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Gabriele Lavia Robert Barrett
Richard Johnson Dimitri
Nino Segurini Dr. George Staton
Elizabeth Turner Barbara Staton
Barbara Fiorini Gail Barrett
David Colin Jr. Ken Barrett
Vittorio Fanfoni Mr. Francis

CREW

Directed by **Ovidio G. Assonitis** (as "Oliver Hellman")
and **Roberto D'Ettorre Piazzoli** (as "Robert Barrett")
Written by **Ovidio G. Assonitis** (as "Oliver Hellman"),
Roberto D'Ettorre Piazzoli (as "Robert Barrett") and **Antonio Troisio**
Produced by **Ovidio G. Assonitis**, **Enzo Doria** and **Edward L. Montoro**
Director of Photography **Roberto D'Ettorre Piazzoli**
Editor **Angelo Curi**
Music by **Franco Micalizzi**







BEYOND OUR KEN... OVIDIO ASSONITIS'S *CHI SEI?*

by John Martin

In the terminally trend-conscious milieu of spaghetti exploitation, box office hits (almost invariably from the US) would generate cheap Italian knock-offs and if those put enough buttocks on domestic cinema seats, further variations on the given theme would follow until that particular *filone* had run its course. If the initial knock-offs competed with or even outsold their American avatars in international markets, as occasionally happened, two things were guaranteed: 1) lawsuits and 2) the Tiber production mills gearing up into copycat overdrive. So when Lucio Fulci's cheeky, unsolicited *Dawn of the Dead* (1978) pseudo-sequel *Zombi 2* aka *Zombie Flesh Eaters* outperformed George Romero's original in 1979, the gates of box office hell caved in under an invasion of zucchini zombies. Enzo G. Castellari's 1981 effort *The Last Shark (L'ultimo squalo)* (posing as a sequel to guess which Stephen Spielberg biggie) took \$20 million in its first fortnight stateside, and although Universal's legal department moved fast, in Italy there ensued a veritable tsunami of oceanic screen predators. Ovidio G. Assonitis, who attempted an earlier bite out of the *Jaws* (1975) action with *Tentacles (Tentacoli)*, 1977) had another go after Castellari's film with *Piranha II: The Spawning* (from which he notoriously sacked original director James Cameron) in 1981 but had already made his biggest mark by far on the Italian counterfeit scene with his ersatz *The Exorcist* (1973) effort, *Beyond the Door (Chi Sei?, 1974)*. "That picture made \$15 million in America and \$25 million in the rest of the world..." remembers Assonitis, who didn't let being sued by Warner Bros. for copyright infringement rain too hard on his parade: "It became the most successful European film ever in America!"





His Christian name a gift for pun-conscious film hacks writing about early '80s UK horror film censorship, Assonitis is an ethnic Greek but was born, like the great Riccardo Freda before him, in Alexandria, Egypt (18/01/43). From the get-go, Assonitis adopted an unashamedly entrepreneurial approach to filmmaking, his favorite aspect of which (as he confessed during an interview with website *The Terror Trap*) remains "watching people buying tickets at the box office." From the mid-60s to the mid-70s he distributed something like 1000 films in Asian markets, from offices in Thailand, Honk Kong, Singapore, the Philippines and Indonesia, often in conjunction with American International Pictures. When he turned his hand to producing, his commercial instincts were clearly evidenced in the likes of Alfonso Brescia's mondo shockumentary *The Labyrinth of Sex (Nel labirinto del sesso, 1969)* and the same director's entry in the "Prehistoric Sex Comedy" stakes (incredibly, that was briefly a thing), *Super Stooges vs. The Wonder Women (Superuomini, superdonne, superbotte, 1974)*. In between those, Assonitis's jump onto the lucrative giallo bandwagon resulted in one of the very best Italian whodunnits, Aldo Lado's unforgettable *Who Saw Her Die? (Chi l'ha vista morire?, 1972)*. In the same year, another Assonitis production, Umberto Lenzi's *Sacrifice! (Il paese del sesso selvaggio)* did respectable and sensational business in (respectively) European and Asian markets, in the process transforming the flagging mondo genre into the Italian cannibal cycle that would reach its unsettling culmination in Ruggero Deodato's *Cannibal Holocaust* (1980). Things took a turn from the confrontational to the sentimentally schmaltzy when Assonitis produced Raimondo Del Balzo's *The Last Snows of Spring (L'ultima neve di primavera, 1973)*, a typically tear-jerking entry in Italy's "terminally ill children" cycle, which was also briefly a tacky thing but thankfully as short-lived as most of its protagonists. The following year Assonitis made the logical move into directing, stepping beyond that door...



Over a blank screen, a portentous voiceover intro sneers at our complacent rationalism and assures us of the tangible existence of evil, inviting the viewer to consider that the person sitting right next to them could very well be Old Nick himself (though if you were watching this film in a 42nd Street grindhouse theater, chances were that your neighbor was somebody altogether more alarming). To illustrate this thesis, we are introduced to the Barretts, a family living an apparently idyllic existence in San Francisco. Robert (Gabriele Lavia) is a record producer, currently producing a track called 'Bargain with the Devil' for some funky soul outfit. Jessica (Juliet Mills) is a contented wife and homemaker (or so she initially seems) and their two kids, Gail (Barbara Fiorini) and Ken (David Colin Jr.) are the potty-mouthed products of an overly liberal upbringing. Things seem OK, but in every dream home a heartache... Jessica feels suffocated and accuses Robert of "sticking your nose into my private thoughts. You can't give me room to breathe." Bourgeois family life is constrictive, but the search for alternatives poses its own risks and Jessica's got a significant skeleton in her closet, a past affair with charismatic occultist/oldest swinger in town Dimitri (Richard Johnson), whom we're introduced to at the exact point where Satan suspends his death in a car crash in return for ensuring the delivery of the devil spawn that's just been fathered on Jessica. The exact circumstances under which this occurred are not clear (perhaps a delayed reaction to some cultish sexual congress back in the day) but Jessica's puzzled by her pregnancy as she's been keeping up with her contraception. What's more, the Satanic sprog is developing at an abnormally rapid rate. "Your child appears to be in a great hurry to be born" offers her doctor, limply. Jessica starts acting erratically, smashing Roger's expensive fish tank... spitting up blood... floating around the bedroom in her sleep... there's a suggestion that she's abusing the kids when strange marks start turning up on them...







Worst of all, she starts picking banana skins off the sidewalk and eating them! She tells the family doctor that she doesn't want to have the new baby. But when the doc lays out her abortion options, she takes offence and starts abusing him in a boogey man voice. "Jessica, what's gotten into you?" he enquires (d'oh!).

Never mind the imminent arrival of the Antichrist, Jessica probably has enough on her plate with the two kids she's already got, whose precocious antics are obviously intended to be endearing but soon mark them down as strong contenders for the "two most nauseating brats in cinema history" accolade. They address their parents as "Robert and Jessica" (when not referring to them as "assholes") and when Ken, picking up on the bad psychic vibes in the house, suffers an episode of night terrors, Gail admonishes him: "You gotta stop that – it's gonna blow my mind! If you don't stop, you're gonna have a real bad trip, y'hear?" Said bad trip intensifies when the kids' toys become animated and furniture starts flying around their bedroom. Their minds properly blown, they wake Mommy, only to find her head rotating the full 360 degrees...

Dimitri accosts Robert in the street to offer his help but Robert (who's already been accosted by a street person who appeared to have a flute stuck up his nose) declines it. Meanwhile Jessica's pregnancy/possession continues apace. Her eyes start moving independently in their sockets and her formerly flawless, peaches-and-cream complexion becomes crusted over with scabs. She throws Robert around the room with her telekinetic powers, splits into multiple images of herself and spews equal amounts of pea soup and blasphemy. How very jolly it is to see the star of *Nanny*

and *The Professor* (1970-1971) urging her doctor to "lick this vile whore's vomit," screaming "get out, you fucking whining turd" when he demurs and scarfing down handfuls of her own rancid puke. After much writhing around, she eventually gives birth, but I'll leave it to the reader to discover the conclusion (if we can stretch a point and call it that). What does it all mean? Perhaps you should ask your neighbor, that red guy with the horns...

In his directorial debut (under the guise of "Oliver Hellman"), Assonitis seems to be prioritizing cost-cutting over establishing any kind of auteurist identity for himself. In fact, *Beyond the Door* was at least partially directed by his favored director of photography Roberto D'Etorre Piazzoli (aka "Robert Barrett" ... curiously, the same name as handed to one of the main characters). The writing credits are an even more tortuous matter... aside from Assonitis and Piazzoli, at various points contributions were made by Antonio Troiso, Giorgio Marini, Christopher Cruise, Sonia Molteni, Aldo Crudo and Alex Rebar (yes, *The Incredible Melting Man* himself...). Nevertheless, *Beyond the Door* emerges as a consistently entertaining (and of course highly influential) effort, enhanced no end by Piazzoli's prowling camera work, a pounding, Goblinsque score courtesy of Franco Micalizzi and such mannered directorial tricks as the eccentric, erratic use of freeze frame.





The film was released as *Chi sei?* ("Who are you?") in Italy, and if you think that's a weedy title for a horror flick, consider that Jorge Grau's classic 1974 zombie stomper *Let Sleeping Corpses Lie* (*No profanar el sueño de los muertos*), released around the world under a clutch of memorable titles (*The Living Dead at Manchester Morgue* in the UK), was released as *Da dove vieni?* ("Where Are You From?") in Italy. UK theatrical and later video releases of *Chi sei?* went under the title *The Devil Within Her*, causing occasional confusion with the identically-titled 1975 Peter Sasdy effort (also known as *I Don't Want to Be Born*). In the US it was *Beyond the Door*, minus 15 mins of footage but benefiting from a barnstorming publicity campaign by Film Ventures International, who worked similar wonders with the likes of William Girdler's *Grizzly* (1976) and Juan Piquer Simón's *Pieces* (*Mil gritos tiene la noche*, 1982). Much was made of the gimmicky miracle of "Possess-O-Sound",



essentially a variation on 1974 blockbuster *Earthquake*'s "Sensurround" that bombarded the viewer with ultra-bass frequencies (UK cinemagoers got more of the same, dubbed "Vibrasound")... funny how the movie magic of the early '70s became par for today's custom car commando course.

Oh, did I mention that the success of *Beyond the Door* fueled an explosion of Italo-Exorcist clones? Assonitis actually pinched as much from *Rosemary's Baby* as from that Friedkin flick, though this path went relatively unexplored in subsequent spaghetti exploitation efforts. There are vague hints of Roman Polanski's 1968 effort in Sergio Martino's marvelous, occult-flavored giallo *All the Colors of the Dark* (*Tutti i colori del buio*, 1972) and rather more on-the-nose references in *The Church* (*La chiesa*, 1989) and *The Sect* (*La seta*, 1991), the two Michele Soavi films which effectively constitute the last gasp of cinematic pasta possession. The best films in this cycle are the ones which examine the theme that cultural critic and academic Richard Dyer has identified as "the monstrosity of The Family in Italian life" with more intelligence than salaciousness. Among the early contenders, Mario Gariazzo's *Enter the Devil* aka *The Sexorcist* (*L'ossessa*, 1974) represents the former tendency (sample dialogue: "There's no such thing as incest, Daddy... it's only an invention of priests" and "You bitch, you've acted in the most vile and disgusting way possible... subjecting your body to whips and belts and other masochistic tomfoolery") while the same year's *The Tempter* aka *The Antichrist* (*L'anticristo*), from Alberto De Martino (who also chipped in with Italy's best rip-off of *The Omen* [1976], *The Chosen* [aka *Holocaust 2000*] in 1977), tries a bit harder but still boasts its share of fruity dialogue ("Bishops... holy men of the Inquisition... I've fucked them all!"). Massimo Dallamano's *The Cursed Medallion* (aka *The Night Child*) attempted a Freudian critique of the whole Satanic panic shooting match in 1975, the same year that Franco Lo Cascio and Angelo Pannacciò's *The Return of the Exorcist* aka *Naked Exorcism* (*Un urlo dalle tenebre*) recycled its most lurid clichés and notoriously broad Sicilian comedian Ciccio Ingrassia attempted to definitively bury it with *The Exorcist: Italian Style* (*L'esorciccio*), wherein poor Old Nick was obliged to carry the can for the expected *Carry On*-style sexual buffoonery. That one slowed things down for a while but in 1979 Pier Carpi's *Ring of Darkness* (*Un'ombra nell'ombra*) reiterated Assonitis's message that well-intentioned witchy dabbings can have devilish consequences, while Andrea Bianchi's *Malabimba* from the same year served up a sleazy cocktail of incest, nymphomania and murder (all Satanically-inspired, of course) which proved so popular that producer Gabriele Crisanti decided to remake it in 1982 (this time with Mario Bianchi directing) as *Satan's Babydoll* (*La bimba di Satana*). Bruno Mattei's characteristically demented *The Other Hell* (*L'altro inferno*, 1981) mixes pasta possession with nunsplotation. With possessed kids virtually banished from Italian screens, not by the ministrations of any priest, but by the influx of zombies and cannibals advancing to claim the devil's monstrous mantel for themselves, in 1982 spaghetti western/poliziotteschi giant Damiano Damiani took the genre back to its American roots with his New Jersey-set *Amityville II: The Possession*, while the antics of the paranormally-connected kids in Lucio Fulci's *Manhattan Baby* seemed spookily reminiscent of those perpetrated by Gail and Ken in *Beyond the Door*.



The great Mario Bava had gone one step further than that in 1977, casting David Colin Jr. himself as another telekinetically-gifted spooky kid with an imaginary friend who just might be real, in *Shock* (*Schock*). Probably the primo pasta possession pic, Bava's film suffered from being released in the United States as *Beyond the Door II* (and Jeff Kwitny's completely unrelated *Beyond the Door III* aka *Amok Train* followed in 1989). This was, however, not even the greatest indignity inflicted on Bava due to exorcism mania: producer Alfredo Leone, who had been keeping Bava's enigmatic *Lisa and the Devil* (*Lisa e il diavolo*, 1972) in a vault since 1973, detected a post-Friedkin opportunity to salvage some kind of commercial return on his investment and released it as *House of Exorcism* in 1975, complete with newly shot scenes of star Elke Sommer spewing vomit and profanities, e.g. "Here's your fucking daily bread, priest!" More tea, vicar?

John Martin has been a prolific commentator on genre films since the heyday of the UK fanzine scene. He co-founded the influential Samhain, edited Giallo Pages and is the author of The Seduction of The Gullible: The Curious History of the "Video Nasties" Phenomenon.









BEYOND THE FILM

by Alessio Di Rocco

Beyond the Door (Chi sei?) is the directorial debut of producer/distributor Ovidio G. Assonitis who, despite being of Greek nationality, was born in Alexandria on January 18, 1943. Ovidio began his career in cinema in the 1960s as an importer of films for the Middle East, founding several companies all over the world. He became a producer in 1968, financing *Silvia e l'amore* by Sergio Bergonzelli, a sort of clone of the German hit *Helga* (1967) by Eric F. Bender. But his first real taste of success came in 1973, when he produced the Raimondo Del Balzo film *The Last Snows of Spring (L'ultima neve di primavera)*, which centered on a child suffering from leukemia who expresses the desire to go to the funfair one last time with his father before he dies. Thanks to a convincing and heartbreaking performance by the young Renato Cestiè and an effective soundtrack composed by Franco Micalizzi, the film was a triumph at the box office, launching an entire (sub)genre. For his next project, Assonitis was to decide on a totally different direction...





INSPIRATION

Inspired after watching Roman Polanski's *Rosemary's Baby* (1968), Assonitis hits upon the idea of making a horror movie where the supernatural happenings unfold within the setting of a typical middle-class family. The producer stumbles on a possible source story almost by chance during a trip between Hong Kong and Taipei, when he buys a copy of William Peter Blatty's novel *The Exorcist*, which had just hit bookstores worldwide. After having read the book "in one breath," as he himself puts it, during his flight, Assonitis decides that this is the story he was looking for. Back in his office in Rome he calls the publishers to secure the rights, but it's too late: they have already been bought by Warner and there is already a film adaptation in progress. Not losing heart, Assonitis decides to proceed anyway, talks with his friend Roberto D'Ettore Piazzoli and together they begin conceiving a story. They are then joined by Antonio Troisio – who had some experience with thrillers having worked on such films as *Manic Mansion (La mansión de la niebla)* and *Knife of Ice (Il coltello di ghiaccio)*, both 1972 – and theater director Giorgio Marini, who was entrusted with the dialogue. The writing sessions take place at Assonitis's studio, in Via Pietro Tacchini 12.



PRE-PRODUCTION

On March 9, 1974, the beginning of production is announced, and in this first phase, the film is entitled "Nastro nero in casa Nichols" (translation: Black ribbon in the Nichol's household). Specifically, it is the production company A-Erre Cinematografica s.r.l. which announces it, headed by Sonia Molteni (wife of Assonitis), in which Assonitis himself and Giorgio Carlo Rossi are executive producers. A-Erre Cinematografica was founded the year before for the production of *The Last Snows of Spring*, with a share capital of just 100,000 lira. After the runaway success of that film, the capital was raised to 30,000,000 lira. Assonitis again hires the collaborators with whom he had worked on Del Balzo's film: Roberto D'Ettore Piazzoli as writer, director of photography and co-director; assistant camera operator Maurizio Maggi, known in the industry as "Sandokan", composer Franco Micalizzi, and assistant director Peter Shepherd. As far as the cast is concerned, the initial choices ended up all changing quite radically. In the role of Robert, the protagonist, Maurizio Merli had been selected, who would later become one of the kings of the Italian poliziotteschi; Sydne Rome, who had just worked with Polanski, in *What? (Che?, 1972)*, was chosen for the role of Jessica; while for Dimitri, James Mason had been contacted.



THE SCRIPT

Even the screenplay filed at the Ministero del Turismo e dello Spettacolo (Ministry of Tourism and Entertainment) is indeed very different from the film that eventually got made. In this initial script, the prologue with the magic ritual is absent, as is the accident in which the car with Dimitri aboard goes off the road and plummets down a cliff, remaining however, suspended in mid-air. The voice of the devil who makes a pact with the man in exchange for some more years to live is also missing, of course. The story begins with preparations for Ken's third birthday party, during which Jessica announces to Robert that she is pregnant again. The idyllic atmosphere, however, is broken. Someone has locked the child in a basement and, trying to get out, the child injures his hand. After this episode the atmosphere in the Nichols' house changes. Jessica becomes short-tempered, subject to apparently irrational attacks of anger and starts becoming increasingly absent from home. During the breakfast scene between Robert and George, this script adds important details about the woman's past. We find out through Robert that Jessica was first married to a biologist named Dimitri Stavòkris, with whom she'd had a son who died at the age of three – the same age as Ken. The scenes that follow are congruent with what was actually shot: the bruise discovered by Robert on the child's body is described as "a rather relevant hematoma. As if someone had tried to strangle him." The scene of Jessica's first transformation is more protracted. When, in the film, the child enters her room and sees his mother's head rotate 360 degrees, in the film there is an ellipsis, whereas in the script the woman arches herself in the bed, moving her hands to her belly from which a child's voice, speaking a language similar to German, is heard. In the script it is George who urges Robert to call Dimitri in the hope of getting an explanation, whereas, on the contrary, in the finished film the doctor warns his friend not to trust the man. In the dialogue that follows, other details about the woman's past are revealed, which are once again absent from the film: the child she had with Stavòkris "was born phocomelic and Jessica would never see him due to the excessive monstrosity of his body. He was truly monstrous." (page 21). The original script also reveals that Dimitri Stavòkris was president of the American Parapsychology Association. After the birth of his deformed child, he abandoned his studies on the paranormal and left the association he was part of. Since then he has returned to devoting himself exclusively to his activity as a biologist. Although originally from Lemnos, Greece, he is not an Orthodox Catholic but has embraced the Methodist Church.



After that, Robert finally meets Dimitri; screenplay and film take distinct paths. Dimitri goes to stay at the Nichols' house which is transformed into a real laboratory with highly sophisticated equipment. The scholar begins his examinations on Jessica. The days pass and Robert manages to wrest some elements from the man about his past activity in the field of parapsychology. We thus discover that he had been interested in "soul studies" carried out by the monk Balbeck. Balbeck maintained that in every being, from birth, the sentiment of good and evil co-exist. He was also convinced about the possibility of isolating and living with only one of the two feelings, through appropriate spiritual exercise. Stavòkris had followed this theory and tried to put it into practice, traveling around the world and residing in Tibet and Nepal for many years. When asked what results he had achieved, Dimitri suggests that he was not able to progress as he would have wanted to. "It is easier to tend towards evil than towards good," as he says in the script. We also discover that the phocomelic child did not die naturally but was killed by Dimitri himself in the institution where the child was hospitalized. "He was forced to do so in order to avoid everything that creature would have brought about growing up. He was deformed inside and out."





The script introduces two new characters: a nosy neighbor and a policeman who gives Robert a \$100 fine for the excessive noise coming from the apartment. It is at this moment that we go back to Dimitri assessing Jessica's health, who distressingly concludes: "The heart works twice as normal. Metabolism is all in favor of the fetus. That is to say that all the nutrition we give artificially is used for the anomalous and premature development of the child" (page 37). The biologist then places a special X-ray apparatus in the room and with an instrument resting on the woman's belly he begins to observe the fetus: "But here the fetus moves. Slowly the little hands clenched into fists are lowered and the baby's head seems to turn around to look at Dimitri. A slow zoom isolates the face of the fetus: it looks like the face of an adult man. A horrible face, with gaping eyes and parting mouth. Clearly that face is taking on an expression. The mocking expression of someone who is diabolically smiling." (page 39). The oscilloscope shows that the brain activity of the woman is completely absent. It is the fetus that controls her movements and speaks with her mouth. Dimitri also calls George into the room, showing him the results of his tests. He then asks the two to leave him alone in the house. He swallows a slow-dissolving cyanide tablet and devotes himself to Jessica. Once the woman's body has been secured to the bed with her legs spread on birth forks, he slowly begins to massage her belly. During childbirth there is a new, violent transformation. But Dimitri now knows what he has to do. His hands disappear over the pubis and he begins to strangle the fetus. The monster's voice becomes convulsive. A final sob, then Jessica's body collapses on the bed. With the killing of the fetus everything seems to have returned to normal. Dimitri calls Robert and tells him to go home; then he walks away taking the fetus with him in a sack. The last scene shows the Nichols family in a train car, traveling towards a new life. On the seat there is a newspaper and on the front page you can read: "Well-known biologist commits suicide." Apart from the happy ending, a little too sappy, the devil is conspicuous by his absence in this first script, and Dimitri does not have that ambiguity that characterizes him in the film, which is one of his most fascinating features.



PRINCIPAL PHOTOGRAPHY

On March 21 1974, the film takes the title of *Chi sei?* and the production also communicates to the Ministry the definitive cast: in the role of Robert we have theater actor Gabriele Lavia who had just appeared in Damiano Damiani's *The Tempter (Il sorriso del grande tentatore, 1974)* and after his experience with Assonitis would be cast by Dario Argento for the role of Carlo in *Deep Red (Profondo rosso, 1975)*; in the role of Jessica we find British actress Juliet Mills, suggested to Assonitis by his assistant director Peter Shepherd who had met her on the set of *Avanti!* (1972) by Billy Wilder; while for the role of Dimitri, stage-actor Richard Johnson is hired. Johnson would rewrite most of his character's dialogue, adding the famous line: "The child must be born!" Other actors include Nino Segurini, the young David Colin Jr. and Barbara Fiorini (Colin was an American, a schoolmate of Assonitis's son at the Overseas School in Rome). Finally, the Californian Elizabeth Turner closes the cast, while Carla Mancini, credited in the titles, does not actually appear in the film. In the control room we find Assonitis, who directs the actors, and Roberto D'Ettore Piazzoli, to whom all the technical-aesthetical side is delegated. The two choose to be credited under pseudonyms, Oliver Hellman and Robert Barrett respectively, the latter a take on the name "Oliver Barret", the protagonist of *Love Story*, a book mentioned several times in the film. The production budget amounts to 260,000,000 lira, 150,000,000 of which are allocated by A-Erre Cinematografica, 20,000,000 put together from overseas presales and 90,000,000 advanced as a minimum guaranteed by Alpherat



s.p.a, a company administered by Aldo Appignani and attributable to the Minerva group of producers Ermanno and Gianluca Curti. Alpherat s.p.a would then sell the distribution to Atlas Cinematografica Productions, which belonged to the brothers Mario and Pietro Bregni.

Principal photography begins on May 6, 1974 and goes on for 47 days. From May 6 to May 22 the exteriors are filmed in America, in the city of San Francisco, chosen because of its sunny and windy climate which emphasizes the contrast with the gloomy atmosphere within the Barrett household. A very small crew made up of roughly seven people participates in the American shoot. Everything is done without permits and the materials are exported without declaring them to customs. From May 29 to July 4, all the interiors are shot in Rome at the Incir-De Paolis soundstages. The house, created by set designer Piero Filippone, is built at soundstage no. 8, at the cost of 15,000,000 lira. Three more days of shooting are needed for the car accident which is shot on the stretch of road from Sperlonga to Sutri, while the drop into the water is filmed in Anzio, a seaside town not far from Rome, on the same beaches Mario Bava had set some scenes of *The Whip and the Body* (*La frusta e il corpo*, 1963). For the special effects, Wally Gentleman is called, who is mostly remembered for his work on Stanley Kubrick's seminal film *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968).







Once filming and editing are complete, Assonitis understands that to really hit the mark he must create something powerful as far as sound is concerned. Universal, together with Cerwin-Veda, had recently patented "Sensurround" to improve the audio impact and provide the viewer with a more immersive experience. Assonitis goes to Universal asking to be able to use it, but the studio rejects the request as it intends to play this new card on its own production, the blockbuster *Earthquake* (1974) by Mark Robson. But the studio technicians make the mistake of showing the director how it works. Assonitis, interviewed by Eugenio Ercolani, says: "They made a mistake though; they showed me how the thing worked and even if I didn't fully understand the details, I figured out enough to be able to replicate it. It was actually quite simple: with 4000 watts, these very huge sound boxes were placed under the screen and behind the audience, on the opposite side of the theater. This frequency is created with a wave replicating the sensation of an earthquake. The mechanism was simple but the technology behind it was extremely complicated and sophisticated [...] I went back to Rome and did the same thing spending almost nothing." Assonitis would call his imitation "A-Soni-Round System", which recalls both his name and that of the Japanese giant Sony.

Beyond the Door is released in Italian cinemas on November 21, 1974, two months after William Friedkin's *The Exorcist*. For the film's first week in theaters, extras are hired to pretend to faint during the screenings and an ambulance was strategically parked outside some cinemas. These marketing strategies seem to have worked and contributed to the success of the film, which collected, according to SIAE figures, 955.724.000 lira. But it is in America that the film reaches mind-boggling results despite a plagiarism lawsuit brought on by Warner Bros. The litigation lasted three years and cost the director in lawyers' fees more than he had spent on the film. "Despite it costing me a lot of money, I owe that lawsuit a lot, it was a blessing in disguise. I was able to do many films with Warner following it, including *Piranha II: The Spawning* (1981)."

Alessio Di Rocco is a film historian specialized in Italian genre cinema and more specifically the history of censorship. He is the author, together with Roberto Curti, of two volumes on the subject: Visioni Proibite – I film vietati dalla censura italiana (1947 - 1968) and Visioni Proibite – I film vietati dalla censura italiana (dal 1969 a oggi), published by Lindau in 2014 and 2015 respectively. He has also worked as a senior editor for Nocturno Cinema and has collaborated with numerous international magazines, including Video Watchdog. His next book will center on the making of Tinto Brass's controversial 1979 historical epic Caligula.



ABOUT THE RESTORATION

Beyond the Door has been exclusively restored by Arrow Films and is presented in its original aspect ratio of 1.85:1 with mono audio.

The original 35mm camera negative was scanned in 2K resolution at Eurolab, Rome. The film was graded and restored at R3Store Studios in London.

The mono mix was remastered from the 35mm optical negative at Deluxe Audio Services, Los Angeles. Audio synch will occasionally appear loose, due to the fact that some dialogue was post-dubbed.

Original materials for this restoration were made available by Ovidio Assonitis.

A 35mm print was loaned from Harry Guerro for the sections unique to the US Theatrical version. These sections were scanned in 2K resolution at OCN Digital and graded at R3Store Studios. The US theatrical version master was assembled by Marc Morris.

At various points during the film, the image will freeze for a few seconds. This was an intentional optical effect on the part of the filmmaker and is not a technical fault.

Restoration supervised by **James White, Arrow Films**
R3Store Studios: **Gerry Gedge, Jo Griffin, Rich Watson, Nathan Leaman-Hill, Emily Kemp**
Deluxe Audio Services: **Jordan Perry**
Eurolab: **Laura Indiveri**
OCN Digital: **Joe Rubin**

PRODUCTION CREDITS

Disc and Booklet Produced by **Ewan Cant**
Executive Producers **Kevin Lambert, Francesco Simeoni**
Technical Producer **James White**
QC **Nora Mehenni, Alan Simmons**
Production Assistant **Samuel Thiery**
Blu-ray Mastering and Subtitling **The Engine House Media Services**
Artist **Marc Schoenbach**
Design **Obviously Creative**

SPECIAL THANKS

Alex Agran, Ovidio G. Assonitis, Eugenio Ercolani, Harry Guerro, Gabriele Lavia, Maurizio Maggi, Franco Micalizzi, Marc Morris and Roberto D'Ettore Piazzoli.

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