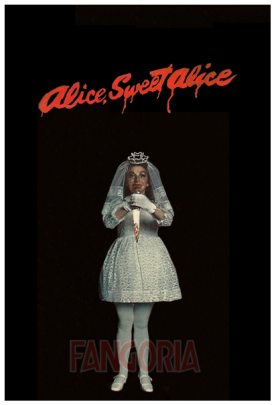
Written by Walter Bonner
Tuesday, 09 October 2012 13:13

As we first reported here , filmmaker Dante Tomaselli (TORTURE CHAMBER, SATAN’S PLAYGROUND) has announced he is proceeding with his long-mooted remake of ALICE, SWEET ALICE, the 1977 shocker (pictured left) directed by his cousin, Alfred Sole, with a script co-written by Fango’s Michael Gingold. Tomaselli gave us more details on the project, as well as the exclusive first look at an early poster.

Though many remember the original ALICE as the film debut of Brooke Shields, who played the first in a series of murder victims in and around a New Jersey Catholic household, the film is also held in high regard by horror fans for its shocking violence and hefty dose of religious imagery. Tomaselli has been wanting to revisit it for quite a while. “As many people who have been following my films already know, I’ve been talking about ALICE, SWEET ALICE for a long time now,” he tells Fango. “Alfred and I discussed it a while back but I just didn’t have it together yet, so I made TORTURE CHAMBER instead. But he knows I idolize his ALICE, SWEET ALICE; it’s a movie I hold close to my heart.”



That love found its way into the poster art seen at right: “In the spirit of bringing back the feel of the ’70s, this ALICE, SWEET ALICE design is all derived from the original film art, which Alfred himself created many years ago. I’ve remixed it. This image of the white-veiled little girl brandishing a knife and the grinning translucent mask used to scare the hell out of me. It’s forever embedded in my psyche.”

Given Tomaselli’s passion for the original, it’s clear this new ALICE is in good hands. “We all want to make this work,” he says. “It will not be a soulless remake. I don’t want to give away details of the script, but it will be a faithful remake that occasionally veers off into unexpected terrain. It will incorporate the same translucent mask and St. Michael’s yellow raincoat. That scary visual is definitely a part of pop-culture history. What I loved about the original is that it

kept you guessing; the viewer had no idea what to expect next. That’s what I stand for as a director, and I hope to take it to a new level with a healthy budget. ALICE will be my fifth feature, and in many ways it’s an explosion of my films. It’s about family dysfunction, guilt, sin—and eternal damnation.”

Regarding his collaboration with Gingold, Tomaselli notes, “Michael and I have already worked together on the screenplay for THE OCEAN, a film I still plan to make. He’s an outstanding writer, and a natural communicator. There was never a doubt that I wanted him to be the co-writer of ALICE, SWEET ALICE; he’s a fan of the original, and owns the novelization and even the old laserdisc. I trust Mike, and his instincts.”

Gingold himself promises that horror fans can expect all the twisted and religious mayhem that made the original so great. “Collaborating with Dante on the OCEAN script was one of the best creative experiences I’ve had as a screenwriter, and that’s carrying over into ALICE, SWEET ALICE,” he says. “We’re making sure to stay true to the spirit of the first movie—and not watering down the religious element at all—while adding fresh touches that will make this its own film. Fans of Dante’s previous movies will definitely recognize certain common elements in this vision of ALICE. And to answer the question that some fans of the original will surely ask: Yes, Mr. Alphonso will be back, and as perverted as before.”

Tomaselli has a great affinity for Sole’s film, as well as for the genre in general. “I was a horror fan from age 3, and in 1977, I was 7 and already had a grip on good horror movies. I saw films like DON’T LOOK NOW, THE EXORCIST, CARRIE and THE OMEN. My mother loved the genre and would take me to the drive-in, where I saw everything.” Though too young at the time to attend the premiere, the director remembers its family-style production like it was yesterday. “My father, who owned a jewelry and bridal store, told me he would be supplying the communion dresses, veils and white gloves for this horror film, then called COMMUNION, and showed me the most stylishly frightening [advance] poster of a white-veiled Catholic girl holding a glowing crucifix dagger. I was young but instantly electrified by the image, so beautiful and sinister, and was inspired that someone in my family created this kind of movie. Many of my relatives are extras in it. I knew I wanted to be a horror director, so this was eye-opening to me.”

Though his family was happy to help with the film, some were startled by its brutality. “There was a big premiere in Paterson that I heard about, but was too young to attend. The word was that it was a very scary and well-made movie. My parents were impressed, but my mother said a lot of my relatives, older Italian-Americans, were shocked by the graphic violence. They were not the typical horror crowd, yet they were awed by the film, and it got great reviews, even from

Roger Ebert, who called it ‘splendidly chilling.’ ” The young horror hound had to wait for the VHS boom to finally see his cousin’s slasher masterpiece: “I was dying to see it, and finally in 1980, when I was 10 and VCRs were brand new, my family bought a VHS of ALICE, SWEET ALICE. The film became a staple in our household. I also used to see it on TV a lot, and as a young boy I would feel so proud: ‘That’s my cousin, he directed that.’ I’d wear the mask and yellow raincoat myself sometimes.”

And what of Sole, who created ALICE? Tomaselli says not to worry: Sole is heavily involved to assure his cousin does right by his much-loved movie. “Alfred hasn’t directed in a while; he’s now an established production designer in Hollywood, and these days he’s working on the ABC show CASTLE,” Tomaselli notes. “I’m happy to say that he’ll be production designer and a producer on the remake. That should make everyone feel safe that the creator of the original is behind the scenes and creating sets.” Keep your eyes here for further updates…