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STRIP NUDE FOR YOUR KILLER

Nude per l'assassino
1975

CAST

Edwige Fenech Magda
Nino Castelnuovo Carlo
Femi Benussi Lucia
Solvi Stubing Patrizia

And with
Amanda Gisella
Franco Diogene Maurizio
Lucio Como Commissioner

And featuring
Erna Schurer Doris

CREW

Directed by **Andrea Bianchi**
Production Manager **Sergio Simonetti**
Screenplay by **Massimo Felisatti**
Based on a Story by **Andrea Bianchi**
Director of Photography **Franco Delli Colli**
Film Editor **Francesco Bertuccioli**
Music by **Berto Pisano**
Set Designer **Sergio Palmieri**





STRIP NUDE FOR YOUR VOYEUR: SEX AND VOYEURISM IN ANDREA BIANCHI'S STRIP NUDE FOR YOUR KILLER

by Rachael Nisbet

Andrea Bianchi's 1975 giallo *Strip Nude for Your Killer* (*Nude per l'assassino*) heralded a new era for the Italian thriller, marking a departure from the genre's psychosexual offerings and instead embracing a more overtly sexually exploitative tone. The film's reputation as one of the more salacious examples of the genre precedes it, its lurid depiction of sexually-charged violence and seemingly reinforced passive gender roles invoking feelings of both revulsion and titillation in its audience. Yet beyond the film's sleazily outrageous premise lies, perhaps, a more nuanced examination of ideas relating to societal issues surrounding sex and gender roles of the time, expressed through the prism of a revenge tale facilitated by a botched backstreet abortion. By looking beyond the film's lascivious surface, one can examine societal issues relating to sex as well as an understanding of Bianchi's intentions and awareness in creating a film that revels in its outlandish nature, inviting his audience to engage and question their role as voyeur.

Strip Nude's narrative and central mystery hinges on the botched black-market abortion and subsequent murder that occur in the film's pre-credits sequence. Themes surrounding abortion and miscarriage were commonplace in Italian genre cinema of the 1970s, arguably due to a nationwide conversation regarding abortion rights in Italy (abortion became legalized in 1978, three years after the film's release). Abortion as a narrative device was used to greatest effect in Massimo Dallamano's giallo *What Have You Done to Solange?* (*Cosa avete fatto a Solange?*, 1972) but thematic issues relating to abortion, miscarriage and subsequent trauma were also utilized in films such as Sergio Martino's *All the Colors of the Dark* (*Tutti i colori del buio*, 1972) and Roberto Mauri's *Madeleine, anatomia di un incubo* ("Madeleine, Study of a Nightmare", 1974). *Strip Nude* was undoubtedly influenced by *What Have You Done to Solange?*, alongside Dallamano's poliziottesco/giallo hybrid *What Have They Done to Your Daughters* (*La polizia chiede aiuto*, 1974), yet Bianchi is less concerned with the political and social implications of abortion that characterize Dallamano's film, instead utilizing the issue of abortion to facilitate a series of grizzly, seemingly sexually-





based killings. Yet, despite *Strip Nude's* apparently tawdry approach to abortion, there's a semblance of awareness to the film's proceedings – a glimmer of underlying social commentary amongst the film's sordid, more outrageous moments.

Bianchi continuously references the pre-credit abortion scene, intercutting blue-tinged flashes from the film's opening into each murder set-piece to highlight the importance of the fatal abortion in regard to the killer's motivation and personal connection to the murder; a reminder of the killer's desperate need for retributive justice. Further allusions to the film's opening are made through the film's water motif, a reference to the film's original murder and an idea that would be later utilized, perhaps to better effect, in Dario Argento's *Trauma* (1993), which also tackled the trauma of pregnancy and childbirth. As well as manifesting in flashbacks to the film's opening, the act of abortion is physically enacted by the murderer in their deliberate targeting of their victims' sexual reproductive systems. In the murder of Lucia (Femi Benussi), the killer stabs her lower abdomen with a long, sharp blade, echoing the grizzly abortion from the film's opening, whereas male victims have their genitalia mutilated – the red-blooded male emasculated. Abortion is the catalyst for the murders in *Strip Nude*, and by mimicking the bodily violation of the abortion through enacting genital mutilation on her victims, the killer reclaims the bodily integrity of her deceased sister by proxy, taking back control and enacting revenge on those responsible for her sister's degradation and murder.

The reveal of the killer as model Patrizia (Solvi Stubing) – a woman – further muddies the sexual politics of the film. In her murderous killing spree, Patrizia is dressed in a leather catsuit and motorcycle helmet, de-sexing her. Patrizia is shown to be a glamorous and desirable model as well as a killer, positioning her as a female character that transcends the film's depiction of women as either sexual playthings or predatory emasculators. Female killers were commonplace in the giallo, but *Strip Nude's* framing of a female killer in relation to the film's thematic premise of a murder that occurs during a backstreet abortion gives Patrizia's character a new dimension. Patrizia wields power with her phallic blade, taking back her female autonomy. Whilst framed as a revenge killing, the sexual politics of the film are made more complex by Carlo's revelation that Patrizia and her sister partook in an incestuous relationship – the killings a product of revenge but also sexual jealousy.

Beyond *Strip Nude's* superfluous use of women as sexual playthings, Bianchi positions women as both creators and destroyers, represented in the film's depiction of abortion and its aftermath. Whilst the film could certainly not be called progressive in its approach to sexual politics, it displays something of an awareness of the issues of the time, albeit

served in a lurid fashion tying back to ideas about male emasculation in the face of the sexually liberated 70s. Yet the semblance of these ideas is always undercut by the film's outrageous tone, best exemplified in a blackly comedic moment at the film's end in which Carlo jokes that anal sex can be used as a preventative measure against abortion – a cheap gag that embodies the film's flippant nature.

In the discussion surrounding *Strip Nude*, much emphasis is placed on the film's lurid depiction of sex and its heavy-handed, reactionary approach to the sexual politics of the era – particularly in its salacious treatment of its female characters. Yet whilst *Strip Nude* may not be considered one of the more progressive gialli in its approach to female characterization, one could argue that Bianchi treats his male characters with a similar disdain.

Nino Castelnuovo, known for his role as the charismatic romantic lead in Jacques Demy's *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg* (*Les parapluies de Cherbourg*, 1964), plays against type as the film's central protagonist – sleazy chauvinistic photographer Carlo. Carlo is a character of questionable moral conscience, driven by a love of women and sex, and is presented as somewhat of an anti-hero. He is shown to indulge in sex outside the bounds of his relationship with photographer Magda (Edwige Fenech), and exhibits a violent streak when he turns on her, choking her for asking questions. As the audience surrogate, we the viewers obtain our vicarious thrills through the exploits of Carlo's character, with Bianchi inviting comparison between his behavior and the voyeuristic thrills the audience receives. Carlo engages in sordid behavior, but he still retains a sense of morality. When Maurizio (Franco Diogene) shows interest in model Lucia, Carlo chastises him for looking outside of the marital home – demonstrating his hypocritical nature, as he himself is shown to be sexually unfaithful. When confronted by his behavior mirrored in others, Carlo feels disgust and revulsion. His hypocritical nature mirrors that of the audience – fluctuating between perverse thrills, repulsion and a sense of moral authority. Bianchi holds up a mirror to his audience, demonstrating a semblance of awareness: he acknowledges his film's outrageous tone, simultaneously embracing its lurid quality and questioning his audience's own enjoyment of it. Whilst undoubtedly salacious in tone, *Strip Nude* also embodies deeper ideas surrounding spectatorship and the act of scopophilia, primarily shown through Carlo and his characterization.

The husband of Albatross' boss, Gisella (Giuliana Cecchini, AKA Amanda), is an equally engaging male character who invites both sympathy and ridicule. Resigned to a supporting role in his wife's business and rejected in favor of Gisella's predilection for women, Maurizio



is a woefully pathetic character, seemingly unable to assert his masculinity. Maurizio is an emasculated man who, upon rejection from model Doris (Erna Schurer) due to his impotency, turns to a deflated blow-up doll for comfort, proclaiming that she's "the only one that can make it happen". Maurizio is a tragically comic figure – grossly overweight and dressed in saggy underwear, he is a man who cries over his sexual failings whilst finding solace in an inanimate object, itself a gross parody of womanhood akin to the oversexed females presented throughout the film. There's an infantilized quality to his character, with the image of Maurizio in his underwear clutching a deflated blow-up doll reminiscent of a child clutching his teddy bear. When the killer finally enters Maurizio's apartment and dispatches him with a phallic blade, emasculating him in a more literal sense, it feels more like a mercy killing rather than a punishment.

Throughout the film, there is an overriding sense of comic revulsion, presented via the characters of Maurizio and Carlo: Carlo in his shameless, duplicitous approach to bedding women and crass dialogue and Maurizio in his desperate attempts to fulfil and perform his insatiable sexual desires, his body grossly ridiculed through the lens of Bianchi's camera. Like the film's female characters, Carlo and Maurizio are shown in states of undress – Carlo as an over-the-top lust object in his swimming trunks, akin to Lucia and her outrageous bikini, and Maurizio in his underwear, voyeuristically leered at by the camera in a similar fashion to Lucia in her death scene. There's a dichotomy in the film's male characters, who are presented as both sexually dominant and sexually weak. Whilst accusations of misogyny in *Strip Nude* have credibility due to the film's exploitative, overly sexualized nature, Bianchi's portrayal of men and women as equally depraved and sexually dominant prevents the film from feeling deliberately hateful with its portrayal of sexual activity, feeling more akin to an Italian sex comedy than something more overtly sinister. Bianchi's willingness to engage with themes relating to abortion and an overall awareness of his film's salacious nature prevents *Strip Nude* from exhibiting the sense of cruelty presented in the more violent, sexually-charged gialli of the late-1970s.

Bianchi plays with audience expectation throughout *Strip Nude*, straddling the line between horror and titillation, exemplified in the film's intrusive opening shot of a spread-legged woman. There's a voyeuristic quality to the shot due to its intimate placement between a woman's legs. However, this prying shot quickly gives way to the surgical setting of the scene, the clawing sounds of a surgeon's tools alerting the audience to the grim reality of what is soon to transpire. Bianchi continuously plays with audience expectation, serving up vicarious thrills whilst simultaneously offsetting them with shots that invoke revulsion. At times, Bianchi chastises his audience, one minute leeringly displaying sordid sexual

shenanigans and, in the next, scenes of genital mutilation. Visually, Bianchi conveys this idea of the audience as voyeur through various means, often via the use of mirrors and reflective surfaces, which invite the audience to assess their role as passive participants. At one stage, Magda holds a magnifying glass up to her eye in a close-up shot – again, a wry nod from Bianchi to his audience, inviting introspection as to their participation and enjoyment of his film.

There's a playful tone to the proceedings, with Bianchi inviting the audience to engage with their role as a voyeur reflecting the audience's carnal desires through Carlo but questioning their predilection for sex reflected in the killer's murderous revenge, Carlo's hypocrisy and Maurizio's impotency. The characters that inhabit the film are so heinously theatrical that it's impossible to take umbrage at Bianchi's tongue-in-cheek depiction of the sexes compared to more nihilistic takes on the genre, such as Lucio Fulci's *The New York Ripper (Lo squartatore di New York, 1982)*. This knowing tone prevents the film from feeling overly cruel, with its salacious tone coming across as playfully sleazy rather than mean. This facet is perhaps best displayed in a scene in which Magda coquettishly strips off, throwing her negligee directly over the lens of the camera, obscuring the audience's view of a now naked Fenech – a knowing wink from director to audience.

Strip Nude for Your Killer's reputation as one of the sleazily entries in the giallo canon undoubtedly precedes it. Yet, beyond the film's sordid reputation lies a film that examines the reproductive power and terror that lies within the female form, touching upon ideas relating to the societal power struggle between the sexes in late 20th century Italy. Whilst offering a less nuanced portrayal of societal issues of the time than his contemporaries, Bianchi shows an awareness of these themes, haphazardly incorporating them into his tale of female revenge. In the examination of the genre, *Strip Nude* is an important entry, acting as both a precursor to the more sexually violent gialli of the late-1970s while demonstrating an acute, almost meta awareness of voyeuristic themes in the genre which would go on to be explored further in the postmodern gialli of the 1980s.

Rachael Nisbet is an Edinburgh-based writer specialising in Italian genre cinema, with a slant towards style and gialli. She maintains a blog at hypnoticcrecendos.blogspot.com.



ABOUT THE RESTORATION

Strip Nude for Your Killer / Nude per l'assassino is presented in its original aspect ratio of 2.35:1 with Italian and English mono audio. Scanning and restoration work was completed at L'Immagine Ritrovata, Bologna. The original 2-perf Techniscope 35mm camera negative was scanned in 2K resolution on a pin-registered Arriscan. Thousands of instances of dirt, debris, scratches, picture instability and other instances of film wear were repaired or removed through a combination of digital restoration tools and techniques. The mono Italian and English language tracks were remastered from the optical sound negatives. 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. Likewise, a few scenes appear quite soft, in keeping with the limitations of the original photography and lab processes involved.

The film was graded on Digital Vision's Nucoda Film Master at R3Store Studios, London.

All original materials used in this restoration were accessed from Surf Film.

Restoration supervised by James White, Arrow Films

L'Immagine Ritrovata:

Simone Arminio, Gilles Barberis, Valeria Bigongiali, Julia Mettenleiter, Alessia Navantieri, Charlotte Oddo, Caterina Palpacelli, Davide Pozzi, Elena Tammaccaro, Giandomenico Zeppa

R3Store Studios:

Gerry Gedge, Jo Griffin, Rich Watson, Nathan Leaman-Hill, Stephanie Mourey, Emily Kemp

Surf Film:

Stefania Carnevale



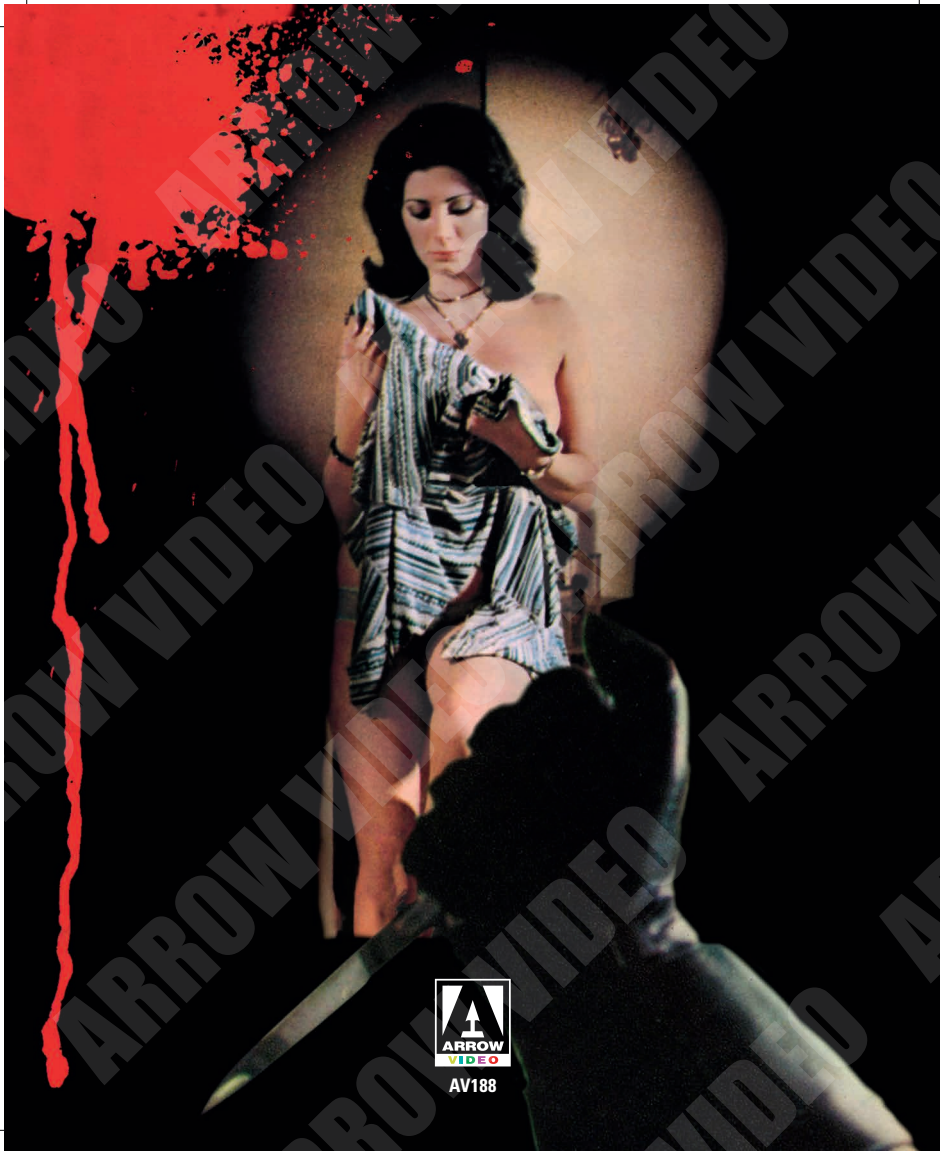
PRODUCTION CREDITS

Disc and Booklet Produced by **Michael Mackenzie**
Executive Producers **Kevin Lambert, Francesco Simeoni**
Technical Producer **James White**
QC **Nora Mehenni, Alan Simmons**
Production Assistant **Nick Mastrini**

Blu-ray Mastering and Subtitling **The Engine House Media Services**
Artist **Graham Humphreys**
Design **Obviously Creative**

SPECIAL THANKS

Alex Agran, Dima Ballin, James Blackford, Nino Castelnuovo, Kat Ellinger, Steve Fenton, David Flint, Matt Jarman, Peter Jilmstad, Rachael Nisbet, Tino Polenghi, Daniele Sangiorgi, Erna Schurer, Adrian J. Smith



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