

Shock Cinema No. 12

"Accomplished psychological drama ... a persuasive profile of a traumatized adolescent pushed to the edge—only to push back with a vengeance."

SHOCK CINEMA

DELINQUENT (1997).

[Peter Hall, [REDACTED], New York, NY 10025-9019]

An asshole cop. Smoking grass. Jerking off. Cross-dressing. And a gun. That's just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to this accomplished psychological drama from director-writer Peter Hall. Meet Tim (Desmond Devenish), a teen trapped in the dinkwater town of Cold Mills, NY. With his crazy mother dead, his father an abusive policeman, and his home a disheveled trailer, Tim finds a place of temporary solace from his shitty life when he sneaks into a closed-up summer house. Repeatedly visiting the place, he rummages through bedroom lingerie, discovers a hidden handgun, and indulges in his fantasies, like lusting after a compassionate teacher. Meanwhile, teenaged Tracy, whose family owns the place, has her own problems due to a tryst with her English teacher, and returns suddenly to this house to suffer alone. Despite the occasional soft-hearted lapse, *DELINQUENT* has a melancholy edge which goes a long way, plus a powerful finale as Tim's wishes come true, and pull Tracy along in their wake. The entire cast gives sincere, naturalistic performances, with Jeff Paul getting the showiest role as the caustic Officer Ben, who spits in his kid's face, downs bottles of liquor, and is pissed off that his son is reading a *book* during his free time. Along the way, Hall subverts the usual expectations (which have come from seeing too many artificial teen-angst pics), with some of his quietest moments being the most effective (like Tracy burning a teddy bear gift from her teacher). Aided by a tense score from Gang of Four, this is a persuasive profile of a traumatized adolescent pushed to the edge—only to push back with a vengeance.