

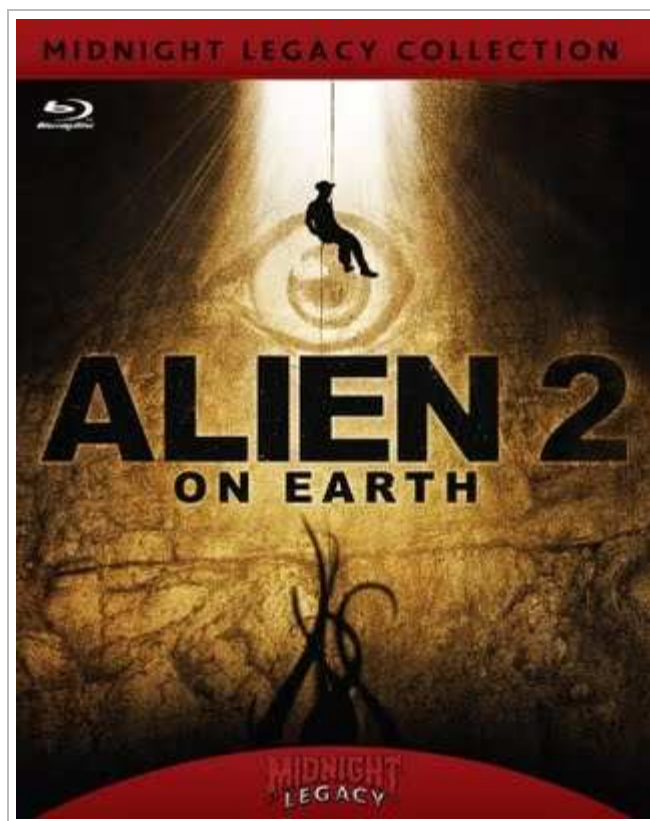
## FFanzeen: Rock'n'Roll Attitude With Integrity

Through the writings and photography of Robert Barry Francos, a view of the arts and culture, including everyday life.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 2011

### DVD Review: Alien 2: On Earth

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 Images from the Internet



#### Alien 2: On Earth

Directed by *Ciro Ippolito (as Sam Cromwell)*

*Midnight Legacy*

85 minutes, USD \$19.95

[Midnight-legacy.com](http://Midnight-legacy.com)

[MVDvisual.com](http://MVDvisual.com)

Fulci. Argento. Deodato. These are names that will sound familiar to those who find joy in the Italian horror sub-genre generally referred to as *giallo*. The more current ultra-horror films such as *Hostel*, *Saw*, and *Wolf Creek*, may not have existed without these extreme and surgically efficient foreign bloodfests (then again, would the giallo

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#### About Me

Robert Barry Francos  
 Currently living in Saskatoon (email at [RBF55@msn.com](mailto:RBF55@msn.com) for address). From 1977-88, I used to publish a print version of a music magazine in New York called FFanzeen, which dealt with the wide-ranging independent

have seen any light without the likes of American pioneer Hershell Gordon Lewis? But I digress...).

Perhaps the biggest promoter of these European films, especially in the New World, was the advent of the new videotape market. During the 1980s, the two largest renters were the extreme horror films and porn. Part of the reason was accessibility. Sure, one could have gone to any of the Times Square theaters and gotten their fill, but anyone away from these kinds of grindhouse theaters would probably be clueless. But then there was the VHS...

One of the problems of seeing these films via video in those heady days of the '80 is that the ever-hungry market would release just about anything that might sell, even if it was an incomplete copy; sometimes the story made no sense at all due to sections being removed by a specific European country's moral codes. This may vary from country to country, so there were many different versions of these releases floating around.

*Alien 2: On Earth* (originally *Alien 2 Sulla Terra*) is a supposed sequel to the original *Alien*, from 1980. While never having an official theater showing stateside, like many of these foreign films, it was released under various names, including *Alien Terror* and *Strangers*. Another quirk of the early VHS days was the tendency of the production companies to call just about any film a sequel to anything that did well at the box office. This is a bit of an exception though, because director *Ciro Ippolito* (who also went by the pseudonym *Sam Cromwell* for this, his first directorial effort) *meant* this as an "unofficial" sequel, even though the bonds to the original James Cameron opus are negligible, at best (i.e., human hosts and snake-like creatures eventually popping out).

*Alien 2* is, in hindsight, best described as having aspects of *Alien*, the underground spelunking death-trap of *The Cave* or *The Depth*, just a smidgen of *The Night of the Living Dead*, and the deserted streets scenarios of, well, so many others. The story is pretty simple: an American spacecraft returns to earth, and somehow, between starting its descent and the at-sea rescue (great Mercury-period stock footage is used during the opening shots), the astronauts have mysteriously disappeared. Around the same time, a strange sparkling rock is found by a group of friends (with big period hair, both female and male) in a small town near San Diego, before they head into a large cave system they plan to explore. For some reason, the main character, *Thelma* (*Belinda Mayne*), who is sometimes psychic and can tell that something is going to happen (unless it ruins a plot surprise moment, apparently), takes the football-sized rock, puts it in her backpack, and takes it with her from the surface into the cave (why not leave it in the car rather than schlepping it?). This shiny stone ends up actually being an egg for creatures brought back on the spaceship, and when it comes out of the rubbery-looking stone its destination is the host's body.

From there, it's a race to get to get out of the cave through alternative directions before becoming lunch. And once outside, will it

music scene. I also photographed many bands from the period (and since). Now I write this blog, and have a column at [jerseybeat \(dot\) com](http://jerseybeat.com) (slash) [quietcorner \(dot\) html](http://quietcorner.com). And the beat goes on.

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be much better? Yes, there is gore, as a very puppet-looking creature busts through a head with an eyeball hanging, or a head slides off a body (both seen in the trailer), for example. Despite the blood and guts, it is more *really?* than stomach-churning (unless you're sensitive to these things). However, it is still a pleasure to see devices used rather than CGI.

Oh, and the inconsistent mistakes are wonderful. For example, while running through a supposedly empty city, as the camera follows the main character(s) while a street is crossed, the viewer can see a red light down the block and a car with its brake-light on. When the light turns green, the brake-light goes off and the car starts to move.

Just as with manga cinema, there are definite cues that this is giallo, almost like a checklist. There's the close-up of the face with a light on it while a mysterious wind blows the flowing hair, the even closer shots of wide-eyes (though the "whites-only" eyes, usually a standard, is missing here), the shrill and two-tone electronic music (ooo-waaaa-oooo-waaaa), the shaky monster-cam view, and the very quick zoom in and out in Dr. Tongue's House of Horror style. And like many Japanese films, the dubbed, over-enunciated voices are familiar to anyone who has watched a few of these films. In much of this release, while it is obvious that the actors are speaking English, the vocal track is recorded over back into English nevertheless.

Mayne's character is the only one with any substance (relatively speaking), though there is no history given to her. Everyone else, including her (boyfriend?) (husband?), are inconsequential, or at least the equivalent of the members of the away crew of the Enterprise who were not in the main cast.

Okay, this is a silly film, granted, but as giallo goes, it is a fun flick that will fill an appetite for this genre. Yeah, if you're a fan of these films as I am, leave your suspension of *any* disbelief before you slip this disc into your player, and you're bound to have a fun time. Oh, here are some official things to note about this particular release: it's in both DVD and Blu-Ray, it's the first release by new company Midnight Legacy (let's hope they let a lot more come our way), and it's widescreen, taken from the original 35mm negative (rather than just copied from one of the myriad of VHS releases) They claim it is the most complete version available. All good news for giallo fans around the world.

So, grab some 'corn, because it's just what's in order for watching this release.

Posted by Robert Barry Francos at [12:01 AM](#) 

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