The careers of New Jersey-born actor Danny Lopes and writer/director Dante Tomaselli have been closely linked ever since Tomaselli got his hands on a camera. Lopes made his acting debut in Tomaselli's first effort, 1999's DESECRATION, and the actor has appeared in all of the Jersey auteur's films since then—HORROR, SATAN'S PLAYGROUND (pictured) and the upcoming TORTURE CHAMBER (see previous item here). With a recent move to LA (though he will remain bicoastal), Lopes continues to spread his creative wings, producing and starring in a new slasher opus called THE LOCALS (no relation to the New Zealand film of the same name; see teaser poster below and previous story here). Lopes tells Fango all about his latest screen stints, beginning with his collaborations with Tomaselli.

FANGORIA: What's TORTURE CHAMBER about, and what kind of character do you play in the film?

DANNY LOPES: TORTURE CHAMBER is about a family torn apart by sin. Thirteen-year-old Jimmy Morgan is possessed. His religious mother thinks it's a demonic entity. His older brother, a Catholic priest, tries to exorcise him. When Jimmy is sent to an institution for disturbed kids, he escapes with a group of followers and discovers an old abandoned castle with a tunnel to a torture chamber. I play Ralph, a homeless hippie drifter. It's a cameo. Dante said it's kind of a homage to Luck, my drug-addicted character in his second film, HORROR. I play in the scene with onscreen girlfriend Raine Brown. And there's a specific reference to my first film, DESECRATION… "A deep hole in the woods."

FANG: Does the film play into the whole “torture porn”/SAW wave?

LOPES: Not at all. TORTURE CHAMBER is its own animal. Dante really reached deep into his gut to write, design and score it. The film creates its own tide. From the very beginning, you are thrown into a colorful nightmare world of an emotionally tortured priest. The subjects TORTURE CHAMBER touches will definitely get under your skin. I don’t want to give away too much.

FANG: How does the film compare with Tomaselli’s previous films?

LOPES: We are still experiencing the depths of hell. Dante has a way of bringing us into his nightmares. This picture is different from the past films in the sense that this one is more realistic. A possession…deep family issues…burnt children retaliating from personal pain. The locations are amazing. We shot in settings that make TORTURE CHAMBER’s production value much higher than that of our previous projects.

FANG: How did you guys first hook up?

LOPES: I auditioned for DESECRATION when I was 15 years old. It was two weeks before principal photography was set to start. Dante had me come to his New Jersey location and read a few scenes from his script. That experience is forever locked in my thoughts and heart. I was pretending that there was a hole, a very deep hole in his living room. A few days later, I heard from his mother, Maureen Tomaselli, who was helping with casting and let me know I had locked the main role of Bobby, the 16-year-old loner haunted by the death of his mother.

FANG: Tomaselli is very loyal to you. You've appeared in all his films, right?

LOPES: Yes, as I am loyal to him and his visions. Dante has given me the opportunity to show my range in my acting craft with very different characters within his nightmares. I look forward to working with him for the rest of his career.

FANG: How has he changed as a director?

LOPES: Dante is very humble. It's not about anything but the horror art. He won't ever change. He is committed to translating his dreams and is a perfectionist with his vision. What is changing are the budgets and the amount of money he gets to film! I am aspiring to lock down funds for his future endeavors and be an executive producer on his upcoming films.

FANG: How has the move from East to West Coast worked out for you?

LOPES: The move has given me fuel. Out here, in Los Angeles, it is a different animal. I am more in my element, surrounded by the entertainment industry. New York gives me comfort and I have my family. I'm completely bicoastal at this point, and I am fortunate to have homes on both coasts of this outstanding country.

FANG: You are an executive producer and star of a new movie, THE LOCALS. How did that come about?

LOPES: One of my best friends from Hollywood, Eric Pereira, wrote an amazing script and approached me to raise money. I fell in love with the story and the way it would be shot/edited.

[redacted] website [redacted]