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Jess Franco's Deviant Lust (Mari-Cookie & The Killer Tarantula / Blind Target / Red Silk / Vampire Junction)

Written by: [Michael Den Boer](#) on January 1st, 2011



Theatrical Release Dates: USA, 1998 (Mari-Cookie & The Killer Tarantula), USA, 2000 (Blind Target), USA, 1999 (Red Silk), USA, 2001 (Vampire Junction)

Director: Jesus Franco

Cast: Lina Romay, Michelle Bauer, Linnea Quigley, Amber Newman, Analia Ivars, Robert King, Pedro Temboury, Mavi Tienda, Rachel Sheppard (Mari-Cookie & The Killer Tarantula), Rachel Sheppard, Tatiana Cohen, Oliver Dennis, Lina Romay, Roger Pavlovich, Linnea Quigley, Steve Barrymore, Paul Lapidus, Mavi Tienda, Robert King, Joaquin Phre, Brian D. Horrorwitz, Peter Evanko, Exequiel Caldas, Emilio Schargorodsky, Johnnie Carson, Genevieve Geneslay, Hazzel Lennon (Blind Target), Lina Romay, Christie Levin, Paul Lapidus, Anna Stern, Ron Franciscus, Carlos Braun, Exequiel Caldas, Guillermo Agranati, Domiziano Arcangeli, Laura Levin (Red Silk), Samantha Olsen, Lina Romay, Viktor Seastrom, Fata Morgana, Paul Lapidus, Exequiel Caldas, Steve Barrymore (Vampire Junction)

DVD released: December 7th, 2010

Approximate running times: 85 minutes (Mari-Cookie & The Killer Tarantula), 86 Minutes (Blind Target), 73 minutes (Red Silk), 95 Minutes (Vampire Junction)

Aspect Ratios: 1.33:1 Full Frame (Blind Target / Red Silk / Vampire Junction), 1.85:1 Letterboxed Widescreen (Mari-Cookie & The Killer Tarantula)

Rating: NR

Sound: Dolby Digital Mono Stereo English (All Films)

Subtitles: N/A

DVD Release: [SRS Cinema](#)

Region Coding: Region 0 NTSC

Retail Price: \$19.95

Mari-Cookie & The Killer Tarantula: When affluent citizens start disappearing. The police retrace all of their last known whereabouts to a nightclub that is run by a Avant garde punk rock star. Who is this mysterious artist and what is her connection to the missing?

The context in which one watches a film can contribute greatly to whether a film works or does not work for said viewer. *Mari-Cookie & The Killer Tarantula* was my third foray into the wonderfully weird world Jess Franco. A filmmaker who's prolific output is as widely inconsistent as it is fascinating to watch. Since watching *Mari-Cookie & The Killer Tarantula*, I have seen about one hundred more of Jess Franco's films. Even though there tends to be more films that lean towards the bad. When things do click, it is like finding celluloid nirvana. Years later when I revisited

Mari-Cookie & The Killer Tarantula my initial reaction for the film seems unfounded. Sure there a few areas where the film could be improved. And the yet the end result is wickedly perverse film that could have only been made by one person, Jess Franco.

The plot like so many Jess Franco films merely serves as the skeleton that holds together his visual tapestry's. Content wise the themes explored in things film are ones that have dominated the bulk of Jess Franco's cinematic output. The story revolves around a woman who is the offspring of a tarantula. Yes, that is correct. The film even opens with a vivid reenactment which shows the tarantula entertaining the vagina. This motif is recurring throughout the film as several of the film's composition are farmed through objects that resembled a vagina. Other recurring obsessions of Jess Franco's include scenes at a nightclub and a woman who performs on a spider web ([The Diabolical Dr. Z](#)).



Out of all of Jess Franco's post 1980's films. This film features his strongest cast which includes scream queens Michelle Bauer (*Cafe Flesh*) and Linnea Quigley (*Night of the Demons*) and Jess Franco's muse Lina Romay in the dual role Mari Cookie and Tarantula. Performance while everyone are extremely enjoyable in their respective roles. It is Lina Romay's performance that steals every scene.



The one area in which this film's excels the most is its subversive humor. In one scene a sheriff, who is portrayed by Michelle Bauer questions a stripper. Only this is not your typical interrogations. The sheriff likes the strippers ass, while she answers via moans. One moan for yes and two moans for no. The sheriff's outfit is also a hoot. She is dress in bikini bottoms, no top, a leather jacket and a cowboy hat. The one area which I found most lacking were the erotica moments. This was not that much of surprise. Since most of Jess Franco's post 1980's films are more miss than hit when it comes to erotica. When all is said and done, the chances of *Mari-Cookie & The Killer Tarantula* ever being regarded as one of Jess Franco's better films are slim. That being said it is film that grows on you and those who have yet to submerge themselves into the Jess Franco's cinematic output should try one of his more accessible films first.

Blind Target: When an author, who has written a controversial book about a dictator that has assumed power in her homeland. She finds herself caught up in an assassination plot. Jess Franco is no stranger when it comes to directing espionage thrillers having helmed films like, [Two Undercover Angels](#) and [Kiss Me Monster](#). Unfortunately when compared to these aforementioned films *Blind Target* pales in comparison in every way. First off *Blind Target* is a tedious thriller that is devoid of tension and quickly becomes predictable. Other areas in which this film is lacking is its lethargic pacing and laughable fight scenes. It is not surprising that this film comes up short in so many ways as it is the antitheses of what one would expect from a Jess Franco. The erotica feels forced and the visuals are often sedated. This film's only saving grace is Lina Romay's performance as a sadistic government agent, who specializes in torture.

Red Silk: The plot revolves around a pair of flirty female private eyes. Who are willing to do anything and anyone. In between jobs they hang out naked sunbathing in their pool or lounge around their luxurious pad wearing very little. With these ladies it appears that clothing is optional. Also being detectives is not their only gig. They also have a racy night club show which involves them making out with a dildo. The main case for the female detective is to try to take down a prominent citizen, who likes to abduct women and keep them prisoner. What starts off as your typical case of blackmail. Quickly turns deadly when someone who works the prominent citizen turns on his boss.



The plot has a few entertaining twists along the way that help keep things moving along. With the biggest surprise being left for the film's finale. Content wise *Red Silk* owes a lot to Jess Franco's *Red Lips* films ([Two Undercover Angels](#) and [Kiss Me Monster](#)). And just like those two films, *Red Silk* plays things for laughs. Humor aside this would not be a Jess Franco film if we're not an ample amount of nudity. And this film delivers and then some in this regard. With its two leads Lina Romay and Christie Levin spending most of their screen time in their birthday suits. Surprisingly their most memorable moment has them fully clothed (in disguise). When they go to meet the prominent citizen, who is being blackmailed. When all is said and done. Despite its shortcomings *Red Silk* is an enjoyable enough farce that comes closer than the majority of his other One Shot Productions to recapturing the style and mood of Jess Franco's more revered films.

Vampire Junction: A journalist receives an invitation to interview a reclusive doctor. Weird things start to happen, shortly after her arrival in what looks like a town out of the old west. When the sun goes down. She is visited by a trio of vampires, who want to make her one of them.

Trying to make sense of this one is futile. The plot often meanders aimlessly in between lengthy erotica sequences. And to top things off is an absurd ending that should have arrived at least an hour before it did. To say that someone should have patience while watching this film. This would be an understatement. Since even the most devoted Jess Franco fans will find this film difficult to digest. Characters motivations are murky, the acting is mediocre and the erotica sequences are underwhelming. When all is said and done, *Vampire Junction* is so far removed from what Jess Franco is capable of as a filmmaker. That one has to wonder who the intended audience was for this film?



The DVD:

Blind Target, *Red Silk* and *Vampire Junction* are presented in their original 1.33:1 full frame aspect ratios. *Mari-Cookie & The Killer Tarantula* is presented in a 1.85:1 letterboxed widescreen. All four of these films were shot on video and while there are some minor flaws. These flaws are more inherent to the source, than the transfers. All the transfer the image tends to look soft, black levels are generally weak and colors at times look muted. Also there are some mild instances of combing present.

Each film comes with one audio option, a Dolby Digital stereo mix in English. Background noise and distortion varies in degree throughout. Also range wise all of these audio mixes are rather limited.

The release comes with two dual layer discs. Each disc comes with a static menu. Disc one contains *Mari-Cookie & The Killer Tarantula* and *Vampire Junction*. Disc two contains *Blind Target* and *Red Silk*. There is no extra

content. Overall another affordable release from SRS Cinema.

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