

Movie City News

Because There Are Enough Stooges In Hollywood



The Scarlet Worm

Reportedly made on a budget of \$25,000, “**The Scarlet Worm**” is a remarkably authentic-looking Western, with production values that belie its bargain-basement roots. With the possible exception of “Deadwood,” I can’t recall an oater that addresses the question of unwanted pregnancies in Old West prostitutes. Here, a veteran gunslinger is hired to kill a brothel owner who forbids his ladies from carrying babies to term and uses tools that might have been invented in the Dark Ages to perform abortions. If these scenes aren’t nearly as graphic as they might have been, it’s still made abundantly clear that the brothel owner doesn’t have the best interests of his employees at heart. It’s all about money. Somewhere along the way, the bounty hunter picks up a trainee, who falls in love with one of the prostitutes – none of whom looks as if she’s taken a bath in weeks – and must be trained in the sniper’s art. Aaron Stielstra, who bears a passing resemblance to Sacha Baron Cohen, is surprisingly credible as the gunman, while the other mostly unknown actors perform way above their salary grade here. Of all the do-it-yourself movies I’ve seen lately, “Scarlet Worm” would rank among the best in getting the best bang for its bucks. In the featurette “Of Worms and Dogs,” we learn how a diverse group of genre buffs, critics and dreamers came together to accomplish something everyone else in the world merely talks about doing: making a movie that someone other than family and very close friends would pay to see.

– Gary Dretzka

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