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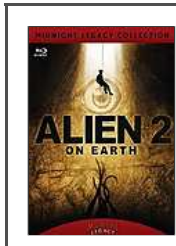
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Alien 2: On Earth

**Review by:**
Head Cheeze**AKA:**
Alien Terror**Release Date:**
1980**Studio:**
Midnight Legacy**Genre:**
SF/Horror**Format:**
Blu-ray**Region:**
All**Aspect Ratio:**
1.85:1**Directed by:**
Ciro Ippolito**Cast:**
Belinda Mayne
Mark Bodin
Michele Soavi
Don Parkinson
Claudio Falanga**Movie:****Extras:****Bottom Line:****Video:**

The 1980's were perhaps the most fertile period for the Italian "mockbuster" (ie; rip-offs of popular films), with dozens of Hollywood hits finding themselves cannibalized by greedy producers anxious to cash-in on their successes. It seemed every major hit begat a cheap and dirty, hastily thrown together Italian version of the same, with everything from *Jaws* (Enzo G. Castellari's *Great White*) and *Predator* (Bruno Mattei's *Robowar*) to *Dawn of the Dead* (Mattei, again, with *Hell of the Living Dead*) getting the treatment. Not content with merely ripping off elements of a movie's plot, Italian producers would ultimately go a step further, offering unofficial "sequels" to such films as *The Terminator* (Mattei's *Terminator II*) and *The Evil Dead* (the Joe D'Amato-produced *La casa 3*). These sequels were at best tangentially related to the films they aped and thrown together to make a quick buck off of the unsuspecting public before undergoing countless name changes when they hit VHS a few months later. A fantastically bad example of such a film is *Ciro Ippolito's* 1980 oddity, *Alien 2 - On Earth* (aka; *Alien Terror*), a film that, save for the word "alien" in the title, has literally nothing in common with the 1979 Ridley Scott classic.

Alien 2: On Earth opens with an exceptionally long montage of stock footage detailing the retrieval of a space capsule that's about to splashdown in the Pacific Ocean. We see a lot of grainy footage of naval vessels, curiously sped-up footage from the Apollo missions, and a few shots from the inside of a rescue chopper where Ippolito's dubbed over the actual pilots so that they sound...um...rescuey. The action then shifts to a television studio that looks like a public access TV show shot from someone's basement, where three people sit in front of a mixing board and stare at a single television set. The director (and we know he's the director because he's got a microphone sticking out of his nifty headset) furiously orders his crew to cut to different footage while they await the capsule's arrival, but he soon grows tired of waiting and decides to move on to an interview to fill the dead air until the astronauts return.

The show's guest, a beautiful geologist named Thelma Joyce (Belinda Mayne), says something about stalactites and stalagmites before going into some sort of trance-like state. Her boyfriend, Roy (Mark Bodin, sporting the most well-manicured 80's doo this side of Richard Marx) rushes to her side and casually informs the host that Thelma's "a little telepathic", which I imagine is like being "a little incontinent", but with less pee. This telepathy angle comes in handy later, but for now it's just stupid.

After her binged television appearance, Thelma runs to the beach where she is struck by another premonition; this one revolving around a young girl at the very same beach and a creepy blue rock that melts her face off. She finds the girl and her mother, but, instead of warning them to steer clear of mysterious blue rocks, she bursts into histrionics and scares them away. Roy then rounds her up to go meet up with their fellow spelunkers (including fan-favorite director, Michele Soavi, as Burt) for a subterranean expedition. After they leave, we see Thelma's premonition come true as the little girl is attacked by what appears to be a mound of gelatin that shoots out Silly String. Terrifying!

While Thelma and Roy and their friends drive out to a remote cave, we learn that the space capsule (remember that?) returned to Earth without its crew, and instead brought back a bunch of those blue rocks. Meanwhile, one of Thelma's fellow explorers finds a similar rock and gives it to her as a gift. Thelma, despite seeing the same creepy blue rock in her vision, is thrilled with the present, and stuffs it into her backpack before they descend into the cave system.

I said Thelma was telepathic. I never said anything about her being smart.

The team sets up camp for the night, allowing for an obligatory shot of Belinda Mayne's breasts (this IS an Italian film, after all) as Thelma and Roy bed down for the night, and, the next day, the team rope their way down into the depths of the system. This precarious descent features all manner of special effects wizardry, including a kaleidoscope lens and several flashlights dangling from strings. The scene goes on for what seems like several minutes, intercutting between the aforementioned flashlights and shots of the actors hanging on ropes against a black curtain, struggling as though they're actually doing something when, in reality, they're just sort of bobbing up and down. When they finally reach the bottom, the team decides to split up and investigate the caves, and it is here that Thelma's new pet rock hatches and lets loose a beastie that looks like a pre-school yam art project gone awry. Now, trapped in the bowels of the Earth with a hideous length of Vaseline-coated twine, Thelma and her team must fight to find a way back to the surface!

Alien 2: On Earth is amongst the silliest and most ill-conceived films of the eighties. It features next-to-nothing in terms of scares, a totally inept screenplay, and one of the most laughable movie monsters ever to grace the screen. The only thing the film really has going for it is the bucketloads of gore, and, even then, it's so unconvincing that it's more likely to elicit laughs rather than disgust. Of course, anyone who reads this site regularly will know that this is precisely the sort of trash I thrive on, so it should come as no surprise that I thoroughly enjoyed the flick. It's howlingly funny stuff, teeming with all of the ingredients that make bad Italian movies such a guilty pleasure of mine. From its

nonsensical plot to its gratuitous violence and terrible performances, this is z-grade material that bad movie junkies will eat up like yesterday's cold pizza, and it's been dredged up from the depths by the folks at Midnight Legacy!

Midnight Legacy unleashes *Alien 2: On Earth* on Blu-ray, with a gorgeous 1.85:1 transfer that, quite frankly, really wowed the pants off of me. I mean, this is a low-budget, little-seen film that's now more than thirty years old, yet these folks have given it a treatment befitting an old classic. The colors are exceptionally vibrant (especially the trademark orange Italian "blood"), the level of detail is outstanding, and the picture, itself, is remarkably sharp and clean. Sure, the opening volley of stock footage looks pretty ratty, but once the film proper starts up, it looks about as good - if not better - than most big studio vintage offerings.

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The audio is an HD monaural track, but that's in keeping with Midnight Legacy's vow to use only lossless audio mixes that remain respectful of a film's original sound design. Here's an example of a company not going out of their way trying to polish a turd, and I appreciate that. The Italian cheapo flicks of this period just weren't recorded in such a way as to benefit from anything beyond a single track, and Midnight Legacy keeps things pure and simple. We get crisp dialogue that manages to stay audible even above the obnoxious distorted synth and drum soundtrack. That's the best one could hope for with a film like this.

Extras are few but it's really a miracle that the film ever saw the light of day, let alone someone managing to dig up any supplemental materials to accompany it. We get a silent FX outtakes reel and a ratty looking trailer culled from an 80's VHS release. The film comes slipcased and numbered, and it's Midnight Legacy's intent to release these films as limited collector's editions – a sort of b-movie Criterion Collection, if you will – promising that once a printing sells out, it will not be reissued.


In terms of pure technical proficiency, Midnight Legacy absolutely knocks it out of the park with their release of Alien 2: On Earth. The film, itself, of course, is an absolute wreck, but it's one that fans of these sorts of movies will be more than happy to add to their collection in any form, let alone in a package as lovingly handled as this one. The image quality is breathtaking (a word I never thought I'd use in relation to a movie like this), and, while I can't recommend this as a purchase to anyone but the most ardent fan of bad cinema, Blu-ray enthusiasts should definitely give this one a rent if only to see a restoration done right. Bravo, Midnight Legacy. Bravo!


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