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The Scarlet Worm

If there is such a thing as a “cool” movie, “The Scarlet Worm” is it. Yep, it took me by surprise – a pleasant one, I shall say. This is what creative filmmakers can do with a low budget, generating engaging, delightful and kick-ass entertainment.

The movie opens in 1909, at the Paul Ranch’s property line. Print (Aaron Stielstra) discovers a guy trying to steal a cow. Print informs the poor fellow that he is “an American at heart,” and there was “no sense of style, aesthetics” anymore. He also tells the unlucky bandit that the single action Colt pistol that he was using was crap, and, while aiming a patriotic Smith and Wesson at the failed robber, he stresses that, “This is the kind of gun that God might carry,” pulling the trigger with no hesitation. It turns out that Print was fatigued of killing. He owns a barber shop in town, and wants to do one final job; he wants to “paint his masterpiece.” By accident or design, he got his wishes, when Mr. Paul (Montgomery Ford), a former assassin himself, who basically owns the town, hires him to “terminate” Heinrich Kley (Dan van Husen) “with extreme prejudice.” Kley is a brothel owner and bible fanatic, who performs bloody abortions on his prostitutes. At the same time, Print has to train a new – at times inept -- assassin.

“The Scarlet Worm” is a smart film, well directed by Michael Fredianelli. It is fresh, funny at times, with smart dialogue, and a great look, thanks to the cinematography by Michael Martinez. It has elements of Clint Eastwood’s spaghetti westerns, Jonah Hex (the graphic novel, that is), “Apocalypse Now,” and more. If there is justice, it shall become a cult film. Ah, and there is also plenty female nudity! The Blu-ray edition includes audio commentaries with writer David Lambert and others, making-of feature, and more. (USA, 2011, color, 93 min plus additional materials). Reviewed on June 3, 2012. Unearthed Films / MVD Visual.