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## CAST

**David Hemmings** Marcus Daly  
**Daria Nicolodi** Gianna Brezzi  
**Gabriele Lavia** Carlo  
**Macha Méril** Helga Ulmann  
**Eros Pagni** Calcabrini  
**Giuliana Calandra** Amanda Righetti  
**Gluco Mauri** Giordani  
**Clara Calamai** Marta  
**Nicoletta Elmi** Olga

## CREW

Directed by **Dario Argento**  
Produced by **Salvatore Argento**  
Executive Producer **Claudio Argento**  
Production Manager **Angelo Iacono**  
Story and Screenplay by **Dario Argento & Bernardino Zapponi**  
Director of Photography **Luigi Kuveiller**  
Production Designer **Giuseppe Bassan**  
Film Editor **Franco Fraticelli**  
Music by **Giorgio Gaslini and Goblin**  
Costume Designer **Elena Mannini**



## DARIO ARGENTO'S DEEP RED

by Alan Jones

*Deep Red* (*Profondo rosso*, 1975) is Dario Argento's undisputed giallo masterpiece, and requires an arsenal of superlatives to do it justice. Coming between his early 'Animal Trilogy' thrillers – *The Bird with the Crystal Plumage* (*L'uccello dalle piume di cristallo*, 1970), *The Cat o' Nine Tails* (*Il gatto a nove code*, 1971) and *Four Flies on Grey Velvet* (*4 mosche di velluto grigio*, 1971) – and his later surreal supernatural extravaganzas, *Suspiria* (1977) and *Inferno* (1980), this breathtaking mystery is a clearly transitional work. With one foot in the intricately constructed whodunits of his past and the other in the more flamboyant, mosaic style of his Grand Guignol future, *Deep Red* takes the Argento brand of technical bravado and deranged shock tactics that made him world famous in stunning new directions – to create an artistically rewarding and truly terrifying magnum opus, a pulse-pounding descent into a baroque vortex of madness that begins when a celebrity psychic senses the identity of a murderer at a parapsychology convention, and becomes the killer's next victim.

British musician Marcus Daly (David Hemmings) witnesses the clairvoyant's brutal death and gets hopelessly embroiled in the police investigation. Obsessed with the idea that he is forgetting some crucial detail at the scene of the crime, Marcus risks becoming either the chief suspect or another fatality. From these narrow plot threads, Argento weaves one of his most imitated films, imaginatively staged with high-powered visual dynamism and choreographed to a landmark progressive rock score.

It's the murder set pieces in his films that have gained Argento a peerless cult standing, and *Deep Red's* catalogue of carnage has rightfully become the stuff of legend. From broken glass execution and boiling water drowning to mantelpiece teeth bashing and neck chain decapitation, the terror tableaux are spectacularly stage-managed for maximum shock and awe so that the viewer won't see the obvious. For in this über-giallo, Argento plays completely fair with the identity of his black-gloved assassin. The maniac's face is in clear view in the key death scene, but only a second viewing (after being privy to the solution) reveals that. Because the main point Argento makes in *Deep Red* is the elusiveness of memory: how the faulty remembrance of things past can irrationally unsettle and be deadly. Cast by Argento because of his role in Michelangelo Antonioni's Swinging Sixties milestone *Blowup* (1966), Hemmings is once more plunged into a warped variation on detective fiction conventions dealing with illusion versus reality. Except in *Deep Red*, Hemmings' character doesn't gaze at an enigmatic crime photo and find no answers. He clocks what he thinks

is an abstract painting and can't see the deceptively easy explanation staring him in the face.

Deliberately theatrical – the opening conference is introduced with a parting of red curtains – Argento plays with the melodrama of telepathy and the ability to see into the future with remarkable dexterity. Triggered by the genuine insights of the ill-fated medium, seen reacting in horror moments before the axe-murderer breaks down her apartment door, the precognitive theme is brilliantly carried through the entire sleight-of-hand narrative as a device foreshadowing each death. For example, Marcus is scalded by coffee machine steam prior to the boiling water death of the *Modern Ghosts and Black Legends of Today* author. And when Marcus jokes about playing the piano because it represents the symbolic smashing of his hated father's teeth, the bloody mantelpiece disfiguration isn't too far behind. With Argento's camera cruising in close-up along the keys of a piano, between toys on a floor, following a mannequin's eerie entrance and literally focusing on the killer's lost marbles, *Deep Red* takes its provocative Freudian motifs and visually elevates them into high art. With every voyeuristic nook and cranny explored by his purposeful camera, Argento renders even the daylight locations as sinister and dangerous as the Edward Hopper-inspired nighttime ones, unlocking primal fears in the spectator they didn't even know they had.

*Deep Red* emerged from of the ashes of Argento's only big box-office failure. After *Four Flies on Grey Velvet*, the director



had called time on the giallo and searched for a new creative challenge. "I had brought the horror thriller back into style," Argento once told me. "After *Four Flies on Grey Velvet* I felt the need to distance myself from it. Too many other Italian directors were ripping off the genre with pale imitations and catchpenny titles echoing mine. I felt I should move in a different direction." The result was *The Five Days of Milan* (*Le cinque giornate*, 1973), a historical comedy-drama about the Italian revolution in the mid-19th century. A flop in Italy, and never given a proper release outside his home shores, *The Five Days of Milan* proved such a nightmare to make that Argento was more than happy to return to his giallo comfort zone.

Almost as if he had taken stock of the giallo explosion around him and decided to show his impersonators how it should be done, Argento went to stay at his parents' country house to write what would quickly become one of the most beloved jewels in his crown. "I returned to the thriller with a clear-headed passionate force that focused me in all the right directions," he divulged. "There's a clockwork precision to *Deep Red* and an aura of ambiguity in every single character. Everyone is a suspect with aggressive and murderous thoughts. I wanted *Deep Red* to incorporate new emotions and sensations and merge the boundaries between the thriller and horror film." Which is, of course, why it proved to be the stepping-stone to the more Gothic settings of *Suspiria* – Argento's most famous film and one that was responsible for changing the face of global horror.

To help reinterpret his characteristic giallo themes – Freud's 'primal scene' theory about warped childhood experience leading to disordered adult existence; the spectator made both accomplice and victim; the fetishized murder weapons – Argento chose as his cowriter Bernardino Zapponi, the long-time collaborator of Federico Fellini. Not because Zapponi had written *Satyricon* (1969) or *Roma* (1972), but because he had scripted the director's acclaimed *Toby Dammit* segment in the Edgar Allan Poe anthology *Spirits of the Dead* (*Histoires extraordinaires*, 1968). "Bernardino filled me with optimism on a daily basis and was a joy to work with. It was he who took my initial ideas for the murders and made them more effective. Why the movie is considered so sadistic is because the injuries shown are ones the audience effortlessly relates to. A tiny percentage of the public knows the pain of being shot by a gun. But everyone knows what it's like to stub your toe on furniture or be scalded by hot water. Bernardino also thought up the central misdirection device of the mirror painting."

Although *The Bird with the Crystal Plumage* was shot entirely on location in Rome, Argento had veered away from filming in the Eternal City because of the constant tourist hassle. Turin soon became his city location of choice and *Deep Red* benefits enormously from what Argento terms its "magical atmosphere". The director elaborates: "There are more practicing Satanists in Turin than in any other European city and I wanted that superstitious undercurrent unfolding in the background. Turin is actually where the Italian Film Industry was originally based in the silent era. During the 1930s Mussolini



moved it to Rome, to be nearer out of vanity, but I have always preferred Turin.”

*Deep Red* is of utmost importance in the Argento universe for two main reasons: lead actress Daria Nicolodi and the rock band Goblin. Former stage star Nicolodi would be vital to Argento’s artistic career changes, become his lover and the mother of their now-famous actress daughter Asia Argento. Asia was born exactly a year to the day her mother walked in front of Argento’s cameras during the sixteen-week shoot beginning September 9, 1974. Nicolodi first caught Argento’s eye in Elio Petri’s socio-political comedy *Property is No Longer a Theft* (*La proprietà non è più un furto*, 1973). The fact she spent the entire running time naked might explain his attention more! But he thought she’d be perfect to play the lead role of feisty journalist Gianna Brezzi in *Deep Red*. On the rebound from his romance with Marilù Tolo, star of *The Five Days of Milan*, Argento was so struck by Nicolodi at her audition that the result was a whirlwind, headline-grabbing love affair. Although the relationship would end in bitter recrimination, lies and accusations (Argento was deliberately trying to sabotage her acting career), *Deep Red* was the hearts-and-flowers honeymoon period that both parties now fondly remember.

“Daria was clearly in my destiny the moment we met,” disclosed Argento. “We seemed to connect on so many levels politically and culturally. It was a stormy relationship containing many highs and lows, the best one being Asia. I wouldn’t have stayed with her for so many years if I hadn’t thought we were two sides

to the same coin, though. I’ve forgotten the bad times now, the ultimate testament is the fantastic work we did together.” Nicolodi adds: “It’s true. We were incredibly happy making *Deep Red* and I think our love story shines through the finished film. My theatre friends thought I was crazy to consider starring in an Argento film. They were very snobby and dismissive over his thrillers. But I adored the script because it would mark the first time I’d be playing such a take-charge woman rather than the fragile ones I’d become known for. Dario got the stronger personality within me out into the open and helped me explore it. My arm-wrestling scene with David Hemmings is a case in point. I win by cheating, but it also underlines the possibility that the hatchet murderer might be female.”

The moment Argento chose the supergroup Goblin to augment Giorgio Gaslini’s score for *Deep Red* is now considered one of the most important decisions in the history of the horror genre. The pumped-up and atmospheric progressive rock became a phenomenon and a genre watershed. “I had wanted to use the rock band Deep Purple for *Four Flies on Grey Velvet* and for *Deep Red* I contacted Pink Floyd to see if they might be interested. They weren’t! So I began asking musician friends for ideas and a demo tape by Goblin found its way to me. One day after contacting them, two great compositions arrived in the mail. I signed them up immediately and we spent a month improvising in the studio for the final themes.”

Goblin keyboardist, composer and producer Claudio Simonetti couldn’t believe it when his band was given the *Deep Red*



assignment. "We were nobodies and Dario was this famous director," recalls Simonetti. "For a while we just lounged around listening to Dario's favorite music by Emerson, Lake and Palmer and Genesis, and then we went away and composed the soundtrack. I think Argento and Goblin were a great marriage. Because Goblin went on to compose *Suspiria*, his production of George A. Romero's *Dawn of the Dead* (1978) and *Sleepless* (*Non ho sonno*, 2001), our success is so inextricably linked with his – like John Williams to Steven Spielberg. While I do tire of the fanboy cult built up around us sometimes, I will never be anything less than grateful to Dario. Nearly forty years after we wrote *Deep Red* we are still talking about it, audiences are still responding to it and the music is still selling. How brilliant is that?" Simonetti continued to work with Argento on *Tenebrae* (*Tenebre*, 1982), *Demons* (*Dèmoni*), *Phenomena* (both 1985), *The Card Player* (*Il cartaiò*, 2004), *Mother of Tears* (*La terza madre*, 2007) and *Dracula 3D* (2012).

Another lasting legacy of *Deep Red* is that it became the name of a rare business venture Argento created with Luigi Cozzi, co-writer of *Four Flies on Grey Velvet* (and director of the 1980 alien chest-bursting epic *Contamination*). Situated at 260 Via dei Gracchi in Rome is the Profondo Rosso horror emporium, which sells Argento merchandise and other genre-related products. In the basement is a wax museum featuring tableaux from Argento's best-known films. So if you're in Rome, pop along, say 'Hi' to Luigi, tell him I sent you, and he'll be happy to show you around.

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## DEEP RED: THE QUINTESSENTIAL GIALLO

by Mikel J. Koven

Dario Argento's 1975 classic *Deep Red* (*Profondo rosso*) is the quintessential giallo film; a veritable checklist of the genre's most salient style motifs and story points. The gialli are Italian-made murder-mystery/horror movie hybrids which reached their peak of popularity in the 1970s. And in this period, Dario Argento made some of the most well-known and spectacular gialli; classics which have stood the test of time. If John Ford was known for his Westerns, Argento is known for his gialli. But it is in *Deep Red* that Argento was at the peak of his creativity (although some might argue that peak was *Suspiria* [1977] or *Tenebrae* [1982], I'm not going to quibble that point), and over the next few paragraphs my intention is to explore *Deep Red* as a film which includes most of the genre's codes and conventions, like its ambivalence towards modernity, the (imagined) locations which are these films' settings, the impact of bourgeois tourism, a series of grotesque and violent murders, amateur detectives, depravity and of course, the over-the-top set pieces.

Gialli are often about modernity – the experience of living in the modern age – and the problems such experiences lead to. Marc Daly (David Hemmings), *Deep Red's* protagonist, is a pianist, but unlike his friend Carlo (Gabriele Lavia), who works in a bar playing background accompaniment, Marc is a jazz composer teaching and working at the conservatory. While Marc's music is modern and academic, Carlo's is old-fashioned but practical as entertainment. This juxtaposition isn't really an either/or construction in the giallo, as both forms of music are recognized as legitimate in their own right – lounge music and modern jazz. The giallo likes to explore its ambivalence to modernity, suggesting that living in the modern age is both (potentially) positive and negative. Elsewhere in *Deep Red*, we first meet both Professor Giordani (Glauro Mauri) and Helga Ulmann (Macha Méril) at the "Congresso di parapsicologia" (Parapsychology Congress) wherein modern scientific methodology is used in the study (and demonstration) of mind-reading and other psychic activities which evoke associations with superstitions and 'peasant' beliefs. The giallo's ambivalence towards modernity then explores the shared experiences of the modern with the old-fashioned – science and superstition, modern jazz and lounge music, and even, as is discussed below, misogyny and 'women's lib'.

*Deep Red*, like many Argento films, ostensibly takes place in Rome (where, in fairness, the interiors were shot), but the external location shooting was often Turin. The Villa Scott, one of *Deep Red's* most notable locations, is one example;

the Piazza CLN, also in Turin, is another. We are not presented with a 'real' Rome, but a fictional Rome/Turin hybrid; an intentionally fictional Rome. Throughout the classic gialli, we are presented with a variety of imagined locations; imagined, in the sense that these are *tourist* impressions, fantasies, and have little bearing on the actual place. And it is through this tourist vision, mediated by Marc Daly as protagonist, that we experience this imagined location. While the external location shooting establishes an imagined experience of travel, the preponderance of interior sequences (those scenes shot indoors) in these films suggests an interiority of the mind. In *Deep Red*, the killer's madness not only comes from (quite specifically) inside the family, but Argento also films two surreal sequences *inside* the killer's mind.

Marc represents the 'jet set': independently wealthy, foreign visitors to Italy; a community of leisured cultural migrants no longer bound by traditional nationalist borders. As Carlo compares, Marc represents the bourgeoisie while he (Carlo) is the proletariat. We can take that example farther to propose that the fantasy of the international *dolce vita* lifestyle is a self-conscious fictional concept reflecting the artificiality of the fiction film we are watching. The bourgeoisie/proletariat divide Carlo alludes to indicates a mutual Otherness between the two characters; Marc is Other to Carlo, and vice-versa. But that Othering, those juxtapositions the film carefully sets up, also includes Marc as English/Foreign, Carlo as Italian/Domestic, Marc as sober and Carlo as drunkard, Marc as



straight and Carlo as gay. These dichotomies are not just Marc-Carlo as Marc seems to spend the majority of the film pointing out the differences between men and women to Gianna (Daria Nicolodi).

At its very core, the giallo is a murder-mystery and therefore this requires a juicy series of murders to be investigated. Even if we include the pre-credit/past-trauma murder, the body count in *Deep Red* is, relatively speaking, pretty low. Argento makes up for quantity with their graphic qualities. Carlo's father is stabbed, Helga Ulmann is hacked apart with a cleaver, folklorist Amanda Righetti (Giuliana Calandra) is scalded by very hot bath water before being drowned in the tub, Professor Giordani is battered against the corners of his mantelpiece and desk (before being stabbed), and Gianna is also stabbed. One of the elements which make *Deep Red* so pleasingly visceral is that most of us can relate to the sting of being cut, the pain of a scald, and the agony of catching yourself on the corner of furniture; these are all injuries most of us can relate to, even if we don't have experience of being stabbed.

John Cawelti noted that the pleasures of what he called "formula stories" – like murder mysteries – was that they satisfied four key needs of the reader: as an affirmation of their views and beliefs; a safety valve to allow expression of ideas seen as less "fashionable" of the day; as a fantasy to live vicariously through these fictional characters; and to assimilate divergent perspectives and ideas into what is perceived to be

"the mainstream". According to Cawelti, popular genre fiction must affirm the ideas, beliefs and attitudes of the actual historical audience into the fictional narrative; in other words, the characters and authorial perspective must think like us, even if the characters don't act like us (35). Further, because these fictional characters *don't* act like us, these formula stories enable us to live vicariously through the hero's adventures; the giallo heroes live in a world where they may think like us, but they also live out our deepest fantasies of how we wish we *could* act (35). The often-questionable ideological stances in many of these films seem to present an allowed voice to sentiments in opposition to contemporary fashionable discourse, as Marc Daly does in dismissing 'women's lib'. *Deep Red* is a deeply misogynist film; for all of Gianna's statements about gender equality (and beating Marc in arm-wrestling), she's mostly inept at life, let alone as a detective, as evidenced by her car with its broken passenger seat and not being able to unlock the doors. Whether this is Argento's 'actual' position on gender equality is irrelevant; following on from Cawelti, giving this mid-1970s Italian misogyny voice is an essential aspect of formula stories, like gialli. What mitigates these often reactionary and regressive representations and dialogue is that in these forms of genre (cinema, in our case) 'traditional misogyny' (for example, albeit not the only example one could use) can co-exist alongside more 'progressive' social changes. Gialli like *Deep Red* propose that conflicting ideological positions, say between 'women's lib' and 'traditional misogyny', can work cooperatively to solve a mystery, like Gianna and Marc do.



Most police detectives who appear in gialli tend to be fairly useless at solving the murders. In *Deep Red*, Detective Superintendent Calcabrini's (Eros Pagni) inclusion is largely for comic relief in the middle of the investigation. Throughout the film, when we encounter Calcabrini, the detective appears to be more interested in food than solving the crimes. He is always filmed around food; when not eating a sandwich, he is beating up an unresponsive vending machine. For added comic relief, Calcabrini conducts his questioning of Marc with his mouth full of food. Argento appears to be making a light-hearted dig at the polizia's expense. The police throughout gialli are frequently (although not always) presented as buffoons and incompetent. In Italian vernacular cinemas of the day, the giallo lived happily alongside the poliziottesco, or Italian crime film, as a separate genre. Gialli and poliziotteschi coexist: one concerning amateur detectives as crime solvers, the other focusing on professional detectives' investigations.

Marc is clearly *Deep Red's* amateur detective. He is the one who witnessed Helga Ulmann's murder from afar, and whose intuition tells him something in Ulmann's apartment isn't right (other than the dead woman); a picture hanging in Ulmann's hallway seems to have gone missing. In most gialli, the amateur detective is haunted by something he saw; his status as eyewitness (*testimone oculare*, in Italian). And it is this drive to understand what he saw which fuels investigations like Marc's, or like Sam Dalmas's (Tony Musante) in Argento's *The Bird with the Crystal Plumage* (*L'uccello dalle piume di*

*crystallo*, 1970). Giallo amateur detectives all seem to have their hunches; and in *Deep Red*, Marc's obsession about the missing picture, as well as his discovery of the hidden room in the Villa Scott, demonstrates this almost sixth sense giallo amateur detectives seem to have. If Marc Daly repeats the same obsession with *testimone oculare* that Sam Dalmas had, *Deep Red's* suggestion of there being two murderers (as that's the only solution which makes sense) anticipates *Tenebrae's* two-murderer solution. While Carlo's mother Marta (Clara Calamai) murdered both her husband and Helga Ulmann, it is strongly suggested that Carlo was Righetti and Giordani's murderer, as he certainly stabbed Gianna, and therefore we know he was trying to protect his crazy mother. By extension, this hints that he was responsible for the other murders too.

Beyond the murders themselves, Carlo's 'depravity' – alcoholic, homosexual, irresponsible, suicidal – all mitigate towards our suspicion that he is the killer. The proposition is that Carlo's depravity indicates a weak moral center, which could very well extend to homicide. Marta, however, was just simply mad, although there is a hint of domestic abuse from her husband as a mitigating factor. But it is his mother's insanity, a dubious inheritance, and witnessing his father's murder which probably contributed to his later 'depravity' and 'moral weakness'. Both killers end in sticky deaths: while Marta garroted with her own necklace is probably the more famous of the deaths, Carlo's is certainly more graphic. Carlo gets dragged by a garbage truck for several blocks, suffering head traumas as he careens





off the curbs, before having his head finally crushed by an oncoming vehicle.

These sequences – the gory murders and graphic deaths of the killers – are known as ‘set-pieces’, defined by Donato Totaro as those moments in a film where “narrative function [...] gives way to spectacle”, (162). Set-pieces are those moments when the sequences are protracted beyond simply progressing the story. For example, in *Deep Red* we see (what we assume is) the killer stalking Giordani in his apartment, the protracted silence before the ‘mad puppet’ emerges, and then the persistent and repeated bashing of Giordani’s mouth (and teeth!) against the corner of his fireplace mantel and the corner of his desk, before finally being stabbed through the back of his head. These moments are, as Cynthia Freeland noted, “moments when narrative stops, and we are asked to experience the sublime beauty of violence (violence made sublime via the agency of the filmmaker)” (256).

Of course, not every giallo needs to demonstrate each and every one of these visual motifs or story points. The giallo, as a genre, is an aggregate of all the different permutations and possibilities open to these Italian filmmakers (cf. Koven 2006). What marks *Deep Red* as particularly noteworthy, however, is that it is a film by one of the genre’s best-known practitioners, at the height of his creativity, at the height of the genre’s popularity. Argento includes every ingredient possible in the genre: ambivalence towards modernity, imagined places and spaces, psychological interiority, fashionable bourgeoisie,

juicy and diverse murders, ineffectual police, plucky amateur detectives with their *testimone oculare*, sexual trauma, depravity, criminality, and all displayed in grandiose set-pieces for the enjoyment of 1970s vernacular cinema audiences. In one sense, *Deep Red* is the culmination of the generic tropes developing since Mario Bava’s *The Girl Who Knew Too Much* (*La ragazza che sapeva troppo*, 1963), a summation film which highlights where the genre was at that particular time, in order to try and develop the giallo into the future. So, having taken the genre as far as he could, Argento’s next film saw him take a different direction, into the supernatural horror of *Suspira*.

Mikel J. Koven is an academic and author of *La Dolce Morte: Vernacular Cinema and the Italian Giallo Film* (Scarecrow Press, 2006).

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## THE ARCHITECTURE OF FEAR: THE SURREALIST SPACES OF DARIO ARGENTO'S *DEEP RED*

by Rachael Nisbet

*"I can feel... death... in this room! I feel a presence... a twisted mind sending me thoughts! Perverted, murderous thoughts... Go away! You... have killed, and you will kill again!"*

Helga Ullman (*Deep Red*, 1975)

From a foreboding Torinese piazza that sets the stage for murder to a haunted Art Nouveau villa laden with secrets, death lurks around every corner in Dario Argento's seminal giallo, *Deep Red* (*Profondo Rosso*, 1975). Intrinsic to Argento's vision of a surreal and nightmarish murder-mystery is his usage of the *mise-en-scène*, cultivating a distinctive atmosphere that draws upon artistic references and cinematic homages to create a dreamlike environment that enhances the film's theatrical spectacle and key themes. In *Deep Red*, architectural landscapes set the scene for visions of terror, subverting latent fears and magnifying the sense of dread that permeates throughout the film.

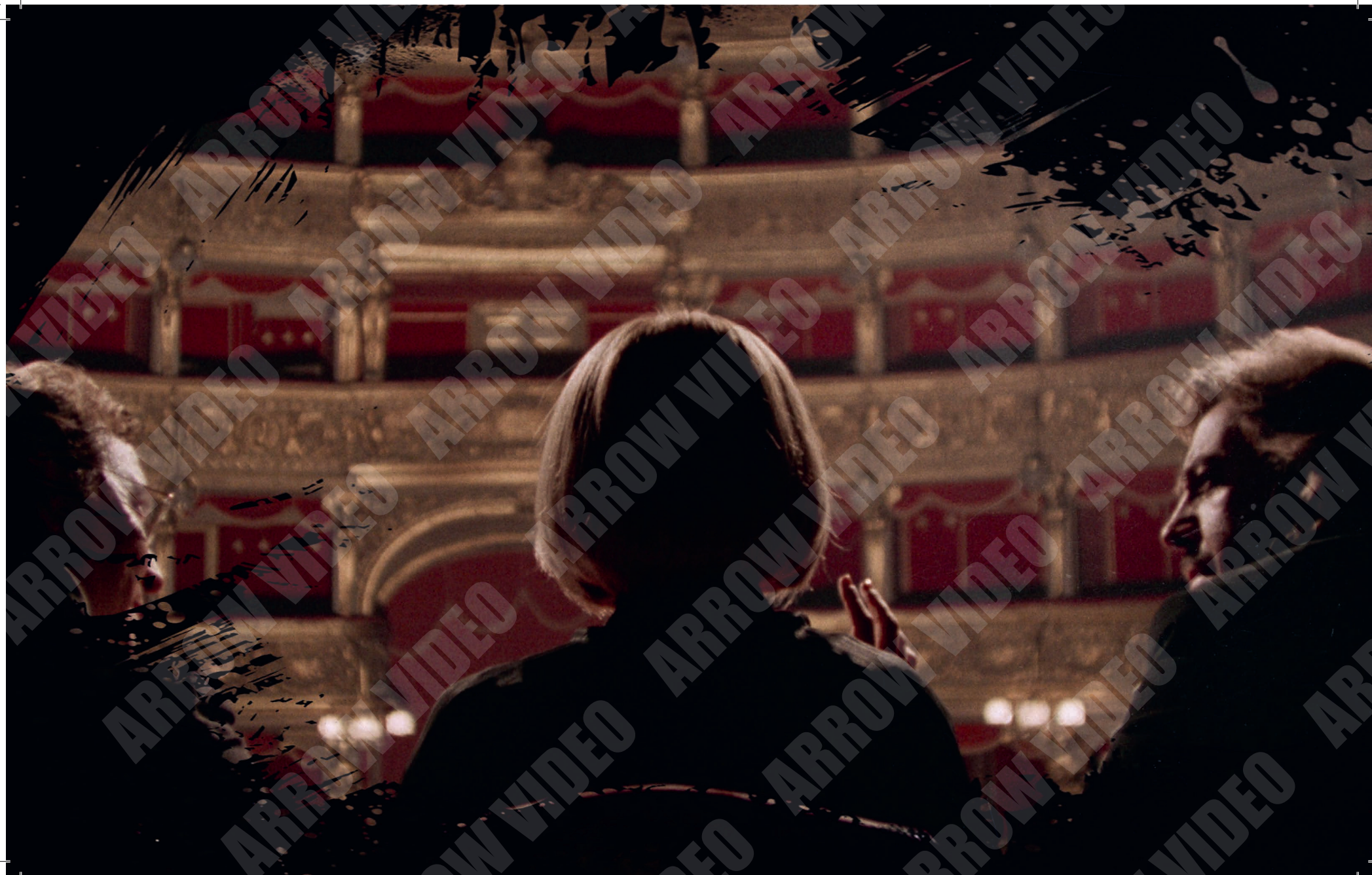
For *Deep Red*, Argento sought inspiration from the oeuvre of Michelangelo Antonioni – in particular his 1966 mod thriller *Blow-Up*, which utilized many of the thematic tenets that Argento would traverse in his film, most notably ideas pertaining to the reliability of the image and the authenticity of one's own memory. In *Deep Red*, like in *Blow-Up*, a minute detail proves to be the lynchpin of the film's narrative mystery, but arguably the most notable and overt comparison between the two films comes in the form of the casting of English actor David Hemmings as *Deep Red*'s protagonist, Marcus Daly. Hemmings' performance as London photographer Thomas in *Blow-Up* made him the ideal candidate for Argento's ode to Antonioni's seminal thriller.

Beyond the aforementioned similarities, Argento utilizes architecture in a manner reminiscent of the work of Antonioni, constructing spaces and landscapes that are reflective of Marcus's inner psychological turmoil, conveyed through the dialogue between the film's characters and the spaces they inhabit. As in Antonioni's "alienation" trilogy of *L'Avventura* (1960), *La Notte* (1961) and *L'Eclisse* (1962), *Deep Red*'s architectural landscape possesses an alienating function, exposing the isolation of modernity as well as visually asserting Marcus's role as an outsider and a foreigner in Rome. In designing *Deep Red*'s aesthetic, Argento and his production designer, Giuseppe Bassan, wanted to invoke Antonioni's craft for exposing the artifice of architecture and its function as a reflective and at times distorting presence (Jones 2016, p. 64), thus creating a disorientating landscape with surrealistic

qualities that highlights the film's focus on the blurring between illusion and reality. For in Argento's landmark giallo, Marcus and the viewer's perception of what has occurred often differs from what has truly transpired, and this ambiguity is the crux of the film's mystery, frequently depicted through the film's lavish production design and artistic compositions.

This concept is perhaps best exemplified in the film's piazza scene, in which Marcus witnesses the murder of clairvoyant Helga Ullman (Macha Méril). Prior to the murder, Marcus traverses a sparsely populated but vast space; depopulated nighttime settings are a common visual signifier of Argento's oeuvre, previously seen in his debut, *The Bird with the Crystal Plumage* (*L'uccello dalle piume di cristallo*, 1970), and later in *Tenebrae* (*Tenebre*, 1982). Here, Argento utilizes unconventional high-angled shots and long perspectives to create a distancing effect, with space manipulated in order to exaggerate the expansiveness of the piazza and to highlight Marcus' isolation. High-angled and long-distance shots also give the impression that Marcus is being watched and that the killer of the film is an omnipresent specter defying the rules of the architectural space he inhabits.

Antonioni frequently depicted vast architectural forms that functioned as an overwhelming presence, and Argento replicates this idea to great effect in the aforementioned piazza scene. The space is dominated by a colossal statue: an anthropomorphic female form representative of the river of Dora Riparia. The statue has an overwhelming quality,



dwarfing Marcus and his companion Carlo (Gabriele Lavia). The exaggerated size of the statue gives the scene a surreal-like quality, playing with notions of perspective, with the statue appearing as an almost set-like construction, inviting the viewer to determine their own interpretation of the image presented to them. This set-like – almost theatrical – staging is amplified further as Marcus and Carlo share an exchange positioned on either side of the statue, the positioning of the shot and the players within it feeling reminiscent of a stage-play whilst again creating distance between the two men to underpin the disconnect between them.

Alongside the overwhelming qualities of the statue that dominates the piazza, another construction inhabits the expanse: a glass fronted, single-story building called the Blue Bar. Whilst the bar appears to be a real-life location, it was actually a wooden prop erected in the piazza and modeled on the bar depicted in Edward Hopper's 1942 painting *Nighthawks*. Argento recounts that the bar was so realistic that it attracted the attention of passersby who believed it to be an authentic venue (Cozzi, Patrizi & Tentori 2012, p. 71), the artifice of the bar blurring the line between reality and illusion. The bar was designed in a hyperrealistic, postmodern style which juxtaposes it against the more muted look of the piazza, creating a point of interest, most notably through its striking use of light in an otherwise grey and dark environment. The bar's signage is illuminated in a cyan blue, a color that links the bar to Helga Ullman's apartment with its modernist menorah artwork, lit in the same strikingly unusual color.

On the surface, the Blue Bar appears to be a familiar setting, yet the space possesses a disconcerting feel. Large glass windows expose the patrons inside who appear posed and still like painted figures frozen in time, drawing comparison to the statue across the piazza. The bar patrons feel disconnected from the scene and the events that will shortly transpire. When Helga lets out a bloodcurdling scream, it goes unnoticed – the patrons of the bar and passersby oblivious to the dramatic events occurring. The lack of reaction or awareness from those around Marcus gives the scene a nightmarish feel; he is the only one aware of the horrors that await, once again making the audience question whether events are quite as they seem. The Blue Bar, like Hopper's *Nighthawks*, exemplifies the loneliness of modern-day life, where people are physically close but psychologically distant.

Whilst the Blue Bar is indebted to the work of Hopper, Argento's vision of a sparsely populated piazza is evocative of the work of Italian artist Giorgio de Chirico, specifically *Melancholy of a Beautiful Day* (1913), with its large statue, regimented columns and solitary, shadowed figure. As with the work of De Chirico, the setting of Piazza C.L.N. has a distorting but familiar quality playing with notions of perspective, amplifying Marcus' emotional state and isolation whilst invoking a subtle surrealist, dreamlike atmosphere. Many of the compositions throughout the film are evocative of paintings, reflecting Argento's fascination with art and its importance in *Deep Red* and the rest of his oeuvre.





The piazza, like the ones frequently depicted in the work of de Chirico, is characterized by simplistic architectural elements: functional columns, archways and repeating gridded windows, acting as a physical and psychological barrier reflecting Marcus' inner turmoil. When Helga crashes through her apartment window, she penetrates Marcus' world, embroiling him in her vicious murder. As Marcus enters through Helga's long corridor, he passes by expressionistic, nightmarish paintings – a Dantean descent into a murderous world that he cannot escape until the mystery is resolved.

Whilst *Deep Red* purports to take place in Rome, the film was predominantly filmed in the city of Turin. As a teenager, Argento first visited the city with his father and was entranced by Torinese Art Nouveau mansions, grand piazzas and gigantic monuments, and this eclectic amalgamation of striking architecture gave way to morbid thoughts about the city that he would later draw upon when conceiving *Deep Red* (Benna 2002) Argento collaborator and director of photography Luigi Kuveiller spoke of Argento's innate ability to "take inspiration from reality and turn it into something hyperbolic", and stated that the director was able to "pick up any single aspect of one's life, [and] turn it into something different and frightening" (Cozzi, Patrizi & Tentori 2012). Argento achieves this throughout *Deep Red* by subverting familiar environments, scratching the surface to uncover the dark chaos that lurks beneath whilst simultaneously distorting and exaggerating beautiful spaces that give way to something far more sinister. Familiar spaces become nightmarish realms shrouded in darkness, removed

from the logic of their external environments. Omnipresent, disembodied figures lurk behind curtains, voyeuristically peer from closets and hover from above, whilst familiar childhood objects like dolls and puppets become fetishized items, subverted and used as frightening lures by the killer. In *Deep Red*, perception is distorted, the authenticity of the image is challenged and clues often lie hidden in plain sight – reflected in mirrors, drawn on bathroom tiles and concealed behind plaster.

A location that proves to be of great importance in uncovering the secrets of the murderous crimes that have taken place is the House of the Screaming Child (the real-life location, Villa Scott, was designed by architect Pietro Fenoglio), a vivid yellow Art Nouveau/Liberty-style villa that was once Carlo's family home. The villa is an impressive but imposing construction that physically overwhelms Marcus, reflecting the fear and trepidation he faces once he crosses the threshold. Yet once he does so, the space proves to be deceptive, revealed as a derelict, crumbling old mansion, the secrets of the house entombed behind walls and hidden beneath plaster. Whilst exploring the villa, Marcus exposes a hidden mural drawn by a child that depicts the horrors that occurred within the house, yet upon leaving the space, another piece of plaster falls to reveal an additional vital clue that alters the scene entirely. Once again, Argento challenges the reliability of perception. Throughout the atmospheric and protracted villa exploration scene, Argento depicts Marcus in close-up, framed by ornate windows in a manner reminiscent of the mirror in Helga's



apartment, visually tethering him to the image which he can't yet decipher and which proves to be the lynchpin in the film's mystery.

The ornamentation present in the House of the Screaming Child consists of organic, floral shapes of Art Nouveau and Liberty-style windows alongside baroque elements, a stark contrast to the geometric forms of both the fascist-style piazza and Marcus' modern apartment. The grandiose, period settings link the house to its past glory and its role as a family home once filled with the excitement of Christmas, which has now succumbed to neglect and become a forgotten place – a house haunted by the ghosts of the past traversing the veils of time. By penetrating this space, Marcus seeks to finally uncover the truth, but in the cinematic world of *Deep Red*, to see is to misunderstand.

In *Deep Red*, Argento constructs and utilizes cinematic landscapes to convey discordant and nightmarish environments reflective of the underlying fear, paranoia and alienation that characterize the distinctive atmosphere present throughout his seminal thriller. Effective and creative use of production design further serves to visually represent the inner turmoil of Marcus and the fractured psyche of the killer whilst creatively displaying the film's thematic ideas pertaining to the reliability of perception. This masterful use of the *mise-en-scène* demonstrates Argento's propensity for constructing terrifying worlds from familiar landscapes, masterfully manipulating beautiful spaces into something all the more horrifying.

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*Rachael Nisbet is an Edinburgh-based writer specializing in Italian genre cinema, with a slant towards style and gialli. She maintains the Hypnotic Crescendos blog and is the co-host of the Fragments of Fear podcast, a show dedicated to the appreciation and discussion of the lesser-known gialli.*

## ABOUT THE RESTORATION

*Deep Red / Profondo Rosso* is presented in its original aspect ratio of 2.35:1 with Italian and English mono and Italian 5.1 sound and was restored in 4K by Arrow Films.

The original 35mm 2-perf Techniscope negative was scanned and restored in 4K resolution at L'Immagine Ritrovata, Bologna. A 35mm print of *The Hatchet Murders* was scanned in 4K for the opening titles of the English export version, while the various alternate English-language insert shots unique to this cut were sourced from the original negative. Both the original Italian cut and the English export version were conformed at Arrow Films and graded in 4K HDR/Dolby Vision at Silver Salt Restoration, London.

Because the original negative was physically recut in 1975 to create the shorter English export version, it had to be reassembled to recreate the full-length Italian version for this release. This included a handful of instances of cuts having been made mid-shot, with the two different halves stored separately and subject to differing levels of wear and tear. These shots have been restored to their full original length, with digital restoration tools employed to make the joins as seamless as possible, though some minor and unavoidable visual fluctuations may remain.

The mono mixes were remastered from the original sound negatives at L'Immagine Ritrovata. The audio synch will appear slightly loose against the picture, due to the fact that the dialogue was recorded entirely in post-production, as per the production standards of the period. English audio was never recorded for the scenes unique to the Italian version, and as such the English track reverts to Italian audio with English subtitles for these sections.

All original materials supplied for this restoration were made available by Intramovies.

*The Hatchet Murders* 35mm print was made available by Harry Guerro and scanned at American Genre Film Archive/AGFA.

Restoration supervised by James White and Michael Mackenzie, Arrow Films.

L'Immagine Ritrovata:  
Gilles Barberis, Alessia Navantieri, Charlotte Oddo, Caterina Palpacelli, Davide Pozzi, Elena Tammaccaro

Silver Salt Restoration:  
Anthony Badger, Steve Bearman, Mark Bonnici

Intramovies:  
Paola Corvino, Paola Mantovani, Manuela Mazzone

AGFA:  
Sebastian del Castillo, Ivan Peycheff



## PRODUCTION CREDITS

Discs and Booklet Produced by **Michael Mackenzie**  
Executive Producers **Kevin Lambert, Francesco Simeoni**  
Technical Producer **James White**  
Disc Production Manager **Nora Mehenni**  
QC **Michael Mackenzie, Aidan Doyle**  
Production Assistant **Samuel Thiery**  
Disc Mastering **Fidelity in Motion / David Mackenzie**  
Design **Obviously Creative**

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