

AGENT 69 JENSEN - IN THE SIGN OF THE SCORPIO

(A.k.a. AGENT 69 JENSEN I SKORPIONENS TEGN; EMMANUELLE IN DENMARK)

From the instantly familiar-sounding saxophone tune played out over the opening credits, it's obvious what the major influence behind this film is: Blake Edwards' phenomenally successful series of PINK PANTHER films.

Sure enough, Jensen (Ole Soltoft) is a bungling detective much in the same vein as Peter Sellers' Inspector Clouseau.

We first meet him irritating customers as the inept clerk of a grocery store. But it's all just a front: behind the store, the Intelligence Agency runs their secret agent business. After yet another bollocking for annoying a customer, Jensen pleads with his Robbie Coltrane-lookalike boss (Poul Bundgaard) to give him some decent work to do.

The boss, knowing that Jensen's particular weakness is the fairer sex, gives the fool a mission that he believes he can't possibly botch: three days earlier, German scientist Neubrau died and left behind a microfilm containing photographs of his revolutionary discovery - a substance that will replace oil. The Agency has the microfilm safely, but need to transport it to the CIA for processing. All Jensen has to do is babysit the courier en route ...

There's just one hitch: the microfilm is also eagerly sought by master criminal Scorpio (Karl Stegger), who is but two steps behind the Agency at every turn.

Due to a mix-up, innocent and jobless Arnold (Soren Stromberg) winds up getting mistaken for the courier and he is sent off on his travels with the ever-clumsy Jensen in tow. By coincidence, Arnold's parents were spies for the agency years earlier, and were slain by Scorpio following a bout of afternoon bonking (which we get to enjoy in explicit flashback).

Meanwhile, Arnold and Jensen set off on their journey by train. Inevitably, they quickly run into feisty females who cause all manner of problems for them (most of which involve Jensen losing his pants). Unbeknownst to the pair of halfwits, they are also in grave danger - Scorpio and his gang are hot on their heels, as are the Agency, who now believe Arnold is working with Scorpio to sabotage their mission.

The plot isn't so much convoluted as it is confused. It's a fast-moving race through ever spy spoof cliché and convention conceivable, breaking frequently to indulge in slapstick comedy and softcore nudity. Peppered with Carry On-style soundtrack noises (a cock crows when a penis is unveiled; a loud "twang" sounds when a bra is thrown into a character's face) and caricature-style performances, it's silly but hard not to like.

It's facile, juvenile and dumb. It's also good fun if you allow yourself to ride with it. The actors appear to be having a great time, hamming it up in line with the camp script admirably. That none of it makes any sense is of little consequence: this is bawdy, one-thousand-miles-per-hour sex comedy done Danish-style. It's broadly played, often daft but rarely hilarious and - of course - sexy.

The women in the film are a cute proposition indeed, including Gina Janssen and Anna Bergman (Ingmar's daughter, no less!). While most of the main players only indulge in soft sex shenanigans,



there is a fair amount of hardcore footage thrown in to the mix. This may alarm some viewers given the overall tone and pace of the film. It certainly does feel a little out of place upon initial viewing, and was added at the time of filming to accommodate the European demand for such content in 1977. Some of it is clearly inserted with substitute performers, but in other scenes it's clear that the cast members (hi, Judy Gringer) are making whoopee for real. Either way, it's easy to soon grow accustomed to. Ahem.

Fellatio, cunnilingus and penetration are all shown graphically during these choice scenes. There are no money shots, but the sex in these scenes is enough to quantify the film as "hardcore". However, this is very much first and foremost a "comedy". And a dubiously enjoyable one at that.

On a technical level, the film is tightly edited, briskly directed by Werner Hedman, and shot with a real flair for colours and striking compositions. Aurally, the film boasts a fabulously bouncy score from Bertrand Bech. It really helps the pace to keep ploughing onwards.

Points of interest, aside from the occasional graphic blowjob and plenty of exposed labia, include Torben Bille (THE SINFUL DWARF himself!) as one of Scorpio's karate-savvy henchmen.

The film is presented uncut in it's original 1.78:1 aspect ratio. The picture is incredibly smooth and clean considering the film's age and obscurity, and is enhanced for 16x9 TV sets. Flesh tones are accurate, blacks are solid and detail is pleasing. Whenever images are soft, it appears an intention of the filmmakers (the lovemaking scenes, chiefly). Indeed, the transfer is a minor triumph in itself.

Audio is provided in the original Danish mono track, which holds up very well indeed. There's no hiss or dropout to speak of, and the mix is a well-balanced, loud affair. Optional English subtitles are provided.

The disc from Smirk is graced with a very arresting animated main menu page, allowing for a colourful montage of hardcore sex clips set to lively 70's-style jazz.

From there, an animated scene-selection menu is equally easy on the eye, and offers access to the main feature via 12 chapters.

The only extra on the disc is a well-edited gallery of stills that runs it's natural course in just over two-and-a-half minutes. Again, the focus is largely on the hardcore sex footage. The gallery is set to a great piece of lounge music which sounds uncannily like the theme to a 70s TV show ...

A sterling effort from newcomers Smirk, who on the evidence of this are going to be a company worth keeping an eye on - in terms of quality DVD presentations, and extremely intriguing titles.

Nice.

Review by Stu Willis

Released by Smirk

Region 1 - NTSC

Not Rated

Extras :

see main review

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