

SCORING SESSION

Dante Tomaselli's HOLY TERROR ☿☿☿

Given that the four movies in writer/director Dante Tomaselli's filmography have carried the titles of **Desecration**, **Horror**, **Satan's Playground**, and **Torture Chamber**, it should come as no surprise that the New Jersey-born and bred shriekmaster has always been fond of intertwining his core themes of terror and religion. Nor should it be surprising that Tomaselli, whose skills (and skulls) set also includes composing the scores for his films, should also lurch towards those themes in his latest musical collection, the aptly named **Holy Terror**. Dedicated to his late cousin, production designer and director Alfred (1976's cult slashfest **Alice, Sweet Alice**) Sole, Tomaselli here ups the ante and the amperage of the electronic music he's been churning out throughout his career with a collection of a dozen tracks that mostly have spilled out as singles over the last few years. While the influences of such '70s/'80s socket-it-to-me electro-elites as Kraftwerk, Giorgio Moroder, Gary Numan, and The Normal are clearly prominent in Tomaselli's music, his deft use of, as he put it in a recent interview with KQEK.com's Mark Hasan, "precisely mutilated chips of whispers, thunderstorms, a violent earthquake" helps keep his music careening along a razor's edge of jump-out-of-your-earbuds audio ominousness. Helping articulate the hell-or-bust spirit of many of the selections here is a suitably menacing voice

of doom that periodically ducks in and out with a variety of sinister laughs and you-will-obey commandments, as on the highway to hell opener, "Route 666": "Are you ready?... Who's with me?... You know how to get here," and the yowling "Sin": "Access Denied... Come to me!" Of special note as well is the dead-man's-floating "Elizabeth Dane," an homage to the ghost ship from **The Fog**, the John Carpenter spookfest that Tomaselli has noted he saw when it came out in 1980, when he was all of ten. Of course, he'd already seen **Halloween** when that one was released in 1978. As he told Hasan, "I used to play the theme to **Halloween** on every piano I could find." We're assuming he was loads of fun to go trick-or-treating with. ☿

—Billy Altman

'80s CULT CRIME

TO LIVE AND DIE IN L.A. (1985) ☿☿☿☿
D: William Friedkin. William L. Petersen, Willem Dafoe, John Pankow, Debra Feuer, John Turturro, Darlanne Fluegel, Dean Stockwell. 116 mins. (Kino Lober) 7/25

I had the pleasure to see this film in theaters in the summer of 1985 where it held its own against **Back to the Future**, **Weird Science**, **Fright Night** and **The Goonies**, and it is as sharp and uncompromising now as it was in 1985. It's a neon-soaked descent into moral ambiguity, where every character operates in shades of gray. Friedkin doesn't simply tell a cop-versus-criminal story, he builds a study in obsession, corruption,

and the personal cost of crossing lines you can't uncross. (I am also of the belief that **Sorcerer** is his best film and this one comes even before **The Exorcist** as I commit horror blasphemy.) Secret Service agent Chance (Petersen) is reckless but magnetic, a man driven as much by thrill-seeking as by vengeance. Willem Dafoe brings a cool, calculated menace to artist-turned-counterfeiter Masters, who'd had Chance's partner killed, turning him into one of the most memorable antagonists of the '80s crime genre. Robby Müller's cinematography captures Los Angeles as both sprawling and claustrophobic, alive with color by day and treacherous by night. The now iconic car chase still feels dangerous, with stunt work and editing that put most modern action sequences to shame. Kino's 4K UHD/Blu-ray makes neon signage pop, shadows hold depth and detail, and the film grain remains intact for a natural, film-like presentation. Friedkin contributes an engaging commentary, candidly reflecting on the film's production and themes. Also: interviews with Petersen, Debra Feuer, Dwier (**The Guardian**) Brown, members of Wang Chung, and others. Stunt coordinator Buddy Joe Hooker breaks down the legendary chase, while the making-of documentary **Counterfeit World** provides valuable context and production insight. Deleted scenes, an alternate ending, trailers, and radio spots round out the package. The film remains a gripping, uncompromising thriller that captures the moral decay of its era without flinching. Kino's release restores the film's gritty beauty. It's a masterpiece.

—B Harrison Smith

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