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DVD review

Make Them Die Slowly (alternate title for Umberto Lenzi's Cannibal Ferox) is still one of the sleaziest of the sickies. Generally, I'll defend the horror genre, but I have to say, this is a hard film to defend - not that I'm about to denounce it, either. But if there's a film with no socially redeeming value, this may be it. This was Lenzi's answer to Ruggero Deodato's artistically superior (relatively speaking) Cannibal Holocaust. But Lenzi is so definitively an exploitation filmmaker and this is likely the pinnacle of his deviant cinematic mind.

There were plenty of cannibal gutmunchers from the Italians, but this 1981 flick has got to be one of the most renegade of a rogue subgenre.

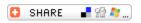
Two groups of folks, both out in the jungle for reasons that don't really stand up to common sense (i.e. a healthy sense of self-preservation), run into each other. One group is there to disprove that cannibalism still exists (because, you know, not finding it in one corner of the Amazon proves it doesn't happen anywhere); not a morally reprehensible reason but not my idea of a college doctoral thesis (which is the goal for the woman whose expedition this is). The other group - I should say pair - is in the jungle because (a) they're on the run from drug-running mobsters whose money they swiped and (b) they are looking for emeralds. When the scholar's group meets the coke-fiend emerald hunter's party, the gem seeker lays on some bullshit story about how they were attacked by cannibals. The truth is actually that the dude is a sonofabitch and brutalized a native, trying to get him to fess up where some emeralds were that the native found. Seems overkill since the native was already their guide through the jungle to the location where the emeralds were discovered.

At any rate, before all is said and done, the tables get turned, and the scholar's group gets caught in the middle of cannibal revenge against the asshole, coke-snorting white boy. Once all that setup's out of the way, Make Them Die Slowly/Cannibal Ferox becomes a series of ugly, brutal, nasty tortures.

Genital dismemberment (followed by genitalia munching - *shudder*), breast impalement (and worse), head chopping and such.

To make matters worse, this flick features actual footage of animal-on-animal violence as well as human-on-animal violence. The graphic but fake brutalizing of people is the draw for this film's morbid fascination but the animal stuff is much harder to stomach and is, honestly, indefensible. Fortunately, it occupies but a small portion of the running time (though it pops up several times throughout the movie).

As a sleazy jungle gutmuncher, Make Them Die Slowly is one of the vilest - and therefore probably one of the most entertaining, given the nature and intrinsic entertainment value (or repulsion value, depending on who's watching). If you can get past the animal violence, this is a super sick deluxe serving of spaghetti cinema nastiness.



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Upchuck Undergrind listens to a little bit of a lot of things - just note the eclecticism of his reviews. He also reads voraciously and loves movies. He is a very open-minded Episcopalian (and student of Buddhism and Hinduism) who thinks Slayer is one of the greatest metal bands. Ever. In addition to his work with Corazine - for which he has written since its inception (he is a Fishcomcollective veteran) - he also writes for DJFix.com.

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