

CRITICS LOVE VAMPIRE PRIEST FILM

When the movie "Thirst" opened in select theaters on July 31, we couldn't help but notice how this film won the praise of the critics. The movie, the work of a Korean ex-Catholic, Park Chan-wook, is about a Roman Catholic priest turned vampire. It is strewn with blood and gore, but none of that stopped the critics from loving it.

The *Los Angeles Times* commended Park for "constructing beautifully composed images of aestheticized violence." Too bad Mel Gibson didn't study under the Korean director: when "The Passion of the Christ" was released, the *L.A. Times* blasted it for its "overwhelming level of on-screen violence."

The *San Francisco Chronicle* admitted that "Park dwells on disgusting images, from the priest's throbbing boils to his sucking of victim's blood through medical tubes, to gory vomiting and various scenes of bone-smashing violence." But, wait, "There's a sense of glee in all the mayhem that helps mitigate the shock effects—at least a bit." This same newspaper found no glee in Gibson's classic, labeling the violence "numbing."

Stephen Whitty of the *Newark Star-Ledger* liked the "giddily surreal stuff" of Park's violence, but saw no fun in "The Passion": he slammed it for showing the crucifixion of Christ in "literally nauseating detail."

A.O. Scott of the *New York Times* praised Park for his "undeniable knack for choreographing bloody, sensual set pieces." Moreover, Scott noted the "elegantly presented servings of sex and gore." But Scott chided Gibson, saying that he "exploited the popular appetite for terror and gore."

That's right—Gibson never learned how to serve his violence with elegance.

Finally, V.A. Musetto of the *New York Post*, always a fan of anti-Catholic movies, predicted that the “windbags at the right-wing Catholic League” would call the film “Catholic bashing.” Not really. It's actually junk designed to seduce guys like him into thinking it's art.