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Impetigore

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Impetigore

Abstract

This is a film review of *Impetigore* (2019) directed by Joko Anwar.

Keywords

Horror, Javanese, Indonesia

Author Notes

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Impetigore (2019), dir. Joko Anwar

Joko Anwar's film *Satan's Slaves* was a box office success in 2017 and was the highest grossing horror movie in Indonesian history, so for fans of Indonesian horror, this is a much-anticipated film. Although the special effects are not that realistic, the story is unique with an almost fairytale like quality.

Maya was raised by her aunt, and knows little of her parents except that they are dead. After some challenges at work and a confrontation with someone from her past, she and her friend Dini decide to go to the village she was originally from to see if there is any inheritance so they can start a new company. Unfortunately, the women soon realize that the village is under a curse, brought upon them by Maya's ancestors. Related to the title, it does indeed look like a very advanced and deadly form of impetigo, which only impacts newborns. Sadly, for Maya, the villagers believe she holds the key to the cure.

It is worthy to note that Anwar uses children and babies in his films as both victims and sources of horror, which may bother viewers. Apparently, this was also a marker of *Satan's Slaves*. While a direct affront to many taboos, the style of the special effects means that this is not hyper realistic, but again, more of a fairy tale style (like the original Grimm's, not our sanitized versions).

The film shows many strong female characters and many strong bonds between women as they help each other through birth, business endeavors, and fighting for their lives. It also shows a country that is divided in some ways, between traditional and modern practices and beliefs, rural and urban living, and even by language: some of the elders speak Javanese, while the younger people do not. This reminds me of some American horror films like *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, where rural people and their way of life can be unknown and terrifying to outsiders.

Throughout the film we learn of witchcraft, intergenerational trauma, and surprisingly, traditional puppetry (a central part of Javanese culture) figures prominently.