

Indie Horror Films

All genres of suspense, terror, and horror will be reviewed by Richard Gary. His address to send preview copies supplied upon request to rbf55@msn.com.

Monday, September 1, 2014

DVD Reviews: Double Feature From Hell: Hellinger, Holy Terror

*Text by Richard Gary / Indie Horror Films, 2014
Images from the Internet*



A nice two-films-on-one-DVD release by Massimiliano Cerchi titled Double Feature From Hell, whose Troma patronage is evident (even though the deal with Troma Distribution fell through). Both these films use a theme of horror and religion, not surprisingly Roman Catholicism is the foci as it is the part of the background of its Italy-born director. It is inevitable that there will be comparisons with the 1980s style of Giallo, but I am saying too much here. Read on... if you dare...

Hellinger

Directed by Massimiliano Cerchi
Rounds Entertainment
SGL Entertainment
MVD Visual
90 minutes, 1997 / 2014
www.mvdvisual.com

Most people are going to look at this film, rereleased after nearly two decades, and say, Oh, a throwback from the 1980s "video nasties" that were so prevalent in that era. Well, they wouldn't actually be wrong, but I would take it a step further, and point out that it still has that gory fun and swiss cheese storyline that we usually love from the likes of Troma.



A Roman Catholic priest decides he wants to start his own religion and see heaven *before* he gets there. After a supposed pact with the devil to do this, he becomes...*Hellinger* (a play on the mixture of Hellraiser and Dillinger?). They never really explain the name: just one of the swiss cheese holes. Meanwhile, he is haunting a young woman, Melissa Moran (the lovely Shannah Betz, aka Shana Betz, aka Shana Sosin, aka...), whose abusive father Hellinger killed by evisceration and pulling out his eyes right in front of her when she was just a schoolgirl. Apparently, Hellinger has a thing for eyes. But Melissa as an adult is both tough as nails and still that scared little girl.

The third main character is Melissa's cousin, the silly named Kendall Ransom (long haired, bearded and full body tattooed Artie Richard). He's a cross between Chuck Norris and Snake Plisskin (as a coincidence, this film was made in 1997, the same year *Escape From New York* [1981] was supposed to have taken place). Now I

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realize that the even relatively modern horror cinema of the 1990s needed to have some kind of male action hero to look up to, but I have to say, Ransom is a totally superfluous character. He basically fails in everything he tries, other than getting us Hellinger's backstory in a longwinded talking head exposition. In a Carol J. Clover moment, he can't even save the heroine. Girl power!

For what it's worth, this is actually a fun film straight through, even though it's not a great piece of cinema. The no-digi effects gore is plentiful if cheesy (especially the ending), the acting on the most part equally questionable (though Betz comes off – er – best), and as I said, there are plenty of plotline holes, but it will keep your attention, along with giving some unintended laughs here and there, which is always fun.

Cherci (who also has a recurring cameo role) borrows a lot from a very interesting time of filmmaking. For example, he was obviously influenced by Italian Giallo, especially Dario Argento, and arguably Leo Fulci (this film reminded me of his 1982's *The New York Ripper* and 1980's *City of the Living Dead*). There is also a pimp character that smacked of Harvey Keitel's role in *Taxi Driver* (1976). However, in a somewhat prescient way, he also has the title character repeatedly call Melissa, "my precioussss," is a throaty hiss.

Let's talk a bit about the Hellinger character. He is borrowed a lot from the Pinhead lead of *Hellraiser* (1987), and there are even the occasional hanging and swinging chains here and there. Bald and pancake-faced film security maven Wayne Petrucelli plays (okay, overplays) him as a cranky, slow-talking, nearly immobile evil character who is not the way he is for the reasons the legend states, trying for audience sympathy at the last moment, though it's hard to feel that. He's both villain and Melissa's protector, as he snarls and sibilant "S" lips out his dialog. He truly will make you appreciate Doug Bradley's equally stoic turn (if you have to ask who Bradley is, you may be reading the wrong blog; at least look him up).

In another Swiss cheese hole, Hellinger keeps telling her he "loves" her and wants her to join him in eternity, but it is never really explained why (unless I missed it in all the exposition). I mean, the first time she sees him she's a little kid, so that makes it even creepier. *Why* is she his "precious"?

For a low-budget film, despite my own crankiness, this was quite enjoyable, that is once you get past all the question marks, and the mysterians. Between the graininess of the image, the grittiness of the characters, there's blood and sex (and yes, nudity), and a film worth viewing if you enjoy indie horror, especially in the Giallo and '80s genres.

Holy Terror

Directed by Massimiliano Cerchi

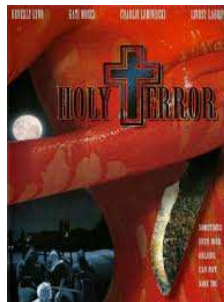
Rounds Entertainment

SGL Entertainment

MVD Visual

55 minutes, 2002 / 2014

www.mvdvisual.com



A possessed nun (played by the ironically Biblically named Katy Moses) needs souls to keep feeding on. Somehow, even though she never speaks a word, she manages to have a real estate agent that periodically (okay, often) rent out her house to young couples for that purpose. Mayhem eventually occurs.

The couple in this case is the beautiful and blonde Julie (Beverly Lynne) and her equally beautiful and blond hubby, David (Charlie Lubiniecki, who amusingly now goes by David Charlie). To celebrate they bring four of their friends, two women and another married couple, over for a housewarming party. By the end, you know very well that few will leave.

All the women are pretty, and the two men are just so gay. Now, I'm not saying this in a negative way, I just mean the actors are very obviously, well, gay. Hell, one even has earrings in both ears. My gaydar went through the freakin' roof. They are decent actors, but it was distracting. The only remaining real characters other than some brief appearances, is the real estate agent, Kane (Michael Brazier, who also co-produced the film with Cerchi), and of course, the nun.

Stylistically, Cerchi has obviously grown since *Hellinger*, but the story just does not get off the ground at all (it's his story, but the screenplay was written by Fratelli DiNotte. It's 45 minutes before anything really happens, and most of it is off-screen, even when it happens right then. For example, you see the arm come down to strike with a crucifix, but you don't see the hit, just the after-effect.

The writing is just terrible, honestly. One character is showering and she is soon covered in blood, shocked by it all of course. Then she calmly walks into the other room and jokes about it with her friends. Another person vomits solid blood for a full minute, and then calmly wipes the john, checks herself in the mirror, and walks out the door. I get freaked out if it's just puke, never mind blood, and she's blasé about it all.

The most egregious thing, however, is the fact that this film never gets off the ground. Even when the action sets into gear after a really long wait, it's anti-climactic because we really don't get to care about anyone, and the action level is so muted.

Most of the cast has a history of sex horror films. Well, the women anyway, and for the men, the credits are limited at best. As for Moses (aka the nun), this is her only appearance on official record (i.e., IMDb). The acting is actually much better than in *Hellinger*, and most of the cast more attractive (except for Shanna Betz, who would fit in well here), but sadly it's all in vain because, as one of the women say in this film, "So far this party has been very uneventful." I couldn't say it better than this self-referential gem.

So, even though this film has high quality filmmaking and acting, *Hellinger* is the reason to get this metaphysical twosome.

Trailer for *Hellinger*: http://youtu.be/z_seoHSkxHI

Trailer for *Holy Terror*: http://youtu.be/jeGCT6zNz_Q

Posted by Robert Barry Francos at 7:06 PM

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Max September 26, 2014 at 4:07 PM

It's actually Cerchi ! ;)
Thanks for the review !

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