

Italian Trash and Stereotypes at Their Highest: A YouTube Phenomenon

Ottorino Cappelli (June 24, 2008)



An Italian/Australian (?) trash movie parody reaches 2.000.000 views on YouTube...

In my endless search for Italian/American oddities on the web, I have just come across a remarkable Italian/Australian oddity: "The Italian Spiderman."

The film is a parodical reference to non-American trash movies of the 60s and 70s that misappropriated popular American superheroes, and it is being presented as a fake trailer for a non-



existent film, allegedly produced as a student film at Flinders University of South Australia. The first installment of the feature film premiered across the Internet on the 22nd May, 2008, with further installments to follow on a weekly basis. The point is: according to YouTube it has reached 2 million viewers...

It isn't easy to understand exactly who is behind the whole thing. A Wikipedia article says that "The Italian Spiderman" is currently being developed by Alrugo Entertainment, an Australian film-making collective formed by Dario Russo, Tait Wilson, David Ashby, Will Spartalis and Boris Repasky. Their website, however, is permanently down, allegedly for having reached "its bandwidth limit."

But the YouTube metering system is something rather difficult to manipulate... So the large YouTube audience of this movie's trailer is in itself rather phenomenal. Also, of course, "The Italian Spiderman" is a magnificent collection of stereotypes about italians abroad - if you have the stomach and the irony to stand it...

I'll try to get hold of the "Alrugo brothers" in the next weeks. Meanwhile, for those who like the genre, here are the [Wikipedia](#) [2] description and a few episodes from You Tube.

From Wikipedia:

The film operates on the fictitious premise that Italian Spiderman was a 1968 Italian action-adventure film made by Alrugo Entertainment, which was deemed "un-viewable" by Italian distributors and never released. The story has the only 35mm print of the film being lost at sea, but recovered in the present day, thereby allowing Alrugo Entertainment to release the film through YouTube.

Episode 1

Alrugo Entertainment was founded in 1961 in Palermo, Italy by orange-farming mogul Alfonso Alrugo. After accruing considerable wealth in the citrus trade, Alfonso decided to start a film production company that produced films that he felt "did the job". Alfonso was very supportive of up-and-coming practitioners and helped to nurture the blossoming careers of a spate of Italian directors like Gianfranco Gatti, Massimiliano Buonatemi, Carlo Zoffa and of course Giacomo Dentibiachi. Alrugo Entertainment began producing low budget, nudie-cutie pictures such as Busto Busto (1961) and Sex Cops II (1962). During this period, Alfonso was to discover two men who would play a large role in the next part of his life, director Gianfranco Gatti and actor Franco Franchetti. In 1964 Alrugo went into production of Gatti's opus, Italian Spiderman. Italian Spiderman was a heavily adapted and abridged interpretation of a novel Gatti had read during a summer in Moldova entitled Death Wears a Hat. When applying for the option, however, the author felt Italian Spiderman held such little resemblance to his work that payment was not necessary and felt that his name should be distanced as far as possible from the production. After three years of turbulent production and about \$15 million later (a sum unheard of for any production of the time) Italian Spiderman was finally completed in 1968.

Episode 2

Even though Alrugo had survived the epic production period, a venture that Gatti described as



"opening the gates of hell" (Gianfranco Gatti wrote about Italian Spiderman in his autobiography *Opening the Gates of Hell*), the company was in debt. There was no money left to distribute the picture and Alfonso had pulled every last favour he had during the production process. In a desperate attempt to show Italian Spiderman to the world, Alfonso sent the only existing print across the Atlantic on a cargo ship to a distributor friend of his in New York - the ship, however, never reached its destination. In the summer of 1969, Alfonso Alrugo closed the gates to Alrugo Entertainment and donned his orange-picking glove once more. Gianfranco Gatti went on to direct hardcore pornography and Franco Francheti died in a spearfishing accident. On Alfonso Alrugo's dying wishes, his two grandsons Vivaldi and Verdi Alrugo led an expedition to scour the Atlantic for the cargo ship carrying the only existing print of Italian Spiderman.

On the 9th of January 2006, after four years at sea, they discovered the sunken vessel with the cans intact inside. In the excitement of this amazing discovery, Vivaldi and Verdi reopened Alrugo Entertainment and spent two years restoring the full-length print of Italian Spiderman from its watery grave. Vivaldi and Verdi believe that the Internet is the best device to expose Italian Spiderman to the world. In November 2007, they uploaded the theatrical trailer and in 2008, ten remastered excerpts from the feature will be broadcast for free over Myspace, YouTube, Yahoo and other video-hosting websites. Hopefully through the Internet, the world will now have a chance to behold Alfonso Alrugo's dream: Italian Spiderman.

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Links

[1] <http://iitaly.org/files/italian-spiderman-trailer>

[2] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Italian_Spiderman