

## Rare Exports: A Christmas Tale: Blu-Ray Santa Claus Conquers the Martians Mardi Gras Spring Break

Tired of sitting around, waiting for the millionth showings of "A Christmas Carol" and "It's a Wonderful Life" every time December rolls around? Start your own holiday tradition by putting "**Rare Exports: A Christmas Tale**" on the old Blu-ray player and enjoying a truly twisted interpretation of the Father Christmas legend. According to European lore, Saint Nicholas once traveled in the company of a freakish little devil known as Black Peter. Together, they would judge the boys and girls to determine if they were deserving of gifts of sweets and nuts or lumps of coal ... or worse. It wasn't until commercialism subverted the true meaning of Christmas that Black Peter's role was reduced and St. Nicholas took on the characteristics of the Santa Claus found in Coca-Cola commercials. "Rare Exports" subverts the legend even more by adding a palpable aura of horror.

"Rare Exports" is set in contemporary Lapland, where reindeer herdsman are suffering from a mysterious shortage of migrating animals to hunt. At the same time, miners working for a foreign company have discovered within Korvatunturi Mountain the grotesque body of a long-buried creature, which bears a resemblance to paintings of Black Peter. And, where Black Peter lies, Father Christmas can't be far away. Here, though, there are several as-yet-unformed Father Christmases in the nearby forests and they all look as if they spend their summers living in a cardboard box in an alley off Times Square. They're scrawny, bearded, extremely dirty and not at all jolly. In the absence of reindeer, though, these nasty little men could prove to be a valuable commodity if trained to be bearers of good tidings in countries without Santas of their own. Already, they've been offered a considerable sum for the one specimen they've managed to trap. The trick will be rounding up other geezers and herding them into the pens once reserved for reindeer.

The idea for such an unlikely movie sprang from a pair of short films writer/director Jalmari Helander distributed as Christmas cards to friends and clients of his production company. They became an Internet sensation and are included in the Blu-ray package, along with interviews and making-of featurettes. For some bizarre reason, the good folks at Oscilloscope thought it would be a grand idea if they added an extra special treat, "**Santa Claus Conquers the Martians**," a movie that benefits not at all from being shown in hi-def. The 1964 kiddies' thriller is notorious for two things: 1) displaying no discernible production values, and 2) introducing unsuspecting audiences to 10-year-old Pia Zadora. Yes, it's a terrible movie. Fact is, though, I've seen plenty worse, including this week's entry "Mardi Gras Spring Break." "Santa Claus Conquers the Martians" remains a movie that is intended for the enjoyment of post-toddlers, not fans of "MST3K" ... if such a show was even conceivable in 1964. For the one or two people out there unfamiliar with Nicholas Webster's cinematic atrocity, the plot is simplicity itself.

An expeditionary force of green Martian commandoes endeavors to kidnap Santa Claus, who they blame for corrupting their children. That's right, American television is available on Mars. Instead of landing at the North Pole, however, they head straight to the house belonging to Zadora and her movie brother. Sensing that the spacemen are up to no good, the kids stow away on their rocket ship. They hope to warn Santa of the dastardly plan, but first are required to evade the phoniest polar bear in the history of the movies. Even if the title ruins the suspense, there's no need to spoil any more of the "fun."

Any list of the worst movies of all time that includes "SCCTM" and not "**Mardi Gras: Spring Break**" has no credibility whatsoever. It's so bad, it makes the raunch-fests "presented" by National Lampoon look like Neil Simon night on TMC. In it, three college seniors head for New Orleans for Mardi Gras, which this year corresponds somehow with spring break. The lure, of course, is the likelihood they'll see the breasts of hundreds of women trolling for beads. If not on Bourbon Street, then the countless wet T-shirt contests that pass for entertainment during any spring break. When the boys aren't soliciting tit-shots, they're vomiting, passing out, playing with their feces, trying to sneak into nightclubs, jumping off balconies, trying not to act gay and vomiting some more. Carmen Electra makes an extended cameo, but, sadly, remains uncharacteristically chaste. That's it. – *Gary Dretzka*