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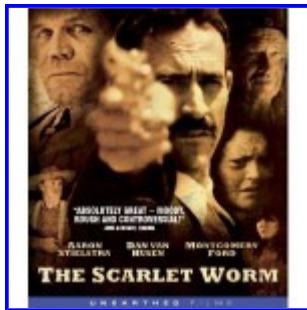
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[Scarlet Worm \(Unearthed Films\)](#)

By

[Upchuck Undergrind](#)

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THE SCARLET WORM is a sideswipe. It catches you by surprise. Even if you're not a western fan, there's a great chance that, if you like subversive, intelligent filmmaking, you'll like, even love, THE SCARLET WORM. This non-traditional – but in some ways arguably more realistic – western is as much a masterpiece as the eloquent, meaningful assassinations of Print, the central anti-hero of THE SCARLET WORM. He's a philosophical hired killer (and church deacon) with a moral compass, however unique. His killings, like THE SCARLET WORM itself, are rife with symbology. There's a message. That's why being saddled with a cocky trainee and being given a job whose timeline doesn't allow for the elaborate set-up and skillful execution of Print's usual style sets things going in unexpected ways. To boot, the job isn't what it seems. THE SCARLET WORM is an unmitigated success on all levels. The story is artful and brilliant. The characters boast depth and their coming to life via smart writing and gorgeous performances pull you into a tale with dimension and thought. THE SCARLET WORM is a philosophical movie, Print its rogue mouthpiece. Balancing Print's powerful character – a performance by Aaron Stielstra – is the turn by Dan van Husen as the abortion-giving whorehouse owner targeted by Print's hirer, Mr. Paul – another sharp performance, this one by Montgomery Ford. I could go on, since every major role in this film is carried off with aplomb; there's no skimping on the less central roles either. And the subtextual, but not pushy, content of the movie give it an art film edge that never interferes with the pure storytelling. THE SCARLET WORM – whose title, by the way, is a biblical reference – is an original entry in the western genre and an important film worth seeking out by cinephiles in general.

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