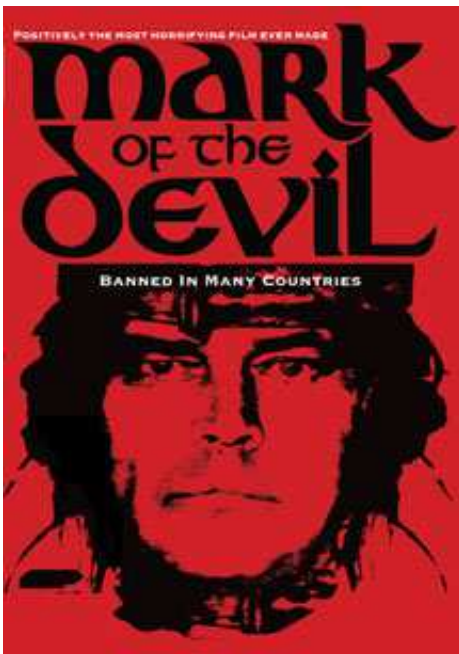


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Mark of the Devil (1970) Yack Pack DVD Review

December 31, 2012 No Comments

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In a small German village it seems that things could not get any worse. The poor villages live in fear of a cruel man named Albino (Reggie Nalder) who uses religion as a weapon to torture and steal from them. When Albino accuses someone of being a witch there is no escape from the ensuing torture and eventual death that will finally follow. When the beautiful waitress Vanessa (Olivera Vuco) rejects Albino's advances her fate is all but decided. Fortunately, the young apprentice Lord Christian (Udo Kier) intercedes, and stops Albino's torture of the young woman. Christian has come to town to announce the arrival of Lord Cumberland (Herbert Lom) who is removing the local witchfinders who he finds to be unworthy of the job.

The town hopes that Lord Cumberland will be just and a suitable replacement for the corrupt Albino but soon they learn that he is just as bad, if not worse than his appointed witchfinder. With the population dwindling and the executions rising, Lord Christian begins to question the motives of his master. Will Christian be able to overthrow the witchmaster and save the locals, including Vanessa, whom he has fallen in love with?

This German movie gained quite a reputation as one of the most violent exploitation movies of the 70s. With a thin plot based on history, the movie uses the story of Vanessa and Christian to move among the various scenes of torture and rape. Surprisingly the rape scenes are not explicit as one would expect for such a hardcore film (and no, I am not saying this with disappointment, merely pointing it out as some would be inclined to skip the movie due to those scenes).

Herbert Lom is good as the empowered Lord Cumberland but his character never really gets any depth other than a major inadequacy that he is compensating for. The same can be said for Udo Kier who's vacant expressioned Christian has a change of heart a little too late. The best performance has to be that of Reggie Nadler, who plays the deplorable Albino. He is just creepy as a villain. Also notable is Vanessa, who is played full force by Olivera Vuco. She plays Vanessa with a defiant independence that works well for the character.

Mark of the Devil is a movie that hangs its reputation on the torture and violence it portrays. The most notorious scene involves the removal of a nun's tongue. The movie is average by today's standards in terms of gore and brutality but it clearly helped to inspire films such as Hostel and Saw with its torture devices and desensitized villains.

My favorite thing about Mark of the Devil is actually the score. Starting a practice used by such films as Last House on the Left and Cannibal Holocaust, the title is a light and airy piece that contrasts with the brutality that viewers are in store for. It produces an odd, unsettling effect on the viewers.

Special features and extras kick off with the standard Cheezy Flicks offerings, including classic trailers and an intermission reel. These are straight from the grindhouse and look rough and authentic. Most intriguing is the one for I Drink Your Blood, which I was unaware that Cheezy Flicks had released. This movie is a classic tale of rabid bikers that fans of 70s cinema need to own. Also included is a reproduction of the Barf Bag that attendees were given in 1970 when viewing the movie. It's a fun touch but trust me, you won't be needing them to watch Mark of the Devil. My one disappointment is that the original ending that ended up on the cutting room floor was not included as an extra. I have never seen it but it added an eccentric supernatural twist to the movie that would have made the finale more memorable.

Mark of the Devil is a movie that I have been curious about for quite a long time. It is similar in tone and gore to Witchfinder General; however Herbert Lom's Lord Cumberland is an ill defined character and the movie's execution is a little lacking. This is a movie that fans of 70s exploitation are going to want to see but may not need in the collection.

Special Features:

Intermission

Trailers

Mark of the Devil Yack Sack

Mark Of The Devil is available on DVD now, courtesy of Cheezy Flicks Entertainment.



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