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Jess Franco's Cravings Of The Depraved (Helter Skelter / Dr.Wong's Virtual Hell)

Written by: [Michael Den Boer](#) on December 17th, 2010



Theatrical Release Date: USA, 2000 (Helter Skelter), USA, 1999 (Dr.Wong's Virtual Hell)

Director: Jesus Franco

Writer: Jesus Franco

Cast: Mavi Tienda, Lina Romay, Exequiel Caldas, Anafía Ivars, Rachel Sheppard (Helter Skelter), Jesus Franco, Anafía Ivars, Howard Vernon, Lina Romay, Pedro Temboury, Rachel Sheppard, Robert King, Joaquin Phre, Tommy Chase, Sol Clink, Casey Yip (Dr.Wong's Virtual Hell)

DVD released: December 7th, 2010

Approximate running times: 81 minutes (Helter Skelter), 97 Minutes (Dr.Wong's Virtual Hell)

Aspect Ratio: 1.33:1 Full Frame

Rating: NR

Sound: Dolby Digital Mono Stereo English

Subtitles: N/A

DVD Release: [SRS Cinema](#)

Region Coding: Region 0 NTSC

Retail Price: \$9.95

By the mid 1990's the output Jess Franco, a once prolific filmmaker had slowed down considerably. Down, but not out and never one to rest on his laurels. In 1998 he would begin a partnership with a production company called One Shot Productions. That would result in 12 films over a seven year period. Beginning with *Mari-Cookie and the Killer Tarantula in 8 Legs to Love You* and culminating with *Snakewoman*. Over years Jess Franco had forged many similar partnerships. With his collaborations with Harry Towers and Erwin C. Dietrich. Widely being regarded as his two strongest collaborations. This brings us to his One Shot Productions. Which has divided his fan base more than any other area of his six decade career as a filmmaker. The two films included as part of this double feature are part of the 12 films

that he made for One Shot Productions.

Helter Skelter: This film was reportedly based on the works of the Marquis de Sade. And while Jess Franco's is no stranger to works of the Marquis de

Sade. Having based seven previous productions and one aborted production on the works of Marquis de Sade. Unfortunately when its comes to



Helter Skelter his ninth and to date final foray into the works of Marquis de Sade. Any semblance of the works of the Marquis de Sade is at best only coincidental.

To say that *Helter Skelter* has a minimalistic plot is understatement. There is no attempt made to explain who everyone is and what are their motivations. Basically what we have here is a incoherent film that has been haphazardly pieced together from other One Shot Productions. With the film that is takes the most of its footage from being *Dr. Wong's Virtual Hell* (included as part of this double feature release). Content wise the film is made up of three erotica sequences that contain lesbians and some S & M action. Having seen my fare share Jess Franco films over the years. I have become accustomed to abstract style of storytelling and need to experiment cinematically. With that being said there is very little to appreciate or even take away from *Helter Skelter*. A film that firmly assumes its place as one of his weakest films as a filmmaker.

Dr. Wong's Virtual Hell: A diabolical criminal named Dr. Wong with the assistance of his daughter abduct a young woman and demand large ransom from her father.

Thankfully there is a lot more plot with this film. Then the aforementioned *Helter Skelter*. The film even opens up with a lengthy pro-log which explains who Dr. Wong is and why he is a dangerous man. After this initial set up however things slow down considerably with a lengthy song and dance erotic scene that Jess Franco is most known for. If ever a scene could be accused of being padded. This would be the scene. Things slowly but surely get back on track when the film returns to more dialog driven moments. In the grand scheme of things even though the plot is a lot of fun. It is nothing more than your basic evil mastermind story with everything culminates the heroes and the evil mastermind in a showdown for the ages.

Besides the aforementioned pacing issues. One area that some viewers may have a hard time digesting is the film's visual style. Which use a wide array of techniques. Most of which call attention to themselves. The one technique that I did enjoy the most was the comic book inspired dialog. Where bubbles appeared above characters heads as they talked. Once again Jess Franco recycles footage from one of his other films. The film in question this time is [The Rites of Frankenstein](#). These inserts all involve footage with Howard Vernon. A frequent collaborator of Jess Franco's, who had passed away a few years before. This film even ends with an inscription in honor of Howard Vernon.

The DVD:

Helter Skelter and *Dr. Wong's Virtual Hell* are both presented in their original 1.33:1 full frame aspect ratios. Both films were shot on videos and while there are some minor flaws. These flaws are more inherent to the source, than the transfers. Both transfers look pretty good considering the limitations of the source materials.

Each film comes with one audio option, a Dolby Digital stereo mix in English. The scores benefit most from these audio mixes as they generally sound robust. Unfortunately dialog often sounds underwhelming and at times muffled. Also there are instances of distortion and background noise that vary in degree.



This release comes with a static menu that has two options, *Helter Skelter* or *Dr. Wong's Virtual Hell*. There is no extra content. Overall SRS Cinema gives Jess Franco fans, who missed on these films previous DVD releases. A chance to pick them up at a their most affordable price yet.

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