



Modules

- Home
- Current & Past Issues
- Donations
- Feedback
- Forums
- Search
- Sleepover Girls & Contests
- Submission Info
- Surveys
- Web Links
- Your Account

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Film Reviews: Women Ordered to Love (1961) - By Roger Carpenter

Posted on Friday, February 01, 2013 @ 03:12:47 Mountain Standard Time by Duane



This film is a true

grindhouse oddity. Originally produced in West Germany in 1961, and making its American debut in 1963, I expect this film never made it beyond the drive-in market before being lost in obscurity. Directed by Werner Klingler, who directed perhaps 30 or so films beginning in the mid-1930's, this is sometimes erroneously pointed to as a precursor of the Nazisploitation films that were primarily a mid- to late-1970's affair.

Originally titled Lebensborn, the English title on the film is actually Ordered to Love while the DVD cover uses Women Ordered to Love as the title. Of course, Lebensborn is the well-known Nazi breeding policy of producing "racially pure" infants during World War II. The plot concerns a group of 30 women who volunteer for the Lebensborn breeding program. They assume—or it is implied by the

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SS—that these women will get to choose their perfect mate from good Nazi soldier stock. But once the soldiers arrive, it quickly becomes apparent that the women aren't going to get to choose their mates for themselves; rather, the doctor on the premises compares anatomical information to pair them with the most suitable male for breeding purposes. Unfortunately, this all takes time, and while the SS do their best at trying to keep the soldiers and the women separate, there are at least a handful who fall in love before the selection process is completed, making them very disappointed when the mate they choose is not the mate they want. One young lady commits suicide by jumping out a window while the star of the picture, Maria Perschy as Doris Korff, decides to escape with her lover, who just so happens to be a Nazi traitor under the guise of a war hero.

While IMDb lists the running times as either 87 or 91 minutes and also uses the keyword of "female nudity", this version seems to be a trimmed-up, tamer version that clocks in right at 80 minutes in length. There is no nudity and no more than a couple of kisses in the sex department, and the violence is nearly as nonexistent, consisting of a couple of drops of blood on a hand or head and people dying by gunshot by merely clutching their chests and falling to the ground like the old westerns that were on TV when we were kids. It's hard to imagine, even with 10 extra minutes tacked on, that this film would approach anything like true Nazisploitation fare. In fact, comparing this film with that particularly nasty subgenre is quite unfair. It appears that Klingler was attempting to provide a fictionalized dramatic account of two lovers within an actual historical backdrop. It is still bottom-of-the-barrel filmmaking and fairly poorly done, but nonetheless it appears to be a serious attempt at

historical drama with none of the perversions so (in)famous with the later Nazisploitation films. In fact, one of the sleaziest aspects of Nazisploitation is the abuse of Jews while nary a Jew is around in this film.

Another possible explanation for the shorter running time is simple film damage. The film hasn't been cleaned up but has just been slapped onto a DVD "as is", which means that the original negative that was used was most likely in rather poor condition. This can be easily seen in the soft, blurry picture throughout the running time of the film, most noticeably during quick camera movements. There are several quick jumps that probably coincide with the end of a reel, the part that is most easily damaged. Many times the projectionist would simply snip the worn edges and splice the two reels back together again. That seems to be the case with this particular film as several scenes end right in the middle for no apparent reason. In one case, one reel ends, we see the typical film stock edges as it runs out, then there are 3 or 4 seconds of nothing but white before the scene picks up where it left off—a clear indication of film damage and no real attempt to fix the damage.

By picture's end, Doris and her beau decide to go on the run. Her beau gets shot and she is arrested and sentenced to hang as a traitor. But her sentence is withheld until after the birth of her baby, which will be racially pure and can be used in one of the Lebensborn projects. In keeping with the downbeat atmosphere of the film, Doris is denied even the knowledge of her baby's gender. But this is at the end of the war and on the day of her execution the prison is being evacuated. Doris is forced to march along with the other prisoners until the road is bombed by the allies. She escapes and makes her way back to her old Lebensborn

dormitory only to find everyone either dead or gone, including her baby. But Klingler is an old sentimentalist, so he allows the character of Doris a modicum of happiness when she discovers an orphaned child shaking the corpses of her parents who were killed in an attack by the allies. She happily picks the child up and the film ends, with child saved and perhaps Doris saved as well.

Even at 80 minutes the film becomes a bit tedious, but fans of Eurohorror might enjoy seeing Maria Perschy, who starred in a handful of 1970's horror films such as Exorcismo (with Paul Naschy), the third installment of the Blind Dead series, The Ghost Galleon, and The People Who Own the Dark. She is quite lovely and definitely the best part of this no-budget potboiler.

The film has been released by MVD Entertainment, but aside from Maria Perschy fans or those viewers who want to see one of the pioneering films that eventually developed into Nazisploitation, most probably won't want to bother with this one. For more information, see <http://mvd2b.com>.

Friday, February 01, 2013 @
03:12:47 Mountain Standard
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