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Legend Of The Witches (1969/VCI DVD) + I Drink Your Blood (1970) + Legend Of Boggy Creek (1972) + Mark Of The Devil (1970) + Make Them Die Slowly (1981/Cheezy Flicks DVDs)

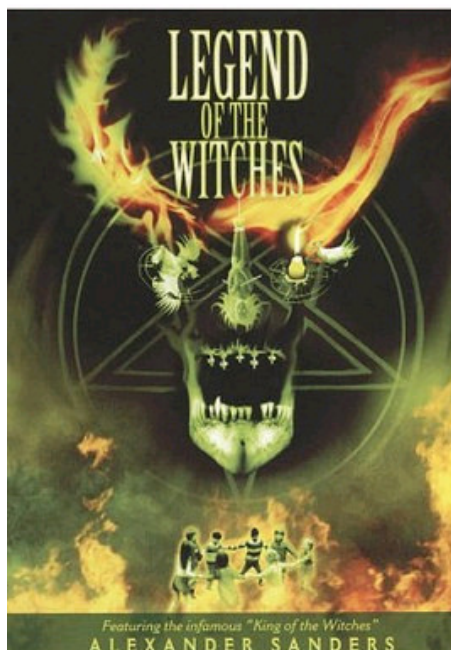
Picture: C- (C on **Witches**)
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Out of the collapse of the studio system and arrival of TV, exploitation films and documentaries started to blur, especially when it came to nudity, special interest and supposedly serious examinations of murder and the occult. This movement peaked in the 1970s and since, many exploitation films have blurred the line and now worse than ever with the decline of solid journalism. This has been accompanied by sensationalism and we look at five examples that blur this line, with a few surprises.

Malcolm Leigh's **Legend Of The Witches** (1969) arrived in black and white the year after Romero's **Night Of The Living Dead** and was out to 'document' being in a Satanic cult. From a somewhat more innocent time, this is an inane work that shows the groups filmed being goofy and though they may be authentic and taking what they are doing seriously, it is just plain bad. No murders, but lots of nudity, odd examinations of torture (in context?) and we do not learn as much as you might think, so this is almost a recruitment piece, down to "King Of The Witches" Alexander Sanders being a somewhat quiet tour guide. Yawn!

I Drink Your Blood (1970, aka **Phobia**) has Satanists as well, but this drama is a rape/revenge down to food poisoned by the blood of a rabid dog, using LSD as a weapon and people going nuts from said blood. Plus, there's other blood to spill, but hardly any ink was spilled on original ideas in the script. This is also dated, with amusingly old make-up effects, but is also a bore and though does not try to pass itself off as real, does everything lese to be so and fails badly.

Legend Of Boggy Creek (1972) has a major indie reputation and is yet another one of the many films in this cycle that is not a documentary, but wants you to know it is "based on a true story" to cover up for its shortcomings and is shot in a documentary way. Essentially, Bigfoot has been on the loose killing people since the 1960s and is far from finished. That myth was so popular at the time that even **The Six Million Dollar**



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Man had him, albeit a robot made by aliens! This one kills and hangs in a swamp, but never runs into Paremalfait/The Boogie Man, the actual legend that comes from there. Now swamps are known as wetlands and have environmental credo, but they we still dirty places at the time (think Swamp Thing, Man-Thing) so Charles B. Pierce tied in anything that would sell tickets and it was a modest hit.


Mark Of The Devil (1970) is an explicit torture film (nearly torture porn) that was banned for years (in some places still is) and gave itself a 'V' for violence rating (it would still get an NC-17 today) with some very graphic ads promising much more. It wastes the talents of the great Herbert Low and underrated Udo Kier, is out to shock and continues to have a reputation for being gross. Too bad the script is very weak and the idea was to be on the documentary/practically snuff film bandwagon. It was a hit and still has a following, but we cannot see why.

Finally, we have **Make Them Die Slowly**, a 1981 film at the end of this cycle that dies as soon as it starts with its tale of a cannibalistic Colombian tribe. In these days where the bad news from that country are deadly drug kingpins, this looks more racist than ever and just as dumb. Also very graphic and violent, it also got banned in many places, but the make-up effects have dated, yet are still as gross as intended. This Italian production has lame acting and was about to be made obsolete by the many Hollywood slice-and-dice films that eclipsed this movement along with home video and other developments in the 1980s. This is one long goodbye that can never be brief enough.

All the films are here as 1.33 X 1 presentations (**Devil** is letterboxed 1.85 X 1) and all look poor per Cheezy's usual cheezy quality as expected, but Witches looks best by default with a decent print of what looks like a 16mm film shoot. It is also soft, but with less problems than the other releases and has Dolby Digital 2.0 Mono that sounds very dated (as expected with a low budget production as this) that is still a bit better than the PCM 2.0 16/48 Mono on the Cheezy DVDs. Extras on all only include trailers, though some of the Cheezy discs add Intermission shorts.

- Nicholas Sheffo

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