

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

- Chris Beaumont

In recent years I have been working hard to cultivate my movie tastes, to hone and sharpen them to a fine edge. The thing about this is that I have worked at sharpening both sides of the blade. I suspect that if you were to graph my growing movie tastes the result would look a lot like an inverse bell curve. You see, while I am all about recognizing the classics and championing high quality film making, I also tend to throw my support behind utter trash. One area that I have worked very hard to fine tune is my love of low budget horror films. You can break that down into further chunks like Full Moon Pictures (you know, *Puppet Master*, *Demonic Toys*, and the like) and Italian B-movies (like the horror output of Lucio Fulci, and the movie this review is about, *Alien 2: On Earth*).

Yes, you can call a lot of these movies classics, even landmarks in genre film making, but by and large they are only known within certain circles. I could go up to any number of my friends and ask them about *The Gates of Hell*, *The Blind Dead*, or *Make Them Die Slowly* and be guaranteed the response will be a blank stare. These movies and those even further down the totem pole certainly take a particular brand of movie lover. The problem with liking, or wanting to like, some of these movies is that they are so hard to find, consider something like Bruno Mattei's Ridley Scott rip-off *Terminator II* (aka *Shocking Dark*) and you will find a movie that is darn near impossible to turn up.

There is a new company on the block that seems poised to help all of us B through Z-grade movie lovers. The company is Midnight Legacy and their debut release is the little to never seen Italian sequelsploitation film *Alien 2: On Earth* from director Ciro Ippolito (under the pseudonym Sam Cromwell). It may not be the splashiest of movies, but there is something strangely hypnotic about this rather slow paced gem. Also, it may be marketed as a sequel to Ridley Scott's *Alien*, but it has nothing to do with the Scott classic (much like *Zombi 2* was a "sequel" to *Dawn of the Dead*, which was released in Italy as *Zombi*).

Alien 2 gets off to a slow start as we are greeted with a whole mess of stock footage. This footage is used to set up a space module plummeting back to Earth, and we are meant to believe this is the source of the alien threat (and presumably from the Nostromo if one is to actually believe this is a sequel to *Alien* despite it being set hundreds of years in the future). In any case the scene shifts to a couple as they take a leisurely drive from their home to a TV studio (set in a movie theater), where the actress apparently forgets her lines (otherwise we are meant to believe she has visions of monsters).

The woman and her boyfriend head to the river to meet a man on a boat before ultimately meeting up with the rest of their team at a bowling alley (yes, a bowling alley). Oh yes, I forgot to mention, they are cave diving scientists about to head into the deep. On the way to the cave they stop and find a mysterious looking rock, so naturally they put it in their bag and carry on.

Do you see where this is going? If you said "an alien attack on the group once in the cave from something in the rock," you'd be right. The attacks lead to some decent gore effects and a continued lack of genuine suspense or an actual script. The leaps of logic, or lack thereof, are mind boggling. I mean, they are scientists, right? If you remember that fact, pair it with their reaction after the realization of the alien attack. It makes no sense. Then there is the final moments of the film that prove they either ran out of money or just had no idea how to end it.

The acting is poor, the suspense is nonexistent, the screenplay appears made up on the spot, and the movie is awfully cheap looking. All of this sounds like reasons to avoid a movie. Most people probably should, but for those of you who are more like me, have at it. I found a lot to like, from the use of the stock footage to the crazy dialogue, from the blood to the alien anus-vision during the return to the bowling alley, from the poor performances to the weird use of music, the movie worked it's terrible charm on me.

Trivia: the director of such films as *The Church* and *Dellamorte, Dellamore*, Michele Soavi appears as Burt in the movie.

Audio/Video. Obviously the tech specs of this release are not going to resemble a big Hollywood release at all. With that said, this Blu-ray release looks fantastic, and I daresay it is likely the best it has ever looked, including whenever it may have screened theatrically. The uncut print has a nice level of detail and colors are very good, save for the stock footage that looks like, well, stock footage. There is little evidence of print damage, whatever the source was, it was kept in very good condition. Frankly, the movie probably has no right looking as good as it does. The audio track is DTS-MA 2.0 and it does the trick. It is clear and understandable, but it has a distinct aura of being an old track. It is an odd, yet familiar tone that is hard to describe, but feels perfect for this sort of movie.

Extras. A couple of extras are on the disk. First is a series of special effects outtakes. Nothing special to see here, and I am curious as to where they were discovered. The other extra is a Dutch VHS trailer; it is the same as the only one I have ever been able to find online. Nothing to really worry about, the movie itself is enough for me.

Bottomline. What can I say? The masses are sure to hate the movie, but for those of us with slightly skewed perspectives, this is a must see. Its hypnotic quality won me over. I found it hard to look away. It is certainly a strange film of the sort you rarely see anymore.

Recommended.

