

## ZOLTAN HONTI

Hungarian-born cinematographer was mentored by d.p. brahmin Vilmos Zsigmond

Unless "The Last Exorcism" was actually "The Next-to-Last Exorcism," Zoltan Honti won't be revisiting his talent for mock-doc horror any time soon — although it's thus far served him well: The d.p. job on "Exorcism" grew out of his first collaboration

**Role models:** Vilmos Zsigmond, Laszlo Kovacs.  
**Camera & film used:** P2-card-based Panasonic HPX3000.  
**Fave tool:** "Collaboration. And a lot of pre-production. Even though they're not technically tools."

with helmer Daniel Stamm on the equally faux-factual "A Necessary Death." And the look was a key element in "Exorcism's" nerve-fraying sense of reality, plausibility and, presumably, its profits: The religious fright fest has earned more than \$41million, or well over 20 times its \$1.8 million budget.

More recently, the Hungarian-born shooter worked with his mentor Vilmos Zsigmond on "The Maiden Danced to Death," a Hungarian/Canadian/Slovenian production. "I was operating for him," Honti says, "and when he had to move on he asked me to finish it, which was an amazing thing. It's great to have the trust of someone of his caliber; because I was very afraid after 'The Last Exorcism' — and it proves to be not true — that people would respond with 'Oh, he can do a fake documentary, great, but he can't do something more conventional, a classic, beautiful picture.'"

Working with Stamm on "Exorcism" — the premise of which is the making of a doc about a huckster preacher, and his encounter with real satanic evil — they had a script, "but there was a lot of improvisation," Honti says. "And Danny's mantra was always, 'OK, if the actor now wants to grab a box of cornflakes, I should be able to follow him to the kitchen and back without seeing anything I'm not supposed to see.'"

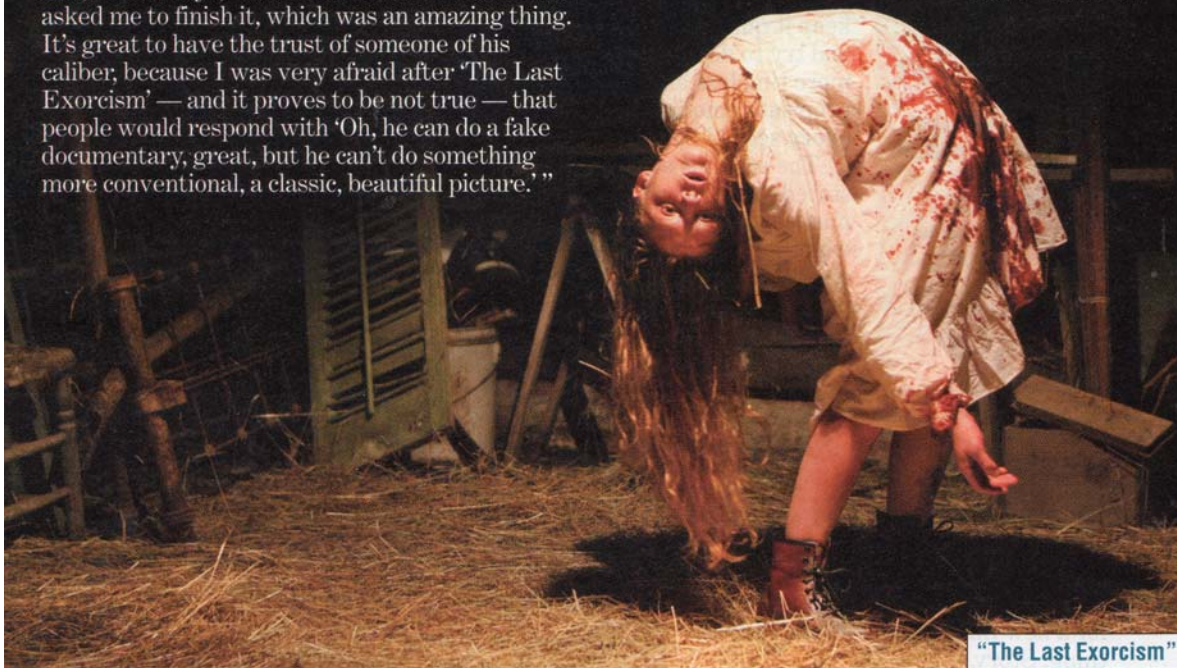


Honti

But since the cameraman in the movie-within-the-movie is a character, Honti had to be a character, too.

"Usually when I shoot, I'm so involved in lighting and composition that I usually really see performances only in dailies," he says. "It was so refreshing to be on set and seeing through the lens what the actors did and to respond to that. I think that contributed enormously to the authenticity of the film. Responding to what the actors were doing made for something that really comes through on the screen."

— John Anderson



"The Last Exorcism"