



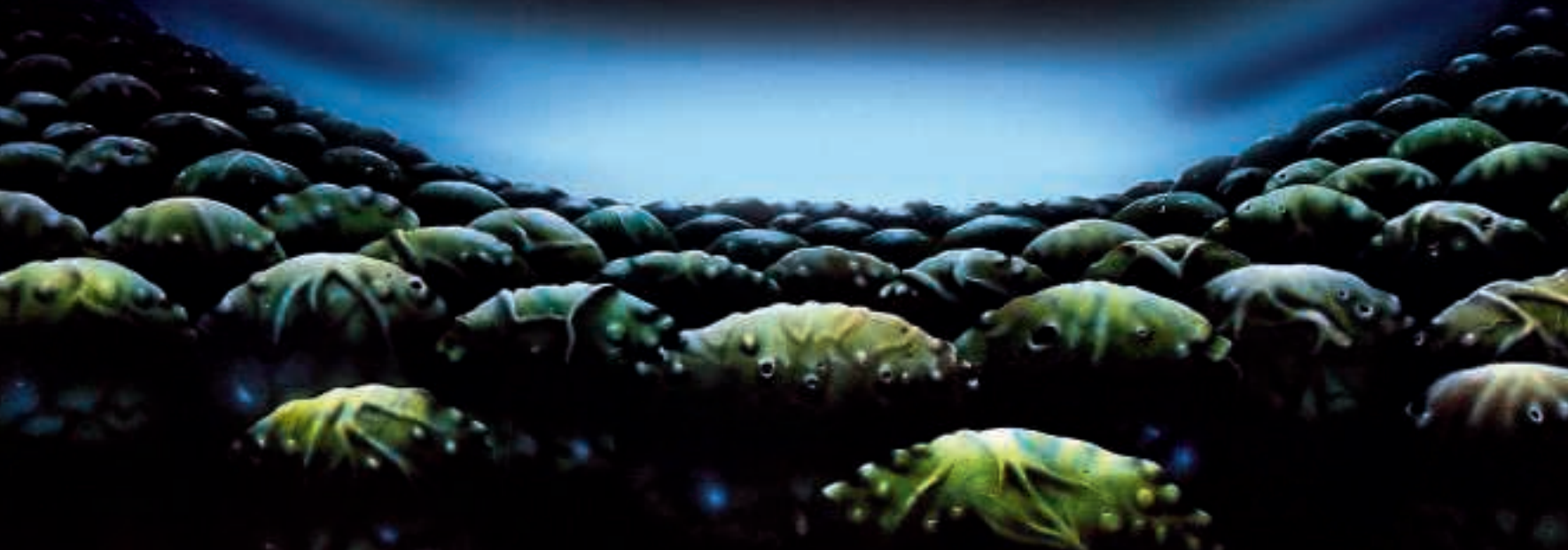
CONTAMINATION

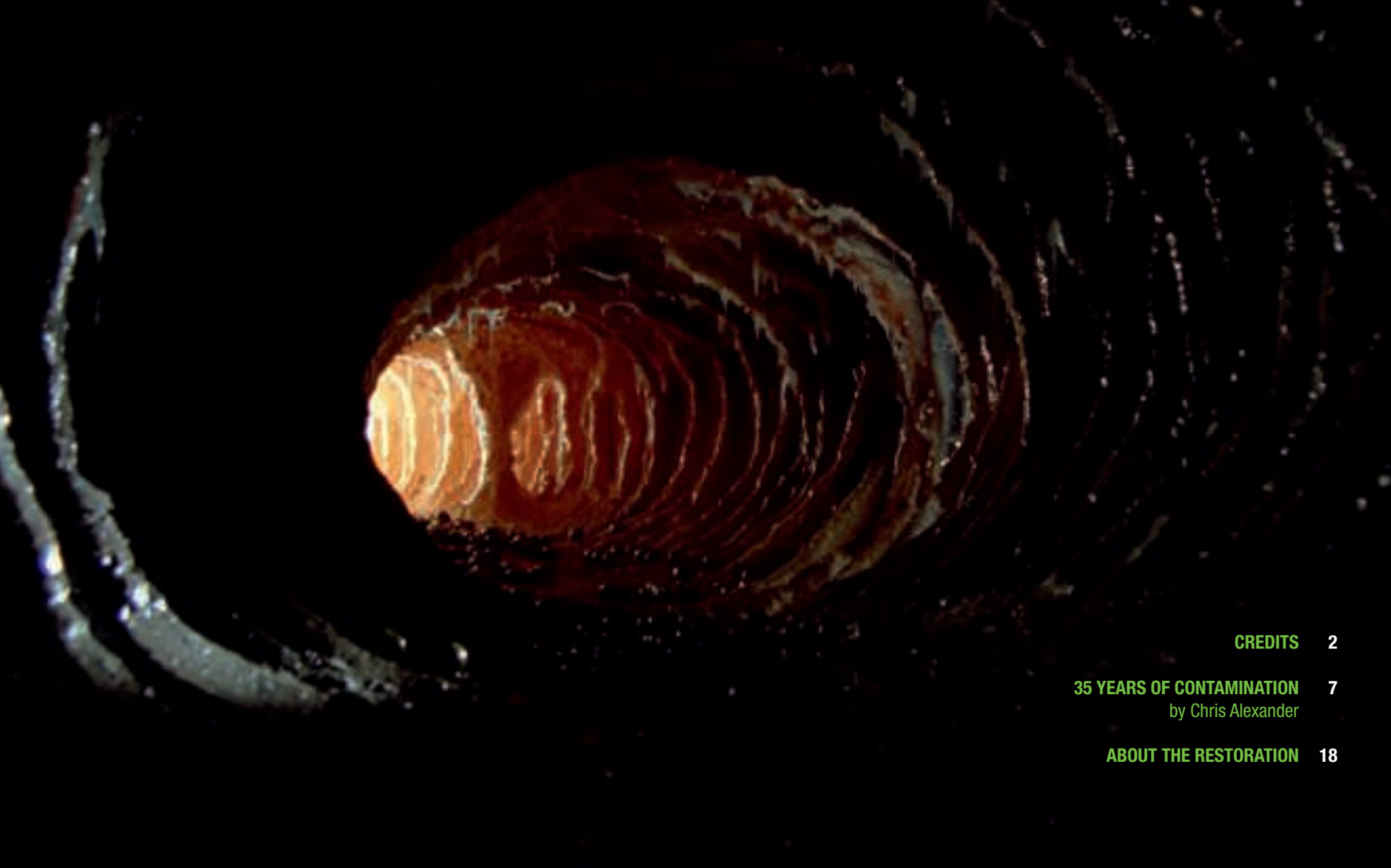
CAST

IAN McCULLOCH as Commander Hubbard
LOUISE MARLEAU as Colonel Stella Holmes
MARINO MASE as Lieutenant Tony Arras
SIEGFRIED RAUCH as Hamilton
GISELA HAHN as Perla de la Cruz
CARLO DE MEJO as Agent Young
CARLO MONNI as Dr. Turner

CREW

Directed by **LUIGI COZZI** (as "LEWIS COATES")
Produced by **CLAUDIO MANCINI**
Screenplay by **LUIGI COZZI** (as "LEWIS COATES") and **ERICH TOMEK**
Special effects by **GIOVANNI CORRIDORI**
Director of Photography **GIUSEPPE PINORI**
Edited by **NINO BARAGLI**
Music by **GOBLIN**





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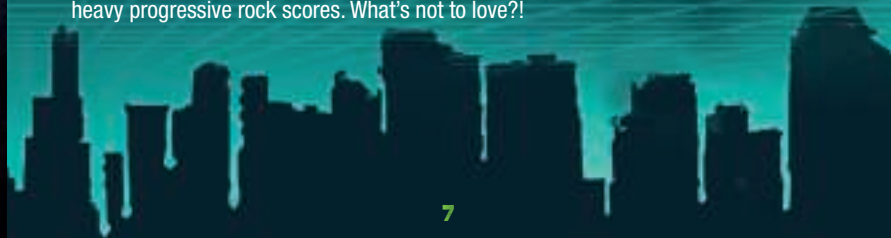


35 YEARS OF CONTAMINATION

by Chris Alexander

Though he's never quite reached the internationally-acclaimed heights of his famous colleague (and business partner in Rome's famous Profondo Rosso horror culture shop) Dario Argento, director and dark fantasy film enthusiast Luigi Cozzi has nonetheless managed to forge a body of bizarre, bloody and fantastic work that is still celebrated today. And nestled amongst those cult gems, the likes of which include modestly budgeted near-classics like *The Killer Must Kill Again* (1975), *Starcrash* (1978) and the uproarious Lou Ferrigno peplum *Hercules* (1983), is his 1980 sci-fi horror gem *Contamination* (aka *Alien Contamination*), celebrating its 35th anniversary this year and honored here, in this beautiful Blu-ray package.

Contamination is perhaps Cozzi's most notorious foray into Mediterranean mayhem; a lively, silly and unapologetically messy thriller that defies logic and delivers the grim goods by the crateful. Made in the wake of the worldwide success of Ridley Scott's *Alien* (1979) and riding upon the tide of the gory aftershocks left by Romero's *Dawn of the Dead* (1978) and its Italian rip-off, Lucio Fulci's *Zombie Flesh Eaters* (aka *Zombie* and *Zombi 2*, 1979), *Contamination* tells the tale of a diabolical plot to bring the world to its knees with the help of ET-hatched, acid-filled eggs. These eggs (which resemble melon-sized, pulsing pimples) are harvested at a sinister Colombian coffee plantation and then left as lethal presents for the one-eyed alien and his human familiar's mutual enemies. When they ripen they explode, spewing out ghastly corrosive and combustible juice that causes the torsos of said enemies to erupt into torrents of blood and guts. As if that wasn't enough to recommend it, all of this groovy cinematic madness is set to the strains of one of Italian super group Goblin's thundering, bass-heavy progressive rock scores. What's not to love?!





“Without the existence of *Alien* we could not have made this movie at all,” Cozzi freely admits.

“Back in those days, when you went to an Italian producer to pitch an idea for a film, there was no possible way to do it unless the idea was a rip-off of another film that made lots of money. So I went to my producer – Claudio Mancini – and said that this film will be *Alien* made for peanuts [...] As soon as Mancini heard ‘*Alien*’ and ‘money’, he said ‘Let’s do it!’”

Outside of the obvious and admitted Ridley Scott/H.R. Giger influence, *Contamination* also sports plain as day nods to both *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* and the Hammer horror classic *Quatermass 2* (aka *Enemy from Space*, 1957). But neither of those films (not even *Alien* for that matter, despite its now iconic chest-bursting sequence), can match *Contamination* for sheer, absurdly bloody abandon. Like the films of Argento, Fulci and lesser Italian shockmeisters of the period like Bruno Mattei, the movie is built around those aforementioned operatically violent set pieces. Of course, unlike Argento, Cozzi’s movies had to shelve any auteur pretensions.

“You must understand, Dario was never in our category, the group that Lucio Fulci and I were in,” notes Cozzi. “He could decide what he wanted to do. He created a new genre. But Fulci and I could not do this. We had to follow the example of the blockbusters. In those times, the concept was to improve on what made money. When Fulci made *Zombie Flesh Eaters* he was imitating *Dawn of the Dead* but the idea was to put more violence in it and spend less money. Every new movie you had to add something: blood, sex, whatever would sell. So *Contamination* took that scene with the exploding chest and just added more of it.”

Said gore effects are simple and incredibly effective gags sculpted by legendary Italian FX artist Giovanni Corridori (*A Fistful of Dollars* [1964], *Zombie Flesh Eaters*, *Tenebrae* [1982]) who created a series of fake chests and simply stocked them with

fake blood and butchers spoils. The chests were then sealed, filled with air bladders and then inflated to extremes on cue, causing them to explode. The wonderfully vulgar sequences were then slowed down in camera, resulting in the wince-inducing, graphically-realized deaths displayed in maximum, anatomical detail.

“I actually tried to do *The Wild Bunch* meets *Alien*,” the director cheerfully explains. “I loved Peckinpah and I thought it was time to do something like that in the horror film. I wanted the audience to experience the pain of the violence as it was with Peckinpah’s violence.”

The cast of *Contamination* is a typical Italian exploitation film melting-pot of international actors, as none of these gruesome films turned much profit domestically and instead made their mark outside of Italy’s borders. The budget for *Contamination* was comprised of pre-sales primarily from the UK (which is ironic as *Contamination* would run into ‘video nasty’ trouble with the British censor), America, Germany and Canada – the latter country’s involvement explaining the presence of French-Canadian actress Louise Marleau, who plays the intrepid heroine alongside handsome British thespian Ian McCulloch, fresh from appearing in *Zombie Flesh Eaters*.

“When Mancini was preparing *Contamination*,” says Cozzi, “he knew the producer of *Zombie Flesh Eaters* [Fabrizio De Angelis] and saw how much money that film had made and so he demanded we had to hire the actor from *Zombie Flesh Eaters* for it. And Ian was just fine, really good in the part.”

“Regarding Marleau, I wanted Caroline Munro who I had in *Starcrash* and everybody just loved her. But the producer wanted an older, stronger actor. Mancini was the executive producer of the Sergio Leone spaghetti westerns and so one day he was talking to Leone who had been at the Montreal Film Festival and had seen Louise in a film there and recommended her. She’s not what I wanted at all. If I had had Caroline, it would have been a different film.”



Also in the cast is Italian actor Marino Masé (from Mel Welles' *Lady Frankenstein* [1971] and later, Peter Greenaway's *The Belly of an Architect* [1987]), serving as comic relief (and, eventually serving as an *hors d'oeuvre* for the alien Cyclops in the film's dreamy climax) whilst German character performer Siegfried Rauch (*The Eagle Has Landed* [1976] and the early Edgar Wallace thriller *The Zombie Walks* [1968]), appears as McCulloch's possessed ex-astronaut colleague who is slave to the eggs. Rauch especially entertains in his role as the scheming super-villainous (and seemingly supernatural) Hamilton, further adding to the almost Ian Fleming-esque feel of the film.

"Mancini loved James Bond and hated horror and science fiction," Cozzi offers. "The truth is, he really wanted me to make a Bond movie, I think. That kind of film was certainly in my mind when I was making the film."

Contamination has long been a film that, while beloved by many and ranking high in Cozzi's canon, is rarely taken seriously as a major genre work – and that's unfortunate. Sure, it's ridiculous: the central plotline about the eggs being used as tools for world domination doesn't even make sense. The green sacs of cosmic poison sitting around in rooms serve no real purpose save for killing an individual, and if that was all that the Cyclops and Hamilton had intended, a bullet could have done the job faster and easier.

But no matter – one does not watch a film like *Contamination* for pithy things such as realism. With its ultraviolence, brisk pace, entertaining performances and that aforementioned and absolutely stunning Goblin soundscape, *Contamination* is simply one of the most watchable and purely enjoyable Italian horror films ever made. It only aims to entertain and it does so by assembling a gaggle of familiar dark fantasy and pulp-fiction tropes and mashing them wildly into one outrageous and super-stylish red stew, the kind of gleeful and almost innocent B-movie escapism that Cozzi has

long traded in. And although Cozzi (or, as he is often credited in English-speaking territories, Lewis Coates) is indeed a genuinely fine genre director, he has not made a feature film since 1989's *Paganini Horror*.

"At the end of the 1980s I realized that the industry in Italy was changing and would change forever," Cozzi told me. "In the last few years, I've just been handling the [Profondo Rosso] shop but I have also started a publishing house that keeps me busy. I love it. I'm a writer and have always been happiest as a writer and it makes me happy to write books about cinema. But in Italy, now, it's all soap operas and comedies and television and none of it interests me. We need to see Italians make horror again – strong, violent horror – and if things change enough to let me, I'd definitely come back."

Recently, Cozzi shot a teaser trailer for a proposed meta-thriller called *Blood on Méliès' Moon*. Could this be the comeback he speaks of? Time will tell. Until then... there's always *Contamination*. Long may it throb, pop and kill.

Chris Alexander is a filmmaker and the editor of genre magazines Fangoria, Delirium and Gorezone.



ABOUT THE RESTORATION

Contamination is presented in its original aspect ratio of 1.85:1 with mono sound.

Contamination has been exclusively restored in 2K resolution for this release by Arrow Films. The original camera negative was scanned in 2K resolution on a pin-registered Arriscan at Immagine Ritrovata, Bologna. The film was graded on the Baselight grading system at Deluxe Restoration, London.

Thousands of instances of dirt, debris and light scratches were removed through a combination of digital restoration tools. Image stability and density fluctuation issues were also improved.

The film's mono soundtracks were transferred from the original optical sound negatives at Immagine Ritrovata, Bologna. The soundtracks were restored and conformed by David Mackenzie. Some minor instances of noise still remain, in keeping with the condition of the materials.

There are times in which the film's audio synch will appear slightly loose against the picture, due to the fact that the soundtrack was recorded entirely in post-production. This is correct and as per the original theatrical release of *Contamination*.

Restoration Supervised by **JAMES WHITE, ARROW FILMS**

Scanning and audio transfer services by **IMMAGINE RITROVATA, BOLOGNA:**
Restoration Department Management: **ALESSIA NAVANTIERI, DAVIDE POZZI**
Scanning/Technical: **JULIA METTENLEITER, CATERINA PALPACELLI,**
ELENA TAMMACCARO
Audio Transfer: **GILLES BARBERIS**

Restoration services by **DELUXE RESTORATION, LONDON:**
Basilight colour grading: **STEPHEN BEARMAN**
Restoration Department Management: **MARK BONNICI, GRAHAM JONES**
Restoration Department Supervisors: **TOM BARRETT, CLAYTON BAKER**
Restoration Technicians: **DEBI BATALLER, DAVE BURT, LISA COPSON,**
TOM WILTSHIRE

Audio Restoration and conform: **DAVID MACKENZIE**



PRODUCTION CREDITS

Disc and Booklet Produced by: Ewan Cant

Executive Producer: Francesco Simeoni

Production Assistants: Louise Buckler, Liane Cunje

Technical Producer: James White

QC and Proofing: Michael Brooke, Ewan Cant

Subtitling: IBF

Authoring: David Mackenzie

Artist: Gary Pullin

Design: Emily Fordham

SPECIAL THANKS

Alex Agran, Chris Alexander, Gareth Bailey, Chris Collier, Luigi Cozzi,
Craig Ennis, Maurizio Guarini, Alessia Navantieri/Immagine Ritrovata,
Davide Pozzi/Immagine Ritrovata, Przemyslaw Sobkowicz
and Barbara Varani.





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