Written by Luigi Cozzi
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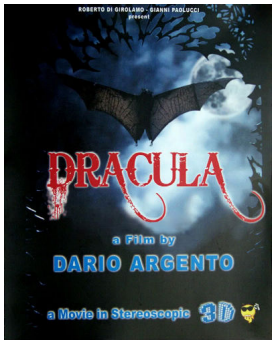
Ed. note: With Dario Argento beginning what may be his biggest year ever, embarking on his take on a genre landmark and seeing many of his past classics reissued on disc in the U.S. by Blue Underground and in the UK by Arrow Video, what better time to catch up with the horror maestro? And who better to help us do it than a fellow Italian horror veteran…



The first time I wrote an article about Dario Argento, I was very young—just 23—and he was 30. It happened back in early 1970; Dario's first movie, THE BIRD WITH THE CRYSTAL PLUMAGE, had just been released in Rome by a major Italian distributor and was doing so-so at the box office. But I had loved the film instantly, and fully understood its potential as a kind of revolution in our static movie industry.

So I immediately wanted to know its director, and, since I was frequently meeting movie people like Mario Bava, Antonio ("Nini") Margheriti and Riccardo Freda, I asked them about this new talent. Bava just said he was the son of an Italian producer and resented the fact that, according to what he had been told by his own crew, BIRD was a kind of reworking of his own 1962 thriller THE GIRL WHO KNEW TOO MUCH (a.k.a. THE EVIL EYE). Freda knew nothing about this newcomer, while Margheriti told me that Dario was not BIRD's real director: There were rumors that it was actually helmed by his father, producer Salvatore Argento.

I then contacted the press office of BIRD's distributor, which gave me the address of Argento's production company. I called their office in Rome, telling them I wanted to meet Mr. Dario Argento for an interview, and the secretary immediately put me on the phone with Salvatore. He was very kind and most of all very excited, because, as I discovered later, I was the first member of the press to ask to meet his son for an interview.

So I met Dario for the first time in his small Roman house, after his wife Marisa had given birth to their daughter Fiore, who was then only 40 days old. We talked a lot, and I immediately realized that all I had been told about Dario was just nuts: He was a very competent man, knew all about classic thriller and horror movies and books and had just come off a long working experience with the great Italian director Sergio Leone, whom he loved to talk about.

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