

REVIEWS

NYMPHA

Street 9/9

MTI, Horror, \$24.95 DVD, 'R' for bloody violent content, disturbing images, sexuality/nudity and brief language.

Stars Tiffany Shepis, Allan McKenna, Michael Segal, Alessandra Guerzoni, Caterina Zanca, Giuseppe Gobbato, Francesco Primavera.

Italian indie horror auteur/director/cinematographer/editor Ivan Zuccon's latest film, *Nympha*, is more likely to please loyal fans of his work than it is to transform his detractors.

However, fans of indie horror icon Shepis are in for a treat—a rich, gutsy performance that might even exceed the expectations of her most fervent followers. Together, the two have combined to make a challenging, draining and frightening film that is not for the weak of heart or mind.

In a case of what might be called self-imposed tough love, Shepis' Sarah travels to a remote convent in Italy where she seeks to wash away her sins by undergoing a rigorous, at times almost sadistic theological transformation into a nun, dedicating to depriving herself in order to

fully serve the Lord. A young woman with a checkered past, Sarah shocks the Mother Superior when she reveals a tattoo that she refers to as a remnant of the life she wishes to leave behind.

Aggressive removal of a full body of skin art might seem like a piece of cake compared to the extreme mental and physical torture Sarah undergoes, a series of four steps in which she must learn to "hear" the Lord, "see" the Lord, "touch" the Lord and "talk" with the Lord. This leads to a state of such psychological and spiritual anguish that she is susceptible to an invasion by the spirit of a young woman who lived on the same property and suffered similar abuse long before the location became a convent.

Inventively produced but clearly shot on a modest budget, the claustrophobic mood and overall unpleasant tone of the film appropriately mirrors the plight of the protagonist, resulting in a piece that is consistently grim and uncomfortable to watch.

— David Greenberg

