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Alien 2 on Earth (Blu-ray / DVD)

Alien 2 on Earth Belinda Mayne Ciro Ippolito Midnight Legacy

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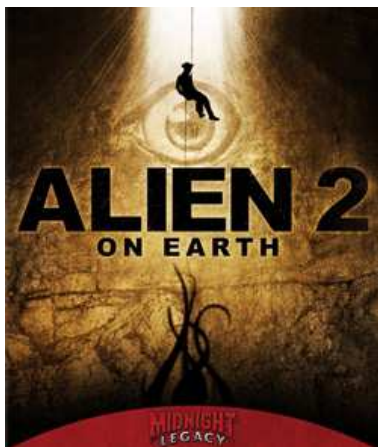


By Masked Slasher
March 10th, 2011

Starring Belinda Mayne, Mark Bodin, Michele Soavi

Directed by Ciro Ippolito

Distributed by **Midnight Legacy**



At the risk of sounding like an old codger, *Alien 2: Sulla Terra* is the wonderful product of a bygone era. A time, pre-globalization, when the world seemed a lot larger and unscrupulous movie producers could make a fast buck off the Hollywood machine without people realizing they weren't legitimate (unlike today where everyone knows *The Asylum* is full of shit). *Alien 2* wasn't the first Italian riff on worldwide box office successes (*Beyond the Door* followed in *The Exorcist's* wake in '74 and even Fulci's *Zombi* was notoriously fashioned as a sequel to Romero's *Dawn of the Dead*), but it could be the most delightfully shameless.

Opening with a barrage of stock footage, we learn that a space shuttle has returned to earth minus its entire crew of astronauts. The throwaway exposition establishes that the mission has gone horribly awry, and that something deadly has hitched a ride back to earth on the now-abandoned probe. Our narrative follows a group of spelunkers whose ultimate misfortune is coming into contact with a mysterious alien rock. It doesn't take long for this nefarious piece of space junk to give way to a sparsely-glimpsed monster that can take possession of its host. Of course, it takes a while for the alien presence to be known and our characters are already miles below the earth when this happens. Things go poorly for these sods as the monster bursts through faces, skulls explode into tiny bits of gore, people lose their minds and *Cemetery Man* director Michele Soavi hammers away on an ancient typewriter he somehow managed to conceal during their initial descent. Oh, and the climax of the film occurs in an abandoned bowling alley.

As one might guess, *Alien 2* isn't a very good film. Its greatest offense is that it's slower than molasses. Even at 84 minutes, an appalling amount of screen time is eaten away by people driving to and from their destinations. And when people aren't driving they're taking their time doing other things. There's a protracted scene featuring a guy rowing a dinghy to shore, leaving the viewer to revel in every last detail. When our characters rappel into the cave's open mouth, we're there alongside them ... for far too long. This is not a film that's in a hurry to tell its story. Of course, the intrinsic problem here is that there isn't any story to tell.

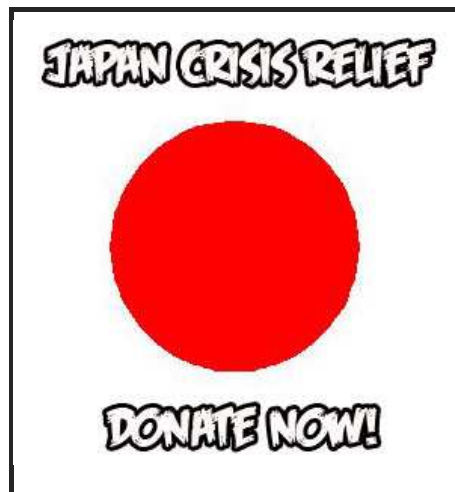
Going into *Alien 2* needs to be done with proper expectations. I hosted a screening of it at my place back in November when Midnight Legacy's first Blu-ray pressing was released. When it was over, the room was divided. Some people had been delighted by the film's nonsensical approach to storytelling, the amazing and meditative folk song about solving one's problems by the sea and the endless examples of bad dubbing and questionable dialogue choices. Others were just bored out of their minds. Both reactions are acceptable ones, and it's probably best to determine which camp you're in before even bothering with this sucker. If excessive stock footage, offensively stereotypical back characters, child death and lots of padding are up your alley then by all means ...

To be fair, it's not all bad. Director Ciro Ippolito manages some stylish moments that break up the tripe quite nicely. The cave descent is an impressive sequence, opening on the helmet light of one of our spelunkers with



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the rest of them lighting up the darkness one-by-one. It establishes some thick atmosphere while cementing the isolation of our principal cast. There's also a maddening camera pan (running north of two minutes) that leads up to the triumphant reveal of our titular creature (it's spoiled in the trailer). Even the climactic confrontation – while silly – places the camera in the creature's mouth – sprucing things up with some nifty POV shots. He also enlisted the help of Italian rock group Oliver Onions, who enliven *Alien 2*'s lugubrious first act with a creepy score that heightens the anticipation of an alien invasion. Ippolito might've been a 'hack' director in the eyes of many but it's worth noting that even the bottom-rung of Italian genre filmmakers demonstrated an eye for style time and time again.

Alien 2 won't play all that well outside of a very specific audience set. As a sequel to *Alien* it's non-existent (and no, the creatures themselves don't resemble everyone's favorite xenomorphs) but that's not why you're here. A healthy dose of nonsense (along with a side of bloody gore FX, of course) can really hit the spot every once in a while and this Italian oddity certainly succeeds in that respect. Seriously, give me this over James Cameron's bloated official sequel any day.

And I'll take start-up label Midnight Legacy, too. With their first release out of the gate they've given Euro fans an eye-popping reference grade disc. This AVC encode is the epitome of a flawless high definition presentation. There are vibrant colors ranging from the yellow jumpsuits of the actors to the natural palate of crystal clear shorelines and mountainous terrains. Flesh tones are natural and authentic – no waxy faces or disappearing wrinkles here! The whole presentation is wonderfully film-like and is capped off by some of the most amazing black levels I've seen on Blu-ray. *Alien 2* is a dark film – one that must've been positively nightmarish to endure on those fourth-generation bootlegs that have dogged the convention circuit for years. Midnight Legacy offers inky blacks that are ripe with detail: watch faces emerge from total darkness without any pesky banding issues, and look at varying degrees of detail visible within the shadows. This is wonderful, fantastic stuff. It should be noted that the film opens with some lousy stock footage (and said footage is intercut throughout the first act) but do not be deterred – this transfer will impress even the most jaded high def junkies out there.



For their audio presentation, Midnight Legacy has given us a DTS-HD Master Audio 2.0 track. It sounds very good: dialogue is strong and the sound FX are appropriately effective without overpowering. There is a slight hiss, but this seems to be a result of the aged audio elements. Believe me, it doesn't detract. There isn't a whole lot that can be done here but this is a solid, if unspectacular, way to hear *Alien 2*.

And now we're on the subject of supplementary material. There isn't much offered but since Midnight Legacy has pretty much smashed their video presentation out of the park, they've got to have some way to go up with their next release. What is here is a *spoilerish* trailer culled from the Dutch VHS, and an 11-minute series of FX outtakes (no audio). Nothing terribly memorable.

With their incredible freshmen release of *Alien 2 on Earth*, Midnight Legacy proves they're the Criterion Collection for Euro Horror fanatics the world over. This film isn't for all tastes but if you're willing to acquaint yourself with the absurdist proceedings you're going to have a good time. With a perfect high definition presentation this disc is essential viewing for you Italian horror junkies. And now that March is here, we're left salivating over the possibilities as to what Midnight Legacy might release next.

Special Features

- Dutch VHS Trailer
- Special FX Outtakes

Film

3 1/2 out of 5

Special Features

1 out of 5

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