

Mark of the Devil (1970) (DVD Review)

Director: Michael Armstrong

Where to get it: MVD

Udo Kier is a witch hunter apprentice to Herbert Lom. He believes strongly in his mentor and the ways of the church but loses faith when he catches Lom strangling Reggie Nalder to death for calling him impotent. Kier begins to see for himself that the witch trials are nothing but a scam of the church to rob people of their land, money, and other personal belongings of value and seduce beautiful big breasted women. In the end, the towns people revolt, Herbert Lom escapes and poor Udo is tortured to death by the towns people with the his own torture devices. This film contains very strong graphic torture including a women's tongue being ripped out of her head, nuns being raped(in the opening credits), and lots of beatings

Everyone loves a good witch hunt every now and again. And this movie here at least gives us a few very interesting characters while goes through the motions. It also tosses in some oddly calm music that I think may be the same music (or close to it) as was used for the intro to *Hobo With a Shotgun*. It's an odd picture overall. It looks more classy than the norm, but still comes off as an exploitation film. We have nudity mixed in with some violence. While some of the violence is pretty cool (burning people alive and tongues being ripped out), I don't think you'll need the barf bag that the cover makes the suggestion that you will need. Still, it's not too shabby for it's time. I will at least give credit to the film for its overall presentation.

The film builds a few layers to it's overall story. It does drag however in a few spots in the middle. That dragging is enough to bring the film down just a bit, but not too much to cause any sort of alarm. The witch hunting (as corrupt as it is) turns into a bit of a cat and mouse game before the film wraps up. And when it does wrap up, if you've managed to invest into some characters it might bug you a bit. The thing is, there's not a lot here to make you care about the characters. Is it well made? Yes, it is. Does it have some nice violence? It sure does. But the thing is, as pretty as the cast might be, you still can't get emotionally attached to it. It's still not bad for what it is.

Chuck Conry

