

MOVIE CITY NEWS MCN

Decades before “torture porn”

*was given a name and sub-genre of its own, the German-made ‘**The Mark of the Devil**’ tested the limits of how much simulated pain the typical drive-in and grindhouse customer could stand. Dubbed by its American distributors as being “positively the most horrifying film ever made” – they conveniently forgot “Santa Claus Conquers the Martians” — Michael Armstrong and Adrian Hoven’s gorefest was screened with an airplane barf bag for every ticket sold. (And, so does the DVD.) Reportedly banned in Germany, where it was titled “Witches Are Tortured to Death,” “Mark of the Devil” is still capable of raising a shudder or two. The many scenes of torture derive from the bloodlust of 18th Century priests and inquisitors who believe that any beautiful, large busted woman who wouldn’t sleep with them must be a sorcerer or blasphemer and, for that, deserves to die under unspeakable circumstances. Genre buffs will enjoy seeing a 26-year-old Udo Kier playing the understudy of the Grand Inquisitor (Herbert Lom) and his chief henchman (Reggie Nalder). He discovers the truth after enjoying a night of bliss with one of the women (Katarina Olivera) accused of heresy. (In 1970, at least, Kier could easily have been mistaken for David Cassidy.)*

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