

When drummer Agostino Marangolo, bassist Fabio Pignatelli, keyboardist Claudio Simonetti and guitarist Massimo Morante reunited to compose and perform the score for Dario Argento's 2001 thriller *Non Ho Sonno (Sleepless)*, it marked an auspicious return to the musicians' roots as a prog-rock (progressive rock) band, and the original voice of Argento's kinetic film style.

While Ennio Morricone added a mordant, primal ambience and psychological subtext to Argento's first three films, *Goblin* seemed to inspire the director to abandon heavy mystery plotting in favor of even more kinetic sequences, joined by increasingly tissue-thin narrative bridges. This move perhaps cursed him to revisiting a narrow collection of themes too often, and similarly may have affected *Goblin*'s attempt to reaffirm itself as a fresh prog-rock force during the late '70s.

With the internecine frictions, disputes, creative differences and member departures characteristic of any band's lifespan, *Goblin* continued to exist as a film-composing entity long after the band's last non-film album, *Il Fantastico Viaggio Del 'Bagarozzo' Mark*, was released in 1978.

The wave of *Goblin* reissues on CD began in

intro to the musical landscape of Dario Argento's films. In an upcoming essay, we'll examine all the Ennio Morricone, *Goblin* and Pino Donaggio scores written for Argento's complete feature film output.

Lastly, this guide only includes the 21 CDs performed by *Goblin* or by two or more ex-band members, and albums released under a pseudonym. Claudio Simonetti's solo work—such as the Argento-produced *Demons*—is not included, although his original scores for Argento's *Opera* and *The Card Player* will be analyzed in the upcoming essay.

Cherry Five (1975) ●●●●

Cinevox MDF-349 - 6 Tracks (39:29)

When demo tapes of what would become *Goblin*'s first album made their way to

MEET THE PROGLODYTES

The Italian Progressive Rock Pioneers and Their Life at the Movies

A GOBLIN BUYER'S GUIDE By Mark Richard Hasan

Soldered to Argento's oeuvre of violent thrillers and supernatural shockers and later to science-fiction movies made by journeymen directors, *Goblin* and its members found the financial stability of film work was a bit of a curse.

Profondo Rosso (Deep Red), the band's first score, was a perfect calling card; in 1975, *Goblin* went to the forefront as one of the hottest and hippest bands in Italy, with a cool giallo under its belt. (Giallo is a special genre of Italian shock thrillers that grew in importance and popularity during the '70s. Violent murders are central, and the plausible plot of a frequently ridiculous mystery is often trivial, allowing directors a lot of room to indulge in elaborate montages of death, sex and the sadistic fusion of the two.)

The reasons for the success of *Profondo* are firmly rooted in Argento's pioneering construction of murders not as Hitchcockian montages, but as stylized music videos: the brutal suffering and demise of men and women as rhythmic ballets set to oppressive music. In a film like *Suspiria*, the music almost doubles in volume by the time the heroine discovers the dance school's dark little secret.

1995 with DRG's first of four compilation albums that gathered previously released and unreleased music. The other three volumes are an uneven patchwork of tracks that often make up a third or three-quarters of a complete album, and at this stage only Vol. 1, *Goblin: Their Hits, Rare Tracks & Outtakes Collection, 1975-1989*, has music that's still unique: two tracks from the 1976 TV game show *Chi?*, the "Love Theme" from the 1981 disaster movie *St. Helens* (aka *St. Helens, Killer Volcano*), and a track from *Wampyr* (director George A. Romero's vampire riff *Martin*, re-edited by European rights-holder Argento, using alternate material from prior *Goblin* scores, including *Zombi*).

The reason for this retrospective is twofold: since 1996, Cinevox has remastered and, in some cases, expanded previously unavailable or long out-of-print albums that rarely made their way to North American listeners during their original releases; this guide will also help fans assess which albums are noteworthy, and simultaneously chart the obvious stylistic changes that altered the band's sound from classic prog-rock to more synth-pop (and, believe it or not, even a dip into the disco bucket).

Secondly, the music of *Goblin* is also the perfect

Argento, the group was hired to perform on the *Profondo Rosso* soundtrack, which further delayed their debut album, and led to the replacement of two band members. The band's name was also changed from Oliver to Cherry Five by label Cinevox for this release, while "Goblin" served as the band's filmic alter-ego.

Very much a prog-rock album, this disc contains six songs of varying lengths, tightly edited into a knockout experience, with each musician showing off his chops. The opening track, "Country Graveyard," is bathed in heavy organ and keyboards, with Claudio Simonetti's virtuoso technique alongside some heavy, albeit brief bass work from Fabio Pignatelli. The sustained discord that separates the track's vocal passages—with cascading synth riffs interwoven with electric guitar—are stylistic antecedents of *Goblin*'s "Deep Shadows" track in *Profondo Rosso*, while a series of percussive triplets can also be traced to the *Zombi (Dawn of the Dead)* title track.

One aspect that might scare listeners off is that all of the *Cherry Five* tracks have English lyrics. The shift from instrumental to vocal might be a shock to fans of the band's film music output, but Tony

Tartarini's vocals are minimal, and they serve the same function as the band's other instruments. *Cherry Five* is also a sublime analogue recording with warm bass. Its beautiful engineering shows off the flawless harmonics between the vocals, organ fugues and rippling percussion.

Profondo Rosso (1975) ●●●●●

Cinevox CD MDF-301 - 28 Tracks (72:17)

Beginning with Michelangelo Antonioni's *La Notte* in 1960, jazzman and composer Giorgio Gaslini had already enjoyed a modest career scoring films. Although *Profondo Rosso* remains his best-known work, much of his orchestral music was not used in the finished film.

Dario Argento had engaged Goblin to arrange prog-rock versions of Gaslini's score, and impressed

after the expanded CD's release.

Roller (1976) ●●●●●

Cinevox CD MDF-321 - 6 Tracks (34:23)

Roller is such a good album, it's sad the band produced only three non-film commercial works during its lengthy career. Had the *Profondo* album and film flopped, you can imagine the band recording additional concept albums; whether its longevity would have extended into three decades, however, is something else.

As it stands, *Roller* makes for a marvelous expansion of Goblin's experimentation unrestricted to the precise needs of a film score. Longer tracks, fully developed concepts, and a more uniform flow unhampered by third parties resonate in *Roller*; it's an album that sweetens with repeated listening.

majesty to the album. "Snip-Snap" and the lengthy "Goblin" are more rock-oriented tracks, while "Il Risveglio del Serpente" moves into a somewhat jazzy territory, with Simonetti typically dipping into classical flourishes during his solos.

Although Cinevox' archives didn't yield any new material, this album's mandatory for Goblin fans.

Perche si Uccidono (1976) ●●●●

Cinevox CD MDF-321 - 11 Tracks (31:55)

Perche si Uccidono (aka *La Merde* and *Percy Is Killed*), described in the liner notes as a "trashy mondo film" about drug abuse, was the only soundtrack co-composed and performed by Goblin under a different band name: the wordy Il Reale Impero Britannico. Issued on a limited LP, the Cinevox CD replicates the original 11 tracks, of



with their fresh sound, asked the band to write some additional music, including the famous theme that spent 15 weeks on Italy's hit parade charts, and propelled the original half-hour soundtrack album to international success.

Of course, with the popularity of Goblin's theme, Gaslini's own music and contributions were pretty much pushed into the background until this expanded album surfaced 20 years later, adding about 40 minutes of previously unreleased or unused music from the original recording sessions.

Engineered by Giorgio Agazzi, the *Profondo* music is another warm, close-miked analog recording that still retains a gorgeous clarity. Gaslini's orchestral cues are razor-sharp, showing off brass and woodwinds in an alternate version of the saccharine "Gianna," rich strings in the various "Lullaby" incarnations, and suspenseful variations of "School at Night."

The CD has two sound effects tracks, a theme remix, and also includes Goblin and Gaslini's film, album and alternate theme versions, although fans should also be aware of a recent vinyl issue that featured the original seven LP tracks plus an alternate version of "Deep Shadows," discovered

Every musician shines in this gorgeous, warm recording, but Claudio Simonetti's deft fingerwork on keyboards and organ frequently lends an air of

which six were written/co-written by Willy Brezza, and four with future *Zombi 2* (1979) composer, Fabio Frizzi.

Frizzi's lone solo contribution, the orchestra-backed "Kalu," is a wonderful urban track obviously inspired by Isaac Hayes' *Shaft* (1971), particularly the lengthy and dynamic song, "Do Your Thing." The CD's three vocal tracks are "Edda," performed by the legendary Edda Dell'Orso with flute accompaniment; the bouncy and pungently titled "My Damned Shit" (with phonetically expressed, nearly incoherent English lyrics, sung by Tony Tartarini), and "R.I.B.," which features an ambient male voice, electric guitar and lush string backing.

Overall, Goblin's compositions blend well with Brezza's, and while this lacks the edge of Goblin's other albums, the variety (plus the quality of Frizzi's own material) makes for a fun album.

Schock (1976) ●●●●●

Cinevox CD MDF-350 - 10 Tracks (30:59)

Schock (released in the U.S. under the fake sequel banner *Beyond the Door 2*), was Mario Bava's last feature film, dealing with a vengeful ghost who possesses his own son (creepy rug-rat David Colin,

About the Ratings

While we call this a buyer's guide, it's really a listening guide, including mention of films with unreleased scores. Bear in mind that these scores are relative to the rest of the composer's output, and do not compare directly to the ratings in our regular SCORE section.

- A MUST-HAVE.
One of their finest works; belongs in every soundtrack listener's collection.
- HIGHLY RECOMMENDED.
Close to being a classic, with lots of replay value.
- RECOMMENDED WITH RESERVATIONS.
A score with representative moments but not a consistently enjoyable listen.
- FOR COMPLETISTS ONLY.
Really, don't you have more important things to spend your money on?

Jr.) and torments his ex-wife (*Profondo Rosso*'s Daria Nicolodi) and her new hubby.

With the veteran director being one of Argento's early influences, it's interesting that Bava chose a more popular aural landscape for *Schock* by engaging prog-rock Libra to score the film. The band's rare soundtrack effort had contributions from ex-Goblin members Walter Martino (on drums) and keyboardist/electronics whiz Maurizio Guarini. Their mystical score is an exceptional blend of diverse themes, styles and full dramatic cues, furthering the potential of early synth and electronic effects.

"Aquaman" and "Dr. Frankenstein"—tacked on at the end. These tracks aren't included on the new Cinevox disc, and have been replaced with an alternate of "Markos" (featuring a longer percussion section), and a few brief *Suspiria* variations: one with narration, and a more traditional rock intro that was never used.

La Via Della Droga (1977) ●●●●

Cinevox MDF-319 - 13 Tracks (35:26)

La *Via Della Droga* is a police drama involving a drug investigation that co-starred *Profondo* lead David Hemmings, and Fabio Testi. This mono

Muzak-styled scores that barely evoke the thrills and horror intended by their respective directors. Arguably his best work remains unreleased: *The Licorice Quartet* mixes trippy lyricism with some haunting underscore for Radley Metzger's psychosexual cinema play.

Solamente's excellent score was performed by members of Goblin, and was released in a very limited CD by Germany's Lucertola. The band's interpretation of Cipriani's material adds a greater array of keyboards and synth effects than *La Via Della Droga*, yet still reflects the prog-rock arrangements of that prior score. Unfortunately, the



Suspiria



Libra's diverse score was poorly edited over related and seemingly unrelated sequences in the final film, and the mono mix failed to exploit the primal electronic effects devised for the possession and telekinesis sequences. The soundtrack album, however, is a smoothly organized work that assembles the propulsive main track (with synth chorals recalling Goblin's *Zombi* theme), acoustic guitars in the beautiful cut "L'Altalena Rossa," and creepy Moog synth effects for Bava's typically overextended montages of actors wandering through creepy corridors and basements.

Suspiria (1977) ●●●●

Cinevox CD MDF-305 - 12 Tracks (41:32)

For their next Argento film, Goblin composed what can still be regarded as one of the most terrifying soundtracks ever written for a horror film. Loud, dark and full of demonic imagery, *Suspiria* is lovingly crafted to fit Argento's lengthy and elaborate death montages. In its original release, *Suspiria* bludgeoned audiences with loud, four-track Dolby stereo.

For the film's title track, Goblin used a large array of exotic instruments: a bouzouki from Hell, blended with guttural vocals; a mandolin in need of Prozac; and a rash of percussion effects that resemble a spinning buzz-saw flying loose in a sheet-metal factory.

Labeled by the band as an experimental score, *Suspiria* has appeared several times on CD and LP over the years. The original LP featured the film's eight primary tracks plus two cues from *Roller*—

score is perhaps the roughest sounding of the Goblin CDs, perhaps due to the age and storage conditions of the source materials, and there's some major distortion in the heavy guitar solos.

A polar opposite of *Suspiria*, Goblin's *Droga* blends jazz, blues and rock elements to create a vivid portrait of urban society. Most of the score is comprised of myriad themes, small combo arrangements and heavy action writing.

The untitled opening track and subsequent action cues are the most rock-oriented, while others offer diverse instrument ensembles. Track 4, for instance, features guitar, bass, drums and marimba, followed by bass and bongos. Keyboards and synth effects in Track 5 convey dread, decay and self-destructive addiction—a powerful cue for a film that unfortunately remains unavailable to English-speaking audiences.

While Goblin's later albums contain an eclectic mix of source and underscore music, *Droga*'s wealth of themes and variations make for a uniquely cohesive listening experience. A better album couldn't have been edited.

Solamente Nero (1978) ●●●●

Lucertola LMCD-005 - 35 Tracks (40:07)

Like Nicholas Roeg's *Don't Look Now*, Antonio Bido's giallo exploited the eerie atmosphere of Italy's Venice, and *Solamente Nero* (*The Bloodstained Shadow*) benefits from a groovy soundtrack composed by Stelvio Cipriani.

Overall, Cipriani's scores are pretty much a mixed bag: *Tentacoli* and *Baron Blood* are unsuitable

title track never enjoys a full-blown arrangement because the collected 35 cues are taken from isolated music stems. Lucertola has adequately equalized sudden volume dips, softened abrupt edits, and added some spatial resonance for the mono stems that include several source cues.

It's a pity the original session tapes weren't available, but *Solamente Nero* marks a distinctive bridge between the band's overtly prog-rock scores and its technological shift to more synth-based scoring.

Il Fantastico Viaggio Del 'Bagarozzo' Mark (1978) ●●●●

Cinevox MDF-308 - 8 Tracks (37:06)

The band's last non-film album began as a concept work by guitarist Massimo Morante, who penned and sung the narrative lyrics when a search for a lyricist proved difficult. "The Fantastic Voyage of a Beetle Named Mark" is a story about an insect who succumbs to a heroin addiction, and ultimately redeems himself by following his conscience.

As drummer Agostino Marangolo stated in the book *Spaghetti Nightmares* (translated online by Alessandro Curci at www.goblin.org/agostino_int.html), this album "was the beginning of the end," as band members argued over Goblin's logical directions: continue scoring movies (the band's main identity) or produce a non-film work for a proposed tour (a project meant to return the band to its non-film roots).

The superb instrumental sections are integral to the album's concept, with bursts of propulsive passages and alternating tempi showcasing Claudio

Simonetti's keyboards, Fabio Pignatelli's resonant bass and Morante's guitar work.

A modest rock fable, *Bagarozzo Mark* takes some getting used to—the Italian lyrics set the album apart from the all-instrumental *Roller*—but its rich melodic and journey-like structure make for a rewarding musical experience.

Zombi (1978) ●●●●

Cinevox MDF-308 - 17 Tracks (51:56)

Dawn of the Dead (released as *Zombi* in Europe) was George A. Romero's second "walking dead" installment. Dario Argento produced the movie,

rock-oriented versions of the film's main titles and the jazz-fusion "Supermarket" cue.

Amo Non Amo (1979) ●●●●

Cinevox CD MDF-347 - 10 Tracks (36:11)

Much like Tangerine Dream, Goblin was better known for horror scores than straight dramas, and *Amo Non Amo* (*I Love You, I Love You Not*) was, ironically, released in the U.S. with Burt Bacharach songs replacing the Goblin score. The music is an anomaly in a canon packed with music designed to scare rather than intimately provoke.

The original Italian LP had four cues from the

admirers of Goblin's early prog-rock writing may find way too jarring.

The album features three disco vocals—two composed by Asha Puthli and R. Pietsch, and performed by Puthli—and a Goblin contribution, performed by Charlie Cannon. All three tracks (not surprisingly) have dated badly, hastened by some pretty idiotic lyrics. "Disco China," is a minor dance track with marimba and bongos; and disco exotica is further exploited in "Banoon," a Caribbean concoction that predates some of Eric Serra's bass-heavy writing in *Subway* (1985). "Stunt Cars" is another odd hybrid—a country-western march



retained European rights and tweaked the film into a slimmer two-hour version, with more original music by Goblin.

For the longer North American version, Romero replaced much of the band's material with "needle-drop" cues from the Capitol Hi-Q and De Wolfe music libraries—music similar to the stock tracks in his original 1968 *Night of the Living Dead*. (Note: Some of the library cues were released in limited CD and LP pressings by Trunk Records in 2004.) The Cinevox CD is the first time Goblin's score has appeared in complete form.

A synthesized pall of doom, the famous track "L'alba Dei Morti Viventi" is an ascending mood piece of unflinching percussion and bass, with a tongue-in-cheek, haunted-house phrase performed on keyboards. Another dramatic highlight is "Zombi," which uses heavy percussion, staccato keyboard accents and eerie background voices to evoke a looming parade of cannibals with a craving for the other white meat.

Most of the remaining score is made up of material meant to underline Romero's jabs at consumerism: "Safari" employs nonsense lyrics to heighten the absurdity as surviving humans shop for hunting accoutrements; and the Chaplin-esque "Torte in Faccia" manages to reflect the survivors' glee during their subsequent hunt. The country-western "Tirassegno" and the Giorgio Moroder-inspired "Zaratozom" are a bit jarring when placed alongside more traditional suspense cues.

The bonus materials include a sound effects track, a brief lounge version (!) of the "Zombi" cue,

film and was filled out with classic horror themes (including the previously unavailable *Yell*), and Cinevox' expanded album includes a previously unreleased, alternate version of "Both-Two," four variations of the *Amo Non Amo* theme (taken from more dynamic source materials), and an instrumental version of "Notte" from the *Bagarozzo* album.

Starring Terence Stamp, Maximilian Schell and Jacqueline Bisset, *Amo* is a picture about relationships bereft of knives, vampires and corpses, so there's genuine fascination in hearing whether the score selections reveal a more mainstream film genre outlet the band should have exploited.

Without the film, of course, it's tough to tell how well the music worked in it (or whether the director was able to articulate the film's musical needs); stylistically, however, the cues are as variable as Tangerine Dream's rare relationship films, like *Heartbreakers*. Prog-rock elements are still evident, but the gentle tone of the title theme is counterbalanced with the wailing electric guitar and heavy drums in "Maiera," and the slick, jazzy-pop "Funky-Top." The shifting styles within tracks (some of which may have functioned as pure source cues) ultimately coalesce into an album recalling the band's past non-film work; it's a final nod to other categories before the band was eventually consumed by the horror genre.

Squadra Antigangster (1979) ●●●●

Cinevox CD MDF-324 - 11 Tracks (37:30)

Disco, jazz and rock collide in the comedic *Squadra Antigangster*, and the album is something

that begins with plucky guitar, and dips into jazz territory with a lengthy keyboard solo.

The remaining cues are more jazz-fusion, with the best examples being "Sicilian Samba," and "Trumpet's Flight." Bonus cuts include an alternate performance of the latter, and short versions of the film's title theme. Of all the Goblin albums, *Squadra Antigangster* is the least satisfying, though it definitely showcases a rare sensibility for the band: a sense of humor.

The Fantastic Journey in the Best of Goblin

Vol. 1 (2004) ●●●●

Cinevox MDF-336 - Disc 1: 15 Tracks (72:37), Disc 2: 8 Tracks (45:47)

This clumsily titled compilation set is included here due to the second disc's eight tracks, taken from a series of live concerts the band used as a launch for their *Bagarozzo Mark* album. Five live performances of tracks from that album are included, plus two from *Roller*, and a rare live (and oddly up-tempo) rendition of the *Profondo Rosso* theme.

Totally archival in quality, the live cuts vary from straight mono to "loose" stereo recordings, and a few cuts have solos dipping in volume. Here, the band had the opportunity to be heard outside of the studio confines with an appreciative audience; an album is generally an idealized creation where performance flaws and musician indulgences are kept to a minimum, whereas a live performance entails musicians jamming together, and responding to an audience's energy. The overall results are sometimes riveting performances that go beyond

an album's more time-restrictive and conceptual design. "Snip Snap" from *Roller* runs almost twice as long here as in the score, and has Simonetti playing a beautiful, jazz-fusion keyboard solo, while Pignatelli's bass wiggles in the background before supporting Morante's guitar improvisations and Marangolo's sax work.

Disc 1 is basically a sampler of Goblin's most popular film themes from *Profondo Rosso*, *Suspiria*, *Tenebre* and *Phenomena*, and is of secondary value in this modestly priced set.

bopping pop-jazz ditty "Bikini Island" break the album's otherwise somber mood. Several cues—the pretty "Quiet Drops" and action track "Rush," for example—edit together minor variations, and some of the alternate versions of the album's eight themes are more threadbare in structure.

Atmospheric and eerie, *Buio Omega* can be regarded as a stylistic follow-up to *Zombi*, and the half-brother of the dopey *Alien* rip-off, *Contamination*.

and '80s pop, the soundtrack is far removed from their early progressive rock scores, though the upbeat main theme does branch off into more moody territory with some ominous, sustained chords and synthetic vocals.

Tenebre was, in fact, the first Goblin score recorded without a drummer. Because Agostino Marangolo had legally tethered the Goblin name and appeared on a separate label, a synthesized drum set was used in his place, and the three remaining Goblin members—Claudio Simonetti



Patrick (1979) ●●●

Cinevox MDF-320 - 19 Tracks (48:55)

By 1978, Dario Argento had become a bit of a horror impresario, producing George A. Romero's *Dawn of the Dead* (aka *Zombi*), and distributing Richard Franklin's underrated supernatural shocker, *Patrick*, a film similar to Romero's *Martin*. Argento engaged Goblin to re-score *Patrick* for his international version. With the original Aussie version (using Brian May's orchestral music) now on DVD, the Goblin-scored version is now the rarity.

Cinevox' CD expands the original album tracks from 10 to 19, adding lots of theme variations, and the older "Snip Snap" cut from the band's *Roller* album. Missing on the recording, however, is keyboardist Claudio Simonetti, who left Goblin soon after *Zombi*. His replacement, Libra's Maurizio Guarini (also responsible for some of the elaborate synth effects programming on the *Roller* album and Libra's *Schock*) brought a distinctive new sound to Goblin.

The score often blends extended rhythmic patterns with circular keyboard mobiles—not dissimilar from Tangerine Dream's trance-like *Firestarter*—and clearly indicates the more overtly synth-pop route Goblin would take in subsequent scores.

Buio Omega (1980) ●●

Cinevox CD MDF-304 - 15 Tracks (47:45)

For *Buio Omega*, Joe D'Amato's gory thriller, Goblin incorporated heavy use of synthesizers and keyboards that overtly recall Tangerine Dream's own film output during the same period. The Cinevox CD has a lot of alternate versions, making for some serious repetition, although a synth sound effects track and the

Contamination (1980) ●●

Cinevox CD MDF-304 - 16 Tracks (48:33)

Contamination (released in the U.S. on video as *Alien Contamination*) is an amazingly fun bad movie that was co-written and directed by Luigi Cozzi (*Starcrash*). The *Alien*/chest-bursting rip-off has a substantive collection of ridiculous dialogue, including the immortal line, "We can rest assured these men certainly weren't killed by coffee." Like Lucio Fulci's *Zombi 2*, the story begins with New York City affected by throbbing green footballs, whose splattering acid causes nearby unfortunates to suddenly lose their intestinal fortitude in one giant, chunky bellow.

Pre-dating the synth-pop/jazz fusion of *Notturmo*, Goblin's *Contamination* music plays like a collection of library cues tracked to an unrelated film, largely due to the inclusion of alternate tracks from *Buio Omega*: "Bikini Island," jazz-synth variations in "Pillage" and "Rush," and a shorter version of "Quiet Drops" (with distortion) all make an appearance on this CD. In the actual film, Goblin's music is wielded like a blunt object. Though they are sparsely used in the final movie, the cues fail to establish any real menace, much in the way Fabio Frizzi's bizarre, disco approach to *Zombi 2* rendered his entire score virtually irrelevant.

Cinevox' crisply remastered CD (with minor distortion in "The Ogre") also includes alternate versions of "Withy," "The Carver," and "Fright," and like the *Buio Omega* album, has two bonus suites of more unused cues.

Tenebre (1982) ●●●

Cinevox CD MDF-302 - 19 Tracks (63:01)

Tenebre can best be described as a major turning point in Goblin's evolution. Bordering on disco

(keyboards), Massimo Morante (guitar), and Fabio Pignatelli (bass guitar)—were billed under their respective last names.

Before this Cinevox release, patches of *Tenebre*'s music were often paired with material from *Zombi*, or in a compilation that included themes from other Dario Argento films (including music by Bill Wyman and Keith Emerson).

Cinevox has gathered film versions, alternates, and remixes—making for a fairly repetitive album—and with the exception of the title track, the film's score consists of death highlights (or "music to be murdered by"). The best tracks include the fluttering track "Flashing" and the erratic bass and percussion clusters that make up the groovy "Gemini."

Notturmo (1983) ●●●

Cinevox CD MDF-320 - 14 Tracks (50:25)

With Claudio Simonetti no longer involved with Goblin proper and keyboardist Maurizio Guarini part of the band, Goblin's next score was *Notturmo*, a suspense film starring Tony Musante (from Dario Argento's *Bird With the Crystal Plumage*). Not dissimilar to the personnel changes and upgrades in electronic instruments that affected Tangerine Dream during its long career, Goblin had once again shifted its sound, and *Notturmo* boasts a title track that captures the less brutal intrigue of the film's spy plot, plus humorous nods to the James Bond theme.

Less reliant on arresting murder sequences, Goblin's score for *Notturmo* uses fewer synth effects and aggressive percussion passages; the material is more intimate, and focuses on melodic themes and phrases, evoking less traumatic characters and conflicts.

Compared to the group's horror scores, *Notturmo*

is more upbeat. The aptly titled “Bass Theme” is a suspenseful track that relies on Pignatelli’s fine jazzy improvisations to maintain tension, while the lighter “Landing Strip” uses alto saxophone to convey a concrete sense of longing and anticipation.

“Helycopter” [sic] has some fine solo piano work, joined by a warm alto sax and synth strings; and “Est” features breezy interaction between sax and electric bass. The CD also contains seven distinct takes of “Notturmo,” many using synth effects, and is admittedly more of archival interest.



La Chiesa (1989) ●●●▶

Cinevox CD MDF-329 - 13 Tracks (50:29)

With bad clothes, big hair and color schemes that force-fed primary colors with leftover glitter from the '70s, '80s horror films have a special charm for genre fans, and the synth scores have a strangely soothing cheese factor. Unbridled percussion, excessive bass, synthetic strings and ambient effects were part and parcel of the day, yet the Argento-produced *La Chiesa* (*The Church*) has the vestiges of its prog-rock pioneers.

Phenomena (1985) ●●●▶

Cinevox CD MDF-303 - 16 Tracks (52:32)

When Dario Argento made *Phenomena*, Goblin had essentially ceased to exist, and though Claudio Simonetti and Fabio Pignatelli were involved with the film’s actual score, the final product is far removed from the progressive rock scores of the band’s first two Argento films.

The original album was a mix of songs (including original material from Bill Wyman and Simon Boswell) and five Goblin score cuts. The new Cinevox CD presents complete and alternate cues by Simonetti and Pignatelli.

As with its other expanded CDs, Cinevox has sequenced *Phenomena*’s 16 tracks to minimize repetitiveness, but with six versions of the film’s title theme and three versions of “The Wind,” the score becomes quickly monotonous. (A wailing sound effects suite, “The Monster Child,” admittedly tips the mood somewhat.)

The Simonetti-Pignatelli tracks reflect a clear transition in the musicians’ careers: Pignatelli’s guitar material is reflective of the instrument’s domination of '80s pop/rock music, and Simonetti’s use of a wordless female vocalist—here accompanied by drum sequencers and a greater assortment of synth percussion—wobbles along the fine line between satire and unintended camp.

Perhaps reflective of the flaws in Argento’s wacky storyline—a girl who can communicate with bugs is informed about a murder by a bee—the music also had to fight for screen time with mediocre, heavy-metal songs. Pignatelli and Simonetti managed to contribute some excellent, atmospheric thriller music, including the techno-heavy “Sleepwalking,” and the percussive, bittersweet “Jennifer’s Friends” (largely junked in the final film mix).

The use and simulation of a grand church organ restricted the synthetic instruments the film’s dual composers had to use, so unlike standard '80s horror scores, *La Chiesa* is very specific in delivering a highly gothic mood.

The original album featured a few tracks by Keith Emerson, who scored Argento’s *Inferno* in 1980. Emerson performs distinct variations of his superb title theme, plus Mozart’s elegant *Prelude 24*. Goblin also appears in the credits, but the name is pretty meaningless, given that Fabio Pignatelli composed, arranged and performed his selections, of which “The Church” is a standout.

The expanded Cinevox album adds a remix of the Emerson theme (full of its marvelous keyboard flourishes), and three Pignatelli minisuites. The latter are mostly alternates, featuring dull sustained chords and a vocal-heavy variation of “Possessione”—itself a shameful rip-off of Christopher YOUNG’s “Dream” from *Rosemary’s Baby*.

Note: Martin Goldray’s performance of Philip Glass’ “Flow” isn’t on the expanded album, but the bad pop ditties by Zooming on the Zoo (who?) and Definitive Gaze (again, who?) are still part of the CD’s remastered (and treble-clipped) contents.

Non Ho Sonno (2001) ●●●●

Cinevox CD MDF-342-DK - 13 Tracks (52:39)

The dissolution of Goblin was a natural development after years of creative highs, conflicts, arguments and a collective sense that the band’s original goals and artistic visions had either been met or repeated, as well as that the agony in accomplishing a near-perfect musical

conception simply wasn’t in the cards once horror scores became the band’s main identity and key source of income.

Reunions are peculiar to 20th-century music and pop culture; past magic recaptured in one grand performance (with sappy happy ending) is a favorite subgenre in movies, and also rekindles fan interests when the reunited band once charted high and then had an acrimonious crash. Goblin, however, never experienced a flagrant crash or furious breakup; as a film scoring entity, it merely fragmented. And perhaps due to Dario Argento’s own desire to hover around familiar elements and cannibalize key themes, his thrillers always left the door open for Goblin to reassemble.

Musically, the *Non Ho Sonno* (*Sleepless*) score is a Goblinite’s wet dream: It’s multithematic, it flips between some rich character-inspired melodies, and more important, delivers a vicious, aggressive series of murder music that evokes

Argento’s best work. The score is still redolent with overt, stylistic indulgences from the '80s, but with a harder, more modern edge; and the construction (appropriately operatic) and solos (often extensive) are still deeply rooted in prog-rock.

Rather than using the film’s shorter cues, however, the album is a densely packed series of longer, re-recorded tracks designed to give the veteran musicians plenty of wiggle room. Tracks like “Killer on the Train” are orgiastic tributes to Argento’s riveting montages.

Dario Argento’s association with Goblin is one of the longest collaborative relationships between a director and composer (admittedly extended through Claudio Simonetti’s solo work in later years). In a follow-up essay, we’ll explore how the sounds of Goblin, Ennio Morricone and Pino Donaggio not only reflected the director’s own stylistic divisions between his Hitchcockian thrillers, the giallo genre and the supernatural shockers, but evoked a new level of cinematic terror. **FSM**

WHERE TO GET YOUR GOBLIN

All of the Cinevox titles are still in print, and while most domestic shops may not have the entire Goblin catalogue, they’re still available from various European distributors. Special thanks to Jan for providing access to those harder-to-find albums, and to Ian Zapczynski’s outstanding Goblin site, www.goblin.org, which maintains a tremendous archive of resources.