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Arab Conspiracy (aka The Next Man/1976/Cheezy Flicks DVD)

Picture: C-   Sound: C   Extras: C-   Film: C+

After **Vanishing Point** (1971, see our Blu-ray review elsewhere on this site), Director Richard C. Sarafian was looking for more material that would work and be a hit. This included several ambitious theatrical film releases like **Lolly Madonna XXX** and **Sunburn**, but one that has sort of been lost is a Sean Connery film of all things that may be too politically incorrect for certain people, but is now out on DVD from Cheezy Flicks. **Arab Conspiracy** (aka **Double Hit** and **The Next Man**) is a 1976 release that Connery made while on a roll of great dramatic films.

In it, he plays an Arab diplomat who wants peace with Israel and make them an OPEC member! Well, that seems lofty then and now, but this was an ambitious film at the time and distributed by a company Connery and Michael Caine eventually sued out of existence for not paying them properly on profits for **The Man Who Would Be King**: Allied Artists.
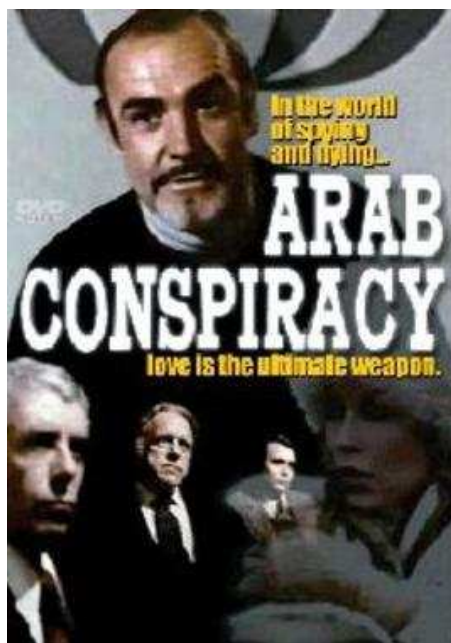
Connery's character represents Saudi Arabia and the idea is that he is playing a fictional version of a character that would or could become a prominent political figure or even Nobel Peace Prize contender for boldly trying to change the course of history. Of course, there are those who want to keep things the old way, no matter how many people are killed or the world suffers. In this, the film is saying what post 9/11 films like **Syriana** and **Munich** is, though the film is uneven when all is said and done.

This is certainly not due to lack of ambition or not understanding the politics of the situation. Sarafian co-wrote the screenplay with Morton Fine (of the original **I Spy** among many other great teleplays), Alan Trustman (**Bullitt**) and David M. Wolf done as a serious, mature, adult piece that tries to take advantage of having Connery on board in the lead. Cornelia Sharpe, Adolfo Celi (Connery's **Thunderball** co-star here too briefly), Albert Paulsen and a young Lance Henriksen are among the supporting cast that help.

There are also some interesting moments, from action sequences, to character development to visuals that forward the narrative. As much of the film takes place in New York City and has several interesting scenes at the United Nations, there are also a few moments the then-new World Trade Center towers are prominently featured as a possible beacon of hope, change and/or irony. This is an example of the kind of effort put into the film that makes it worth seeing, despite its age and mixed results.

The was not only one of Allied Artists' last films, but is also the last film from production company Artist Entertainment Complex (**Serpico**, **Dog Day Afternoon**) involving longtime producer Martin Bregman, though Bregman continued to be a major producer decades after and reportedly kept changing the film around too much during production. Serious film fans will want to catch this at least once, no matter how "cheesy" some of the results now seem. This is a full-length

The 1.33 X 1 color image may or may not be a soft matte frame, but the original film was 1.85 X 1 and this copy does cut well when you zoom in on it with a 1.78 X 1/16 X 9 HDTV. Sadly, Cheezy Flicks was not able to secure the best possible copy of the film and it looks faded and has serious detail issues. However, this was lensed by the very talented Director of Photography Michael Chapman (**Taxi Driver**, **Raging Bull**, **Hardcore**) and he pulls off a good

looking film even this transfer cannot get in the way of. The PCM 16/48 2.0 Mono is a little better, but the source is at a lower level than I would have liked and distorted throughout, but note this was an optical mono sound theatrical release. Extras include some Intermission shorts originally featured in theaters and previews for other Cheezy Flicks DVD releases.

You can order this DVD from the Cheezy Flicks website in the DRAMA section at:

http://www.cheezyflicks.com/

Just click on the CATEGORIES button on the upper left hand corner.

- Nicholas Sheffo