

## “COLOUR FROM THE DARK” (DVD Review)

Written by Mike Watt  
Monday, 12 April 2010 14:21

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Italian director Ivan Zucco takes a thoughtful approach to H.P. Lovecraft’s seminal short story “The Colour Out of Space” in COLOUR FROM THE DARK (now out on DVD from Vanguard), transplanting the story from America to rural Italy, 1943. Right at the center of “The Great War,” just as it seemed Europe would fall to the fascists and the Nazis, we are introduced to Pietro and Lucia, who live on an isolated farm with Lucia’s younger sister, Alice.

Unfit for military service due to a crippled leg, Pietro (Michael Segal) toils in the fields and garden while awaiting news about his soldier brother, Luigi, fighting at the frontlines. The teenaged Alice (Marysia Kay) is mute and still childlike, frightened by the world around her, using her handmade doll as a periscope before she makes a move. Meanwhile, their neighbors Anna (Eleanor James) and Giovanni (Gerry Shanahan) are harboring a Jewish friend, Teresa (Alessandra Guerzoni), knowing full well that they risk death themselves in doing so.



While fetching water, Alice and Pietro pull something loose from the floor of the well, releasing foul smoke and a shimmering light that almost seems to skip past them. The next day, the family discovers miracles on their farm: Their crops have ripened and grown exponentially overnight, Pietro’s crippled knee has miraculously healed and Alice speaks for the first time in her life, ending the prayer of grace with “Amen.” That night, Pietro and Lucia (Debbie Rochon) passionately make love while Alice has a dream that Teresa is hunted down by soldiers in the cornfield. However, the miracle ends as suddenly as it began—the crops rot and blight, as does Lucia. Her mood darkened, she becomes increasingly confrontational and violent toward Pietro and Alice. Her eyes have gone black and she seems constantly accompanied by the strange shimmering “colour.” Soon, the blight has spread from their farm to that of their neighbors, and Lucia becomes a threat to everyone. Meanwhile, the war rages on...

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Deliberately paced, moody and beautifully photographed, COLOUR FROM THE DARK is a fine Lovecraft adaptation while managing to be unique unto itself. Gone is Lovecraft’s meteor—the author’s means of transportation for “the colour”—which is sure to irritate his hardcore fans, but having the shimmering light serve as a metaphor for the mounting fascist violence spreading like a disease through Europe serves the story well. Some may criticize this device as being obvious, but it’s an allegorical tool that never loses its impact, particularly as this particular disease has yet to be cured.

Serving as his own cinematographer, Zuccon fills the negative space with shafts of dirty light and presents the farm’s isolation with gorgeous wide shots, which contrasts with the exterior horror of the story and looks great in the DVD’s widescreen transfer. All of the performances are above par, particularly the three leads—Kay, Segal and Fango’s own Rochon as the possessed Lucia. COLOUR FROM THE DARK is a very satisfying cinematic experience, playing like a cross between Roger Corman and Pier Paolo Pasolini.

The movie itself is the highlight of the disc package, which lacks the kind of plentiful extras we’ve come to view as standard. With no extensive behind-the-scenes documentary and no commentary, it’s difficult to analyze the film afterward, as many fans enjoy doing. Instead, we’re given a handful of trailers and a short but entertaining featurette about a “ghost,” nicknamed Trevor by the cast and crew, which seemed to haunt the production, causing equipment failure and delays when he wasn’t paid enough attention. It’s a fun little segment, but hardly an adequate replacement for something meatier.

Much of what works in COLOUR FROM THE DARK will turn off ADD-afflicted on-line posters. The movie requires your full attention, and rewards with atmosphere more often than with gore or cheap thrills. But if anyone gives it a miss due to impatience or an aversion to the movie’s European sensibility, low budget or free adaptation, it will be their loss. COLOUR will be a welcome addition to any real horror fan’s collection.

MOVIE: 🍷🍷🍷🍷

DVD PACKAGE: 🍷🍷🍷🍷

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