We all know the controversy: people have walked out of the screenings, exhibitors have been arrested, it's been banned in countless areas, and even Netflix has refused to be associated with this film. It took the cast iron balls of the folks at Invincible Pictures to properly release A SERBIAN FILM and give it the respect it deserves. It's a good movie, and I'll tell you why shortly, but I must preface my praise with this – you probably shouldn't  watch this film. It is everything you think it is and sometimes it's a little bit worse than you think it might be. But, like myself, I know horror fans are driven and compelled to absorb the unknown and controversial. Simply because I have told you not to watch this film means most of you are going to finish this review and run at breakneck speed to watch A SERBIAN FILM. But you have been warned. This film is incredibly disturbing…

Somewhere in the deep recesses of my brain I have a list of disturbing movies that, no matter how hard I try, I will never forget. I can never un-watch them. When I mentally recall these movies, I still get the same churning stomach bleak and disgusted feeling I felt when I first watched them. And it is not by any means gore related. I can cheer my way through MERMAID IN A MANHOLE and find a certain eloquence in the oozing body fluids, but yet Catherine Breillat's FAT GIRL, for instance, will haunt me till my last dying breath. I can now add A SERBIAN FILM to the list.

The film tells the story of Milos, a porn actor who is looking for his last big role before he can retire from the industry and live out his days happily with his wife and son. He takes one last film gig from a mysterious and wealthy porn director named Vukmir. Milos gets wary when he starts being directed to perform some pretty disturbing acts like having sex with abused women and watching "newborn porn". Yes, you read that correctly, and you can't unread it. Try actually seeing it. See, I warned you. ..

Milos tries to quit, but is kidnapped, drugged, and then wakes up days later only to find a stack

of tapes documenting what went on during the past few days. What went on? It is like a checklist of every form of depravity. Really I feel like the writer just searched through topics and actions that would touch on humanities most basic sacred ideals and then fucked them, literally.

So the ultimate goal of a reviewer is to decide whether or not they liked the film and would recommend it to the audience. No, I would never recommend this to gen pop. I cant say I like A SERBIAN FILM, but I do have a lot of respect for it. Subject matter aside, the filmmaking is breathtaking. Gorgeous lighting paints each scene in a misty diffused mix of shadow and light. The grungy production design bleeds and screams almost as much as the characters. Even the carnage has a brilliant quality to it. The blood-splatter is vivid in the film's stark industrial setting. The effects are graphic and visceral, gritty and unrestrained. The acting…well, this movie would not get the strong reactions it does it the acting was not equally believable, so much so you become invested in these characters enough to feel the depravity along with them.

When reviewing this film, I must also address the filmmakers' intention. As director Srđan Spasojević has stated in many interviews, this film was meant to by a symbol of what the Serbian government did to it's own people and country. So the ultimate question is- does A SERBIAN FILM convey this successfully? I will say to a slight degree yes. You leave the movie feeling like you have had your inner-self beat till there is no point to go on living. But, do I have anymore understanding of the plight of the Serbian people or there sensibilities? No way. Actually knowing it was supposed to be about Serbia changes my understanding of the film very little, if any at all. Many films are transgressive to make powerful statements about something or an issue- Passolini's grim SALO for example. But A SERBIAN FILM does not convey its message well. Instead it comes across as gratuitously repugnant. I applaud this as well but not nearly to the same degree. It is well-filmed, but if the director's point was to convey a message about the Serbian people, it got lost in the endless killing and fucking.

But the film has something, an almost meta- artifice. At one point during an incredibly gruesome part of the film, the onscreen director yells out "Now that's filmmaking". As my stomach was churning, I thought about how viscerally this film was affecting me and how very few films ever do that. Maybe this is what filmmaking is about- having a deep (even chemical) affect on the viewer.

Now for the stinger- the BluRay DVD release has been cut down from the original. After some of the controversy where the film was banned from Stiges, a private screening was held and the exhibitor was later arrested on child pornography charges for showing the film. Due in part to this Invincible played it slightly safe and cut just a few minutes out of it. Don't worry. All your favorite scenes are still there and accounted for. A few are just edited down a tiny bit to keep the authorities from raising their eyebrows to their hairlines. As for bonus features, there are none. What? Were you expecting a blooper reel?

A SERBIAN FILM does not pack any sucker-punches. You know what you are getting into. So you do partake? Well, do not watch this film with family, girlfriends, co-workers or anyone else who may later judge you for being able to withstand such brutality. Or better yet, just go to YouTube and watch some of the reaction videos of people viewing A SERBIAN FILM. At least then, you'll be able to sleep tonight.