

Document Citation

Title	Communion
Author(s)	Coli.
Source	<i>Variety</i>
Date	1977 Sep 21
Type	review
Language	English
Pagination	
No. of Pages	1
Subjects	
Film Subjects	Alice, sweet Alice, Sole, Alfred, 1977

9-21-77 ~~21-77~~ 9-21-77

(COLOR)
Alice, Sweet Alice

London, Sept. 8.

Hemdale release (Allied Artists in U.S.) of Harristown Funding Ltd. (Richard K. Rosenberg) production. Stars Linda Miller, Mildred Clinton. Directed by Alfred Sole. Screenplay, Rosemary Ritvo, Alfred Sole; camera, (color), John Friberg, Chuck Hall; editor, Edward Sallier; music, Stephen Lawrence; asst. director, Adrienne Hamalian; production designer, John Lawless; costumes, Michelle Cohen; sound, Mark Salwasser. Reviewed at Hemdale preview theatre, London, Sept. 8, '77. Running time: 108 MINS.

Catherine	Linda Miller
Mrs. Tredoni	Mildred Clinton
Alice Spages	Paula Sheppard
Dominick	Niles McMaster
Father Tom	Rudolph Willrich
Auntie Annie	Jane Lowry
Mr. Alphonso	Alphonse De Noble
Karen Spages	Brooke Shields
Angela	Kathy Rich
Detective Brenner	Tom Signorelli
Pathologist	Lillian Roth

By any standards, "Communion" is quintessential American film making: entertaining, intelligent, and derivative. Alfred Sole's third feature (the first entitled "Deep Sleep" ran afoul of the British censor and the second, "American Soap", awaits release, is an inspired homage to Hitchcock that should gain him the attention he deserves.

The film was independently produced by Richard K. Rosenberg, shot on location in Paterson, New Jersey, using a talented cast drawn primarily from the stage and television. With the right marketing it should be solid.

The film centers around an Italian-American family, living in Paterson. When Karen, the youngest of two daughters, is murdered on the day of her first Communion, the prime suspect is her malicious 12-year-old sister Alice. Naturally, the child's divorced mother denies the incriminating evidence.

Although further attacks upon family members (Alice's harpy of an aunt and her estranged father, back to lend his support) reveal Alice to be innocent, the film's conclusion, like the Catholic attitude toward sin, condemns her for the killings in thought if not in action.

As the pic borrows selected elements from the demonology genre — Catholic iconography and an evil incarnate child — at the start it seems as if Sole intends to resurrect the "Exorcist" formula. But the film soon acknowledges its Hitchcockian inspiration and sets about shocking and teasing the audience in a manner worthy of the master.

In fact, "Communion" almost seems like a project slyly constructed to endorse prevalent French theories about "Catholic guilt" being Hitchcock's most persistent thematic concern.

Be that or not, it's certainly an impressive feature on a multitude of levels. Rosemary Ritvo's and Sole's script brilliantly psychoanalyses a family's inter-relationships — the jealousy between sisters, the bond between mother and child, etc. — through the immediacy of a tight,

suspenseful search for a butcher-knife assassin. And in the process offer some detailed criticisms of absolute beliefs whether they be religiously, socially, or familiarly rooted.

The gory setpieces (the initial killing, the father's protracted death in an abandoned warehouse, and the stabbing of the family's grotesquely obese landlord, Mr. Alphonso) are all frighteningly conceived and realized.

Sole was born and raised in Paterson and it's evident that he used his native familiarity when selecting locations or detailing specific characters, like the rectory housekeeper, Mrs. Tredoni, well played by Mildred Clinton.

But what's even more obvious is his innate sense of cinema and direction. The way in which his camera tracks rather than zooms, his evocative composition, and unexpected cutting all contribute to the film's disturbing ambience and progression. Only in the portrayal of Mr. Alphonso does his touch (and script) falter.

Although "Communion" is first and foremost Sole's baby, he received invaluable assistance from John Friberg's and Chuck Hall's ace photography and Stephen Lawrence's effective score. All of the cast, from the children (Paula Sheppard and Brooke Shield as Alice and Karen) to Rudolph Willrich, as the family's confessor Father Tom, are remarkable.

Linda Miller and Niles McMaster as the troubled mother and separated father act beautifully. Their relationship, as depicted by the script and performed, is perhaps one of the most moving and honest to appear on the American screen for a long while. And praise also to Jane Lowry for her portrayal of the children's nagging Auntie

In producer Richard K. Rosenberg Sole has found an admirable partner. It must be to his credit that "Communion," as a completely independent production, has no rough edges.

And that despite its Catholic background, the film should have universal appeal. —*Coli.*