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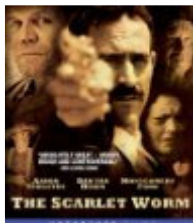
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Scarlet Worm Review

[Drama](#), [Reviews](#), [Screenshots](#) | February 17, 2012 by [Matt Paprocki](#) | [0 Comments](#) and [1 Reaction](#)



[Scarlet Worm. The \[Blu-ray\]](#)

Aaron Stielstra, D...

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In an era of internet-spawned projects, *Scarlet Worm* is a stand out. Six strangers are brought together by their love of film over the 'net, drive cross-country to take up residence in a foreclosed home, pool together whatever money they had, and made a movie.

If you **don't** know that, you'll probably wonder why the brothel is clearly just a barn with a few sacks laid over it as décor. That would be because all of the interiors take place in one single location, just decorated to match the needs of the scene. You have actors who are reading lines (not acting them), and the no-budget stylings that even student films might scoff at.

For all of that, there's still something here, the vintage Western narrative able to weave between the flubs, slap dash locations, and hard to swallow performances. It's all held down by Aaron Stielstra, playing an aging hired gun who believes in his actions, going so far as to take pride in how they're performed. They're legendary, Print (Stielstra) making a name as he stuffs his victim in the carcass of a cow, a death fitting the crime.

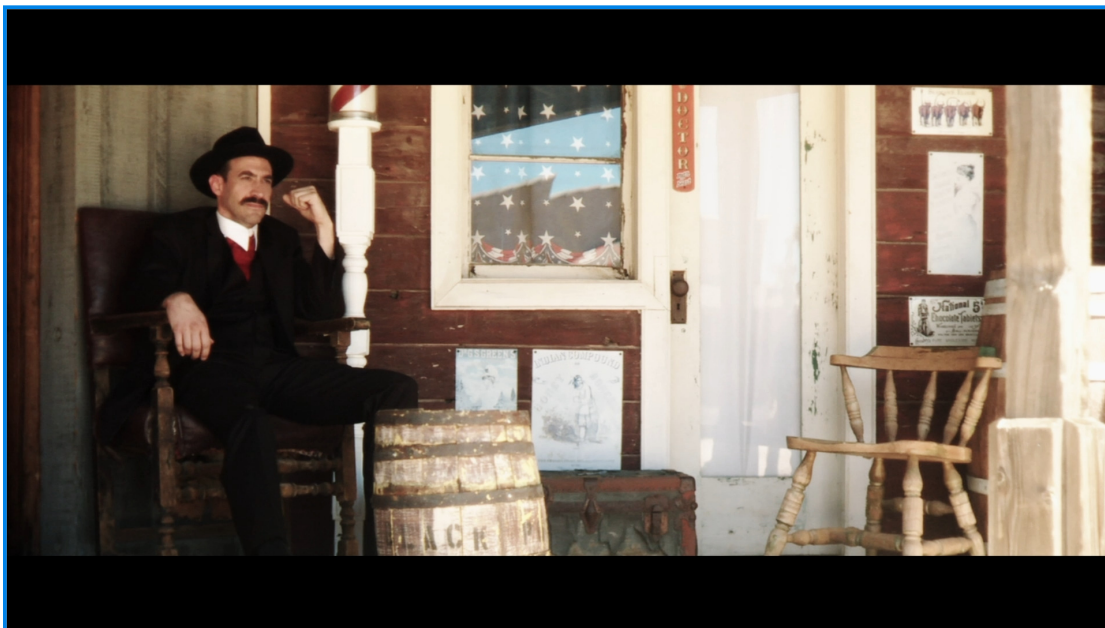
His mistake, unknowingly, is taking on a young apprentice, hot headed and seemingly lacking the mindset. They're pushed into action to take down an unflinching brothel owner, one that aborts his clientele's babies in a fashion barely deemed acceptable in the old west. *Scarlet Worm* depicts everything with a vicious attitude and unflinchingly graphic style.

That's part of the problem too, the gore overstepping boundaries, even if that is to assume there were any. Filmmakers here want to show it because those artists of years prior did so without ever considering if it was necessary. An aborted fetus surely has more impact as an unseen entity, not blatantly staged for multiple edits.

There's a lot of that in *Scarlet Worm*, two of the prostitutes carrying on their morning conversation in the nude as if it adds anything to the feel. Then again, anything to save on wardrobe costs.

Regardless of its motives, the film brings back a style lost, a steady camera willing to savor the sights, even if they're puny in scale. To *Scarlet Worm*, that doesn't matter. It's a labor of love, working within its constraints to tell a rich, winding story. After all, that's what film is for in the first place, production values be damned.

Movie ★★★★★



Shot on digital, there's an attempt at style that never comes across. The brutal, white-out inducing contrast does more to hide the meager scale than add visual flair. Everything feels blown out, a blistering heat insinuated, if never actually found.

Scarlet Worm will suffer from a little of everything, from compression that ranges between YouTube to standard cable down to murky, imprecise medium shots. Close-ups seem to hit their mark later, the first half rendering fine detail lost to the contrast and general blandness of the camera's capabilities.

The encode to Blu-ray itself doesn't produce any substantial concerns. The AVC codec here is healthy, beefy, and more than adequate to handle the material as presented. That leaves those compression complaints solely on the source. Saturation is bright, save for some flashbacks that tinge themselves a distinctive shade of sepia.

There also seems to be some type of filter employed, a bizarre haze that gives the piece the look of a watercolor. At least, that's *seems* to be the intent. The reality is that it looks more like a smudged lens. Whatever the case, this was never going to be much of a looker in terms of fidelity. That's the nature of shooting on this type of scale. In terms of Blu-ray though, there's not much here to see.

Video ★★☆☆☆

The disc simply crumbles when it comes to audio, the Dolby Digital 2.0 stereo as dry, flattened, and scratchy as possible. Without true sound design, *Scarlet Worm* captures almost everything directly on set, which means background noise is constant, and ambient sounds are a bother. Dialogue is tough to discern, if not lost entirely to the muffled, unclean nature of the recording.

Again, it's all to be expected. At the very least, there's a sense of directionality when the guns start firing off. The stereo effect is there, if a little lost in the shuffle so to speak. Gunfire is dulled to a bare minimum. Even releasing this uncompressed won't save it.

Audio ★★☆☆☆

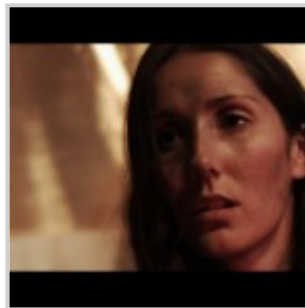
There's a firm level of involvement in the extras from those who created the piece, going so far as to record two commentary tracks. Writer David Lambert joins most of the tiny cast for the first, with actors/producer Mike Malloy and Eric Zaldivar take the reigns of the second chat. *Of Worms and Dogs* is a brief making-of that reveals the story of how this came together with plenty of random snippets inserted as people have fun behind the scenes. A string of trailers remain.

Extras ★★☆☆☆

Full disclosure: This Blu-ray was provided to us for review. This has not affected the editorial process. For more information on how we handle review material, please visit our [about us](#) page to learn more.



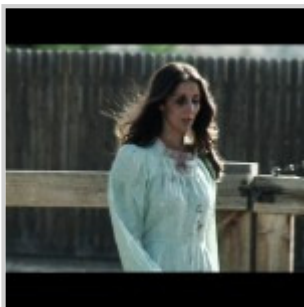
Landscape scorched by contrast
@ 4:09



Passable definition @ 58:42



Wow. That's compression all
right @ 1:04:52



Example of the filter/dirty lens @
1:12:38



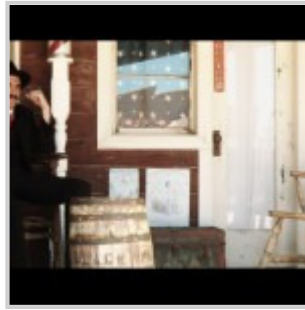
Crisp, sharp, detailed @ 1:16:41



Rich texture @ 1:22:46



Facial detail showing through @ 7:52



12:08



Contrast is hard to miss @ 19:24



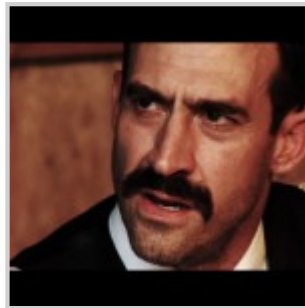
Refined detail @ 27:42



Best close-up here @ 36:37



The brothel owner @ 40:05



Firm detail @ 46:16

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