from the outset. The hallucinogenic soundscapes live in my head nonstop while shooting. I don't even need to listen; they're so embedded in my psyche. Ultimately, not everything matches up with the actual footage and I end up rejecting a lot of cues and effects, but when everything clicks, it's magic!

DELIRIUM: Which one of your movies do you think most successfully marries the elements of what you hear and see?

TOMASELLI: TORTURE CHAMBER. I spent a full year sculpting the soundtrack to that one. I tried to give it a black mass feel, like something vicious, toxic and satanic is looming.

DELIRIUM: Are any of your concept CDs planned or designed to become features?

TOMASELLI: With my music, I do aim to create pictures, to produce images in the listener's mind, but I never want to dictate the music's visuals. Probably the best way to absorb OUT-OF-BODY EXPERIENCE is resting in a reclining chair on a balcony, gazing at the sky.

DELIRIUM: What are you working on now? What albums or films are on the horizon, and what's the status of your long-in-development ALICE, SWEET ALICE remake?

TOMASELLI: Since Cinedigm released TORTURE CHAMBER back in 2014, I've been composing music in my home recording studio. Musique concrete. Without a doubt, I'm ready to conjure a new feature with Michael Gingold as co-writer, called DAMNATION—previously titled THE DOLL. We've been sculpting the screenplay for a while and it has gone through many changes. My intentions? This is a pure horror movie devoted to scaring an audience. It's a supernatural shocker concerning a family in deep psychic pain, bathed in guilt and sin. DAMNATION depicts a violent haunting at a family-owned wax museum in Salem. I should be making an announcement on the production soon. ALICE, SWEET ALICE, also cowritten by Michael, is waiting. I have the rights to direct the remake of my cousin's '70s Catholic slasher, and I'm confident that will happen when everything is

TOMASELLI: On every one of my films, it doesn't matter if I change cinematogratotally different DPs. There's just a certain look. I always strive for each film to be beautiful, tactile and painterly. And for sure, sometimes the macabre music leads the way. If I fall in love with a particular soundscape I've created, you can bet that it will be featured somewhere in the film. There's no doubt, I do prefer the atmosphere to dominate. It's a little experimental and I've made my mistakes, but I even go so far as to score the bulk of my movies before they're even shot. It seems strange, but it allows me to set the tone



