

In his follow-up to *Deseccation*, his low-budget nightmare of Catholic symbolism, Italian-American filmmaker Dante Tomaselli again plumbs the hallucinogenic depths of the genre with *Horror*. This freaky little tale follows Grace (Lizzy Mahon), a young girl who has been sucked into a quasi-religious cult run by her brainwashed mother and father. Though hope is found in her grandfather, Reverend Salo (played by renowned mesmerist The Amazing Kreskin), he may be appearing to her as a ghost—and his intentions may not be wholly pure.

Grace's world is further shaken by the appearance of five escapees from a drug rehab center, promised salvation by the reverend's son. *Horror* chronicles one long, drugged-out night of the soul, as the heroes hole up in the reverend's isolated house plagued by visions, demonic temptations, a legion of zombies and a satanic goat. Stuck in the half-life between waking and dreaming, *Horror* places its characters and audience in a surrealistic battleground. The movie debuts on special-edition DVD from Elite Entertainment May 27.

"I purposely banished logic," Tomaselli says. "*Horror* is an emotional excursion. You should get the feeling of suicide, or a drug rush or damnation." Through the shocking images and wild narrative shifts, Tomaselli creates a personal film that



Don't kill yourself trying to glean a traditional plot from *Horror's* surrealistic approach.

"HORROR" "Alice in Wonderland" on acid

doesn't allow for easy identification. Following its own logic like a twisted *Alice in Wonderland*, the movie leaves the viewer to decipher what it means. "With my films, ambiguity is the essence of the plot, and everything should be open to interpretation. Each film should be an interior journey."

Melting angels, demonic pumpkins, gaping sores and one unlucky character's skin curdling into a sickening blue hue are some of the wildly imaginative images Tomaselli weaves into *Horror*. He proudly sticks to homegrown special FX instead of CGI. "Aside from the opening credits, I made sure there were no computer-generated effects," he says. "I prefer a real special effects craftsman working with latex and prosthetics over a mouse and computer screen any day. I believe [those techniques are]

ruining horror films. I mean, what's next? Computer-generated blood?"

More beguiling than any special effect are the Amazing Kreskin's real-life mentalism techniques, where he hypnotizes subjects through the power of suggestion. Finding a kindred spirit in Tomaselli due to their similar preoccupations with magic, Kreskin and his techniques became an integral part of *Horror*. Scenes where he quietly commands an audience to fall down on their knees and crawl imply vast supernatural powers at work.

"Kreskin's mentalism scenes were freaky to shoot," Tomaselli says. "They were very bizarre, because they were so real. At his command, people would [actually] drop to the floor. This matched with the whole idea of my movie, where people feel powerless and dominated by forces they have no control over."

Another chilling presence in the film is the sinister black goat, often glimpsed in front of the house staring down the frightened humans. Tomaselli encountered the goat by chance during preproduction on a farm in Warwick, NY. "It's a part of Dawn Animal Agency, an animal actor organization," he reveals. "I was actually at the farm looking into using creepy spiders, meant to symbolize impending doom. The moment I laid eyes on the goat, I knew it had to be in my film. Here was a beautiful, evil-looking

creature that seemed straight out of *The Witches' Sabbath*, that famous Goya painting. I rewrote the script and included the mystical black goat. My poster art changed—everything changed when I met that goat. It was fate."

The religious iconography of goats, crosses and twisted sermons are potentially controversial elements in *Horror*, though they're meant more as suggestions to convey Grace's warped, repressed childhood. "Religious fanaticism is just a backdrop," Tomaselli explains. "It's more about peeling back layers of pain and guilt buried deep in the subconscious mind. It's that hopeless feeling of being lost and then, even worse, getting led the wrong way."



Filmmaker Dante Tomaselli put extra effort into everything—even the jack o'lanterns.

As the disturbed youths deal with the traumas inflicted upon them by their families—and maybe society as well, represented in the climax by an art therapist played in a cameo by Felissa (Sleepaway Camp) Rose—they slip into Tomaselli's chilling landscape. *Horror* creates an unsettling argument that non-reality can be just as real as exterior reality. Tomaselli says contemplatively, "I believe there are other worlds that exist parallel to ours. Alien worlds. They exist in our dreams, flashbacks and hallucinations. I'm always trying to illustrate supernatural experiences, or supposed 'non-reality' experiences. What drives these movies is my intense interest in the paranormal. If I wasn't a filmmaker, I'd be a parapsychologist—a ghost hunter."

—Jeremiah Kipp

Indulge your Primal urge with Sony Computer Entertainment's new game for the PlayStation 2. In this story-driven adventure, players guide Jen Tate, a modern girl discovering her supernatural abilities, and Scree, a living gargoyle, through a fantasy world in which they must both confront demonic enemies and solve complex puzzles. Go to www.us.playstation.com/games for more info.



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