

<http://blogcritics.org/video/article/blu-ray-review-alien-2-on/>

Blu-ray Review: **Alien 2 – On Earth**

Every now and again, I like to rekindle my retroactive romance with the analog video cassette. Seriously, I do. My interests in these antiquatedly-awkward, easy-to-irreparably damage bundles of plastic are not for their quality, however. Not by a long shot. Nevertheless, I find it fun to occasionally pop in a fuzzy, bastardized pan-and-scan transfer of an obscure and poorly-made excuse of a motion picture and laugh away. However, it's not so much the crappy-quality factor that amuses me so: it's the fact that, quite often, these are the only ways you can see some of the most hilariously mind-numbing films ever made.

For some ungodly reason, nobody has ever bothered releasing movies like *The Headless Eyes* (1971), *Cruise Missile* (1978), or *Deadline* (1981) on DVD. As such, original VHS copies of these classics (or, "class-icks," as they are sometimes referred to as) are true collector's items to connoisseurs of trashy ol' b-movies.

And then, there are those movies that were never even released on videocassette in the United States to begin with. During the pre-Internet days, there were video distributors located in basements all across the country that sold genre film collectors second-generation (if you were lucky) copies of prints of movies that had been culled from various International sources (VHS, Beta, LaserDisc, etc.) for about \$25 a pop. Once the era of the Digital Versatile Disc began to shine some much-needed light on the world of cult cinema, various gems of diverse grades finally started to get the attention crazed film aficionados like myself felt they deserved.



We were happy. Hell, we were fucking ecstatic! But we still have our little lists of movies that we feel may never see the light of day in the US. One such film is — or rather *was* — *Ciro Ippolito's* 1980 horror/sci-fi obscurity *Alien 2: Sulla Terra*, which has not only received its very first legitimate debut in America period, but which is also unveiling itself via a glorious High-Def presentation from the brand-spankin' new label, Midnight Legacy.

"Hey, wait a second. Did he say *Alien 2*?"

Yes, kids, I did. The English-language translation for *Alien 2: Sulla Terra* reads out as *Alien 2: On Earth*. But, while Ippolito's unofficially official Italian rip-off "sequel" to Ridley Scott's 1979 classic bears a five-letter extraterrestrial critter in its title, the ultra-rare, ultra-cheap obscurity no more resembles its famous American cousin than Lucio Fulci's *Zombi 2* bears a passing likeness to George A. Romero's original *Dawn Of The Dead*. In the case of the latter two titles, they both contained flesh-eating zombies that like to kill stupid humans. In the case of *Alien 2: On Earth* vs. *Alien*, they both feature highly-intelligent varmints from other worlds that like to kill stupid humans.

But *Alien 2: On Earth* goes the extra mile — it not only adds a lot of pitch black shots of people spelunking into the proverbial blender of deceivable Italian cinema, but we *also* get to see a bunch of European actors (pretending to be American) go bowling. As a matter of fact, the climax of the flick even takes place in a bowling alley.

We begin with a manned space capsule crashing down into the ocean (represented here by stock footage), which is (presumably) being covered by all three of the TV networks. Apparently, watching the news back then was a big to-do thing back then since they didn't have *American Idol* — or cable, for that matter. As the world waits to hear whether or not the astronauts inside the capsule are alive and well, a local San Diego television station attempts to suppress the anticipation by interviewing a noted speleologist named Thelma (Belinda Mayne). The interview turns into a complete bust, though, when Thelma picks up some sort of psychic connection to something ominous (maybe it's just all those reruns of *Mr. Ed* piled up in the studio's library trying to get out?).



And so, her television career in shambles, Thelma and her Kenny Loggins-esque beau Roy (Mark Bodin) go to the bowling alley, where their fellow spelunker friends (one of whom is '80s Italian horror regular Michele Soavi, who went on to direct the last good zombie movie ever made, *Dellamorte Dellamore*) lie in wait. The bowling alley is kind enough to let the group of cave dwellers share a gigantic tin can of Del Monte pineapple juice, as well as employing San Diego's one and only black guy — who, true to '80s Italian cinema, is about as stereotypical as they come.

"Is this a movie about aliens, or unimportant stereotypical characters at a bowling alley." Well, both really. When I the first time I saw it on VHS via a second-generation copy back in the mid-'90s, I too wondered when the hell the whole "alien" aspect of this flick was going to kick in. Sadly, we only get a brief teaser toward the beginning of the film, when some little girl gets her face torn off, but proceeds to sit in the sand on the beach and whimper anyway (apparently, all of

her nerve endings were sucked clean out of her system and replaced with morphine). After that, we have to wait a good seven years or so for Michele Soavi's character to find a funky-looking fake rock on the ground while he's passing all that god-awful pineapple juice behind a cluttered redneck roadhouse bar out in the desert (which is just a funky-looking fake stone's throw away from San Diego).

One of the other explorers places the rock — or, “meteorite,” as I believe we're supposed to call it — in Soavi's backpack as they descend into the rocky bowels of Italy's famed Castellana Grotte (damn, they drove *far!*). Soon (another two hours or so in), the meteor emanates a thingy; one that somehow manages to plant itself into one of the party. Later, in an effect shot that's a real eye-opener (heh), a barely-perceivable tentacle-like beastie lunges out of the unconscious underground traveler's ocular opening and onto the neck of another ill-fated European who literally loses his head over the unpleasant incident.



From there, our trekkers are besieged and eliminated by an alien force that remains unseen. Oh, you should get used to not seeing our titular monster: the budget for this shameless non-sequel was so astonishingly low that we never truly get to see the creature for more than just a fleeting (no tot mention unconvincing) glance until the finale of the film — wherein we see a terrified Thelma reacting to a POV shot from the alien's mouth. Or it could be its tracheotomy. Hell if I know. It's damn funny, either way you look at it, though.

Well, it's funny for *some*. I showed *Alien 2: On Earth* (which was also released in various parts of the world as *Alien Terror* and plain ol' *Alien 2*) to a group of friends one time — and, even though some of them were devout believers in the Church of Bad Film, they still didn't appreciate it as much as I did. Of course, I'd also seen it before, back when it was a near-unobtainable mystery, so I knew what I could expect from the movie (not much) and what it would not deliver (a lot). But my reintroduction to this crap-tastic Italian oddity did carry with it an unexpected pleasure: an incredibly glorious High-Def transfer!

Even if Midnight Legacy were to never release another film, they would go down in the annals of b-moviedom for the spectacular video quality *Alien 2: On Earth* boasts. Taken directly from the original Italian negative, Midnight Legacy's 1080p/MPEG-4 AVC 1.85:1 widescreen transfer (which preserves the original Italian-language credits) is a goddamned wonder to behold —

especially if you still have your old bootlegged second-generation VHS copy to compare it to like me). As you might expect, the stock footage seen in the beginning of the film is not so hot. But, once the footage from the *actual* film comes barreling onscreen (if one dares call this an “actual film”), the quality changes drastically.

As beautiful-looking as it never would have looked on US movie screens had the movie ever actually been released here in the first place (“Say ‘huh?’”), Midnight Legacy’s *Alien 2: On Earth* could definitely shake the stalactites off of a grotto’s ceiling. It looks that beautiful! The colors are more vibrant than I would have ever thought them possible to appear (especially the reds during the film’s gorier moments); contrast is completely natural and untouched by conventional “restoration” procedures (another plus for Midnight Legacy: they’re keepin’ it real with a 100% organic transfer, kids!); and...it...uh...**wow!** I’ve never seen a cheesy Italian horror movie look so fucking great.



Again with doing the whole “organic”

thing, Midnight Legacy didn’t bother mixing up a brand new DTS 5.1 soundtrack that offers a few fresh-yet-decidedly-extraneous surround sound effects and very little else going for it. Instead, they go *au naturel* with an English DTS-HD 2.0 mono audio track, which, for purists, is like watching *Star Wars: Episode IV – A New Hope* in its original mono form (and wondering what the hell Darth Vader is saying the whole time). On a more “standard” A/V side of the coin, this soundtrack will leave some folks feeling about as empty as a little girl on the beach who just had her face ripped off by an alien. That is not to say this one and only audio option is not good. It’s great, in fact! Midnight Legacy’s auditory offering is crisp, clear, and successfully delivers the film’s inane dialogue and oft-outrageous dubbing.

The only downfall here as far as I’m concerned is a lack of English subtitles. Sure, it’s bad enough to just *hear* the dialogue without having to read it, too — but there’s a majorly-vital and ultra-corny tagline that pops up during the film’s apocalyptic finale (all Italian horror/sci-fi movies *must* have an apocalyptic ending: it’s a law over there) which will only make sense to anyone that a) is semi-fluent in Italian, b) has seen the movie before with its English-language credits), or c) gives a shit. That being said, though, the tagline is viewable via the disc’s English-language trailer, which is presented in Standard Definition and has been culled straight from a full-frame Dutch VHS copy (t’was all they could find, apparently).

The only other Special Feature to be found on Midnight Legacy’s release of *Alien 2: On Earth* is an eleven minute reel of “Special Effects Outtakes.” These clips (which are even rarer than the

main feature itself) are presented without any sound (as they were shot) or music, and give us several different takes of some of the movie's gory highlights.

OK, so let's tally it all up here, kids: we got a bad Italian rip-off masquerading itself as a "sequel;" extremely bad acting; several wonderfully gory moments; Action Kenny Loggins; a telepathic heroine; a view of San Diego and the Coronado Bay Bridge in 1980; and a killer (if sometimes repetitive) music score by the dynamic duo of Guido and Maurizio De Angelis (under their "Oliver Onions" alias). Sure, it's not as delightfully trite and gory as Luigi Cozzi's *Alienrip-off*, *Contamination*, or the 1983 cult fave, (*[Return Of] The Alien's*) *The Deadly Spawn*, but it's still good (bad) fun.

Really, how can you go wrong with this one, kids?



The only additions Midnight Legacy could have made here would have been to throw in a CD soundtrack of the film's De Angelis score (extremely unlikely since I doubt one was ever released, but I can dream, right?), possibly a still gallery (I have an original Italian [locandina](#) poster that I would have been more than happy to donate!) and the aforementioned subtitles for the Italian credits. Other than that, this release is perfect, and Midnight Legacy's release of this rare, cheapo Italian rip-off is a bad movie lover's High-Def dream come true — and I can't wait to see what else Midnight Legacy has in store for us!