

---

# Nuns and Guns: The Bizarre World of Italian Cult Cinema

## Andrew Graves

### Week 1: Introduction – Mondo and Exploitation Films

#### Italian Cinema 1930s

- Horror films banned under Mussolini
- Cinema often more escapist than propagandist but was heavily tainted by Mussolini's Fascist ideals
- Glossy American style productions – 'White Telephone' films

#### Italian Cinema Post War

- After Mussolini's defeat Italian filmmakers were forced to rethink 'the language of cinema'
- Partly due to political realities
- Partly due to practicalities – the main studios where the 'White Telephone' films were produced had largely been destroyed
- Directors developed a 'moral conscious' - they took their cameras onto the streets. Italian Neo Realism

#### Italian Genre Cinema

- Because copyright laws concerning film properties in Italy differ from certain other countries, it's perfectly legal to pass your movie off as a sequel to another.
- Most films of this era filmed 'silently'
- Often the international productions meant that actors were speaking different languages
- The replacement of sound including Foley sound effects give the films a heightened, unreal feel
- Scores by composers like Ennio Morricone also helped solidify the uniqueness of these productions
- Filming 'silently' was advantageous because it meant many productions could be made at the same time

#### Mondo Cane (1962)

- Directed by Gualtiero Jacopetti, Paolo Cavara and Franco Prosperi
- Written by Gualtiero Jacopetti and Paolo Cavara
- Produced by Gualtiero Jacopetti and Angelo Rizzoli
- Narrated by Stifano Sibaldi
- Cinematography by Antonio Climati and Benito Frattari
- Edited by Gualtiero Jacopetti
- Music by Riz Ortolani and Nino Oliviero

---

# Nuns and Guns: The Bizarre World of Italian Cult Cinema

## Andrew Graves

### Mondo Films

- Mondo or 'World' films were usually documentaries (or at least sold as documentaries) which tapped into the pre-permissive society's obsession with the sexual or unusual
- Also referred to as 'shockumentaries' these movies, though hiding under the guise of depicting reality in an educational sense, really sought to exploit the public's hunger for 'freak show' style extreme imagery
- The idea of colonialism is also represented, arguably feeding into xenophobic feeling – foreign worlds are presented as dangerous, untamed and importantly 'non-human' places full of exotic horrors
- Often presented other cultures as exotic or offensively 'savage'

### Typical Elements

- Sex
- Titillation
- Violence
- Mating rituals
- Nudity
- Animal cruelty

### American Pre-Code Films

- The Mondo Films tapped into similar 'exploitation' areas as many pre-code films of the Hollywood Golden Age
- Before King Kong, there was already a girth of 'Jungle Movies'
- Whether documentary or drama, both tended to be exploitative in tone and advertising
- The lack of general knowledge about foreign, undiscovered places meant that filmmakers could play fast and loose with scientific fact
- Cheaper 'poverty row' productions in America were also an inspiration for Mondo Films

### The Man from Deep River (1972)

- Directed by Umberto Lenzi
- Written by Francesco Barilli and Massimo D'Avak
- Produced by Ovidio G. Assonitis, Stenio Fiorentini, Giorgio Carlo Rossi and Marcello Soffiantini
- Cinematography by Riccardo Pallottini
- Edited by Eugenio Alabiso
- Music by Daniele Patucchi