

Fango Flashback: "ALUCARDA"

Written by Bekah McKendry

Tuesday, 20 December 2011 16:35



A few weeks back, I was searching for rare horror titles at Los Angeles' Amoeba Music (for those of you who have never been there, I highly recommend a visit; it's a treasure trove of rare and unusual cult films). On this particular trip, I happened upon ALUCARDA. How had I missed this title? I'm a sucker for nunsploitation and a die-hard fan of weird '60s and '70s psychedelia. So ALUCARDA (a.k.a. SISTERS OF SATAN) was pretty much a mental and visual gift.

Straight outta 1975, ALUCARDA was directed by Juan López Moctezuma, who cut his surreal fangs working with the god of trippy, Alejandro Jodorowsky, on EL TOPO. Part of the new wave of Mexican filmmakers, Moctezuma directed THE MANSION OF MADNESS in 1973 before resurrecting Satan and killing some nuns in ALUCARDA. Set in a Catholic convent for orphan girls, the film sees the strange teen Alucarda befriending the recently orphaned Justine. Their relationship quickly gets weird...like, "Oops, we accidentally had a blood orgy" weird. Somewhere among the oaths of devoted friendship, breast-slicing and heavy petting, the two gals end up pledging allegiance to Beelzebub. Then everything gets batshit crazy!

The girls develop mental powers and possibly become possessed. So they do the only natural thing, and start taking down nuns and orphans while chanting their love for the dark lord. The nuns fight back and host a grand exorcism, which (not unlike the previous satanic blood orgy) includes copious amounts of nudity, gore and ecstatic dry-humping amidst the festivities. Who will prevail, our satanic teens or the repressed nuns...and how many will get naked and bloody in this process?



Beyond the ultrashocking themes in ALUCARDA, I have to give some credit to the costumer on

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this one. Alucarda is clad in all black, like a colonial My Chemical Romance groupie, though it works in comparison to the other orphans in their lusciously colored garb. But the overwhelming applause should go to the nuns' outfits. These ladies of the Lord are not clad in the typical regalia—no, no. These nuns are decked out in dingy white gauzy layers that have been stained with blood long before the spillage is ever introduced on screen. I spent the first part of the movie confused as to why our holy rollers were already bloody, but the effect was disturbing as hell. It later became apparent that their grue-soaked garments are due to excessive self-flagellation, beating themselves with hooked whips as a way of demonstrating their piety to the big man upstairs.

The effect of these befouled costumes is remarkable. Disturbing and grotesque, the nuns almost look like mummies or (and pardon my crudeness here) large walking tampons. And as all my male readers cringe and get sick to their stomachs—yes! That's exactly the same feeling you'll get watching these women on screen.



It's no surprise that this film has often been compared to Ken Russell's THE DEVILS. Both are trippy, visceral, filled with controversial material and portray religion as a confused and often blind faith of the weak. Additionally, it's no coincidence they were both released around the same time, along with our own Stateside religious shocker THE EXORCIST. This was a time of change within religion and post-war examination of faith, and also a time when controversy and exploitation sold films...so why not maim some nuns?

Shot entirely with an English-speaking cast, ALUCARDA is a dose of fine surrealistic international filmmaking without all those pesky subtitles. Released by those crazy gents over at Mondo Macabro, the ALUCARDA DVD comes packed with bonus extras, including a great interview with filmmaker Guillermo del Toro, who pays credence to the film as a stalwart example of Mexican filmmaking at its finest.

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Satanic, bloody, controversial and nude. Come partake in this international sin!