



THE LOST ROOM
PETER KRAUSE'S KEY TO MYSTERY

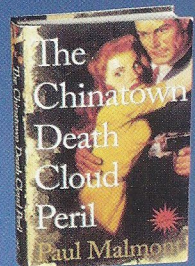
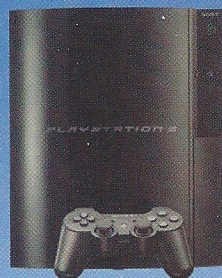
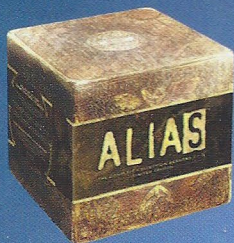


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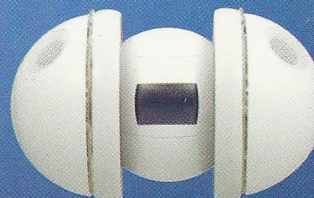
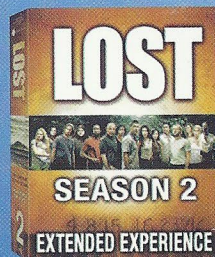
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DISPLAY UNTIL DECEMBER

AN AMERICAN HAUNTING

Based on the legend of The Bell Witch, *An American Haunting* (Lions Gate) is a heavily fictionalized version

C-
STARRING
DONALD
SUTHERLAND,
SISSY SPACEK
DIRECTED BY
COURTNEY
SOLOMON



of the only case in U.S. history where a supernatural force was officially blamed for a person's death. The project has all the makings of a crackerjack ghost story, as well as an excellent cast, but the end result is merely passable, due to the filmmakers' tedious pacing and repetitive structure.

In rural 1817 Tennessee, the Bell Family—mother (Sissy Spacek), father (Donald Sutherland) and teenage daughter Betsy (Rachel Hurd-Wood)—are cursed by a wronged local witch, and soon all hell breaks loose. Creepy

noises come from the attic, bedsheets fly about and poor Betsy is sadistically abused each night by an invisible poltergeist. What begins as an eerie, well-mounted period take on demonic possession quickly loses its grip due to the filmmakers' tired approach—relying on generic scare tactics instead of exploring the deeper psychological aspects of the story. Spacek (underplaying) and Sutherland (overwrought) lend the drama a bit of gravitas, but its hamfisted direction, muddy cinematography, useless wraparound story set in the present day and unintentional laughs keep it less than memorable. The film is on DVD in rated and unrated versions, and includes a making-of featurette, interviews, bloopers and deleted scenes.



JERSEY GIRL: DANTE TOMASELLI SACRIFICES WOMEN AND LOGIC FOR HIS HALLUCINOGENIC PLAYGROUND.

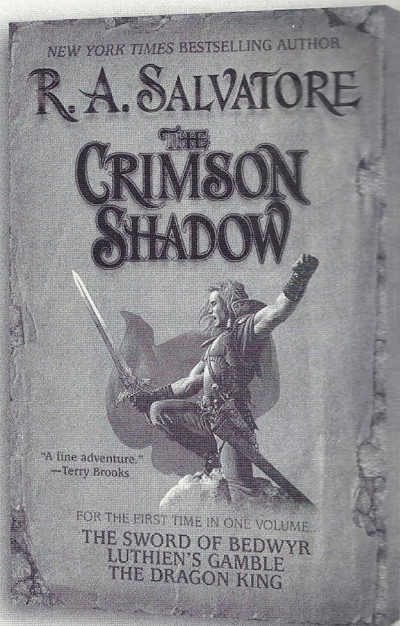
SATAN'S PLAYGROUND

A SEEMINGLY NORMAL HORROR YARN takes several surreal, supernatural detours in writer-director Dante Tomaselli's darkly amusing *Satan's Playground* (Anchor Bay). Using the 18th-century legend of The Jersey Devil as its inspiration, this low-budget feature might be low

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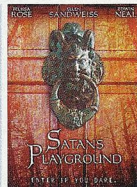
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on logic, but it succeeds thanks to highly stylized camerawork, eerie atmosphere and a driving pace.

The setup is like that of any '80s low-budget horror film, with the vacationing Bruno family traveling through New Jersey's Pine Barrens. When their station wagon becomes stuck on an isolated stretch of country road, they soon confront their darkest fears when a houseful of deranged backwoods crazies with a link to the Jersey Devil abscond with the Bruno's baby.

Following Tomaselli's more avant-garde outings, *Desecration* and *Horror*, *Playground* initially looks like

the most easily digested concept from this up-and-coming indie director—that is, until his relentlessly hallucinogenic agenda kicks in. In fact, his nightmarish visuals are almost good enough to make us forget about the occasionally amateurish dialogue and acting. The film also features some work from Ellen Sandweiss (*The Evil Dead*), while *Sleepaway Camp*'s Felissa Rose endures the film's most harrowing, physically demanding moments. The DVD includes behind-the-scenes footage, trailers and a Tomaselli interview and commentary.



B
STARRING
FELISSA ROSE,
ELLEN
SANDWEISS
DIRECTED BY
DANTE
TOMASELLI