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THE SCARLET WORM (2011)

BY LOUIS DOERGE

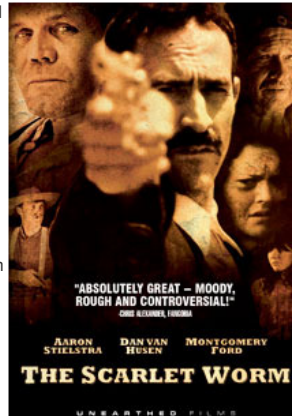
“Django the Awesome.”

Directed by Michael Fredianelli

One might recall how, over the past ten to fifteen years, right-wingers and various Christian organizations have been appropriating the harsher sounds of rock and roll as a means of widening their audience and creating more of a – for lack of a better word – “fun” image for themselves. It can be argued that the parties involved in Michael Fredianelli’s 2011 western, *The Scarlet Worm*, use similar methods to promote an anti-abortion message. In lieu of gut blasting guitar chords, however, Fredianelli implements blood, breasts and an acute knowledge of the Spaghetti Western classics.

While I’m not entirely confident that an anti-abortion message was Fredianelli’s intention, it’s really not of import. I personally feel that it is unfair to judge a film based solely on its politics. While its themes placed my liberal sensibilities a tad on the uncomfortable side, *The Scarlet Worm* is actually a spectacular piece of low-budget movie-making. The assemblage of extraordinarily peculiar characters, masterful action sequences, and gorgeous camera work make it well deserving of one’s time, particularly if one is a western enthusiast. The reason for this being that this is possibly one of the most unique westerns since Sergio Martino’s hatchets-versus-pistols classic, *Mannaja: A Man Called Blade*.

Fredianelli’s tale combines Monte Hellman’s resourceful minimalism with Sergio Corbucci’s visionary concepts. The film’s protagonist, Print - who is portrayed masterfully by actor/film critic, Aaron Stielstra – is a psychotic hired-gun, who’s propensity for creative killing (i.e. stuffing a man into a severed cow) often conflicts with his Christian morals. When Print is chartered to kill a notoriously cruel brothel owner - played by the always-engaging Dan van Husen – for enforcing sadistic abortions on the women under his employ, the film enters into philosophical realms that seem to provide a well-balanced contrast to its gruesome six-shooter battles and nude delights. I guarantee you haven’t seen gun-slinging celluloid of this caliber before.


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