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Sci-Fi

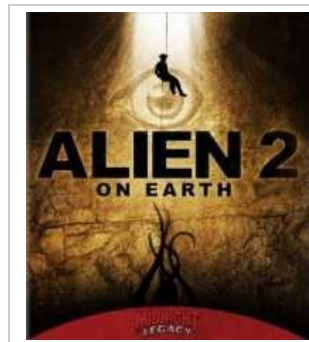
Alien 2: On Earth

Now *that's* Italian!

Rod Lott

March 29th, 2011

One year after Ridley Scott's "Alien" terrified 1979 moviegoers, "Alien 2" presumably baffled them.



Not a sequel, but an unabashed rip-off, Italy's "Alien 2: On Earth" — or "Alien 2: Sulla Terra," as the untranslated credits read — takes the Hollywood concept from outer space to an underground cave, some 150 feet below Earth's surface. There reside blue, breathing rock/egg-like things containing slimy pink creatures able to rip your face off, as one poor little girl with ungodly hirsute arms discovers on the beach. They've recently staked a claim on our planet after a failed space mission — represented by copious grainy stock footage — returns with dead astronauts aplenty.

A team of scientists jumps into a Griswold-style family truckster, dons spelunking gear and descends into the cave where many will meet their grisly, gooey fates. The film expends almost no effort to introduce these characters, so you'll come to know them by labels like Woman with Psychic Headaches Who Might Be in ABBA, Her Near-Mulleled Boyfriend Who Looks Like a Bee Gee, Woman Who Enjoys Orange Crush, Guy Who Takes a Typewriter, and so on.

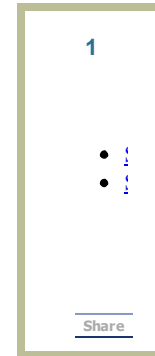
The blood spills bright and thick in this flick, like house paint from a tipped-over can, perhaps best exemplified when one explorer has the unfortunate experience of having his head be choked clean off by an alien thingie while hanging upside down. Falling to the cave floor, the darn noggin — safety helmet still attached — practically bounces.

Super-gory effects, poor English dubbing, a guy drinking from a Del Monte can with a straw, and a synthtastic Oliver Onions score — at once swinging and unsettling — all combine for a joyous experience in B-movie heaven. It's as if writer/director/producer/madman *Ciro Ippolito* (aka *Sam Cromwell*) were trying to show up *Scott* in every way — "Think in space, no one can hear you scream? Well, what about in a bowling alley, *Ridley*? Take that!" — but lacked the budget and brilliance. He did succeed in one aspect: The iconic chest-burster scene of "Alien" is outdone by "Alien 2"'s face-burster scene, albeit following one of cinema's longest-ever pans.

The movie ends with a sentence superimposed big and bold, but again, it's in Italian, so your guess is as good as mine (or Google's language tools). I'd like to think it reads something like, "And you thought our awesomeness ended with ravioli and the breasts of *Sophia Loren*."

Anyone who complains it's boring just doesn't get the point of its numerous pleasures. "Alien 2" marks the first release out of the gate for upstart cult label *Midnight Legacy*, which promises to specialize in showcasing obscure genre titles in the best possible quality, befitting of Blu-ray technology. You can see they've achieved that here, not only because the movie has never been available in the U.S. unedited, but also because the included trailer demonstrates just how ugly the image would've appeared in lesser hands.

The number "1" on the box's spine suggests that, like *Criterion*, the output of *Midnight Legacy* will be worth collecting. Given this first impression, I'm inclined to believe them. —*Rod Lott*



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