



Color, 2013, 93m.
Directed by Dante Tomaselli
Starring Vincent Pastore, Christie Sanford, Lynn Lowry, Ron Millkie, Carmen LoPorto
Cinedigm (DVD) (US R0 NTSC) / WS (1.78:1) (16:9) / DD5.1



Though the cover art promises a generic SOV horror cheapie indistinguishable from any anonymous titles littering the shelves at your local retailer, eagle-eyed horror buffs who spy the name of the director, Dante Tomaselli, should have a clearer idea of what's in store here. With his **previous three films** (*Desecration*, *Horror*, and *Satan's Playground*), Tomaselli established several familiar trademarks like obsessive Catholic imagery, children tempted by the forces



of darkness, fragmented storytelling, and sudden bursts of bloody, irrational horror. You'll find all of that here, of course, and on top of that he makes the jump to digital shooting (after his last project, which was *Super 16*) with great ease to produce his most visually accomplished film to date.

Things start off with a bang as we meet little Jimmy Morgan (soap actor LoPorto, delivering a highly effective performance) locked inside a cage at the behest of his panicked, religious mother (Tomaselli regular Sanford). Jimmy's older brother, a priest, has been brought in to help, but the ordeal instead leaves mom blind with her eye sockets bleeding. From there we jump back through time to find out how they got there, with the sadistic Jimmy getting his face horribly burned thanks to an unfortunate afternoon incident involving two school buddies, a plastic bag, and a can of aerosol hairspray. Shipped off to the burn ward, Jimmy's malefic influence infects the kids around him and has a nasty effect on those around him, both inside and after he gets out.



One of his first victims is his art teacher (*The Crazies*' Lowry), who endures violent nightmares before finding them turning into reality. His doctor (*The Sopranos*' Pastore) tries to piece together

what's going on and how to stop the little menace, while his own family and his friends find themselves next on his supernatural hit list. That dark agenda involves torture devices in an abandoned castle in the woods, where one unfortunate couple (including a cameo by another Tomaselli vet, Danny Lopes) has already met a grisly fate.



Set almost entirely at night and existing in a freaky dream state common to Tomaselli's first two films, *Torture Chamber* is another challenging, personal epic of blood and thunder that will probably annoy unaware viewers expecting a straightforward scarefest but delight anyone with a taste for this style of macabre art. The DVD release from Cinedigm (which was timed to coincide with a **Tomaselli disc of Halloween music**, sort of an unofficial soundtrack compilation) looks great, incredibly marking only the second of his films to be released with an anamorphic transfer. The creepy dark bursts of red in the color scheme work especially well here, often coinciding with one of Jimmy's unnerving appearances. Unfortunately the disc drops the ball in the extras department, with "special features" including 5.1 and 2.0 mixes (yep, labels still do that) and a modest stills gallery. That said, the sound mix is up to the director's usual creepy ambient standards, with rear channels often rumbling and growling enough to keep you looking over your shoulder.

Reviewed on April 2, 2014.

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