

THE MAKING OF

A L I E N S



J.W. RINZLER



As one of the most highly regarded movie sequels of all time, *Aliens* quickly embedded itself in the minds of cinemagoers around the world when it was released in 1986. Driven by the singular vision of director James Cameron and guided by producer Gale Anne Hurd, its relentless action and unforgettable characters helped cement its place as an undisputed classic of 1980s cinema.

The Making of Aliens tells the complete story of how Cameron and Hurd, together with their immensely talented cast and crew, brought heroine Ellen Ripley back to the big screen—and upped the stakes by introducing a whole army of aliens for her to face. Highlights of this remarkable tale include:

- Cameron's determination to make the film more of a war movie, with more emphasis on action
- Cameron and Hurd's struggles to be taken seriously in the industry, and the clashes that occurred between director and crew on set
- The challenges faced by Stan Winston and his team in creating the huge alien queen puppet
- Casting the actors to play the space marines and the grueling 'boot camp' training they had to endure
- Finding schoolgirl Carrie Henn to play the major role of Newt
- The extensive and meticulous model work that went into the creation of the iconic ships and vehicles
- Persuading the anti-gun Sigourney Weaver to return in a film heavy on weaponry

Interviews with the cast and crew, alongside revealing photography and fascinating concept art, illustrate the film's eventful journey from its beginnings as a sequel that nobody wanted to make through to its transformation into one of the highest-grossing blockbusters of the decade.

T H E M A K I N G O F





EL BARRAGE

70









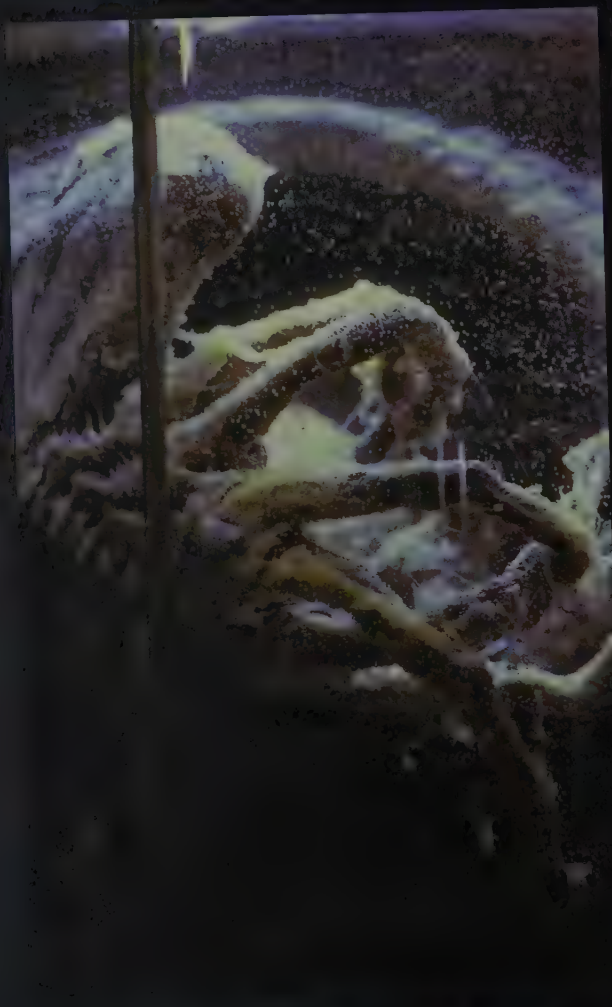


THE MAKING OF

ALIENS

J. W. RINZLER

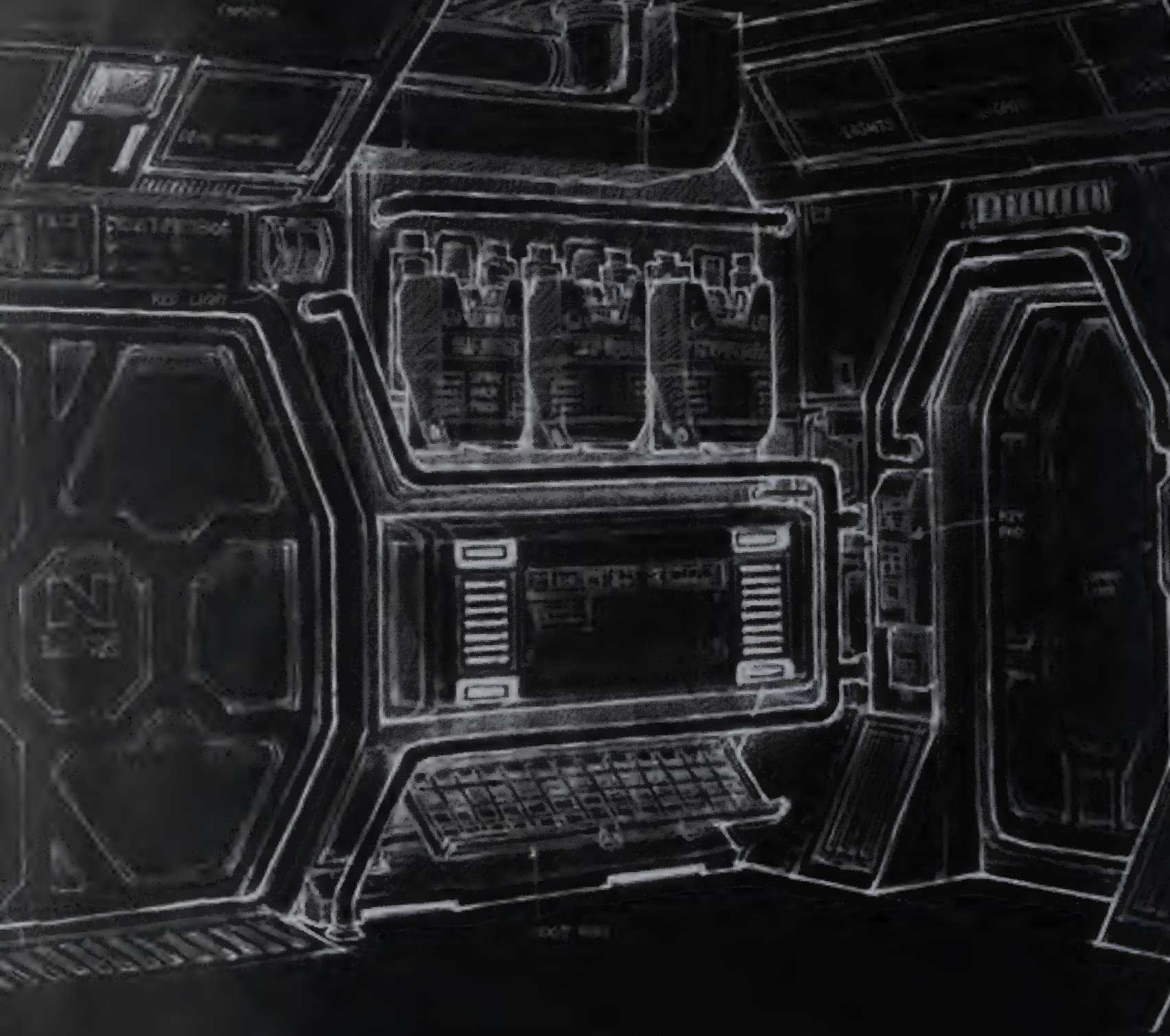
**TITAN
BOOKS**



*Dedicated to fans of this film and the franchise.
And to Elesia (aka "Stinky"), my co-writing cat.*







COLONY AIR LOCK INTERIOR

TABLE OF CONTENTS

18	CHAPTER 01 FOUNDATION INFANTRY 1981 to September 1983	116	CHAPTER 05 PHANTOM XENOMORPHS September to October 1985	246	CHAPTER 02 SMASHING MANNEQUINS February to June 1986
40	CHAPTER 02 THE TERMINATOR QUEEN October 1983 to February 1985	146	CHAPTER 06 THE AMERICANS October to December 1985	260	CHAPTER 10 BITCHDOM June 1986 to March 1987
66	CHAPTER 03 DRONES AND WARRIORS February to May 1985	180	CHAPTER 07 ADIOS, LOCO December 1985 to January 1986	282	EPILOGUE GLORIOUS GRUNTS
86	CHAPTER 04 SCRAMBLE FOR WAR June to September 1985	210	CHAPTER 08 CONTENTS UNDER PRESSURE January to February 1986	290	Cast & Crew
				294	Bibliography
				296	Acknowledgements

PREVIOUS PAGES- (pages 2-3) A shot of the dropship II model within the maw of the atmosphere processor (AP) station; (4-5) another shot of a model, the AP exterior; (6-7) the colonial marines approach the colony doors on a Pinewood soundstage in England; (8-9) a dressed cadaver set; (10-11) a technical drawing of the colony doors; (12) one of the dead Facehuggers found in the colony's med lab; (13) a sleeping Ripley (Sigourney Weaver) aboard the *Narcissus*.

OPPOSITE: A drawing of the colony airlock interior by concept illustrator Ron Cobb, 1985.

FOLLOWING PAGES: (left) Writer-director James Cameron studies a setup with the miniature queen alien on her egg sac; (right) Sigourney Weaver (Ripley) studies her script on one of the *Sulaco* interior sets.







CHAPTER 01



FOUNDATION INFANTRY
1981 TO SEPTEMBER 1983





Film director James Cameron's revenge fantasy was evolving. In his mind he saw a nearly indestructible killing machine arrive from the future to destroy his nemesis: a scheming liar of a producer.

It was the germ of a good story, but on a particular day in 1981 he was focused on breaking into an editing room in Rome, Italy. Producer Ovidio G. Assonitis and his colleagues were absent, attending the Cannes Film Festival in France, and Cameron wanted to see the rough cut of their painful collaboration: *Piranha II: The Spawning* (aka, *Piranha II: The Flying Killers*, the sequel to Joe Dante's *Piranha*, a 1978 *Jaws* knockoff). Cameron had started out as the sequel's special-effects supervisor and had become its director when Assonitis had fired its first director, Miller Drake. The truth, according to Cameron, was that the producer was determined to undermine whoever was the film's director, for Assonitis wanted complete creative control of the Italian production.

"Jim went to Italy to fight the good fight," said Lance Henriksen, who had played the film's Steve Kimbrough (most of the film's actors were American). "When they were cutting it in Rome, they locked Jim out of the editing room. He had to crawl through the window at night, re-edit, and hope that they didn't discover his changes. He was tenacious. He'd altered the script. He'd designed all of the special-effects fish. He only got three hours sleep a night. He was obsessed. I'd never seen anybody like him."

In fact, Cameron had been more subtle than that. After they'd wrapped principal photography, he'd flown to Rome and "ingratiated myself back into the production," he said. "I had wavered on the edge of fighting or running, but I stayed to fight because I'd worked really hard on the film. But the producer wouldn't show me certain reels."

Cameron didn't have to break in, however. He'd been in Rome for a few weeks during preproduction, before the location shoot in Jamaica, and he remembered the access code to the editorial department. Quietly, he entered, sat down, and ran the film. It wasn't as bad as he'd been led to believe, which was a relief. "Everyone around me had basically said, 'You stink. You suck. You don't know what you're doing,'" he recalled. "And I just—I accepted it. I thought, *Maybe I'm bad. Maybe I'm just not good.*"

Looking at the footage, he saw the shot in which Henriksen (Kimbrough) had leapt from a helicopter 40 ft down into the ocean to save his fictional kids from the flying piranhas, a stunt in which the actor had broken his right hand. Cameron recalled that the quickie shoot had taken "every bit of cunning" to complete.

"All I wanted to know was one simple fact: Could I or could I not do this job?" he said. "A little voice kept saying, 'I don't think it can be that bad.' So I looked at it, and there really was a movie there. I'd gotten some pretty good performances out of the actors. I thought, *You know what? I actually can do this.* I'd just fallen in with a pack of thieves and whackos."

And those 'whackos' weren't cutting the footage together the way the director intended, so he went to work making alterations.

When Assonitis returned, they had a "big fight" and Cameron's revenge fantasy came surging back. That evening, he picked up the phone and made a long-distance call to Gale Anne Hurd, who had recently produced her first film, *Smokey Bites the Dust* (1981). She and Cameron had met while working for Roger Corman's New World Pictures (see sidebar, page 26).

"Jim called me from Rome, and started to pitch *The Terminator*," Hurd said.

Cameron then flew back to Los Angeles, but didn't give up on his exploitation flick. He made a deal with the American distributor to re-cut it. The final domestic release was therefore different from the final European release, a bit closer to its director's vision. "It's the finest flying piranha movie ever made," he joked.

The B-movie sequel didn't do well at the box office, however. Cameron's name on it, as director and screenwriter (sort of: he used an alias, 'H. A. Milton'), was a double-edged sword: a credit or an embarrassing blight on his burgeoning career.

His next script would have to be better.

SWORD & SORcery & FINE PRINT

|| had written a treatment and most of a first draft of *Terminator*, which Gale became involved in polishing," Cameron said. "The initial idea was mine, and the collaboration was her taking the rough edges off. Our strength in doing the movie was pooling our resources and forming an impenetrable barrier to anyone who wanted to take it away from us or change the concept."

In 1982, Hurd left New World Pictures to form her own independent production and development company, Pacific Western Productions, which consisted of Hurd and one assistant. *The Terminator* would be their maiden project, and its central characters would be a woman, Sarah Connor, and a

PREVIOUS PAGE: The alien queen.



ON CAMERON I: EARLY LIFE

James Cameron was born August 16, 1954, and grew up in Chippawa, Ontario, Canada.

"Learning cinematic storytelling started back when I was 12 years old and drawing my own comic books," he said. "A comic book, frame for frame, is cut like a film: close-up, wide shot, etc. You learn how to create a visual narrative. At one point I wanted to be a comics artist, so I learned to draw by emulating Marvel comic books.

"And, of course, we all grow up on movies. You watch how a story is told, you study it. It really comes from observation of the technique. The only qualification that you need to be a filmmaker is that you know how to watch a movie."

One of those movies, perhaps the earliest key film of Cameron's youth, was Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968). Cameron was 14 when he saw it, and "several light bulbs" went off in his mind, he said. "The light bulb was 'a movie can be more than just telling a story. It can be a piece of art. It can be something that has a profound impact on your imagination'. It blew the doors off the whole thing for me, and I started thinking about film in a completely different way and got fascinated by it. The more I learned about him and Kubrick's methodology, the more I realized what a rigorous intellectual exercise filmmaking was for him, and I was inspired by that.

"It was such a fascinating film that they made a book, *The Making of 2001* [edited by Jérôme Agel, 1970]. It was, to my knowledge, one of the first films that had a 'making of' book. I read it cover to cover 18 times. I didn't understand half of it until many years later, but it started a process of projecting myself into the idea of actually creating images using these high-tech means."

Cameron was inspired to create low-tech analogs: he bought model kits of ships, and glued them onto pieces of glass and moved them around. He was learning to think spatially, in terms of storyboarding, and so on. And he began to read science fiction voraciously, a habit that he kept up through high school. Because Stamford Collegiate School was in Niagara Falls, an hour away by bus, he had about two hours a day to devour his favorite authors: co-screenwriter of *2001* Arthur C. Clarke; A. E. Van Vogt; Harlan Ellison; Larry Niven; or, as Cameron described it, "all of the mainstream old guard."

"I would have to say that in my febrile youth, I was an absolutely rabid science-fiction fan," Cameron said in 1984. "I read all the classics, all the old Ace paperback novels." He added later, "The thing I most like about science fiction is that it provides a way of exploring issues without upsetting any one group."

What he describes as another "critical moment" in his artistic development occurred in the eleventh grade. His biology teacher, Mr. McKenzie, decided that their high school needed a theater arts program. "We bootstrapped it," Cameron said. "He taught it, and I think he might have done it for nothing."

The teacher and his class spent a year building props, creating scenery, making costumes, a working stage, doing everything themselves. "We started putting on our own productions," Cameron said. "My biology teacher was our muse at that time. The fact that we were having to do everything, that it wasn't handed to us, may have created a work ethic. You're finding scraps and putting it together, and putting on a show. It was that sense of being able to

create some moment of glory, some showmanship, out of nothing, out of baling wire. It was a lesson learned as a result of this man who decided to have a theater arts program. Teachers can be absolutely critical at the right moment in your life, and they can be mentors."

Cameron was also blessed with a slew of landmark films at the local cinema—*The Graduate* (1967), *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967), *Easy Riders* (1969), *Woodstock* (1970), *Catch-22* (1970), among others—"films that still burn vividly for me," he said. "It was such an amazing time in film production, very eclectic and breaking all the rules."

Coincidentally, Cameron's family moved the summer before his senior year to Brea, in Southern California, not far from Disneyland, "which is very close to the black hole of Hollywood itself," he said. "But at that point, I didn't know if I could get there. 'Who am I to say that I can be a filmmaker?' It didn't make any sense, so I abandoned it for grown-up things and decided to be a scientist."

Cameron enrolled in Fullerton College to study physics and astronomy—his father, Phillip, was an electrical engineer—but switched to English literature because he wanted to be a writer. However, he still studied every technically oriented book and magazine on moviemaking he could find. "I was going in two directions," he said of his two years at Fullerton. "Then I got married and became a truck driver; I was actually more of a novelist at that time. I wasn't really thinking about screenwriting. I got in with a bunch of writer friends."

AN INSPIRING FORCE

In 1977, *Star Wars* came out, charmed the world, changed the landscape of the movie industry, and altered the course of Cameron's life. "That was the film that galvanized me to get off my butt and go be a filmmaker," he said. "I was fascinated by space, I was always painting spaceships and living in this world of these whizzing, dynamic space battles. I was living in a *Star Wars* world in my mind, and all of a sudden I saw this film, and it was like somebody had reached into my hind brain and yanked out a lot of stuff that was in there. I was seeing it on the screen—realized. My reaction to it was not, *Oh, wow, that's cool, I want to see more*. It was, *Oh, wow, I better get off my butt because somebody is doing this stuff—and they're beating me to it*."

George Lucas's space fantasy movie helped Cameron realize that ultimately film was the best way for him to fuse all of his interests: story, the visual arts, and science/technology.

"At the time *Star Wars* came out I had no plans to work in film, but then the next light bulb came on which said, 'Just do it,'" he recalled. "Pick up a camera and start shooting something. Don't wait to be asked, because nobody is going to ask you. Don't wait for the perfect conditions, because they'll never be perfect. It's a little bit like having a child. If you wait until the right time to have a child, you'll die childless. You have to take the plunge."

Cameron quit his job and, with four friends, formed a production company to make commercials and industrial films. They decided to raise money to create a demo reel for an eventual feature-length movie (see "On Cameron II: *Xenogenesis*," page 23)

rebel fighter from the future, Kyle Reese, trying to survive multiple attacks from a cyborg also sent from the future to kill them both—for Connor's unborn son is destined to be the savior of humankind.

"The truth is, when Jim and I would discuss it," Hurd said in 2014, "the feeling was that there had been so many male character action heroes that there wasn't really much new that you could do. But the idea of a female at the center of the action, especially a reluctant one... was a way to have an everywoman character, someone not only women but men could relate to as well."

"I realized that I was going to have to get busy and create my own thing," Cameron said, "and that nobody would hire me [to direct] after that *Piranha* experience. I'd have to create my own thing and hang on tenaciously to that in order to be able to direct again, and that's why I wrote *The Terminator*."

While he was writing it, Cameron often thought of *The Driver* (1978), written by Walter Hill (who also directed). "Not that I was cribbing," Cameron said. "I had only seen the picture once and just had a dim memory of the kinetic forward energy he had in it. And then while I was writing *Terminator*, *The Road Warrior* [1982] came out and I said, 'This is the next step.' Nobody in-between had come close."

His fourth draft, dated April 1983, made the rounds at the studios. He and Hurd had many offers, "but I wouldn't sell the script to them unless I went with it as the director," Cameron said.

"At that point, Roger Corman offered me the job of going down to Argentina and overseeing the movies he was making down there," said Hurd. "But my heart was in *The Terminator*. We talked to Roger about financing it. We needed \$6.4 million. And he said, 'Well, can you do it for under two?' He knew it wasn't something that could be done for his budget. But a Corman connection did get the movie made, because Barbara Boyle, who had worked for Roger, went over to Orion, and they read the script."

It took a few months, but a deal was put together with two production companies (Hemdale Film Corporation and HBO) financing it, and Orion Pictures distributing the film. Cameron and Hurd were then told that the actor Orion wanted to play Kyle Reese, the humanoid hero from the future, was Arnold Schwarzenegger. The Austrian champion bodybuilder had recently starred in *Conan the Barbarian* (1982), a Dino De Laurentiis sword-and-sorcery production.

Cameron was skeptical. He'd already cast Lance Henriksen as the Terminator and reportedly said, "Yeah, I'll meet him, but if you have Arnold play Reese you're going to need King Kong for the Terminator."

When director and actor met, they got along well and Schwarzenegger kept talking about the Terminator. "I kept saying he had to be able to change the weapons blindfolded," recalled Schwarzenegger, "and shoot without blinking his eyes, and how he should walk and look with his head tilted forward. Then Jim said, 'You should play the Terminator.' He whipped out a pencil and started drawing. You could almost act off the drawing—the coldness of the character. I ended up thinking, *I'll give it a shot, because this is so well written and the guy is so determined.*"

Production approached Michael Biehn to play Reese; Henriksen was re-cast as a detective. Biehn recalled: "I'm like [dully] 'Oh, that sounds real

interesting. Who's in it?' They said, 'Arnold Schwarzenegger's playing the robot!' Arnold wasn't somebody that people thought of as an actor. So I asked who's directing it. 'A guy named Jim Cameron. He worked on *Piranha II*, but he got fired from it.' And I go, 'Oh boy! Geez, this is really something. Who's producing it?' 'Gale Hurd. She worked for Roger Corman.'"

Despite his misgivings, Biehn agreed to meet with Cameron and Hurd, and they cast him as Reese.

Linda Hamilton was cast as the film's heroine, Sarah Connor—the waitress, mother of the species' salvation, who becomes a soldier by the story's end.

"My fascination with strong female characters comes from a number of different things all congealing," Cameron said. "One is science-fiction literature, which has certainly influenced my writing. Prose science fiction has historically been very egalitarian: The female and male characters have always been on the same playing field there. If you look beyond the covers of the old sci-fi pulp magazines—which usually show a scantily clad damsel being abducted by an alien—you'll find that the women behind those covers were not only as smart as men, but often the heroes of the piece."

"But when you are trying to break into the film business and you're trying to make a statement, you also frequently have to do something different. And interesting women were just not being written into science-fiction films. I mean, did anyone ever really believe Raquel Welch knew her stuff as a neurosurgeon in *Fantastic Voyage* [1966]? Plus, I guess I just have a natural proclivity for writing women."

Cast and crew were ready, primed to shoot in Toronto during the summer of 1983, when producer Dino De Laurentiis triggered a preemptive option in Schwarzenegger's contract that obliged him to star in the sequel to *Conan the Barbarian* called *Conan the Destroyer* (1984).

Cameron and Hurd's tenuous production was suddenly on hold for an estimated nine months.

THE RONIN

De Laurentiis had dug a "hole" for Cameron, who was left with no income and nothing to do. He scrounged up a job creating ad campaigns for low-budget films, and instructed his agent to circulate his *Terminator* script again among the studios, this time as a writing sample. He hoped to get a script assignment.

One of the studios to read his script was Twentieth Century-Fox. The studio was in precarious shape, as usual, but had profits from the last of the *Star Wars* trilogy, *Return of the Jedi* (1983), filling its coffers. It's possible they were on the lookout for potential sequels to other films in their library. Although *Alien* (1979) had made a good profit for Fox, it hadn't been enough to guarantee a follow-up. Unlike *Star Wars*, the film's merchandising had been nearly non-existent, and the executives who had backed that film were long gone.

Several writers, including Theodore Sturgeon, had been hired, but none of their scripts had been deemed worthwhile; some Fox executives also cited declining box office for horror films. Moreover, a protracted





ABOVE: The derelict model as it appeared on a stage during the making of *Alien* (1979).

OPPOSITE: One film known to have influenced Cameron at the time he was writing *Aliens* was director Walter Hill's *The Driver* (1978, poster for Denmark).

lawsuit had short-circuited any real cooperation between the studio and the three producers of the original: Gordon Carroll, David Giler, and Walter Hill.

"We had been planning on doing a sequel right away while Alan Ladd was there [as head of production]," David Giler said. "We were talking about it already, and then he left. Marvin Davis bought the studio and Norman Levy was running it, and Norman Levy was really opposed to it, I was later told. They just didn't want to do it. And we weren't pushing for it."

"The rule when they made sequels was they cost twice as much to make and made half as much," Hurd recalled. "It was very unusual then to do sequels."

By the summer of 1983, that lawsuit concerning profit participation was settled, and an *Alien* sequel was more of a possibility. Fox was even required by the suit to put the project into development, which meant paying someone or a creative team to come up with a concept, though the studio wasn't required to actually make the movie. Hill and Giler, who had co-written the first film, brainstormed story ideas before settling on a military concept.

"Finally there was another change of management and a new group came in," Giler continued. "One of them stopped me in the parking lot and asked what I wanted to do for a sequel. So I told him of a story that was a cross between *Southern Comfort*, which Walter and I had made since, and



ON CAMERON II: XENOGENESIS

After deciding to make movies, Cameron's next step was to create a calling card. His friends managed to find a consortium of wealthy Mormon dentists in their home area of Orange County. The dentists were prepared to invest \$20,000 in a proof-of-concept reel. If all went well, the concept reel would be integrated into a final feature film.

Cameron and his friends presented ten ideas. Nine were low-budget exploitation concepts. The dentists went for the tenth: a science-fiction film. "This was as a result of the success of *Star Wars*," Cameron said in 1986. "They wanted to do science fiction. In a way, I suppose I owe it all to George Lucas. He made science fiction a viable genre again. And I was really gang-bro on special effects, so we decided to give it a whirl."

Cameron co-wrote the script for *Xenogenesis* (1978) with his friend William Wisher, and served as the 12-minute, 35mm short's producer, director, editor, model-maker, director of photography, and special-effects supervisor. It was a moment to put his theoretical knowledge, culled from a lifetime of reading and studying, into practice.

"On the first day of shooting, I found myself with \$40,000 worth of rented equipment and no idea how to use any of it," Cameron said. "I spent the first few days learning how to load the cameras and change lenses. I spent a lot of time on the phone with the rental company. Even so, the first thing we did was an in-the-camera glass matte combining a painting on glass with a real landscape, which I would still hesitate to attempt, and it worked out fine."

He and Wisher had come up with a number of visual set pieces for their short: one chapter in the story of a colony starship, loaded with the last remnants of frozen humanity, on the search for another planet where they would jump-start the human race. Within the bowels of a sci-fi-style ship or city, whose inhabitants have been dead for 50,000 years, the story's two heroes (an android man, Raf, and a woman) do battle with a giant robot sentry. The male is about to be pushed off a ledge to his death when the female arrives in 'the Spider'—a four-legged walking machine—and battles the robot sentry.

"We filmed an actress manipulating these controls, and then rear-projected it inside an animated, hydraulically activated model," Cameron says. "We animated it to her; it worked really well. It was an amazing piece of work for a bunch of dumbshits that didn't know what they were doing."

The short was titled *Xenogenesis* and took about five months to make, but it didn't lead to a full-length feature.

It was time for Cameron to find another way to make a living in the movie industry—and for starving filmmakers, all roads led to Roger Corman (see sidebar, page 26).



The Magnificent Seven. He said, 'Great, that sounds fine.' We all had a meeting and we were on."

Both *Southern Comfort* (1981) and *The Magnificent Seven* (1960) concerned small groups of trained soldiers or mercenaries facing off against lethal threats. In the outline by Giler and Hill, their trained military outfit and Ripley, the hero of *Alien*, would confront a host of aliens. Their one-page story summary was clearly dashed off, with laughable place names and cursory story points, though with a solid underpinning (it was either untitled or may have been referred to as "The Mining Co."):

The *Narcissus* arrives back on earth. Ripley is gotten out of hypersleep. Fifty years on earth time has passed. Twenty minutes in hypersleep. Those responsible for the corporate decisions involving the alien have been deposed or destroyed, and a new era reigns. No knowledge of the alien exists, previous records lost or destroyed. The planet of the Spotted Dick has been colonized some five years previously, so far without untoward incident. Ripley finds it difficult to

believe that the inhospitable planet could be auspicious for any kind of settlement. This colony seems however to have tamed its harsher elements and is in fact now farming peacefully. Ripley's dire warnings about the planet's other inhabitants is greeted with some skepticism. However, a mission, an investigative trip, is commissioned. A group of very tough military types is put together and sent out.

Meanwhile back on the planet... we see the glory of the frontier space colonies. A hardy group of families tilling the virgin soil, building a community, etc. Small children playing on a mountainside discover a shaft-- the entrance to the alien space craft cleverly disguised as a mountain (or something equally prosaic). Unaware of the terrors within they toddle in for a look around.

Eventually, of course they discover the egg chamber. I don't know how much value

ABOVE (FROM LEFT): Foreign release posters for *Alien*: Japan, Spain, Germany.

there is in having the toddlers' heads bitten off in gruesome fashion by their alien contemporaries, so perhaps it is merely by the introduction of some other element, like light or warmth, which triggers the hatching of not just one of the horrible eggs but of all of them. The whole egg chamber bursting into life. The kids beat a hasty retreat.

It should be noted that something has happened to alter the whole nature of the planet. It was struck by a meteor which moved it to a more temperate clime. Some fabulous explanation which has turned the planet into a potential garden spot.

When tough guys arrive on the planet. The colony is either under siege or wiped out. The aliens having made structures out of themselves and cocoons out of the colonists. It might be that the team is already inside one of the sky structures discovering the cocooned colonists when they then discover that the structure itself is alive and hostile.

The answer to all this is clear. Our team has to get off the planet and destroy it. Maybe they should discover something on the spaceship left from the dental patient [the space jockey] that tells them something about the alien and its potential menace to all other living forms. That it's an anti-life force. Some bullshit.

Their next few pages went into a few story details (for a total of five typed pages), and was titled *Alien II*.

The warmth of the children's bodies "triggers the hatching of not just one of the eggs, but all of them. The chamber becomes a writhing, living horror, as the terrified kids flee for safety." When Ripley returns with the "tough guys," they realize they can't just blow up the planet, because the spores would infect countless planets.

The team sees only one real shot at conquering the alien hordes. They must find the entrance to the spaceship, penetrate to the very bowels of the egg chamber, and hope they can find a way to destroy the aliens from within.

While searching for the entrance, the team lives like guerillas in a supremely hostile enemy territory. Several of them are wiped out in an excruciatingly violent fashion and the survivors are on razor's edge, fighting

among themselves—some ready to abandon the planet and leave the universe to its fate. Ripley manages to hold the team together, until they find the entrance.

Penetrating the egg chamber is a descent into hell. More members of the team are lost, but finally Ripley and the few survivors reach the center of the chamber. They find inscriptions (or some sort of information) that tells them that aliens are more than mere flesh-eating monsters. They are an anti-life force that could endanger the living universe.

In some magnificently clever fashion, Ripley and the team figure out how to reverse this anti-life force; in a sense, causing the aliens to implode. Ripley and the team fight their way out of the chamber and with only seconds to spare, blast off the planet, as the aliens implode, in a black hole effect, or something similar.

As for the actress who had incarnated Ripley, Sigourney Weaver, she was far from considering a return. "Exec producers [Giler and Hill] are friends of mine, and we would get together over dinner and laugh about the sequel," Weaver said. "One scenario was that they would open Ripley's little space-pod tomb—and she would dissolve into dust. No need for Sigourney!"

Meanwhile, Weaver was about to return to the theater for a production of *Hurlyburly*—"I like telling the same story every night. It's up to you and the audience, not the camera angles"—and was working in non-horror films, including *Eyewitness* (1981) and *The Year of Living Dangerously* (1982). She was slated to costar in the comedy adventure *Ghostbusters* (1984) and said, "No one really wanted to touch a sequel. Once a good film has been made by someone like Ridley Scott, I don't think you want to go back."

At any rate, it would seem that Hill and Giler's treatment didn't generate much interest at Fox, and they turned their attentions to other projects, including a science-fiction version of the Spartacus story (a slave revolt during Roman times) and a science-fiction version of *The Great Escape* (1963), in which POWs dig their way out of a Nazi camp during WWII.

It was at this nadir in the trajectory of the sequel to *Alien* that Giler and Hill invited James Cameron to a pitch meeting.

SLAVES IN SPACE

In the summer of 1983, Larry Wilson, a development executive working for the Phoenix Company (Giler's production house) was searching for writers for their Spartacus re-telling. He read Cameron's *Terminator* script

Since the late 1950s, Roger Corman had been a maverick's maverick: a fearless, innovative, highly intelligent producer who generated dozens of low-budget B-movie exploitation flicks and earned a profit. New World Pictures was his production company, where he also made more original B-movie pictures. Occasionally he ended up making a good film "by accident," joked actor-writer-director Jack Nicholson (one of the "graduates" from Corman's unofficial film school/production house).

Gae Anne Hurd was pulled into the Corman orbit directly out of Stanford University, where she'd majored in economics and communications, and graduated Phi Beta Kappa. Like hundreds of others, she was in search of her first job in the industry.

"If he'd wanted me to go around the office and pick up trash for two years, I would have," Hurd said. "I figured I would learn something as I went. But when Roger first interviewed me, he asked me at the interview's end what turned out to be the key question: 'Ultimately, what do you want to do in this business?' Oddly enough, I hadn't even thought about it. I immediately thought, *Okay, what is Roger most successful at? He has been an actor, a writer, a director, and now a producer. I guess that's where he feels the most rewards are. So I said I wanted to produce.*"

Hurd became Corman's executive assistant in 1977. "I was absolute evidence of Roger's amazing ability to start off people's careers," Hurd recalled. "The one wonderful thing about Roger, which you only appreciate in retrospect, is that he believes that anyone who is intelligent, dedicated, ambitious, and willing to work absolutely ridiculous hours can succeed. He instills that belief in you from the beginning. Roger doesn't teach people to be a geek, he teaches them to take risks—that's his greatest contribution."

Hurd took those risks, and quickly went from being his assistant to writing scripts to casting to being the director of advertising and publicity. As with all she created and executed campaigns for five pictures in two months.

"I knew nothing about it," she said. "It was really trial by fire."

Hurd moved from publicity to assistant production manager, a producer-type position, via *Battle Beyond the Stars* (1980). Designed to capitalize on *Star Wars*' success, its story was about Shad (Richard Thomas), a young space warrior who scours the galaxy to recruit mercenaries to help defend his peaceful planet from the evil tyrant Sador (John Saxon). Its plot was a rip-off of Japanese director Akira Kurosawa's *Seven Samurai* (1954), but its script was written by John Sayles. The cast even included Robert Vaughn, one of the mercenaries from *The Magnificent Seven*, another film based on *Seven Samurai*.

Its budget was, for Corman, an astronomical \$2 million, his most expensive film to date, with a 20-day shoot (by comparison, *Star Wars* had costars \$11 million). When filming began in 1980, tensions were high.

Cameron came looking for a job as an entry-level model-maker at Corman's lumberyard facility—his quasi art department—in Venice, California, circa April 2, 1979. He was armed with his *Xenogenesis* reel and a few drawings. "Roger tends to hire people practically off the street," Cameron said in 1984, "people who have no demonstrable experience, but have a certain

gleam in their eyes that only Roger can detect; he usually hires them for little or no money. In return, they get the experience of having worked on an actual motion picture, learning what is and is not important. And that's the crucial thing to learn—that's something you only get by living through it."

In fact, Cameron didn't actually meet Corman until later.

"The guy who was heading up *Battle*, Chuck Comisky, said, 'There are couple guys that might be good as model builders,'" recalled Robert Skotak, who was heading up the effects unit with his brother, Dennis. "So Chuck asked me to interview these two kids. There were just a handful of us, including my brother, Dennis, and Jim came in with a guy named Alec Gillis; they brought some drawings and we hit it off. Afterward I kept pushing Chuck, 'We should get those guys from Orange County.' We didn't even remember their names. 'We need more people on this.' Chuck was dealing with Roger's financial restrictions, but about two months later was finally able to hire them."

"I was just happy to be on a film," Cameron said in 2013. "Roger came through one day and threw down a challenge to everyone in the model shop. He was pissed off. We were so many weeks away from shooting, and no one had even designed the main character's ship. He said, 'I want a design in the next two days.' It became a design contest, and I thought, *Okay, it's Roger Corman. He does girls-in-bamboo-cages movies. What is he selling? He sells tits!*"

"The original lead ship was called 'Mother' at first," says Skotak. "It was called that in the script. It was supposed to be kind of sleek, kinda 'sexy' and feminine. I built that ship. The name was later changed to 'Nell' since 'Mother' had sorta been taken in *Alien* as a nickname. Then the director came in with sketches of a big-boobed (and rather fat) woman-ship (I still have his drawings). He wasn't interested in my design. My ship became Robert Vaughn's ship, *Gelt*. The director's ship design was awful, so Roger put word out that a new design was needed."

"So I designed a kind of Amazon-warrior spaceship," Cameron says, "basically a spaceship with tits. Roger came through and he looked at all of the designs, and he stopped at mine and he said: 'What is this?' And I said, 'This is a spaceship with tits.' And he says, 'Yes, that's exactly what it is. You build it.' So suddenly, I was the guy in the model shop that everyone hated."

"I'd sketched my idea," Skotak says, "but Jim beat me to it and got his design approved... and he went on to build it."

Cameron said, grinning, in 1984: "I clawed my way up from there, as meanly and brutally as I could." "Roger sent me to the set of *Humanoids from the Deep* [1980]," Hurd recalled. "I put superslime cellulose on the monsters right there with Rob Bottin. After that, Roger said, 'I need someone to go down and check to see how preproduction is coming along on *Battle Beyond the Stars*. Can you go down to the lumberyard and see how the sets are coming along?'"

"I walked into the model shop, and this very tall, blond gentleman came up to me and asked, 'What can I do for you?' And I said, 'Can I tour the model department? I work for Roger.' So he showed me around. He had designed the spaceship exteriors and was building them, and they looked fantastic! I assumed he was the head of the model shop, but he wasn't. He was Jim Cameron. I also realized not one interior set was under construction.

"So I went back and I said, 'Roger, I think we have to build 25 sets in a few weeks and not one of them has been designed, much less started.' And

he said, 'What do you recommend?' I said, 'Now this sounds outrageous, but there's a terrific artist who's designed and built the spaceship. He knows what the exteriors look like. Would it make sense for him to design the interiors as well? And that's how Jim went from being a model-builder to art director in 24 hours.'

"When Gale came back from the studio," Corman remembered in 2016, "she said, 'The guy you hired to head the special-effects department is good, but he, as many people do, slightly overstated his experience. The No. 2 man—Jim Cameron—is actually much better than the No. 1 man.' So I did something I very seldom do and went to the studio myself, talked to Jim and said, 'I'm giving you a raise in the middle of picture, and I want you to run the special effects (and art direction) for the rest of it.' Plus, that started the relationship between Gale and Jim."

"The problem was that the guy who I was replacing," Cameron said, "his job was to design something like 25 sets and he'd only made two, and they were going to start shooting in four days. It was a complete nightmare. Roger fired me two or three times."

Cameron and his crew, including Hurd at times, worked through nonstop, night and day, to prepare the sets. Actor/filmmaker Bill Paxton was told they needed help and paid them a visit. "Jim said, 'Can you start right now?'" Paxton recalled. "And I go, 'You mean, right now?' And he goes, 'Yeah. Go paint that wall over there.' And that's how I met Jim Cameron."

"We called him 'Wild Bill' because he was big in gesture and speech, and he was obviously a natural performer," Cameron said. "When he first came in, I was right in the middle of building a set, and I said, 'You—can you paint?' And he said, 'Yeah, baby!' And I said, 'Get over here and paint this wall.'"

"I remember helping spray sets in the middle of the night," Hurd said. "So my first memory of Bill was him pounding nails and cracking everybody up. We'd be working at three or four in the morning, and he would be the one who kept all our spirits up. He was that person on and off set."

Battle Beyond the Stars, with a score written by another young artist named James Horner, was New World's biggest grosser. Released right after *Star Wars: Episode V—The Empire Strikes Back*, the timing was right for hungry sci-fi fans.

Cameron worked on another Corman film next—*Galaxy of Terror* (1981)—this one intended to capitalize on the success of *Alien* and other sci-fi horror genre pics. Having proved himself on *Battle*, Cameron was the film's production designer and second-unit director. He also worked on the effects again with Robert and Dennis Skotak.

"But I kept watching that guy over there who was moving the actors around and setting up the shots," Cameron said. "I had pictured myself as a filmmaker, but I had never pictured myself as a director. I had wanted to make films, and I'd understood at some intellectual level that the director was the person who was most in charge creatively, but I had never pictured myself in that role, as the guy with the monocle and the megaphone. It had no meaning for me. But I watched a couple of really bad directors work, and I saw how they completely botched it up and missed the visual opportunities of the scene. They had these great actors to work with and they just blew it."

Cameron figured he couldn't be any worse than them, and his ambition to direct was born. But first he worked as co-supervisor of special effects with

the Skotaks on John Carpenter's *Escape from New York* (1981), while Hurd went to work on additional New World productions *Alligator* (1980) and *The Georgia Peaches* (1980), before earning her first co-producer credit on *Smokey Bites the Dust*.

"Gale had her headlights on," Cameron said. "She was an up-and-coming producer. She was interested in all of the effects processes, and we just naturally gravitated to each other."



STORY FILES

mining Co.

5341.A1

Ripley's craft The Narcissus arrives back on earth. Ripley is gotten out of hypersleep. Fifty years on earth time has passed. Twenty minutes in hypersleep. Those responsible for the corporate decisions involving the Alien have been deposited or destroyed, and a new era of good feeling reigns. No knowledge of the alien exists, and previous records lost or destroyed. The planet of the Spotted Dick has been colonized some five years previously, so far without untoward incident. Ripley finds it difficult to believe that this inhospitable planet could be so auspicious for any kind of settlement. This colony seems however to have tamed it's harsher elements and is in fact now farming peacefully. Ripley's dire warnings about the planets other

and, according to a story in the *Los Angeles Times*, couldn't put it down. "It was electrifying," Wilson said. "I put the script on David's desk."

Giler remembered getting the script with a "big recommendation."

"David and Walter had a project which they wanted Jim to do: a futuristic updating of *Spartacus*," Hurd said. "They had read *The Terminator* script and were very impressed. Jim met with them, was pitched the *Spartacus* idea, and didn't immediately respond to it."

"They came to me to do a futuristic updating of *Spartacus* in outer space," Cameron said. "They wanted the same movie, but with the sword-and-sandal elements intergalactically dressed up, which was a concept I found pretty idiotic. I wanted to do a fundamentally different story told in primarily science-fiction terms. We weren't seeing eye to eye; I could tell by their sagging expressions."

"But they had read my script, and they wanted to work with me on something. I was getting up and making my way toward the door, and David said, 'Well, we do have this other thing.' And I said, 'Oh, what's that?' He said, '*Alien II*.' And all those pinball machine lights and bells went off inside my head, but I maintained an absolutely straight face and said, 'That could be interesting.' I felt like David was digging out an old bone in the backyard, dragging out something no one had been thinking much about."

Cameron, on the other hand, had long been a fan of Ridley Scott's film; he'd even worked on Roger Corman's *Alien*-knockoff movie, *Galaxy of Terror* (see sidebar, page 26). "*Alien* was a watershed in science-fiction filmmaking," said Cameron. "A truly seminal moment. Along with *2001*, *Alien* is my favorite science-fiction film. The thing that struck me about *Alien* was its heightened sense of realism. *Alien* was the first film that really created an environment with real characters who spoke like real people, instead of running around in silver lamé jumpsuits, speaking dialogue that we all know wouldn't be that way. I also tend to like strong female characters. It just interests me dramatically. A strong female character is interesting to me because it hasn't been done that much, finding the balance of femininity and strength."

Cameron stayed to discuss with Giler and Hill their ideas for the

sequel. It was apparent that that the younger writer knew *Alien* intimately. "He probably knows the first one better than I do, backwards and forwards," Giler said.

"At the time, it really hadn't been cracked," Hurd said in 1986. "No one had come up with an approach that was satisfactory to all the various creative individuals involved."

"I suggested that I write a quick outline or treatment," Cameron said. "Just to give them an idea of what I might do with it."

Giler and Hill agreed, and handed over their five-page treatment as a starting point (or they may have given Cameron only the one-page summary). Cameron would recall in 2001: "That outline said something like, 'Ripley gets rescued and goes back to the planet with a bunch of soldiers. They are attacked and eaten.' That was pretty much it. Except—and I'll never forget this—the outline concluded with this sentence: 'And then some other bullshit happens.' Which I thought trivialized the entire process of actually working out what the story should be."

"They didn't really give me anything specific," Cameron said in 1986, "just this idea of getting Ripley together with some military types and having them all go back to the planet. Walter Hill, who I have a great deal of respect for as a writer and director, does not have a mind that goes into science fiction. He doesn't know the lore of it. And David Giler would just as soon be doing anything else but science fiction."

"Remember, James Cameron had only done *Piranha II*," Giler said. "I suggested to him at the time not to tell anyone he had done it."

GALAXY SOLDIERS

So I raced home and stayed up for three days straight and drank about eight pots of coffee," Cameron said in 1986. "When I'm writing, I have a period of assimilation where I absorb everything to do with a project. For *Aliens* I read a lot of books on Vietnam because of the strong military storyline."

Cameron tended to write on yellow legal pads, while denying himself all sensory stimulation except appropriate music (Gustav Holst's "The Planets," which coincidentally Ridley Scott had played on set at times while shooting the first film). To complement the coffee he would consume a lot of junk food during the three- or four-day period it took him to write his treatment (or a week, in some tellings).

He expanded Hill and Giler's concept, which was sometimes referred to as "Ripley and Soldiers." "But really I adapted a story I [had] already written called *Mother*," Cameron said of a treatment he'd written circa 1980/81. "Right after my meeting with David and Walter, I pulled something out of my files that had been inspired by *Alien*. It was originally titled *E.T.*, but when I found out that a guy named Spielberg was making his own movie called *E.T.*, I changed the title to *Mother* and I dropped Ripley and a bunch of marines into it."

Cameron had placed his original story for *Mother* in the future, on the planet Venus, and wrote of an off-world mining operation spearheaded by an interplanetary consortium called Triworld Development Corporation,

FAR LEFT: An excerpt from David Giler and Walter Hill's treatment for the *Alien* sequel, with "Mining Co." scribbled at top, from the Story Files within the Fox archives.

RIGHT: An excerpt from Cameron's treatment, date September 8, 1983, (the "rec'd" notation refers to the document's arrival in the Fox archives most likely).

**Just when you thought it was safe
to go back into space...**

FAR RIGHT: A frame grab from Cameron's effects reel, *Xenogenesis* (1978), with the female inside "The Spider" operating a four-legged walking machine.

Rec'd 12/10/85 - P.M.

or "The Company." Because the planet's environment is dangerous to humans, the protagonists create a "xenomorph"—Cameron's term for a genetically engineered creature—based on a local life-form, in order to serve the needs of the Company. These genetically engineered aliens are then used as workers in the mines, controlled via a "psychic link with an 'adept' or an electronic link with a trained controller."

One of the Company's research-and-development stations is run by a female senior operator, a Ripley-like character, who is also the controller of the xenomorph prototype. In the final confrontation she wears a 'power suit' (a utility exoskeleton, a cross between a forklift and a robot) and fights the alien xenomorph mutant, which Cameron called a 'Skraath' or 'Skraith' (a six-limbed black panther that Cameron had actually created for yet another project called *Labyrinth*), which is attempting to ensure the survival of its young. 'Mother' could refer to the xenomorph or the woman controller. During their battle, the mining complex is being destroyed due to super-heated gases boiling up from the planet's interior.

Cameron had already created a form of power armor in *Xenogenesis*. That idea, along with others in *Mother*, was originally inspired by his sci-fi reading: in particular, author Robert Heinlein's 1959 novel, *Starship Troopers*. In that book, the troopers wear power armor while battling their bug-like enemies (another friend would recall that Cameron was inspired by material in *Analog Science Fiction & Fact*, a magazine that he frequently read).

"Read *Starship Troopers* if you want to see what inspired [*Alien II*]," Cameron said in 2009. "Heinlein's story is pretty serious. The last line of the book, and he means it absolutely seriously, is, 'to the everlasting glory of the infantry.' He was celebrating the ground-pounder, the dogface, but in a futuristic context. I liked the idea of a futuristic military movie with 'ground pounders,' dog soldiers who've been around from the time of the Roman legions to Vietnam. 'Grunts in space' was a wonderful concept. There's a whole list of science fiction going back to the 1920s that explores the idea of the military in space, but it hadn't really been done in a film."



STOP THE TERROR

The primary challenge Cameron faced was how to top the first film. "I saw *Alien* on its opening night in 1979," he reiterated. "And it had a great effect on me. For a filmmaker to go into territory created by another filmmaker is dangerous ground. So I knew that I had to create my own stylistic territory in *Alien II*, to surprise the audience while also being true to the first film. But the things that interest me aren't necessarily the things that interested Ridley Scott. I probably gravitate more toward heavier plotting, and a little more concentration on characters and dialogue—and much more action—and less on the visual aspects. So, just following my interests was really my only guideline writing it. You also have to dig deep into the bag of tricks and come up with some good ideas in order to do a proper homage to the original without being a mindless fan, [to create] a piece of entertainment and a story in its own right."

"Twentieth Century-Fox didn't want to stray too far from the first film," said Hurd in 1986. "Jim said he wanted to open it up and bring more action—elements we're good at. We didn't want to make a claustrophobic Gothic horror film with things popping out of closets."

"You also can't make the assumption that your audience has seen the first film, especially seven years after the fact," Cameron said in 1985. "They may have heard of *Alien*, or they may have even seen it yet only remember vague imagery as opposed to story details. One has to be very careful that the [new] story functions as an independent entity from the first film. That's always the dilemma in doing a sequel: knowing exactly how far to stretch the umbilicus with the original movie. Its writer, Dan O'Bannon, and the director, Ridley Scott, established a set of elements which can't be violated. But they only created part of a universe, which primarily dealt with life and death within the confines of a spaceship. Doing a reprise of all those elements from *Alien* would be pointless, but certain elements were necessary for the story's continuation. I had to come up with an entertaining way of having it evolve beyond what we had seen

before, so that people would have an expectation of going beyond a horizon that they already knew.”

In a lighter moment, Cameron called taking on the project “insanity,” and laughed. “So what we did was we tried to deflect any possible criticism by making the film in our style, making it more thematically consistent with *Terminator* than with *Alien*.”

In short, Cameron and Hurd decided to skirt the original’s ‘haunted house’ elements to focus on action.

“We’re not doing a Gothic horror movie,” Hurd emphasized to another journalist. “We’re doing a combat movie. And that’s how we can be respectful of Ridley Scott’s original vision and not try to remake it.”

The glue between the first two films would be Ripley. “*Alien II* focuses on Ripley from the first scene,” Cameron said. “It’s her story. As such, it’s an opportunity to do something that’s dimensionally more intricate than the first film, from both a character and a dramatic standpoint. There were many things that hadn’t been explored in *Alien* simply because of the way in which the first film was structured dramatically. She didn’t emerge as the main character until the last third, which is part of its structure, not a flaw. We were intentionally misdirected toward Dallas as the main character, because the captain is always the guy who lives. When Dallas got killed, all bets were off. It was very shocking.

“So now I wanted to take the character further, to know Ripley as a person, to see some depth and emotion, to take her back to face her own worst nightmare—and conquer it, so to speak. In a way, it is about her revenge. Also, I’m fascinated by characters who carry some great weight with them, who have been through a very traumatic experience, and how it affects them and their life. I like to probe at it. How would these individuals put the pieces of their lives back together—and what would they do if they were faced with it again? Would they be weaker or stronger? Would they flee from it, or find the tools to deal with it? That’s really what this is all about.”

Cameron prefaced his writing burst—his treatment, dated September 8, 1983—with a tagline inspired by the sequel to *Jaws*: “Just when you thought it was safe to go back into space...” The treatment was titled *Alien II* and was 45 typed pages (for a complete summary, see sidebar, page 33):

Space. Silent and endless.
A tiny chip of technology drifts through the
frigid vacuum.

Closer...it is the *Narcissus*, the lifeboat of
the ill-fated *Nostramo*.
A shadow passes over it and an enormous black
object cuts into the frame above.
Searchlights play over the little ship.
The massive hull descends.

(The opening image was similar to that of *Star Wars*, in which a rebel ship is swallowed up by a much larger Imperial Star Destroyer.) After Ripley is rescued and brought back to a hospital at an indeterminate

location, she is grilled by the “Interstellar Commerce Commission [ICC], an Extrasolar Colonial Administration [ECA] security officer, an insurance investigator, and a representative of the conglomerate which has since acquired the Weylan Yutani Corporation, owners of the *Nostramo*.”

Because there is no proof for her story, they ground her and take away her license pending a more thorough investigation.

Ripley is also told that a “standard class-C mining and ‘terraforming’ colony was dropped on the planet 30 years earlier.” She’s spent 62 years floating in space. All is well on the planet, however, which contradicts her account of its horrors. She also has an unpleasant conversation with her elderly daughter, who feels that Ripley abandoned her.

“The first thing I did was give Ripley a past, a life back on Earth,” Cameron said. “It’s just barely sketched, but there are resonances throughout the story; she was married, she got divorced because her career took her into space, and she had a daughter, who, in the time that Ripley was on the *Nostramo*, grew up.”

Meanwhile, on the planet Acheron—which Cameron named after the frozen swamp at the center of the ninth circle of hell in Dante’s *Inferno*—things take a turn for the worse. A family is out prospecting, following a tip. To explain why no one had earlier picked up the warning beacon (heard in the first film), Cameron wrote that the alien derelict ship had been damaged by a volcanic eruption: “Jammed against up-thrusting rocks by the flow of lava, the hull is buckled in one spot, with a black rent almost large enough to drive the tractor into.”

“I see Acheron as a raw and primal world: windswept, with cold, freezing rain,” Cameron said. “Not a place you’d want to live. I wanted to create something unlike anything that exists on Earth, but with points of familiarity: mountains, clouds, rain. It is like creating a sensation, not of something that is absolutely inhuman and bizarre, but of a place in which it is very difficult to survive.”

The parent prospectors leave their kids, Newt and Tim, in the tractor and wander off to investigate. Only the mother makes it back; in a panic, she calls in a mayday and is joined by other colonists. Together, they penetrate the egg chamber:

The eggs erupt.
One.
Two.
Three.
Then a volley.
Screams are muffled by the face-hugging
creatures.
All the eggs are hatching.

The floor of the chamber comes alive with
scuttling spider-hand nightmares.

The men above start hauling the searchers’
lifelines.
Cutting quickens.

Screams echo, escalate.
The chamber is a writhing, living horror.

The company now wants to recruit Ripley to help them find out what's gone wrong on Acheron. She refuses, but her nightmares continue so she relents.

In plotting out his treatment, Cameron had come up with a compelling reason to make Ripley return to face her nightmare aliens. He based it on Vietnam vets who re-up for combat. "They offer her a job and they offer to protect her," he said in 1991. "That helps. She feels relatively secure. But the real reason is the cathartic psychological reason. There has to be an inner motivation. Even if people don't agree with it, they at least can see the motivation."

The team is picked up at the colonial garrison, Gateway Station. Aboard the freighter *Sulaco* for an eight-week trip she meets the small group of professionals going with her, including Bishop, an ECA Cyborg Assignee. (The *Sulaco* was named after a fictional town in Joseph Conrad's novel *Nostromo*, which kept up the first film's tradition of naming ships after the works of Conrad.)

On Acheron, they drive around in an APC (armored personnel carrier) and find the sole survivor, Newt (at one point Cameron considered a surviving android character, too, but dropped it). They find the alien hive in the generator plant. In the ensuing battle, several soldiers are killed; their dropship pilot and crew are also killed, and the dropship crashes. (Cameron conducted extensive research into Russian military aircraft; the term 'dropship' came from Heinlein's *Starship Troopers*, though its inspiration, according to one of his friends, was also the seminal marionette and miniature show from 1965-66 *Thunderbirds*, created by Gerry Anderson.)

"Although technologically superior [to the aliens], the Colonial Marines find that the aliens are not easy to conquer," Cameron said. "I drew inspiration for that from the Vietnam War. Their training and technology are inappropriate for the specifics, which is analogous to the inability of superior American firepower to conquer the unseen enemy in Vietnam: a lot of firepower and very little wisdom, and it didn't work."

The survivors re-group in the control block. Ripley and Hicks, the coolest of the marines, search through still functioning video cameras for the colony's shuttles, but find nothing. A time-lock situation develops when they realize a system failure is imminent in about six hours, due to damage caused by the dropship explosion—"followed within about one-tenth second by a thermonuclear explosion on the order of 20 megatons."

The aliens attack and they retreat. When all seems lost they get a weak message from Hudson, who's been cocooned in a dark chamber.

Hudson describes a chamber constructed by the aliens, near the one they burned.
A chamber whose floor is covered by egg-like things.
There are lots of creatures around.
Different sizes.

And one huge one.

The small ones are all carrying eggs.
He says they have a ship down there, the one from the colony.
They're loading the eggs through the cargo lock.

Ripley looks at Hicks.
The queen must want to reach the *Sulaco*...
Realizes she's running out of prey here.

Thing go from bad to worse. Soon only Newt, Ripley, and Hicks are left. Bishop, who had stayed onboard, flies the second dropship to the planet, but at the last second is told by the computer he can't pick them up for fear of infecting the rest of the universe.

Ripley hits on a plan in which they take pre-emptive medicine, let the aliens sting them—so they will be awakened before being cocooned, but not helpless in the alien lair. Once there, they can seize on their only chance of escape: the colonists' shuttle.

In the egg chamber, they awake to see the alien queen laying eggs, a horrifying sight. "It was kind of staring us in the face," Cameron would say. "You have a ship full of eggs—well, who laid the eggs?"

What's bigger, meaner, more terrifying than the alien?
Its mother.

"It was very important to have something beyond what had been seen in the first film," Cameron said in 1986. "It was important to show some new form beyond that. And there's a lot of revelation going on there, as to how their whole social organization works. I think of the queen as a character, rather than a thing or an animal.

"When I began writing the *Alien II* script," he continued, "I realized I'd have to slightly tweak the creatures' life-cycle. Because, at least in the release print of *Alien*, there's no answer as to where the first stage of the creature's life, those alien eggs, came from. *Alien* originally did have a scene that dealt with that, but it was cut just before the film came out. That sequence showed Captain Dallas and Brett slowly turning into eggs themselves, after the creature captured them. What this suggested was that once an individual was cocooned by an alien, that individual then became an alien egg—which I thought was a stupid concept then, and a stupid concept now. That's something that would have been hard for the audience to swallow, because it involved the transformation of the human host.

"So I went in a totally different direction: I determined that the eggs were actually being laid by a single, more highly evolved alien organism. A queen, if you will. I specifically had the social and biological aspects of a termite queen in mind. A termite queen is much larger than worker termites, and she's equipped with an enormous ovipositor, this egg-laying sack that produces new termites. That was a lot more interesting than a

captured human becoming an egg.”

In his treatment, Ripley fights her way from their cocoons to the shuttle; Hicks doesn't make it. Ripley and Newt blast off.

Aboard the *Sulaco*, however, Ripley discovers that the queen has made the journey with them. It shreds Bishop, but Ripley steps up in a powerloader and manages to eject the queen into space.

“*The Empire Strikes Back* came out with these big walking machines in it,” Cameron would say of the Imperial walkers. “I'd been scooped. So I

changed ‘the Spider’ from *Xenogenesis* to more of an upright, forklift exoskeleton concept.”

Ripley, Newt, and Bishop survive. Ripley is a mother again.

A happy ending.

But it was a long way from a treatment to a shooting script to a green light. And the fact that Cameron wanted to direct the sequel, given his track record, made the whole proposal somewhat dubious.

BELOW LEFT: The file and photo for Ripley (Sigourney Weaver).





ALIEN II
PRELIMINARY TREATMENT BY JAMES CAMERON,
SEPTEMBER 8, 1983-SUMMARY

On the title pages, Cameron typed "(All this and 'Alien II?)" to set the tone. He was excited and his rapid-fire, fast-paced story was also exciting, though it begins slowly with the discovery of Ripley in her shuttle.

Inside the *Narcissus* is dark and dormant as a crypt.

Like the tolling of a bell, a metallic clang echoes through the hull.

Her rescue dissolves into a dream, "running down *Nostramo* corridor," in which she replays her escape and her terror. She awakes in a hospital, where she is cared for by Dr. O'Neil. He "explains that the capsules were never intended to operate for 62 years, and that Ripley is lucky to have survived after drifting for so long."

"They say you're not supposed to dream in the freezer," Ripley tells him, "but I did, for sixty years, the same fucking nightmare."

The doctor informs Ripley that her 75-year-old daughter is divorced; the next morning they have a "vid-phone call".

The conversation is short and devastating. Ripley remembers her daughter as a bright thirteen year old living with her ex-husband before her last trip out.

She is unprepared for the arthritically crippled old woman who icily accuses her of abandoning her when she chose her life in space.

That blow is followed by an investigation into her destruction of the *Nostramo*:

On a wall-size vid-screen they review the files. Ripley watches as the faces of the dead crew flash before her, smiling in their mug shots: Dallas, Kane, Parker, Brett, Lambert, and the traitor, Ash.

The ICC investigator reports that analysis of the *Narcissus* flight-recorder, which accessed the *Nostramo*'s computer, clearly showed that Ripley used command override to deliberately blow the engines, despite the fact that there was no structural damage or impairment of function previous to the destruct order.

Despite its allegations, the board stops short of criminal charges. Unable to physically disprove Ripley's wild story, they settle for revoking her commercial license, permanently grounding her. "She is released on her own recognizance, with a six-months psychometric probation, including monthly review by a Health Department psychtech."

When she protests, the Extrasolar Colonial Administration officer points out that there has been a "thriving colony on the very planet which she claims harbored this deadly life form... he patiently explains that a standard class-C mining and 'terraforming' colony was dropped on the planet 30 years earlier. Fifty families, 10 TRW atmosphere processors, one K-hull General Products starship (dismantled to form colony buildings and power station)... At last check-in, they were doing nicely, thank you. The planet's air was getting breathable, and the colony was expanding."

Ripley warns him that those families are in great danger, but he ignores her. Dissolve to:

A hideous, storm-blasted landscape, as bleak as we remember it.

The ugly little planet had been an anonymous alpha-numeric on the star charts until the first survey team christened it Acheron. With stubborn optimism characteristic of hardy frontier types throughout history the people of the colony ECA/C-486 call their little community Hadley's Hope, presumably after one of the founding members.

That's what the sign set in concrete pylons between the landing field and the main complex reads, or would at least if gale-force winds hurling rain laced with carbonic acid hadn't corroded the facing off it.

The terraforming stations dotted around the planet have succeeded in warming and oxygenating the atmosphere sufficiently so that closed space suits are no longer required. Near the equator, where the colony is located, it is even usually above freezing.

Unfortunately the terraforming plants create almost perpetual nasty weather, the birth pains of a new ecosystem.

The operations manager has received a call from the Colonial Administration directing them to concentrate efforts in a certain quadrant. One of the prospectors has a lead on a strong magnetic profile.

He and his family, the Jordens, take their tractor to investigate.

The little girl, who is about six, argues heatedly with her older brother.

"Monster Maze" is the subject.

Seems that "Newt," the girl, cheats at this

game played by all the kids back at the colony.
She squeezes into small air ducts that none of the other kids can follow her into.
Newt hooks her brother Tim mercilessly.
She likes winning.
Directly ahead, a bizarre rounded shape projects upward, exposed by the wind.
It is the tip of the bone-like alien ship, recognizable by its bio-mechanical surface ribs and veins.

The kids are left alone and get scared; finally their mother reappears and calls in a mayday.

Hours later the site is bustling with activity.
A score of men with lights and ropes are assembled at the gash in the hull, their tractors parked nearby.
Newt watches apprehensively from the cab.
The researchers enter the ship led by Anne Jorden.

"All of them are starting to move now," somebody says tensely.
More eggs open, flower-like.
The man was found Jorden turns the body.
Something is on his face.
We know what it is.
So will they in a second.

At last breaks loose on Acheron.

Back at the hospital, Ripley is visited by Dr. O'Neil and a Lt. Gorman of the Colonial Guard. Gorman wants her to help him. The ECA has lost contact with the colony. He's been ordered to lead a military team to investigate. Will she go along as an attaché consultant in case the problem is related to "her" alien? He makes it sound 'reasonable' and explains that with the new faster ships they can be there in eight weeks. They'll pick up a team from the colonial garrison at Gateway Station. "A seasoned group. Used to fighting in hard environments" with "state-of-the-art weaponry. Enough firepower to subvert a continent. And she needn't leave the ship. Merely be on hand with any information she can supply from her close experience with the creature. O'Neil offers to take care of Jones."

Ripley thinks them out, but she awakens that night from another nightmare. "The alien still stalks the corridors of her subconscious. It killed her friends and even things she was or owned. The demon has to be exorcized. The most heinous one."

She returns.

Deep space.

A mountain of steel descends into frame... the mothership, *Sulaco*, a colonial freighter re-assigned for military transport. Though not a warship, nestled within its cavernous lock are two small but very mean combat drop ships.

Ripley meets the team, fit and hardened. Ten men and four women. Only two of the 14 are the ship's crew: Captain Urquhart and Executive Officer Bishop, ECA assignee.

The unit:

Lance Corporal Hicks: B-Team Leader
Corporal Lydecker: Med-tech
Corporal Hudson: Com-tech
PFC Dietrich
PFC Frost
PFC Wierzbowski
PFC Drake: Smart-gun operator
Corporal Vasquez: Smart-gun operator/weapons specialist
Sergeant Ferro: Drop ship pilot
PFC Hay: Drop ship crewman

The women, Vasquez, Dietrich, Lydecker, and Ferro are as tough as the men and hold their own in the banter.
Ripley is treated with diffidence, as an outsider...

Hicks, an older, stolid type who has said virtually nothing, tells them to lay off.
They do.

When Bishop explains to Ripley that all colonial operations now utilize cyborgs as standard procedure because of their unique qualities, she remarks: "Like lack of conscience?"

In the cargo lock, Hicks uses a powerloader—an exoskeleton machine with hydraulic arms and legs—to move heavy equipment into the dropship. The operator straps in behind a safety cage, and when he or she moves, massive servo-limbs follow. The forklift claws can carry tons.

After screaming down to the planet in the dropship, they arm up. Vasquez and Drake buckle on "massive" smart guns: "computer-aimed automatic energy weapons... reminiscent of the gyro-stabilized, video-guided Steadicam (the Steadicam camera was created by Garrett Brown and used in a number of films in the early 1980s for long tracking shots where handheld or dolly tracks wouldn't work).

When Hicks asks Ripley if she's going to reconnaissance with them, she explains that she's staying with Gorman, who will supervise by remote video from the dropship. "That figures," Drake mutters to Vasquez.

The dropship lands, the troops hit the ground running and flank the control block's main entrance; the dropship takes off.

Inside, they discover the debris of a large battle that aliens were winning. "As Ripley sees the melted evidence of many alien casualties increasing, her fear builds. She tells Gorman to get his teams out of there." Gorman protests, saying there may still be survivors, "There aren't," Ripley asserts. She recommends they clear off and nuke the whole place.

They find Newt, the little Jordan girl, who is "very dirty and terrified. She will not speak. She's totally traumatized. When they ask her if there are any other people alive, she shakes her head, 'No.'"

The dropship returns and unloads an armored personnel carrier (APC). "The APC is a larger version of the colony tractors, with servo-gun turrets and, on the front, crab-like manipulator arms. Inside is a monitor bay for directing operations."

With Apone driving, it rolls forward with the marines, and the dropship hovers. In the still-open cargo lock, Hay stands at the boom controls.

Behind him the massive arm rises slowly.
From among the rams and hoses a shape emerges.
Something not of the ship but blending
biomechanically with its structure.
Hay senses it, turns.
An impression of drooling jaws in a terrifying
eyeless head.
There is no time to scream.

Gorman, Ripley and Newt remain in the APC while Apone leads his team into the refinery structure. Inside, it's pitch dark and hot. "Their lights reveal a bio-mechanical lattice, convoluted like the marrow of some vast bone. Ripley suggests that the aliens were attracted to the heat of the generating plant. The air is thick with steam. Water drips and trickles. The place seems almost alive."

They face a wall of living horror.
The colonists have been brought here and
entombed alive...
In rough cocoons in the niches and interstices
of the structure.
The cocoon material is the same translucent
epoxy.
The bodies are frozen in carelessly twisted
positions. Macabre images of frozen agony.
Many are desiccated.
Skeletal.
Rib-cages burst outward, as if exploded from
within.
Then they become aware of a faint moaning.
Weeping, shrill cries, sudden sobs.
A chorus of the damned.

Apone draws closer, overcoming his revulsion.
"Kill me," comes a choked whisper.
Eyelids flutter.
The woman's mouth moves but no more sound
issues.
Ripley watches the screen, white-knuckled.
Gorman turns away.
The sound of retching comes over the general
frequency.
"Flamethrower," Apone barks.
Someone hands him the weapon.
The woman begins to scream, the shrieks torn
from her.
She convulses, ripping cocoon material.
"Masks," Apone says.
They pull up their respirators.
The woman's chest explodes with a gout of
blood.
A small fanged head emerges.
Hisses.
Apone pulls the trigger.
The other troopers carrying flame-throwers open
fire, as well.
An orgy of purging fire.

The death of the Chestbuster alerts the adult aliens. "Lots of them." Drake, Wierzbowski, Lydecker, then Apone flat-line, killed. Gorman is ineffective, so Ripley takes charge and drives the APC into the complex, but they're attacked, too.

She loses control of the vehicle.
The alien's mouth opens... Wham!
The creature is slammed sideways by a plasma
burst.
Acid sprays.
Hits the seat beside her.
Hicks, rifle still aimed, runs up to the APC.
Dietrich and Hudson drag an inert Apone out of
the smoke as Vasquez lays down a ferocious
cover fire.
Gorman gets the door open.
They leap in, hauling Apone and Vasquez with
her bulky rig.

At what he thinks is a safe distance, Gorman aims the APC's cannon at the alien nest, but Hicks stops him. At the center of the plant is a controlled-fusion reactor—that is, a possible thermonuclear bomb if damaged. Gorman calls the dropship. They'll evacuate and nuke the place from the air.

But an alien kills Ferro, and the survivors of the ground team watch as the dropship crashes into the terraforming complex in a tremendous

explosion. Their hopes of getting off the planet quickly vanish in a fireball.

They return to the main colony and set up a base of operations in the central hall. The APC is parked across from the main doors, guns aimed outward. Guns are set up with a clear field of fire across the open plain. They will be Bishop on the table, but he informs them that preparation of the second dropship will take six hours.

Ripley and Hicks on the base's video cameras to search for a possible dropship left. Deep gouges in the ground beyond the second hangar suggest that a second ship was dragged away. They don't know what to make of the tracks and scout the area.

Liam Ripley, wearing a sidearm now, sits beside Newt, watching her sleep. Hicks enters with a stack of data cartridges in a plastic bag. Ripley plays the first tape:

It turns out to be a video log recorded by a haggard-looking, middle-aged woman, Dr. Skotak, who identifies herself as the colony's xenobiologist.

She describes the subsequent demolition of the alien ship. The mounting panic as the nature of the alien's life-cycle became apparent...

Big egg hatches into Facehugger.

Facehugger inserts small egg or embryo into host.

Embryo emerges as Chestbuster, or what Skotak calls the larval stage.

The larva molts, grows rapidly, becoming the adult.

The adult is slim, paralyzes new hosts, produces eggs, and thus replicates itself.

Dr. Skotak also mentions a form we haven't seen yet, what she calls a drone.

A scouter.

A scouter, less vicious, adult form.

These have been seen removing alien bodies after a fight.

Thousands of these adult types can account for the thousands of meter-high eggs found in the ship, she says. "There must be another form." She shows us a large, empty box at the top of the diagram. "Something no-one has seen."

Skotak is convinced that the eggs were being transported by the large alien as some sort of bio-weapon in an ancient war that humans know nothing of.

Driven by a blind, voracious need to reproduce.

Surviving exponentially.

They could decimate the population of an entire world in a few months.

She does doubt, though, that the creatures themselves are intelligent.

The queen would impose order and organization to keep mindless warriors from attacking each other.

But that does not constitute power of reason.

Vasquez's voice comes over the intercom.

She's been listening in.

"Bullshit, man. Those things are intelligent. They kicked our ass in an ambush. A planned ambush."

(The xenobiologist was most likely named after Cameron's friends and effects specialists, the Skotak brothers.)

It turns out that the crash of the dropship has damaged the heat-exchanger system. System failure is predicted in about six hours, to be followed by a thermonuclear explosion. Newt tells them that the aliens will "come back. They use the tunnels. The ones between here and there." She points at the distant power plant.

Newt is right. A swarm of aliens bypasses their defenses. "A floor grate flies open. Glistening figures emerge." Ripley grabs Newt and a flamethrower to escape; Hicks is wounded by the acid-like blood.

They sprint to the APC.

Dietrich arrives first, whips open the side door.

A figure lunges from within and Dietrich is gone.

From the darkness, dark shapes emerge.

Lightning glares.

The aliens emerge, spilling out of the APC, their arms and legs forming inhuman, insect geometries.

Ripley staggers back.

Hicks and Vasquez open fire.

The creatures fill the width of the entry lock.

The APC explodes from the concentrated fire.

The creatures surge forward.

Ripley levels her flamethrower.

Unleashes an inferno.

The screeching is unbearable.

Engulfed in flames, the figures still advance.

Newt leads them to an air shaft and a small steel chamber with a flooded floor. They hunker down in the darkness and wait. Bishop is due in an hour.

Eerily, they hear a faint voice coming over the headsets.

A whisper.

It's Hudson...
He's in one of those cocoons they saw.
Ripley asks what he can see.
Hudson describes a chamber constructed by the
aliens, near the one they burned.
A chamber whose floor is covered by egg-like
things.
There are lots of creatures around.
Different sizes.

And one huge one.
The small ones are all carrying eggs.
He says they have a ship down there, the one
from the colony.
They're loading the eggs through the cargo
lock...
The queen must want to reach the Sulaco..

They conclude that the poison in the alien sting is similar to nerve gases
used in combat. They can use their ampules of atropine, a nerve gas counter-
agent, "the type you jab into a major muscle and squeeze."

Ripley bonds with Hicks.

"You're a smart boy, Hicks."
"Dwayne."
"Okay, Dwayne. Ellen."
"Good to know you."
They shake.

Ripley didn't have a first name in *Alien*, "so I made one up for her: Ellen,"
Cameron said. "I intentionally left the larger details of Ripley's life vague,
however. We don't learn the circumstances surrounding that daughter.
Maybe Ripley had a husband who was in the space service. Or maybe she
wasn't married, and Ripley decided to have a kid. I purposefully omitted
those details. Calling her Ellen and giving her a child was as far as I went
with Ripley's backstory."

In the tunnels, on the way to the rendezvous with Bishop, they're attacked
again, cut off:

Vasquez can't get by Gorman, who's frozen.
"Move sucker," she punches him.
Too late.
She feels the stinger slam under her chest
plate.
Pulls the pins on two grenades.
Hands one to Gorman, with her last strength.
"Happy Birthday," she whispers to the alien as
it crawls over her.
The wall explodes outward behind Ripley,
Hicks, and Newt as they run.

It's a delirious dash now.
Hysterical.
Without semblance of caution...

When Bishop arrives, at the last second, he refuses to land.

"Listen, Ripley, I have some bad news."
"Save it. Get us out of here."
"Well, that's it you see," Bishop says
reasonably. "There's a problem. The ship's
computer has been accessing the colony's
central processor and collating your own
progress. It seems to have concluded the risk
of contaminating other inhabited worlds is too
great... It won't allow me to land... Some sort of
Quarantine Command Override. I hadn't heard of
it, but, there you have it. Just received the
order on my descent."
"Bishop land the ship!"

He flies off.

They turn to look at the plant, which has
become a roaring infernal engine.
Lightning zaps around its superstructure,
lighting up the weird landscape.
Ripley looks at her watch.
Starts walking toward the roaring complex.
Hicks says, "Where are you going?"
"To get a ship."

"What's the plan?" Hicks whispers tensely.
Ripley hands him a small object.
Three ampules taped together, their needle-
ends looking like a three-pronged plug.
Atropine. Morphine. Benzadrine.
"Oh man," Hicks groans. "There's got to be a
better way."
They walk into the group of aliens.
The creatures seem to cock their heads
quizzically.
Then they lunge.
Tails whip.
"Now," Ripley shouts, stabbing her own thigh
hard, squeezing.
Inhuman hands seize them.
Ripley stares trembling into the face of the
ultimate horror.
Newt's screaming echoes as the image fades out.
Ripley awakens in the egg chamber under the

power plane.

A drone, a smaller, sort of albino version of the aliens we have seen, is doing something to her.

Excreting cocoon material over her, anchoring her body to the wall of death.

Where the warrior has a set of striking teeth within its head, the drone has an excreting probe, like an organic stucco-gun.

Hicks responds weakly to her urgent whisper.

"I think we may have fucked up."

Ripley fights back and fires her gun through the cocoon wall, straight into the drone's belly. It screeches and leaps back. She escapes, saves Hicks, and vanishes from the "Queen Alien."

The shiny black body swells at the base into a blunted translucent egg-sac.

Innerness. Disproportionate. Like that of a termite queen.

A pulsating sausage ten meters long, filled with gestating eggs in intestine-like tubules.

The powerful six-limbed body straddles a throne of its own swollen abdomen.

The head, like the warriors, is just human enough to be horrifying.

The saw-dovelling eyeless skull-face.

Ripley pulls a grenade from her belt.

Flails the activator and throws.

It rolls under the egg-sac.

Back on the ship, they meet Bishop standing before her with a power-rifle. He explains, "Now that you're here the quarantine order has been superseded. I'm happy to have you aboard. Now I have to seal this shuttle and jettison it. Excuse me."

Behind Bishop the scorched black "hydraulics" begin to move.

A huge glistening shape drops silently to the walkway.

Bishop looks down as a drop of acid splashes on the deck by his shoe.

He turns.

The Queen Alien hisses, dripping acid and rage.

Its body ends in torn gristle where the egg-sac was torn away.

Its huge thighs flex, glistening as it rises.

One blurred swipe flings Bishop out of frame in a spray of milky android blood.

Ripley tries to get the queen to leave Newt by shouting obscenities. "Whore! Bitch! It's me you want! Slut!"

The queen chases Ripley into the storage bay, but she manages to close the doors and re-emerges in the powerloader.

The battle is joined.

In the gloom of the cavernous chamber the titans circle. The alien attacks.

Ripley parries with swipes from the massive fork-lift claws.

Eventually they fall into the airlock.

The alien shrieks.

Its "blood" flows around the lower door, eats through.

Air begins escaping.

Ripley unbuckles, claws her way up a service ladder to the controls.

Hits the outer door switch, emergency override.

Below her an open pit of stars appears as the door slides open.

She is buffeted by a hurricane of air howling past her into space.

The alien claws up toward her.

Seizes one ankle.

But Ripley holds on, and the queen is sucked into space.

"OO," he yells.

Ripley backs away.

Scrambles toward the ship.

Downs are struggling feebly in the cargo lock.

She retreats to an emergency airlock.

Runs to the cockpit.

Hips back in a seat.

Seals the door.

The cargo module containing the eggs is jettisoned from the spine of the ship.

It plunges back into the inferno below.

See this tears through encrusted structure as it falls out of the complex.

Fire jets out from vents among glowing machinery.

RIGHT: An excerpt from Cameron's treatment lists the colonial marines and their specialties.

ALIEN II

13

The unit:

Lance Corporal Hicks.....B-Team Leader
Corporal Lydecker.....Med-tech
Corporal Hudson.....Com-tech
PFC Dietrich
PFC Frost
PFC Wierzbowski
PFC Drake.....Smart-gun operator
Corporal Vasquez.....Smart-gun operator/weapons specialist
Sergeant Ferro.....Drop-ship pilot
PFC Hay.....Drop-ship crewman

The women, Vasquez, Dietrich, Lydecker, and Ferro are as tough as the men and hold their own in the banter.

She passes the remains of Bishop, lying in a puddle of curdled milk.

Tubing strewn out.

"For a human being you're really quite remarkable," he says with a hissing gurgle.

Ripley looks down.

Bishop winks.

"Thanks."

Ripley walking down a long corridor.

Newt stirs in her arms.

"Mommy... Mommy?" she says in a tiny voice.

"Right here, honey. Right here."



C H A P T E R 0 2



T H E T E R M I N A T O R Q U E E N
O C T O B E R 1 9 8 3 T O F E B R U A R Y 1 9 8 5





Cameron submitted his treatment to Brandywine, Giler and Hill's production company, and let all parties know that he also wanted to direct the sequel.

"I met Jim at a Chinese restaurant, where he gave me the first treatment," Lance Henriksen said. "It was an absolute knockout. The treatment was ready to shoot, it was that good. And then we started talking about various characters."

Cameron also stopped by LA Effects, the studio Robert and Dennis Skotak now headed up, and dropped off his treatment, "which I read," said Robert, who heard rumors about a sequel. "It was very exciting." (Presumably, Robert was amused by the character sharing his family's last name.)

Reaction to the treatment was favorable in general, though actual casting was premature.

"Everyone's a gamble," Giler said. "Ridley Scott had only made *The Duellists* before *Alien*, which wasn't really a qualification for the movie. I did

try to get Fox to take an option on Cameron as a director, but they didn't.

"The first one was the haunted house," he added. "This would be the roller coaster. Cameron very much wanted it to be about Ripley. He was very much determined it should be about her."

In late September, Giler and Hill submitted the treatment to Fox. Unbeknownst to Cameron, no one at Brandywine or Fox mentioned to Sigourney Weaver that his treatment starred Ripley. Also unbeknownst to Cameron, Hill and Giler added their names to the title page, dated September 21, so it read: "*Alien II*, by David Giler & Walter Hill and James Cameron."

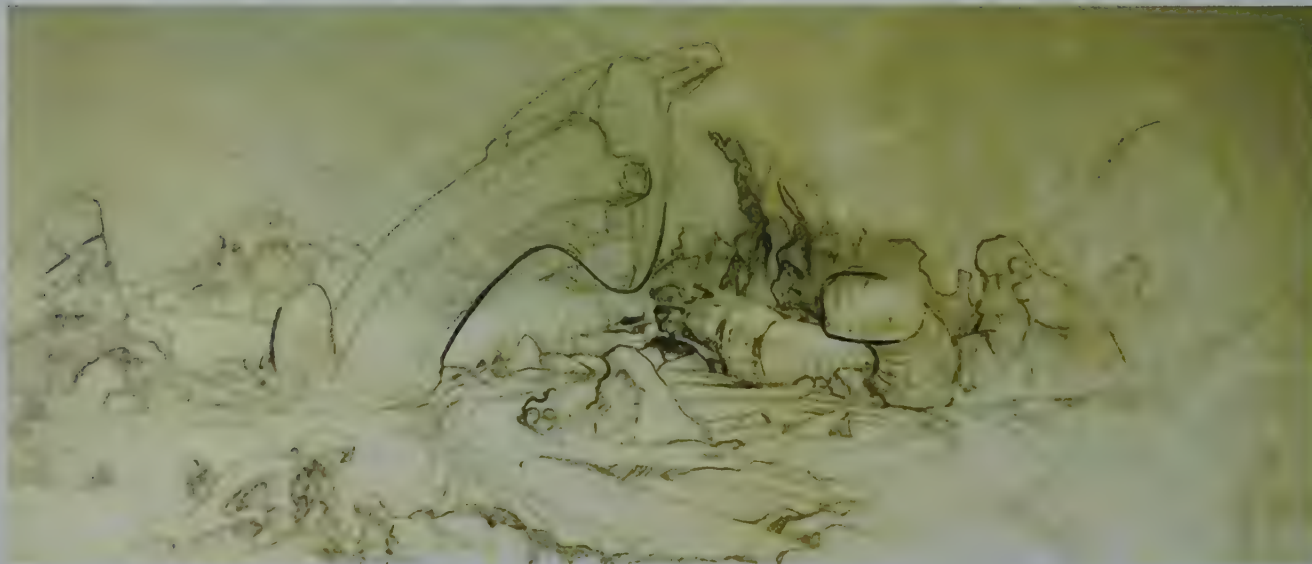
They also changed the formatting a little.

"Walter and David got a check for my treatment, and I got nothing," Cameron said. "I was pretty pissed off about that one."

But in need of a paying job, with *Terminator* in limbo, Cameron didn't jeopardize his chances by severing his relationship with Brandywine. He needed all the help he could get, for Fox was lukewarm about the sequel. "An

PREVIOUS PAGE: A concept drawing of the "Bug Stomper" by Cobb—a decal destined for the dropship.

BELOW LEFT: Concept art for the derelict amidst a lava flow; the lava flow was a story device invented by Cameron to disconnect the ship's warning beacon.



executive told me he didn't like the treatment," Cameron said, "because it was wall-to-wall horror and it needed more character development."

One note written on the treatment by someone at Brandywine or Fox read, "Too much clumsy exposition in the tapes [found at the colony]."

Fox even discussed selling the sequel rights to *Alien* to producers Mario Kassar and Andrew Vajna, who had made *First Blood* (1982), the original Rambo movie starring Sylvester Stallone, but the deal fell apart.

Giler, however, very much liked Cameron's writing, and may have given his *Terminator* script to Kassar and Vajna to read. At least one source has said that Cameron was recommended by Giler, who had done some uncredited script work on *First Blood*. The various interests of the involved parties led to two jobs for the struggling writer-director.

"I wound up getting two phone calls the same morning," Cameron said. "I had the opportunity to write two scripts: The first one was *First Blood II: The Mission* a.k.a. *Rambo*, the sequel to *First Blood*." The second call was from Giler and Hill, who asked Cameron to expand his treatment into a full-length screenplay for *Alien II*. "So I called up David at Brandywine," Cameron continued, "and said, 'I just got offered *First Blood II*, and you guys have offered me *Alien II*. What should I do?' Giler's response was, 'Don't be stupid. Do what I do. Take both jobs and write real fast.'"

Cameron agreed, and took on both scripts.

CYBORG DREAMERS

"So I had a three-month period to write *The Mission* and *Alien II*," Cameron said. "I got a desk for each script. I put one in the bedroom and one in the living room, and that way, when I moved from one desk to the other, all the notes and papers and everything were right where they were supposed to be. So if I didn't know what to do next on *Mission*, I'd go work on *Alien II* for a while. I was a hired gun for *The Mission*, and took it for that reason: to see what it felt like to write without hoping to direct."

Cameron was also revising the *Terminator* script at times. To make sure he could meet his deadlines, he took the total number of pages of the two screenplays—240, for two two-hour movies—then divided that total by the number of waking hours he had to come up with the number of pages-per-hour he had to write.

"At first I didn't see a problem there," Cameron said. "I'd worked out mathematically how fast I could write a script page; I could write both screenplays and have a little time left over for a quick polish on the *Terminator* script."

He kept a picture of Weaver on his *Alien II* desk to inspire him while writing that script.

"Because I was also writing *The Mission* at the time, I was getting more into the whole Vietnam thing," Cameron said.

He finished *First Blood II: The Mission* more or less on schedule, circa December 22, 1983. Carolco, the production company, asked for re-writes. Then they asked for more rewrites and polishes, which ate into the time Cameron was supposed to be writing *Alien II*. His carefully planned

mathematical schedule fell apart. By late February 1984, he hadn't finished *Alien II*, and suddenly Schwarzenegger was available.

Cameron remembers: "I called up David Giler and said, 'I don't have the *Alien II* screenplay done yet; I only have about 60 pages finished. I also just found out that *The Terminator* is ready to go—Arnold is now free to participate—and I basically have to start that picture tomorrow. So, I'm sorry.' And Giler just lost it. He actually said something I never thought I'd ever hear anyone say in Hollywood—'You'll never work in this town again!' He was angry as hell. Then he hung up on me."

Justifiably anxious, Cameron called Larry Wilson, who recommended calm and asked to read what was actually closer to 90 pages of the *Alien II* script. Wilson said he would then pass them on to Walter Hill (for summary of partial script, see pages 45–49). "Which I did," Cameron said, "sweating the whole time. I was just about to direct my first real studio picture, and I needed every friend I could get."

Cameron's first 90 pages fleshed out the scenes from the treatment and introduced a couple of new characters: Carter Burke, the "young and smooth" rep for the Weylan-Yutani Corporation; and Lydecker, a "Xencontact Specialist" in "xenomorphs," a term Cameron carried forward from his *Mother* script for the alien life-form. Both of them are Ripley's adversaries: Burke tricks her into giving him the coordinates of the derelict ship, which causes the devastation of the colony and its inhabitants; then Lydecker blocks her when she recommends nuking the planet. Apart from also deepening Ripley's characterization, Cameron described more action and took the story up until the crash of the dropship, which strands Ripley and the surviving marines on Acheron.

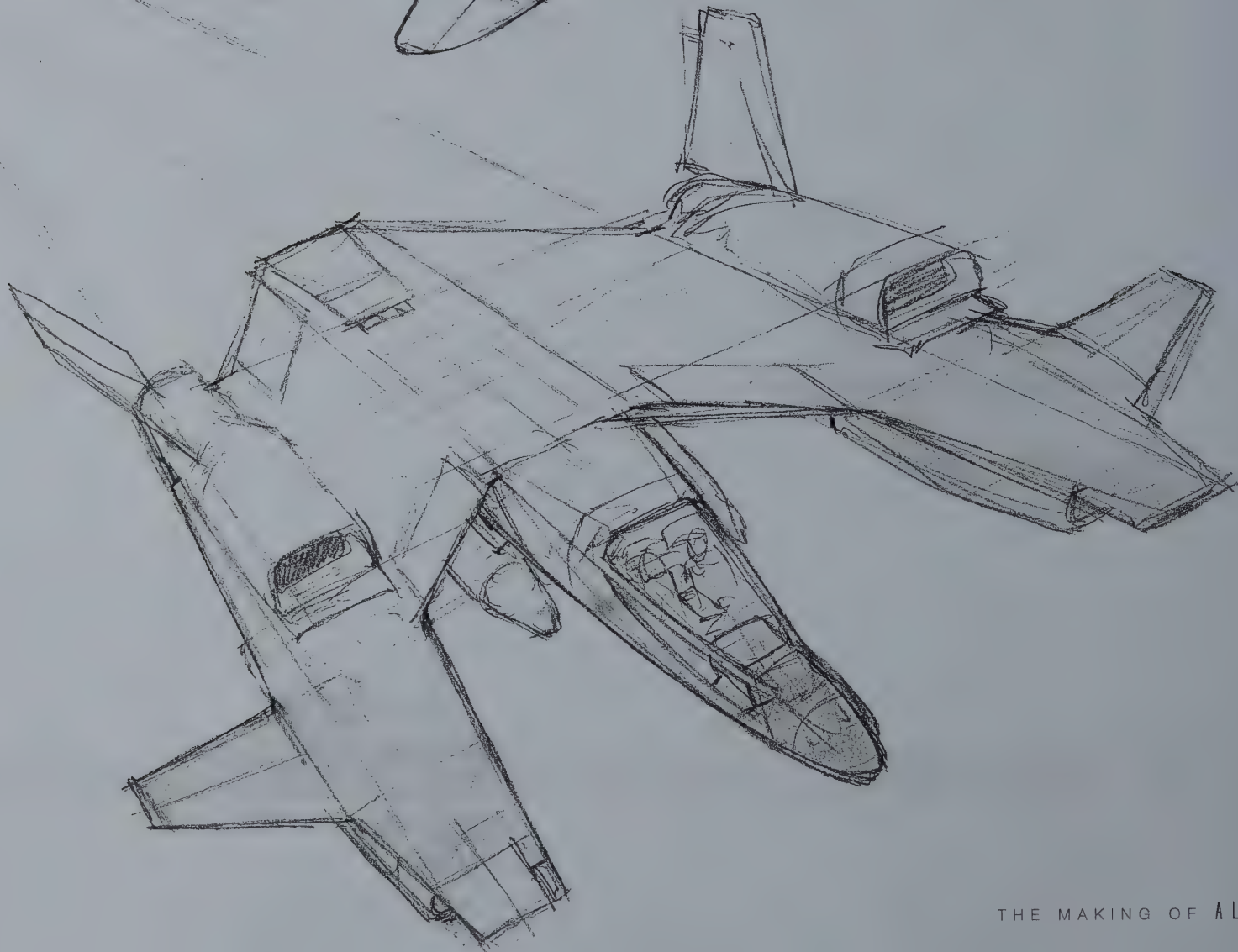
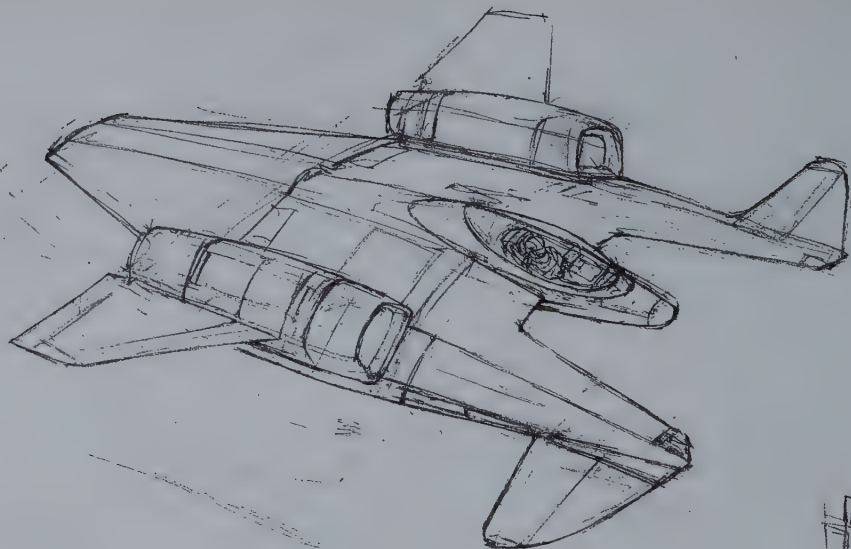
Hill read the partial script that evening, and phoned the next day to say that he "loved my pages," Cameron said. "He loved the dialogue, loved the development of the storyline. Walter told me they'd had a little conversation over at Brandywine, and had decided that they could wait until I was done with *The Terminator* to finish the *Alien II* script. There was only a gentlemen's agreement between us on this, though. Of course it would have gotten kicked aside like a sandcastle in a heartbeat if Brandywine had a shot at getting someone of Ridley Scott's stature to do *Alien II* while I was working on *Terminator*. But Walter kept saying, 'Don't worry. We'll wait. Then we'll make our movie together.' So I thanked him and hung up."

Why Ridley Scott wasn't approached for the sequel is open to conjecture. Since directing the first one, he'd done *Blade Runner* (1982) and was working on other projects. "They didn't ask me!" he told *The Hollywood Interview* in 2008. "To this day I have no idea why. It hurt my feelings, really, because I thought we did quite a good job on the first one."

Brandywine sent the 90 pages over to Fox. "The people at Fox read it and they loved it," Hurd said. "They said, 'We're going to do the unthinkable. We're going to wait until you can finish the script.' They also said that if Jim was good at directing, they'd let him direct. I'm not sure they were telling us the truth, but we chose to believe it. We were naïve and, in Hollywood when you're starting out, it helps to be naïve and believe that people are telling you the truth."

(continued on page 50)

LEFT: Early concept art of the dropship attributed to Cobb.





ALIEN II,
PARTIAL SCREENPLAY BY JAMES CAMERON,

FEBRUARY 24, 1984-SUMMARY

Running 90 typed pages, Cameron's partial script had a remarkable, revised opening:

FADE IN:
SOMETIME IN THE FUTURE
Space.
Silent. Endless. The stars shine like the love
of God, cold and remote.

Against them drifts a tiny chip of technology.

A few pages later, Cameron wrote a seamless transition between the rescue of Ripley and her first nightmare about the Chestbuster.

REVERSE ANGLE/SUBLIMINAL CUT
New faces have replaced those of the salvage
crew. For an instant it is LAMBERT, NOSTROMO'S
NAVIGATOR, shrieking as blood sprays her
face... ENGINEER PARKER and CAPTAIN DALLAS
clutching Ripley's shoulders.
CUT TO:
INT. HOSPITAL ROOM/GATEWAY STATION
TIGHT ON RIPLEY screaming.

However, a handwritten note on the script read, "Is the entire first scene a dream? Can't do that. Make it real."

Either Giler, Hill, or someone at Fox was writing notes on the pages.

Dr. O'Neil tells Ripley that she's been in hypersleep for over 62 years (but hasn't broken the record of 68 years). He arranges a video call between Ripley and her now aged daughter, Amy (Amanda Ripley-Larson, because she's been married and divorced).

AMANDA
I'm old. As you can see. Getting ready to die.
And look at you.

RIPLEY
This isn't going very well, is it? Your
father, when did... I mean...

AMANDA
What difference does it make now? You made your

choice. To go off. To have your great career in
space.

'Gateway' has become the name for where Ripley convalesces: "a sprawling complex of modular space habitats connected by tubes and conduits. Above the enormous latticework is the Earth. Blue. Serene."

Ripley has an unpleasant meeting with a corporate rep for Weylan-Yutani, Carter Burke; a rep for the Extrasolar Colonization Administration (ECA); and Van Leuwen, the voice of the Interstellar Commerce Commission.

VAN LEUWEN
An analysis team has gone over the shuttle
centimeter by centimeter. There is no physical
evidence of the creature you describe.

RIPLEY
That's because I blew it out the airlock...

VAN LEUWEN
The Weylan-Yutani representative, Mr. Burke,
has testified under oath that his corporation
has no record of a Special Order 937 in the
Nostromo file. Your claim that the corporation
willfully subjected you to danger from an
alleged hostile life-form will be
investigated... but, frankly, I find it a bit
far-fetched.

After Ripley becomes angry and storms out, Burke remarks, "That is one strident woman."

Later, in a Gateway bar, Burke tricks Ripley into telling him where the derelict ship is, and tells her about the colony.

Ripley is seated at the genuine polyurethane
oak bar. The rustic Spanish decor nicely
offsets the shuffling AUTOBAR UNITS on their
overhead tracks and the passable view of the
space-docks outside the viewport.
Burke slips onto the stool next to hers as her
double vodka arrives...

RIPLEY
Burke, you're not telling me they put a
colony on that rock?

BURKE
Well, as a matter of fact... yeah, they
did.

RIPLEY
(low) Sweet Jesus.

BURKE
My concern is that the company has the private sector franchise there and... hey!

She makes another emotional exit to go protest, but to no avail. Burke sends the coordinates of the alien ship to the planetoid (named Ganymede in 'LV-420').

After the colonists discover the egg chamber and are attacked, Burke arrives with Lieutenant Gorman to see Ripley. They ask her to help, but she is worried about Jones.

BURKE
Oh, right, the cat...

He takes a small control unit out of his pocket. Presses a button. Jones stops moving.

BURKE
(continuing)
Sorry; I put off telling you but... your cat couldn't be revived from hypersleep so we had a synthetic made up... custom order... to ease the shock a bit.

Ripley stares at the orange tom, frozen with paw in mouth in mid-lick.

RIPLEY
(Weakly) Jones.

BURKE
Cats aren't one of your cheaper synthetic jobs, but the company wanted you to be...

RIPLEY
Fuck the company... and fuck you. Get out. Now!

When her nightmares continue, Ripley calls Burke:

RIPLEY
Burke, just tell me one thing... That you're going out there to kill them. Not study... not bring back... just burn them out... clean... forever.

BURKE
That's the plan. My word on it.

C.U. RIPLEY, her gaze intense.

RIPLEY
Alright. I'm in.

Aboard the *Sulaco*, the roster has changed slightly and Cameron has added a shower scene:

E.C.A. PERSONNEL:
BISHOP... Executive Officer
LYDECKER... Xenospecialist

THE MARINES:
MASTER SERGEANT APONE... Unit Leader
LANCE CORPORAL HICKS... B-Team Leader
CORPORAL HUDSON... Com-tech
CORPORAL DEITRICH... Med-tech
PFC FROST... Trooper
PFC WIERZBOWSKI... Trooper
PFC DRAKE... 'Smart-gun' operator
CORPORAL VASQUEZ... 'Smart-gun' operator /weapons specialist
SERGEANT FERRO... Drop-ship pilot
PFC SPUNKMEYER... Drop-ship crew chief

Lydecker leans his head against the locker door. He's in his mid-fifties and looks soul-weary, a retread waiting to be told to sit out the rest of his life.

LYDECKER
I'm getting too old for this shit. Got a smoke?...

INT. SHOWERS
High pressure water jets and a blast of hot air when you step out... a drive-through car wash for people. Through the swirling steam Hudson, Vasquez and Ferro are watching Ripley dry off.

VASQUEZ
Who's the fresh meat again?



ABOVE: A concept illustration of the alien queen with egg sacs by Cameron.

FERRO

She's supposed to be some kinda consultant...
(exaggerated)
She saw an alien once.

HUDSON

Whoooh! No shit? I'm impressed.

APONE

Let's go... let's go. Cycle through

Ripley's reaction to the robot, Bishop, is more developed.

Bishop takes a seat beside Ripley and she pointedly gets up and moves to the far side of the table.

BISHOP

(wounded)

I'm sorry you feel that way about synthetics, Ripley.

Ripley turns on Burke.

RIPLEY

(vehement)

You didn't say anything about an android being on board. Why?

BURKE

(shrugs)

It didn't occur to me. It's been ECA policy for years.

BISECF

(smiling)

More corabread?

MEANI

Ripley knocks the plate out of his hand. Dishes are scattered.

RIPLEY

Just stay away from me, Bishop. You got that straight?

Bishop and Burke try to explain that Ash, the synthetic from the previous mission was a Cyberdyne Systems 120-A/2... and a bit twitchy." As a briefing they discuss the alien creature.

GORMAN

All we know is that there's still no contact with the colony and a xenomorph may be involved.

SPUNKMEYER

A what?

WICKS

(to Spunkmeyer/low)

It's a bug-hunt.

DETRICH

Maybe their subspace relay's screwed up.

GORMAN

If it's transmitter problems we take out

transit pay and forget it. Anybody going to complain?

SPUNKMEYER

She likes to kick ass.

VASQUEZ

Anytime. Anywhere...

LYDECKER

When you sign up... when you're young and fresh, you hope you'll find that sexy new species to put your name on. Make your mark and all that. But I've been going on these hayrides for eighteen years and I haven't seen anything like what she's describing. Nobody has.

He stubs out the cigarette slowly.

LYDECKER

I spend my time classifying bugs and slugs. Boring species. You find the universe is basically pretty drab. Now, to me, a new organism just means paperwork. Lots of it. It's the paperwork will kill you...

Because she doesn't want to be left alone on the ship, Ripley elects to go down with the others in the dropship.

HUDSON

Me and my squad of ultimate badasses will protect you. Look at this... Independently targeting particle beam phalanx. One hundred megawatts. Zap! Fry half the planet... Can't sleep at night? Check it out... tactical nuclear smartmissiles. RPGs. Phased-plasma pulse rifles. We got sonic electronic ballbreakers, we got nukes, we got knives... sharp sticks...

But as they prepare for their mission, Gorman reveals that this is in fact his first real mission, after 38 simulated ones.

On the planet, the marines look for the colonists via their embedded personal-data tracers. In the medical lab, they discover Facehuggers suspended in liquid.

The creature inside stirs suddenly, reacting

to Lydecker. Lunges against glass. He jumps back reflexively. From the "palm" of its hand-like body emerges a pearlescent tubule which slithers tongue-like over the inside of the glass. Then retracts.

FROST
(to Lydecker)
It likes you.

RIPLEY
(forcefully)
Kill them.

LYDECKER
Don't be ridiculous, I need...

They discover Newt. Then they find the colonists via computer, all grouped together, a cluster of blue dots. The marines penetrate the terraforming station. Watching them on the video cameras connected to their helmets, Ripley notes that "if they fire those pulse rifles in there they could rupture the cooling system. Then the containment shuts down and it's a thermonuclear explosion." Apone is ordered to collect their power cartridges, but Vasquez hides one for emergencies.

The area has already been "cocooned."

LYDECKER
Looks like some sort of secreted resin.

BURKE
That's why the colony's ripped apart.
For building materials.

LYDECKER
Industrious, aren't they?

When they're in the terraforming station, a note on the script reads: "How can we not know what to expect? Turn a corner." They find the colonists who have been "impregnated" by Facehuggers.

When the aliens attack, a note emphasizes that the aliens will be "easier [to make] if all one size; what we expect from original." With the marines shooting at phantoms, in confusion, being killed one by one, another note reads: "How can this be exciting if we can't see the aliens getting hit or troopers getting killed?"

Ripley comes to the rescue in the APC.

A shape lunges through the side door before
Burke can get it closed.
Grabs at Gorman, lying in the aisle.
Newt screams.

The creature's tail whips around, slamming a scorpion-like tip into Gorman's thigh. Vasquez fires from a prone position. The alien drops away. Burke slides the door home. Suddenly something lands on the roof with a metallic thump. An alien arm arcs down. Smashing the windshield in front of Ripley. Newt hasn't stopped screaming. Glistening, hideous jaws lunge inside... Ripley recoils. Face-to-face once again with the same mind-numbing horror. She loses control of the vehicle. The alien's mouth opens... And Hicks JAMS HIS SHOTGUN MUZZLE BETWEEN ITS JAWS AND PULLS THE TRIGGER.

When they opt to nuke the planet, Lydecker ~~plays the part of Ash from~~ the first film, letting his interest override the others' ~~safety~~.

LYDECKER
You can't destroy that ~~nest~~.

HICKS
Why not?

We notice for the first time an amazing change in Lydecker. The jaded weariness has been replaced by something akin to childish excitement. Like a kid with an open account at Toys-R-Us.

LYDECKER
This is too important a species to destroy. We need to go back. Capture a specimen.

RIPLEY
Bullshit.

VASQUEZ
(nodding)
Yeah. Bullshit.

The partial script ends with the crash of the dropship.



NIGHTS OF ADRENALINE

Cameron chose Stan Winston Studio to build the robot and do its effects. Known for his ability to age actors through his makeup design, Winston had already won a couple of Emmys (one for *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman*, 1974). He'd since branched out and, with his small studio, had created effects for two John Carpenter films: *Starman* (an alien baby) and *The Thing* (a mutant canine). He'd also created the family of Wookiees, based on Stuart Freeborn and Ralph McQuarrie's designs, for a *Star Wars* holiday special on TV.

"They had approached Dick Smith concerning doing some makeup effects on *Terminator*," Winston said in 1986 of the man who had created the makeup for *The Exorcist* (1973) and dozens of other films and TV shows, "and Dick recommended me as doing this type of work, a larger-scope picture than he usually likes to handle. I had done robots in my career, strangely enough: I had developed a robot for the Styx band, Mr. Roboto, which was an album cover, and I had been nominated for an Oscar for *Heartbeeps*. So Jim came to me. He showed me the artwork he had done for the Terminator, and I was very excited about it. Initially, he just wanted me to do an insert head and the makeup effects, but I really felt we should build the robot full-size and puppet it, so that more of it could be done full-sized,

OPPOSITE: A concept illustration of the fighting alien queen, without egg sac, by Cameron. "I gave her a very long, elegant, tapering, almost a high-heel look at the foot," he said, "and then she just turned into this creature that was hideous and yet somehow beautiful. Giger had created... the long phallic head that was pivoting on the central neck, and that reminded me a little bit of a triceratops. So I took the back part of the triceratops skull with the armor frill, and mixed it with many of Giger's biomechanoid gestures. It was fairly methodical. The series of spines sticking out of its back form a kind of threat-display structure, but that is purely an extrapolation from the tubes sticking out of Giger's alien."

RIGHT: Concept drawing of the alien queen laying her eggs by Cameron. "Even with the queen's vast egg-laying capacity," he said, "the aliens are still a parasitic form, requiring a host from a different species to create the warrior or queen stages of the life cycle. Since the warriors are bipedal with two arms (H. R. Giger's original design), it may be inferred that the Facehugger is an undifferentiated parasite, which lays an egg inside a host, but that the resulting form (Chestbuster through adult) has taken on certain biological characteristics of its host. This would account for the degree of anthropomorphism in the design."

and less animated in miniature."

Filming began on March 19, 1984, scheduled for about 10 weeks, mostly at night. In an early scene in which the Terminator encounters several young punks, Cameron decided to re-cast and thought of Bill Paxton, from their "kludging" days at New World. Paxton was called, and did two days' work as the leader of the gang (who are all killed).

During the intense days and nights of shooting, Cameron and Hurd became a couple. They went on a date to the Chart House restaurant in Malibu. "We went off-road on a four-wheel drive," said Hurd, "took a hot-air balloon out, and a huge wind came up, and we ended up crash-landing. We went horseback riding, ice skating, we shot AK-47s out in the desert."

And that was a single weekend. They would race each other to work, Hurd in her Porsche and Cameron in a new Corvette (purchased with his *Terminator* fee), talking on mobile phones, playing 'Ditch-'em.' One day she would try to shake him, the next day was his turn. "We'd be smoking down the freeway at 120 miles an hour," Cameron said, "talking the whole time like nothing was happening."

As producer and director, they instilled in the relatively low-budget production a sense of order and purpose (while keeping a sense of humor). "Jim was like an encyclopedia of technology," Schwarzenegger said in 1994. "If a shot was a half-inch off the way he visualized it, he would go crazy. But he wasn't just a gearhead; he won over the actors by giving them room to work. And he surprised everyone by demonstrating the stunts himself. He would show it to you without any padding. He was totally mad... And he's not the kind of guy who will try to say things in a diplomatic way. If you do something right, he'll say it was disastrous, but probably a human being could do no better. If he was dealing with machines, they could do better. So you walk away going, 'I guess he likes it.'"

"Arnold did phenomenally well," Cameron said in 1984. "He has a magnificent ability to concentrate, and create the character practically seamlessly. He never stepped out of the role—once he became the Terminator, he was the single-minded, strong-willed, forward-moving character that it was written to be. And that coldness isn't just a blank; he gave the character a sense of grim purpose that makes the Terminator quite menacing."

"Jim used to be very open about letting us come in and watch dailies," Biehn said. "He'd cut a scene together—'Michael, come look, I've cut Tech Noir together.' Unlike most directors, he loved to show us stuff, and loved to take us down to Stan Winston's special-effects shop and show us what he was working on."

"While he was doing *Terminator*," said Shane Mahan, one of the effects specialists at Stan Winston Studio, "Jim showed us some artwork of the powerful queen in the *Alien* sequel. And that was a big deal."

Cameron had already conceptualized the alien queen in order to help sell the idea to Brandywine and Fox. "That's why I did a few sketches of the queen very early on," he said, "to give everybody an idea of her appearance. Now, that look was obviously inspired by H. R. Giger's approach; his ghost sort of hovered about. I wanted to continue with that design philosophy. I also wanted to get at certain other characteristics, like size and speed and grace, plus certain feminine qualities. The first full sketch I did of the queen



was a cross between a black widow and a dinosaur. Somebody described it as an anorexic dinosaur. In fact, I wanted specifically not to suggest a dinosaur concept, at least overtly, because it made it look less human."

"Right from the start," Stan Winston said, "Jim had a concept of the alien queen in the back of his head. When we first began talking about the project, he showed me this beautiful rendering he had done of it, which I liked immediately."

Of course *Alien II* didn't have a complete script yet or a green light, but Cameron's enthusiasm and momentum impressed Winston and his crew.

Cameron and Hurd wrapped *Terminator* toward the end of May, and immediately went into a compressed postproduction period. Biehn would recall that the very morning after they wrapped he walked into Cameron's office and found him munching cheese crackers and "furiously scribbling"—writing notes for the rest of the *Alien II* script. "That shows you the energy he has," Biehn said. "After a grueling three-month schedule of 16-hour days, most directors take a week off in Bermuda and rest on their laurels after wrapping. But not Jim—he was absolutely consumed with his next project."

MYRIAD MONSTERS

In September 1984, Cameron was interviewed by Thomas Cleaver for *Starlog* magazine about his upcoming movie. Cleaver wrote: "Though *The Terminator* has yet to go before the public as this is written... Cameron is currently refining his script for *Alien II*, which should start filming at 20th Century-Fox before too many seasons pass. Of course, except to say that Walter Hill, David Giler, and Gordon Carroll, who produced the original, are again in control, Cameron declines comment on what we hope are exciting plot details."

"I saw Jim on my way to London, to see my fiancée," Paxton recalled.

“He’s handing something off to a courier at LAX who’s getting ready to get on the same plane. I said, ‘Jim, what are you up to?’ And he said, ‘I’m writing the sequel to *Alien*.’ So I said, ‘Hey, man, you better write me a part!’”

Cameron was writing notes for his script in-between his high-pressure job of preparing *The Terminator* for theaters. He was not neglecting that film’s editing, sound mix, scoring, ADR, and so on. He would not have devoted much precious time to *Alien II*, a film that still had no deal in place.

A big step toward that eventual deal was taken when Larry Gordon, who had replaced Joe Wizan as production chief at Fox, saw a preview of *The Terminator*. Impressed, he pushed harder for the *Alien* sequel. “I couldn’t believe it hadn’t already been done,” Gordon told the *L.A. Times* in 1986. “In this business there are those decisions you agonize and lose sleep over, but this was so obvious. It was a no-brainer.”

Gordon, who had also worked with Walter Hill on *48 Hours*, contacted Brandywine, and wheels were put in motion—pending results of *The Terminator* at the box office. But the news that came back to the director must have been promising, for when he arranged a private preview screening for Winston and his crew, he surprised them with the possibility of more work.

“Gordon Carroll from Brandywine, who did the original *Alien*, was also at the screening,” said Mahan. “Afterward, he left and everyone was smiles and hugs, and that’s when Jim turned to us and said, ‘You guys want to go to England and do *Alien II*? We were like, ‘Yeah!’”

“To get to work on [*Alien II*] would be a dream come true,” said John Rosengrant, another young effects specialist working at Stan Winston Studio. “My jaw hit the floor because the final thing that got me into this business was *Alien*. I grew up being a fan of monsters and *Famous Monsters of Filmland Magazine*, but when I saw *Alien*, I thought, *Oh boy, this is my life calling. I’ve got to go do this*. And the sequel was going to be very different from *Terminator*—we knew going in that it would be a high-profile movie. This was our shot to work in the big time, and we all knew it.”

The Terminator was released on October 28, 1984, and, fortunately for all concerned, became a surprise hit. “*Terminator* was a real sleeper,” said Cameron. “It came out of nowhere. It was number one at the box office for something like three weeks. Suddenly, I was this hot new director. But I still wanted to do *Alien II*, even though everyone was now telling me, ‘Don’t do *Alien II*. It’s a sequel to somebody else’s work; do your own stuff instead.’ But my position was, ‘I want to do *Alien II*. It’ll be fun. I love the first picture, and I know exactly what to do for the second one.’”

One of those who counseled against the idea was producer Julia Phillips (*Taxi Driver*, 1976; *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, 1977). She warned him that anything good in the movie would be attributed to Scott’s original vision, while anything bad would be credited to Cameron.

“But I was such a geek fan,” he recalled. “It may have been hubris, but I never really considered how it could be career suicide. So I call Brandywine again and ask, ‘Are we still on for *Alien II*? And how about Sigourney? Is she up for this?’ David Giler tells me everything’s fine; I can go ahead with *Alien II*, and Sigourney Weaver is signed for the second picture. So off I go to finish the script, which I was doing strictly on a promise. I hadn’t really negotiated my deal yet. But I’d told Brandywine I would do it, so I was doing it.”

In the fall of 1984, another fan magazine reported that Cameron was “relaxing and wondering about the fate of some long-planned sequels.”

“I have written the screenplay for *Alien II*,” he told them. “It does exist. What will be done with it, no one really knows. I can’t really say anything more about *Alien II* than that it does exist.”

Behind the scenes, deals and contracts were being put in place. On December 4, 1984, Cameron signed a ‘Director Borrowing Agreement’ between American Gothic Productions, Inc. (his production company) and Twentieth Century-Fox Film Corporation for *Alien II*. Given the success of *Terminator*, Cameron would now be the writer *and* the director of the sequel.

As such, he took his notes and hammered out the rest of his first draft of what he now titled *Aliens*. Cameron likened the title change to the original writer’s process: “I read an interview with Dan O’Bannon that said he was typing away one night at four o’clock in the morning, ‘the alien did this, the alien did that,’” Cameron said, “and he realized that the word ‘alien’ stood out on the page. It was very much like that for me on this film. I was writing away and it was ‘aliens this’ and ‘aliens that’ and it was just right. It was succinct. It had all the power of the first title, and it implied the plurality of the threat. It also implied, of course, that it’s a sequel, without having to say ‘Alien II.’”

“We thought that *Alien II* sounded as if there were going to be 35 *Alien* movies,” Hurd said. “That it’s just going to go on and on until people are tired of it. That’s not what this film is about. On the other hand, we didn’t want to call it *Ripley’s Adventure: Alien II*, the way that they did *Rambo: First Blood II*. We thought that *Aliens* would signify that this picture goes beyond *Alien*, but is related to it. *Aliens* says it all.”

One possibly apocryphal story had Cameron talking Giler and Hill into the title change by drawing two vertical lines through the “s” in *Aliens*, thereby making it into a dollar sign: *Alien\$*.

PRIMAL SCREAM

Cameron dated his first draft February 26, 1985. It wasn’t simply an addition of pages to the partial draft he’d written a year before. He revised the first 90 pages, and took it to a new and improved climax (see page 55).

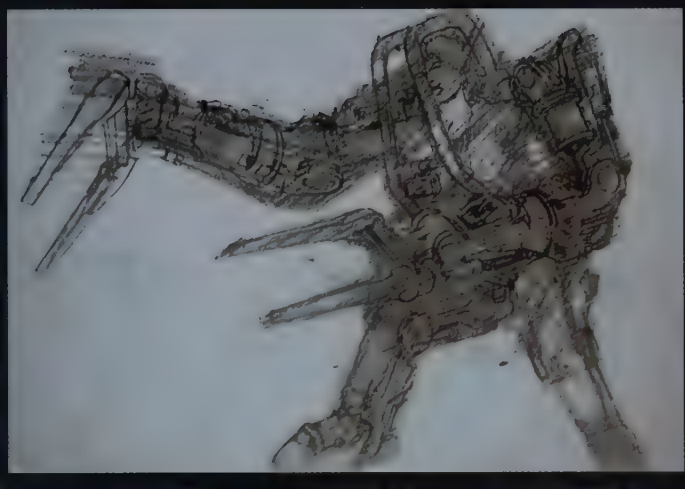
“Jim does most of the writing; I do most of the deleting,” said Hurd, who acted as Cameron’s de facto editor.

In the finished script, Burke is more than ever Ripley’s foil on Gateway, where she no longer talks to her daughter because the latter has already passed away.

Cameron also simplified the scenes on Acheron, now also referred to as “LV-426,” to the incubation of only one colonist: Newt’s father. “One of my first ideas,” Cameron explained, “was to do a scene inside the derelict where they actually find the egg chamber and all the eggs come to life. But it would have cost us a million dollars just to create the same basic imagery we’d already been shown in *Alien*, so I decided to treat that whole aspect as inferred. We know what’s inside the ship; we don’t need to see it again.”

Now Bishop descends with Ripley and company to the planet, leaving no

RIGHT: A very rough sketch and a more fully developed drawing by Cameron of Ripley using the powerloader as a weapon.



one aboard the *Sulaco*. Once they're stranded, Hicks reveals that they have sentry guns—a “high-tech servo-actuated machine gun with optical sensing equipment”—with which to battle the xenomorphs. Throughout, Cameron deepened the script by layering it with parallels between the heavily armed Colonial Marines and the United States' soldiers in Vietnam, both going up against opponents with more primitive to non-existent technology.

“I'd read every book I could get my hands on about Vietnam,” he said. “That research was still very much in my head while I was finishing *Aliens*. One day, it just hit me that the basic story I was telling was the perfect metaphor for America's involvement in Vietnam.”

He also drew parallels in his mind between *Aliens* and old movies. “The old WWII combat movie,” Cameron noted, “the type where a small squad of ethnically diverse soldiers find themselves trapped behind enemy lines. I had *The Alamo* [1960], that old John Wayne film, in mind. In fact, that's what I told Fox about *Aliens*. That LV-426 was the Alamo, and that Ripley was John Wayne. But they didn't get it.

“*Aliens* takes clichés—the bonding between the characters, what happens, what disintegrates, what gets stronger, all that—which creates an emotional crucible out of a combat situation and transports them into a science-fictional context. In a sense, it's what George Lucas did with *Star Wars*: take clichés from Westerns and other old movies and put them into a breathtaking new environment, where they become viable again. *Raiders of the Lost Ark* [1981] also proved you could do that.”

Cameron also strengthened a key relationship, between Ripley and Newt. When Newt finds out that Ripley's daughter is dead, she asks if she can fill in and be her daughter; *Aliens* thus becomes a more obvious mother-daughter love story. A love story had also been central to *Terminator*.

“A maternal element was already in *Mother*, the earlier story I'd based the *Alien II* treatment on,” Cameron said. “I felt that that fit like a glove in the development of Ripley's character for *Aliens*.”

While Newt sleeps, Ripley and Bishop puzzle out that some creature has to be laying all the eggs (the tapes in the previous draft have been eliminated)—a queen.

Ripley also confronts Burke; she's figured out that he's the reason the colonists found the derelict. Here, Cameron was also using the Vietnam War as a template, in which the military is used to pursue business interests (Cameron was also aware of the historical precedents for same). The colonials are a military detachment in service of a corporation. Things get worse when Bishop informs them there will be a systems failure in less than four hours. A new wrinkle has the android volunteering to crawl through an underground shaft to the colonists' uplink tower to pilot down remotely the second dropship.

Cameron also wrote a new sequence in which Ripley and Newt sleep—but awaken just in time to fight off two Facehuggers; Burke switches off the cameras so Hicks and the others can't see their battle, but Ripley triggers sprinklers and the marines come to the rescue. They're about to judge and perhaps execute Burke when the aliens attack.

One day at Winston Studio, Cameron had taken a stuntman in a mock-up alien warrior suit into a hallway, turned the camera upside down, and filmed him. Suddenly the xenomorph was climbing a ceiling and looking

dynamic. That resulted in a new image for the script:

HICKS' POV

A soul-wrenching nightmare image.

Moving in the beam of his light are aliens.

Lots of aliens.

They are crawling like bats, upside-down, clinging to the pipes and beams of the structural ceiling, not touching the flimsy acoustic panels.

They glisten hideously as they claw their way forward in silence.

They cover the ceiling of the operations room.

In the melee, only Hicks, Ripley, and Newt survive; but the little girl falls down a chute and Hicks is burned by acid. Instead of letting themselves be taken prisoner to find a shuttle, as in the treatment, Ripley opts to rescue her little girl. When Bishop returns with the second dropship, she tells him that they're going in, soldier-like, to do battle with the aliens to save Newt.

“The whole idea of the little girl is a ‘light at the end of the tunnel’ concept,” Cameron explained in 1986. “If Ripley was to go into it alone and survive another encounter with these organisms after I've set up in the first act that the first time completely destroyed her life, then that's not going to be a satisfying ending. There must be a sense that, when she comes through the fire this time, it's an end to the cycle. She will have the tools to go on. So the relationship with the little girl, Newt, is absolutely critical.

“The other idea that I've always been fascinated by is: Would you be willing to go into hell for someone? And if so, who would it be, and what would your relationship to them be? And so, really, it's a love story not between a man and a woman, but between a woman and a little girl, who becomes her surrogate daughter. They both have the same nightmare, and that bonds them. If this all sounds sappy, I think it's okay because there are many other elements that balance it out.

“One of the fears that I've played on intentionally, and that I think people will respond to, is a parent's fear of danger for her child. It goes outside of immediate survival to protecting someone else that you care about very much, your own flesh and blood. That is a dimension that didn't exist in the first film. In giving Ripley a past and a larger life, one can tap into emotions—and I'm really a strong believer in emotions. You can't just have action. You can't just have special effects. The best technically achieved film in the world is nothing without some sort of human viewpoint. It's all meaningless unless the emotion is there.”



ALIENS
FIRST DRAFT SCREENPLAY
BY JAMES CAMERON
FEBRUARY 26, 1985 - SUMMARY

The first draft ran 121 typed pages and was now called *Aliens*. Cameron amended its first scenes to comply with the earlier studio note so Ripley's rescue is clearly separate from her first dream in the hospital. The character of Doctor O'Neil is omitted; instead Carter Burke is present, making his first appearance at Ripley's side in her hospital room instead of in the boardroom. Ripley has been floating in space for 57 years and her daughter, Amanda Ripley-McClaren, is already dead at 66. Burke shows her a photo.

RIPLEY
Amy.

BURKE
(reading)
Cancer. Hmmm. They still haven't licked that one. Cremated. Interred Parkside Repository, Little Chute, Wisconsin. No children.

RIPLEY
You always think you can make it up to somebody... later, you know. But now I never can. I never can.

The planet's designation has changed from LV-420 to LV-426 ("which I gave to the planet as an official designation for navigational purposes," Cameron said). When Ripley is suspended by the board of inquiry, she also learns that the planet is inhabited by 60 or 70 families (her scene in the bar with Burke has been omitted).

A new scene on the planet has two administrators discussing a situation. One of them is now called Lydecker (in the previous script Lydecker had been a scientist with the marines, but that character was eliminated):

LYDECKER
You remember you sent some wildcatters out to that plateau, out past the Illium range, a couple days ago?... There's a guy on the horn, mom-and-pop survey team. Says he's homing something and wants to know if his claim will be honored.

SIMPSON
Christ. Some honch in a cushy office on Earth says go look at a grid reference in the middle of nowhere, we look. They don't say why, and I don't ask. I don't ask because it takes two weeks to get an answer out there and the answer is always "don't ask."

LYDECKER
So what do I tell this guy?

SIMPSON
Tell him, as far as I'm concerned, he finds something it's his.

Cameron cut down the colonists' scenes on Adrien to the discovery of the alien ship and the incubation of a single colonist. Newt's dad, Private Anne, runs back to their tractor to call for help:

ANNE
Mayday! Mayday! This is Alpha Xile 170 Four Niner calling Radio COMBAT. Repeat. This is...

As Anne shouts the mayday Newt looks past her to the ground. Russ Jordan lies there, limp, dragged somehow by Anne from inside the ship. There is SOMETHING ON HIS FACE. An appalling MULTI-LEGGED CREATURE, pale and with obscene life. Newt begins to SCREAM hysterically, competing with the shrieking wind which rises to a crescendo...

In 1987, Cameron elaborated on what he imagined as happened. "Although it wouldn't be shown," he scripted, they were given the general coordinates of [the derelict's] position by the manager of the planet on orders from Carter Burke," he wrote. "It is not directly stated but implied that Burke could only have gotten that information from Ripley as from the black-box flight recorder aboard the *Thurde Nevada*. When the Jordan family reaches the coordinates, they discover the derelict ship. Russ Jordan is attacked, they radio for rescue; a rescue party, *unsuccessful*, several members face-luggered... brought back to base for treatment; several Chestbursters free themselves from hosts, escape into *vacuum*, begin to grow..."

"Presumably, the derelict pilot (space jockey, big dental *giant*) became infected en route to somewhere, and set down on the planet to isolate the dangerous creatures, setting up the warning beacon as his last act. What happened to the creature that emerged from him? Ask Ridley. I

of the purpose of the alien. I think that's clear. They're just trying to make a living, same as us. It's not their fault that they happen to be disgusting potential predators, any more than a black widow spider or a cobra can be blamed for its biological nature."

When Earth begins contact with the colonists, Burke and Gorman pay a call on Ripley.

BURKE

I heard you were working in the cargo docks.

RIPLEY

(defensive)
That's right.

BURKE

Meaning loaders, fork-lifts, that sort of thing?

RIPLEY

(struggling)
That's all I could get. Anyway, it keeps my mind off of... everything. Days off are worse.

BURKE

What if I said I could get you reinstated as a flight officer? And that the company has agreed to pick up your contract?

RIPLEY

If I will.

BURKE

If you go.

This promise to take care of her cat, Jones, which is no longer synthetic, but the original cat from the first film.

Ripley eventually agrees. On the *Sulaco*, the roster has changed slightly to:

MASTER SERGEANT APONE:	UNIT LEADER
CORPORAL WICKS:	B-TEAM LEADER
CORPORAL METTRICH (female):	MED-TECH
PFC HEDSON:	COM-TECH
PFC VASQUEZ (female):	OPERATOR
PRIVATE DRAKE:	"SMART-GUN"
	OPERATOR
PRIVATE FROST:	TROOPER

PRIVATE CROWE:	TROOPER
PRIVATE WIERZBOWSKI:	TROOPER
CORPORAL FERRO (female):	DROP-SHIP PILOT
PFC SPUNKMEYER:	DROP-SHIP CREW CHIEF

Vasquez and Drake are described as "Dobermans playing. Conscripted from juvenile prison, the two of them were trained to operate the formidable 'SMART-GUNS.' That is part of their bond."

Vasquez likes the feel of the guns, the weight... the authority. Her hands move without hesitation. CLACK. CLACK. CLACK. She swings one of the SMART-GUNS out on a work stand. Using a body-brace and GYRO-STABILIZED SUPPORT ARM, it is a computer-aimed, video targeted automatic weapon. The futuristic equivalent of a .30 caliber light machine-gun. Sort of a Steadicam that kills.

When Ripley explodes at Bishop and knocks the proffered tray of food across the room, Wierzbowski remarks, "She don't like the cornbread either."

Aboard the *Sulaco*, Ripley drives a loader, which impresses the marines. "She's had to support herself as a dockworker at Gateway Station," Cameron said. "It was logical to assume that she might know how to handle a basic piece of cargo-handling equipment. You had to set it up. You had to see her volunteer to help unload the ship."

Within the colony, Ripley's scenes with Newt were rewritten. Cameron makes their bond much stronger.

RIPLEY

(soothing)
Poor thing. You don't talk much do you? That's okay by me. Most people do a lot of talking and they wind up not saying very much.

She sets the cup down and wipes the child's chin clean.

RIPLEY

Uh oh. I made a clean spot here. Now I've done it. Guess I'll just have to do the whole thing.

She pours water from a squeeze-bottle onto a small cloth and gently washes the little girl's face. Newt's eyes seem to focus on her for the first time.

RIPLEY

Hard to believe... there's a little girl under all this. And a pretty one at that.

Newt gazes at her. Ripley smiles.

RIPLEY

I don't know how you managed to stay alive, but you're one brave kid, Rebecca.

Newt's voice is almost inaudible.

NEWT

N-newt... Newt. My n-name's Newt. Nobody calls me Rebecca except my dork brother.

RIPLEY

Oh, Newt. Your mom and dad went away like that, didn't they?

Newt nods, staring at her knees.

RIPLEY

(soothingly)
They'd be here if they could, honey. I know they would.

NEWT

(with cold certainty)
They're dead.

RIPLEY

Newt. Look at me... Newt. I won't leave you. I promise.

NEWT

You promise?

RIPLEY

Cross my heart.

NEWT

And hope to die?

Ripley smiles grimly at the inadvertently macabre expression.

RIPLEY

(quietly)
And hope to die.

Bishop takes the role (formerly played by Lydecker) of scientist. His loyalties are clearly meant to be a question mark for the audience.

INT. MED-LAB

Bishop is hunched over an ocular probe doing a dissection of one of the dead parasites. Spunkmeyer enters with some electronics gear on a handtruck and parks it near Bishop's work table.

SPUNKMEYER

Need anything else?

Bishop waves "no" without looking up.

For the processing station, Cameron explained his thinking the next into his creation of their hive: "Extrapolating from terminology (ants, termites, etc.), an immature female, one of the first to emerge from hibernation grows to become a new queen, while males become drones or warriors. Subsequent female larvae remain dormant or are killed by males. It is biochemically sense that a queen exists and change into males to first wage. The queen locates a nesting spot (the warmth of the atmosphere rather heat-exchanger level being perfect for egg incubation) and becomes sedentary. She is then tended by the males as her abdomen swells into a distended egg sac. The drones and warriors also secrete a resinous building material to line the structure, creating niches in which they may be dormant when food supplies and/or hosts for further reproduction become depleted (i.e. when all the colonists are used up). They are discovered in this condition by the troopers, but quickly emerge when new hosts present themselves."

The battle is even more intense than in previous versions. After their first encounter with the alien horde, Ripley, Burke, and the surviving marines face off:

HUDSON

Look, man, let's just bug out and call it even, okay?

RIPLEY

I say we take off and nuke the entire site from orbit. It's the only way to be sure.

BURKE

Now hold on a second. I'm not authorizing that action.

RIPLEY

(muttering)

Burke senses the challenge in her tone and responds flawlessly into conciliatory mode.

BURKE

Well, I mean... I know this is an emotional moment, but let's not make snap judgments. Let's move cautiously. First, this physical installation has a substantial dollar value attached to it--

RIPLEY

They can bill me. I got a tab running. What's second?

BURKE

This is clearly an important species we're dealing with here. We can't just arbitrarily exterminate them--

RIPLEY

Bullshit!

VASQUEZ

Yeah, bullshit. Watch us.

HUDSON

Maybe you haven't been keeping up on current events, but we just got our ~~last~~ ~~big~~ ~~one~~ ~~call~~

BURKE

(turns to Ripley)
Since you are the representative of the company who discovered this species your percentage will naturally be some serious, serious money.

Ripley stares at him like he's a particularly disagreeable fungus.

RIPLEY

You son of a bitch.

BURKE

(hardening)
Don't make me pull rank, Ripley.



LEFT AND OPPOSITE: Cameron's sketch and concept illustration of the duet between the alien queen and Ripley.

RIPLEY

What rank? I believe Corporal Hicks has authority here.

BURKE

Corporal Hicks!?

RIPLEY

This operation is under military jurisdiction and Hicks is next in chain-of-command. Right?

HICKS

Looks that way.

Burke starts to lose it and it's not a pretty sight.

BURKE

Look, this is a multi-million dollar operation. He can't make that kind of decision. He's just a grunt!
(glances at Hicks) No offense.

HICKS

(coolly)
None taken.
(into mike)



WELL, you copying?... Prep for dust-off. We're gonna need an immediate evac. (to Burke) I think we'll take off and nuke the site from orbit. It's the only way to be sure.

He winks. Burke looks like a kid whose toy has been snatched.

BURKE

This is absurd! You don't have the authority to--

CLACK! The sound of a rifle bolt snapping home truncates his rant. Vasquez has a pulse-rifle wedged, not exactly aimed at Burke but not exactly aimed away either. Her expression is hawk-like, lethal in its disdain. Burke folds up his tent. End of discussion.

Ripley sits behind Newt, putting her arm around her.

RIPLEY

We're going home, honey.

When that plan didn't work out, with the destruction of the dropship, Ripley tells them it will take 17 days for a rescue mission to get to them.

BUDSON

Man, we're not going to make it seventeen hours! Those things are going to come in here, just like they did before, man... they're going to come in here and gut us, man, long before--

RIPLEY

One survived longer than that with no weapons and no training.

The soldiers avert their eyes with heavy guns and welded doors, and settle down for their first night on the planet. The connection between Ripley and Newt is dispersed with a bedtime conversation:

NEWT

My daddy always said there were no monsters. No real ones. But there are... Did you ever have a baby?

RIPLEY

Yes. A little girl.

NEWT

Where is she?

RIPLEY

(quietly)
Gone.

NEWT

You mean dead.

It's more statement than question. Ripley nods slowly.

NEWT

Ripley, I was just thinking... Maybe I could do you a favor and fill in for her. Just for a while. You can try it and if you don't like it, it's okay. I'll understand. No big deal. Whattya think?

Ripley gazes at her a long time before answering... a conflict between the urge to crush the child to her in a forever hug and the knowledge that neither of them may see another dawn.

RIPLEY

I think it's not the worst idea I've heard all day. Let's talk about it later.

While Newt sleeps, Ripley and Bishop try and figure out the mystery of the aliens:

RIPLEY

Now let me get this straight. The aliens paralyzed the colonists, carried them over there, cocooned them to be hosts for more of those...

Ripley points at the stasis cylinders containing the Facehugger specimens.

RIPLEY

Which would mean lots of those parasites, right? One for each person... over a hundred at least.

BISHOP
Yes. That follows.

RIPLEY
But these things come from eggs... so where are all the eggs coming from?

BISHOP
That is the question of the hour. We could assume a parallel to certain insect forms who have hivelike organization. An ant or termite colony, for example, is ruled by a single female, a queen, which is the source of new eggs.

RIPLEY
You're saying one of those things lays all the eggs?

BISHOP
Well, the queen is always physically larger than the others. A termite queen's abdomen is so bloated with eggs that it can't move at all. It is fed and tended by drone workers, defended by the warriors. She is the center of their lives, quite literally the mother of their society.

RIPLEY
Could it be intelligent?

BISHOP
Hard to say. It may have been blind instinct... attraction to the heat or whatever... but she did choose to incubate her eggs in the one spot where we couldn't destroy her without destroying ourselves. That's if she exists, of course.

In her next piece of detective work, Ripley confronts Burke:

RIPLEY
You're just try getting a dangerous organism past ICC quarantine. Section 22350 of the Commerce Code.

BURKE
You've been doing your homework. Look, they can't impound it if they don't know about it.

RIPLEY
But they will know about it, Burke, from me. Just like they'll know how you were responsible for the deaths of one hundred and fifty-seven colonists here-- (stepping on him) You sent them to that ship. I just checked the colony log-- directive dated six-twelve-seventy-nine, Signed Burke, Carter J.

BURKE
Look, maybe the thing didn't even exist, right? And if I'd made it a major security situation, the Administration would've stepped in. Then no exclusive rights, nothing. It was a bad call, that's all.

Ripley snaps. She slams him against the wall, surprising herself and him, her hands gripping his collar.

RIPLEY
Bad call? These people are fucking dead, Burke! Well, they're going to nail your hide to the shed... and I'll be there when they do.

When Bishop estimates system failure in about four hours, Hudson reacts: "I don't fucking believe this. Do you believe this?" While they argue about what to do, Bishop volunteers to crawl through the vents and see the uplink tower at the colony to call down the *Sulaco's* second dropship. "I'm really the only one qualified to remote-pilot the ship anyway," he says. "Believe me, I'd prefer not to. I may be synthetic but I'm not stupid."

In a setup inspired by Cameron's youth—he and neighborhood kids used to crawl through water pipes in new subdivisions—Bishop makes his way through a tight-fitting underground shaft.

Hicks then shows Ripley how to use an "M-41A 10mm pulse rifle, over and-under with a 30mm pump-action grenade launcher."

Ripley hefts the weapon. It is heavy and awkward. But there is an irrational promise of security in its lethal cold-steel lines, or at least the sense that she will be in some

greater measure the master of her own fate.

Ripley finds Newt *not* in her bed, but under it. "I just love the idea of this little girl who feels so much more secure by herself than with the adults," Ripley says. "In the fascinating aspect of her looking around at all these machines and things, 'Soon you guys are going to die and I'm gonna be on my own.' It's more at risk when I'm with you than doing my own thing that I know works."

Ripley stages an attack on the two living Facehuggers while Ripley and Newt are sleeping in the operating room/med-lab.

TIGHT ON RIPLEY as she awakens with a start. She checks her watch... an hour has passed. She gently disengages herself from Newt and is about to crawl out from beneath the cot when she sees something and FREEZES. Across the room, just inside the door to the med-lab, are two innocuous but nonetheless chilling objects, TWO STASIS CYLINDERS. Their tops are hinged open, and the suspension fields are switched off. They are both EMPTY. Ripley feels a slow upwelling wave of terror rise through her in that silent frozen moment... the indiscrepable certainty of a lethal presence. Unable to move or breathe, she looks around frantically, assessing the situation.

The activation of Ripley triggers the sprinkler with a lighter, and the sound that the two Facehuggers. They confront Burke:

RIPLEY

The only way it would work is if he sabotaged certain freezers on the trip back. Then he could jettison the bodies and make up any story he liked.

(wearily)

You know, Burke, I don't know which scenario is worse. You don't see them working each other over for a fucking percentage.

William and Dent finally their accusations. They come from above and below Ripley in his case off, but Hudson is killed; Burke is stung; and Ripley and Thomas don't make it out.

Behind (RIPLEY) an alien is moving down the corridor like a locomotive, a graceful, skeletal shape as lethal and inhuman as you can imagine. The overheads backlight the demented silhouette.

Shaking, Ripley raises her rifle. She squeezes the trigger.

NOTHING HAPPENS.

The creature HISSSES, baring its teeth as it advances. Ripley checks the SAFETY.

The safety is off.

The DIGITAL COUNTER.

The magazine is full.

Newt begins to wail.

Ripley's hands, slick with sweat, are trembling so much she almost drops the rifle. Panic screams in her brain.

The thing is almost on her, filling the corridor, when she remembers.

She snaps the bolt back, chambering a round. Whips the stock to her shoulder.

FIRES. FLASH-CRACK!

A flash-bulb glimpse of shrieking jaws as the silhouette is hurled back, screeching insanely.

Ripley is slammed against the door by the recoil, blinded by the flash and deafened by the concussion.

Hudson screams as floor panels lift under him, and clawed arms seize him lightning fast, dragging him down.

Another skeletal shape leaps on him from above.

He disappears into the sub-floor crawlway.

Hicks, Vasquez, and Gorman make it to the med-lab access corridor.

Burke, hyperventilating with terror, backs across the dark chamber. Gasping, almost paralyzed with fear, he crosses the chamber to the door leading to the main concourse. His fingers reach for the latch. It moves by itself. The door opens slowly.

ON BURKE, his eyes wide, transfixed by his fate.

We hear the BULLWHIP CRACK of a tail-stinger striking as

[VASQUEZ] fires with incredible rapidity...

BAMBAMBAM!

Rolls aside.

It lands on her legs and she snaps her head to one side just as its TAIL STINGER buries into

the metal wall beside her cheek.
She fires again, emptying the pistol, kicking the thrashing shape away.
Acid cuts through her chickenplate armor, searing into her thigh.
She cries out, gritting her teeth against the white-hot pain.
Gorman sees Vasquez hit, unable to move.
Sees the creatures coming the other way... and turns away from the escape hole.
He crawls back to her, grabs her battle harness and starts dragging her toward safety.
Too late.
The approaching alien warriors have reached and passed the opening.
Vasquez sees him, barely conscious.

VASQUEZ
(hoarse whisper)

You always were an asshole, Gorman.

She seizes his hand in a deathly grip, but we recognize it as the "power greeting" she shared with Drake... something for the chosen few.
Gorman returns the grip.
He hands her two grenades and arms two himself as the creatures are upon them.

RUSHING WITH Ripley, Newt, and Hicks at a full tilt run.
The service-way lights up with a POWERFUL BLAST behind them and they stumble with the shockwave.

"In a way, without this sounding stupid, almost everyone in the film is a hero, with the exception of one character," Cameron said in 1985. "*Aliens* is an exploration of courage and heroism; hopefully one without clichés. And every character reflects it in a completely different way. It's about being pushed to the limit, and finding the resources to act. I'm talking about the key characters, the core group: Hicks, Vasquez, Gorman, Drake, Hudson. Hudson's a perfect example. He's the character who seems to be the coward of the group, always whining and complaining; but, in one last burst, he gets it together. After years of being pummeled by depressing films exploring the nether-reaches of human depravity, I think an audience wants to see some positive emotion. And that's what I was trying with all the characters—except the bad guy."

During their perilous escape, Newt falls down a chute.

Newt is in a low grotto-like chamber, filled with pipes and machines.

It is flooded, almost up to Newt's waist.
She looks up, seeing light streaming through a grating. Ripley's voice seems to come from there...
Newt, standing waist-deep in the water, watches sparks shower blindingly as Hicks cuts.
She bites her lip, trembling.
Cold and terrified.
Silently, a glistening shape rises in one graceful motion from the water behind her.
It stands, dripping, dwarfing her tiny form.
Newt turns, sensing the movement...
She SCREAMS as the shadow engulfs her.

Aliens then track down Ripley and Hicks, who is injured by acid in their flight. When Bishop picks them up in the second dropship, Ripley tells him to pilot it into the processing station. She has 26 minutes to find her surrogate daughter.

Fully armed, she takes the lift down several levels, going down to "Hell," an avenging angel ready to battle a demon.

"The other stream which converges with [my story] is, I guess probably my subconscious," Cameron said. "I concentrate on all the things that scare me and that I'm interested in visually in the science-fiction genre. There's a bit of Dante Alighieri in the third act, and lots of Freud."

The elevator descends.
She checks her weapons.
Attaches a BANDOLIER OF GRENADES to her harness.
Primes the flamethrower.
Checks the rifle's magazine.
Racks the bolt, chambering the first round.
She checks the MARKING FLARES jammed in the thigh pockets of her jump-pants.
This is the most terrifying thing she has ever done.
She begins to hyperventilate, soaking with sweat.
Her fingers slick and slippery on the rifle.
The elevator descends.
The lift motors whine, slowing.
It hits bottom with a bump.
The safety cage retracts.
Slowly, expectantly, the doors open...
HER POV through the parting doors... an empty corridor. Dark, swirling with steam, a ruddy glow visible here and there.
It seems to have been a descent into Dantean Hell.

The air itself vibrates with heat distortion.
Complains groan.
Machinery whines and throbs.
Like the beating of a vast heart the pounding
of massive pumps echoes through the station.

At Ripley's heels her way toward Newt, guided by Hicks's "locator"—

SUDDENLY SOMETHING SHOOTS OUT, GRABBING HER!
Ripley.

She recovers, then recognizes the face sealed
in the wall. Carter Burke.

BURKE

Ripley... Help me. I can feel it ...
inside. Oh, god... it's moving! Oh
god... god...

She looks at him. No one deserves this.

RIPLEY

Here.

She takes his grenade, wrapping his fingers
around the spoon, and pulls the primer.
It goes off.

VOICE

You only have eleven minutes to reach
the alien safe distance.

Ripley moves ahead. The locator signal shows
she is almost there.

A **CRACKING** rocks the place, like an
earthquake, jarring her almost off her feet...

The admittedly confusing aspect of this creature's
behavior (as clear as well in *Alien*) is the fact that sometimes the
queen is simply killed outright, and other times simply kill it. For example,
in *Alien* she is killed outright, while Newt, and previously most
of the other queens, were only captured and cocooned within the walls to
begin their life cycle. If we assume the aliens have intelligence,
then the queen's leading authority of the queen, then it is possible that
she was captured on a tactical basis. For example, Ferro was a greater
threat to the heavily armed dropship, than she was a desirable host for
the queen. And most of the colonists, were unarmed and relatively
easy to capture for hosting."

She watches the Facehugger emerge and turn
around her. Ripley runs in just as it is

tensing to leap, and FIRES, blasting it with a
burst from the assault rifle.

The flash illuminates the figure of an adult
warrior, nearby.

It spins, moving straight for Ripley.

Firing from the hip she drills it with two
controlled bursts which catapult it back.

She steps toward it, FIRING AGAIN.

Her expression is murderous.

AND AGAIN.

It spins onto its back.

She unleashes the flamethrower and it vanishes
in a fireball.

Ripley runs to Newt and begins tearing at the
fresh resinous cocoon material, freeing the
child.

She swings her up onto her back.

"After *Rambo*, I'm not that interested in making a film where people are
running around shooting each other," Cameron said in 1985, "and getting
into the moral complications of saying, 'Just because they're wearing a
different uniform from another country, it's okay,' in order to feel absolutely
lily-white and clean about the havoc that's wrought on their bodies by high-
velocity ballistic weapons. So, no human being kills another human being in
this movie, but the sci-fi environment allows an incredible amount of
firepower [to be] unleashed in quite exciting ways. So, it's sort of violence
without guilt."

Finally, Ripley discovers the source of the eggs—the queen.

Ripley pumps the slide on her grenade launcher.
She fires.

Pumps and fires again.

Four times.

The grenades punch deep into the egg sac and
EXPLODE, ripping it open from within.

Eggs and tons of gelatinous matter pour across
the chamber floor.

The Queen goes berserk, SCREECHING like some
psychotic steam whistle...

After Ripley's killing frenzy, the queen pursues her through the hive:

The elevator won't be in time.

[RIPLEY] runs to a ladder set in the wall as a
horrendous screech beats in her ears. She
scrambles up the rungs.

INT. SECOND LEVEL

Ripley struggles up through a narrow hatch,
Newt clinging to her.

She dives aside as a POWERFUL BLACK ARM shoots up through the opening, its razor claws slamming into the grille-floor inches from her. Looking down through the grille she sees the great horrifying jaws directly below her, wet and leering.

She scrambles up, running, as the grille-floor lifts and buckles behind her with the titanic force of the creature below.

It hurls itself with insane ferocity against the metal, pacing her from below as she runs.

Ripley, with Newt still clinging to her, slams through the door opening onto the platform. Through wind-whipped streamers of smoke she sees...

THE SHIP IS GONE.

RIPLEY
BISHOP!

Her shouts become inarticulate screams of hatred, outrage at the final betrayal. She scans the sky.
Nothing.

RIPLEY
(hysterical)
BISHOP!

Newt is sobbing.

"This is what you expect to happen—that Bishop completely betrays them," Cameron said. "I think what you don't expect is that he didn't. That he turns out to be a good guy."

Bishop and the dropship return.

Ripley leaps for the loading boom projecting down from the cargo bay and it raises them into the ship.

A TREMENDOUS EXPLOSION RIPS THROUGH THE COMPLEX nearby slamming the ship sideways. Its extended landing legs foul in a tangle of conduit, grinding with a hideous squeal of metal on metal.

INT./EXT. DROP SHIP/STATION

Ripley leaps into a seat with Newt, cradling her.

Begins strapping in.

Bishop wrestles with the controls.
The landing legs retract, ripping free.

However, they're still not safe. Aboard the *Sulaco*, Bishop is torn in half by the queen—a stowaway attached to the dropship. As in the treatment, Ripley manages to grab a loader to battle the queen...

Ripley's expression is one you hope you'll never see... Hell hath no fury like that of a mother protecting her child and that primal, murderous rage surges through her now, banishing all fear.

RIPLEY
Get away from her, you bitch!

The Queen SCREECHES pure lethality and leaps.

The first draft ends like the treatment, with the queen sucked into space and Ripley ascendant—but Cameron has revised the dialogue:

Ripley limps along the corridor, carrying Newt on her hip. The ship's systems hum comfortingly. Newt's head rests on her shoulder.

NEWT
Are we going to sleep now?

RIPLEY
That's right.

NEWT
Can we dream?

RIPLEY
Yes, honey. I think we both can.

HOLD ON THEM as they recede down the long straight corridor.



C H A P T E R 0 9



ONES AND WARRIORS
BRUARY TO MAY 1985





After Cameron sent his first draft to Brandywine, who read and forwarded to Fox in late February, the real fighting began. The script arrived only hours before a threatened writers' strike and was praised by both production houses, but several quite serious pitched battles then occurred over collaborators, casting, and money.

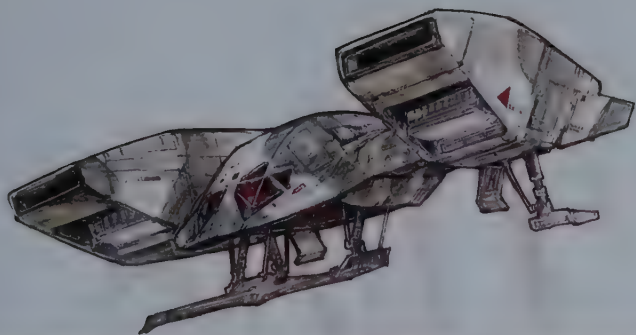
First of all, Cameron wanted Gale Anne Hurd, now his partner and girlfriend, to produce *Aliens*.

"I finally made my deal as a writer-director," he said. "Then I brought Gale into the mix. But Fox initially didn't want to take her on, because they weren't that familiar with Gale. Now, by this time Gale and I had become close—we'd decided to get married at this point—but my insistence on Gale was strictly business. I told Fox, 'Gale is an excellent producer and she must work with me on this film. We are a team. You either hire her and me together, or I don't do *Aliens*.'"

PREVIOUS PAGE: The final design and build of the dropship, situated in the cargo bay set.

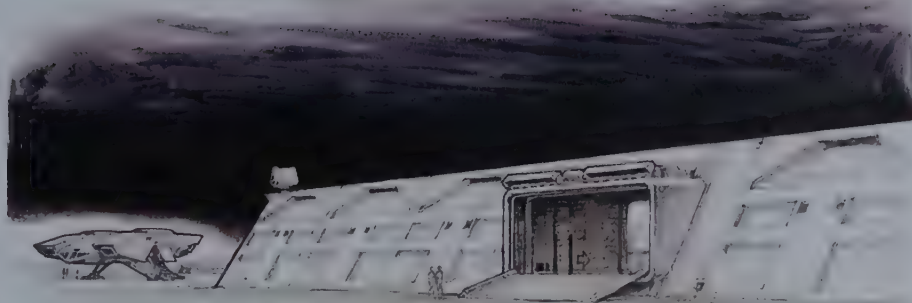
LEFT: Producer Gale Anne Hurd and Cameron.





ALIENS

SULACO DROP-SHIP 1



ALIENS

ACHERON COLONY

ABOVE: Early dropship concept art by Cobb.

ABOVE RIGHT: Same early dropship sitting outside the Acheron colony, another concept art piece by Cobb.

"I had to go in and interview," Hurd said. "The first question I was asked was, 'How can a little girl like you produce a big movie like this?' I've never been a really shy, retiring type, so it was all I could do to sit there, not walk out and say, 'Why don't you check my references.' I said, 'I'll have them call you.' The head of Film Finances in Los Angeles, Lindsley Parsons, called, and Roger Corman and various other people said, 'Not only can she do this, you'd be lucky to have her.' I got the job, but I earned it."

"Eventually it made sense to them, and Gale came aboard," Cameron said. "Fox saw the kind of movie they could make with me, and it looked like we also could do *Aliens* for cheap."

Once Hurd was on board, Cameron revisited the Skotaks with his completed screenplay, circa March 1985. Their willingness to join up and bring in the effects at a price to be determined would be integral to getting the film a green light.

"Jim gave us both an hour and a half to read the script, and then return it immediately for confidentiality reasons," Robert Skotak said. "So Denny and I went to my house, we sat across from each other, and I would read one page, then hand him the page."

"Robert had to go to the bathroom," Dennis Skotak recalled, "so we were passing script pages under the door, just so we could keep reading it. We didn't want to stop."

The Skotaks loved the script, and discussed with Cameron how they would accomplish together the story's models, matte paintings, puppets, and so on. Generally, Robert would storyboard and design shots, which Dennis would light and shoot, but both of them had myriad skills related to creating visual effects. They were known for their ability to meld practical sets and miniatures into a seamless whole, something Cameron preferred. Unlike many of his contemporaries, he wanted to use models and all the old tricks, such as rear projection, that could be recorded directly onto the film negative.

At LA Effects Group (LAE), the Skotaks (part-owners) were busy that year on small to big jobs, including Joe Dante's *Explorers* (1985), *City Limits* (1985), and *Creature* (1985). They brought in some work, Larry Benson brought in some work, and handled the financial and business side of their company; his wife, Suzanne, sometimes acted as secretary; their son, Steve, also helped out. "I felt as a matter of loyalty, because this company did hire us, that they should come along. Maybe they could keep some of the business stuff away from me and Denny," Robert said.

"The approach that we have to filmmaking is 'no frills,'" said Hurd. "Instead of doing the typical things you would expect on a big-budget film, we wanted to go the opposite direction and employ people we had worked with back at New World Pictures, people like Robert and Dennis Skotak."

"We could have gone to Boss Film or Industrial Light & Magic, one of the elite facilities," Cameron said, "but we didn't know those people personally, and it occurred to us that since I like to get directly involved in everything that perhaps that might not be the best way to go... What attracted us most to LA Effects Group was the fact that Bob and Dennis Skotak came with the package. Both have an incredible eye for the work." (Other sources say, however, that Cameron did due diligence and got a bid from ILM, but it was more than he or Fox wanted to pay for their effects.)

"I think the reason Jim wanted to work with us," Robert Skotak told *Cinefex*, "is our orientation towards producing effects images in-camera, which is especially important if you're doing any process work. Jim is not very fond of blue-screen because it tends to set up shots that look like special-effects shots... Blue-screen dictates a slick style instead of the nitty-gritty, hit-the-ground-running approach that Jim seems to favor."

Cameron also preferred process work—front projection and back projection—because it allowed for more random camera movement and could be done in-camera. The challenge in doing so was that his effects unit

would have to generate plates in advance of shooting the live-action scene; the upside, if all went according to plan, was that whatever was supposed to be happening behind the actors would be right there on a projection screen during principal photography.

Hurd and Cameron also reached out to H. R. Giger, the designer of the original alien concepts, from *Facehugger* to adult. “We contacted Giger before the production was even given a green light,” Hurd said, “but he was already engaged on another picture [*Poltergeist II*, 1986]. Due to his contract with that film company, we were unable to even proceed with negotiations.”

“I was a little depressed because nobody asked me to work on the sequel,” Giger said. “I was in Los Angeles at the time working on *Poltergeist II* and I asked around about *Alien II*. People told me they didn’t know... For me it would be the most logical thing to work on that film. I also heard they didn’t ask Ridley Scott about this movie.”

Cameron would say it never really occurred to him to court Giger. “Maybe because we really only had to design one new creature and I had already designed her by this time,” he said. “Maybe it was my own ego as an artist. Giger had made his stamp. And I knew from what I read that he had to do everything his way and I had a very specific idea for the alien queen, to extrapolate beyond what had been done before.”

In a reverse case of omission, Cameron learned that no one at Brandywine or Fox had asked Sigourney Weaver about the sequel either.

“All of a sudden I’m asking, ‘Sigourney doesn’t know about *Aliens*?’” Cameron said. “Brandywine told me, ‘We wanted to wait until we got the script. Then we were going to call her.’ So here is the script that everyone wanted to make—and she was in every scene, but no deal has been made with her. It turned out that everybody but us thought that the film could be made without Sigourney Weaver, which completely blew my mind, and was absolutely out of the question for us. That infuriated me.”

“We knew it would be about Ripley,” Hurd said. “At the same time, Sigourney Weaver was not signed.”

Sigourney Weaver was in France, where she was filming a comedy with Gérard Depardieu, *One Woman or Two* (1985).

“So I got Sigourney’s number,” Cameron continued, “called her, and said, ‘Look, you don’t know me from Adam, but I just wrote this script I’m calling *Aliens*. And now I’m in an embarrassing situation. I’ve been working on this film for some time, but now I’m being told you know nothing about it. So—can I send you the script? Can you read it? Then we can meet to talk about it.’ Sigourney said, ‘Sure.’”

Cameron sent over his first draft.

However, Weaver wasn’t necessarily interested in reprising her role as Ripley. She’d moved on. *Ghostbusters* had become a smash hit. Her starring role as Darlene in the production of *Hurlyburly* on Broadway (in the Ethel Barrymore Theater) from August 1984 to June 1985 had been a huge success, for which she’d received a Tony nomination. And she’d already lined up a starring role opposite Michael Caine in *Half Moon Street* (1986), ironically a Fox film. The studio would have to act fast to secure dates in her ultra-busy schedule, and executives weren’t necessarily interested in inflating the cost of their planned low-budget movie.

Moreover, Weaver thought Cameron might want her for only a cameo

appearance in a scene-setting role before being killed off. She feared that his sequel would be formulaic, produced only to cash in on the original.

All of this led to a budget fight over *Aliens*. With Weaver starring in it, Fox put the price tag at a frightening \$35 million, according to the *L.A. Times*, while Hurd and Cameron insisted that their movie could be made for \$15.5 million. Fox countered with a price tag of \$12 million (only about \$1 million more than the original). Fox chairman Barry Diller was insisting on that. His executives were therefore concerned that if they caved in to Cameron’s insistence on Weaver, they would be in a poor bargaining position and would be unable to meet their chairman’s target number.

At Brandywine, David Giler felt they’d already gotten enough mileage out of a female hero (which, back in 1977, had been his “cynical” ploy to persuade Alan Ladd Jr, production head of Fox at the time, to green-light the first film, for Ladd was a believer in “women pictures”). Giler was ready to switch to a male hero, and the studio asked Cameron to pursue a storyline that didn’t involve Ripley.

He refused. He and Hurd “put their feet down,” she said. They wouldn’t make the movie unless it was with Weaver.

“They could have done *Aliens* without me,” Weaver admitted.

But Cameron insisted that the knee-jerk “re-mulching” of the male hero by a “male-dominated industry” was commercially shortsighted. “They choose to ignore that 50 percent of the audience is female,” he said. “And I’ve been told that it has been proved demographically that 80 percent of the time, it’s women who decide which film to see.”

Cameron and Hurd quit.

“We walked out,” he recalled, “and said, ‘Thanks, we’ll do something else.’”

MAGICIANS

In France, Weaver was reading *Aliens*—or skimming it. Because she was concentrating on making another movie, she skipped stage directions (descriptions of the action).

“When I read Jim Cameron’s script, it was almost all Ripley and the little girl,” she said. “He made Ripley this renegade. It was a great beginning for this character to find this isolation and rage. He changed the nature somewhat of the aliens. It was set to go. ‘Can you start in three months?’ And I remember thinking, *I can’t believe no one has even mentioned this to me*. But I was thrilled.” Weaver also knew that Cameron wasn’t willing to make the sequel without her. “I was egotistical enough to be moved by that.”

Calls were made, Hurd and Cameron were temporarily mollified, and a meeting was planned between Weaver and Cameron. Reportedly, studio chairman Diller battled production head Larry Gordon over the budget until “Barry gave the final yes, and he could have said no,” Gordon told the *L.A. Times* reporter with a broad smile. “But it was a yes that probably took away one of my arteries.”

Cameron would credit Gordon for putting *Aliens* on the green-light track: “Unquestionably, this was Larry’s picture.”

Despite the fact that they didn’t have Weaver signed, production moved forward.

RIGHT: Stan Winston, alien effects supervisor and second-unit director.

RIGHT, MIDDLE: Production designer Peter Lamont, who studied at High Wycombe School of Art, and joined the industry as a print boy. He moved up through the ranks to junior draftsman, chief draftsman, assistant art director, and set decorator (nominated for an Academy Award for 1971's *Fiddler on the Roof*). He was promoted to art director on *Sleuth* (1972), and production designer on the James Bond film *For Your Eyes Only* (1981).

FAR RIGHT: Special-effects supervisor John Richardson was the son of a previous master in the field, Cliff Richardson, a pioneer who had worked in the business since 1921. John Richardson had worked with his father on *Exodus* (1960) and had gone on to mastermind the Arnhem battle scenes for *A Bridge Too Far* (1977), shot in Holland, among many other films.



"Jim was considered more or less a first-time director, even though he had done *The Terminator*," Robert Skotak said. "Fox had originally set the budget at \$30 million. That's what they thought the whole thing should cost, but Jim really wanted to direct it. So they told Jim, 'If you can do it for \$12 million, you can direct it.' He came back and said, 'I can do it for \$15 or \$16 million.'"

On March 20, Fox prepared a budget along the lines proposed by Hurd and Cameron, for a total of \$15,933,229. Set design and construction was estimated at over \$4,200,000; stunts at \$29,400; \$50,000 for telephone and telegraphs; \$7,000 for typewriter/Xerox machine rentals, and so on.

To save money, the movie would be shot and its special effects would be done in the United Kingdom: at Pinewood Studios, outside of London, England.

"We were originally going to do it in the States," Robert Skotak recalled. "Denny and I had worked out a lot of the details with Jim on how the job could be tackled, because the money was very tight. We would have a couple million dollars to work with, but, using our methodology, it would be possible. With beam splitters and a lot of stuff in-camera, we could paint backings, build the models, load the cameras, and shoot them with our usual crew. We were going to do that approach. But then they said, 'We're thinking about going to Pinewood. We might be able to get lower rates and more bang for the money.' And that's what happened."

"I felt the Skotaks would serve very well as an interface between me and the all-British effects crew and shooting unit," Cameron said.

A 'rough estimate' preproduction calendar was drawn up for what was

still being called *Alien II*: On April 1, the UK production designer would start; on June 17, stage construction would begin; on July 15, Cameron would start eight weeks of preproduction at Pinewood. The 15 weeks of principal photography would take place from September 9 to December 20. The rough cut was due on January 31; picture would be locked on March 7; the finished film would be delivered on June 2, 1986.

A list of sets numbered 45, although some were adjoining, from the *Narcissus* interior and the hospital room to the hypersleep vault/locker room/showers and the cargo lock on the *Sulaco*; they'd need a dropship cockpit, colonist's room, medlab; Newt's nest; cocoon room, and so on.

A list of visual-effects shots included: "space... *Narcissus* in distance. We approach. Shadow engulfs. Searchlights come on, bathe *Narcissus*... Six-wheeler moves through soggy volcanic ash... Alien derelict... Dropship screams through atmosphere into dark turbulence... APC peels off out of dropship... roars across Stygian landscape... Burning of cocoon mass... dropship cartwheels, bursts into flames... Atmosphere Processing station venting fire... *Sulaco* cargo lock "preps" dropship for launch... Queen with sac... moving through corridor... following Ripley from below walkway... Battle of loader and queen... facing off, grappling... Hit by loader, queen carried off into space."

To pull off these shots, Cameron anticipated using various techniques: matte paintings, optical composites, blue-screen, front projection, rear projection, glass shots, perspective miniatures, etc.

"I used to love it when the effects department of a major studio was

called the 'trick department,'" Cameron said. "Because they were tricks, tricks of the eye."

A list of those miniatures to be built by model-makers included: salvage ship; colony complex (landing field; causeway; antennas; terrain; lights...); six-wheeled tractor; skeletons impaled in walls; atmosphere processor; powerloader with Ripley (rod puppet); dropship for flight; dropship (large scale for crash); APC (small scale for far shots; and large scale); queen's chamber.

"Not only would filming in England cost us less," said Hurd, "but there seemed to be such a continuity in respect to the film in England. *Alien*, of course, was shot there, and numerous technicians who had worked on it—and who had since risen to greater heights—were still around and available to work for us in more senior capacities. Not that we were trying to re-create what had been seen in the first film—ours was to be very much different—but that sense of continuity, we felt, would be an intangible asset. We also didn't want to put ourselves in the position of trying to re-assemble the Ridley Scott crew because then you're in a position where someone might say, 'Ridley would have done it this way.' You can't put yourself in a straightjacket."

One of those who had come up in the industry was Crispian Sallis, who had labored as an art department trainee on the first film and who was engaged as set decorator for the sequel.

They talked to other key production staff candidates, several of whom were quickly hired. Among the first was production designer Peter Lamont, two-time Oscar nominee with 12 James Bond films to his credit, including *For Your Eyes Only* (1981) and *Octopussy* (1983). John Richardson, who came on to supervise the special effects on the floor, also known as "practical effects," had three Bond films to his credit, as well as *The Omen* (1976) and *Superman* (1978); he would have to deal with the extensive combat sequences between the marines and the xenomorphs.

One of the people John Richardson brought with him was effects technician and all-rounder Julian Parry, who specialized in miniatures. A motorcycle courier delivered the script; he read it in his garden and thought it was "amazing." Richardson, at this point, was unaware of LA Effects' involvement for he was setting up the project to use Pinewood talent and establishing their workspace in the "very structured," historically departmentalized studio. Making models and shooting miniatures meant organizing tricky interdepartmental cooperation. Drawings arrived for the colony complex and the vehicles.

"At that point we didn't realize we were going to be segued into the LA Effects group," Parry said. "I turned up for work, very excited—and found out a few weeks later that this LA Effects group was coming in as a separate unit, which I would migrate across to."

Lamont had been recommended to Cameron by Jerry Zucker, one of the writer/producers of the hit comedy *Airplane!* (1980), who had also made *Top Secret!* (1984) in England with the production designer. He went to meet Cameron and Hurd at the Fox office in Soho Square. "When I first met Jim and Gale they said, 'How much do you want for sets?'" Lamont recalled. "I said, 'How much have you got for the picture?' They said, 'Fifteen million.' I said, 'I want 10 percent.' They said, 'Okay.'"

"Peter got the job, and I would have been one of the first people he rang," said set decorator Crispian Sallis. "Jim had said to Gale and all the senior parties, 'Anybody who worked on *Alien* is not welcome. I don't want Ridley Scott sycophants, or aficionados, or Ridley Scott fans even. I want to make my own film.' But Peter snuck me in because I was his set director. I was about 25 and I was wheeled in front of Jim and Gale, and I must've passed muster."

To augment their effects team, Robert Skotak phoned Doug Beswick and asked whether Beswick would be interested in building three quarter-scale puppets: the alien queen (at about 3 ft tall), the powerloader, and a Ripley puppet (about 18 inches tall). They'd have about six months to complete them.

"A few days later I ran some footage for Bob, Jim Cameron, and Gale Anne Hurd of the cable-operated T-Rex that we'd built for Walt Disney's *My Science Project*," Beswick said in 1986. "There was talk of doing some stop-motion along with the cable-type puppets. We went over the script, and the functions that we wanted each character to have, and made a list. The queen had to have head up/down, left/right, head tilt, tongue in/out, etc. One of Jim's comments when he saw our dinosaur was that the alien queen would have to move very fast—almost like a blur. The dinosaur had had to move very slowly, which was actually more difficult. It's really much easier to get smooth movement from something that's moving quickly than it is from something that's moving slowly."

For the full-sized aliens and queen, and related design and effects work, Cameron had already lined up Stan Winston Studio. This last group would number about 40 people and anticipated about eight months of work. His studio would also be working on *Invaders from Mars* (1986), so Winston planned to oversee crews on both sides of the Atlantic.

"It is important that everyone be based under one roof," Hurd said in 1985. "We told the studio that the only way we could guarantee the delivery date, given the time allotted, was to concentrate all the effects at Pinewood. This will afford us constant interaction with the heads of the various effects groups, as well as the ability to screen their work immediately."

That work didn't start right away, but contracts were negotiated.

In fact, Hurd had first approached another *Alien* alumnus, Brian Johnson, to do the miniature effects. He had founded Arkadon Ltd., with partners Dennis Lowe (another alumnus) and Nick Pollock, based at Bourne End, conveniently a few miles from Pinewood.

"I was contacted by Gale, who had just moved into Pinewood," Johnson said in 2019. "She asked me about *Alien* and about motion control. She asked me if I would be involved in *Aliens*. I said yes, as I had read the script she'd given me a few days before. I was due to meet Jim a few days later. Then I had a call from Gale saying she was really sorry, but Jim had a change of mind as he wanted to use LA Effects and their motion-control systems. I was really looking forward to working with the director of *Terminator*, but it wasn't to be. At our ACTT (Association of Cinematic and TV Technicians) it was decided that we had to accept LA Effects to bring their advanced motion-control systems [to the UK] as we had no comparable equipment."

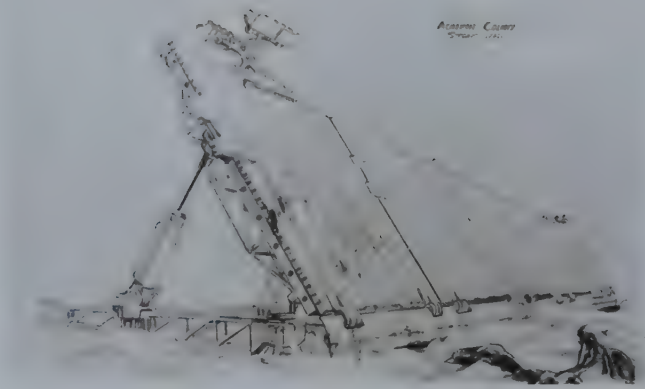
Because Cameron didn't like widescreen/anamorphic, 2.35:1, due to problems the screen ratio had caused for his effects on *Escape From New York*,

OPPOSITE: Concept art by Cobb of the colony layout with atmosphere processor in the distance.



ENS-

ACHERON COLONY



LEFT: Concept art for the colony's storm wall.

he preferred to shoot in 1.85:1. He almost chose Super 35 film, but was talked out of it. The idea with that format was one could shoot at 1.33:1, and then crop it for an anamorphic ratio if so desired. However, it was a transition year. Kodak was changing its emulsions to a higher-speed negative, and they hadn't worked out their grain emulsion; there was a risk that the Super 35 film would be too grainy. Cameron stuck to 1.85:1.

Now all he needed was his star to film.

RIPLEY

Fox continued to balk when it came to hiring Weaver to reprise her role as Ripley. The situation was dire.

"I had a frank talk with the producer, Gale Anne Hurd, and the director, Jim Cameron," Weaver said in 1986. "I felt their purpose in doing the sequel was their own; not because they wanted to cash in on the success of the first, but because there was something in that story they wanted to finish. They certainly don't intend to duplicate the first, which has a kind of eerie majesty to it. This one is completely different."

Although Weaver was coming around, she had yet to meet with Cameron or make a deal with Fox. Consequently, on April 8, the schedule was pushed back, so set construction would begin later, on July 8; the start date of principal photography was delayed until September 30. All other key dates were pushed a week, and the film would be released on June 20. The budget was still being hammered out: nothing had been provided for a director's "secretary"; one executive noted that the estimate for transportation "seems low"; they considered special effects "the area most vulnerable to cost overruns"; "set cost could be low... lab estimate is low... editing could be short..."

Fox was afraid that Cameron and Hurd were underestimating the whole shebang. Most importantly, an internal studio document noted that the casting budget didn't include funds as of yet for "Ripley."

Cameron finally persuaded all the players to arrange a meeting with

Weaver in a Santa Barbara hotel. The actress had returned from France, and was willing to talk over the script.

"One of the main reasons I was interested in repeating the role," Weaver said in 1986, "was that I wanted to get back inside Ripley again and discover what had happened to her. It isn't often, as an actress, that you get the opportunity to play the same role again. A stage actor, for example, can play Hamlet several times in his career, but that is not often the way in films. So I found the whole concept fascinating... waking up nearly sixty years later. At first, Ripley just senses things are different. Then, when she finds out what has occurred in the interim and that nobody believes her account of the disaster on the *Nostromo*, and when the company rips up her whole life, she finds it very hard to re-route herself. She is a very scarred person."

When Weaver stepped into the hotel, she was interested but not ready to commit. She had, however, watched *The Terminator* shortly before and been pleasantly surprised because it was not typically a genre she would choose to watch. "I saw *Terminator* about an hour before I met Jim," she'd say, "so I was like this [laughs, bulging her eyes and looking frazzled]. I admired the film."

Cameron had arrived first. "I was in awe of her before I ever met her," he said in 2009. "And I knew Sigourney was a tall girl, so I was thinking about her shoes. *If she's wearing high heels, she's going to be this domineering personality and I'm going to be in for a rough ride. If she's wearing flats, she's self-conscious about her height.*"

Weaver walked in wearing "like a middle heel, and I thought, *Okay, this is going to work fine. She's going to be strong, she's going to be bold, but she's not going to be completely out of control.*"

"Jim said to me," Weaver said in 1986, "If you think of the first one as a fun house, this one's the roller coaster."

But she really wanted to know why Cameron wished to make the sequel, and if his intentions were "honorable." She reiterated her fears in follow-up conversations. "I talked to Gale and Jim a good deal about why they were doing a sequel," she said. "I didn't want to do *Aliens* just to make money for Twentieth Century-Fox (laughs). I wanted to make sure that the people making this movie had the same attitude toward it that I did."

"Sigourney was wary," Hurd said. "She wondered, *Who are these kids?* But from the first meeting where Jim told her the direction he wanted to pursue, she was interested."

"Sigourney seemed to respond well to the maternal element," Cameron would say. "She talked about wanting to have a baby. So *Aliens'* maternal angle keyed right into Sigourney's own personality."

"I felt they were kind of a new breed of filmmaker," Weaver said of Cameron and Hurd. "In the sense that they understood the business requirements of the industry, but also really wanted to do something that was personal and true to their vision."

"I wrote the original treatment for this story two years before," Cameron reflected. "Then I wrote the screenplay about a year later, and Sigourney didn't get involved until four or five months before principal photography. So by the time she came to it, the script was visually and dramatically a 'fait accompli.' I have to give her a lot of credit for not rampaging through it saying, 'This won't work, that won't work.' Her approach was: 'Right, I see

RIGHT: Syd Mead's earliest sketch of the *Sulaco* had a rotating crew compartment up front, an antenna field behind it, and a heavily armed aft section that held cargo bays and propulsion systems. "I did this big melon-shaped thing, thinking we could make it hexagonal, like a soccer ball, and when this thing was refueling or re-loading it would just open up like a big umbrella," Mead said. "You'd pack stuff around in these segments and it would all close shut again for transport. I always like to have some strong mechanical idea for a design. That makes it dramatic. You can't assume that the audience has more than a couple of seconds to catch on to what this thing is supposed to be."

the direction you want to take; this is how my character would respond to that situation—wouldn't I be a little bit angrier here or softer there?' She thought it was consistent with the character she had created."

"He didn't want to make a sequel," Weaver said, "but a film that would stand on its own. He wanted the film to be about Ripley's character."

In 1986, Cameron told several interviewers: "So it was a dream for me as a writer, because I was able to take the best and most applicable of what Sigourney brought to it and plug it in. I was very relieved that she thought it was consistent with the character she had created, because obviously this movie is about her. She liked the script a lot."

However, decades later, Cameron and Weaver would reveal that the first meeting had been replete with landmines that could have scuttled the project. Weaver had marked her copy of the script with several different colors of ink, and filled the margins with questions and notes. She had specific ideas that she asked to be incorporated into the script.

"She wanted to die in the film," Cameron said, "she wanted to not use guns, and she wanted to make love to the alien. I had written the script for her, and when I finally met her, she had all these ideas that were anathema to me."

Cameron told her he wasn't prepared to implement any of those changes into the story.

Weaver also didn't think Ripley hated the aliens.

Cameron recalled: "I said, 'No, no, no, she hates them. She hates the aliens that killed all her crew members and put her through the most traumatic event of her life, and she wants to see them destroyed.' I thought Sigourney would bolt—I was petrified. However, she had a lot of really good other ideas, and that creative tug-of-war between us forced me to think outside of my limited box and to see that Ripley's motivation was on a higher plane." Cameron said later: "Ripley had a sense of duty."

They avoided a showdown, but, rebuffed, Weaver reminded Cameron that nothing had been signed.

"Sigourney confirmed that she still hadn't made her deal, and that she wasn't under option, either," Cameron said.

A showdown with the studio was imminent.

AGENT VS. AGENT

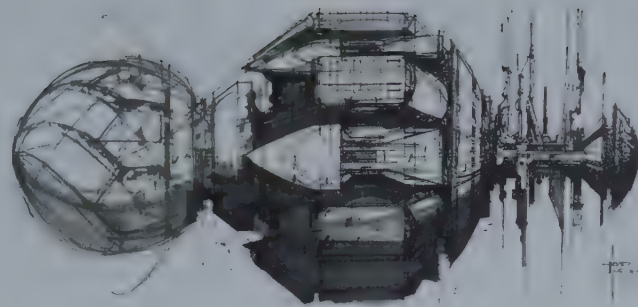
Weaver knew that she had a director-writer who wasn't prepared to do the film without her. She also knew she would be carrying the film, and wanted a paycheck to reflect that. Fox didn't like being backed into a corner. So they did nothing.

Cameron and Hurd were amazed by their inaction.

"Without Sigourney, it's not a sequel," Hurd said, "it's something else."

"It's another movie, and why bother?" Cameron agreed.

The *Los Angeles Times* noted that, "Fox executives argued that they could not publicly take such a position [that the film couldn't be done without Weaver]—because that would severely crimp their negotiating posture. (If Weaver's agent, ICM's New York-based Sam Cohn, knew Fox had to have Weaver, he could inflate the asking price considerably.) Because Fox insisted that it could make the film with or without Weaver, Cameron and Hurd quit



again, this time taking off for a honeymoon in Hawaii."

"We assumed it was a dead issue," Hurd said, "and when we left for Hawaii, we thought the movie was off."

Another reason they were souring on the film was that things weren't working out at Pinewood. The production couldn't reserve the famous and very large '007 Stage' at Pinewood, so Fox was "pulling out," Lamont said. "Unfortunately we were third in line, behind *Little Shop of Horrors* [1986] and *Gunbus* [aka *Sky Bandits*, 1986], then us."

Instead, the production designer negotiated for 'E' Stage, one of three other large soundstages at Pinewood, as well as the insulated north and east tunnel stages (which would remain warm during winter). "I don't think Jim was very happy about that," Lamont said, "but it was the best I could do."

Cameron recalled: "I told the studio, 'Gale and I are going to Hawaii for our honeymoon. We'll give you until we get back to lock in Sigourney's deal. If it hasn't happened by then, we're out.' Then we got back from our honeymoon—and a deal still hadn't been made."

Fox had called their bluff.

"So, since Gale and I had created a deadline scenario that we now had to play out," Cameron continued, "I figured I had only a couple of days to decide what to do. I really wanted to make this picture. So I came up with a ploy: First I called Arnold Schwarzenegger's agent, who worked at the same firm [ICM] as Sigourney's agent. I told him I'd been thinking over this *Aliens* situation and my new place in the Hollywood pecking order. I went on to say that, since I'd done *Terminator*, everybody was telling me that I shouldn't do *Aliens* because I'd just made my mark with a completely original film. The more baggage I carried into the sequel from the first film, the more strikes I'd have against me in terms of trying to create my own original vision of *Aliens*. I then told Arnold's agent that, since I had some great original characters in *Aliens*, I'd decided to drop the character of Ripley altogether, and build the story around Newt and the marines. That way, *Aliens* would be 100 percent mine; this would get me over the stigma of doing a sequel to somebody else's classic picture. I finished by saying I was starting the rewrite today. Then I hung up.

"I just knew that after I hung up, the next call Arnold's agent was going to make would be to Sigourney's agent, and that person would then immediately call Larry Gordon, head of production at Fox, to tell him what

I'd said. And you know what? That's exactly what happened. Sigourney's deal was made that day. But it was a close call. People never knew how close *Aliens* came to not happening."

On Weaver's behalf, Cohn negotiated a deal worth \$1 million up front, plus a percentage of the profits.

"I'm amazed that [the deal] happened," Weaver said. "It's completely due to the perseverance of Gale and Jim."

For his part, Giler felt that Weaver was always going to give in. "She got 1 million bucks, which was a big deal," he'd say. "She might've been the first actress to get \$1 million, and it was all because it was mishandled by the producers."

Hurd and Cameron had married on the island of Maui—but that, too, had almost failed to be. "The day of the wedding I got cold feet," Hurd said. "Jim had to do a logical cost-benefit analysis of why getting married would be good. We came out in the black."

A SYMPHONIC QUINTET

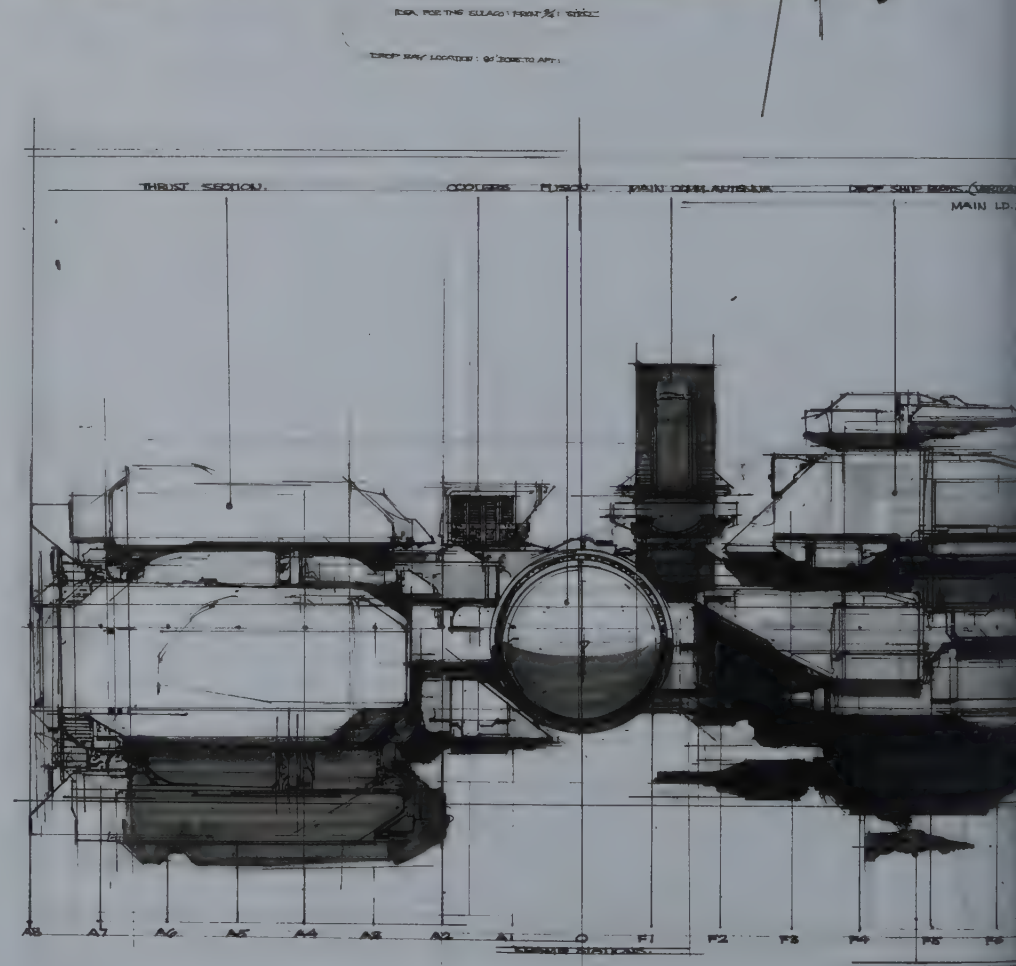
Now that Cameron and Hurd had Ripley, they had to find their Newt. Because the film was to be made at Pinewood, production employed the same UK casting director as Fox had for *Alien*: Mary Selway. Circa late April, she initiated a massive talent hunt for an American in England who fit the part's requirements for an extremely resourceful and tough little girl. Casting agents also visited schools in the United States, as well as military bases in the UK. Candidates who showed promise were photographed.

"We were living in the UK," said Carrie Henn, who was eight years old at the time. She and her brother, Christopher, had been born in Florida, but had moved overseas when she was two because of her father's work in the military. "My mom used to pick me up and take me home for lunch, but on that day she was meeting friends in Stoke-on-Trent, so I had my lunch at school. I was eating in the cafeteria when Sarah Jackson, a casting agent, came round taking Polaroids of the girls. It didn't seem like a big deal; I didn't even tell my parents. My dad got the call: 'They're really interested in Carrie's picture. Would she like to audition for the movie?'"

Henn's mother was from Yorkshire, England; her father was a master sergeant in the United States Air Force, based at Lakenheath in Suffolk. Henn and the more promising kids were being videotaped in London and the cassettes sent to Cameron (they were also on the lookout for Newt's brother, Tim).

"My dad asked, 'Would you be interested?'" Henn recalled her response: "Why? It's not like I'm going to get it." But I went and auditioned anyway, along with some friends of mine. My brother, Chris, was just in the corridor with mom, and they called him in to do the scene with me. They knew what they wanted, but hadn't found it yet—all the child actors from [TV] adverts would deliver their lines and give a big smile, but Newt isn't a happy child. After the audition, they had me and a couple of other girls from my school read again."

The casting crew recorded something like 500 candidates on videotape, but Hurd called Henn's audition: "Dead on. From the very first reading."



OPPOSITE AND BELOW: Another concept piece by Mead of the *Sulaco*. "Jim didn't like [the first concept]," Mead said. "The reason was that when this thing goes by the camera, or the camera goes by the model, you'd have to change focus because you have something bulging towards the camera past a certain focal length. So we changed it into a long, submarine-like shape, which was its final form. Lots of ins and outs and deep shadow areas, which photograph nice. There were huge, long-range guns and a mechanical idea down the side, which is like a freighter with a built-in crane system, which slides down the entire length of all the storage bays. It had a nice mechanical veracity to it." Overall, it was a more aggressive look.

The list of hundreds was reduced to dozens—and then nine. Those girls and their parents were invited to Pinewood Studios to meet Hurd and Selway.

Back in the States, Cameron was casting concept artists.

"We started the film in early May," he said. "At that point, nothing had been designed, literally zippo. I knew that the most critical thing was to get the designs fast, because you can't storyboard without them and you can't build anything without them, and we were supposed to start shooting in September. The only way we could see getting the job done was to bring on two top designers and divide up the workload, with me taking on certain parts to fill in the gaps."

One of the concept illustrators he chose was Ron Cobb, who had worked on *Alien*, *Star Wars*, and *Conan the Barbarian*, among others.

"A film like this is absolutely dependent on the creation of interesting and new, yet still believable, environments," Cobb said, "whether it be a future environment, or another planet, or whatever. There are several environments in *Aliens*: an everyday space environment, essentially an Earth city in orbit; an outpost-type colony on a distant planet where people live much closer to

the bone; and a military environment in space, which is yet a third and completely distinct version of what it would be like to function in a hostile environment. There's an undercurrent to all the scenes that comes directly from the nature of the sets: the colors, whether it's a large or small space, a threatening space or a comforting space."

Cameron also wanted to hire Syd Mead, who had created concept designs for the Ridley Scott movie *Blade Runner*, as well as *Star Trek: The Motion Picture* (1979), and *Tron* (1982). He searched and found him circa May 13, in Florida, where Mead was judging Miss USA 1985 (the 34th Miss USA pageant), which was being televised live from the Lakeland Civic Auditorium.

"I was one of 12 judges," Mead recalled. "While I was there I got this phone call from Jim Cameron. He said, 'I finally tracked you down. Your office told me you were down there. That must be hard work,' referring to being a judge. And it was hard work. They dragged us around every single day to luncheons and civic affair appearances other than just the judging procedure itself. He said, 'I'm going to Federal Express the script down to you, and you read it and tell me if you'd like to work on the production.'"

"The script read like a very fast-paced novella," Mead continued. "A good story in and of itself. I sat up until four in the morning reading because I couldn't stop. I called Jim back and said, 'It's a great story' and told him when I'd be back in Hollywood."

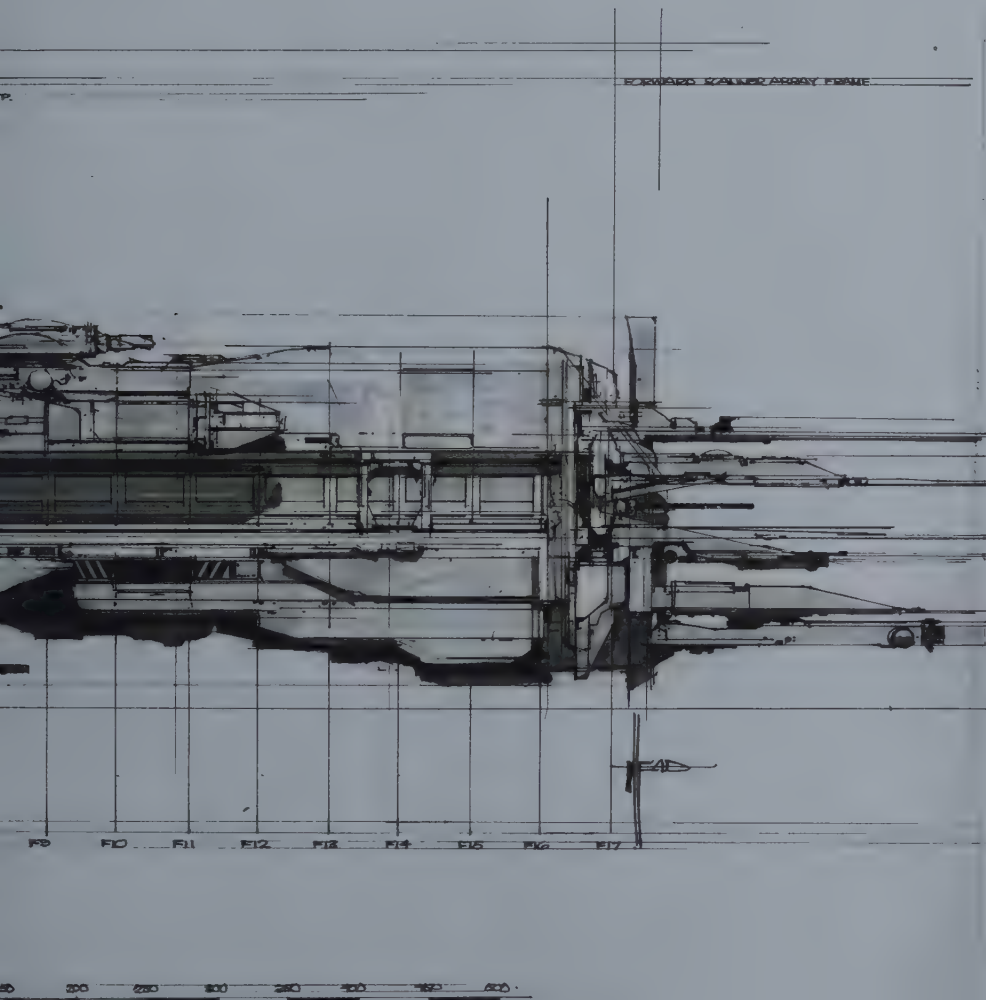
"So I came back, and went over to his house on Mulholland. He showed me little artifacts he had from *The Terminator*. He had the scale model of the robot, and he showed me his drawings of the queen and of their environment in the power plant."

"I assigned more of the military hardware to Syd," Cameron said, which included the *Sulaco*, its dropship, interiors, and so on. "I was hoping to keep its look in one style; it seemed to me that Syd works best in areas that are very futuristic, while Ron tends to create with elements that are a little more present-day recognizable. I thought I'd let Syd handle the cutting-edge technology. To Ron, I gave the colony because I figured the colony would have a more straightforward, rudimentary-type technology, whatever they could afford. And I filled in the gaps. I handled the design of the creature elements, strictly from an illustration standpoint—Stan Winston took over with the sculptural design. That was the division of labor. The end result was we all went design crazy for about a month."

"The fact that Ron Cobb worked on the first film didn't have much bearing on our hiring him for this one," said Hurd in 1986. "We hired him for the great body of work that he has in the genre, and also the ability for Jim, Ron, and Syd to communicate in a very, very technical visual sense."

Within days, Mead had drawn a concept for the *Sulaco*.

"From my original reading of the script," he said, "I interpreted the word picture as being something like a large melon-shaped rocketship with a vast antenna field on the front of it. For camera purposes, however, Jim wanted more of a vertical blade format. That way, once the spires went past and the main bulk of the ship entered the frame, there'd be a moving wall of detail that wouldn't require you to move the camera or change the focus or anything. So I had to re-orient my thinking a bit based on how he was planning to shoot it."



The basic idea for the ship's exterior was, Cameron said, a "rocket gun that carries something."

"In movies," Mead added, "you don't have to match everything up, inside and out, but there has to be a logical visual connection. I figured that with dropships mounted inside, we'd need a bay that was about 100 ft wide, so that's what I used in approximating the scale for the rest of the ship."

The armored personnel carrier designed by Mead reportedly looked too much like a fancy sports car. "Syd would do things that wouldn't necessarily work," Hurd said, "but looked bitchin'."

"*Aliens* struck me right away as a grand takeoff on Vietnam," Cobb told *Cinefex* magazine in 1986, "with all of these odd echoings of *Apocalypse Now* [1979] or something. There was a rich, witty aspect to the picture. It's not a projection, truly, into the future. It's more like a contemporary war film. From the vehicles to the weapons to the patches on their uniforms, it's more a reflection of Vietnam than it is the future."

"Many directors who are not artists or designers themselves," Cameron said, "who don't have that sort of immediacy at their fingertips, have to say, 'Do three and I'll pick one.' I am able to say, 'Do this,' and that's it. It is a big creative family and a lot of people are pouring their ideas into the creative stockpot, but this allows me to channel it a lot more purposefully and therefore make a film more efficiently. Being able to sketch something out on a napkin gives people not only an idea of what I want, but it closes the circle a little tighter and makes it a little bit more intimate. There are high-budget movies, low-budget movies, and then there are 'no waste' movies. I like to think of myself as a 'no waste' filmmaker."

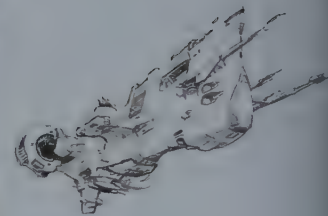
Lamont and Richardson also flew over to meet with Cameron, Mead, and Cobb at the director's house on Mulholland Drive. The five went over how all of their design and conceptual work would work together.

GHOST SHIP

In May 1985, *Rambo: First Blood II* was released in theaters. "When I saw *Rambo*, it was just like watching someone else's movie," Cameron said. "I found it enjoyable. I saw it at a pre-release screening, and Gale and I looked at each other and said, 'This movie is going to make a lot of money.'" (It did.)

That same month, LAE's Suzanne Benson, now acting as the effects line-producer, left for Pinewood to start preproduction. Cameron and the live-action crew would follow in about a month. Benson supervised the transfer of materials and equipment from LAE's San Fernando Valley studio to Pinewood's 'L,' 'M,' 'F,' and 'G' soundstages. Allan Markowitz, optical-effects and animation supervisor, and LAE chief Larry Benson joined her two weeks later. Certain process photography, plates needed for rear or front projection, would start shooting in August.

"Initially, Cameron had agreed that the special effects for the film should be as close to the first generation as possible," Allan Markowitz told *Cinefantastique* magazine. (Again, "first generation" referred to in-camera effect processes that avoided using an optical printer to combine shots, which would typically result in second-generation effects: shots duplicated in order to be put on another piece of film.)

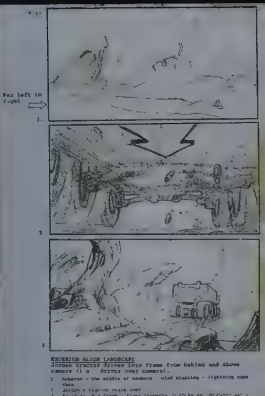


ABOVE: More concept art, by Cameron, of the *Sulaco*.

LEFT: Two models based on the *Narcissus*, the small escape craft from the first film.

The Skotaks asked Pat McClung to head up the model-making shop in the UK. "I'd never done anything like that before," McClung recalled. "Bob and Jim had been working on this thing for a number of months at that point, but I knew almost nothing about it. I had an hour to go through the script, then Bob asked me to go with Suzanne Benson to check out the facility; I really didn't know the Bensons all that well at that point. I'd met them a few times. I'd seen her at the front desk at Private Stock [an earlier effects company], and she was Larry's wife. She didn't seem to be film savvy at all. She talked a lot about shopping." (The earlier effects company had been headed up by Chuck Comisky and Ken Jones, with Larry Benson as a financial partner. The Skotaks had operated as the creative heads, along with John Muto.)

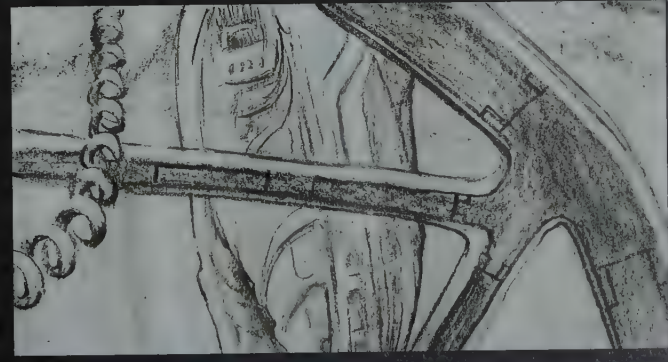
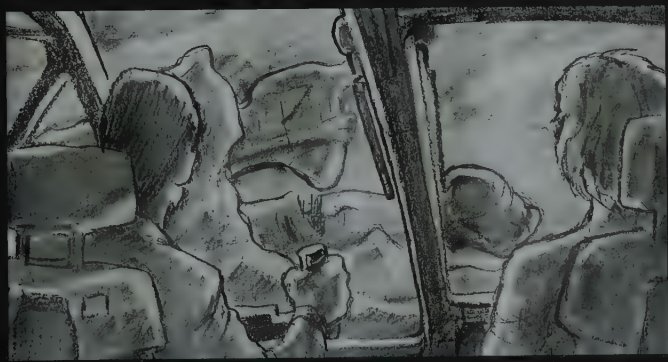
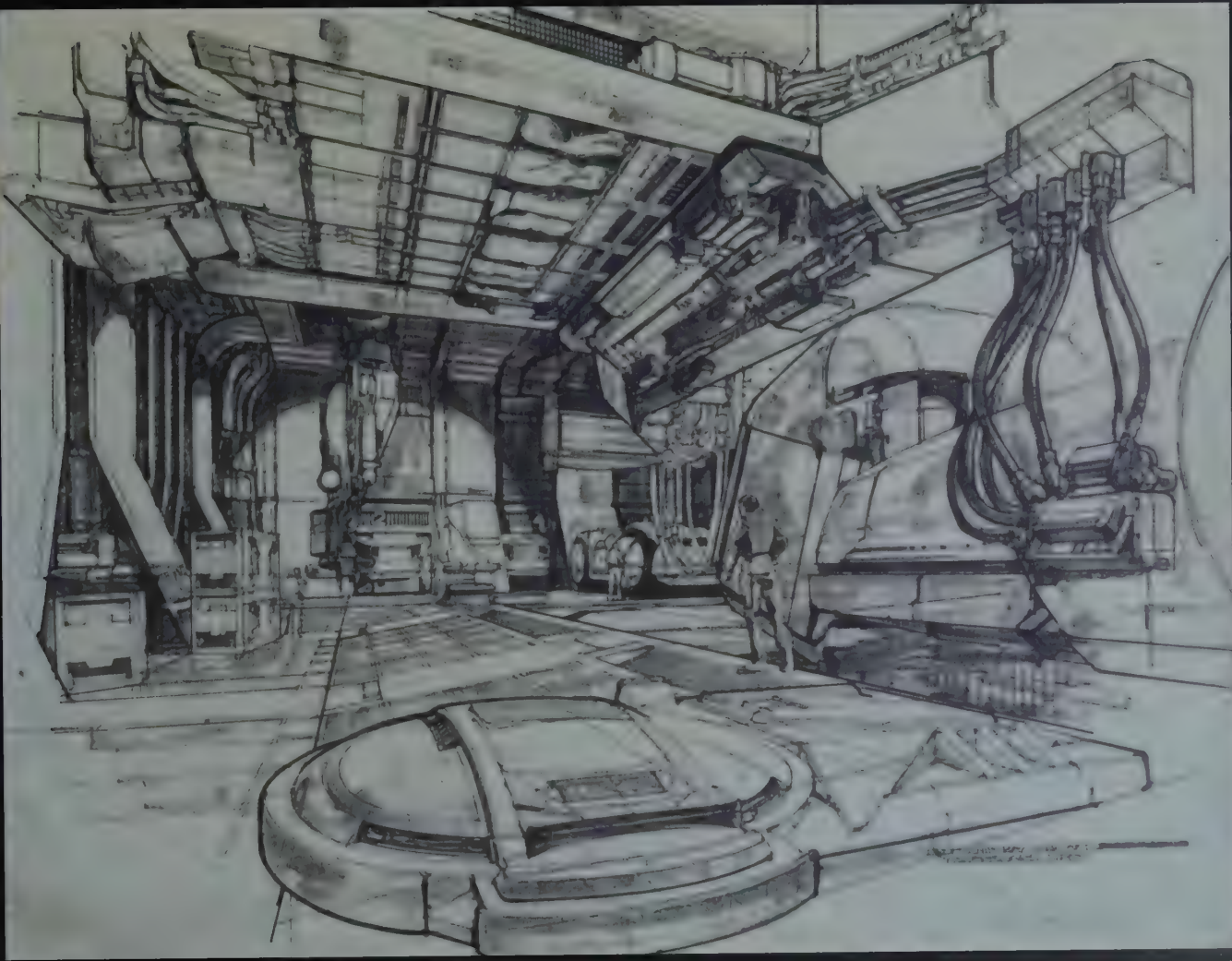
LAE's Steve Benson, and Jay Roth, its USA model shop supervisor, were already at work trying to re-furbish the derelict. Fortunately, collector and dimensional makeup artist Bob Burns had obtained the original ship—nearly 12 ft in diameter—back in 1979. Burns was famous in Hollywood for

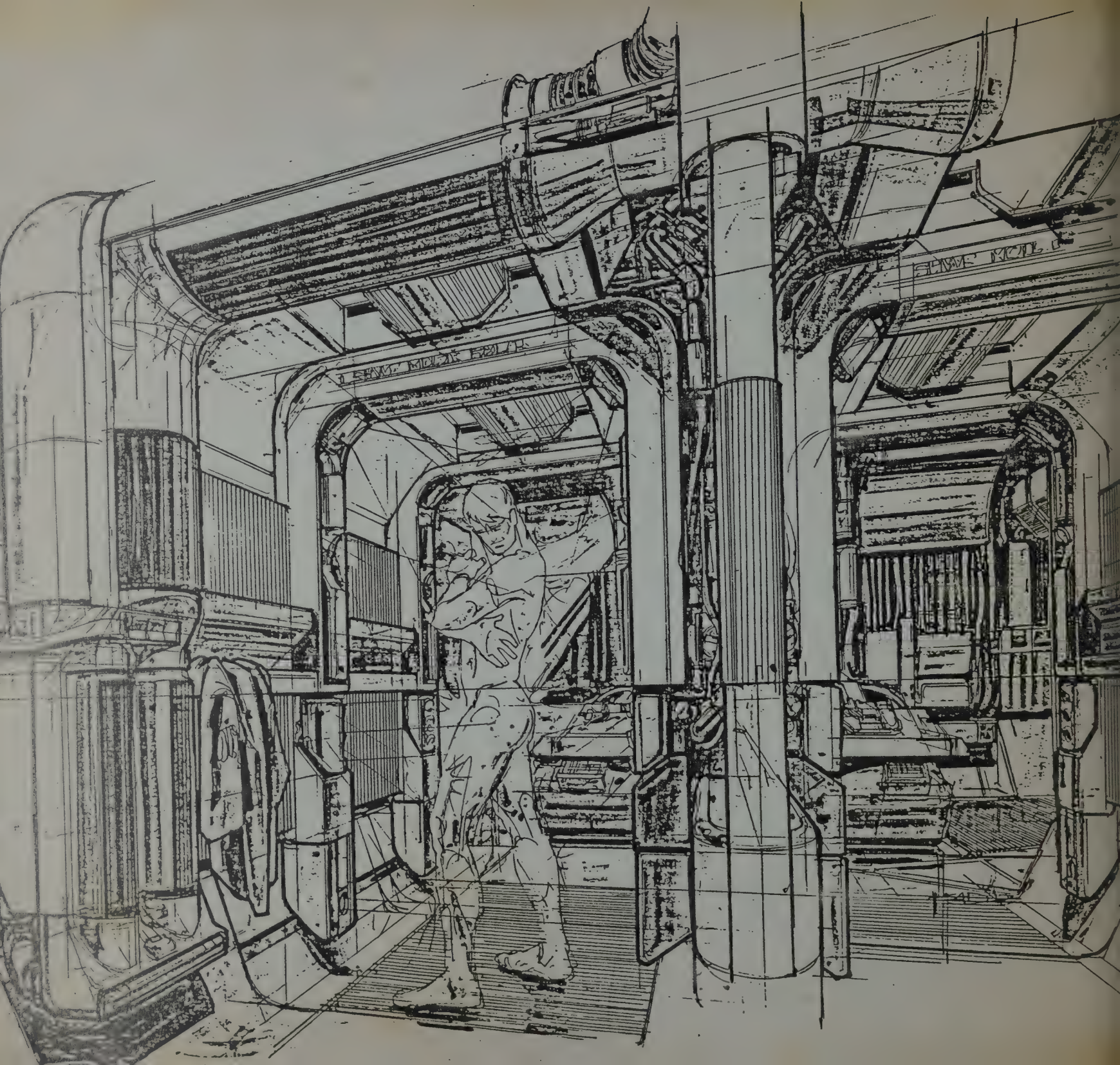


ABOVE: Storyboards for the Jordan tractor's drive over camera to the derelict.

RIGHT: Following the *Sulaco*, Mead did a concept for the cargo bay → "Dropship view aft, starboard side" → a nearly empty hull with interior structural supports visible, modified and dressed with functional panels and equipment: "What I liked about *Aliens*, from a design point of view," said Mead, "was the military hardware, and the mixture between space and naval architecture."

BELOW RIGHT: Storyboards for later composite images of the tractor's approach to the derelict. Cameron needed point-of-view, through-the-window tracking shots. "We smoked up the set and ran our camera along this tiny little road," visual-effects supervisor Robert Skotak said, "up and down hills and around various outcroppings, until we came right up to the derelict. In one version, we ran right up to the crack in the side where the Jordens were going to enter the ship. At that close a range, however, the model didn't hold up well." The landscape for the derelict required two tons of plaster.





OPPOSITE: Concept art of the showers on the *Sulaco* by Mead.

RIGHT: Mead's drawing of the colonial marines charging down a ship corridor, perhaps as part of a drill.

BELOW RIGHT: Mead's concept drawing of the mess area on the *Sulaco*.

his elaborately staged Halloween shows at and outside his home. Each year was themed, and 1979 was the year of *Alien*. With his usual group of friends—Mike Minor, Lynn Barker, Tom Scherman, Fran Evans, Bill Malone, Tom Campbell, Walter Koenig, Dorothy Fontana, et al—and the Skotaks—the team got to work. Fox was looped in and okayed the concept and a sign posted at the head of the spaceship set giving credit to the studio and the film.

“The Fox execs came through and were real impressed,” Robert Skotak recalled. “I’d been put in charge of supervising the re-making of the alien costume. I headed a group that included my brother, Dorothy and Tom Campbell; we’d been working with Tom on *Battle Beyond the Stars* at the time. We also re-created several corridors of the spaceship. It was very ambitious. It was a big thing, and thousands of people saw the promo, ‘20th Century-Fox’s *Alien*.’ Fox appreciated it, and they had all the leftover stuff, so the studio gave it to Bob: the *Nostramo*, parts of the sets, the costumes, the spacesuits. They didn’t want to waste money on storage, and they saw that Bob already had a museum of sorts, including King Kong’s original armature and so on.”

However, the derelict, six years later, was in bad shape. LAE had to repaint and re-sculpt it. “Because it had been in Bob’s driveway for quite a long time, black widow spiders had found a home in it,” Dennis Skotak said. “They had laid eggs in it, which was a weird irony, so it wasn’t very safe to handle at first.”

The actual job of restoring the derelict and creating the volcanic environment (and rock wall) for it went to Matt Rose and Mark Williams, who re-sculpted part of the ship in foam.

Cameron would need several shots of the derelict ship for process plates. Due to the derelict model’s weight and perilous condition, he opted to shoot those plates in Los Angeles rather than ship it over to England.

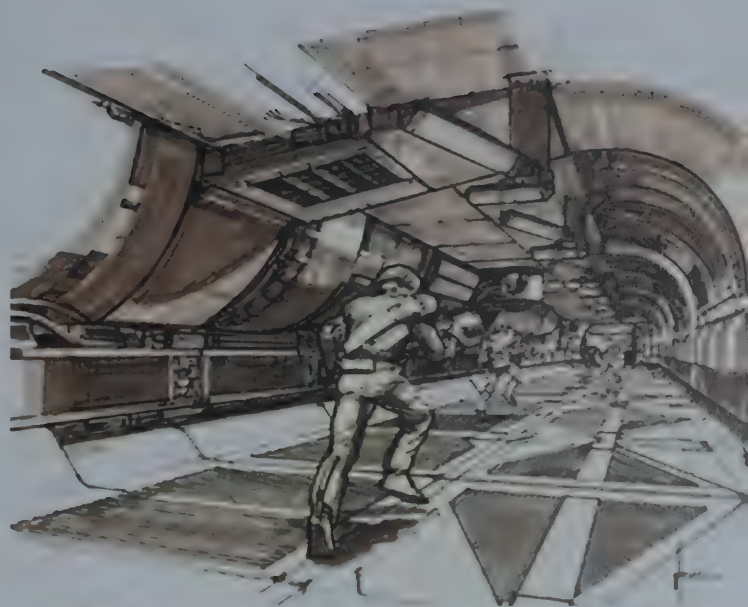
“Our first day of real work on the film was vacuuming dust off the derelict,” said Robert Skotak.

Their team also had to re-create the *Narcissus*. In this case, the original model was not available; it had been stolen from an exhibition. Working from photographs, they fabricated a square steel tubing armature, which they welded together using wood for the understructure and plexiglass on top.

As Cameron approved finished models, he shot video storyboards, also known as animatics. These would serve as guides for the final effects shots and, much later on, as placeholders in edits when final shots had yet to be completed.

“Jim has been recording shots with a video camera as he wants them,” Hurd said at the time. “This is a much better device than just regular artwork storyboards. The effects people can see exactly the composition of the shot and what the director requires. It is very difficult to convey exactly what you require through a static drawing. You can’t indicate speed or how the shot should move. We can then cut it to length so that editor Ray Lovejoy can allocate the number of seconds each particular scene requires.”

Two more script versions are dated May 28 and May 30, but are substantially the same as the February 1985 first draft, except that the scenes are numbered for principal photography—which was coming up fast.





THE QUEEN'S KNIGHTS

The queen was an opportunity to take a design stand that went beyond the four legs," Cameron said, "to strike out in a new direction with a new creature. No one that was so new would be lost when you saw it, though. I was very careful about that. I wanted to make sure that when we finally saw the queen, audiences intuitively understood what she was and what she did. Which was to make new aliens."

"The only thing that attracted me [initially to working on *Aliens*] was to be working with Jim," Stan Winston said. "Because I'm terrified of working on a sequel. My involvement was due to my respect for Jim's imagination. But when Jim first came to me with this idea of putting two guys inside a giant alien queen, I thought, *This man is out of his mind*. But the next moment, I treated this [if he had imagined it, we could probably do it]."

Because Cameron's concept art had only included the upper part of the queen, Winston produced a few drawings of her rear legs. He and Cameron agreed from the outset that they were making a character and not a monster. "Stan has always loved creating characters," said Rosengrant, "and that was important to him."

"Stunt as feathers," Malton said, "and that segued into Jim having faith that we could do this big puppet version of the queen. It totally galvanized our real-life relationship."

"Jim took that drawing of mine and re-drew it," Winston said. "We would hand-draw parts like that. At one point, the two of us were sitting at his house drawing different parts of the alien queen. Jim on one board, myself on the other."

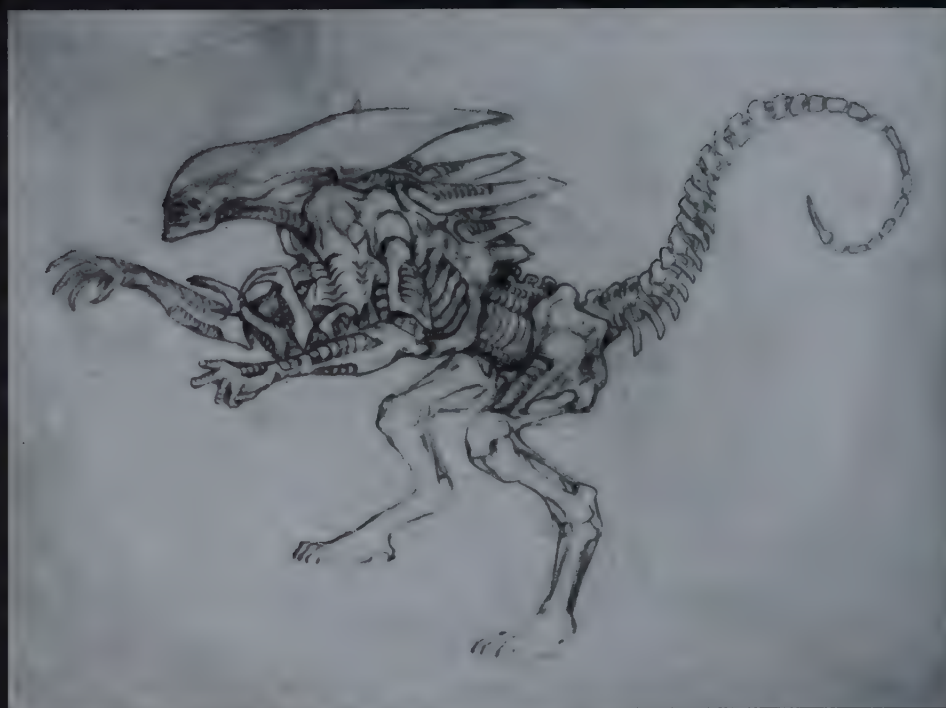
"Then Jim took with consideration some of what I'd said and the things I'd drawn and he went off and drew another queen, which was similar to his first, but much more refined. When he came back, it was obvious that that was the alien queen. There was no doubt about it. We then sat down together and worked out the drawing, literally blueprinting her out in profile and from above, with her exact shape and exactly how she would have to be done from the puppet inside."

Winston soon brought in several of his crew. His Northridge studio complex was spreading. Its front office was in one unit, its mechanical department was in another, while sculpting, moldmaking, and fabrication departments occupied yet another. Howard Berger, one of the artists, recalled that he "basically doubled how much time I had wasted walking from the mechanical shop to the fabrication shop to the front office, and it added up to something like two and a half hours—in a single day!"

Berger suggested that Winston purchase skateboards. Soon, some crew were zipping around in these from shop to shop.

"As far as Stan goes, the shop felt very much like an extended family," said Rosengrant. "He treated Shane and I like sons, in a way. He treated us very well, and he was very warm and open to us. He allowed us to grow as artists and get better and better."

"Stan was a great artist and he had a great eye, but he was also a real good businessman," Rosengrant added. "And a lot of what was going on in makeup



effects was a bunch of guys working out of a garage and—'Let's have a little break at one o'clock and get, pardon my French, fucked up (or drunk), and then we'll go back to work.' But Stan treated it like a business. Which was fine with us because we were there to work and do our thing. There was a 'rock-and-roll makeup effects' lifestyle which was just not professional. Stan transformed that."

DINO-MITE

Cameron and Winston decided to create a low-tech proof of concept for the queen in the studio parking lot. They rented a crane and built a body plate setup out of wood to hold two stuntmen, Dick Warlock and Ed Matthews. Crew formed a rough mock-up of the 14-ft queen using foam-core and black plastic trash bags.

"We put this garbage-bag queen alien together," Winston said. "Jim wanted to put two men inside the body to accomplish the four-limbed look, extend the body from a crane arm to hold it up, and puppet the legs externally. Two of the men's arms produced the queen's [T-Rex-like] small arms. The large arms were operated by one arm extended and holding onto something like a ski pole attached to some creature hands I had developed for another project."

ABOVE AND OPPOSITE: Extrapolating on Cameron's concepts, Stan Winston sketched out several variants of the alien queen, including one (bottom right) that could be operated by only one stuntman, situated backward, with his hands in the elbow area and his feet in her knees. (Images courtesy of Stan Winston School)



"It was a real test, none as wide as you can move them," Cameron said during the test. He then asked the crane operator to raise the queen to about 10 feet high, then to pivot the body, then had him swing the boom arm so it moved through a corner.

"I had this concept that was basically a crane moving up and down, and I'd build a creature around it," said Rosengrant. "Then we'd have the puppeteer dealing with the arms. Originally it was going to be a test of the queen on the plate with the guys inside, but then we started mocking up the queen's arms, and we covered it up with black garbage bags."

"Then we knew that the concept worked," Winston said, "all we had to do was figure out how we were going to build it for real. The concept test showed that it could be done, basically, as a big puppet: two people in a suit with arms and legs."

The next phase of queen creation was a quarter-scale prototype, which would serve as a reference maquette for the full-sized queen. Molds made from it would also be used to produce the quarter-scale rod-puppet.

In consultation with Doug Beswick, whose team would make the puppet, the puppeteer's idea had been definitively quashed, partially because they all agreed that the slime dripping from the queen's jaws would be impossible to clean up after every take.

"The first step was to analyze the types of shots we'd be doing," Cameron said, realizing that most of them would require fairly quick action—turns and stops and rapid strikes—moves that in stop-motion would cause so much motion blur that even the arms and legs would end up strobing.

The rod-puppet and cable-actuated puppet would also meld more seamlessly with the fire, smoke, and steam for the full-sized queen shots. Beswick and his team would build the puppet, while Winston and his team would build the quarter-scale miniature for reference. The quarter-scale maquette would go over to the Winston studio to be photographed and reference photographs so he could begin working on the mechanical aspects of the puppet. His challenge was to put a network of rods, levers, and cables into very little space within the queen's body. The puppet would be supported by a rigid pole from the base of her head to a quarter-scale overhead crossbar. Her basic ambulatory movements would be done via rods attached to her feet that ran down the length of the rear of the set.

"From a mechanical perspective, the design was very difficult," Beswick said. "The queen was extremely complex and extremely skinny. The puppeteer had to be able to reach the joints when the model was still being sculpted, Phil was in charge of the mechanics, but not a whole lot because the dimensions were so tight. In fact, we ended up having to do a couple of adjustments to the back joint. Phil underestimated how deep they were, so the rods ran all around the thorax and, as a result, when it came to the mechanics he'd worked out for it didn't fit. So he had to adjust them, and then it just barely made it."

"I had to be in it," Xotaco said. "The thorax narrowed to a tiny triangle—only a couple of inches from corner to corner. We kept trying to make it a bit wider, but the puppeteer didn't want to fatten up the queen or fatten her up a bit, but he stuck to the design. It got to be kind of funny





OPPOSITE ABOVE: Stuntmen Dick Warlock and Ed Matthews in position to operate the alien queen's arms for the "Garbage Bag Test" at Stan Winston Studio.

OPPOSITE BELOW: Stan Winston coaxing his alien queen to perform. (Images courtesy of Stan Winston School.)

ABOVE LEFT: At Stan Winston Studio, Shane Manan, Alec Gillis, John Rosengrant, and Shawn McEnroe work on the alien queen maquette.

ABOVE RIGHT: The alien queen sculpt at the Winston Studio. (Images courtesy of Stan Winston School.)

because we'd go to him and say, 'Couldn't the fingers be a little bigger?' And he'd say, 'That's not the design.' Or we'd say, 'There's not enough room for a mechanism in here.' And he'd say, 'But that's the design.' Everything we asked for, we didn't get. In the end, the alien queen turned out exactly as Jim had planned it in the first place."

After Winston's crew finished their sculpting and molding, Tony Gardner accompanied the silicon molds over to Beswick's shop to start duplicating the same in Ultracal so Michael Burnett could begin running the necessary foam pieces that would be cast, trimmed, and seamed before being attached to a fiberglass head/shell. (Gardner also worked with a crew at Winston's who were re-creating the Chestbuster.)

SERVING HER MAJESTY

Cameron, Winston, and company also started on the costumes for the queen's henchmen in Los Angeles before flying overseas. "There was a lot of concern in that regard," the director said in 1991. The script he'd written described not one, but dozens of xenomorphs skulking around. Fox execs were apprehensive, but Cameron swore metaphorically on a stack of Bibles that he could do it with six suits and a few puppets. "Even though there were supposed to be hundreds of them," he said, "the original plan was never to have more than six in a shot at the same time."



In terms of their design, he didn't want to alter it much except in so far as the updates would result in greater ease of performance. "We tried to be as true to the original film as we could," Winston said in 1986, "without disallowing ourselves a little bit of artistic freedom to do things that we considered, if not improvements, something to keep our heads above water so we were not just doing what was done before."

"I went more for motion as opposed to design," Cameron explained. "We spent most of our R&D time on motion."

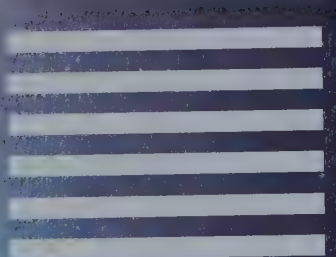
Indeed, Cameron understood that creature designers, in their makeup and prosthetics, generally spent too much time on the finer details of their creations. Having studied film, he saw clearly that audiences needed only a few details to recognize form, and couldn't even process the mountains of details (for the most part). Cameron said that most designers "fail to realize that people need very few pixels of information to identify a human figure, and most of that identification is through motion."

"Luckily, with Jim's background in effects," Hurd said, "he was able to troubleshoot quite a lot of that in advance. He could talk on a technical level with the people who were actually going to have to create the effects and make them work, and he was able to solve a lot of problems that way before any money had to be spent."



CHAPTER

04



SCRAMBLE FOR WAR

JUNE TO SEPTEMBER 1985



DRAWINGS



With the green light for *Aliens*, Cameron and Hurd began a search for actors needed to fill out their cast.

Comedian Paul Reiser auditioned early for the part of Carter Burke. Reiser had broken into the New York comedy scene within a year of graduating from college, but while accompanying a friend on an audition was accidentally shown into director Barry Levinson's office. Levinson was so taken with Reiser that he offered him the role of Modell in *Diner* (1982).

Cameron didn't know he was a comedian, "But Paul could play this really sincere but slightly smarmy guy who becomes evil," he said.

Reiser became the frontrunner for Burke, but was unaware of this because he heard nothing from Cameron or Hurd following his audition.

That June, Mead went on to conceptualize the *Sulaco* mess room, hypersleep chamber, locker room, pressure doors, shower, and hygiene area. "They walk through that before they put on their uniforms," Mead said. "But nothing with the control room; I guess that's because you never saw that on the ship and it's assumed to be largely automatic. You never got into the drama of the ship. It was all concentrated on getting them to where they were going.

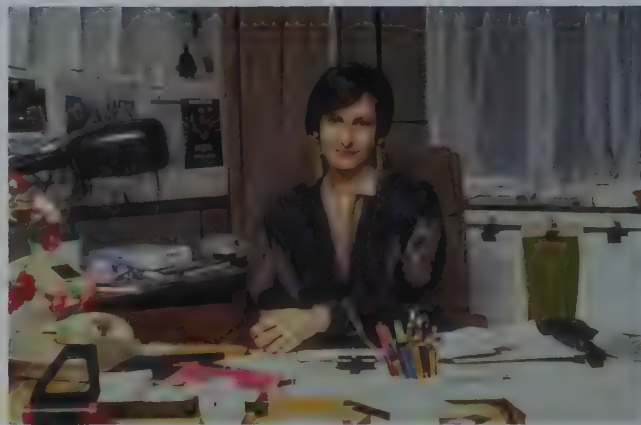
"That was practically the end of my involvement. They all went off to Pinewood, Cameron and Gale and the whole group."

"We hit the ground running," said Hurd.

In England, Cameron and Hurd occupied "The Old Stables" in Langley Park near Slough, but they were rarely home. Cameron went on several recess (location scouts) with Lamont for possible real-world sites that might be transformed into the script's atmosphere processing plant. Instead of building a very expensive series of sets, the idea was to take advantage of a defunct industrial factory of some kind and convert it, dress it with alien goo, and so on. They scouted oil refineries until they realized that they wouldn't be able to create sparks or explosions in those.

Robert and Elaine Skotak, and Dennis Skotak and his wife, D.C. Fontana (of *Star Trek* fame), arrived circa July 1. "The night we finished the last plate with the derelict, three hours later we hopped on a plane to England," said Robert Skotak.

Their temporary home was a 700-year-old ramshackle house located in Seer Green, reportedly named as such because Merlin the Magician had lived in that area. Skotak even discovered a plaque indicating that their new abode had once been an inn frequented by the Black Knight.



PREVIOUS PAGE: A wall covered with *Aliens* concept art at Pinewood.

LEFT: Hurd in her office at Pinewood, where she had a hard time convincing some department heads that she was in fact producing *Aliens*.

"Pinewood looked pretty run down, a lot of rust," Dennis Skotak said. "In fact, in a lot of ways, the exterior looked like what we should make the colony complex model look like on the stage."

"The studio was way out in the country," Robert Skotak said. "It was surrounded by cow pastures. I was used to going to Universal and Fox in the middle of the big city, but Pinewood was out in the boondocks. I was expecting something very different, some kind of very polished, gleaming—this is where the Bond movies were made after all. But it was pretty run down. Everything was rusty and worn out."

Winston arrived in England not long afterward, taking with him only a few of his crew, including John Rosengrant and Shane Mahan, and they set up their headquarters and their shop at Pinewood. Mahan and Rosengrant rented an old house from the 1800s on St. Leonard's Hill in Windsor, not far from Pinewood.

"It was, *Wow*—this is an adventure of a lifetime to go live in London for seven months," Rosengrant said. "The history of Pinewood Studios, where the Bond films were made... It was all very new and a different country, and we had to learn the culture and customs. It was still sunny and all that in the English countryside."

"We also had a deep burning—not fear—but we had to live up to the first film," Mahan said. "We had to learn the English customs of how the studio

RIGHT: A concept sketch by Mead of the powerloader. "I envisioned it as larger than it ended up," he said. "I knew how high the dropship bay was—35 ft—and thinking that you're stacking things.... I'm thinking in terms of utilitarian mechanical design rationale. Mine would have had her about 4 ft off the floor, which would have made the whole thing about 10 ft high. It would have made her look too equally matched dramatically [in relation to the queen]."

"Starting with the basic look Jim was after," Richardson said, "we worked out each joint and body part individually. When we came up with something that was basically functional, we would photograph it and measure it, and Jim would then take it away and do a pencil drawing of what he wanted it to look like. More often than not the changes were just cosmetic, but then we'd get it back and discover that certain parts didn't work. So we'd rework it and take it back to Jim again. It was a continual backwards and forwards process: Multiply that by about 25 times for every joint and part, and you begin to get the picture."

worked at Pinewood. There were some rules we had to follow. They told us we were going to be in the *Superman* building. It didn't have any windows in it, but had a big folding door."

"It wasn't fear," Rosengrant agreed. "We were just dumb enough at that age to think that we could overtake the first film and kick ass. But at first from the English crew there was some, 'Well, who do you think you are?'"

"They had ownership of the first Ridley film, and rightfully so, we knew that," said Mahan. "*Alien* was an artistic and commercial success, and that was their baby. We were sensitive to it, but we also had a job to do, so we weren't going to coddle people. We had to get them on board and find out who the best people were."

"They really didn't want us there," said McClung. "They were like, 'Well, we're British. We should be doing it all.'"

"We had to prove ourselves to them as well as to the rest of the world," Rosengrant added. "When we first got there, we ran into the first assistant director Derek Cracknell in this pub. He took us under his wing a little bit because he saw that we were a couple of American guys who were eager to get in and understand things. So he gave us an English-culture tutoring."

"In terms of Gale and Jim picking the best first assistant director in the land, they probably couldn't have done better," Sallis said. "Derek Cracknell was one of the British all-stars of that role."

"We set up shop on a large effects stage at Pinewood, and began building the different components of the queen," Winston said, "which basically we designed and built and sculpted exactly as we had done the miniature." (See sidebar, page 82.)

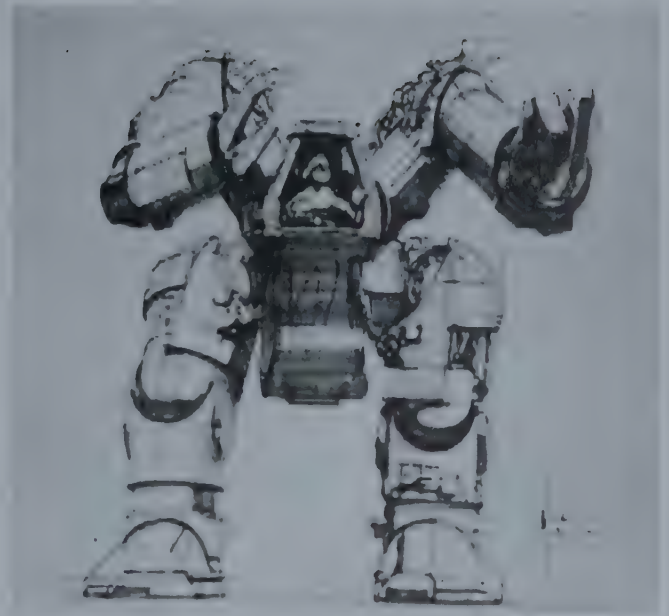
Winston visited Julian Parry, who was a big fan and collector of *Alien*, and saw his reference material on the wall. Winston asked if he could borrow Parry's stills of the Chestbuster, the alien, and so on—"they stole my references," Parry laughed. "It was a symbiotic relationship."

Armatures were built separately for the queen's legs, arms, body, head, and tail. Winston decided they should tackle the tail first, because it was the simplest, the easiest to build quickly. He also thought it would be a "good break-in project" for the English crew component. Ray Lovell and Richard Landon did most of the mechanical work. After the tail armature, they'd go to clay while the rest of the armatures were being built.

"We spent a lot of time just learning to communicate with one another," said Landon. "What we called general tools were often two very different things: They call a C-clamp a G-clamp. Just close enough to be confusing. They call a wrench a spanner. We were also dealing with metric measurements for the first time."

"Even though we spoke a similar version of English," Pat McClung said, "there was still miscommunication on a lot of levels that was very subtle: I would tell somebody to do something, they'd come back and it'd be backwards and upside down. Somebody would tell me something and I would completely misinterpret it. Jim Cameron said he went through some of that. So that was a little bit of a learning curve."

Winston had left the queen's inner body to be built back at his studio, supervised by Lazzarini (assisted by machinist Wayne Sturm): strong fiberglass shells would contain the two stuntmen; an aluminum plate would



contain the hydraulics. The completed inner core would dictate the exact size of the queen's full-size body when it arrived at Pinewood.

Between recces and other tasks, Cameron consulted with John Richardson on the life-sized powerloader; Mead had done a sketch, based on the director's ideas.

"I'd done some work years ago when the military first started to play around with analogous machinery," said Mead. "A powered exoskeleton for a person is a wonderfully utilitarian idea for moving things around warehouses and so forth. I started to produce a headless gorilla-like machine which had no head to it because the person is riding up where the shoulders are."

"The powerloader wasn't designed by anybody in drawings per se," Cameron said. "I came up with an original concept for the loader, but it was really designed while it was being built because there were so many technical limitations and considerations."

As they had for the queen, they first made a full-size mock-up out of foam-core.

"In the week that I did sketches for the loader," Mead added, "Jim's gang in Pinewood took plastic PVC tubing and large black plastic trash bags, and built a loader mock-up full size. It worked so well, they just went with that. Then they made a pipe frame duplicate. So the loader was done by patching PVC pipe together and aging it and so forth."

When Cameron wanted to place a stuntman inside the loader to help it move, the English effects technicians thought he was "crazy." The director explained that it would be similar to how a father puts his daughter on his feet and walks. Richardson took the ideas to his art directors and draftspeople with a three-month schedule, during which many challenges developed.



Puckett obtained Giger's original designs for the Facehugger and Chestburster.

The Facehugger, after its leap onto John Hurt's face, appears simply as an "acid burn," said Cameron, who wanted to expand its capabilities. Should it rise on its first leap at a host's face, he wanted a Facehugger to be able "to have one tread on its right legs, and leap again."

At Stan Winston, he got to work coming up with that locomotive Facehugger mechanism in L.A. "I wanted to do a pull-toy type of thing," said Winston, "where we would literally pull it across the floor, and a wheel would turn underneath or something and cause the legs to move. But at the start we couldn't quite figure out how to do it."

Scenes Alec Gillis rendered the somewhat revised version, while Lance Anderson assisted on some of the internal mechanisms.

Cameron left for England while Winston's crew went off on a few tangents. "Finally Jim called me from England," Winston recalled, "and said, 'I don't know why I didn't think of this, Stan, but I did this thing for *Piranha II* where a fish was pulled through the water over a wire and we had a little mechanism inside to make the tail wiggle.' Working from that idea, Jim drew out a little design of what he thought the insides could be for the Facehugger, sent it over here, and Rick Lazzarini proceeded to make it work, which was quite a job since there were still an awful lot of problems to overcome."

"This thing looks like a fucking Alaskan king crab," Rick Lazzarini said during a video test of the prototype, which he sent to Cameron in England.

Ultimately, the Facehugger was on a wire that wrapped around a rubber-surfaced gear on the inside, held taut by two operators on either end. Pulling the Facehugger along that wire would cause the gear to move, which in turn moved smaller gears connected to the legs. The faster a crewmember pulled the Facehugger, the faster the legs would go.

THIS PAGE: The Chestburster being developed at Stan Winston Studio; (above, right) unpainted and unpatched foam latex Chestburster skin used for mechanism testing; (below, middle) the hero cable-controlled Chestburster puppet without the skin; (below, right) a fully painted Chestburster mounted for display at the studio; (left, middle) Alec Gillis holds up a fully painted Facehugger puppet; (below, left) Stephen Norrington makes mechanical adjustments to a cable-controlled Facehugger puppet. (Images courtesy of Stan Winston School)



EXPATS ON PARADE

"It did pose quite a lot of problems," Richardson told *Cinefex*, "not the least of which was the amount of time we had to do it in. It was late June or early July before we got down to some serious thinking about it. I was worried that we weren't going to meet our date. Part of the problem was that the powerloader went through an unusually long design phase. A lot of directors would have said, 'I want it to look like a walking forklift,' and let it go at that. Jim would say, 'I want it to look like a walking forklift and those little bolts up there have to be this shape.' He's very pedantic about the fine details and very particular about the overall aesthetic. And, of course, it wasn't just a matter of getting it to look right. It also had to do a lot of things..."

"Jim would then send a bottle of champagne on Friday nights, saying something like 'building a powerloader is heavy business—have one on me.'"

"It was a very painful process," Cameron said. "More painful for him than for me, I'm afraid, because all I had to do was go in and say, 'No, I want it to look like this.' The biggest problem was getting clearances for all the rams in the back so that it could have a full range of movement. We all hated each other for about a month until we realized that the powerloader was actually going to come together and work, and then everybody was enthusiastic again."

"Nobody knew us there, and they barely knew Jim," said Dennis Skotak, "and they were asking, 'Who's this young whippersnapper coming here telling them how to do things, how to make movies?' Americans had been there before, but the fact that we were relatively young, and here was a director doing what was only his second film—they felt like he hadn't proven himself yet. It seemed as though they weren't going to give him much respect."

"When I first got to England, I had a meeting with the model shop," Robert Skotak recalled, "and I said, 'I want you guys to look through the camera to double-check that something hasn't slipped, so I don't have to run around and can feel sure that everything is in place.' But one of the guys told me, 'You have to realize, we can't really do that here. That's a faux pas. They would take that in a very bad way.' We would have normally blurred the roles, so that was one of the first inklings of hurdles."

"Overcoming some of the ego problems in relation with some UK production people proved to be difficult," said Alan Markowitz of LAE.

"Alan was there at the beginning," McClung said, "but then he told Bob, 'I'm going to go back and work on these other shows' at LA Effects. I think it was *Commando* [released in October 1985]. He had been going to do the rear-projection material for *Aliens*, but he bailed on Bob, left him in the lurch, so that was just one more big thing Bob had to deal with."

"We had to re-organize ourselves very quickly," said Robert Skotak. "It fell back on Denny and me, and Pat wound up taking on a larger role than simply model shop supervisor. It was really one of the things that put a stranglehold on trying to get things done, because there hadn't been a lot of lead-up time. That was probably the single most difficult factor."

They also had to liaison with Beswick and his crew back in the States. "We would send out the drawings that Jim was making and our own notes about what Jim was expecting to see," Robert added. "And we were talking to Stan Winston and his guys as they're making the alien queen, to get over reference pictures and drawings. That was a major job to get on the phone in the wee hours to be talking to Doug."

It seemed to Hurd that she and Mary Selway met with every American living in England, as well as English actors who thought they could do an American accent, which added up to something like 3,000 auditions. Hurd kept copious notes. They had to do due diligence before officials in the UK would let production import any American actors.

"It was incredibly hard," said Selway, "because James Cameron kept saying 'incredible firepower.'"

He wanted actors portraying marines who could perform as if they were on the cutting edge of the American military, but Selway felt that Americans living in England had lost that super-aggressive American edge.

"The way Gale and I work is that we each play devil's advocate to the other's casting ideas," Cameron said in 1986, "which tends to steer us away from snap decisions or gimmick casting. Because unless we both agree on somebody, we won't cast them."

A priority was still Newt. Carrie Henn, who had turned nine on May 7, was invited back to London to meet the director. He was as impressed with her as Hurd and Selway had been. "I wanted someone who hadn't been conditioned by the system. Carrie brought an incredible realism to it."

Cameron and Hurd arranged a meeting with Henn and Weaver to see how the two got along. According to Henn, the choice was between her and another girl in the States.

"They told me they were flying Sigourney over by Concorde and they wanted me to audition with her," Henn recalled. "*Ghostbusters* had just come out, so I thought, 'I've got to get an autograph book!' Cameron asked Henn to watch the first movie. "So I watched it," she said, "but I didn't think it was scary; I thought it was funny. I was laughing at it the whole time."

James Remar was up for the part of Hicks, recommended by Walter Hill, who had worked with him in *The Warriors* (1979).

Since working with Cameron on Corman films, Bill Paxton had won parts in several feature films and TV movies, including *Weird Science* (1985) and the NBC Movie of the Week *An Early Frost* (1985, the first television film to tackle the subject of AIDS). He read the *Aliens* script over the Fourth of July weekend on vacation in London.

"I was renting a little place in Twickenham above a sweet shop," said Paxton, "and I remember running down the stairs, looking through the window to see the time and going, 'Shit, shit, shit, I've overslept! I had to take a train, then a bus, then jog the last mile to Pinewood.'"

During Paxton's audition, Cameron gave the actor a poster tube and said that it was his plasma pulse rifle. "Then Jim stood on chairs, finding angles to film me running around yelling," said Paxton. "But I came out feeling pretty bad. I thought I'd been way over the top—and I didn't get a call back. I didn't hear anything, so I went on with my vacation and didn't worry about it."

"I went in on my crutches, in this really space-age long jacket, for Hudson's role," said Daniel Kash. "I said to these two assistants, 'Guys, tell whoever wrote this to re-write it—I think it's silly....' And then I got a recall and went back, and realized that the two assistants I was pushing around were James Cameron and Gale Ann Hurd! Cameron said he really liked my coat, so I told him if he gave me the part, it was his."



GROUND-POUNDERS

Gorman and Hurd filed out the rest of the marines that July/August. Cameron had felt also Canadian actor William Hope as Hudson, but he had been tried and cast first as Lt. Gorman. Hope, like several actors, was a former stuntman, for Stanley Kubrick's *Full Metal Jacket* (1987), but he opted for *Alien*. Cameron might have appreciated that Hope had recently produced a film about Vietnam called *Private Wars*.

"I'll only appear out in *Full Metal Jacket* as Lt. Cleveland," Ricco Ross told Cameron in 1985. "Then James offered me a role on the spot. He said that if I could get back in less than two weeks I could start in *Alien* a week late, but he'd let me know for going over schedule and wouldn't let me go. I had to get back in time. It was hard! Kubrick wouldn't let anyone read *Full Metal Jacket*. The only way to get a page. So being able to read *Alien*, I just got a feeling that I was going to make it."

Cameron had considered Ross, an American working in London, for the part and cast him as Private Frost.

When Hurd remembered meeting with Gale Anne Hurd first at Paramount, she asked the perfunctory, "So what have you been up to?" he said, "And I don't know what inspired me, but I let out a yarn about this character I'd played in *Revolution*, I'd been on the movie for two months, but I'd only played a minor-ish character. I had a big scene with Al Pacino, but I was afraid I had the next best part to Al Pacino. It worked. The next thing I knew I was sitting with Gale and Jim, and they were taking me through

In Cameron's office, Rolston was completely "gobsmacked" when he saw the walls plastered with hundreds of storyboards and drawings, in story order, going round the room.

"At a third meeting with Gale and Jim, they handed me a script and told me I'd gotten the part of Drake."

Cameron chose Colette Hiller to play Corporal Ferro, dropship pilot, and Cynthia Scott to play Med-Tech Dietrich.

Scott had sent in her picture and resume—she was without an agent—and had read for the casting director. On a call-back she "read aggressively" for Cameron and Hurd, and was cast as Ferro. However, during the next interview, they switched her to Dietrich, explaining that it was a "bigger part" and asked her to train with stuntman John Lees in Pinewood for five days, unpaid. She had to take bodybuilding supplements, which, she said, "tasted awful."

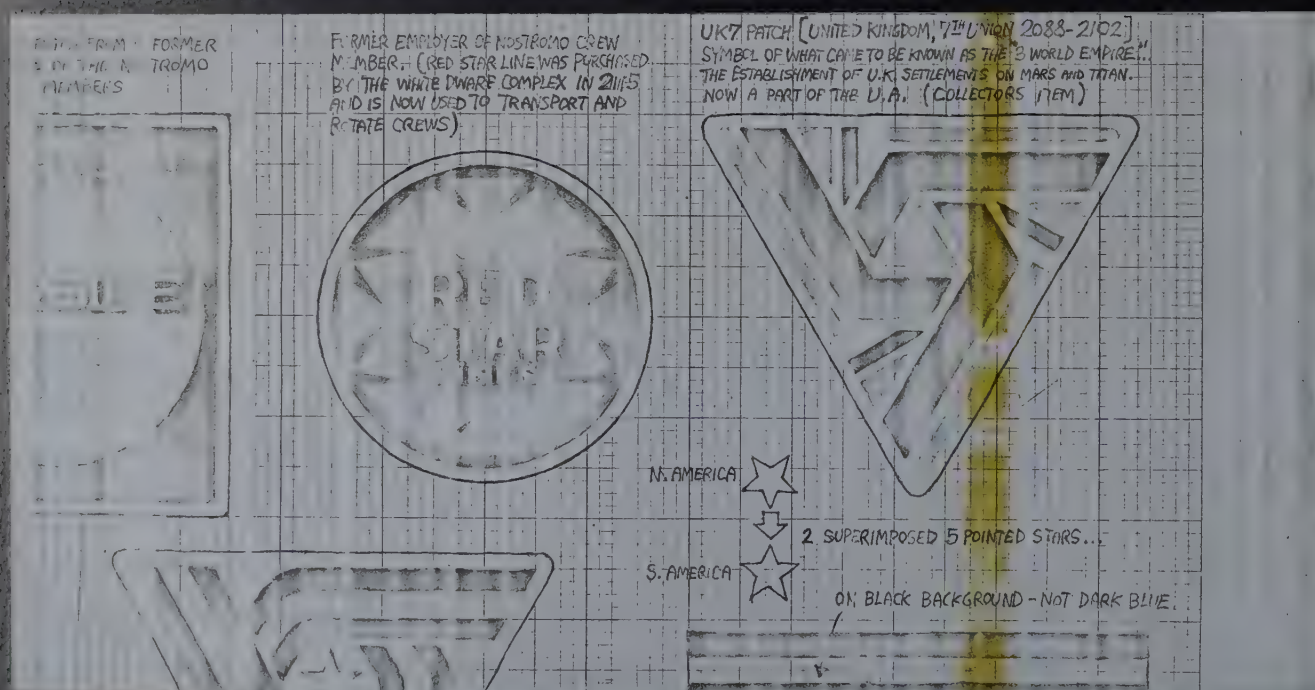
Rolston had also been asked "to bulk up," he recalled. "I wasn't necessarily on salary yet, but they sent a car. I'd get out there and they had us working out really heavily. We'd work out three to four hours in the morning, we'd have a lunch, and Lees was having me drink this amino acid drink that sparked my metabolism and made me hungry all day. I put on 35, 40 pounds, but it was all muscle weight. Lees was a tremendous guy. He was from up north, a farmer really, and we used to giggle because he had this massive upper body, but tiny little legs."

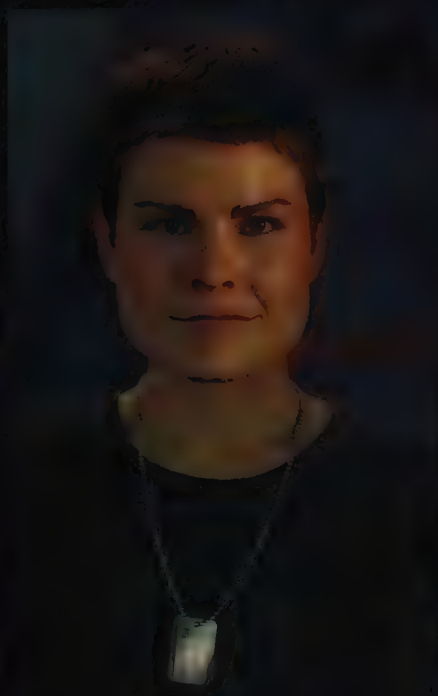
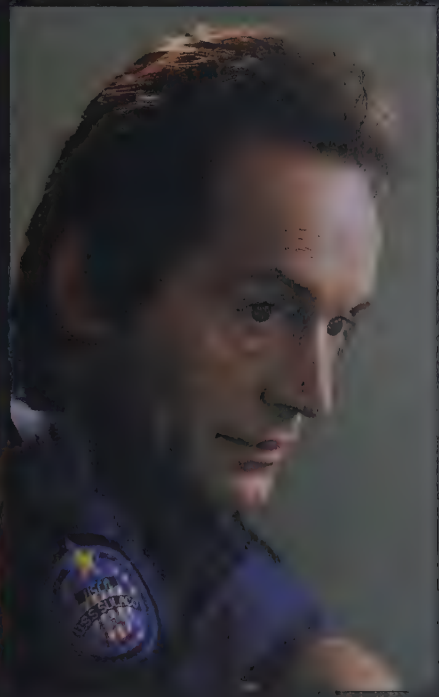
To fill out the marine unit, the director cast two stuntmen: Tip Tipping as Private Crowe, and Trevor Steedman as Private Wierzbowski.

BELOW LEFT: A photocopy made at the time of *Alien*, with notes explaining the meaning of certain colonial marine patches, in concept form by Cobb.

OPPOSITE MARGIN: A few of the final patches worn by the marines.

OPPOSITE (CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT): Mark Rolston (Drake) had appeared in the opening season at The Mill at Sunning, and had played Richard II with the National Shakespeare Company, New York, and toured the entire United States for ten months. More recently he'd spent six months with the BBC Radio Drama Company. His motion picture credits included *D.A.R.Y.L.* (1985), *The American Way* (1986), and *Revolution* (1985); William Hope (Gorman) had appeared in *The Last Days of Patton* (1986), the TV mini-series *Lace* (1984) and *Nancy Astor* (1982); Lance Henriksen (Bishop) got his first big break with the lead role in the off-off-Broadway production of Eugene O'Neill's *Three Plays of the Sea*, during which he met Al Pacino. "We were both wearing the same type shoes," Henriksen said. "We later did plays together on Broadway, and with the Theatre Company of Boston. Then I auditioned and got [the part of Murphy in] *Dog Day Afternoon*"—a 1975 film starring Pacino; Ricco Ross (Frost) was also a singer and dancer, and had performed in several plays. When he relocated to London, he won parts in *Troilus Cressida* and *Bartholomew Fair*. He'd appeared on TV in *The Young and The Restless* and *Hill Street Blues*, and in the film *Spies Like Us* (1985); Al Matthews (Apone) was the first African-American marine to be promoted to sergeant in the field during service in Vietnam, where he earned nine awards and decorations, including two Purple Hearts. He moved to London in 1971, where he became a success on the English folk scene; he released "Fool," a number nine hit single on the British Top Twenty Charts. He also appeared on British television and in numerous films, including *Ragtime* (1981), *Superman III* (1983), and *Spies Like Us*; Cynthia Scott (Dietrich) was performing in her first big film.





But Cameron was playing his cards close to his chest. He might cast Kash as Hudson or someone else or not at all. "The characters were not written with specific actors in mind," Cameron said. He and Hurd would cast them as an ensemble to get the right group of marines. Each would have to stand out from the other, be immediately identifiable, but meld with the others to form a unit.

"I had assumed from the title, *Aliens*, that the film was about foreigners, resident aliens," said Jenette Goldstein, who had been a resident alien in London since 1982. She'd grown up in Southern California, trained at Circle in the Square Theater School in New York, then married a British veterinarian and continued her training at the Webber Douglas Academy of Dramatic Arts in London. She had since toured the UK in small stage roles doing "fringe theater." She'd only recently acquired her British Equity Card and had spotted the casting call in a trade newspaper: "Genuine American actors, British Equity, for feature film, *Aliens*, 20th Century-Fox."

"I was wondering why they wanted Americans," she said. "I figured the movie was about immigrants in England. So I showed up wearing high heels and lots of makeup, and I had waist-length hair. The day was uncharacteristically hot, so I was wearing a sleeveless blouse."

Other candidates in the central London office had been briefed by their agents and were decked out in military fatigues; Goldstein, who didn't have an agent, stood out as unprepared. She recalled: "When Gale confirmed that the film was about marines, I thought, *Oh shit*, but then I made this little sort of bicep thing, and she said 'Ooh.' When she saw my arms, which were superb if I do say so myself, she started thinking seriously about using me in a small part. Gale said, 'Do you have time to hang around for an hour or so?'"

Before lunch, Goldstein read a few scenes as Vasquez—"anytime, anywhere"—but was told she wasn't auditioning for that part. After lunch, Goldstein was given Hudson's monologue for the dropship descent scene, but told she wasn't auditioning for his part either.

"So I did the version of Hudson," Goldstein said, "and I went home and was even more confused."

Goldstein had been struggling to find roles, "beating my Yank head against the iron wall of the British theater world." With many days free, she'd been working out at Hyam's Gym, on the edge of Hackney in East London (where Mr. Britain had trained), which she'd discovered on her way to dance classes. She began lifting weights again, "which I used to do as a kid—I was kind of a tomboy—and I got really, really into it, that whole subculture of body building. There was a handful of women lifting weights. The owner's daughter was there, and myself, and a couple of girls who were hanging out to keep an eye on their boyfriends. It was a good discipline to have. When you're unemployed, you need some sort of a discipline. I needed something that I could do that—if I put in the time and effort—I would get results, which you're not guaranteed as far as acting. I didn't see it as a tool to get work."

Hurd asked Goldstein to return for a second read. This time, the actress came dressed and made up as a marine, brushing her hair back and wearing a pair of army boots. She read again, but was told nothing definitive, and left.

Al Matthews also auditioned. A Marine Corps veteran of Vietnam, he was shooting a film called (in Europe) *The American Way* (in the States, *Riders*

of the Storm) with Dennis Hopper. "James Cameron asked to see me," Matthews said. "He read my CV, and that was that. I asked James how long did it take him to make up his mind. He said, 'Thirty seconds.'"

Matthews' career was primarily in music, writing and performing. He'd shaved his head for *The American Way* when he learned that it would earn him an extra fee. Cameron asked him to grow his hair back and cast him as Sergeant Apone. Matthews/Apone would anchor the film's Colonial Marines.

"I met Al Matthews," said Kash, "and he was a really scary guy, and he'd been in Vietnam. He was living in England because he hated America."

Weaver was finally flown in and ushered into a room with Henn, Cameron, and Hurd.

"I asked Sigourney politely to sign my autograph book and she signed it," Henn said. "Within minutes of meeting her I absolutely adored her. She's amazing. I guess they wanted to see how I worked against Sigourney, though I thought it was just a small cameo bit."

Hurd considered Henn "an astonishing find." Watching them do a scene together, Cameron felt it was right.

"We read," Henn said, "and they called me a few days later to say I got the part."

INSECT SKELETONS

In late July, production issued a "Revised Special Photographic Effects Shots List," which totaled 85.

Most of the on-set special-effects shots would involve the alien warriors. Work on their six hero costumes continued at Pinewood, with Cameron and Winston making sure the suits were simpler and more flexible. "The alien head in the first film, the translucent cowl covering the whole top of the head was very smooth and looked like a porpoise back," Cameron said. "Underneath was a skull shape and a rib design. We planned to do the same thing with ours, so Stan had Tom Woodruff sculpt up a ribbed bone-like understructure that would be slightly visible through the cowl. When it was finished, they gave it a real nice paint job—and I thought it was more interesting. So we ditched the cowl and decided that this was just another generation of aliens—slightly mutated."

"Jim requested we don't put a dome on the head of the alien," Tom Woodruff said. "He didn't want a nice, big smooth surface that wouldn't really work with the harsh lighting he was choosing; he wanted to be able to see the shapes of the head underneath as it moved between light and shadow."

Much of the suit was re-created from Giger's original molds, but feet and hands were tweaked, and a forearm bone was added via snap fasteners. For some stunts, Cameron had them make suits that were almost pure spandex with polyfoam pieces, painted for high contrast in dark shadows. Winston supervised the fabrication of alien warrior puppets, too; those destined to be shot, blown up, or otherwise killed.

"We created approximately 15 spandex suits, plus almost 10 articulated puppets that are larger than the suits," Winston said. "They stand almost 8 ft tall. We also have an insert puppet and insert arms. We even re-designed the hands and fingers so that they're longer than the original."

RIGHT: The alien warrior costumes and puppets take form: (above, left) Richard Landon and Philomena Davis touch-up a full-sized puppet; (above, right) crew pose with a finished warrior (Nigel Booth, Graham High, Lindsey McGowan, and David Keen); (below) for background warriors that would be seen only in flashes or in the distance, Stan Winston's team glued suit parts onto black unitards. Allowing for spares, production fabricated about 12 alien warrior suits. Tom Woodruff and John Rosengrant supervised the construction team, which included Julian Caldwell, Nigel Booth, Lindsay McGowan, and David Keen. Stan Winston recalled: "If you were to look at them hanging on a rack, you'd think, *My God, those are just black leotards with pieces of stuff on them.* But when you see them in the [dailies] and they're wet and slimy, you can't tell the difference at all between ours and the original—and ours had complete freedom of movement." (Images Courtesy of Stan Winston School)

"If you can do one, you can do any number," said Cameron. "Anyone who's been through the process of creating a creature effect, or a character that's sculpted in clay and molded and blown and painted or whatever, knows that to make one takes six months and to make two takes six months and a couple of extra days. I'm exaggerating slightly, but there's an economy of scale there."

"What Jim wanted were movements that were sporadic and odd and strange," Winston continued, "so that even though they were men in suits, they didn't move like men in suits. So the big thing for us was to figure out a way to make these guys move and act in ways that were unlike a human: hanging from ceilings, jumping from wall to wall, doing insect-like moves, and so on. The alien in the first film could never have done these things because it was a full rubber suit and was very difficult to move around in."

Cameron hired stuntmen with gymnastic and acrobat skills, as well as dancers, to inhabit their streamlined suits. In studying *Alien* he'd discovered that the monster was almost never in the same frame as the humans, so casting a 7 ft-tall person really didn't make sense; instead he found taller folks, but with those athletic abilities.

On July 30, the preliminary shooting schedule slated Day One for Monday, September 30, followed by a 73-day shoot, with an end date of January 10.

Two "Deal Player Borrowing Agreements" were issued that month: on July 29, Paul Reiser was confirmed as Carter Burke; and on July 31, James Remar was cast as Hicks.

"*Aliens* was a four-month commitment in a foreign country, which I was willing to make," Remar said in 1986.

"There was a *looong* wait between auditioning and being told I got the part," Reiser said in 2014, "because they had to satisfy British actor union requirements and prove that they had looked at 'every single actor in the UK, but could not find a suitable talent' and just *had* to go with the American kid. I know they were looking to go against type, so to play a guy that turns out to be a corporate bad guy I think they were looking for someone who people wouldn't immediately suspect. And to whatever extent I was known, it was as a comic, so the thinking was the audience would not be automatically ascribing ulterior motives to my character."

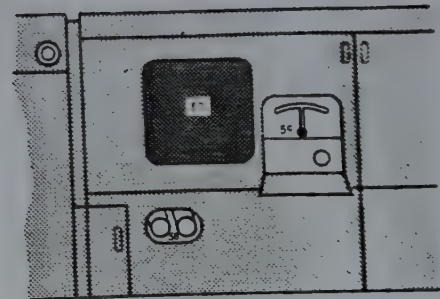
Reiser was given a copy of the script. "It was the first time I ever got out of breath reading. There were some sequences so intense—just to read!—that I had to put the script down and go outside for a minute."

On August 5, Lance Henriksen was cast as Bishop. "Jim and I had taken care of old karma, and I really wanted to play this kind of guy," Henriksen said, "because I had several ideas about what's going on inside somebody like that. I had two months before I started filming, so there was plenty of time; I used it all, believe me."

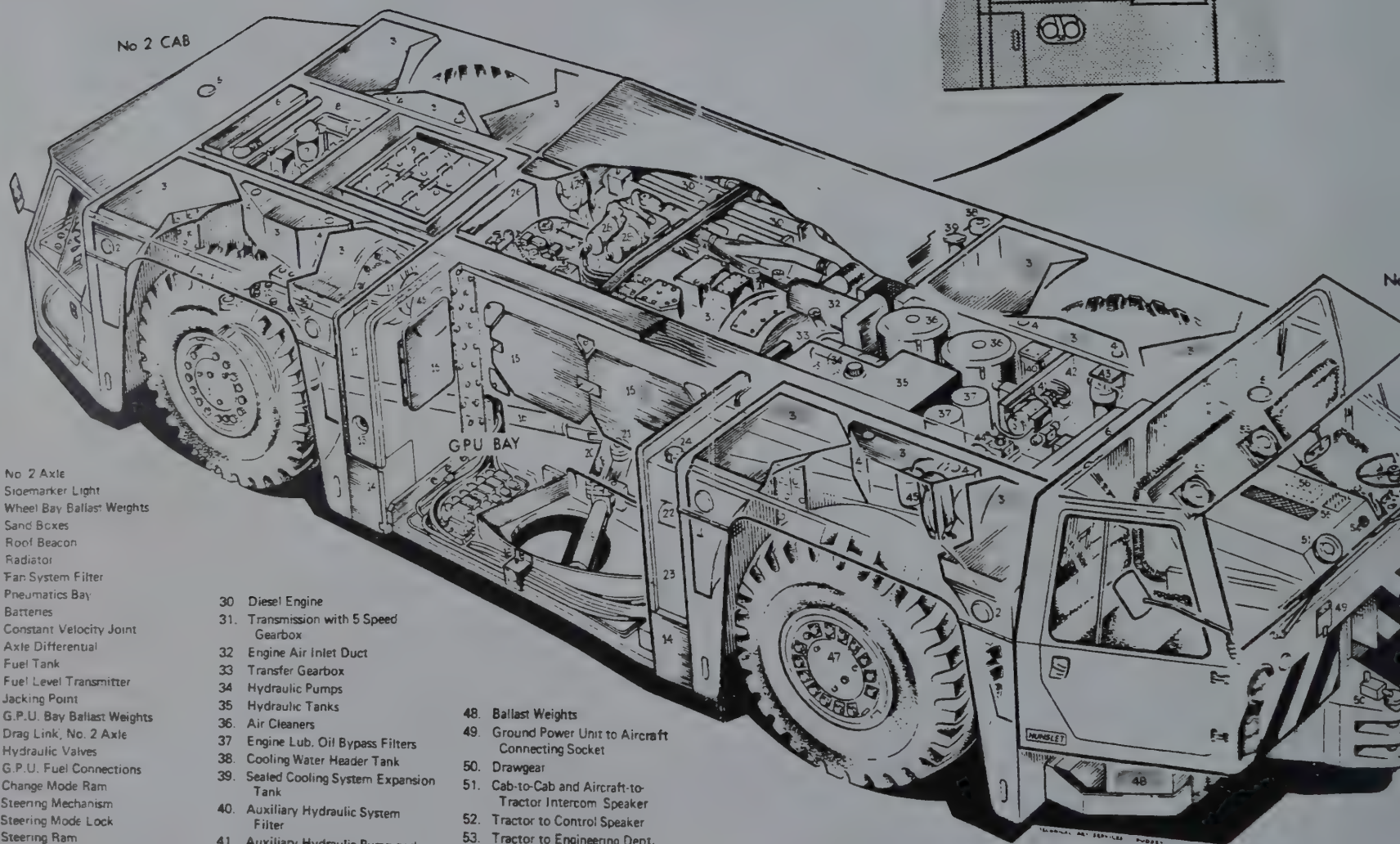
Cameron told journalists several times that his goal in casting was to find the best actor for the character. "In other words, Bishop was not written for Lance, though I know him well," the director said.

"My biggest problem was having to follow two exceptional performances of androids," Henriksen added. "Rutger Hauer [as replicant Roy Batty] in *Blade Runner* was excellent, and I loved Ian Holm's work as Ash in *Alien*. So Jim and I talked for a month on the phone—he was already in London—to





No 2 CAB



- 1 No 2 Axle
- 2 Stoemarker Light
- 3 Wheel Bay Ballast Weights
- 4 Sand Boxes
- 5 Roof Beacon
- 6 Radiator
- 7 Fan System Filter
- 8 Pneumatics Bay
- 9 Batteries
- 10 Constant Velocity Joint
- 11 Axle Differential
- 12 Fuel Tank
- 13 Fuel Level Transmitter
- 14 Jacking Point
- 15 G.P.U. Bay Ballast Weights
- 16 Drag Link, No. 2 Axle
- 17 Hydraulic Valves
- 18 G.P.U. Fuel Connections
- 19 Change Mode Ram
- 20 Steering Mechanism
- 21 Steering Mode Lock
- 22 Steering Ram
- 23 Fuel Tank
- 24 Fuel Filler
- 25 Pipe and Cable Trunking
- 26 Relay Cabinet
- 27 Final Drive Gear Box
- 28 Transmission Oil Filters
- 29 Transmission Fluid Heat Exchanger

- 30 Diesel Engine
31. Transmission with 5 Speed Gearbox
- 32 Engine Air Inlet Duct
- 33 Transfer Gearbox
- 34 Hydraulic Pumps
- 35 Hydraulic Tanks
- 36 Air Cleaners
- 37 Engine Lub. Oil Bypass Filters
- 38 Cooling Water Header Tank
- 39 Sealed Cooling System Expansion Tank
- 40 Auxiliary Hydraulic System Filter
- 41 Auxiliary Hydraulic Pump and Motor
- 42 Hydraulics Bay
- 43 Main Hydraulics System Filter
- 44 Hydraulic Steering Flow Control Valve
- 45 Parking Brake
- 46 Drag Link, No. 2 Axle
47. No. 1 Axle

48. Ballast Weights
49. Ground Power Unit to Aircraft Connecting Socket
50. Drawgear
51. Cab-to-Cab and Aircraft-to-Tractor Intercom Speaker
52. Tractor to Control Speaker
53. Tractor to Engineering Dept. Speaker
54. Low Air Pressure Warning Buzzer
55. Domestic Electrics Switches
56. Engine Protection Unit
57. Engine Compartment Cooling Fan
58. Exhaust
59. Cab Selector Lever

OPPOSITE: Cutaway of the original airport vehicle before transformation into the APC.

RIGHT: The full-sized APC, photographed on the back lot.

try to figure out the best way to introduce Bishop. We had an idea about him being alone while everyone else was in hypersleep, tending to meters and buttons and doing a thousand push-ups. You see this lonely figure in the ship by himself. But we realized that didn't do much storywise, and then we came up with the knife. I practiced that quite a bit."

The knife idea was a nod to a scene in Dan O'Bannon's *Dark Star* (1974) in which the character called Boiler (Cal Kuniholm), out of boredom, takes a switchblade and stabs a wooden table between his outspread fingers until he nicks one.

"I always over-prepare," Henriksen said. "I go through this. I call it 'gathering.'" He read a couple of books, including *Mockingbird* by Walter Tevis. "There's a bit in it where the android knew how to play a piano, but didn't know why. He didn't know what music was, but he kept hearing it. That image stuck in my mind, and what it translated to me was that there were feelings that Bishop didn't understand, like a joke. For him, the world is xenophobic. He's an alien to anything alive. He must be as careful as, say, a black man in South Africa, where you make a mistake and you're out. You're either replaced or you're destroyed. I told Jim, 'Anything that's really organically alive is fascinating to Bishop. There's no good or evil—just this ultimate respect for anything living.' We realized that although Bishop is very advanced, we didn't see him as the end-all in terms of an android."

AGAINST THE DEMON CLOCK

Lamont and his crew were busy building dozens of live-action sets on five soundstages. One of the first sets scheduled to be on camera was the *Narcissus* interior, where salvagers would find Ripley. The original set had been a revamp of the *Nostramo* bridge, but whatever plans or blueprints documenting that process had been lost. Lamont and his art department therefore had to re-create it from photographs and frame blow-ups.

Like many directors, Cameron had opted for a relatively straightforward scene to ease Weaver and crew into the film. It would also provide time for the construction unit to complete the more complex sets.

"Sigourney was on *Half Moon Street*," Lamont said, "and they were running behind schedule. They were falling more and more behind..."

Half Moon Street, directed by Bob Swaim, was being shot across town at Elstree Studios, so word trickled in that there were problems. Then it became official: Weaver would be unavailable for the first three weeks of principal photography on *Aliens*. Production's detailed shooting schedule had to be scrapped. The *Narcissus* had to be pushed to the end of the schedule. In a series of emergency meetings, Cameron, Hurd, Lamont and essential HODs moved up whatever scenes didn't need Weaver. Because she was the movie's star and hero, the choices were few.

The marines' exploration of the atmosphere processing station was the longest and most complex scene that didn't include Ripley. Suddenly all of its collateral needs—a hanging miniature, a full-size armored personnel carrier, automatic weapons and flamethrowers, the Chestbuster, cocooned colonists, and warrior aliens—had to be fast-tracked. Moreover, the real industrial site would have to be readied in record time.



The Jorden family's discovery of the derelict, and other colony scenes, were also moved up. The schedule mix-up caused further problems, because *Aliens*, third in line at the studio, "never got our complement of construction workers," said Lamont. "You've got the money, but you haven't got the wherewithal."

Lamont toured the studio and the sets, consulted with the HODs, and managed to get a nightshift going on the required new sets.

"In one of my early stage props meetings with Jim, he came into my office," Sallis said, "and I'd laid out some very early stage props. The beginnings of, 'I like this shape, I like this texture, I was thinking this size, what about this for a color?' And Hudson had this great speech written by Jim in the APC that includes the words, 'We've got this, we've got that—and we've got sharp sticks.'"

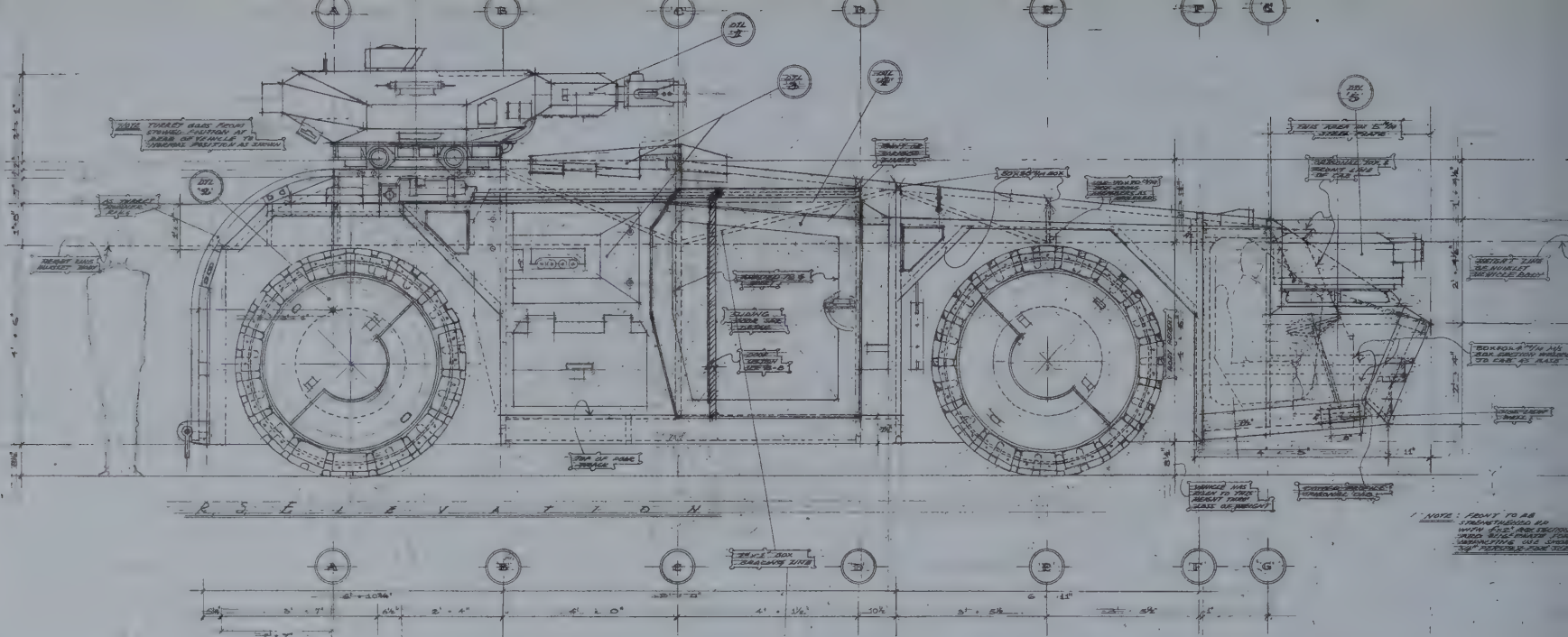
"So I'd invented half a dozen variations of the sharp stick, meaning harpoon, I thought. And Jim just laughed and went, 'Crispian, Crispian, it's an expression. I don't actually need you to have Hudson draw a quiver from behind his back and provide some futuristic sharp stick.'"

Fortunately, by August, supervising art director Terence Ackland-Snow had discovered a decommissioned electrical generating station in the London suburb of Acton, only 14 miles from Pinewood. "With certain reservations," said Lamont, "it looked like a viable proposition. It was very large and full of machinery, with tremendous stairways and grillwork floors. The grillwork was especially nice since it would allow us to see through from one story to the next. And it was going to be dismantled, so they said we could do anything we wanted and leave everything there afterward."

No cleanup meant less money.

"Then somebody thought of a power station," Cameron recalled. "As it turned out, all the old power plants around London were derelict so they had their choice. The Acton power plant had been closed for three years. It had the right look, with stairways and everything, so it gave the impression of sending them to Dante's *Inferno*."

The power plant, owned by the Central Electricity Generating Board,



PROPOSED . PURPOSE BUILT UNIT

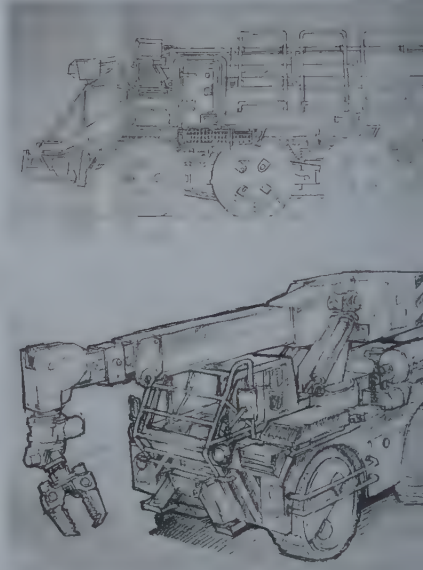
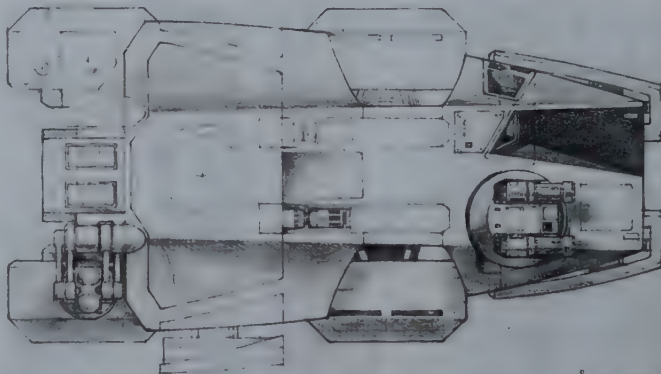
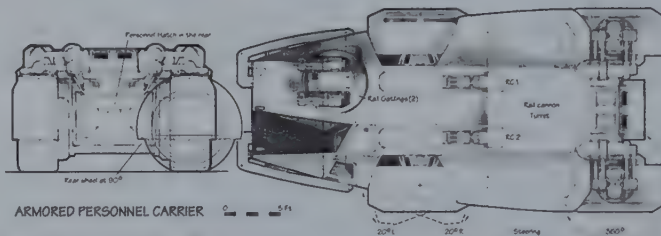
WT 12 TONS

ESTIMATED COST OF BUILDING IT TO 30%
 BELOW WITHIN 3 WEEKS
 (WILL SIGN CONTRACT FOR SAME) WITH ORDER)
 NEW TYPES 6' 2" DIAMETER SMALLER
 TURNING CIRCLE 21' 5 1/2" WIDE TIRERS.

ESTIMATED WEIGHT BETWEEN 8 & 9 TONS
 SPEED WITH COUPLED BOXES 25 TO 30 MPH

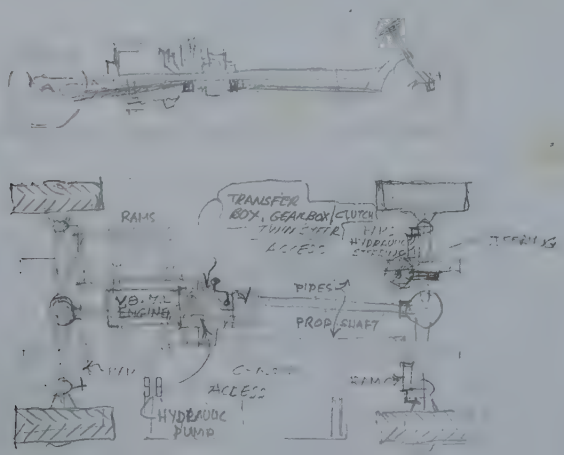
BETWEEN £8,000 & £10,000

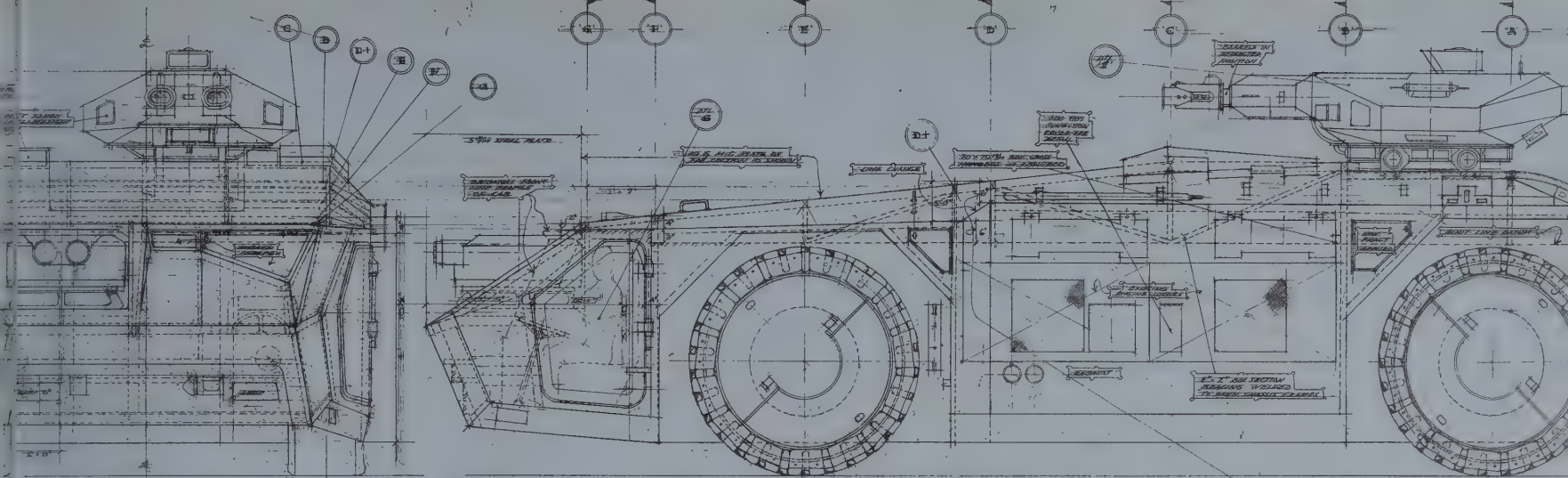
NEW TYPES ON OFFER UNTIL NEXT MONDAY
 EVENING AT 6'2



TOP: a technical drawing of how the airport towing vehicle would be transformed into the APC.

LEFT: (from far left) Notes on the costs and weight of the transformation; schematics by Cobb; colony tow lorries by Cobb; OPPOSITE: APC concept drawing with human for scale.

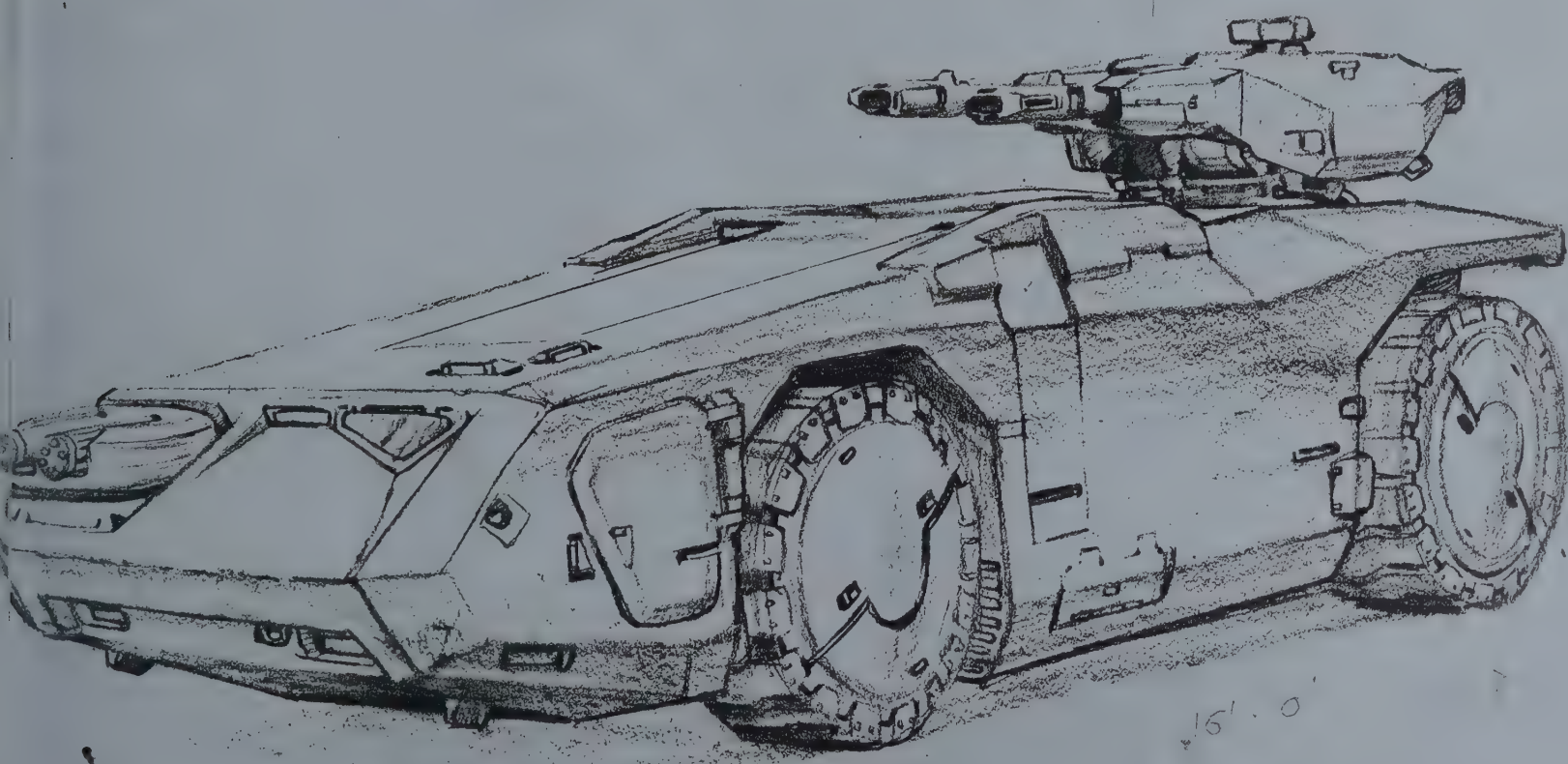
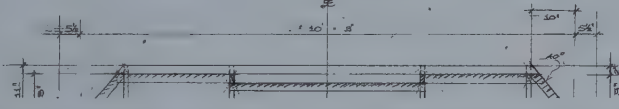
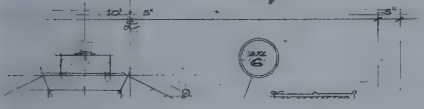




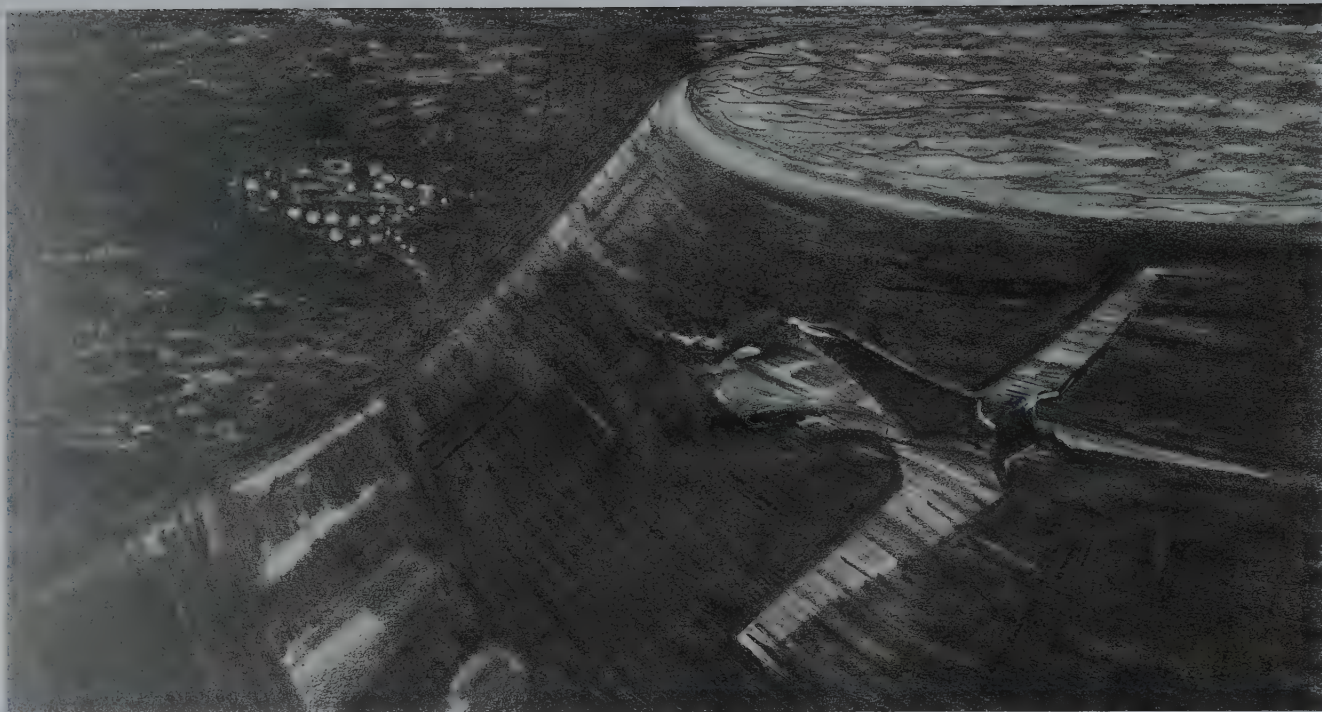
FRONT

L.H. ELEVATION

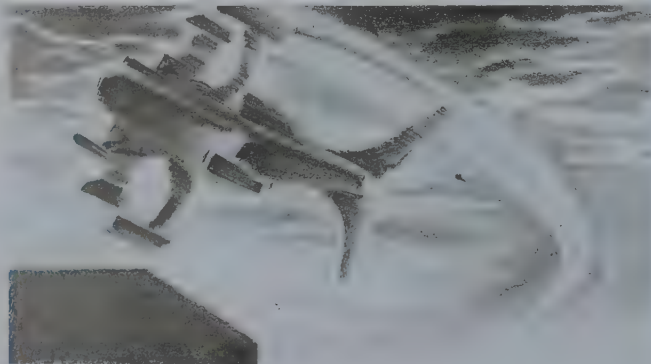
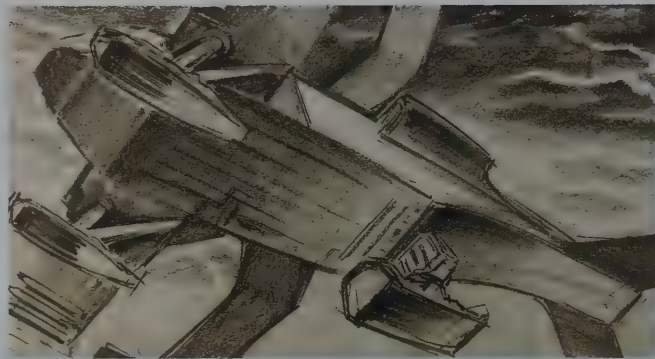
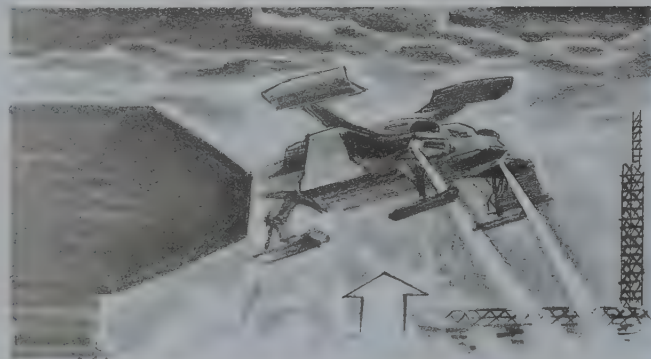
1/4\"/>Architectural drawings showing the front and side elevations of a vehicle. The front elevation on the left features a complex, angular structure with circular elements. The side elevation on the right shows a long, rectangular body with two large, circular, treaded wheels. The drawings include numerous technical annotations and callouts:



15' 0"

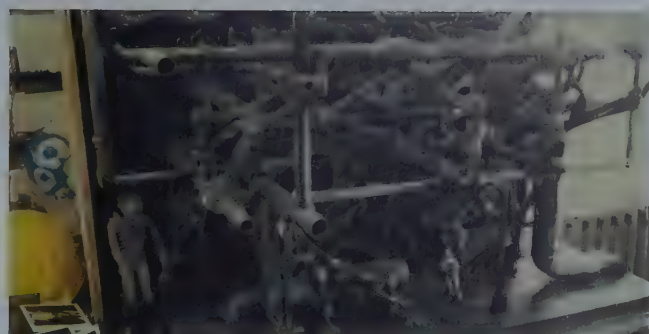


LEFT: Storyboards of various versions of the dropship at the colony. Some boards during preproduction and production were drawn by Roger Deer. "We had to hit the ground running," said Robert Skotak. "And we only had a handful of storyboards. Jim and I were talking through shots, and I was making doodles. Jim was making doodles. That's how we worked. The idea was we'd be storyboarding as we went along, and I would work ahead based on descriptions, what was in the script, and what Jim told me. Very often, I would go to a guy at Pinewood who had worked on a lot of the Bond films, a guy named Roger Deer. Between shots and setups and model building I would run over and see him, and he would draw these things up. Because the British crew had to have a production illustrator draw these. They couldn't just have my drawings and Jim's drawings. But it was good, because it helped to have more detailed drawings to give to people. And so we storyboarded as we went along to a great extent."



RIGHT: Recce (location) photos taken of the abandoned Acton power plant.

FAR RIGHT: Models showed how the alien goo/slime could be dressed on the factory location.



had been built in the 1950s and had generated coal-fired electricity to London from 1958 until October 1983. The main problem was the plant was rotting: asbestos fibers floated in the air, a hazardous environment for actors and crew. Production quickly hired a specialist company to remove the asbestos. Simultaneously, once Cameron had approved the site, a team of modelers at Pinewood went to work creating and sculpting bio-mechanical pieces for the set dressing: organic looking, but mixed with bone-like forms and machinery. Molds were made to produce multiple pieces—all of it done in a hurry.

“The alien structure provided an interesting opportunity for us to do a Giger-esque-type design,” Cameron said.

During the scant three weeks that it took to clean the power station, the workshops at Pinewood generated two castings a day from each mold, fiberglass or vacuum-formed, numbering in the hundreds, which were then painted by scenic artists. At Acton, another team spray-painted the factory structures silver. The alien forms were then fitted into designated spots in the station.

“We had just three weeks to complete the work once we got inside,” Lamont said. “It was quite a chore.”

One of Lamont’s art directors, Ken Court, worked with Winston in coordinating the creation and placing of the cocooned colonists and alien dressing. Sallis recalled: “I did all the, if you like, the spacey decoration of turning the inside of an old derelict power station into something that looked 21st century and more like something that was akin to the rest of the design of the film.”

That August, Cameron also worked closely with the LAE model unit, which had already set things up. “We had to build almost everything at once, right at the beginning,” said Pat McClung, miniatures technical supervisor.

Conditions were less than ideal. Such was the battle for workspace that Pinewood had placed the *Aliens* model shop between two buildings without a genuine roof, where pigeons had their home. “It was pretty messy,” Dennis Skotak said. “They had to put up a giant cheesecloth that must’ve been 50 ft across, hung from the ceiling, to catch the feathers and all the other bad stuff from the pigeons overhead.”

With the schedule change, their work had also been rejigged, with certain plates now needed sooner rather than later, including a fair amount of footage for video monitors inside the dropship and the armored personnel carrier. Also at the top of their shot list were most of the colony exteriors, which would mostly exist in miniature form.

Spread thin, Cameron was sometimes hard to pin down, which frustrated the LAE execs who were getting final designs for some key models in “bits and drabs,” according to a *Cinefantastique* article.

A revised schedule for special effects was issued on August 2, which, among other things, moved the due dates for the final APC models, large and small (including sixth-scale) and the full-sized vehicle up to September.

“The original APC model, which was now needed for some of the first shots, was put together very quickly,” McClung said.

Its body was built out of ABS (acrylonitrile butadiene styrene) plastic, which turned out to be too heavy. Its rear wheels couldn’t turn because of the

BOOM TOWNS

...and Cannon threw another vast building project that was... Stage L, and projected to finish end of August;... (Stages 'L' and 'M' were known as the... these films had been shot there.) He'd executed a... Cobb had continued the work. They... components: the main complex, frontier town... at a bar), and the atmosphere processing station... town wall surrounding it all.

...the construction of the colony should be very modular,"... two basic modules: long, hexagonal cylinder-... in various ways and could be transported... some sort of hovercraft, and then mounted... The idea behind the ramshackle boomtown... an afterthought. Everything was to look... that had been turned into buildings, so... and boxes sitting on hydraulic jacks with various... sort or another. Then we came up with a... surround the colony to keep out the blowing

...models were required to build and set up these... model-makers, and Pinewood's... work. The whole was encircled by a long, high,

...was based on a Polaroid of the actual... of us or Jim took," Dennis Skotak... and many year. The sky was gloomy, overcast... really quite good, took this Polaroid and... the rest of it." (The Polaroid was also the basis... for the two skies had to match.)

...the colony complex took up an area about 8 ft... high individual structures. The larger version... The main street of the colony was laid out... buildings in the rear were constructed in forced... The main complex and the frontier town were divided by a dirt

...the model consisted of: "(right side) a fuel depot,... Module 1, metal container; bar/metal container,... Dwelling 1. (left side) Module 2 (control block/operations),... connecting corridors." Undated notes on the color... read: "for Dwelling 1, needs to be dressed with... connecting corridors, red, rusted, add I graphics... with Bob Skotak."

...tech complex that had been battered mercilessly by... of the planet," said Robert Skotak, "very rusted, very beat... what had normally been done in these kinds of... he'd walk around the studio taking endless Polaroids



ABOVE: Concept art for the colony uplink dish.

LEFT: Model of the storm wall that would go around the miniature colony (in the background, on the wall, are reference photos from *Alien* that Winston borrowed from Julian Parry, who had collected them). (photo courtesy of Julian Parry)

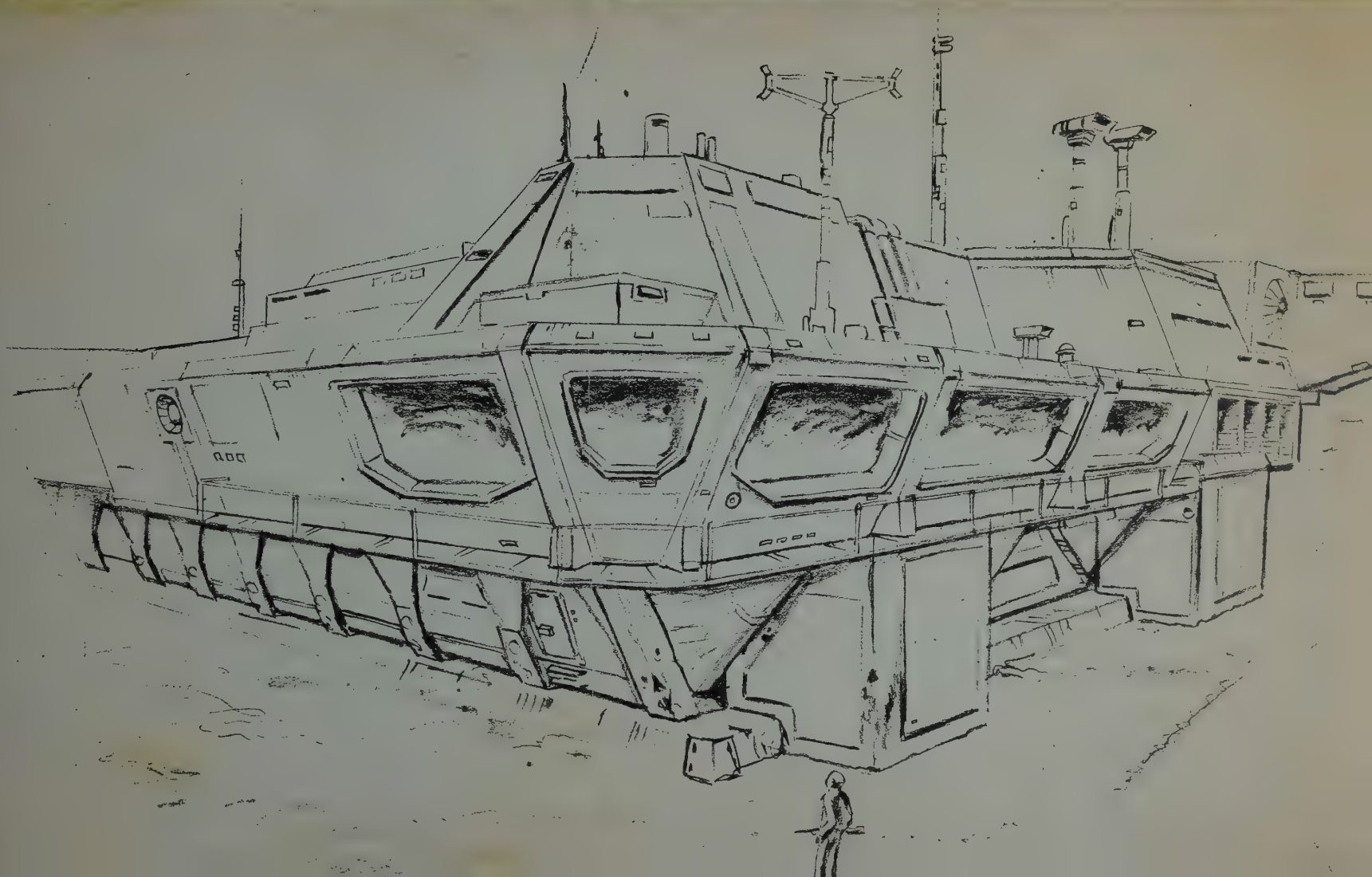
OPPOSITE (CLOCKWISE FROM BOTTOM): Concept art of a control block at the colony by Steve Begg; a piece of the colony model; Cobb concept art of the APC entering the colony.

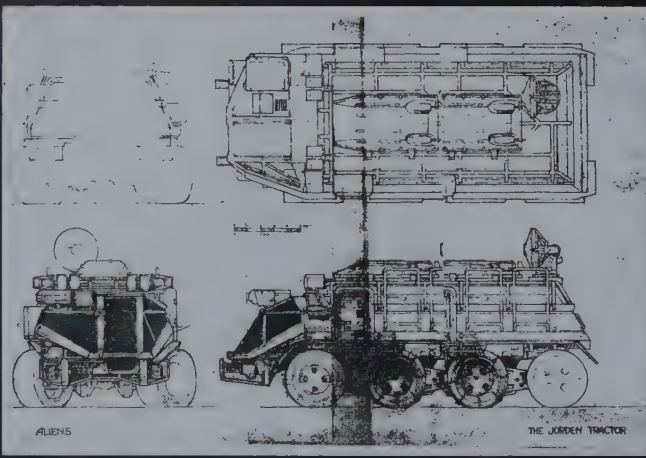
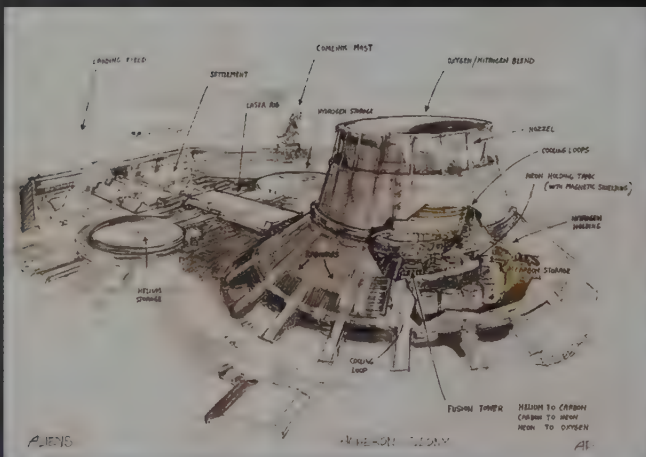
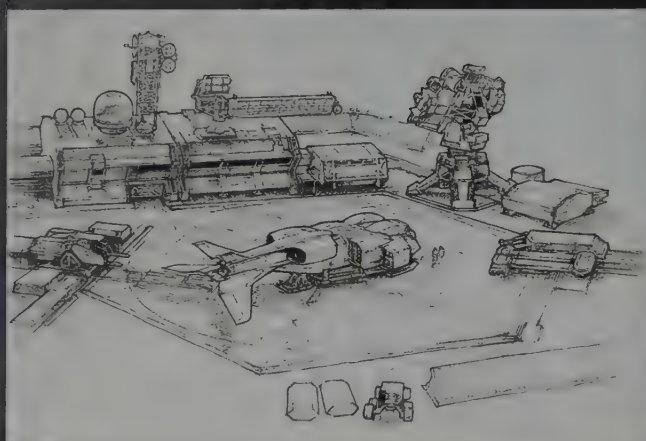
of rusted doors and things. So you'd get this Polaroid and he'd say, "That's exactly the kind of rust spot I want."

Much of the colony complex dressing consisted of leftovers from sets of other films, salvaged from Pinewood before being burnt in a big dump near the 007 Stage. "So there we'd be on a Sunday afternoon rooting around for choice bits of sixth-scale junk," said Skotak, "finding all this neat stuff like tin cans and cables and metal sheets that were rusted out—anything that could conceivably fit into our set—and then hauling it back to the stage in buckets. It was certainly much cheaper than manufacturing everything from scratch."

More junk arrived in bits and pieces from the prop shed, where technical designer Mark Harris had been collecting everything from discarded plastic computer cases to chunks of jet aircraft sourced by Sallis. Pat McClung found a couple of airline cargo containers, one of which had "nice corrugated aluminum sides... totally beaten up and smashed." That became the bar in Hadley's Hope. Three buildings were made from polyurethane baskets usually used for carrying beer. They acquired large numbers of plastic TV backs, injection-molding cast-offs in odd colors like pink or blue.

"Mark Harris was a set decorator," McClung said. "He really saved our butts on the show. He would go shopping to all these companies and get cast-off mechanical parts. He had a warehouse full of stuff, and most of the set dressing for the hallways and so forth Mark found; he had a huge hand in dressing the set. Mark had a real eye for science-fiction stuff."





Another large model was of the barren Acheron landscape, “a raw, primal world, constantly windswept with freezing rain,” said Cameron. “The colors, the light, the contours, everything so harsh and hostile that even the rock formations have been eroded into tortured shapes, all dark and shadowy so that things sometimes appear to be there—even when they’re not.”

“For those,” Robert Skotak said, “Jim had done some drawings and I had also done a few. What we tried to create was a slightly more elaborate version of what was done in the first film. Those were Giger-esque rocks. Well, these were more Cameron-esque rocks.”

“Jim drew up pictures of the rocks,” McClung said, “even the windblown rocks that we made on the planet surface. He was a one-man band.”

Most of the hands-on work was done by Chrissy Overs, Mick Milford, and the studio’s plaster shop. Rocks were carved out of Styrofoam, covered with plaster and a layer of wax, and so on. Crew hammered out sections to create a shale-like, sheeting effect. About 40 rocks were fabricated that could be assembled in a variety of ways as needed for each shot.

To drive around Acheron, colonists and marines needed vehicles. The latter would use the APC, which would be seen onscreen mostly as a model and whose first basic structure was built out of existing radio-control-car parts. All versions had a mechanized gun turret on the rear that could be stowed away (which was not on the life-sized vehicle). Its tires were made out of urethane rubber because the material reacted more like real tires.

Early shots would show the Jordan family vehicle driving through Acheron’s uncharted territory. “Right away I wanted to make it a Winnebago so you’d figure it was a family outing,” said Cobb. “I came up with this strange little eight-wheeled thing, with a boat on the back and a dirt bike, bumping slowly through the planet. That didn’t survive, though, because Jim got excited about something based on another design.”

Cameron wanted a more spider-like vehicle—an eight-wheeled buggy with a strange cantilevered suspension system—which art director Fred Hole developed, then turned over to the model shop for construction in mid-July; the one-sixth-scale model was due in August. “It was a crazy-looking thing, and it proved very difficult to build,” McClung said, “especially since the designs had to be produced exactly to match a full-size version that was going to be made.”

Nigel Brackley did the radio control and mechanical work, Jamie Thomas built the body and the arms for suspension. The tractor could even lower itself to the ground.

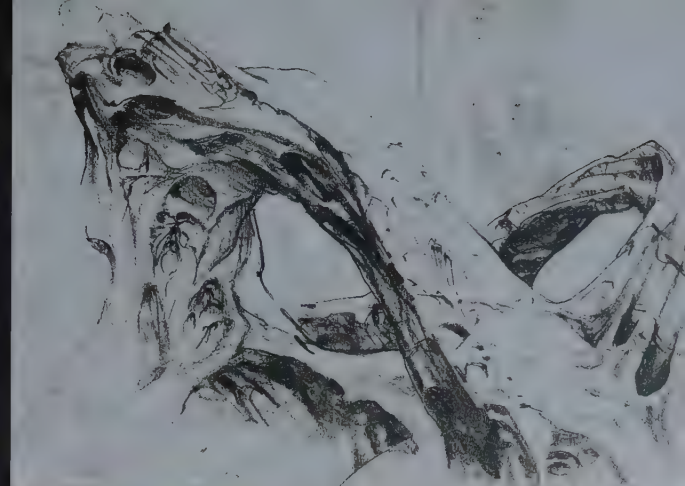
“Our original intent had been to build the tractor full-size,” said Lamont. “In addition to the opening scenes, we also planned to use it later in the film. Originally, the marines were supposed to drive up to the colony and find the Jordan tractor jammed into the main entrance as though the colonists had tried to keep the aliens out by barricading the way. Ultimately, though, it became expendable. When funds started getting tight, one of the things we decided we could get by with was building only part of the tractor and then shooting it tight or partially concealed behind pieces of landscape.”

Production therefore constructed only a full-sized front section, built light, carved from polystyrene and mounted on plywood, with three of the eight wheels visible. It was then detailed by Crispian Sallis and Mark Harris.

All traveling shots were slated for the radio-controlled miniature.

LEFT (FROM TOP): Cobb concept art of the dropship and the factory; Cobb concept art cutaway of the atmosphere processor innards; Cobb schematic of the tractor.

RIGHT (FROM TOP LEFT): Final working tractor model—"This is the Jordan's Tractor (test color green)," Julian Ferry says, "later seen again driving into the colony complex as orange and white (driving by blast boat)." (Nigel Brackley remembers Pat McClung putting soap liquid in with the paint to prove its colors could be changed easily), concept art of the Acheron planet geological forms by Cameron, a diorama model of the planet surface in the art department with background cyclorama painting.



weight. After a few sedentary test shots, the art department generated a second model out of Kevlar.

“Originally the [full-scale] APC was going to be built from scratch,” Cobb said, “so I came up with a wedge-shaped design that had kind of a salamander look to it. I wanted to give it rear wheels that could turn 360 degrees so the vehicle could rotate on its own wheelbase. I’m sure there would have been major problems trying to actually build something like that for real, but it was an interesting idea.”

Cobb’s design was indeed deemed too expensive for the full-scale APC. Lamont, following a tip from Ackland-Snow, instead contacted the ground crew at London’s Heathrow Airport, where two of its 12-cylinder tractors for towing jet aircraft were being replaced (Ackland-Snow had spotted one during a recent trip). Cameron took a look, drove it around, and hatched a design based on it; production bought one of the tractors for the bargain price of £2,000.

They had only three weeks to prepare it, however, and the tow vehicle weighed 72 tons; its outer structure was four-inch plate steel, and its wheel arches lined with lead. It was completely impractical. So Lamont’s crew quickly stripped off most of the outer plate, and reduced its weight to about 28 tons; they also hired an outside vendor, metalworkers in the nearby village of Slough, to re-plate the armored car with quarter-inch steel. Lamont’s art department added lights and other components to complete it.

“We were having a problem at the studio because of the volume of work in the metal shop,” Lamont said, “and the fact that another film called *Gunbus* was still in production and still had priority. But Jim got it up to about 35 miles an hour one day, and the thing could really swing around. It had four-wheel drive, four-wheel steering and a crab device, all of which we wanted.”

PUNCHING THROUGH PREJUDICE

By mid August, an alarming routine was establishing itself in the production hierarchy. Department heads meeting with Hurd were asking her: “Who is really producing this movie?” Hurd recalled that when she answered “I am,” they would persist: “No, you are the director’s wife. You get the credit, but who is really producing the movie?”

“It was really difficult for me to maintain a sense of calm,” said Hurd, who dressed “professionally” in Chanel and Christian Dior suits. “I was really trying to give off this feeling of authority because there was so much resistance to a woman producer in England.”

Stan Winston, who would remember being worn down financially by Hurd when negotiating for his effects and models, would also recall that the producer-director team were subjected to the expected honeymoon jokes—but that Hurd was singled out for condescension. “There was an older man who was her production supervisor,” Cameron told one journalist in 1986. “He tried to go around Gale several times and got shot down. The British view of female producers proved to be a big problem for Gale. They didn’t know such a creature existed. She was like a unicorn—”

“Except that they like unicorns,” Hurd interjected.



LEFT: Jenette Goldstein (Vasquez) arrived in England in 1982, and toured London schools and community centers in the play *Jessica's Monkey*, a one-woman show based on *The Merchant of Venice*. She also had roles in *Guistino* at the Sadlers Wells Theatre, and in many other theater productions. “I grew up in the slums of Beverly Hills,” Goldstein said. “My father rented an apartment just inside the city limits so my brother and I could go to school there. It worked out well for me. I decided to be an actor at a very young age, and Beverly Hills High had an exceptional drama department.”

“Finally, [the production manager] said he just couldn’t work for her,” Cameron concluded, “and we had to replace him.”

“Honestly, I felt like I was in *The Wizard of Oz*,” Hurd said in 2018. “People kept saying, ‘Who’s really behind the curtain? Who’s really producing this movie?’”

“There were rumblings within earshot of Gale,” Dennis Skotak said, “that women should not produce films. It was said loud enough so she could hear it.”

Going around Hurd meant calling the head of Fox in the UK, Tim Hampton.

“But anyone who called him,” Hurd recalled, “he’d say, ‘No, Gale’s producing the movie. No, you can’t call me. I’m not producing the movie.’ People would argue with him. ‘No, come on, Tim, you’re producing the movie.’ ‘No, I’m not, and if Gale’s not going to hire you, you’re not getting hired.’ I thought it was crazy because Margaret Thatcher was the Prime Minister of England. I thought they were a lot more advanced. They weren’t, not in film.”

And Hurd was doing her job, creatively, fiscally, and in terms of security. All of the sets at Pinewood were closed to visitors; plot points were kept secret. Hurd told each department crew: “The only f---ing person allowed to take photos is Robert Penn.” Penn was the official stills photographer; anyone caught taking photos for any reason would be sacked on the spot.

“This is how tight the budget was over there: When we would send a fax over there,” Syd Mead said, “or any photocopies, we had to specifically get a

clearance per sheet from Pacific Western [Hurd's production company]. This is very tight for a movie. Usually stuff just tumbles through production surfaces without any control whatsoever."

"I found the budget on *Aliens* to be just as small as the budget on *Terminator* because the film is that much more ambitious," Cameron said. "And none of *Aliens* is going to be filmed on location, with the exception of Acton Power Station, which was heavily made over. So a great deal of money went into the realization of that which didn't exist: costumes, armor, equipment, props, everything. I found the money to be just as stretched, and the ingenuity quotient just as necessary on *Aliens* as on my last picture."

A visiting journalist described Hurd's Pinewood Studios office as "light-colored carpets, pine furniture and large green plants. Next to an electric typewriter on her desk is an equestrian's hat; it will soon be lunchtime, when Hurd customarily goes horse-riding... Two clocks adorn Hurd's wall: UK time is 12 noon, but in Los Angeles it's 4 a.m. Phone calls to a film industry based 6,000 miles away are just one reason a movie producer overseas may work late every night. Apart from a full-length mirror, the largest wall space in Hurd's office is devoted to a framed copy of *The Terminator* movie poster."

"I made the mistake with Jim Cameron," Ackland-Snow said of their early meetings, "of talking about him doing the sequel to *Alien*. He said, 'We're doing *Aliens*—that's my film.'"

The producer-director tandem pushed through the last of their casting choices that summer. Goldstein was called in a third time to read for Cameron at Pinewood.

"I spent a long time there, improvising," she said. "Jim took a hand-held camera and he was filming me as I was improvising, moving as I was moving or crawling on the floor. I was thinking, *Who is this guy? I thought I was meeting the director, but why is he crawling on the floor? Maybe he's not the director...*

"Then they said, 'Thank you, great to meet you.' I walked out of the room and was getting my backpack together to go find a train to London—and they came after me and said, 'Can you come back in the room?' That's when Jim said, 'This sounds very strange, but you're in the movie. We don't know what part yet, but I want to get you before someone else does. So I'm going to give you this script, read it, and we'll be in touch.' He also asked me how big I could get in four weeks (laughs)."

"I got a recall and went back," Kash said, "I actually had three recalls for Hudson. But when Jim gave me the part of Private Spunkmeyer, I gave him the coat [as promised]."

"I found some cast members in England," Hurd said, "and some they said I could bring over for us."

"I'd already given up on doing *Aliens*, I hadn't heard from Jim," Paxton said in 2012. "I was actually in negotiations to do *Police Academy 2*. I was offered more money than I'd ever seen and I was ready to take it. But they wanted to tie me up for a *Police Academy 3*, if there was such an animal, so that left my deal hanging in the air. And that's when I got a call from Hildy Gottlieb, my agent, at the eleventh hour, who says, 'You're gonna be getting a call in about ten minutes from Jim Cameron in London, and he wants to offer you the part of Hudson.' And I said, 'Oh my God! But what about *Police Academy 2*?' She said, 'Don't worry. Their own greed has knocked them out.' I just about flipped out."

At around 10 p.m., Paxton, in the kitchen of his apartment in Venice, California, got the call from Cameron—and whupped it up so loud that all his neighbors could hear him.

Two weeks later he was on his way to London, for about half of what he would have earned on *Police Academy 2*, "but one thing I learned very early on is that you take the jobs that you can get with the good directors."

"Vasquez had already been cast," Jenette Goldstein said in 2009, "then the stars aligned: The gal with the part, who was a born-again Christian, went to the producers and told them she didn't feel right about the character using bad language and wanted them to tone it down. So I got the part."

"Gale then explained to me that the idea of giving me Hudson's speech in the earlier audition was because Hudson and Vasquez are foils for each other. Everything Hudson blurted out, Vasquez contained. It didn't mean that she didn't have that all inside her. He was her inner voice. For an actor, it had been a fascinating way to audition."

"But then it took Jim two weeks to convince Fox—he had to go back and say, 'No no, this is who I want.' They said, 'She's never done a film.' 'Yes, I know, yes; I don't care.' Jim is pretty fearless."

"Jenette has very fair skin, blue eyes, freckles, and hair down to her waist," Hurd said. "Yet somehow we managed to see that if we cut off all her hair, gave her brown contact lenses, and so on, that she would be able enough to pull off this Hispanic character."

TRAINING DAYS

Call Sheet #1 for special effects was issued on September 3. On Stage 'G', GLAE tested camera lenses and speeds with wind, smoke, and lighting and heat ripple effects. A few days later they'd test front- and rear-projection options.

On September 7, a final budget was estimated with direct costs of \$15,299,000. Adding Weaver's \$1 million (which also included her per diems, looping days, etc.), sequel rights to be paid out to O'Bannon, increases of \$125,000 for sets and \$75,000 for set dressing, the total "tentative budget" was \$18,128,135.

"Fox did let us go a bit over budget," Lamont said, "because of the lateness of Sigourney and because we had to re-adjust things."

On September 11, principal photography start and finish dates were confirmed, the final cast was fixed, and insurance documents of all kinds were drawn up.

With the cast in place, costumes were finalized. Cameron's design philosophy for that department was that if he understood his characters, why they were there, and why things were a certain way, then design decisions would follow naturally. "So the costumes became very bright because the atmosphere was very dark," he said. "My attitude is, if it makes sense to me visually, it'll make sense to other people visually."

He'd already conceptualized two designs for the marines' battle armor, which were then given to armor designer Terry English. One was basic armor; the second was for Drake and Vasquez, those with the smart guns, which gave them more freedom of movement. For the wardrobe of Ripley,

Newt, those on Gateway, the colonists et al, Cameron was aided by costume designer Emma Porteous, whose big break in the business had been creating clothes for Mick Jagger in director Nicolas Roeg's 1979 film, *Performance* (her more recent credits were on *Force Ten From Navarone*, 1978; *Octopussy*, 1983; and *A View to a Kill*, 1985).

Cast from America flew in circa mid-September. Henriksen had been practicing his knife scene for a month, "shaving off parts of his fingers," he said, and brought his collection of knives over. Hurd was afraid he'd never clear British Customs, but he made it through.

"*Aliens* was shot at Pinewood, just down the street from my home at that time," said Al Matthews, an expat. "You see, when you live in Europe, it is assumed that you live here because you can't cut the mustard—tut, tut! There are many more films shot in the UK, because we have some of the best craftsmen on the planet."

Hurd had talked with Henn's parents about the darkness and violence of the movie. "But Carrie was perfectly fine," the producer said, "and realized it was all make-believe."

With his cast assembled at Pinewood, Cameron put them through a kind of 'boot camp.' Remar, Paxton, Goldstein, Matthews, Rolston, the whole squad, would have to look, function, and behave like marines for his film to work. The director asked Paxton to run full speed and slide into a wall with all of his armor on to test it. The costume fell apart on impact. Cameron told English where the armor needed to be strengthened.

The boot camp also served another purpose. "There's something good about knowing an actor's strengths or weaknesses, and that an actor can be counted on," Cameron said. "In a ten-week shooting schedule, you

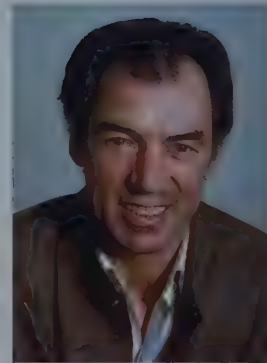
might find out certain things about an actor five or six weeks in, after you've shot certain scenes where that knowledge could have applied, and you'll be frustrated because you weren't able to use it. You can't just discount the first two or three weeks' work as good rehearsal. It doesn't work that way. There isn't a day on a film that you're not doing something that's important to that movie."

Boot camp would provide Cameron with an opportunity to assess the character of his marines. All of those marines were given crew cuts. "They told me, 'It's okay, look at Jenette!' and I just bawled," recalled Colette Hiller (Corporal Ferro). "I was going to get married shortly afterwards, so I made them buy me a long, blonde wig! I don't know what came over me! I never actually wore it."

"They just brought out the buzz saw," Goldstein said. "But I was ready for it, to undergo a change." Goldstein's brown contact lenses, however, made her a "little crazy."

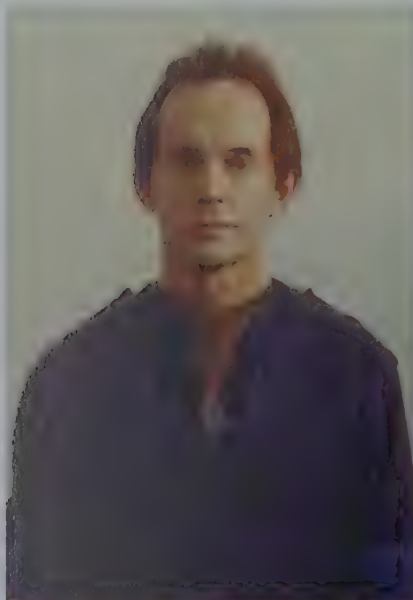
The director then told his marines to personalize their reinforced armor. An assortment of pre-approved material was made available to the actors in a room on a table to choose from. The script had specified:

Among the troopers dress discipline is lax, fatigues customized and emblazoned with patches. Drake's tunic is cut off to a vest and has "Eat the apple and fuck the Corps" stenciled on back. "Peace Through Superior Firepower," "Pray for War" and "I've Served My Time in Hell: Cetti Epsilon NC-104"



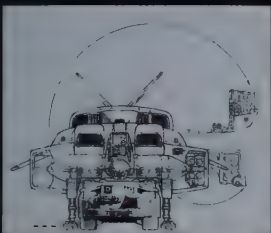
ABOVE: Stunt coordinator Paul Weston.

BELOW (LEFT TO RIGHT): Lance Henriksen (Bishop); Bill Paxton (Hudson); and Ricco Ross (Frost), all in costume. Paxton had worked for Roger Corman as a set decorator on such films as *Big Bad Mama* (1974) and *Darktown Strutters* (1975). When Jonathan Demme directed *Crazy Mama* (1975), the director gave Paxton a few lines in the film. "I'd always wanted to be a film actor," Paxton said, "and this was the start of it." In fact he'd already grabbed good roles in theatre productions, including the lead in Sam Shepard's *Curse of the Starving Class*. "But it was movies I had always wanted to be in. I'm into the whole thing, not just performing. I love watching what goes on behind the camera. My heroes are Buster Keaton and Harold Lloyd—complete filmmakers." Paxton even made and starred in his own shorts, one of which was *Fish Heads*, a surreal music video that was broadcast on *Saturday Night Live* in 1980.





SUSPENSE SHIP



ABOVE: Cobb concept art of the dropship's unfolding armaments.

RIGHT (FROM TOP): Dropship concept art; two Cobb concept art pieces; the dropship model, which was overseen by technical advisor Brendan Alimo in the art department. The basic version was about 6 ft long (one-twelfth scale), of which about nine were fabricated. The pattern was made by Peter Astin, an outside contractor who also produced the fiberglass shells that were then brought over to the model shop for detailing. Only one of the models was fully mechanized, with retractable landing gear and unfolding weapons pods, and a descending floor on its bottom for the APC to drive out. The others were built in the fully deployed position. Some were carefully detailed, others not. Crash models were constructed more crudely.

Fox press materials mention that Cameron and Hurd employed author-lecturer Alimo, who had advised NASA, to advise on the film's hardware and the dropship (he was credited as "assistant set decorator technical"). Alimo had also written novels, had lectured for 20 years on aerospace technology, and was recognized as an expert on weaponry and modern warfare.

During preproduction, the dropship prototype went through numerous, "unscheduled alterations." Some difficulties occurred because the full-size and miniature dropships were being built at the same time.

Syd Mead had conceptualized the dropship with a body similar to that of a Sikorsky H-53 heavy-lift helicopter; Cobb had done a few drawings, too, based on a Bell UH-1E/I Huey hybrid with outrigger armament pods. "Jim's direction was that he wanted it to look...well, not ugly, but mechanically threatening," Mead said. "There's a heavy-lift helicopter that Sikorsky makes that the Marine Corps uses. It's a huge helicopter; you can drive two Jeeps into it. And it's consummately ugly. It has big sand filters on the intakes for the jets. It's a five-blade-rotor helicopter."

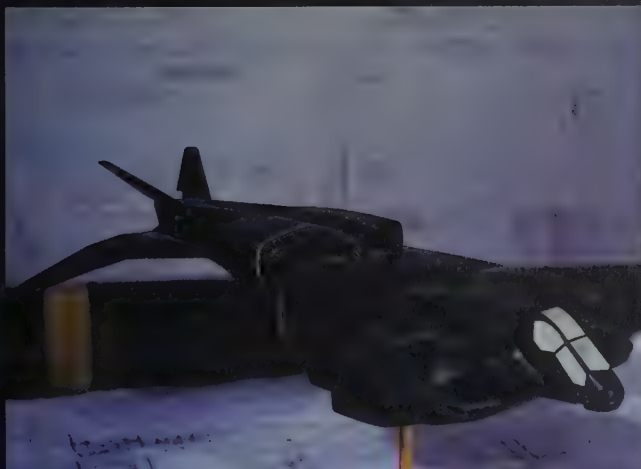
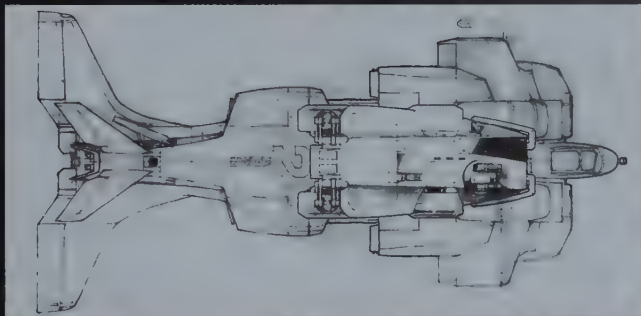
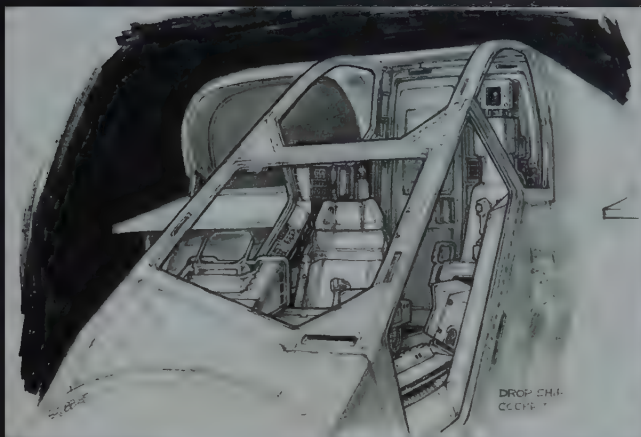
Not content with either artist's take, Cameron came in to Pinewood on a Sunday and kit-bashed a prototype together. He started with an AH-64 Apache helicopter kit and modified it with other model parts and foam-core, then spray-painted it and handed his model over to Cobb to draw up schematics.

"The dropship went through a lot of hands," said Cobb. "Cameron's was much more conventional, but in a way a better design; it wasn't quite as weird as mine. We went back and forth on it for quite a while, which was difficult for me."

"The dropship was something that I could see very clearly in my mind," Cameron said, "but for some reason I couldn't seem to draw it. It defied me. The main problem was not the overall configuration, but the variable geometry concept of having the gun pods fold out and lock into place. What I wanted was to suggest an existing piece of military hardware, and make it a trans-atmospheric vehicle. Obviously it wouldn't have rotors, but it does have VTOL [vertical takeoff and landing] and vectored thrust. Even the motion of it would be very helicopter-like. The nose drops down when it accelerates forward, and the ship spins in place as it descends. All of that was very intentionally imitated from helicopter movements."

"They were in a hurry, and the budget was limited," Mead said of the full-size version, "so they hired metal formers to come over from a nearby auto shop and just hammer this together in the dropship bay set over formers. And whatever that ended up looking like, they made the models from that. So they went the reverse from normal: They built the full-size version first and then made the models to look the same."

It would seem that the design of the dropship was problematic also because several were needed for the various types of shots. The 'crash-and-blow-up' models were needed first for the early rear-projection plates, but work on the full-size mock-up had equal priority.





"I encouraged the actors to customize their own armor," Cameron explained, "to give the impression that they were seasoned, that they had been away from command authority on their own a lot, and were good enough at their jobs that they were allowed these kinds of latitudes. And obviously this is a continuation of the motif from the first film, where they're wearing Hawaiian shirts and all kinds of strange stuff, all of which was a new idea in science fiction. And so the idea here was extrapolated to a military unit that's worked at the extreme fringes of human civilization."

"Jim was making 'Grunts in Space,'" said Sallis, "That phrase was around during the making of the film."

"One day Jim said, 'Hey, after lunch you're going to meet here and then you're going to follow me,'" Rolston said. "He led us over to the art department. We went inside a room, and there's just paint and brushes and markers and crazy stuff. And Jim said, 'Go ahead and personalize your gear.' So each of us had our own moment of, *Hang on a sec*, and you had to get into your character. It became a real bonding moment."

Rolston painted on his gun the words 'My Bitch,' with 'Grrr!' down its barrel, as well as adding crude breasts to his gloves.

Ricco Ross (Frost) inscribed the name 'Heath' (short for his girlfriend, Heather, because he ran out of room) in a love heart on his armor plate. Goldstein quoted the title of a poem in a book of Chicana poetry: 'El Riesgo Siempre Vive.' "That means 'The Risk Is Always There,'" she said. "The risk never dies; it was about gang life in Lo Barrio, and I thought that was really interesting." She also wrote in large letters 'Adios' on her smart gun; and on the back of her shirt, 'Loco.'

Paxton stenciled a love knot and the name 'Louise' over his heart (a reference to his girlfriend, Louise Newbury) and painted on his armor's back plate the phrase 'Contents under pressure, dispose of properly'; he painted a Magic 8-ball on the back-left side of his helmet, and a can opener on his codpiece.

He also followed Cameron's advice to develop a backstory for his character. "I figured Hudson was a guy who had been raised by his mother for some reason," Paxton said. "He wanted to be a pilot, but really couldn't

cut it, IQ-wise or test-wise. So he ended up joining the marines."

Goldstein and Rolston decided that because their characters were recruited from juvenile prison and were serving life sentences, "they were therefore different from the others, who were on a time limit," she said, "Hudson was supposed to get out of the marines in four weeks, which is what made him flip."

"We figured we'd been sent up for murder, and the service was the only chance we had to get out of that," Rolston said. "Whatever we did, it was going to be better than staying in prison. We came from the same place and had our backs."

Cynthia Scott, cast as med tech Dietrich, drew a red cross with a drop of blood; on the back of her helmet she scrawled 'Blue Angel,' a reference to the 1930 film starring her namesake, Marlene Dietrich.

Even Burke's costume was not neglected. "We had about 12 meetings on a suit," Reiser recalled. "They took literally 72 measurements, from the eye to the spleen... I'm thinking this is going to be some phenomenal suit. I get it—and it's a regular suit with the collar turned up. Two hundred years in the future and all we've come up with is: the collar goes up."

"We got more notes from the studio on costumes than anything else," Hurd said. "It was like they had to focus on something. And they couldn't tell Jim about visual effects, so they focused on wardrobe."

Then boot camp actually began with ex-SAS (Special Air Service) Tip Tipping, who had also been cast as a marine, leading the unit; Al Matthews also became their natural leader. After a couple of days on how to use their

ABOVE: Concept art of the smart gun by Cameron.



ABOVE: Concept art of a marine helmet and a practical helmet (top).

ABOVE RIGHT: Concept art of a colonial marine costume and gear. Concept art this page by Cameron.

weapons—pistol, flamethrower, pulse rifle, smart gun, standing up after falling on sandbags—it was full days of running, calisthenics, military grilling, saluting, and other drills.

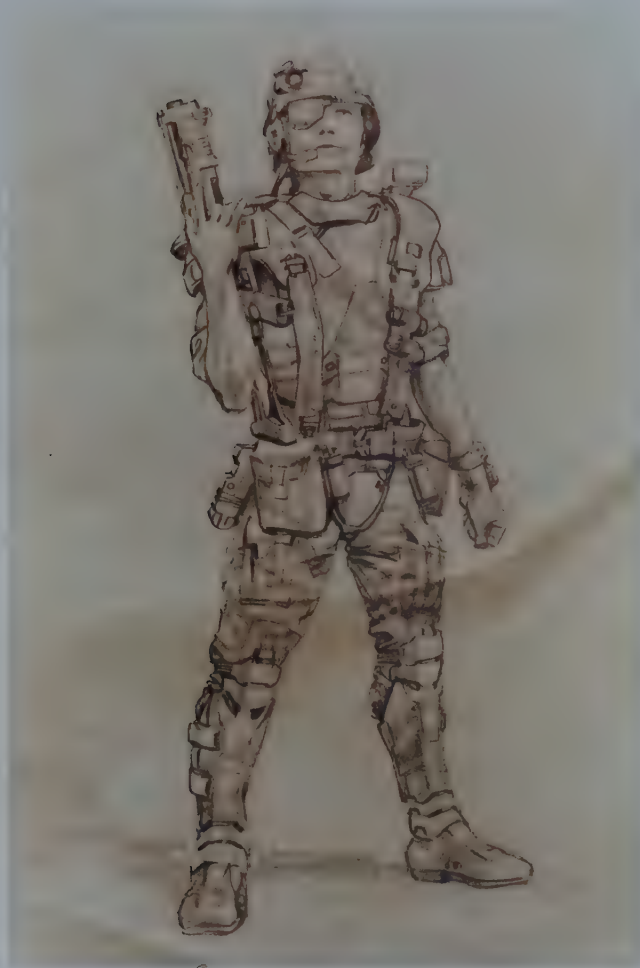
“I felt that Al plugged us in,” Ricco Ross said. “He wasn’t just acting. And some of the things that would come out of his mouth—you knew that was real shit.”

“I was the only person in the movie not pretending to be a marine,” Matthews said. “I did not have to act, I was just my normal self. Al Matthews and Sergeant Al Apone—bet you didn’t know his first name was Al, we did that as a joke—they are the same person. In fact, I taught the other actors how to look and act. Mr. Cameron was pleased with my input . . .” Matthews would add, “Jim asked me to train them, and the main thing I had to teach those guys was never point a weapon at somebody, and never walk around with your finger on the trigger.”

“Every piece of me hurt,” said Cynthia Scott. “I trained like mad, and they had us taking supplements like extract of spleen. Jenette was a competitive bodybuilder; she was what I aspired to.”

Scott also recalled that if any of them accidentally pointed their gun at someone, the offender had to fall to the ground and do ten push-ups.

“One of the stuntmen had been in the SAS, Tipping, in Northern Ireland,” Goldstein said. “So he taught us urban warfare, how to attack a building, what to do. We ran around the sculpture gardens of Pinewood. We were going, ‘Wooded! Awaah!’ It was kind of silly. But it was good, we were assaulting stairwells. And then we had Matthews, who’d been in the marines. So I just hung on every word they said, ‘This is what you do, this is how you



hold it.’ Because that’s something I didn’t know and I really, really wanted to make it look like Vasquez was who she was.”

“Stunt coordinator Paul Weston and Tip, and a couple of other people, they whipped the shit out of us,” Rolston said. “Since I was already training, I was ahead of the game, but for Paxton and Jimmy Remar and everyone else . . . They’d kick it off with a five-mile run and it wasn’t jogging; they were SAS guys, they were barking at us. Jim had given them the note, ‘Train them as if they’re going to be SAS.’ So they were up our butts and if you weren’t moving, they were pushing you. They weren’t sparing us anything.”

“The marines all got their weapons and gear,” Reiser said, “and I got a stupid suit. And I got a Filofax to carry into battle. I had to have something!”

Henn was sometimes allowed to run behind the marines carrying her Cabbage Patch Doll as if it were a gun. “I really wanted to feel like I was part of it,” she said, “and they really did make me feel like I was a part of it.”

IN COLD, DEAD HANDS

Cameron and Hurd, according to Fox PR material, worked with several weapons companies—Parranti, Marconi, Barr and Stroud, and EMI—on the film's hardware and weaponry was in line with relatively advanced defense and space research. The Chief of Public Affairs for the British Aerospace Contractors visited Pinewood to help in purchasing equipment, while British Aerospace gave the production a Minitrac Range-Finder (identical to the one used in the Falklands war to destroy enemy artillery).

It was Cameron who designed the weaponry for his Colonial Marines. "Part of the attraction of doing the film was that it was a design job," he said. "As a filmmaker, I don't want to be a slave to it, but the subject has to be up to certain standards."

He handed over a few of his designs to Simon Atherton, one of two armors of the film, who had trained as a gunsmith. He could choose from 10,000 weapons in the studio's armory as a starting point. From design to the finished weapon would take about three months.

To create the armorers, and John Richardson looked for real-world weapons that would make the brightest muzzle flash, but produce a minimum amount of smoke (because smoke tended to make the guns look like prop guns) and which could fire blanks rapidly. The marines' pulse gun was a combination of a Thompson machine gun and a Franchi SPAS 12 pump-action shotgun mechanism. The Franchi SPAS 12 could fire pump-action and/or grenades, and the Thompson could fire pump-action and/or grenades.

It had a lot of trouble with that bloody pulse gun," Richardson said. "Jim wanted flames coming out of the nozzle, and we couldn't get that. So that's the Thompson submachine gun." So Richardson, with help from a few others, molded a pulse gun's "kind of a hybrid" between the submachine gun, so the latter could fire while the former burned.

The "smart" guns were modeled on the German Spandau-type machine gun, an MG 42, mounted on a Steadicam rig, and detailed with futuristic-looking parts. The idea, again, was to operate the heavy gun with a camera. The smart gun had an ammunition magazine on top and fired blanks too. Its sighting mechanism, in theory, was based on night vision, i.e., using body heat radiation to form clear pictures of the enemy in the dark or at night.

"It was a long time choosing guns that we could adapt to look like something you've never seen before," said Richardson. "Jim is very much into the idea of creating weaponry, so whatever we came up with had to have a futuristic look."

The weapons and hardware were specially constructed by Terry Richardson. A lightweight fiberglass version was made of each weapon for the actors, so actors could carry them around for hours in scenes that required firing blanks.

In scenes that required shooting, their weapons would fire "wooden blanks." "Whenever I mention wooden blanks," said Richardson, "people tend to throw up their arms in horror. But in actuality they're very safe. In all our automatic blank-firing weapons there are baffles in the gun barrel that shatter the blanks into tiny little splinters so that by the time they get to the end, they've been completely consumed by the heat of the powder burning."

The marines' helmets were equipped with a battery of sensor tools, action props dressed by Sallis: a flip-down eyepiece, a video camera that in the story transmits back to the unit commander, and a headset communications system. Small but powerful practical lights were affixed to the helmet or shoulder.

BELOW: Practical weapon props for the marines.



"For the week we spent with each other, 10 days, we ate together and hung out," Goldstein added, "and we worked again. We got to know everyone, joking around. We began to feel like we were a unit. We had a great camaraderie. I grew up with brothers, so I was used to it. In fact, it was good that we were together first and that Ripley would come in later. We were all a unit and she's the outsider, so it was perfect. Same thing for Burke."

"We partied our asses off," Kash said in 2012. "I had no money at all. I was living on half a bag of chips—suddenly I was getting picked up in Kilburn by a car with a chauffeur. I thought, *This is the life!* And it was good money. I had a lesser part, of course, but all of us... Cameron would rent a whole restaurant and spend a lot of money making us have a great time. That was his way of making the atmosphere like he thought it should be. Maybe part of it was making us bond as a unit."

Wednesday, September 25, marked day 5 of 10, the halfway point for "Artistes Rehearsals, Workouts & Training"—or "Boot Camp." They were due on set at 9 a.m. and supplied with "Dummy Pulse Guns and Smart Guns, handgun and shotgun," practical weapons for firing and training on Stage 'F.' "Cast to be full costume and armor."

That afternoon, Colette Hiller was due at 3 p.m. for dialogue coaching, with Henn. A production note indicated that they were also searching for a suitable Newt double and stand-in.

"I think we're doing a good job," said Matthews at the time. He wanted them all to be in love with their guns, because from the military point of view, that was the correct attitude. "We have a lot of actors here who have never seen or handled a weapon before in their life, and they're doing it well."

The one exception was Remar, who didn't pay attention one day when they were in the vicinity of director Frank Oz's *Little Shop of Horrors*. "He blew a hole in Frank's set! With a shotgun!" Matthews recalled. "I said, 'Where the fuck did you get live ammo?'"

"I'm actually frightened of guns," said Goldstein, who found the smart gun balanced, but heavy. She practiced for hours, like her colleague, Rolston, who happened to be taller and larger. Goldstein also had to capture Vasquez's anger and dialect. "I had to do it from memory; I didn't have a dialect coach, or the time or money to fly back to Los Angeles. I had my parents send me some source material from libraries in Los Angeles, interviews with gang members, that sort of thing, because there was nothing like that in London."

Cameron often watched them. He knew what to expect from Paxton, but not the others. "When you're working with an actor you know, who you have a rapport with, you can get those things right from the beginning," the director said. "But we found pleasant surprises in everyone in the cast."

"The day before shooting," Reiser recalled, "Jim said, 'Think seriously about whether you want to have that Filofax, that prop—because you'll have to hold it for the next three months.'"

During a table read of the script, although the actors were in street clothes, Cynthia Scott got a taste of her director's intensity: "Jim turned to me and said, 'You have lip gloss on! Marines don't wear lip gloss.'"

"We were in a meeting room in the mansion of Pinewood," Paxton said. "And I asked Jim, 'What if I say—*We're on an express elevator to Hell—going down!*'"

BEFORE THE GOLD

Lance Henriksen had also spent about a thousand dollars of his own money on contact lenses. Each scleral lens covered his entire eye and created the illusion of each eye having two pupils (Bishop would have two pupils when he became 'alert'). "I was worried that if I had to play the villainous side of this character, I wanted something that would convey that without having to be menacing all the time," he said. "It would be too boring to be dangerous all through the movie. Jim was good about it: He filmed [a test], but the double-pupil lenses didn't work. Now I use them for tiddly-winks."

"It was a really cool idea, but I felt it was too overt," said Cameron.

Toward the end of boot camp, production distributed to HODs, the actors, and key personnel Cameron's "Final Shooting Script," dated September 23, 1985 ("based on a story by James Cameron and David Giler & Walter Hill; based on Characters Created by Dan O'Bannon and Ronald Shusett"). At 106 typed pages, it was very close to the previous draft, though Cameron altered the roster slightly to fit his casting choices; when the Colonial Marines come out of hypersleep, their names are slightly different:

The canopies of the row of capsules are raised. Ripley sits up. Rubs her arms briskly. Next to her, Gorman and Burke are stirring and beyond them the troopers, wearing shorts and dog tags. They are: MASTER SERGEANT APONE, CORPORAL HICKS, CORPORAL DIETRICH (female), PFC HUDSON, PFC VASQUEZ (female), PRIVATES DRAKE, FROST, WIERZBOWSKI, and CROWE, plus the drop-ship crew: CORPORAL FERRO (female, pilot) and crew-chief PFC SPUNKMEYER. In addition there is EXECUTIVE OFFICER BISHOP, who supervises planetary maneuvering. GROANS echo across the chamber.

The script also incorporated the new introduction for Bishop:

HUDSON

Hey, Bishop, man. Do the thing with the knife.

BISHOP

Oh, please. Not again.

FROST

Yeah, do it, Bishop. This is great. Go on, man.

Frost tosses Bishop a K-Bar combat knife and Bishop slaps his palm on the table. He proceeds to stab the point down rapidly between his spread fingers, speeding up until



FAR LEFT: Carrie Henn, cast as Neve.



LEFT: Henriksen wearing contacts to enhance the look of Bishop. After his early successes on stage, Henriksen had won smaller roles in *Network* (1976), *Prince of the City* (1981), and a larger role in *Damien: Omen II* (1978). He had a part in Spielberg's *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1977). While making that film, he met the French film director Francois Truffaut, who played Lacombe. "Which was the real event for me," Henriksen said. "Truffaut gave me a book of his movie, *The Four Hundred Blows*, and wrote in it: 'You are now and have always been this child.' All the months we worked together I didn't think he noticed." (In Truffaut's autobiographical film, his protagonist is a neglected, wayward young boy who is unloved, but who loves movies.)

the knife is a blur, as the others cheer. Inhumanly fast and precise...

Bishop takes a seat beside Ripley. He is sucking on one finger, scowling. He examines the tiny cut closely and to Ripley's horror a trickle of WHITE SYNTHETIC BLOOD runs down his finger. Ripley spins on Burke, her tone accusing.

Cameron also altered Ripley's first round with the alien queen. Instead of simply backing away, she threatens the queen first:

She becomes aware of a number of warriors moving toward her from the dim recesses. She fires the flamethrower above the rows of eggs and then lowers her aim toward the eggs, while staring fixedly at the Queen. The warriors freeze. A nightmare tableau. Ripley fires another warning jet of flame. The warriors move back into the shadows, clearly at the Queen's direction. A Mexican standoff between two females fighting for their young. Ripley backs

slowly across the chamber until she reaches an exit tunnel. Then she unleashes the flamethrower, igniting the field of eggs with an insane fury. The Queen goes berserk, SCREECHING like some psychotic steam-whistle...

Everything disappears behind a wall of fire. Ripley drops a magazine and grabs another from her belt, ramming it home just as a warrior leaps from the inferno like a living fireball. She blasts it back to hell with a long burst. She unslings the bandolier of grenades, primes one, and throws the whole thing as far as she can into the egg-chamber. Dashing into the catacombs, she is hurled forward by the shock wave of multiple explosions.

With his script complete and his marines formed into a solid unit, Cameron was nearly ready for Day One of principal photography. He was only missing the star of his movie...



THE QUEEN'S REIGN, PART II

BELOW: Making the alien queen (from top left, clockwise): crew work on the underside of the queen's head; Robert Skotak puts a pair of glasses as a joke on the queen; Lindsay MacGowan paints the alien queen's tail; John Rosengrant sculpts the torso; Shana Mahan sculpts the face of the queen. (Images courtesy of Stan Winston School.)

Winston had left his studio to be run by a couple of dozen fairly young artists and technicians. They would build and send required pieces to their boss throughout production. "Basically, the insane people had been left to run the asylum," said Howard Berger. "There was a lot of wild stuff that went on."

But work was completed, too, as planned: i.e., the queen's torso, large enough for the two stuntmen inside. Mannequins were made out of foam and placed inside the already-completed body plate when it was shipped from the States to Pinewood. There, a wire mesh sculpting armature was constructed around it. Rosengrant sculpted the full-scale queen torso, while welded-steel armatures for the legs, arms, and head were constructed.

Brian Penikas and Shawn McEnroe sculpted the tail. As the other armatures were finished, other sculptors tackled certain body parts: Graham High and John Robertson, the legs; Shana Mahan, the full-size head and

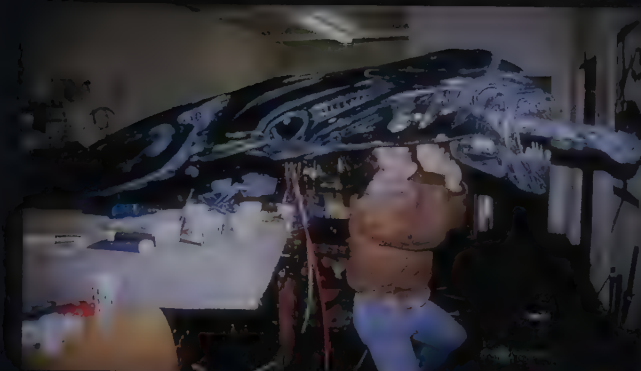
face; Christine (Chrissy) Overs, Steve Norrington, and Philomena Davis, the longer arms; Rosengrant, Tom Woodruff, and Robertson, the short arms.

"I'm fortunate enough to have surrounded myself with the finest artists and technicians in the world," Winston said at Pinewood. "Then I must add some wonderful British artists and technicians to the list: Ray Lovell, Steve Norrington, Graham High, Ian Rolph."

The queen's molds required the full staff of Pinewood, headed by Keith Shaamon.

To minimize its total weight, the queen was cast in a light polyfoam, usually over the individual armature sections. They had to make sure that the longer arms were as lightweight as possible in order to be operable on the wrist of the interior puppeteers.

Mahan and Rosengrant went to the Natural History Museum one weekend and studied fossils for inspiration. "We sketched ideas from a prehistoric fish, the coelacanth," said Mahan. "That coelacanth had what became elements of the queen's head. There were details that we added to the queen based on studies like that."





CHAPTER 05



PHANTOM XENOMORPHS
SEPTEMBER TO OCTOBER 1985



LV-486





The eve of Day One, Sunday, September 29, was dedicated to makeup, hairdressing, and costume tests. Cameron continued to shoot down-and-dirty video storyboards with a camcorder directed at people walking foam-core mockups of the ships through shots; these would be used as reference by his model-effects team.

At the Acton power station, DP Dick Bush and his crew pre-lit the set while the effects crew finished preparations on the 'hanging miniature' for scene 81 (FX shot no. 61).

"There were a lot of last-minute adjustments to be made [on the hanging miniature]," said Dennis Skotak, "mainly because the live-action set was not quite ready until a day or so before we started to shoot. Since a lot of what we had to do depended on the final set dressing and paint job, it was pretty crazy those last couple of days trying to get our blend just right."

Production had spent a small fortune to eliminate the asbestos, but was required to take air quality readings multiple times a day.

To guide the art department in the dressing of the plant's details, Cameron had sketched a number of colonists entombed in the alien goo. By the end of September, full-size sculptures created by Winston's team were being rigged to the walls of the power station to create a 'cocoon chamber.'

"Visually, that set was stunning," said Shane Mahan. "But it was very cold at Acton, very dreary, with many, many flights of stairs. Overall, it was

a tough environment to work in. The worst part of it was psychological, knowing that there could be asbestos in the air. They said it was perfectly safe, but I still wore filter masks in there. I could deal with the cold and the grit and the grime of the place, but there was a mental irritation in thinking there might be a carcinogen in the air."

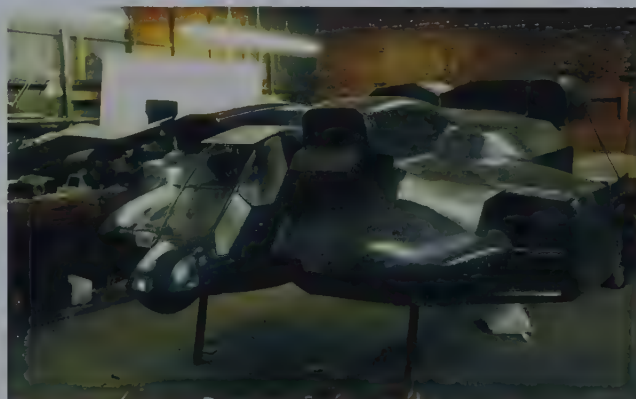
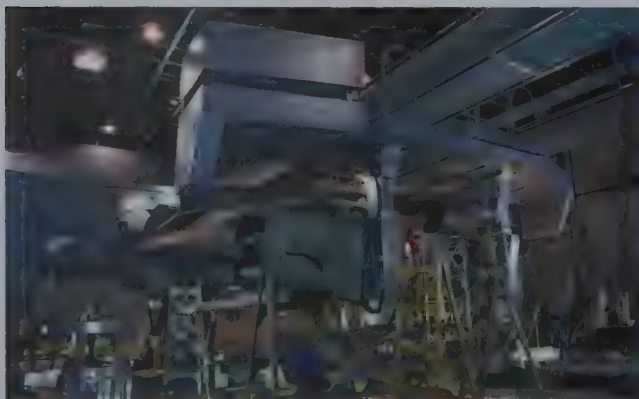
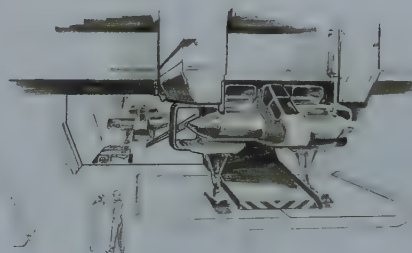
Indeed the Call Sheet for the second day of shooting noted: "A payment of \$5 per day [for] 'abnormal conditions' money can be claimed on the time sheet by unit members working within the power station."

To help kick off the film, Cameron and Hurd had a party for cast and crew at the Inn on the Bridge, in Eton.

PREVIOUS PAGE: Stan Winston touching up makeup on one of the victims.

LEFT AND BELOW LEFT: The dropship and cargo bay from concept to final set.

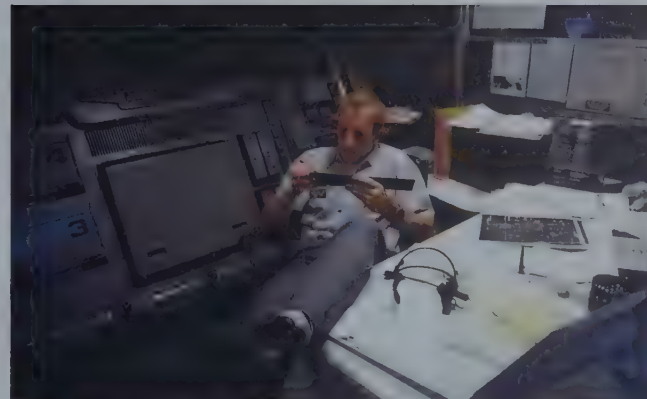
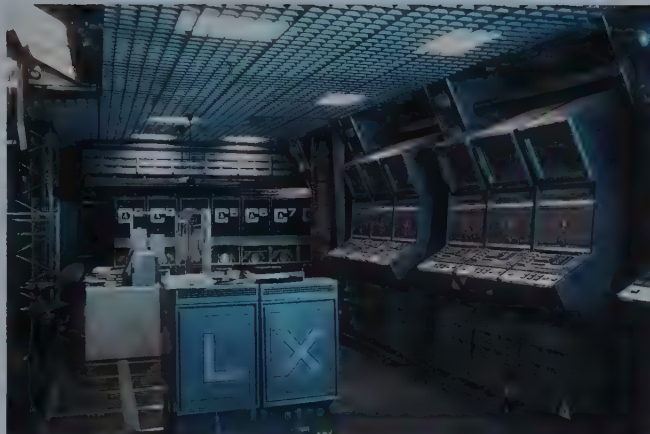
LEFT, BELOW RIGHT: The quarter-scale dropship takes form, built by Mick Milford (this model may have been used for one or two shots in the AP station rescue sequence and in the background of the queen/Ripley duel).





ABOVE AND RIGHT: The colony before it's invaded and attacked. At some point during preproduction a 'd' was added to 'Weylan'—a name coined for the first film—so the company financing the colony became "Weyland-Yutani."

FOLLOWING PAGES: Another colony set build and dress.



MEET THE MAELSTROM

SHOOT DAYS 1 to 10; Monday, September 30 to Friday, October 11, 1985

LOCATION: Acton Lane Power Station, Everitt Road, Harlesden, NW 10 1QT. Colony—Main Concourse: sc. 12 (colonists, kid on 'wheeled plastic toy')

INT. Operations Room/Control Block: sc. 13 (Simpson and Lydecker discuss prospector)

INT. Station Complex: sc. 79 (troopers file out of APC and enter colony)

INT. Alien Structure: scs. 81 (troopers stand before bizarre tableau; hanging miniature; LA FX Shot No. 61 and Video Version LA FX Shot No. 62); 83 (troopers enter the labyrinth); 97 pt. (video); 101 pt. (troopers retreat prior to arrival of APC); 85 (deeper inside); 87 (collecting weapons magazines); 100 (APC crashes through and floodlights activate); 105 (attacking alien warrior destroyed); 101 (marines fall back to APC; Drake killed)

INT. Cocoon Chamber: scs. 88 (cocooned colonists; woman colonist awakes); 90 (flame blast cocoons as Chestbuster emerges); 92 (battle of phantoms begins; Frost drops satchel of pulse rifle magazines); 94 (Vasquez, Drake open fire); 96 (Apone isolated, raises flamethrower; killed); video cover for scenes 95, 97.

EXT. APC (station complex): sc. 98 (the massive machine leaps forward)

Note: Shooting schedule notes rely on Progress Reports, a Continuity Script, and several 'One Liners,' or advance schedules. Most dates are exact, but a few are approximate (scenes are listed more or less as shot, but not all scenes shot are listed).

The first day, Cameron filmed a couple of scenes with colonist adults and children in the complex (the set dressed in 'Good Shape'; that is, before the alien attack), as well as Simpson and Lydecker in discussion.

"Actually, on the first day of shooting 'Good Shape,' which is the first day we shot, I did a joke with Jim," Sallis said. "I said, 'Jim, can I have a bit of

fun? What if I put a bunch of flowers on that table over there?' And he said, 'Great idea. Let's see who's the first to spot it before we turn over.' So I dressed a bunch of flowers in a vase in one of the sets of the corridor."

When no one spotted it, Sallis recalled that he "had to dive in and go, 'Guys, guys, guys—you're all idiots. What the fuck is this doing here?' and take it away."

On the second day, the actors playing marines were driven from their homes or hotels to the studio and reported for makeup.

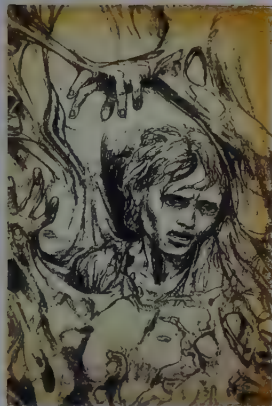
"My makeup took an hour," Goldstein said. "The makeup woman said I had the most ornery freckles she had ever seen."

Goldstein, Remar, Matthews, Paxton, and the rest of the marines left the studio at 7 a.m., transported by three minibuses to the Acton Lane power station at the end of Everitt Road. Other support vehicles numbered six









ABOVE AND OPPOSITE: Concept art and sculptures of the tortured colonists in their cocoons.

ABOVE RIGHT: The APC at Acton; its real interior seen through its open door. The set of the APC interior would be a cheat—that is, much bigger than the actual space available in the vehicle.

FOLLOWING PAGES: Views of the dressed location at Acton.



caravans, one Road Ranger, one Prowler, two Honeywagons (portable toilets), and two dining buses. The actors were on location by 8 a.m. Their weaponry included 'Pulse Guns, Smart Guns, Flamethrowers, Hicks's shotgun, handguns, and accessories as established for troopers (additional magazines and ammo), practical motion trackers, Frost's rucksack and repeats.' Marines were also equipped with '5 X 250w Shoulder Lamps.'

Crew were on hand to supply smoke, steam, wetting down, and trickling water. Also on location was the full-sized APC with its designated driver, recruited from a London airport. Though the ground-level floor of the power plant had been reinforced to support the heavy load, production was still concerned about its structural integrity, so the APC's use within the facility would be limited.

"We had started on the lower floor," Lamont said, "and were still working on the upper floor when production began. As Jim came up shooting, we were gradually retreating behind."

The first day at Acton wouldn't require any actual aliens, so they held rehearsals back at Pinewood for the 'Creature Effects: Alien Warrior Suits for Stunt and Dancers.' Paul Weston supervised rehearsals with alien warrior/stuntman Chris Webb and dancer Carl Toop for wire rig prep. The actress cast as the colonist with a Chestbuster, Barbara Coles, was at the studio at 10 a.m. so they could take a 'mouth impression' for a future effect with her dummy.

At Acton, cast and crew of 130 had tea on arrival. On hand was executive producer David Giler. Of course, Weaver was still absent. "Sigourney had a previous commitment," Cameron told a journalist in 1986, "and she was not available to start work on *Aliens*—which was a severe handicap."

"Fox was having serious doubts as to who these people were at LA Effects," Robert Skotak said. "A lot of questions came up. So we had David Giler on the set the first couple of days of the shoot."

Their first shot was of the APC inside the AP station. They slightly under-cranked the camera so the genuine vehicle would match the more rapid movement of the miniature as it came to a stop, turned off its headlights and turned on an overhead light; the shot was staged so the marines looked like they came out of the APC, but the actors in fact simply circled around it to



give that impression (the actual APC didn't have room for that many people).

It was Goldstein's first day on a film of any kind: "I had no idea what 'back to one' meant or anything. I'd gone to drama school and been trained as a theater actor, but I didn't know what a master shot was or any of those things. I was just terrified. But I used that fear, and Bill said, 'Don't worry about it. Stick with me. You'll just *learn while you earn*.' [laughs]"

Cameron had been working with his DP Dick Bush to create "a seamless blend" between the two films. He wasn't going to use long lenses like Ridley Scott, but his use of smoke and lighting, and his framing, would be similar. Technically, Cameron would have an advantage: a 'video tap' on the main camera that would allow him to see what they were getting on film (more or less).

Cameron could therefore help his DP and effects crew line up the trick 'forced-perspective' shot inside the alien lair with the approximately 10 ft high by 12 ft wide hanging miniature (of alien encrustation) in the foreground; the live-action set and actors were in the background. The trickiest part was creating smoke that matched foreground and live action, which meant tweaking the lighting, and pumping additional smoke over the miniature.

"Cast and crew would be standing around, waiting," said Dennis Skotak, "and when everything looked right, we'd say: 'That's it! Shoot!'—and everybody would go for it. The blend was there literally just for moments and then it would be gone."

"David Giler was sitting there watching us," Robert Skotak recalled. "I'd been told by Gale he was watching us to see who really knew what they were doing and who was actually doing the effects work. He needed to get a sense of who we were."

Once inside, Matthews as Apone led his squad, often ad-libbing his lines. "Either he was really good at bullshitting us..." Paxton recalled. "But his orders were so authoritarian, we did what he said."

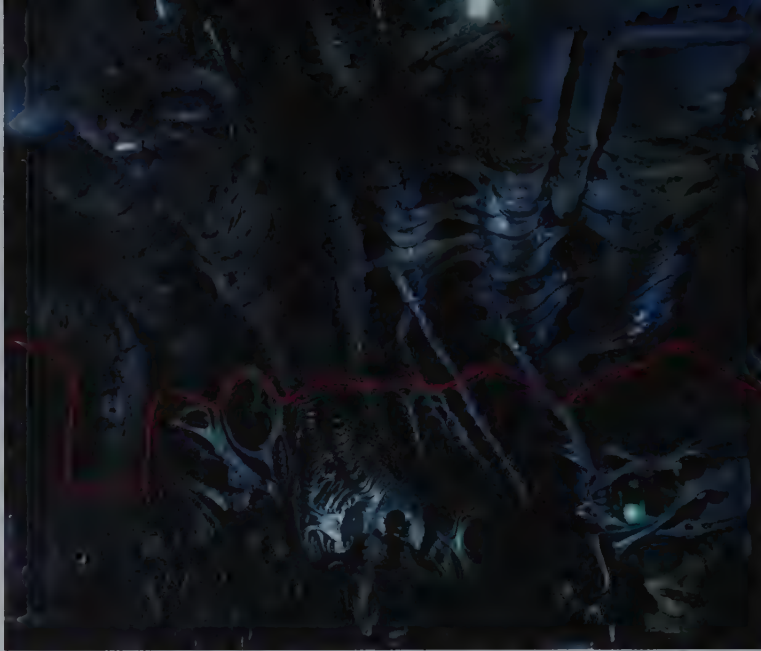
On Thursday, October 3, Fox sent out a press release: "*Aliens*, a futuristic, high tension suspense/thriller to be directed by James Cameron from his own screenplay, starring Sigourney Weaver, went before the cameras at Pinewood Studios." The publicity also supplied a theater date, "summer of 1986," and noted that Cobb, Mead, and Lamont were uniting to create sets over "six massive soundstages and the entire process stage at Pinewood."











FAR LEFT (ABOVE): Visual-effects technician Steve Begg, model unit DP Harry Oakes, and camera operator David Litchfield working out how to create the hanging miniature shot during preproduction (Begg, following the Skotaks' brief, drew storyboards, shot plates; operated camera in the APC ramp sequence and the dropship approach, lined up shots with beam-splitters—making cardboard mattes for those shots, painted backings; detailed models; etc.)

FAR LEFT (BELOW): Installation of the hanging miniature.

LEFT: A red line marks the change from hanging miniature in foreground to dressed location farther away in the trick shot. The section to be dressed in the Acton power plant had been reproduced at first in plywood on Stage 'L' at Pinewood. Artists then sculpted and built the cocoon mass over it in Styrofoam, which took about two weeks. The Skotaks then set up a camera, determined measurements, and did a few test shots; they gave the plans to model-makers Steve Begg and Chrissy Overs, who, together with Faisal Karim, finished off the miniature on site, which took another two to three weeks.

"I saw Ron Cobb on two or three occasions," said model-maker John Lee. "Generally he was a jolly chap, and again, another hero of mine because the guy can draw. He can draw and he can design, and his stuff looks completely functional. He designed this little tractor which had a telescopic arm on the front, which is in the flyover of the small-scale colony, and I got to make the small tractor from his concept."

Behind the scenes, Cameron was having problems with his DP. Hurd would say that Bush was a traditional British lighting cameraman—he'd started out in the 1960s—and he didn't want to hear what the 'director's vision' was. He was going to light the set as he saw fit. The point of friction was the marines' exploration of the APC station; Cameron wanted them to see and the set to be lit only by their practical shoulder lights. But each day Bush lit the set brightly.

Martin Hume, focus puller on the camera crew, recalled decades later: "Dick said to his gaffer, 'Let the director direct, and then we'll go and do the lighting afterward.' So it was all a bit of a conflict, and it's personalities. James was a very, very hard man."

"I remember having to say to Dick, 'This is Jim's movie; this is Jim's vision,'" Hurd recalled. "The chemistry between him and Jim wasn't working."

"Mr. Bush's lighting style was crisp," Dennis Skotak said. "There were a lot of dark shadows, a lot of hard-edged light. One of the issues with that style is that it takes longer to shoot. He was good at that, but the speed wasn't there, which was needed. Jim just needed to have it happen faster."

The director may have also noted that James Remar was having trouble in his work. "It was an honor to get started," Remar would say. "I just wasn't focused."

"It was freezing cold on the set, and we were oiled up all the time," Goldstein said. "They had dressed Acton with all the stuff and there was no backstage. You would walk up these steps and try not to fall off because

you're holding your smart gun. They were so heavy. But I wanted Vasquez to seem like she only really lived when she was carrying that gun. It was a part of her, and everything clicked into being. Still, there was only a certain way you could walk with it [laughs]. As every Steadicam operator knows, you have to walk like that or you'll fall over. And it took a lot to strap you in, so they wouldn't unstrap us unless we had to pee, which was begrudgingly. So our break was to sit on a stool with our guns still strapped on. It was hard."

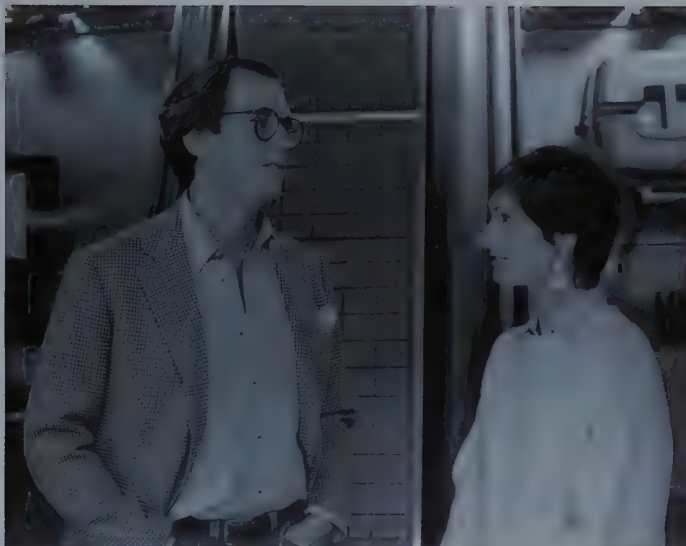
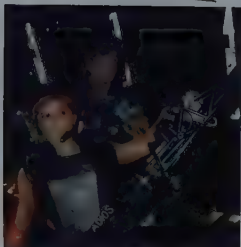
"Jenette and I were sitting there like bumps on a log," Rolston recalled. "Paxton was goofing around with Reiser and running around the set. That's probably why Jenette and I became such great friends, because we had so much time to talk."

By the third or fourth day, Cameron was finding the tea breaks an unnecessary intrusion on his time. Often he'd pick up a video camera and form an ad hoc second unit to film the point-of-view video shots for the in-set monitors while his crew ate sandwiches.

"There are scenes that were shot on a home video recorder, intentionally," he said. "The degradation of image quality is important to creating the sense that this is really happening. It instantly became a real event, as opposed to the fabrication of a real event, or other devices. Let's face it, we're a generation that's grown up watching things happen on the evening TV news."

Cameron was scheduled to view dailies (or 'rushes') at 8 a.m. each day on a Steenbeck editing table, which had been installed in the 'back aisle' of the power station.

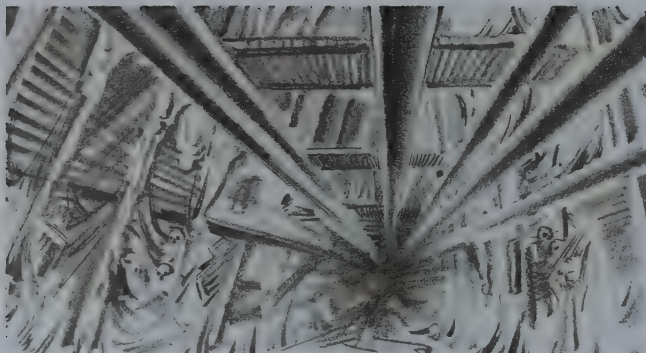
In Los Angeles, Fox executives were watching the same dailies, including the tricky forced-perspective shot of the hanging miniature. "But Fox complained to Gale, 'Where are the effects?'" Robert Skotak said. "She laughed and said, 'You just looked at one of them. That whole big setup, that's a miniature.' And they said, 'Holy...'" At Pinewood, she was all smiles."



ABOVE: Continuity Polaroids shot on set of Matthews, Goldstein, and Paxton. Paxton decided to chew gum in (nearly) every scene to give his character continuity and something that set Hudson apart. When Hudson spits down the stairwell while exploring the colony, production did it in a miniature insert shot because the set wasn't elevated. The actual spit was a combination of water and milk, apparently, or some concoction designed to show up on film.

RIGHT (CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT): Executive producer David Giler and producer Hurd; Cameron and Al Matthews; Cameron with handheld camera on shoulder; Rolston and Goldstein sit on stools provided for them—the only way they could sit down when saddled with their smart gun props.





CRY OF THE DAMNED

On Day 5, Cameron filmed his Colonial Marines in the cocoon chamber, which was ready only in the nick of time. Hurd had come by a few days earlier and been “terrified” the set wouldn’t be ready. The hellish remains of the colonists in various stages of alien impregnation were nevertheless a sight to see. Most of the cocooned colonists were inanimate body sculptures with life-castings of grotesquely twisted faces. One colonist, played by Barbara Coles, would open her eyes and immediately go into spasms as a Chestbuster claws its way out of her stomach (in the first film it had burst out of a male).

Winston and crew had set things up so Coles was leaning slightly forward between a couple of pillars. From the waist down they’d rigged a fiberglass dummy of her body so she could say her lines and the alien baby could start to push its way out. Cameron would then cut, and they’d switch to a second setup in which Coles was positioned on a slant board, her body now a foam rubber appliance from the neck down, though the actress was able to flail her real arms.

Two Chestbuster puppets were used (as in the first film): one to explode from her stomach, and a second that could move its head and tiny arms for closer shots.

“One day at the Acton power plant, we were about four floors up, where they had the colonists entombed by the aliens,” Rolston said. “I was watching



ABOVE: Continuity Polaroid of the eggs found in the hive.

FAR LEFT: Early storyboards of the cocooned colonists: RD 16, “Wide angle of epoxy substance—first signs of skulls, etc.”; RD 17 (a POV): “He sees the awful horror—”

LEFT: Winston and Cameron working with Barbara Coles—the colonist whose chest is burst on camera. While Winston and company were still in the States, Tony Gardner had created the basic Chestbuster sculpture. Bill Sturgeon built the mechanics for the one designed to burst through the chest, providing it with a metal structure and cables. The molds, mechanics, and skins were then sent to England, where Stephen Norrington developed the second, more articulated Chestbuster, which didn’t have to push through anything, but had little arms.

OPPOSITE: The marines upon seeing the “awful horror.”

behind the set and Stan was working with this kind of pressure lever. He said, ‘Go to the other side and I’ll show you.’ So I walked round right in front of the dummy. Stan asks, ‘Are you there?’ And out comes the alien from the chest—I jumped in the air and backward, and I was lucky there was a railing.”

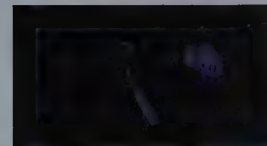
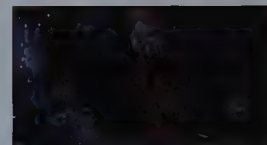
On the day of the shoot, coincidentally, the crew had the same problem as the effects crew did on the first film: that is, the first Chestbuster had problems pushing through. With six pre-distressed shirts, the *Aliens* crew had an ample supply, but either the Chestbuster didn’t make a clean exit or blood would hit the shirt before the breakthrough.

“It was frustrating—Jim was going crazy and I was going crazy,” Winston said. “It was rough on everybody, psychologically and otherwise. So much thought and energy went into that whole sequence that to sit there on the set thinking you had all your bases covered and have the T-shirts, of all things, not react the way they’re supposed to...”

Eventually they got it to work, and then switched to the second setup and puppet.

“God!” exclaimed Al Matthews. “I could not wait to torch the little creep that popped out of that girl’s chest. I first saw it undressed, but when Stan and his boys had dressed that damn thing I was really ready to kick ass, film or not!”





ABOVE: Final frames of the Chestbuster sequence.

LEFT: Coles in the first stage of the chestbursting scene. Cameron and Winston's revised Chestbuster was subtly different from the original, and had one big difference: tiny working arms. (In fact the original Chestbuster's co-creator, Roger Dicken, had wanted to add arms, but director Ridley Scott had nixed the idea.) In re-fashioning the iconic baby monster, Winston felt a sense of competition: "To say otherwise would be a fib. There's always a bit of competition—not just with people who have done something before you—there's always a bit of good rivalry within your own crew: one person working on one Facehugger, another person on another. Whose is going to work best? That's human nature."

OPPOSITE: The aliens attack, and the marines let loose their armaments while retreating. "We built all the flamethrowers from scratch," said John Richardson. After Cameron approved the prototype, the art department built a whole range of them with flame jets from 5 to 45 ft long, using two types of fuels: propane gas or an alcohol gasoline mixture if they wanted to light things on fire.

FOLLOWING PAGES: The marines move in—and several are dispatched by the aliens, including Drake (Ralston), whose face is burned by the alien blood/acid. Cameron explained to Ralston the complex shot he had in mind. Dietrich (Scott) is lifted into the air, abducted, by another monster in a two-part shot with the actress, and stuntpeople/alien on wires.

"I do think our Chestbuster looks a little cooler than the one in the first film," said Cameron. "More articulated. Stan Winston's guys really did a good job on it."

"Although it's the same basic effect," Winston said, "it's more dramatic because we did more with it. It's quite alive, it's animated in a way that the first one was not."

Matthews was then cleared for a shot in which he flames the Chestbuster and a complete body-duplicate of the colonist. "We had the Chestbuster writhing around and really going crazy," Winston added. "That little sucker was really alive."

Once their 'baby' is dead, adult warrior aliens close in and are detected on the marines' tracking devices. "This scene was completely inspired by the one in the first film with Dallas in the air vents," said the director.

On subsequent days at Acton, Cameron filmed this 'battle of phantoms' wherein the marines are picked off one by one by barely seen monsters. Dietrich is killed first, then Frost, then Apone.

Cynthia Dale Scott (Dietrich) did part of her character's two-setup demise. The actress was placed on one end of a 'teeter-board,' a see-saw; when the alien (stuntman) was lowered down and grabbed her from behind, other crew pushed the opposite end of the see-saw down to catapult alien/stuntman and trooper/actress into the air. Scott was coached on how to shift her footing and to angle her flamethrower down (to toast Frost) while reacting. During rehearsals, she fell off a couple of times. "It was physical and exciting," Scott said.

The second part of Dietrich's death was a stuntwoman on a wire, as the marine is lifted into the hive.

"My challenge as a director is group scenes," Cameron said. "You had to be very aware of the camera axes. It took a while to get it straight in my head. Because of the actual location, I didn't have a lot of room."

A few of the alien warriors came from above on cables built into the set. Having secretly reserved a magazine or two, Vasquez and Drake open fire.

"Everything was cool," said Matthews, "until we started firing the gun and this fine snow started coming down on us."

The asbestos had returned.

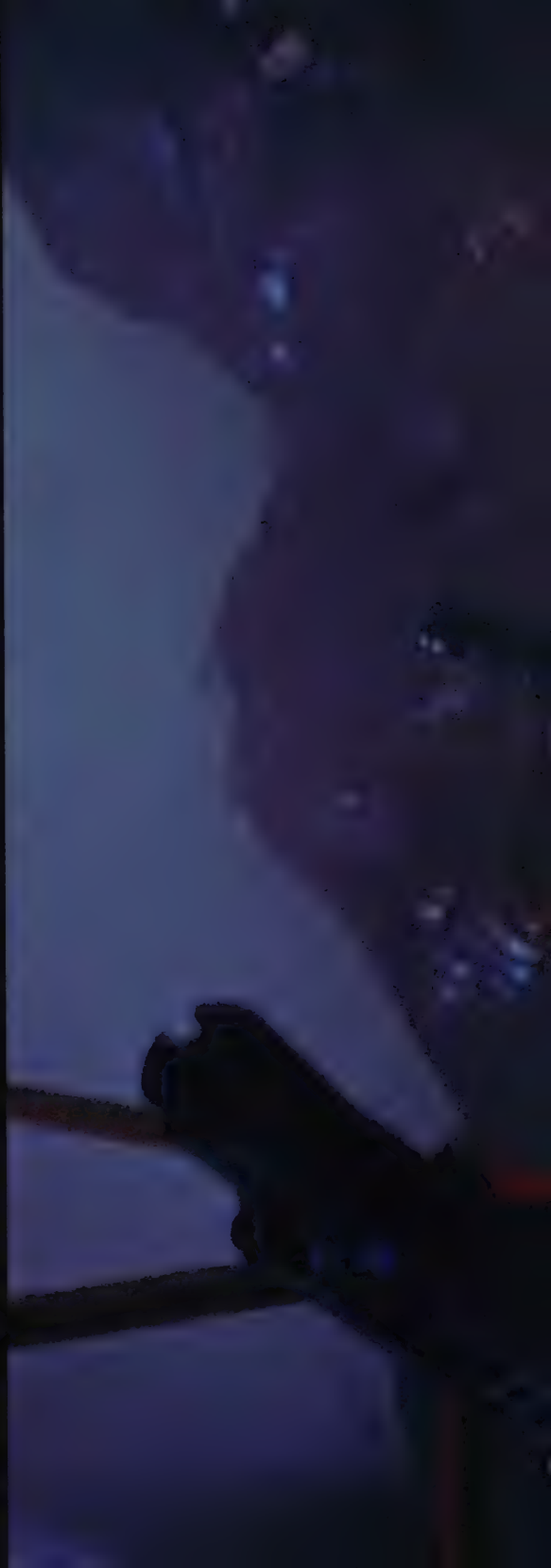
Frost's death was performed by stunt double Clive Curtis. "I could foresee it would look spectacular," Curtis said of the stunt. "Plus, the stunt made sense; it was not a stunt for a stunt's sake. I thought it was emotionally charged ... I vaguely remember being set alight then having to find my way (acting all the time) completely blinded by flames (and remembering not to breathe) for about 15 feet before hitting the railing, which stood about three or four feet in height, before falling approximately eight feet, to be put out by my colleagues."

"I like to use some handheld photography," Cameron said, "where it's appropriate, primarily in the action scenes."

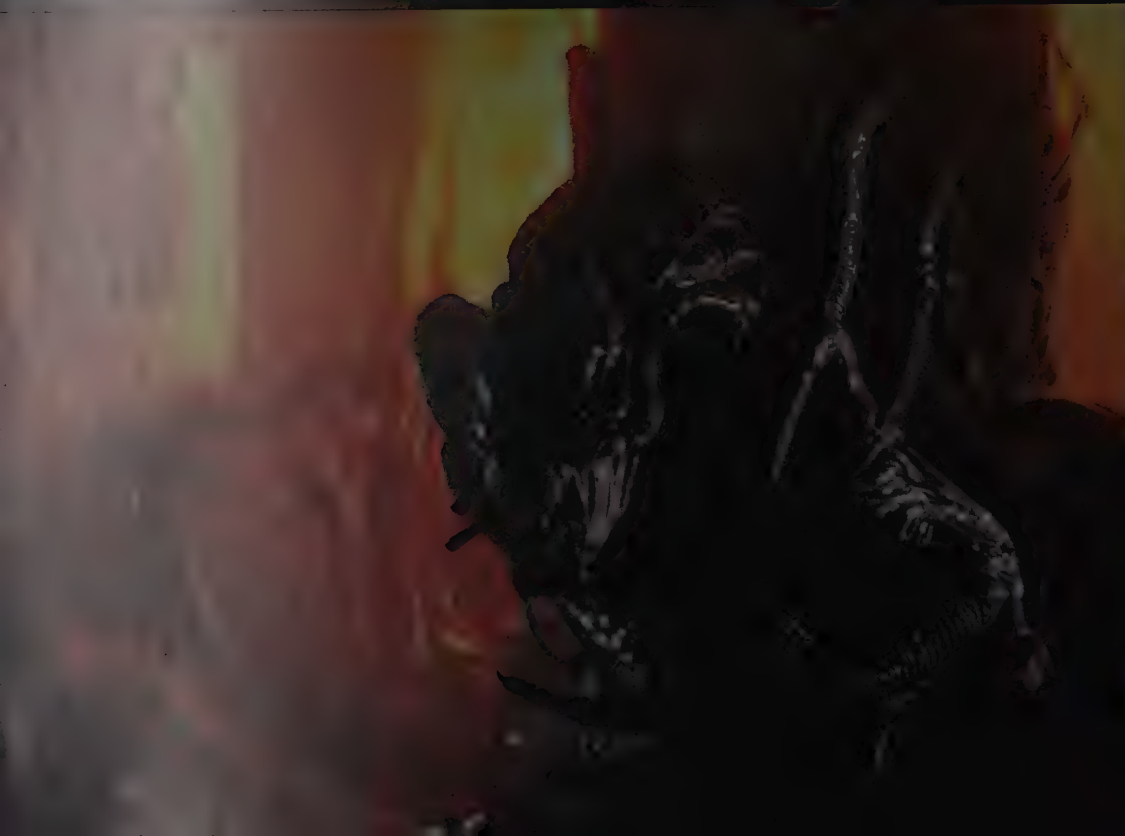
Toward the end of the shoot at Acton, the director prepared to shoot Drake's death by the APC.

"I was hooked to three tubes going up my pant leg underneath to the prosthetic that was on my face," said Ralston of Drake's burned face. "One











SCI-FI DRAMA

SHOOT DAYS 11 to 16, Monday, October 14 to Monday, October 21, 1985

LOCATION: Pinewood Studio, Stage E

INT. COLONY—MAIN CONCOURSE: sc. 55 (marines move to broad corridor)

INT. LOWER LEVEL—QUARTERS: sc. 60 (Vazquez and Hudson to child's bunk bed)

INT. DROP SHIP COCKPIT: scs. 46 (Ferro; craft shudders and lurches); 48 (looking for beacon); 113 (Ferro killed)

INT. COLONY—FIRST LEVEL: scs. 62 (Apone: "Whatever happened, we missed it") 64 (Gorman's coming in; Hudson: "I feel safer already")

INT. MAIN CONCOURSE—SECOND LEVEL: scs. 59 (Hicks passes through offices, coffee cup overflowing with rain water); 69 (Ripley and Drake join others)



would ooze out a chemical that bubbled, another one fizzed, another one smoked. I've also got a live flamethrower. Jim said, 'I want you to do it like this—you turn to Jenette, and as you turn, you're going to scream and reveal the prosthetic and shoot the flamethrower. Then as you shoot the flamethrower you're going to fall in-between the flame bars over here; at 'cut' these guys are going to pick you up and take you to this helicopter fan to blow away all the chemicals on the prosthetic because, oh, forgot to tell you, they're toxic. So you have to hold your breath the whole time.'

"I was like, *What?!*

"But it was 'hold your breath and do all this action.' Jim and the camera guys were about 25 yards away with a Plexiglas sheet in front of them. On the first take, as I turned, something in my brain said, *I'm firing right at people*, so I arced the flame over them. When I finished the shot, Jim said, 'Mark, Mark, no, no, shoot the flames right at us.' I asked, 'Are you sure?' He said, 'Yeah. It's far enough away; it's not going to burn the Plexiglas or anything.' So we did it again and it was good."

A few aliens were dispatched as well, mostly puppet versions arranged in weirdly insect-like poses as they're blasted by marines. Production used a yellow dye and various odds and ends for xenomorphs that were blown to bits. On October 10, they created a kind of acid smoke affect by combining chemicals for one alien death. On Friday, October 11, Cameron filmed the APC smashing through a corridor and mowing down an alien.

"We developed one full-size puppet specifically to be crushed by the armored personnel carrier," Winston said, "and then another torso for a tighter shot of the same thing."

Saturday was a designated production 'move day' back to Pinewood, but it would seem that Cameron filmed some insert shots the same day.

The weekend of the transition from the Acton location to Pinewood, Cameron and Hurd made two big changes: they fired their DP and actor James Remar, and replaced them both.

Production had gone into overtime several days at Acton, and was falling behind on their 75-day shoot. They weren't 'making their days.' After Bush informed the producer that he couldn't make the schedule because it was "ridiculous," Hurd consulted Giler. "I told her that if he tells you he can't make the schedule, then you have to fire him," Giler recalled. "He has to go. It was just stupid on his part to say that."

Hurd and Cameron replaced him with Adrian Biddle, after camera operator Shaun O'Dell recommended him. Biddle had come up through the ranks of commercial cinematography at Ridley Scott Associates; he'd shot Scott's groundbreaking '1984' ad for Apple and had worked as focus puller on the first film—so this was his big promotion to cinematographer.

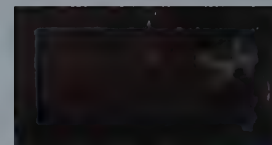
"Adrian never missed a beat," Hurd said. "He was really able to get into Jim's head."

Hurd had also phoned Michael Biehn in Studio City that Friday. She asked if his passport was in order. It was. He'd read the script when it first went out to agents in Los Angeles and had been "disappointed" not to have been cast. "They called up to offer the role very late in the game," Biehn said in 1985. "Gale asked if I could be there Monday morning. I said, 'Absolutely, sure!' I saw *Alien* before I left, got on a plane three days later, and was shooting a couple of days afterward."

"Unfortunately, urgent matters at home required that I return to the States and attend to them," Remar told *Starlog* in 1986. "They got someone else, and I came home and took care of the problems, and moved on to *Band of the Hand* [1986]."

Decades later, Remar explained what really happened: "I had a terrible drug problem... I had a great career and personal life, and messed it up with a terrible drug habit. I was fired after a couple weeks of filming because I got busted for possession of drugs, and Michael Biehn replaced me."

"Jimmy had been out with Paxton in Slough, a nearby town," Rolston said.



ABOVE: Final frames. In Acton, on October 15, 1985, a second-unit team filmed the demise of an alien trying to force its way into the APC, whose head is blown off with a shotgun. To get the gun into the alien's mouth they shot it in reverse, pulling the gun out (then reversing the film in editorial so it looked like the gun was going in). Two of Winston's team spent the night before preparing the puppet whose head is exploded. "All of a sudden that shot moved up two weeks," Rosengrant recalled, "and needed to shoot, so I stayed up all night with Steve Norrington. He was finishing up the mechanics and I was doing the art. We worked about 30-something hours straight to finish that thing."

ABOVE LEFT AND OPPOSITE: Set dressing made it clear there had been alien penetration into a colony hallway.





VENTING FIRE

According to a special-effects 'Production Progress Report,' the LAE team began with 29 shooing weeks to accomplish 143 shots, with a scheduled finish on April 18, 1986.

"We were playing catch-up from Day One," said Robert Skotak. "One of the first things we had to do was come up with a process plate for a shot in the operations room at the colony," looking out the window at the AP station.

"Mark Harris was working on *Aliens*," said John Lee. "He called me in September and said, 'You need to get down to Pinewood. They are looking for model makers and I've put your name forward.' I'd just moved from London and the corner from Pinewood into London, so I actually turned it down. Then a week later, Mark rang again, thankfully, and said, 'You really do need to come down because they haven't got anybody on the team who can'—what we call 'freestyle model-make': take a sketch or a concept from Jim or one of the designers—'They've got nobody that can make this stuff look realistic and make it quickly, and we're really behind schedule.'"

"One of the things that we ran into was—and we knew we were going to be at a bit of a bind—was we didn't know anybody there at all," said Pat McClung. "John Richardson had given us some names of model makers and union pay scale sheets and what have you, but I just didn't know anybody there, so we had to take a chance and hire from the people that he recommended. Some were great and some weren't so great. But Mark Harris had worked for Gerry Anderson, the guy who had done *Thunderbirds*, so Mark had a tap into other model makers who were not necessarily the John Richardson crowd."

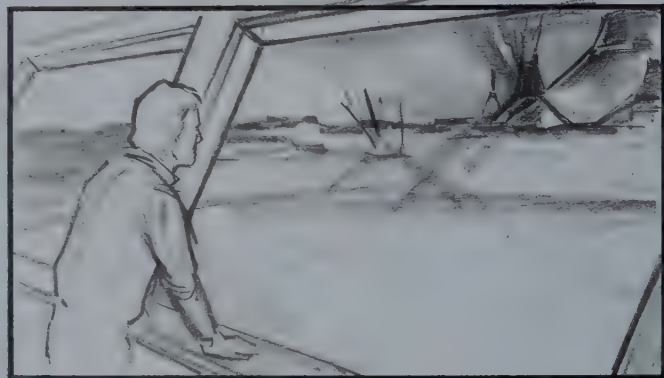
"So I drove around one evening," Lee continued, "and of course he put on a really good show. I met Pat McClung, who was one of the American team. This was September 1985. They'd started building sets and they had a model workshop in the covered way at Pinewood, just opposite 'E' stage, and they had a number of people, and some of the team were very experienced—John Brown, Cyril Forster, Nigel Brackley, who was supervising model-maker—I knew one or two of them, but there were lots of guys I didn't know. Bear in mind, I was 25. So I went to speak to Paul Tivers, the visual-effects production manager, straight away, and they worked out a deal and I started almost immediately. The first thing I believe was the atmosphere processor."

"The AP station design started out looking pretty much like a volcano," Cobb said. "Jim did a lot of drawings. I did a lot of drawings. Ultimately, I think it was more his concept than mine."

"Ron's design was basically a conical shape," said Cameron, "and I knew from experience that the approach to something with walls that slant back like that defies perspective from ground level. It becomes very hard to create a sense of height. To get around that problem I added some outward radiating fins to give it scale so the station would come forward in perspective as we approached it."

The first shot needed was a back projection (BP, or 'rear projection') point-of-view plate of the AP station venting after the dropship explosion—for the live-action moment in which Bishop informs the survivors they have only hours before a meltdown—a scene scheduled to be shot on October 30. The plate had to be done in-camera, and in order to create the venting effect they had to shoot the 6 ft station and then use a beam splitter to reflect in a burst of steam. They experimented with several sized plumes of steam and Freon, from 3 ft to 15 ft at various camera speeds, and decided on an approximately 12 ft plume, overcranked. Circa September 22, they shot

BELOW (FROM LEFT): Storyboard of "view from operation as AP station starts venting from radiation towers"; the AP station small scale cardboard model being built by Julian Parry (model maker Jamie Thomas is in background working on the colony bus); John Brown touching up the large camera-ready scale model on the miniatures set; two shots of a venting test (with and without steam). (Photos courtesy of Julian Parry and Steve Begg.)



*View from Operation
as AP Station starts venting
from rad. towers*



three passes on the negative: a 'beauty pass'; a steam pass with reactive lighting; and a practical lighting pass.

All of this was complicated by the fact that the AP station model wasn't finished. "The basic structure was complete," Robert Skotak said, "but in order to make our deadline we had to get this shot before all the detailing was done. Right up to the last minute we were trying to dress it up. There'd be a three-minute delay while the steam was being aligned, so I'd run over with colored chalk and draw some detail on the side of the model, or Steve Begg would dash in with a can of spray paint or lay down a few quick strips of styrene, whatever we could do to create the impression of detail."

"Setting up that plate of the miniature atmosphere processor, there were just insane things," said Begg. "As these things do, they take all day to set up, but the union rules were very strict. You had to finish at 20 minutes past five to give ten minutes to wash your hands and clean up before you finish at 5:30. So it was a mad rush to try and shoot stuff—and the electricians, their hands would hover over the breaker, threatening to switch the lights off while we were shooting. Luckily, I managed to talk them into leaving the fucking lights on until we got the shot. But it got very stressful. Very, very."

"There were hurdles such as limited hours," Robert Skotak said, "meaning that if it was 5:30 and we needed another hour, our first AD Chris Knowles would have to say, 'Okay, gentleman, we'd like to call the hour,'"—meaning that if they were in the middle of a shot, they could take what they called a 'quarter,' or 15 minutes (the maximum they could take on a single day was four quarters, or one hour)."

"It took a lot of feeling our way through what each person really did," McClung said, "where one job ended and another department job picked up. ADs in the US, for example, help schedule the movie with the producer, but in the UK they don't. So it was hard to figure out who actually did what.

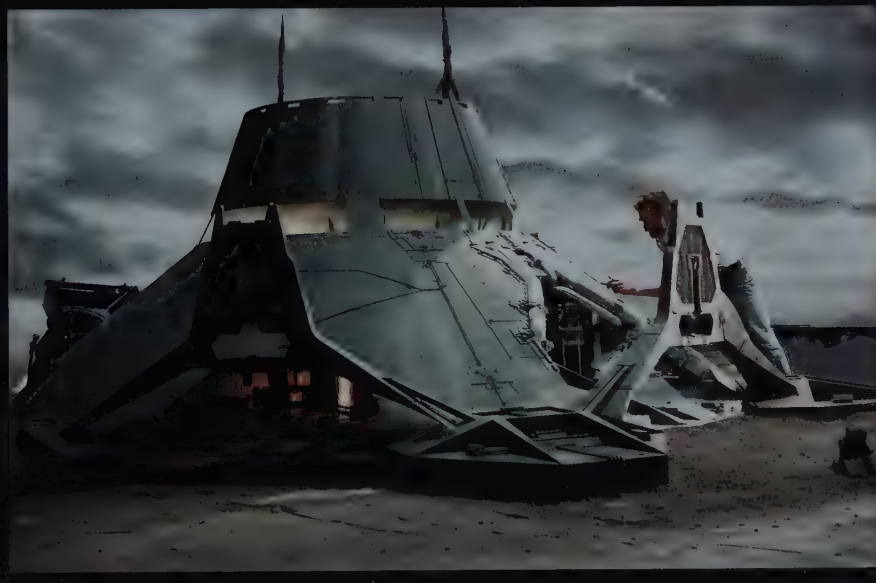
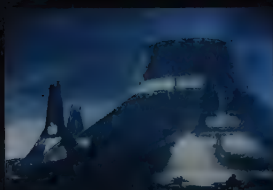
Some of the carpenters would not do anything that involved metal" (Skotak would say that their first AD, Chris Knowles, was a huge help throughout the shoot.)

"We were told that we couldn't use timber for any of our work, which all had to be done by the carpenters," Lee said. "This did slow things down a bit. We were also allowed only very basic machine tools on set, so we were continually back and forth to the workshop, or had to ask the construction crew to cut any wood to size. We were told that we couldn't do any of the painting of the props and sets, which was another blow to the special-effects guys, so John Brown came up with the rather brilliant idea of using colored powder pastels and charcoals to do the dirtying down and weathering, which we did by hand. Technically it wasn't paint, so the unions couldn't do anything about it."

"The atmosphere processor had not been finished, because the union allowed to paint it himself, and this painter did not know how to do it," said Dennis Skotak. "So here we were on the set, the camera's ready, and the model is not finished. What are we going to do? The union people were there, so Robert couldn't paint it. It was a panic time. We had to shoot. So Robert pulled out his colored pencils and chalk, and proceeded to paint it with chalk and pencil, and put in the level of detail needed for it to work in the shot. There was no union for chalk, there was no union for pencils. They were stuck, and they stood there with their mouths agape."

"We got it done in time," Robert Skotak concluded, "but it was just by the hair of our chinny-chin-chins."

On October 10, after another couple of weeks of difficult work, Suzanne Benson invited all LAE crewmembers to have a drink at the 'M' after wrap.





"They went to a pub and apparently Jimmy was walking around . . . , and somebody was like, 'What the fuck is this?' They called the police, and the police nabbed him and then next thing we knew, the Monday morning, we came back to work and here's Michael Biehn."

"Jim Cameron came in on a Saturday and said, 'I think we're going to have to do that hanging miniature over again,'" Dennis Skotak said. "The way the shot had been staged, Hicks was very close to the camera and the actor playing him was no longer in the picture. We sweated bullets all weekend. Not only was the shot a bitch, but the set had been struck and the miniature, which was too fragile to be moved, had been destroyed in the process. Fortunately, Jim and the editor figured out a way to cut the scene so we didn't have to do it over, but for a few hours there it was hell."

"In that first shot they had James Remar actually in the foreground," Begg said, "but luckily he turned away from camera."

Biehn, in his words, took over Remar's "wardrobe, salary, and billing," but was very relieved not to have to go through boot camp. "The only negative thing was that Hicks and Reese from *Terminator* were rather similar," Biehn said in 1985. "But when Jim and I got together, we talked and decided how we could make them different. Reese was this grungy guy from the future, where Hicks is a more likable guy next door." Where Reese was feral and ultra alert, Hicks would be cool, the platoon's "Rock of Gibraltar, who everyone looks up to."

Biehn performed as Hicks in his first scene circa October 16 with the marines as they made their way carefully through the colony complex. There, Biddle was up to the challenge of using built-in lighting as much as possible, while Cameron was aware that audiences could lose their 'geography' very quickly in the sequence. He'd therefore planned out the visuals (shoulder cams) and audio (Gorman's orders) to keep audiences situated.

"One of the things I tried to do was to make the film as subjective as possible," Cameron said. "What creates a sense of you-are-there reality is not that extra bit of grit and grime on the walls, which tells you the set has been



lived in, but how it's shot. You could have a proscenium-type scene where the camera sits back and watches, or you can have the camera move through the scene and become, in effect, one of the characters. I've done many shots where I follow a character into a room, and then come around to catch the reaction to what they see—but as we come into the room, we are stepping behind that character."

Paxton thought the Concourse 'A' set, the entry hallway, was "amazing."

"We had shot two weeks of the movie with James before Mike arrived," said Ricco Ross decades later, "and James had a different sort of Hicks. And because he was the first one, the cast had gotten used to each other, we had that camaraderie thing going on. Then all of a sudden Remar was out, and here comes this newcomer, and I was like, 'Damn, just like that, huh?' And then Mike came in there and Mike was playing his thing, and his thing went the other way with it, and I went, 'Okay, okay,' and then the next thing you know it was on and cracking and I was like, 'Alright, I'm sold, I'm sold.' He was smooth; he was pulling the audience into him."

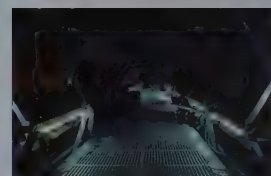
Scott was also surprised when Biehn arrived; Remar was short and had a deep voice and had played villains. "And Michael came on set and he's tall, blonde, and gorgeous and very soft spoken. And I just felt his line readings were soft for the male lead. But then I saw how beautifully it worked; because he was strong in himself and he didn't need to shout or lower his voice or be gruff."

Biehn would say that he felt supported on his arrival and that the "cast wanted me to succeed."

"One day we had a new DP," Goldstein says. "As far as the new actor, it happened so fast and everybody tried to make Michael feel as welcome as possible and get him up to speed and not gossip. Gossip is really bad."

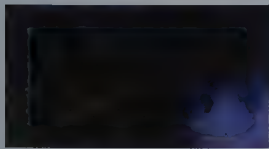
"Actually performing the role on a daily basis takes a bit of getting used to," Biehn said in 1986. "Just standing there every morning with all these wardrobe and props guys running around putting on your armor and your shin guards, your quivers and your lights, you almost feel like a Roman warrior preparing for the battle."

"And the equipment is difficult at first to work with. You end up with scrapes and bruises until you become accustomed to it. But I found no difficulty in



ABOVE: The concept model and the fully dressed hallway that the marines investigate.

LEFT: The demise of Corporal Ferro (Colette Hiller), dropship pilot. For the dropship cockpit, production managed to procure 'heads-up displays' from the latest iteration of an actual Harrier Jump-Jet, as well as an EEV (thermal imaging) camera, the kind that was used in Mexico for finding people buried in the rubble following the September 1985 earthquake in that country. Colette Hiller had traveled to London to appear in *Annie* at the Victoria Palace. She then worked with the Royal Shakespeare Company in several plays. On television she'd appeared in the show *The Boy Who Won The Pools* (1983) and in the films *Birth of the Beatles* (1979) and *Ragtime* (1981). (Note: The decal on the primary dropship, full size and models, kept being modified so that sometimes the bird in the logo switched positions. The second dropship was named "Smart Ass" and had the motto "We aim by PFM"—"pure fucking magic.")



ABOVE, TOP: At Acton, the crew shot another alien being dispatched, this one thrown from the roof of the APC, when Ripley brakes hard, and then crushed under its wheels (when Ripley accelerates over it).

ABOVE: Final film frames

handling weapons. In *The Terminator*, I had that shotgun throughout and I was always firing off weapons and working with guns. To me, it's like every boy's fantasy to play these sorts of roles. These are the roles that I used to dream about when I was a kid: tough fighters with endless courage."

The one thing Biehn didn't like about his inheritance was that Remar had already personalized his chest plate with a heart and a lock on it over his real heart. "I thought, *Fuck me, I'm not wearing that—that looks exactly like a target!*"

Cameron's manner with the UK crew and his dismissal of a British production manager and DP wasn't going unnoticed. One day, Pat McClung was walking through the studio's 'covered way' (an area between soundstages with a roof) and ran into one of the art directors. "He said, 'Oh, I want you to meet Irvin Kershner,'" said McClung. Kershner had directed many films, several of them in the UK, including *Star Wars: Episode V—The Empire Strikes Back*. "Kersh asked how things were going and I said, 'Well, we're getting there.' He said, 'Has it been difficult?' I said, 'To be honest, yeah, it has.' He said, 'Well, they have it in for you here.' I said, 'Really?' He said it was fallout from Jim. They were making things difficult for us."

"There was a hostile atmosphere," said Steve Begg of the model unit, in particular "because there was still a kind of buzz about *Alien* and they thought, 'We did that without heavy American input, so why do we need

these Americans?' Particularly the Skotaks at that point had no real track record. So they had a lot of hostility initially. There was a very cold atmosphere with them."

"Jim was a force of will," McClung added. "There was a protocol and a system for shooting movies in England, and he just ran roughshod over it. I'm sure he pissed off a lot of people."

If Cameron was going to ride 'roughshod' over anything in his way, many of the HODs and crew had decided to be equally hard on him and his partners. What had perhaps begun as a calculated distance was calcifying into resistance.

"That was the take I got from Kershner," McClung concluded.

THE RETURN OF RIPLEY

On Monday, October 21—Day 16 of principal photography—Weaver was on set, doing a relatively simple scene in which Ripley and Drake join the other marines in the corridor. A sequence in which Ripley is surprised by Drake outside the colony complex was cut (as was a scene in which Ripley hesitates before following the marines—in other words, Cameron wanted Ripley to be damaged psychologically, but not too timid).

Reportedly, Weaver was exhausted. She'd only finished *Half Moon Street* three to five days earlier so was not able to recuperate between films. She'd met her co-actors ahead of shooting in the Pinewood mansion in costume (gray outfit and Reeboks) after a fitting.

"I was really intimidated to meet Sigourney Weaver," Paxton said. "I mean Sigourney Weaver from *Alien*? Then she was really disarming and friendly and easy to talk to."

"In the period between *Alien* and *Aliens*, Ripley has changed a lot," Weaver said in 1986. "And I've changed a lot. It's interesting to come back and play the role a second time and allow that growth to have taken place. She's certainly not the eager young ensign any more. Now she's haunted."

"I think I have a lot more fun now with my work," she added. "Perhaps I was a little too hard-working at the beginning. As you become more experienced, you become more confident. Now I don't take it so seriously."

"Sigourney is intensely prepared," Cameron reiterated. "Her copy of the script was marked with 17 different colors of ink. The margin notes were incredible. She got the dramatic significance of almost every line of dialogue and how each one might tie in with a later scene."

"It was good that we finished [the training] first and Ripley came in later," said Goldstein. "The same with Burke and Gorman, because they were outsiders."

"Maybe it was a good thing that I wasn't there," Weaver agreed, "because all the soldiers were bonding and figuring things out, experimenting with who they were, what their armor looked like. And Ripley isn't one of them; there's a distrust on both sides. But it was weird to come in that late."

Despite fears that she would be too tired, later that same week Weaver had already summoned great reserves and was psychologically ready to be Ripley for the next few months in what promised to be a tough shoot with limited time.



PUPPETS, PART II

Back in Doug Beswick's studio, Phil Notaro wanted to minimize the number of puppeteers required for the queen, so he consolidated related cable functions into a single joystick. "But because the queen had so many mechanical functions we still ended up running 49 cables through that area," he said, "through a hole that was only about an inch and a half around."

Complicating things was that the queen, per Cameron, had to bend at the waist. Which meant a "massive joint" to enable her to bend with all the cables in there, plus an inch of foam all the way around. Her arms were also a problem—they were only three-quarters of an inch in diameter on the outside, yet they had to have nine functions each. Arms and shoulders had to move up and down, forward and back, and rotate. The elbows and wrists had to bend, the forearms rotate, and, even though they were smaller than a soda straw—about three-sixteenths of an inch in diameter—all of her fingers had to be functional.

Once the mechanics were installed, the queen went to James Belohovek for final cleanup, sanding, and finished detail. Brian Penikas and Kevin Yagher assisted with the mold-making during the "crunch," Beswick said.

Indeed, it took Gardner, Penikas, Yagher, and Shannon Shea to produce the multitude of molds from which the queen's outer form was cast. Stan Winston's crew had made silicone RTV molds from their quarter-scale clay sculpture, but Beswick preferred stone molds because he'd found, through experience, that they worked better with armatures; they were more solid and provided better castings. Gardner consequently made clay press-outs from the original molds, cleaned up the sculpture, then re-made the molds in Ultracal so that others could run latex pieces.

Beswick supervised, working "a little bit" on "everything." He built the hands and tail for the queen puppet, and the rotating light for the powerloader (see below). "Since the characters had been designed for us," he said, "our challenge was to make them work as miniatures, to bring the characters alive and make them move as realistically as possible."

Once the stone molds were ready, Michael Burnett ran the latex foam over the aluminum armature. "Putting the body on was difficult," Notaro said, "because we had to stretch the foam over all of this metal. The foam had to be thick enough so we wouldn't have metal things poking through it, yet thin enough to still bend and fit the character. By the time I was done putting in all the mechanics, Tony had to literally cut the foam down to paper thinness in some spots in the core."

The queen's triceratops-like head required something more rigid and durable. "We were especially worried about the head," Beswick said, "because it was about 18 inches long, which was huge in relation to the tiny neck joint it had to rest on. So it had to be very light, yet strong enough to make it through shooting."

Beswick opted to fabricate it out of the thinnest fiberglass they'd ever used, about thirty-thousandths of an inch. They then applied a little bit of gel coat, one layer of angel hair, one layer of half-ounce cloth, and a bit of resin. They did it in two sections, top and bottom, then "seamed" them together.

TIGHT SQUEEZE

"It was pretty tense for a while there," Notaro went on, "because we were halfway into our schedule and we hadn't even started the powerloader yet."

Unlike the queen, specific details of its design weren't finalized until the engineering problems of the full-size one had been resolved over at Pinewood. To keep Beswick and Notaro in the loop, production sent back reference sketches, blueprints, and photographs. But the puppet unit frequently had to stop until more information became available. "It was an extremely slow process," Notaro said.

They started on the arms, then the legs, and finally the body of the loader. Most of the movement was in the arms. The miniature would have to have wrist, elbow, and shoulder movement, as well as grippers that opened and closed. Its mid-torso could twist back and forth to give it side-to-side mobility. The legs were designed to be 'free-animated' so they could be controlled through the floor by rods.

Because Notaro had to adhere to the loader's complex design, he constructed a basic aluminum armature and proceeded to mechanize it. "As each new mechanism went in, space became very tough to come by," he said. "I'd lay out a game plan for where I could put something, usually in some tiny little space somewhere, and then I'd have to go in and shift everything all around to actually make it work. It was a long process. By the time I finished, there was virtually no room left inside at all."

While Notaro built its internal workings, Belohovek made the patterns for its outer shape. "The powerloader was constructed like a model," Beswick explained, "because of its symmetrical configuration and its hard, flat lines. Working from the photos and drawings we were getting from London, Jim made patterns for all the basic shapes out of plastic, Bondo [putty], and wood. From those, Tony Gardner made silicone RTV molds with stone backings; those molds, in turn, were used to produce a fiberglass outer shell for the loader. Everything from the main body to the pneumatic cylinders to the final detail pieces was hand made."

Inside the loader, of course, would be a miniature Ripley. Stuart Land sculpted Ripley based on photos; Margaret Beserra created a wig, then Gardner created Ripley's 'cosmetic look.' He took silicon molds, epoxy cores and vinyl casting (courtesy of Shannon Shea). Teresa Burkett made the miniature costume.

"Ripley was the unknown puppet," said Notaro, "but she was put together very quickly; the mechanism only took me two days to build."

Once the Ripley puppet was completed, Tony Gardner finished molding and casting the fiberglass pieces for Jim Belohovek's powerloader model. Once he finished making a part, Gardner would mold and cast fiberglass pieces that made up the shell of the loader. The part would then go to machinist Notaro to be mounted over the completed mechanism. Once Notaro finished the aluminum substructure, they attached the fiberglass pieces to the main frame. To keep everything as light as possible, the fiberglass was held up from the mechanism by aluminum standoffs, so it was essentially hollow. The pieces were seamed together, either glued and patched, or a trim piece was put over the seam to make it look like it was one solid piece. The lighter the puppet was, the more responsive it would be, the easier to handle and operate.

The powerloader was topped with a rotating beacon to match the light atop the full-scale loader: a halogen bulb with a Pyrex dome dyed amber.

OPPOSITE: The puppet powerloader takes form at Pinewood, with Brian Cole, reportedly, making adjustments.





C H A P T E R

0 6



T H E A M E R I C A N S
O C T O B E R T O D E C E M B E R 1 9 8 5





SHOOT DAYS 17 to 29 Tuesday, October 22 to Thursday, November 7, 1985

LOCATION: Pinewood, Stage E

INT. MED LAB: scs. 70 (entry into med lab, place of colonists' last battle; Facehuggers in transparent cylinders; Newt detected)

INT. OPERATIONS—MANAGER'S OFFICE: scs. 73 (question Newt; Ripley cleans her face); 75 (Ripley, Newt get to know each other)

INT. OPERATIONS: scs. 74 (Hudson scans for PDTs); 76 (finds PDTs); 76A (they move out, with Newt); 116 (regroup, 17 days till rescue); 117 (looking at maps, strategy); 125 (Ripley hears an alarm); 126 (aliens in the tunnel); 128 (sentry guns 'A' and 'B' dry up) 144 (Hicks hears fire alarm in med lab); 121 (sentry guns 'C' and 'D' are armed, scan); 129 (with FX, watching AP vent; four hours till meltdown); 135 (Hicks instructs Ripley on the M-41A); 142 (Burke turns off video monitor so they can't see Ripley); 133 (Ripley asks Hicks to kill her if need be); 146 (Hudson: "I say we grease this ratfuck son of a bitch right now!"); 148 (aliens are winning; "fall back"); 150 (Ripley: "They found a way in, something we missed"); 152 (Hicks falls into the room, firing; the ceiling explodes); 148-149 (pull back to Ops); 154 (Hudson grabbed from below)

INT. CORRIDOR/STAIRWELL: sc. 162 (Hicks finds Newt's locator signal)

INT. CORRIDOR: sc. 166 (Newt taken; Hicks wounded by alien acid)

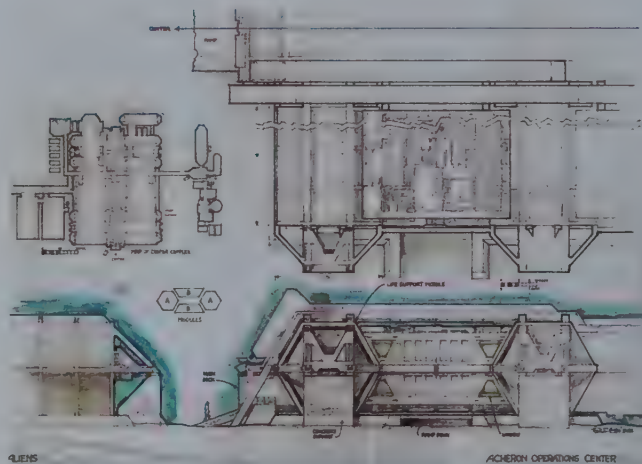
INT. MEDICAL LAB CORRIDOR: scs. 153 (Burke locks door on Ripley); 155 (Hicks uses torch on lock; Vasquez and Gorman defend)

INT. SECOND LEVEL CORRIDOR: scs. 119 (Hicks and Ripley welding; he gives her a 'locator' wristband); 136 (Gorman recovered); 147 (Hudson reads aliens inside)

By late October, composer James Horner was engaged to write the film score, for which he'd have ten weeks in post; his orchestrator would be Greig McRitchie. Since working for Corman on *Battle Beyond the Stars*, Horner had become extremely sought after, working in TV and on many films, such as *Wolfen* (1981), *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Kahn* (1982), *48 HRS.* (1982), and *Cocoon* (1985).

At Pinewood, Cameron and company spent a number of days, off and on, shooting scenes in the operations center, from finding the PDTs to preparing for the alien attack to the attack itself. Upon wrapping each day, the director would adjourn to Theater 7 to review dailies/rushes.

Also on her first big film, Scott was amazed when she opened a drawer



PREVIOUS PAGES: Cameron directs Weaver and Henn.

LEFT: Concept technical drawing of the "Acheron Operations Center" by Cobb.

on the operations set and found it filled with actual material that the colonists would have used, as supplied by the art department.

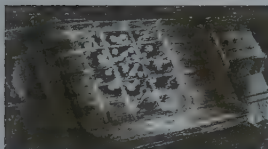
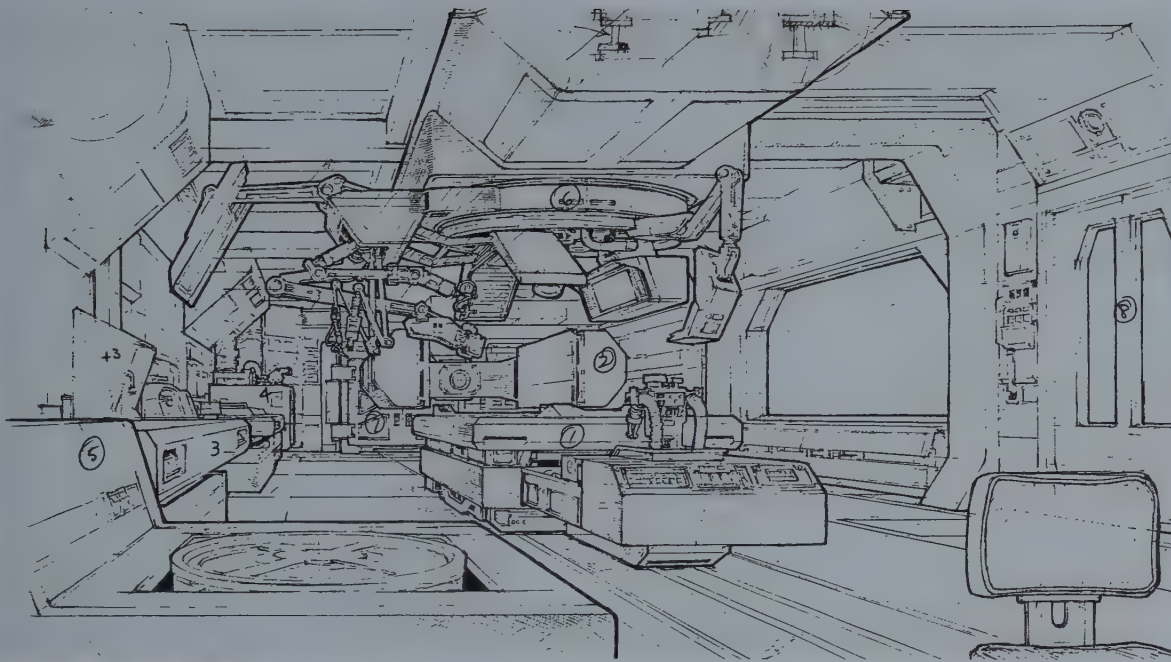
"Oddly, this is the first film where I'm surrounded by a large number of people who actually have less acting experience than I do," Weaver said at the time. "This is my eighth film, and I am used to all this stuff. But a lot of the other actors are still making their way. And that's a nice feeling; I'm glad I am not the most inexperienced person on the set."

"Sigourney Weaver does very intense facial exercises," Hurd observed. "And almost primal grunting sound exercises. When you see your actors running through these pre-take exercises it can be a little amusing."

"Paul [Reiser] used to hate to ride to work with me in the morning," Henriksen would say. "I was just the real primitive man and he was sophisticated. I was grunting and groaning, smoking. He was reading the paper the whole time. I was interrupting him if I talked to him."

"I'm the guy who would say, 'Hey guys, come on over and I'll make you a really nice meal,'" said Rolston, who is an excellent chef. "At first I had Reiser over; I used to work in the wine trade as well in London, so food and wine was my thing. Reiser went back and told Paxton and Biehn. So we had a couple of poker nights where I'd make a fancy dinner for the guys."

"Pretty much every weekend we [the cast] did something together,"



TOP, LEFT: "Operating Room" concept by Cobb.

TOP, RIGHT: A concept model of the colony center allowed Cameron to study its layout, make alterations, and plan shots.

ABOVE: Storyboard of "Int. Ops.," fight on screen: Showing an amoeba-like cluster of flashing blue dots clumped tightly in one area"—i.e., the surviving colonists.

Paxton would say. "Something we can't talk about now..."

Cameron also shot the med lab scene in which the marines find a number of Facehuggers preserved in something like formaldehyde. "For the stasis tubes," said Winston, "we had to develop the look of dead Facehuggers with flaking skin."

When Reiser's character, Burke, puts his face too close to a container, one of the Facehuggers slams itself against the glass, trying to reach him. This Facehugger had to be constructed with a tubular extension (to impregnate its victim) and had to be able to splat against the Plexiglas while in the liquid-filled tube. Winston's team therefore created a watertight Facehugger, with its control cables and mechanics flowing out from the receptacle through watertight seals.

"Getting the tail to whip around in a confined space and underwater was a major challenge," Winston added. "We tried various things, such as air pressure and water pressure, but nothing seemed to work. Finally, Ray Lovell came up with a spring-loaded tail that was cable-operated. Pulling on the cable would curl the tail up very tightly; then releasing it would allow it to whip open."

"What's interesting looking back now is that the marines all stuck together," Henn would say. "Lance Henriksen in the movie was kind of a loner, so he was off on his own. Even Paul Reiser was a loner, and then Sigourney and I were like our own little entities as well. So the way it was on set was kind of how it was off the set."

Weaver also aided her fellow actors. When Bishop informs the marines and Ripley that they can't expect a rescue mission for 17 days, Hudson has a meltdown. Paxton would say that he was having a hard time working

himself up for that moment—until, after lunch, Weaver looked at him in such a way that he felt that she understood his difficulties and was supporting him. With cameras rolling, when Ripley retorted that Newt had survived even longer with no training, Paxton ad-libbed the line: "Why don't you put her in charge?"

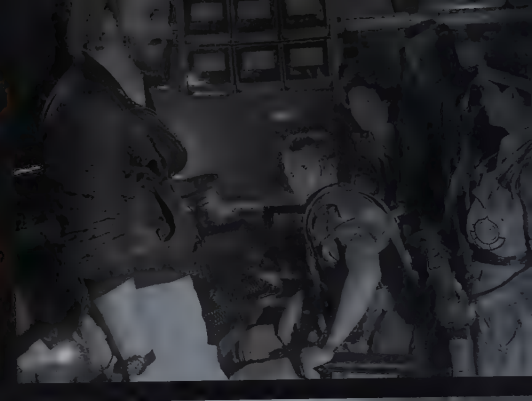
"There's humor in *Aliens*," Cameron said. "I found that once the characters came alive, I had to throw out 90 percent of the dialogue. I could have just written funny dialogue for them all day long, but I had to pull back. In a film like this, you've got to have that balance of impulses: the suspense, the thrills, the shocks, the comedy, the character development. Obviously, the most important story was Sigourney's, but she wasn't that funny; she was the straight man to all the others. Which is funny because Sigourney herself is very funny. She's a hoot and she likes comedy. So it was hard for her to have all those good lines going to everybody else."

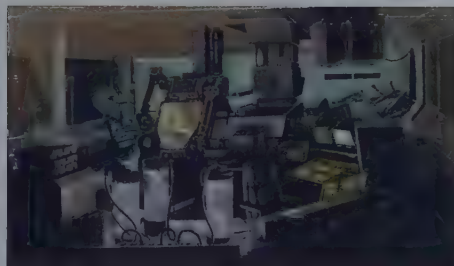
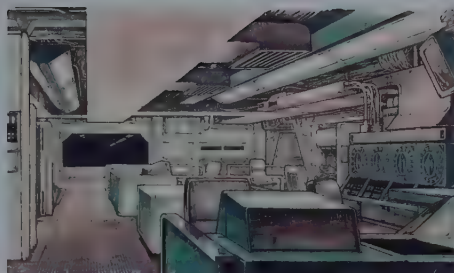
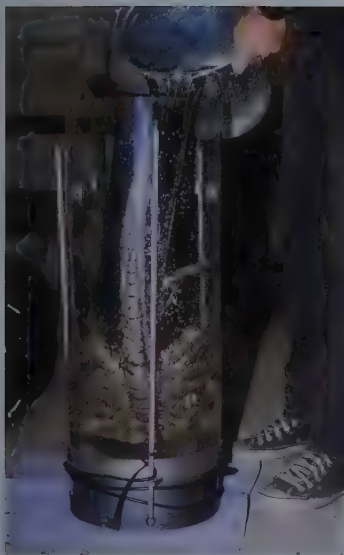
"I don't have to be funny in this role," Reiser joked on set, "because in space, no one can hear you laugh."

"Paxton would always have a million lines," Goldstein said, "and because he and Jim were old friends, Jim would be, 'No, no, no.' But Bill had a thick skin."

Henn would recall being surprised by the amount of swearing in the dialogue, particularly Hudson's outbursts, but said that Paxton would apologize to her after each take. "Some of the marines I was closer to," Henn would say. "Bill Paxton and I were very close. Our off-screen and on-screen rapport did kind of jibe to some extent."

"I was the smallest one besides Carrie Henn," Goldstein said. "I'm





OPPOSITE: Unit photography of Cameron and his cast shooting scenes in the operations center. Michael Biehn had replaced Remar as Hicks. Biehn had followed his starring role in *The Terminator* with two television portrayals: guest-starring on a three-part *Hill Street Blues* arc (1984), and in *Deadly Intentions* (1985), a four-hour TV movie. His first screen role had been two lines in the TV pilot for *Logan's Run* (1977). He later appeared in several TV series and movies, as well as in feature films *The Fan* (1982) and *The Lords of Discipline* (1983).

ABOVE, LEFT: Filling up a receptacle for a dead Facehugger. **ABOVE, MIDDLE:** Two concept illustrations by Cobb of the medical center. **ABOVE, RIGHT, AND FOLLOWING PAGES:** The dead Facehuggers preserved in liquid.

teeny. A few times, so they could get everyone in the shot, they'd say, 'Carrie, honey, would you stand on that box?' Then they would say, 'Oh, Jenette, would you mind standing on it, too?' and everyone would break up laughing."

"There are three female marines," Weaver said on set. "Vasquez is the toughest, quietest one. She's a complete person of action, and handles a 'smart gun,' the heaviest gun they have. She's a great character."

Because of the imminent meltdown, the survivors realize that someone has to go out in the open and use the uplink system to pilot down the second dropship. Amidst arguing, Bishop volunteers. "My saddest moment was when my friend [Hudson] agrees: 'Send Bishop,'" Henriksen said about his character. "And I forgave him. I said, 'That's all right, I'll go,' and nobody heard me. I wanted Bishop to have this tolerance for people's intolerance towards him. I was wrestling with feeling such pain and rejection, and yet I wanted to understand it."

Between more action scenes, Cameron filmed more intimate moments with Henn and Weaver. "I didn't have to be in as early as the rest of the cast and crew due to child labor laws," Henn said. "My day was: schoolwork, then hair and makeup, then more schoolwork. After that we'd go over to the set, run through the scenes a couple of times, then go. At the end of the day my mom and I would run through lines for the next day, although I knew most of the lines anyway from the auditions."

"All the women's roles were good, particularly the little girl," Goldstein observed. "Little girls are usually shown to be such idiots. I liked the fact that Vasquez just happened to be a woman. And Jim said, 'You don't have to be likable. I don't want likability. You just be the person.'"

"I tried to treat Carrie as a fellow actor," Weaver said in 1986. "She's nine, and nine is a whole person. My husband was a child actor, an Equity member by the time he was eight. He enjoyed that because he was like a little adult.

When people treated him like a child, he considered it was they who had a problem. But when the other actors treated him like a regular member of the company, he thrived. So I tried to treat Carrie as a fellow actor, just the way I would treat anyone."

"My dad recently told me that James had asked him at the time, 'What do I do? Is there anything that would help working with Carrie?'" Henn would say. "And my dad just said, 'You tell Carrie what you want and she'll do it.' I'm very much one of those people you tell me what you want."

"You just talk and are equals," Weaver emphasized in 1986. "Any attempt on my part to guide or instruct was met with amusement by her."

Behind the scenes, however, Weaver was not amused by Ripley's increasing contact with guns in the storyline: for example, the scene in which Hicks instructs Ripley on weaponry. "I don't like guns," she said. "Personally, I detest guns, and I'm a member of a gun-control lobby. I was a member of Handgun Control. I give money to anti-gun legislation and I won't even see movies with guns about killing people. Reading the script, I had no idea how martial the atmosphere would be. I don't think I really took into account the script's emphasis on guns, because in reading the script, it says a 'pulse gun' and a 'smart gun'—and I thought those guns would be smarter than whatever we have now and that the others would shoot pulses. Then one day I was handed this huge gun. And Jim looked at me like, 'What?' And said, 'Didn't you read the script?' I didn't realize that they would be traditional guns in new designs. That's one aspect of the film I really didn't understand until we got into it. I didn't realize that these guns were a star of the film until I got there, and this amazing hardware kept coming out. I'm afraid that I completely underestimated that aspect of *Aliens*.

"And it's hard for me morally to justify being in a film with so many guns.







I just find it very upsetting. That's the biggest problem for me," Weaver said at the time. "I don't think Ripley is a gun person at all. And I want to make sure that in those scenes, when I'm handling them, that I don't turn into a marine. I'm not a soldier. I never want to be a soldier."

"Sigourney is very liberal politically and despised the whole idea of any kind of guns," Cameron said later. "She tried to talk me out of them having weapons. And I said, 'No, they are marines; they would have weapons.' She asked, 'Do I have to carry a weapon?' I said, 'Yes.' She said, 'Why?' I said, 'Because it's not Sigourney Weaver in the film, it's Ripley. Ripley wants to survive.'"

Conversation between star and director took place off set. Biehn had already remarked that Weaver dealt mostly with Cameron on her approach to scenes. "They probably talked about it privately," Rolston said. "They did do a lot of private talking, they really did, or they talked in low tones. They

were never screaming at each other; it was always very, very measured. We were aware of it because Jim would take Sigourney gently by the arm and they'd walk away, and they'd talk together, and then they'd come back and Jim would make some announcement."

"It was the number one conversation," Sallis said. "I mean, she had a really big problem with the guns. And to his credit, Jim talked her into it, and told her why it was essential. My instinct was that it was an ongoing discussion."

At one point, Cameron took Weaver outside the studio to fire a Thompson machine gun. "She fired off a 50-round magazine from the hip and then she looked at me with this kind of sly grin and said, 'That's really fun.' Another liberal bites the dust."

"The thing that scares me about the guns is that, after you've been using them for a couple of days, you get into it," Weaver said in 1986. "But I don't like that feeling you get after you've shot off a few rounds of 'I'm immortal.' It's just garbage. I think that's what happens to people with real guns. I think Jim Cameron is very anti-gun, too, in his own way, but I think he is fascinated by them in a way that I'm not at all... My most uncomfortable moments in the film are when I have to fire the gun, because to me it's more interesting to outwit the alien than to shoot it down. There are all these troopers who believe in just their guns. To me that seemed very naive."

"I said, 'No, no—you've got to machine gun the shit out of them! Because that's what the film is!'" Cameron said. "We had a long, creative dialogue about that. The way I finally sold it to her was by saying that Ripley would want to prevent the kind of trauma that she had experienced herself to happen to any others. So I displaced it. I saw it as a really straightforward revenge story, but she forced me to think out of my role as a writer, that Ripley was acting on a higher spiritual plane, out of duty. And that took to her relationship with Newt as well."

Weaver took to jokingly describing her character on set as "Rambolina." "But I secretly structured myself to play Ripley like Henry V and the women warriors of classic Chinese literature," she said in 1986. "I've used that; I've used my feelings as Ripley's feelings. I think she has a basic skepticism about the power of weapons against something as instinctively violent and destructive as the alien. I know the poster will probably picture me as some sort of 'Rambolina,' but it's not at all important to me to project that kind of image. I don't care whether or not people think I'm 'tough.'"

Weaver would later reveal that she based her performance on a woman environmentalist friend who was "unsentimental about things and just goes forward."

WIRED MUTANTS

The actual battle between invading aliens and the remaining marines was a complex affair and took several days to shoot. "We used various tricks," Winston said of the stunt people in costume, "wire harnesses enabled them to jump from wall to wall, plus undercranking the camera made them move a little bit quicker and more insect-like."

"This was a hardcore sequence," Biehn would say.

Cameron had his six stunt people primed, rehearsed, and ready to go as

LEFT, ABOVE: Hicks shows Ripley how to use the weapon of a colonial marine.

LEFT, BELOW: Ripley discovers Newt's face under the grime. "For the first time in a picture," Weaver said, "I've been more experienced than a fair number of the actors I'm working with. That's been fun. It's nice to pass things on to someone else for a change, to let them know how good their work is."

OPPOSITE: Cameron directing the assault of the aliens on the operations center. "The battle in Operations when the creatures all came through the ceiling, I shot basically all of that myself," Cameron said, "so I didn't board that at all. If I'm doing a scene 100 percent by myself, I won't do boards. I'll do little thumbnails for myself on the back sides of my script pages. I storyboard any action scene that may be so complicated I need a series of pictures to show the stuntmen how I want it done, or especially if there's second-unit material to be cut in with my material. I try to be as accurate as possible on those, even to the extent of going through four frames of a given shot. Primarily I use storyboards to communicate with other people."



the alien warriors—Chris Webb, Simon Crane, Jazzer Jayes, Bill Weston, Steve Dent, and Carl Toop—and drew on lessons he'd learned working for Corman, who claimed that he'd filmed the fall of the Roman Empire with five extras and a bush. "Only those six were ever in one shot," the director said, sticking to his original plan. "They keep coming at you from different angles, but it's the same six guys. Having the same suits though does create additional problems when you're shooting. All the things that can go wrong with one creature go wrong five times as often. On the other hand, you have five times as much to look at, so your attention is a bit divided."

"We also put puppets into different positions that a human can't get into," Winston said. "They were manipulated externally, either by strings, rods, or radio controls for head-jaw movement. Whenever we could, we used one of the puppets because they were about 8 ft tall and very thin—there was no way they could have been humans in suits. Some were floppy-jointed puppets that could be thrown or crushed or blown up. We also built a completely articulated upper torso puppet that had moveable lips and a mechanical tongue that came out with its own set of biting jaws. Then we did a lot of specific things for specific shots. We hung them on wires and had them act like lizards."

"We were able to alter the capabilities of the alien warriors," Cameron said. "We knew from the start we'd be plagued by the man-in-a-suit syndrome, but we did what we could by adding arm extensions and doing a lot of shots upside-down and at different speeds."

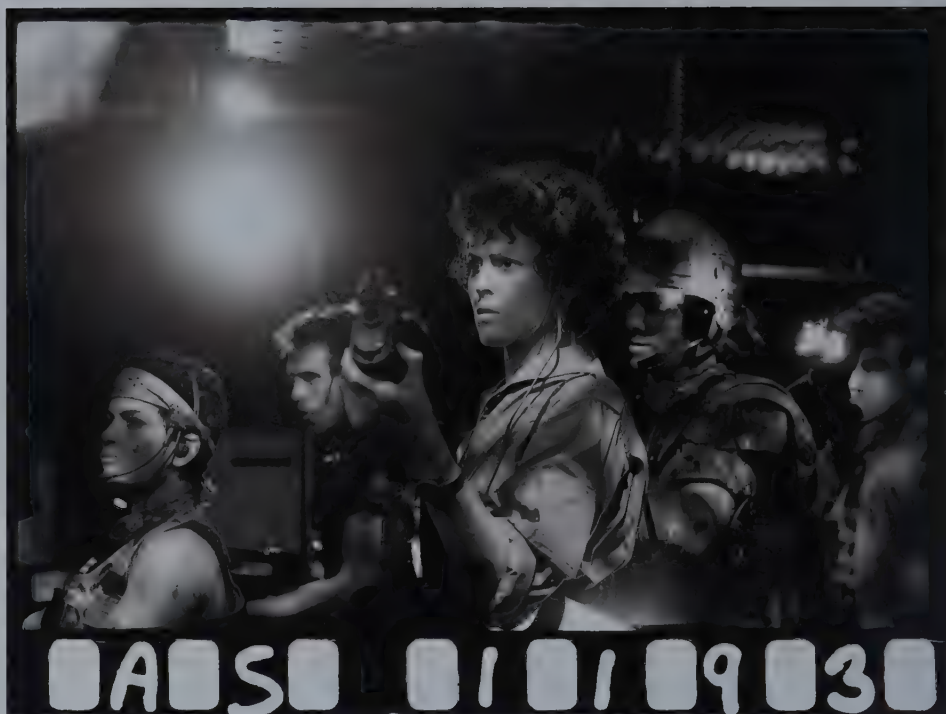
"I tried to make my performance work for the camera crew," Weaver said, "in terms of focus and camera angles—especially when I'm firing guns and there's a lot of physical stuff going on. We had a very tight schedule throughout the filming, and I didn't want to be the one to hold up shooting. The crew has to know that you are going to do a certain thing a certain way—every time. And so long as it's cooking inside, you can do that without feeling like it's artificial. I think it's terribly important, when there's something dangerous going on, for them to know that they can rely on you, almost as if you are a stunt person."

"And you've got to be completely responsible for the weapons that you're using," Weaver added. "Normally in a scene, I don't concentrate on anything but the performance. But when it's physical like this film, you have to be aware of other people's safety as well as your own. Paul Weston is the best stunt coordinator I have ever worked with, and he is very funny, too. If he sees that I am having a problem with the hardware, he rehearses with me enough times so that I lose my insecurity about the scene and I can get the job done."

Biehn was also understanding more completely his character, and suggested to Cameron that he try and save Hudson when the latter is pulled underneath the floor by the aliens. In the script, no marine tries to save their comrade. "I had to ask Jim if I could go after Bill," Biehn would say. Cameron agreed.

"It was one of the few times we got to shoot those guns off, which was great," Paxton said, "because we are carrying them all the time."

To make the action even more intense, Cameron and Biddle used many strobe lights on the actors to accentuate the weapon fire. "It created a nice sense of a lot of energy flying around," Cameron noted.



ABOVE: Unit photography of Ripley and the marines tensing for the alien onslaught.

"The gun stuff in the film is not that hard physically, once you've learned how," Weaver said in 1986. "The gun is loaded and as soon as I'm finished, I put it up. I've been well trained by the people here, they're not taking any chances. I had a slight injury in the film's beginning and had to work with a physiotherapist a good deal of the time. But despite the discomfort, I felt totally supported in the moves that Paul and Jim worked out. I also had a great stunt-double. She was only in the film for a few explosions, but it was nice to know that she was always there, in case I thought, *Uh-oh, it's too hairy*."

"I had a submachine gun," Weaver added, "which would fire off about 17 rounds, and blanks would come out like little casements. You had to be careful that you wouldn't be hit by other people's gun blanks coming out from the side because they were always very hot. Everyone connected with the guns was adamant about how you carried them, how you handed them to each other. Sometimes the guns would lock, and that was dangerous because when you passed it, it could go off. Basically we treated them like real guns."

"Making *Aliens* has been harder than any other movie I've made because it is so technical," Reiser said on set. "Everything is very slow and deliberate, and a great deal of the concentration is on the technical aspect as opposed to the acting. On the other hand, things are so real that you don't have to work very hard. You're running, and there are bullets flying. There's smoke and this tremendous horror chasing you, or lurking behind a door, and you're also

RIGHT: A humorous moment, Hurd and Cameron on set.

covered in slime. It worked to my advantage. The sets are so real and the special effects are so authentic that it's easy to lose yourself in it."

Because his character had died the day before, Weaver gave Paxton a bouquet of flowers the following morning, something she did for each actor whose character had a death scene.

REVOLUTION

SHOOT DAYS 30 to 35, Friday, November 8 to Thursday, November 14

LOCATION: Pinewood, Stage E

INT. MED LAB ANNEX: scs. 122 (Ripley and Newt to surgery, bond); 137 (Ripley crosses to small O.R. where she left Newt)

INT. MED LAB: scs. 108 (Spunkmeyer delivers supplies to Bishop); 123 (Ripley reasoning with Bishop; queen), 124 (Ripley confronts Burke); 130 (Bishop into underground shaft); 157 (Burke meets his alien fate)

INT. SURGERY: scs. 143 (Ripley triggers fire alarm); 138 (Ripley finds Newt under bed); 141 (Ripley wakes up—Facehuggers); 145 (Ripley and Newt battle Facehuggers; Hudson and Hicks arrive)

On November 8, Cameron viewed rushes at 8 a.m. in Theatre 7, with coffee provided. It was another day making *Aliens*. Weaver and Goldstein were picked up at 7 a.m., the former in car number 1, the latter in car number 4. Henriksen was picked up at 7:15 a.m., in car number 6, and so on. Weaver reported to dressing room 322, with Carrie Henn in dressing room 323; Weaver was in makeup by 7:30, most of the marines by 8 a.m., and Henn at 9 a.m.

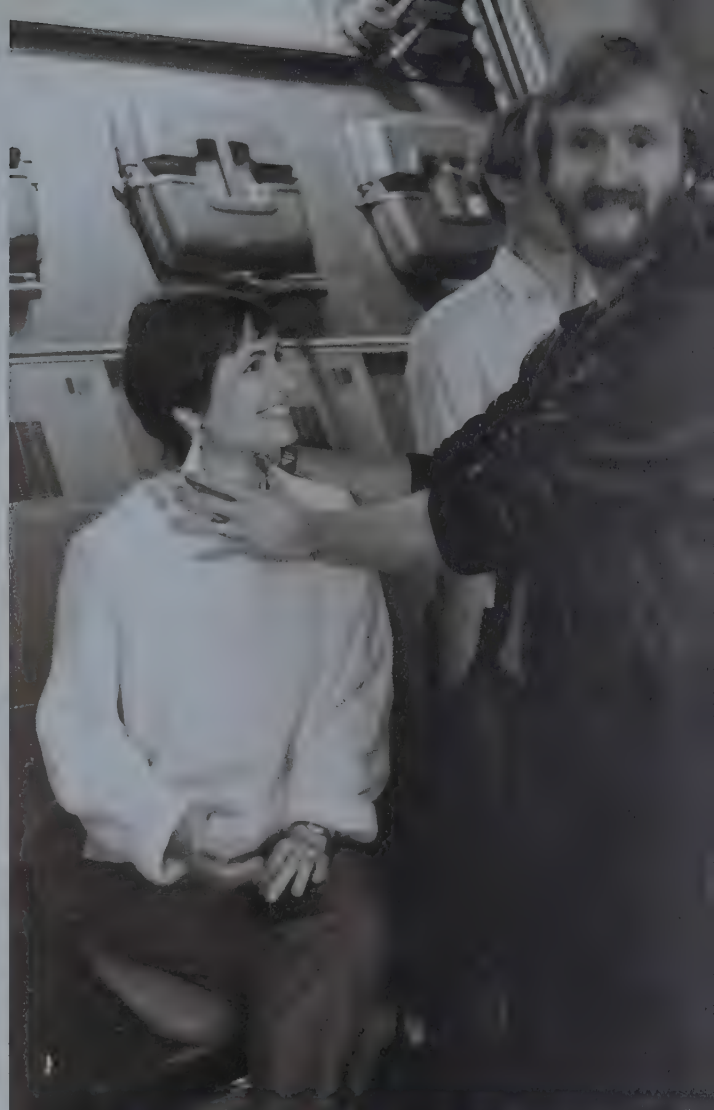
"Fox didn't feel there were any crises on the dailies," said Cameron. "Gale was playing big-league ball with Diller and Larry Gordon. She proved to the studio that she knew what she was doing. She interfaced really well with legal affairs and business affairs. She made sure contracts were all in good shape, and early on. So they were able to have the faith to kind of leave us alone. Gale pretty much kept them apart from me during the shoot."

Weaver said in 1986 that Hurd was "gentle, but firm."

Barbara Boyle, head of production at RKO, said in 1986: "In LA the attitude is, 'So what if it runs a couple of hundred thousand dollars over budget? Screw the studio.' But Gale is very careful with other people's money."

"Gale and Jim play 'good cop-bad cop,' and often he's the bad cop," Biehn said at the time. "Jim got a lot of his film education from Roger Corman; he seems to know everybody's job on the set better than they do. Gale comes in and tries to find a compromise, smooth things over."

"We have a rule," Cameron said. "I don't make any deals for her and she doesn't argue on the set with me in front of the crew. Filmmaking is a trauma that's akin to combat. [laughs] Never having been in combat, that's probably unfair for me to say, but in terms of having to be fully on and fully alert, day after day, for a long period of time, and dealing with one crisis after another, it does create that sort of stress environment. That's probably why I feel akin to some of the military characters in the story, even though I wouldn't ever want to be in the army."



And more strife had been percolating.

Goldstein remembers the Brit crew was still uncomfortable with a woman producer. Giler had a different point of view. "The English were quite used to having women producers—her personality wasn't everybody's favorite," he would say. "Neither was Jim's. There was a lot of tension between the British crew and Jim."

Hurd had also remarked that Cameron appeared very young to the older veterans on the English crew, many of whom had worked their way up over a period of decades. "We were simply not treated with a great deal of respect," she'd say. "It was very hard every day of the shoot, because we were being second-guessed. Every decision we made was questioned."

The Terminator hadn't come out yet in England. Hurd and Cameron arranged several screenings, but crewmembers didn't show up to see it.

Several of the actors would also later describe the situation as a “culture clash”: a young, aggressive “American” (actually Canadian) director vs. a British crew who had their traditions and possibly weren’t as invested as their director in his vision. They referred to Cameron, because of his beard, as “Grizzly Adams”—a reference to the popular American film (and spinoff TV series) *The Life and Times of Grizzly Adams* (1974)—a not-so-subtle way of mocking him and his age.

Henriksen thought “there’s something wrong here.” He felt the crew resented the Americans coming in making a sequel to Ridley Scott’s movie, a British production. Weaver felt they were big fans of Scott and didn’t know Jim.

“The crew did not think Jim was up to the task of creating a sequel to Ridley Scott’s masterpiece,” Hurd said. “There was a lot of resentment and very little understanding of what he was trying to accomplish.” A few of the HODs were on his side, such as John Richardson and Crispian Sallis, but most of the crew looked at him as a “young know-nothing,” “an upstart Yank,” “which really drove Jim crazy, particularly since he is Canadian,” Hurd added.

“There was a lot of wink-wink-nudge-nudge,” Kash said in 2012. “Who gives a shit what this American says? We know best, we’re artists, he’s just a moneymaker.”

“The crew was terrific,” Reiser would say, “but I think that to them, a 30-year-old wunderkind like Jim who knows exactly what he wants—and how to get it—might have been initially off-putting. The British crew seemed to be a bit more ‘traditional,’ whatever that means. Polite? Reserved? Different pace?”

Many of the cast and crew would recall that, as Cameron readied to shoot around 9:30 a.m. each day, the huge stage doors would open, all the atmospheric smoke would be sucked out, and a little old lady would come in pushing a tea trolley. Because most of the crew would skip breakfast, this was a moment they looked forward to: eating something from the tea trolley; there would be a big rush toward it to grab a sandwich before the food ran out. The tea trolley would make a second appearance in the afternoon, and Cameron found the delays exasperating.

“The tea trolley and the multitude of breaks that would take place on set infuriated Jim,” Mahan said. “Because he’s right in the middle of something intense and everyone walks off. I understand why he would get aggravated by that.”

“The entire production would stop, and you’d get the tea lady and her little cakes,” said McClung. “They had one at 4:30, too, which was a big shock. And 20 minutes really turned into a half hour by the time everybody walked up, waited in line, got the tea, had the tea, had a smoke, so really you were losing close to an hour every day. Mind you, I really liked the tea and the scones—but Jim flipped out.”

Cynthia Scott recalled: “Jim would say, ‘I have nightmares of arms extending toward me—holding a tray of tea!’”

To make a point, Cameron would sometimes grab a video camera and a few actors to shoot video portions of scenes while crew drank their tea and ate their sandwiches.

A number of the crew also enjoyed ‘liquid-based lunches,’ which caused problems. “A lot of the guys would go to the pub at lunchtime and have a

pint of beer and half a sandwich,” McClung added. “They were not much good after lunch because they’d had a few pints.”

On Fridays, the crew had a kind of lottery. “This guy asked Jim if he wanted to put some money in for the drawing—and Jim just looked at him,” Henriksen said. “The guy wanted to crawl into a hole because Jim couldn’t relate to him. This guy’s having a party and Jim is at war trying to finish his movie.”

“With some of the old-timers,” said one American, “it was like walking on eggs. There are just many areas where the English were set in their ways. And let’s face it: this was *Aliens*. The first film had been made in England by the British, and here was this fellow Cameron bringing in a crew of some 15 Americans to run things. And at times, they resented us for it. Sometimes it was like being in a pressure cooker just waiting to explode.”

At Pinewood, many of the Brit crew had been working at the studio for decades and would simply be assigned to certain soundstages. Hurd and Cameron were not provided with a selection process. Hurd felt that this was making it very difficult because some people were “really punching a clock. There wasn’t that enthusiasm of ‘Let’s get together and make a movie’ like at Roger Corman’s. And we were working pretty long hours and people were pretty frazzled; by our standards in America, a 12-hour day was a long day but an average day; but 12 hours in England was a very long day, a very long day. That being said, I think that their craftsmanship was spectacular. And they did take complete pride in that.”

“They were great craftsmen,” said Paxton, “but they really had an indentured way of doing everything. If Jim wanted a light moved, sometimes he’d grab it and do it himself.” Which caused strife, too, because the director wasn’t supposed to touch the lights.

“There were enormous problems with the Film and Television Union,” said John Lee. “There was a resentment amongst some of the UK crew of the expectations that perhaps some of the American team had. Perhaps the British crew was reluctant to work until midnight every night. There were lots of union problems, which were possibly exacerbated by other issues.”

“There was too much made of that—we were doing stupid hours,” said effects technician Julian Parry. “I was doing video pre-viz with Jim after he was finished shooting for two or three hours, often until 9 at night. That was a very long day, but we loved doing it. What can be more fun than working out shots? Jim had a lot of enthusiasm and we were using new technology—so it was exciting. He was wanting to lay out his full-sized shots, too.”

“It wasn’t just the culture clash for me,” Cameron said. “It was the transition from a non-union guerilla filmmaking mentality to a union picture. And frankly I thought there were a lot of people in England who, to use a charitable term, were ‘comfortable.’ And that was just completely foreign to me. I’d been used to working with eager, hardcore, dedicated film folks who had something to prove. But a lot of the crew at Pinewood were ‘lifers.’ They had permanent employment. It didn’t matter what movie they were working on. They had a gig. And they were pushed on us. If you worked at Pinewood you had to use X number of people. So I pushed against that as hard as I could. But I knew there were a lot of people at Pinewood who didn’t care for us.”

Not all of the English crew, like Parry, minded the long hours. “I was a workaholic,” Sallis said. “I wasn’t married. I lived at the studio.” (And it’s

RIGHT: On set, Cameron with (from top): Hurd, DP Adrian Biddle, and setting up a shot.

possible that Cameron would have had some of the same problems doing his first studio picture in the States, as well, coming from the Corman background into a union situation.)

But Scott would recall that Cameron was indeed pushing hard, very aware that this was his first big-budget studio film. “He told us that he’d made *Terminator* to convince Fox that he could do the sequel. So the tension was solely between Jim and the crew. Because the rules in Hollywood are, you keep going until you’re done, keep going until you’ve got the shot, keep going till you lose the light. Whatever it takes. It’s just a completely different style. Jim was used to being an absolute monarch, and he was a young director. But I felt for him.”

“It was a question of who’s in charge?” Goldstein recalls. “You’re coming in. You’re not from the same country. You’re really young. You’ve done one film and you’re coming into an institution that’s a machine. That works. So there was tension. It was tension about who was truly in charge. Ideally, the assistant director is the assistant to the director, right?”

First assistant director Derek Cracknell and his working relationship with Cameron became the crucible of the conflict. Cracknell had worked his way up in the industry, starting as a third assistant director back in 1962 until he finally became first assistant on a great number of films, including several classics and two directed by Stanley Kubrick: *2001* (1968) and *A Clockwork Orange* (1971).

“The first AD kept calling me ‘love,’ ‘Come on, love,’” Goldstein said. “It was a turn of phrase, but Jim said, ‘Please stop that. She is playing a soldier, just stop.’ The assistant director sounded patronizing, even if it was cultural.” (Scott would recall the crew audibly debating who had the “best bum”—Weaver or herself—and not being sure if she should be insulted or pleased.)

When Henriksen had first walked on the set, Cracknell put his hand on his chest to stop him for some reason. Henriksen said, “If you ever touch me again, I’m gonna kick your ass.”

“Derek was a professional,” Rosengrant said, “but he was very set in his ways and how it was going to go. And the English crew were extremely loyal to him.”

“Derek was a cockney, and the best man I ever met,” Kash said in 2012. “He was like your sergeant in the war, who you’d go over the hill for. You hate him, but you respect him at the same time and you do anything he says because he’s The Man. This guy knew how inexperienced I was, and he would constantly give me wonderful confidence. He ran that set. They were very veteran people on that set. They’d done all the Bond films. They were like a brotherhood, and I think James Cameron had a bit of a hard time with that and he couldn’t really crack it. He got into some trouble.”

Rolston had worked with Cracknell on *Revolution*. “He was famous due to the number of movies on his resume,” the actor said. “He was no-nonsense, get the work done, a very strong personality. But the tea breaks, that pissed Jim off—Fuck this, man. Go get it yourself when you’re not working. If I’m working I want all the guys here, ready to go—but Derek said, ‘It doesn’t work that way, mate. We all have our breaks.’ Jim and Derek locked heads over it, and Derek had the support of the crew. And the British, it’s amazing about their culture, you attack one of them you attack them all.”

“Derek was always fun to work with, he had all the cockney slang to add to his spirit of not suffering fools easily,” said veteran art director Alan





Tomkins, who had worked with Cracknell on several films, including *2001*. “He would bawl them out in front of the crew. But he was one of the best four first assistants. If you did your job well, you were one of his top team; if not, you may as well pack it in.”

Cracknell would call Cameron “guv’nor” and “roll his eyes as if Jim hadn’t earned the title yet,” Hurd said. “Derek felt he should really be directing the movie. He was a frustrated director. He had directed second unit before. He really felt he was better qualified than Jim. So when Jim asked him to set up a shot one way, and Derek would say, ‘Oh, no, no, no, I know what you want.’ Then he’d do it wrong and the whole set would have to be broken down.”

“We’d all bugger outside and do whatever we wanted,” says focus puller Hume. “It was the English tradition. ‘Oh, lunchtime, tea break.’ All that shit. So we ended up doing God knows many hours, and James got fed up with Derek. I even said to Derek a couple of times, ‘What time are we working till tonight?’ And he goes, ‘I don’t know. Go and ask the caterers.’”

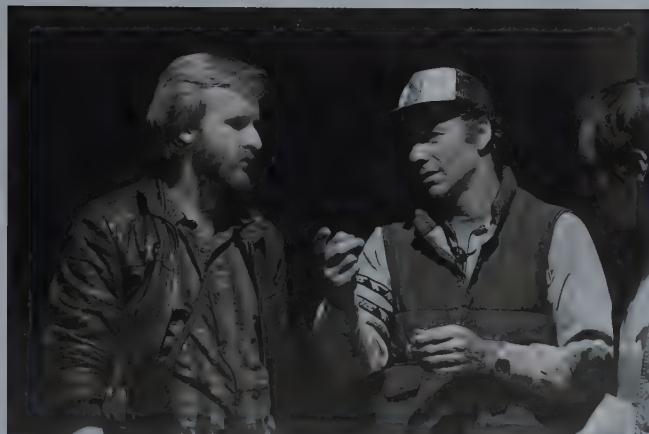
“First assistants are frustrated directors,” Ackland-Snow said. “They think they know it all; of course they know about filmmaking, but actually...”

The question of who was running the set came to a head when Hurd and Cameron gave Cracknell his notice.

“I was aware, everybody was aware, there was hostility,” Sallis said. “Jim wasn’t much loved. The most famous fight was with Derek. Jim was irritated beyond belief with the tea ladies coming round and everybody queuing up for a cup of tea and a sticky bun. I should think he was immensely irritated. And whilst you could initially take it out on Derek, and Derek might have said, ‘Listen, Jim, it’s how things are around here. Tough’—I don’t think you actually go on to try and fire the guy if there isn’t some sort of underlying personality trait. Derek was fabulous to me, and I liked him enormously, but Jim might not have done. They may have just gone at a different speed.”

In retaliation, Cracknell fomented a rebellion: In the middle of a shooting day, the Pinewood crew put down their tools and stopped work. “At a certain

OPPOSITE: Cameron and crew on set. Third from left (seated with cap) is 1st AD Derek Cracknell; fourth from left (standing at back in glasses) is art director Fred Hole; second from right, tall, standing, arms folded, is standby prop man Rodney Pincott. The man standing at left, looking at camera, smoking, and the moustachioed man with glasses and striped jumper to Cameron's right (in pic) were both assistants to Pincott (prop men, but unidentified).



RIGHT: Cameron with first assistant director Derek Cracknell.

FAR RIGHT: Hurd talking with Weaver.



point our assistant director said 'we're not doing this anymore,' so we fired him," Hurd said. "Then he basically went to all the departments and persuaded everyone to walk off the set."

"There was a mutiny!" said Kash. "They fired Derek, and the moment Cameron did it, everyone walked out. And we all went, too. It was like, 'You can't fire Derek; he's a landmark character in this industry!'"

"Jim yelled," Goldstein said. "There was a bit [of] yelling."

Paxton would recall some "problems," while Henriksen called it a "big battle."

"The crew said, 'If he goes, we go,'" said Lamont, who was at Acton preparing for re-shoots.

"There was quite a bit of pressure from Cameron," Begg said. "But the British were very stubborn, and there were a lot of things that went on that I certainly didn't agree with. But Jim gave as good as he got."

"The crew said, 'Screw this,'" Rolston said. "They walked out, and then there were big discussions. I'd been living in England for a number of years, so I was really an Anglophile. And having worked with Derek on other big movies, I thought, *Wow, why are the American guys creating all of this friction?* The crew were not novices. But I did understand that Jim and Gale were on the hook for the budget. If they went over, it was on them to pay for it."

Hurd called Fox. Cameron wanted to move the entire production out of England, but Hurd tried to talk him out of it. Another option was replacing the entire crew, but England was busy with other film shoots and there wasn't another crew to hire.

Most of the American ex-pat actors were in British Equity and understood the union-mandated rules about tea breaks and so on, and were sympathetic. "Jim blew up and he fired Derek," Scott said. "And we all loved Derek. So it was really a management/shop-floor problem. The tension wasn't between English and Americans. I was on set, it was very tense. Everybody froze. It was, *What's going to happen?* Because if Derek is fired, the rest of the crew is walking off."

"It was scary," Winston would say, "very scary, because we were at a point where it was like, 'What are we going to do, hire a new crew?'"

"It was, to this day, the most difficult moment of my entire career," Hurd would say, "to try and rally everyone back."

She gathered everyone together on the set for a summit.

"We had a bit of a difficult time, because James wanted to fire Derek Cracknell," Hume recalled, "who was one of our top men. We all loved him. He was magic. We said, 'What are you talking about? We need to have a meeting about this.' So we did, most of the crew, with his wife, because James didn't want to come in. Gale said, 'They're not getting on very well, and this, that, and the other. And we need to get someone else, because James doesn't like Derek.' Because he was rather overpowering, and James was a young director. A few of them said, 'Look, if you fire Derek, we're all leaving.' So it was a bit of a mutiny."

Scott would say that it was Weaver who saved the film. As its star and the star of the original, she was "the only one who had the power to have a voice—and she brokered a peace," Scott said. "Derek had to stand up for the rules, that was his job. But as far as Jim was concerned, it was 'How dare you? I'm the director; I'm the absolute power here.' Sigourney deserves full marks for saving that situation."

According to Hurd and Paxton, Cameron was honest and said: "Look, this is my first studio movie. We have an almost impossible shooting schedule, and I need everyone's help. I can't do this on my own. But I also can't have a situation where it seems like the crew is working to prove that the endeavor is gonna be a failure. If you have a problem with that, you've gotta step forward, 'cause we've gotta replace you."

Henriksen recalled Cameron saying, "'Look, if you guys don't shape up, we're going to pull the movie and do it somewhere else.' The crew laughed, saying 'where are you gonna get another crew?' But they weren't kidding—they were gonna fire the whole crew."

"I remember the day of the mutiny," Sallis said. "The meeting was mostly in the medical bay and spilled over onto the wooden floor. Partly because I didn't want to take part in the mutiny, and partly because I needed to do something for that day's work, I squirreled myself away in the med lab. But I heard it all going on—there was a big, 'Do we support

Derek? And Sigourney led the way there; she saved the day, but it took smart reasoning by Jim and Gale.”

The meeting, reportedly, lasted for hours. Crew complained about the long days, but Cracknell and his staff agreed to be more supportive. Cameron vowed to be more tolerant of the tea trolley intrusions.

“I’m sure Cameron learned a lot in that moment,” Kash said. “He had to work through Derek, because he couldn’t work against him. That’s how it worked in England. Cameron was a second-time director working with a veteran crew, and these guys get their jobs by word of mouth. They call each other; their survival depends on each other in England.”

“Derek was re-hired,” Scott said. “He was an excellent AD. And things went on. I think Jim and Derek actually liked each other personally.”

“Jim and Gale quickly fathomed that they’d better climb down, and they climbed down,” Sallis said. “I think they were taken by surprise by the whole event, and there was a movie to be made in double-quick time and they couldn’t stand on the stage and waste another hour. So in the end it was all recanted, and Jim and Derek got on—I don’t know about famously, but they got the job done. Derek did not go anywhere.”

“In fact, we were able to turn it around,” Hurd said, “so that the outcome of that mutiny was we were united and we resolved the issues for the first time on the film. It was an example of something good coming out of a really difficult situation.”

“By the end of it, there were a number of them that came to respect at least that we knew what we were doing,” Cameron said, “which I guess is okay.”

“Right around the time of the Cracknell incident,” Rolston recalled, “we’re all on set and this phalanx of suits comes walking through, Fox finance guys or something. They look like Mafiosi, tweed and cashmere, long trench coats, polished shoes, black hair. I remember joking with Reiser, ‘Oh my God, the Mafia’s here.’ And it was for real! They were there to see how it was going, because it was on Jim and Gale.”

With Winston’s team working hand-in-hand with the English crew, going to pubs and socializing, some of the earlier tension began to thaw, at least in the creature-effects division.

“Once we started shooting stuff and when we were real close to putting the queen together, everything started to gel,” Mahan said.

“We weren’t butting heads with them,” Rosengrant said. “We adapted into their society and the way they did things, and we engaged them. They saw that we were working hard. We weren’t over there ordering people around. Shane and I, we helped with the lion’s share of that queen alien, and we had our hands in just about everything: the cocoon bodies, the Facehugger construction, the alien warriors...”

“Once people started to see that the Skotaks were actually quite passionate about what they were doing,” Begg said, “and they were trying their damndest to achieve Jim Cameron’s vision, the atmosphere improved for them, too. They got some sort of allegiance, finally, from the British group.”

Winston, Rosengrant, and Mahan threw a big ‘halfway’ party at their house on St. Leonard’s Hill. “And we really got to know Bill Paxton,” Mahan said, “we got to know Michael Biehn, and Sigourney with her husband.”

“I remember this huge party at the house Stan Winston rented for his team,” Goldstein said, “and everyone came over. It was like a family, or even like a war. Because the work was really hard.”

TERROR IN THE RAIN

To speed things up and lighten his load, Cameron asked Winston to direct second unit. November 8 was the first day of Winston’s new job, on Stage ‘E’, shooting more of the pitched battle against the aliens on the operations room set. There, he worked with doubles: Jason White for Hicks; Shaun McCabe for Hudson; Elena Bertram for Vasquez.

“When you’re working as second-unit director for Jim Cameron, you’re hopefully directing the shot exactly as he wants to see it,” Winston said in 1986. “It was a very demanding and trying experience because of the amount that we were trying to shoot and the time limitations. It was a drain to be directing and in charge of such an enormous effects unit. And every shot seemed to be an enormous setup because most involved effects or stunts. And I had to make sure that every light was exactly the way Jim wanted it so that it would fit seamlessly. It’s a rough job because you’re not being creative, you’re making sure that you get exactly what the director wants.”

Meanwhile, Cameron and the main unit were shooting the scene in which Bishop is dissecting a Facehugger. Props included electronics gear, dissection equipment, a medical trolley for Gorman, and so on. Fox executives were scheduled to watch rushes at 4 p.m. in Theatre 7.

By this time, Henriksen had figured out how to play his character—something like a 12-year-old living with abusive parents, knowing that he’d outlive them. Henriksen had worked in Johannesburg, South Africa, and had found the country’s racism “very upsetting,” and used that, too. “I was using my 12-year-old emotional life and thought of myself as a black kid in South Africa,” Henriksen explained. “That if I made a mistake, anything could happen. So that’s what I was using through that whole role. There was a certain innocence about Bishop that I created that way.”



BELOW: Weaver being shown how one of the mechanical Facehuggers works.

FOLLOWING SPREADS: A dissected Facehugger; in the med lab, Weaver defends herself from a Facehugger; Hudson dispatches a Facehugger; Cameron directs Henn, who then screams in a shot in which she pins a Facehugger against a wall. For various stunts in the med lab action scenes, Sue Crossland doubled for Ripley, and Jason White for Hicks. Props included Newt’s doll and locator bracelet; effects included water sprinklers, smoke, glass-shattering effects and “repeat windows”; as well as rain deflectors to protect the cameras

ON CAMERON, PART III: WORKING PORTRAIT



ABOVE: Cameron directing Henn (it was the young girl's first film).

BELOW RIGHT: Cameron explaining a shot. The director asked rhetorically: "If you're 16 weeks into an 18-week shooting schedule and your leading actor breaks a leg, or gets hit by a truck, or the set burns down—what do you do? You can't think about those things. You've got to have faith that when you walk on the set that morning, that most of what you need will be there—because it's hard enough getting in the shots when everything is there."

Speaking of what might influence him, Cameron said: "I admire the work of certain directors without consciously emulating them. I've gone back and re-discovered things about Howard Hawks or John Ford. When I got started in film, it was pure techno-lust. I just wanted to learn how all that stuff was done on a technical level as opposed to on an aesthetic level. I've been a fan of movies for so long, compared to the actual amount of time I've worked in them, that it's really like all that stuff has been thrown into a big Cuisinart and been blended together into a kind of puree."

"There are not that many directors fluent in the language of film," Paxton said. "Jim comes to it intuitively."

On set, Cameron's intuitive approach and his perfectionism was a volatile brew.

"Jim is essentially a nice guy, but he had a tough job," said Dennis Skorak. "Some days he was a nice guy, other days he wasn't," said Al Marthews.

"Jim would say after a take, 'That's exactly what I don't want,'" Biehn recalled. "If something's not going right, Jim will get down on his hands and knees and work in the slime to get it right. He'll do it himself. Sometimes I don't think he realizes other people aren't as talented as he is, so they can't do what he does."

Biehn said on set in 1985: "Jim wants everything to look exactly right, and can be pretty difficult."

"Working with him wasn't a frolic," Reiser said.

"Jim is the bride at every wedding and the corpse at every funeral," Henriksen said.

"Filmmaking starts off with a sort of Bureau of Standards perfect vision of what the movie should be, which exists up here," Cameron tapped his head. "Or on the page, or collectively in the minds of a small number of people—and then it deteriorates from there. So what it really is all about is entropy: Day by day, you're fighting entropy. The extent to which you can fight entropy will determine how much the film resembles the initial vision, and therefore how good it is. And endurance is the primary quality for fighting entropy."

"With Jim, you don't make stuff up as you go," said McClung, "like a lot of directors do, where you show up and all your plans go out the window. Jim, he plans something and he sticks to the plan. And that was one thing great about him: He could work it all out and he was very articulate, and if you needed a drawing he could draw something out for you—and away you went."

"We had a lot of faith in Jim," said Robert Skotak. "That guy is incredibly talented. He's the real deal. He's capable in so many ways, and he is passionate, insanely passionate, in a good way."

"One morning I had a 4:45 a.m. call," Rolston said, "and I'm walking through the soundstage to makeup. It's dark, except I can see in the distance one light and somebody standing there. As I got closer I saw it was Jim, and he's making notes and looking at the set. I said, 'Good morning, Jim.' But he was so involved in what he was doing, he was unaware that I was passing

by or had said anything. I marveled at him, thinking, *He's all in; he is completely in.*"

"James Cameron was always fantastic with everybody," Henn would say. "Even as a child I could see that. He was funny, he was always trying to make me feel comfortable, and if there was anything with the aliens or anything like that that might be a little bit different, he made sure he showed me what they were going to do."

"Jim is incredibly open," Weaver said in 1986. "I always felt that he trusted my instincts, and I felt that he had a very clear idea of who Ripley is. He has tried to incorporate whatever decisions I made about her situation and her mental and emotional attitude in terms of changing scenes and how we played them. For the most part, it has gone very well."

"Jim would be an actor if he wasn't what he is: a hard-working director," Henriksen said on set. "He's not very expressive at times, not like an actor is—and he loves actors because they can do that. In his life, he does it another way. So he has a fascination with androids and robots, because it's a side of him that he's investigating."

Winston described working on the film as "a rather rugged period. It was quite a challenge."

"On the set, not to be hypercritical, but the only direction I ever heard any actor get was, 'Faster,'" Kash said in 2012. "I've heard Cameron in interviews saying, 'I used to let my anger be more obvious. I liked him, though. He really had a good time with the actors. I thought he was a nice guy. He was like a kid in a candy shop. And though he wasn't a great director with actors, he cast it really well. He cast people that he felt he could just let go.'"

"Jim knew exactly what he wanted," Beggs said, "and if he detected that you knew what you were doing, you wouldn't get any problems from him. But what impressed me about him is he seemed omni-talented. He understood cameras, art direction, effects, everything. I witnessed him in action a few times and I was very impressed by him. He'd just appear on the little model set that I was responsible for and I had no problem with him at all. I found him really good."











During the next few days, Cameron and his actors shot scenes of Newt and Ripley in the med lab—and their ensuing battle against the Facehuggers.

“I can’t even describe Sigourney or our relationship,” Henn would say. “She’s all class. She acted like my mother on set, and a lot of the interaction was very natural between the two of us.”

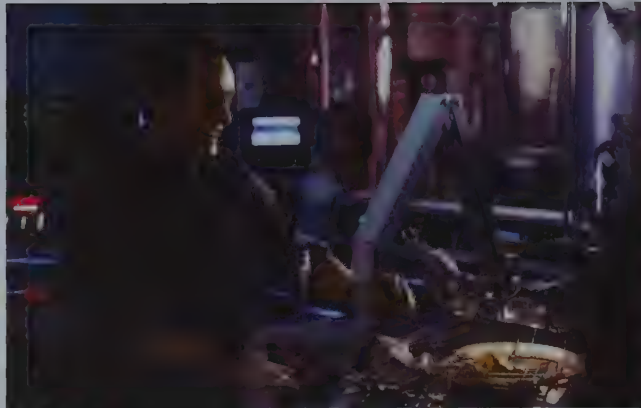
“It was really a big adventure for Carrie,” said Cameron. “There was one day when she was sick and had a fever, and I didn’t want her to work and she was absolutely devastated that we were going to do the scene with a double. She had a fit, so I did one little shot with her so she would feel better.”

To accomplish the director’s list of action shots, about 15 types of Facehuggers had by now been devised and built: jumping Facehuggers; one with magnetized legs to hold onto a wall; a grabbing Facehugger to attack Ripley, with articulated double-jointed ‘fingers,’ a ‘tongue,’ and a tail that could whip around and tighten (which required nine operators; this one had been begun by Lance Anderson in the States and completed in England by Steve Norrington and others); others that could be yanked around on fishing line; and shootable Facehuggers with free-moving legs that could claw when flown across the room.

“All of these Facehuggers end up looking like one very active little Facehugger,” Winston summed up. “Sculpturally, I think ours was a little more organic than the first one, although the first one was brilliant. The finger appendages on ours are a little more like fingers than on the original. We made the knuckles a little more knuckle-like, and on the tips of the fingers we actually put nails. Also, we lengthened the tail by about six inches so we could do more work with it, wrapping it around necks and getting a whip-like action out of it.”

“I called them rubber-chicken Facehuggers,” Cameron said of the floppy ones. “I never thought our Facehugger looked as good as the one in the first film, to be perfectly honest. So this is a bunch of grown people fighting rubber chickens. But, of course, it’s the actors who make the effects real in our minds.”

When the tail wrapped around Ripley, it was shot backward, then reversed (as they’d done for the first film). A sequence in which a Facehugger



runs, jumps on a table leg, then off the table at the camera was divided into three shots: the running Facehugger via a pulley system; a reverse shot to make it seem like it had jumped onto the table leg; and a quick shot of the Facehugger pulled by a string toward camera.

To cover up the various tricks, Cameron could use the fire sprinklers’ rain, though that caused its own complications. “It was freaking cold,” Goldstein said. “The water was not warm! And any time you’re shooting a scene where there’s a big effect, and especially if you’re all wet, you don’t want to fuck it up, miss your mark, because to have to do it again the whole thing has to be dried off.”

“We’d be wondering what sort of fancy doodad to come up with for a particular shot,” Winston recalled, “and Jim would say, ‘Let’s just make up a bunch of dummies—we’ll throw them and blow them up.’ And for quick cuts that worked.”

For Biehn, seeing one of the Facehuggers scurrying toward a gurney was “frightening.”

“The scene was very detailed, and was a little daunting,” Henn would say. “There were a lot of different elements to remember, but I felt relieved that Bill was filming [part of] the scene with me. He knew I was a little nervous of everything, so he quietly told me not to worry, that he would help me. He kept saying, ‘Don’t worry, Newt—Hudson to the rescue.’”

SHAKE, RATTLE, AND BLOOD

SHOOT DAYS 36 to 48, Friday, November 15 to Monday, December 2, 1985

LOCATION: Pinewood, Stages ‘E,’ ‘F,’ ‘L,’ and ‘D’

INT. MED LAB ANNEX: sc. 158 (Newt leads them to air vent)

INT. AIR DUCT: sc. 160 (Death of Vasquez and Gorman)

INT. SERVICE WAY DAY: sc. 161 (Newt falls into a duct; Ripley distraught)

INT./EXT. APC: sc. 40 (getting into dropship; Hudson speech)

INT. APC: scs. 44 (Apone, Ripley close eyes during descent); 47 (Hicks sleeps; Gorman confesses only second combat drop); 50 and 52 (Gorman



FAR LEFT: Weaver and Paxton presumably drink something hot between takes in the med lab where they were soaked by fire sprinklers during their battle with the Facehuggers.

LEFT: Between takes, Henriksen laughing, and a partially dissected Facehugger.

ABOVE: A continuity Polaroid of Henriksen goofing around.

RIGHT (FROM TOP): Ripley, Hicks, Newt and Vasquez. Often when retreating the monsters, the latter would have to weld a door shut. "I did a lot of welding," Goldstein said. "Welding, welding. Someone said, 'It's not just a job, it's a profession'"; Cameron asked Hurd, who was proficient with firearms, to double for Vasquez in an insert shot of the character's hand firing a small sidearm into the head of an alien she'd pinned to the wall.

at video screens); 56 (Ripley watching, Gorman: "Second team, move inside, use your motion trackers"); 61 (Burke: "Acid for blood"); 63 (Gorman: "The area's secured"); 58 (Burke: "Looks like my room in college"); 80 (over radio, Hudson: "You tell me, man. I only work here."); 82 (Gorman: "Proceed inside"); 84 (Ripley tells Newt to go sit up front); 86 (Ripley warns of rupturing cooling system); 95 (reacting to firefight with aliens); 97 (Ripley takes over APC); 99 (Burke pulls Gorman away from Ripley); 102 (Hicks blasts alien with shotgun); 107 (APC safe, but marines angry)

INT. SERVICE TUNNEL—SUBLEVEL: sc. 118 (testing sentry guns)

INT. LOADING BAY—CARGO LOCK: scs. 36 (Spunkmeyer in powerloader); 33 (Hudson: "Another bug hunt?")

INT. READY ROOM—ARMORY: scs. 37 (fieldstripping light weapons; Vasquez swings smart gun out on a work stand); 39 (marines suit up)

On November 14, production moved from the medical lab and operations sets on Stage 'E' to the interior air duct set on Stage 'F' to shoot Ripley and company's retreat from the alien onslaught. There, Vasquez and Gorman would bond before blowing themselves and several aliens into tiny bits with a grenade. Seconds before this, Vasquez would dispatch one alien—a stuntman in costume, lowered by a harness onto her from above—by pinning it to the wall with her boot and shooting it several times in the head with her service pistol.

Hurd was in the middle of doing paperwork in her office when Cameron came in: "Gale, I need you to do me a big favor." "The favor was to be, in a sense, a 'hand double,'" she said, "where Jenette Goldstein had to fire the gun into the alien. She couldn't get the recoil right." Cameron felt that his wife, having fired many guns at practice ranges, could get it right.

Hurd agreed, was dressed in fatigues and made up. She quickly accomplished her task, noting that, ironically, her willingness to do that sort of "dirty work" gave her more "credibility" among the English crew than anything else she'd done for the film.

"They saw the real Gale," Winston noted.

"The most difficult moment was being in that tube at the end," Goldstein said. "All of the [casings] came out and smacked me in the face, and I had to try not to wince. I had to act like getting hit in the face didn't hurt. I had to get all slimed up... I think Vasquez is just so angry that it has finally gotten her. Rather than being scared, she's pissed off she's about to die."

Circa Monday, November 18, they shot Newt's fall into a chute and the setting up of the sentry guns.

"In the story, somebody has to go off and get the sentry guns from the APC," Sallis said. "And all the sentry guns were big; they were on tripods and they were massive things. So I conjured a pair of boxes for the sentry guns. And they had to have been burnt, so on the backlot the prop boys and I burnt them, singed them, so they looked charred on the outside. Then the boys and I wheeled them in front of Jim on the edge of a set, and he was like, 'What the fuck? They're huge.' And I said, 'Jim, your guns are enormous. The guns fit in these boxes.' And he said, 'Yeah, yeah, yeah, but I think we're going to have to cheat. These boxes are too big.' So I cheated the size of the boxes."

For the chute that Newt slides down, the art department put up a humorous sign that read, "Adults £1. Children 50p." "It was a huge chute about three





LEFT: Vasquez and company attempt to close the APC door on an unwelcome intruder.

OPPOSITE: Cameron demonstrates how he'd like the shotgun used on the alien trying to barge into the APC. (The alien actually being blown away had been filmed earlier at Acton.)

FOLLOWING PAGES: Rehearsing with the powerloader: (left) Weaver; (right) Cameron and perhaps stuntman John Lees in the rig. Lees would be hidden behind Weaver to operate the powerloader's arms and legs.

stories high," Henn recalled. "And sometimes I'd mess up a little bit—so I could come down again." At the bottom was a mat for her to slide onto.

Production then moved again, to Stage 'L', to film scenes taking place in the APC interior. Meanwhile, powerloader rehearsals were scheduled for Stage 'C', with Kash, John Richardson, and John Lees; and the art department continued to re-dress the Acton Lane power plant location for re-shoots, necessary because Biehn was now playing Hicks.

"Rehearsals were something that we mostly did not have on this film," Cameron said, "partially because of the preproduction schedule, but we did it as we went along, of course—rehearsals are very important."

"We had a few days of rehearsals," Richardson told *Cinefex*, "which were used primarily to put the loader through its paces and for me to find out what actions worked best and looked best, and what actions didn't. It also gave the stuntman [John Lees] inside a chance to get the feel of things. Beyond that we didn't do much in the way of rehearsing specific scenes because with Jim we didn't really know what any given shot was going to entail until we got into shooting it."

On Tuesday, Winston's second unit was scheduled to film the sentry guns blasting away at unseen aliens. The main unit was to shoot Hudson's monologue about the marines' weaponry in the APC interior, and on subsequent days the crew's reaction to the dropship's descent from space into the atmosphere and so on.

"God, I stayed up late trying to learn that thing," Paxton said. "Which Jim wanted right because he is a perfectionist."

Earlier that afternoon on Stage 'L', a meeting took place, with Hurd, Cameron, Cracknell, Lamont, Sallis, production manager Hugh Harlow, and a few HODs. "It was around the set, which was a carcass of plywood," Sallis said. "There's no jump seats. There was no paraphernalia, there was no dressing, there was no cockpit, there was no steering wheel, there was fuck all."

All of the set dressing was laid out on trestle tables and in boxes and crates around the set, but the interior was non-existent. Sallis was ready, but hadn't been able to "screw anything onto the walls" because, due to other problems, the construction and paint crews hadn't been able to finish the

APC interior.

"Everybody stood around," Sallis continued. "It simply wasn't ready and it came to, 'So what the fuck should we do?' I put my hand up, and obviously I'd channeled it through Peter, because he was my boss, but I said, 'If you guys can finish the construction element and the painting in the next couple of hours, I'll stay on all night with a crew and get I'll get it done.' Everybody thought I was nuts, and I said, 'I'm not. I will dress the set; we know where the jump seats are going. All this clutter surrounding us is supposed to be in there, and I know pretty much where everything is supposed to go. I need a team: four prop men, one chippie, and an electrician,' which was approved.

"So we worked through the night. And Peter, who lived nearby, he came at about one in the morning with some soup and biscuits. We took a quick break, but we were still screwing things down when Jim and Derek and Adrian and everybody came on the set in the morning. Jim walked straight in and he was happy, and so was Gale—because there was a set that they could shoot."

After filming Hudson's speech, Cameron set up the next day to film the descent. To make it look like the cabin was shaking, director and crew reverted to old tricks: They shook the camera (Cameron sometimes whacked it) on the inside, while several stagehands shook the set from the outside.

"The thing about Jim is he has a photographic memory," Paxton said. "So three months later we're doing the scene and he says, 'What was that line—*We're on an express elevator to hell?*—yeah, let's put that in here."

Paxton went so 'large' for his character in this scene that Scott and Ross thought he was hamming it up too much. "Bill did try to improvise a lot," Rolston recalled. "And Jim would say, 'Bill, Bill, don't say that, don't say that.' Occasionally, Bill would come out with a real gem and Jim would say, 'Perfect, I love it.' But quite often, Jim was, 'Say that but don't say that.'"

That day, what happened next differs depending on who's telling the story, but it would seem that one or two incidents took place.

"They kept shaking the set and I had this line," Paxton said. "At that moment, the whole roof collapsed on us. On that occasion, the worst to happen to anyone was a sprained back."









But Cameron recalled it differently: “When Bill said they’re on an express elevator to hell, the grips shook the set and that’s when the ceiling collapsed—and split open my scalp, so I’ll always remember that line.”

Most of those involved remember the roof collapsing only once. Al Matthews remembers a light smashing into where he’d been sitting a moment before. Others recall a light grazing Weaver and injuring William Hope. Most everyone said that if someone had been hit on the head, they could’ve been killed.

Paxton would recall a second accident that caused Cameron’s injury. “We had these kind of rollercoaster bars that come down to strap us in there,” he recalled. “Jim was sitting where Sigourney was going to be sitting in about an hour. They were blocking out part of the action when the bar just slipped straight down and hit Jim right on the head, cutting him. He was bleeding and had to have some stitches. I saw blood spurting out. It was a good thing it hit Jim and not her.” (He would later joke with the other actors that the crew did it on purpose.)

“The grips would shake that thing to death,” Rolston said. “It was part of the ceiling that dropped in and narrowly missed Bill. It did nick Jim, and Al Matthews launched into military action mode and he was ordering people out of the APC and trying to hold up this other piece of the ceiling. As soon as Al started barking orders, we were real marines: We followed his orders, and got each other out.”

“Any number of things could have happened after I left the set,” said Sallis, who didn’t hear about the roof collapsing until decades later. “I probably went to bed by nine in the morning or thereabouts. My job is done. I delivered the set overnight. If I was responsible, truly, I would have known that day. Gale is a very, very tough lady; she or Hugh Harlow or Derek would have given me a bollocking if I was responsible. But shaking the shit out of a piece of plywood with a lot of metal stuff attached to it overnight was an accident waiting to happen, if you like.”

Shooting out of continuity (as required), Cameron next filmed the



marines’ entry into the APC on November 21. “We were trying to get my whole squad into the APC as quickly as possible,” Matthews would say. “Man, we must have done ten takes. On the very last take, we got it right. Once we were all in, in a ‘military manner,’ we had the take in the can—suddenly the door opened. I shouted, ‘What the fuck is going on?’ Yes, I was tired and I knew the opening of the door would screw the sound, and we would have to go again.

“I turned toward the door—and there was Miss Weaver holding the biggest birthday cake I had ever seen in my life and wearing the warmest smile ever! The whole cast and crew knew it was my birthday and they were all in on it. I was so embarrassed I broke down and cried. There was Sergeant Apone, bawling like a baby. At the best of times I don’t like surprises. You can call it a ‘Nam thing.’”

Main unit then jumped forward in the story to the moment in which Hicks rams a gun into an obstreperous alien’s mouth (parts of which had already been filmed by Winston’s second unit). “Hicks is just a steady hand,” said Biehn, whose character sleeps through the dropship’s descent. “He’s the calming effect on the group. There are many different clashing personalities here, and Hicks is a guy who has been through it a few times. He has been in a few firefights and stomped a few bugs. He has seen a good deal, takes things very slowly, and is the one that you can always count on in a bad situation. He won’t lose his head.”

Weaver, according to an eyewitness report, spent that whole afternoon in the APC being filmed “next to a creature that was spewing out its guts onto her T-shirt” (large sections of aliens were lying about, out of camera range). “I’d forgotten what it was like to work with all these special effects,” Weaver told the journalist. “They’re interesting, and I like them—maybe because I cut my teeth on them—but the restrictions on a film like this are very frustrating. I forgot how often it’s the machinery that gets the focus. I work every day, and every night I rush home and prepare for the next day. Because of all the effects, we don’t get much time for rehearsal. So we have to be very well prepared.”

FAR LEFT: One of the sentry guns put in place by the marines to mow down invading aliens. The sentry guns had real machine guns on top that could fire 10 rounds per second, 600 rounds a minute (wooden blanks). To simulate their automation, crew rigged hydraulic tripods that could swivel and turn via remote control.

LEFT AND OPPOSITE: More shots of scenes and moments in the APC interior. The interior, as mentioned, was a cheat because it was much larger than its exterior—large enough to house a bank of video screens necessary for several scenes in which Gorman watches playback of “AP Station and Cocoon chamber scenes... ground plan, video monitors, and Bio Monitor Readouts Flatten,” and so on. Insert POV shots of these screens were filmed by Winston’s second unit after first unit wrapped the set. “The scene where Ripley takes over the control of the APC,” Cameron said, “and drives it through the whole structure, that was heavily storyboarded because we were intercutting the full-size action I was shooting with miniatures; they had to get the screen direction, the size of the frame, all of that.”

FAR RIGHT: While shooting the marines' entrance into the APC, the cast surprised Al Matthews with a birthday cake.



CASUALTY

While Cameron and the crew had declared a truce, the Skotaks were experiencing aggravated issues. “I was highly aware of the tension,” Begg said. “Because I was employed by the Americans (LA Effects, through the Skotaks), I was on the American side. So it was really weird. There was a little bit of heat that came at me meant for them. It was very political, very difficult. Stupidly so, actually. The Skotaks had double pressure, or triple really. They had pressure mainly from Jim, obviously. That’s number one. Number two, they had aggro with LA Effects. Then there was the third bit of aggro, which was the British unions making the whole procedure very difficult.”

Indeed, when Larry Benson of LAE had elected to stay in the States, he’d left his wife, Suzanne, in charge and it wasn’t going well. “She did not have the ability to run a department like that,” McClung said. “She would come in late, leave early, and then fly to Paris on the weekends, while we were working long hours and many Saturdays, very often seven days a week, including evenings. So Robert had all of the responsibility, but no financial authority to make it work. We were also trying new variations on some of their specialized techniques—the ones that had convinced Jim and Fox to hire them for the job in the first place (and which had allowed them to come work in England). Some of these techniques were odd and out of the ordinary. So if Robert’s ideas created friction and if a few of the ‘traditional’ craftsmen had trouble with all this, Suzanne would get on his case, or send out a memo chastising him—that went to the entire production. We knew Jim was going to be demanding. That was a given. The thing we didn’t expect was the difficulties of working in the British film system, which, at Pinewood, was heavily unionized and departmentalized and took some getting used to—but on top of it, to have the company we were working for be difficult? That didn’t help matters. It just made everything harder and more stressful.”

“Call Sheets would go out two days ahead with various notes to departments as to what was going to be needed—‘This is what’s going to be

set up here on this part of the stage, this is going to be a beam-splitter shot, this a forced perspective with a projection, etc.’” Robert Skotak said. “The burden of keeping all this organized and keeping it all together was on us and our production manager, Paul Tivers, who also wasn’t familiar with some of these ideas and ‘blurred-roles’ working methods. Larry Benson wasn’t there all that much, and Suzanne didn’t have any background in effects. That was not her thing.”

Not long before Thanksgiving, temperatures dropped drastically. In the 700-year-old manor house where the Skotaks, McClung, and the Bensons were staying, the secondary kitchen they used for meals was freezing in the mornings. “It was very cold in the house, so a few times we had to turn on the electric kitchen stove ‘burners’ to help heat the room a little bit for our morning preparations,” Dennis Skotak said.

“Bob would go down and turn on one or two of the burners to at least warm up the kitchen a bit,” McClung recalled, “then go back upstairs to our rooms for four or five minutes while we got ready. Suzanne found out about it—I think the housekeeper may’ve seen the stove being on—and suddenly there was a memo from Suzanne about our living circumstances: ‘You could’ve burned the house down. Oh, the entire neighborhood is going to be upset with us. And if you can’t toe the line, you’ll have to find your own living accommodations.’”

“We’ve got enough problems without having to be scolded like children to not leave the burner on,” Dennis said. “We don’t need to be told that. We weren’t using the burners that way by accident. It was to solve a very difficult and unpleasant situation. It was much ado about nothing, really. These memos were a hindrance to us, and an embarrassment that undermined our credibility with our crews—‘Do this, don’t do that’—down to how we should use electricity in the house? What are you trying to do to us here?”

“That was the last straw,” McClung said. “It’s hard enough doing this work, we’re busting our asses—so I went into Suzanne’s office and I blew my

(continued on page 182)



LOCATION: Stages 'K', 'G', and 'M'

EXT. COLONY: scs. Mist rolls in along Main Street; night as shutters close; Apone's POV of deserted colony.

EXT. A.P. STATION/LANDSCAPE: Electrical activity; Ripley watches A.P. station burning; sunset effect through clouds; VistaVision plate for live action B.P.

EXT. APC: scs. Wide, high-angle driving toward base of AP station

EXT. LANDSCAPE/COLONY COMPLEX: Test, camera follows APC from landing field to Blast Wall gate)

EXT. LANDSCAPE: Dropship crash

GENERAL EQUIPMENT: mini Mitchell geared head; low rocker pan and tilt; bazooka/sliding tongue fluid seven head/Movieola dolly; flying rig; stepper-controlled track and control unit; hot head; motor unit for dolly; python arm; VistaVision camera.

Note: Not all FX shots are listed.

By November 11, effects cameraman Les Dear had started and the model shop was more or less finished building the salvage ship and the uplink tower. But neither the model shop nor the creature area were hospitable as the seasons changed.

"It was just miserably cold in that shed," said Lindsay MacGowan, an English creature-effects supervisor hired by Winston. "We had these big gas jet heaters and we'd all huddle around them. Every once in a while the pilot would go out and gas would fill the air, so we'd have to run around and turn off the gas before we all passed out. But it was great fun, even with the bitter cold and the leaking gas."

"We were working in parkas, and everybody had a gas heater near their station," said Mahan. "I just remember the smell."

"That winter, gloom and doom and the cold set in," said Rosengrant.

"They had these big gas blowers," Begg said. "Not dissimilar to the burners that you see in a hot air balloon, blowing hot air into this environment, and it was fucking awful. It was damp and very cold and smelly."

"It was an open space covered over with plastic," Robert Skotak said. "Propane heaters were brought in to try to heat the area up, but these guys, their fingers are getting numb. All of us were fighting this incredible cold."

On November 13, Cameron viewed rushes of the APC driving through the Acheron landscape and requested "a faster speed and less wobble" on the vehicle.

The next day, the effects team had problems with an automatic 'rewind' on the VistaVision camera on Stage 'G.' They switched to manual rewinds for safety.

"We were all invited to see the effects rushes in the theater," John Lee said. "Bob and Dennis, they'd have to re-shoot stuff because it wasn't exactly as Jim had requested on the storyboard. In fact, we all thought that the film wouldn't work because we could not understand how it was possible to mix aliens with U.S. Marines. We couldn't see it. Also, the interior sets had a very



military feel to them. Much less cinematic, but in keeping with the vibe of the film. We just didn't get it."

On November 15, Cameron met with Winston and the Skotaks to discuss the queen and her egg chamber sequence, due to be shot next month.

Five days later, the director reviewed rushes of the dropship crash and requested, among other things, "more speed on the flaming debris" and "greater bounce upon impact."

"It wasn't just a crash," Robert Skotak told *Cinefex*. "The ship had to come veering in at a certain angle, hit the top of a rock, shear off the skids, hit the ground at a specified point and then tumble over the camera, exploding and sending off pieces."

Production effects notes indicate that when the APC was blown up in the test crash, because it weighed so much the explosion took off the main body, but did not flip the vehicle over as planned. A steel support was therefore added to the APC so it could be flipped over manually during the explosion.

On Saturday, November 23, Cameron saw another test and decided that the "delay between the large piece of debris landing and the two explosions was too long" and that there should be more visible damage to the APC. He also requested greater detailing on the AP station model, and remarked later that the scale of the colony complex in relation to the AP station was off; the effects team consequently repositioned the station, radiators, complex, and re-did the dressing, re-lit the stage, and re-photographed a number of shots.

By Monday, November 25, the LAE team had completed 31 shots.

"The atmosphere on the model set was business," Lee said. "Everybody was aware of what needed to be shot that day. The Skotaks were directing the visual effects, Jim wasn't on set for the model unit because he was off shooting live action. *Aliens* had to fit around the other two films, so our stages and workshops were all over the site, which is pretty big. We spent a lot of time walking between workshops and stages as we were dressing the sets."

"We may have had more money than we had on some of the other productions," Dennis Skotak said, "but the fact is that proportional to what

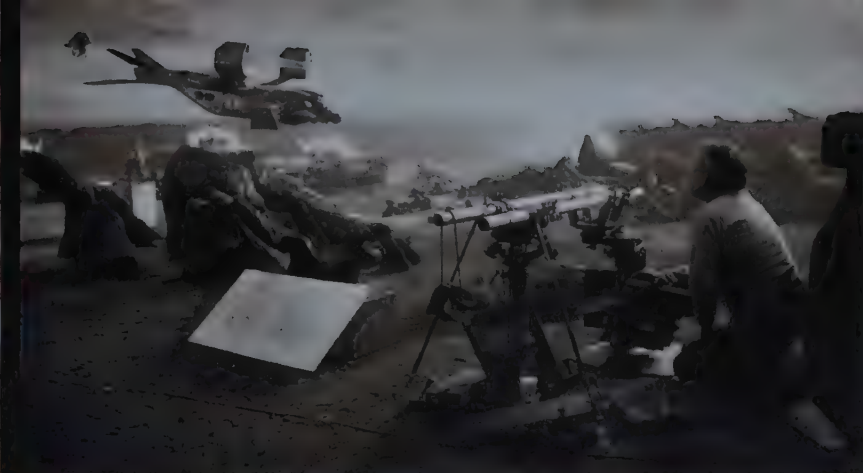


ABOVE: Final frame of the colony seen out of the dropship window. Mark Harris had introduced Steve Begg to the Skotaks when the model team needed to form a smaller unit to do wide shots of the AP station, the smaller-scale colony, and so on. The smaller model of the colony was designed for "flyover shots" shot on videotape, which would be seen out of the dropship cockpit and on monitors. "There is one shot where Ripley is looking at a video monitor onboard the dropship and it is the wing camera," Begg said. "And you see a bucking and weaving point of view from

this camera under the wing as the dropship overflies that miniature colony. There is a starboard camera view where you see a weapons pod visible top of frame. The wing itself was a foam-core or cardboard model with miniature bombs attached to it with gaffer tape. Other shots, seen mainly on the dropship monitors that Ripley is looking at on the approach before landing, were all shot on video, handheld, while I was being pushed around the model in a supermarket trolley. I'm a big guy so it was quite a squeeze."

LEFT, ABOVE: Dennis and Robert Skotak; Dennis is five years older than his brother. "We did this stuff when we were kids," Dennis said. "We used to work on our own movies. We were working on movies before we had money for a camera. We'd just get a cigar box and pretend it was the camera."

OPPOSITE (FROM TOP-LEFT): Model maker Julian Parry working on the dropship (photo courtesy of Parry); filming the dropship; the smaller model of the complete colony; the large-scale colony miniature. Cameron had christened the colony "Hurley's Hope," after one of the original settlers. Population 158.





ABOVE AND LEFT: Three shots of the miniature APC. All shots of the APC with its tires spinning are of the miniature. "When the troopers first land on the planet, it's raining," said miniatures technical supervisor Pat McClung, "which created quite a mess." To match the live action, the miniature-effects crew had to cover the stage floor with plastic, and cover that with a layer of ash-like material, which was then walked down. Crew used pressurized insect sprayers to create a fine mist in front of the camera to evoke light rainfall, and fog on the stage. "Everybody complained about it for months, but we needed it because Jim wanted our miniature APC to kick up all kinds of mud and splatters as it drove by."

OPPOSITE: Main street of the miniature colony with the APC looming in background. Harry Oakes, lighting cameraman for miniatures, had worked on many movies and TV shows, including Gerry Anderson's productions such as *Thunderbirds* (1965-66), which featured many miniatures, "and in some ways there's some similarities in the style of photography," said Dennis Skotak, between those series and the style used in *Aliens*.

FOLLOWING PAGES: Many but not all of the model and miniatures crew, with the Skotaks in front, and (in striped shirt) effects producer Suzanne Benson.

had to be done, there wasn't enough money. If I had been photographing with my crew, I could have it happen really quick. Harry Oakes knew his crew, he had his own electricians and so forth, but in that environment at Pinewood it just cost more, and it shouldn't have."

Skotak would recall that the exchange rate fluctuated from something like \$1.35 for £1 to something like \$1.85 for £1. "So we lost maybe 30 percent of our budget."

After several more crash tests, Cameron told Robert Skotak that the speed as the APC turned over was "too erratic," and gave several notes on how the debris should be handled. Afterward, he had another meeting about the egg chamber with the Skotaks and Stan Winston.

On a Sunday (and other Sundays) the effects team did quick shots of the APC driving around the complex to be used for pacing by the editors working on the assembly cut. "We were trying to get shots out of models that weren't ready to shoot," Robert Skotak said, "but shooting them anyway."

"We really used every trick in the book," Markowitz said. "Because of the extensive cutting over from live-action to effects sequences, many of LAE's shots were extraordinarily long" compared to an average effects shot.

As work progressed and intensified, and the English winter grew bleaker, colder, rainier, and more hostile, the effects team would remember feeling like they were inhabiting the same world as the one on Acheron. To fortify themselves, crew drank a lot of coffee and ate a lot of chocolate, and relations between the Americans and the Brits doing model and creature effects solidified into more of a camaraderie.

A "really nice" dining room was attached to Pinewood's manor house, with a bar. "One evening," McClung recalled, "I went and bought all the model-makers a round of beer. All of a sudden I was their best buddy. When I got back the next day, I said to Rob and Dennis, 'Tonight, you have to go and buy everybody a round of beers!' 'Why?' I said, 'They'll love you. They'll love you after you do that!' It was a friendship thing, the brotherhood of beer."

The Skotaks presumably did so. Robert also informed his crew that they could attend the morning's dailies (on their own time) and told them that if they had an idea, he'd listen to it. "The guys really appreciated being part of the equation," McClung added. "They were allowed to be part of the whole process where I think in previous movies they were cogs, workers."









stack at her. Her son was there, Steve, and he said, 'You better be in my office'—and the guy didn't realize how close he came to getting his ass knocked to the ground. I had to leave and walk away."

"Now granted this is a business," Dennis said, "and the whole purpose of business is to make money, but you *also* need to have some passion about what you're doing. We were trying to do both, using every trick in the book—and some new 'crazy' ones—to keep costs down and maintain quality and help build confidence that this could all work out for everyone in the end. The potential was there for a great film. We really wanted this to work for everyone's sake, but... it was really frustrating."

"After that," McClung said, "LAE came to me and said, 'We don't have any more money in the budget for you. You'll have to go home. I said, 'Okay, I'll work for free,' because I wasn't going to leave Bob and Denny. But a little while later, they said, 'You have to go because of insurance.' They were trying to get rid of me. I felt really bad about leaving them, because it was so emotionally difficult. It was getting better with the British guys working with us. They'd realized we were pretty good guys, but the other problems were grinding us into the ground."

With the effects unit limping toward the end of November/early December, the main unit were shooting scenes in the *Sulaco's* armory and, on the largest interior set, its cargo bay and loading dock on Stage 'D'. (In preproduction, two scenes aboard the *Sulaco* had been omitted: scene 28, in which the camera would have shown the mess area before the marines are awakened from hypersleep; and scene 35, where Bishop would have been shown on the bridge during practice maneuver operations.)

The hangar set with the full-sized dropship was first filmed empty; that

footage would be combined later with footage of the second dropship, a model on a miniature set. The live-action set was so big that Mark Harris had rented a cherry picker to dress it.

Cameron shot Kash as Spunkmeyer in the nearly 600 lb powerloader. The loader had wound up looking like an anthropomorphized forklift with an open roll cage in which the actor stood erect. Joystick controls operated two 8 ft-long lifting arms; servo mechanisms powered its hydraulic legs; but most of its power came from Lees, the 270 lb muscular stuntman, hidden behind Kash. Depending on the shot, either a crane or an overhead track rig kept the powerloader standing.

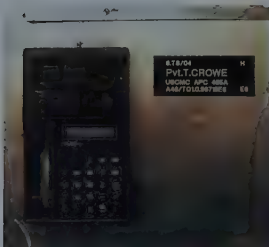
"The operation of the claws proved to be tricky," Richardson said. "Even though they were built out of fairly lightweight materials, they were still pretty heavy because they were so large. Basically, we were worried about breaking the claws themselves or whatever it was they were picking up or even the arm of the machine. We found that without wires or other assistance, the claws could lift about 10 to 15 pounds all by themselves. Hanging it on wires from above turned out to be the most successful because it gave the thing more freedom of movement."

"There was this northern English, very large stuntman strapped in behind me on the loader," Kash said in 2012. "It felt like crap. I thought it sucked and it was going to be awful. I was just getting jolted around like a bad Disneyland ride. There were close-ups of me supposedly loading, and that was terrifying because I didn't know how to improvise any of that crap. I was shitting that, because it was the ultimate sci-fi movie, and this guy's giving me dirty English jokes in my ear, just walking this stupid thing around on his legs."

Another visiting journalist on set found Weaver "begrimed with dirt, her

ABOVE: Cameron shot the briefing of the marines and other sequences on the cargo hold set. The largest interior set, the cargo hold was constructed on Stage "D." "Doing this picture was like a huge jigsaw," production designer Lamont said. "Our main problem was size. It was a matter of putting a pint pot into a half-pint jug. For one thing, we needed a stage with a tank, both for the cargo lock and for the scenes where Newt is scrambling around under the floor. This posed difficulties because the tanks on the various stages at Pinewood are in different places. We spent a whole morning just moving a model around trying to come up with an admirable compromise for how we could fit it all in. Finally we arrived at a solution where we had an 8-ft pit for the start of the cargo lock and another area where Newt could scramble around under the grills, and yet we still had enough room to maneuver our 30-ton APC without problems." Ultimately, only the front third of the cargo bay fit on

(continued in margin opposite)



ABOVE: In the locker room aboard the *Sulaco*, each marine had his or her own keypad protected locker. This one is for "Pvt. T. Crowe, USMC APC 405A."

RIGHT: Cameron filming the marines in the locker and weapons room.



the largest stage available, most of which was taken up by the full-sized dropship. Lamont's construction crew put up a wood structure before an outside contractor clad the ship in custom-made aluminum paneling and "pop-riveted the whole thing together." The interior and cockpit were also constructed, as was the ramp. To dress the ship, they also used aircraft parts from scrapyards: Its legs were cannibalized from a retired Royal Air Force Vulcan Bomber; its skids were flare trays from a Canberra bomber.

costume torn, sitting in the shadow of the massive dropship. It's clear that for the actress, *Aliens* is as exhaustingly challenging a movie as *Alien*."

"Her [Ripley's] situation in the beginning challenged me," Weaver told the reporter. "I tried to imagine and comprehend something like that, coming back to a whole different world, and yet haunted by the other one. And Ripley's personal situation is so bleak. I know I'm playing the same character, but I feel she has [been] changed so utterly by what happens to her early in *Aliens* [referring to her lost daughter]—she's not the earnest young ensign she was when she went into space the first time."

Not long afterward, Cameron shot the briefing scene in which Gorman and Ripley address the outspoken, disrespectful marines.

"We were chilling and relaxing, a little bit merry in Al Matthews' dressing room," William Hope would recall. "Then suddenly this voice [boomed out], 'Okay, everybody back on set, we're doing scenes'—me addressing the troops. We came down the stairs onto this massive set. All of us were pretty smashed, really, and we started to rehearse. And they were all staring at me. But you don't fool around with Jim, because time is money and he was seriously focused. We got through the scene and luckily we didn't do my close-ups till the next day."

"It's impossible not to go through a kind of power hierarchy in terms of who gets their close-ups when," Cameron said. "Figuring out the actor dynamics was tricky because they're all going to peak at different moments. Fortunately, Sigourney liked to go last. She liked to build before the camera really got in tight on her."

"Again, I actually had a hard time making [scenes like the briefing] less funny, so it didn't play like a comedy. There's the constant wisecracking,

defying authority, complaining about the job with military characters. But hopefully audiences will respond because if they're not sympathetic with the characters, they can't be scared. And the quickest way to make the characters sympathetic is by being funny."

After the marines' off-color jokes, Ripley tries to convey to them what they'll be facing. "Ripley really feels like an alien in that group, no pun intended," Weaver said on set. "She's from another time, a different background, and the marines are very skeptical about what her contribution might be. That makes Ripley nervous because they have no idea of what they're getting into. They believe that they have this operation totally under control, no sweat."

The director then moved the main unit and his actors into the ship's armory, where his marines ready their weapons and suit up for their mission. Here, too, Cameron had encouraged his actors to personalize their lockers. "There's a photo of a really young girl who was Sandinista," Goldstein said, "and her hair is cut really short and she has her cross in her mouth. I found it in a magazine. Another great picture was from a Richard Avedon book of this carny guy. He's got this snake. I imagined that he was my brother."

Weaver happened to walk by the lockers one day and saw Biehn sleeping. "There's my leading man," she quipped on set. "But there's a very special relationship between Ripley and Hicks—there's just a suggestion of an attraction and a bond. Jim sets up everybody well, and then gives each one their moment, even the ones who die early. I think the audience will get a sense of who you're losing—and that's important because there are so many."

The reporter asked a visibly tired Cameron what his next film might be. "One thing I've decided," he said, "is that the next film is not going to be about guns, cars or space. These two films, *Aliens* and *Terminator*, have both



been very technical enterprises, and the technical often takes away from what you can do performance-wise because of the exigencies of smoke, wind, blue-screen, front projection, back projection, hanging miniatures, and you name it. Very likely, the next film will be much more an imploded actors' writer's film, very close to the inner workings of what the characters are about. I've got some ideas... One is a devilishly clever way of doing a very intriguing near-future story with no special effects whatsoever, but it could be quite riveting. I might do that one. Another one is a very rollicking adventure of the Scarlet Pimpernel, believe it or not, with a twist. Anyway, entertainment is what it's about."



ABOVE AND LEFT: Cameron filming the marines in the locker room with 1st AD Cracknell.

W
CYCLICAL TIME

BELOW: Spunkmeyer (Daniel Kash) in the powerloader. Kash was already a veteran stage actor when he won the part of Private Spunkmeyer, dropship crew chief.

FOLLOWING PAGES: Weaver addresses the marines, trying to drive home the point that their mission will not be routine.

To operate the powerloader's arms, Richardson and his team devised high-powered radio-control servos, rewired to work on a direct route or through a radio transmitter. Clasp mechanisms were run manually using Bowden cables. Some of the hydraulic rams on the backside of the loader were practical, some were dummies, and others disguised as counterweights. To keep the loader standing, apart from wires, the effects team built a crane arm, which they mounted on a small electric dolly to track back and forth; a pivot on the end of the crane jib enabled the loader to turn. The support wires were two quarter-inch steel cables attached above to something like girders or the crane arm (the cables were usually out of frame or disguised as heavy-duty aerials). For low angles they used a rigid pole arm mounted from below to support the powerloader.

Three effects crew manned the back end of the crane jib for stability;

another controlled the pivot; one or two more operated the shovel and side-to-side movement of the 'wrists'; two others opened and closed the claws—and me invariably standing somewhere in the middle, screaming my head off at all of them," Richardson added. "On occasion, we also had people assisting with the feet. So there was a lot of coordination involved."

"The powerloader was yellow and black, and it was probably the first thing I noticed," said Sallis. "John Richardson built it, and John invited me at the right time to come in and decorate it. And by then I had all my boxes of little bits of stuff to stick on, handles and knobs and dials and switches, all the sort of silly nonsense that just brought it to life. But as I was doing so, I thought, *What's this called?*"

Because the color scheme was reminiscent of Caterpillar equipment, Sallis wrote to Caterpillar Inc., which had an office in Slough, and explained to its manager what they were doing. "I said, 'This is going to look phenomenal. This is going to look like a machine from the future, but a very believable one, and I wonder whether you'd like to give it your name?' And I got a letter back saying yes."







0-6227

STACK



CHAPTER 07



ADIOS, LOCO

DECEMBER 1985 TO JANUARY 1986



1992





SHOOT DAYS 49 to 56, Tuesday, December 3 to Wednesday, December 11, 1985

LOCATION: Acton Lane Power Station

INT. CATACOMBS: scs. 176 (Ripley and Newt run from egg chamber); 172 (Ripley drops flare, finds Burke); 174 (Ripley hears Newt screaming and runs)

INT. EGG CHAMBER DAY: scs. 173 (Newt sees Facehugger, screams); 175 (Ripley incinerates Facehugger, drills alien; confronts queen and incinerates eggs)

INT. ALIEN STRUCTURE (RE-TAKES): sc. parts, 83, 97, 101, 85, 87, 94 (with Biehn as Hicks)

INT. FREIGHT ELEVATOR: sc. 170 (elevator descends; Ripley dons a battle harness; checks her weapons)

INT. CORRIDOR: sc. 171 (Ripley moves from lift, enters maze)

INT. CATACOMBS—CORRIDOR: scs. 178-179 (Ripley runs out of ammo; realizes queen is following them)

2ND UNIT

INT. LOADING BAY—CARGO LOCK: scs. 36 (Spunkmeyer in powerloader); 39 (hands on guns, stripping weapons)

By late 1985, the industry was talking about Cameron's sequel: "The studio loved the dailies," wrote the *L.A. Times*, "and the buzz began to leak out: *Aliens* just might be the sleeper hit of the summer."

"Everyone seemed to think the dailies were sensational," wrote the *Hollywood Reporter*.

No doubt Ridley Scott was aware of the buzz, and he bumped into Cameron on the Pinewood lot. "It wasn't a meeting," Cameron said. "I was coming out of dailies, and he was going in, and we spoke for about ten minutes. We didn't really talk about *Aliens* at all; he didn't seem particularly curious about it, other than the fact that it was being done. We just spoke in general terms about shooting in England. It was very polite, there was no depth to it. Basically, it was like, 'Hello, pleased to meet you.'"

Both directors were busy, Scott promoting *Legend* while prepping other projects, and Cameron moving his crew back to Acton to film Newt's rescue and re-shoots with Biehn instead of Remar as Hicks, from December 3 to 10.

On her way to find Newt, Ripley encounters Burke in his own cocoon. "Paul was so good in this," Winston said. "You so wanted his character to get killed."



PREVIOUS PAGES: Cameron and Weaver preparing for a shot with a cocooned Reiser (Burke).

LEFT: Cameron and Weaver discussing perhaps Ripley's descent in an elevator to search for Newt in the aliens' lair. In the actual elevator going down (and up), the elevator never moved; the illusion of movement was created via a rear-projected image of floors scrolling by in the background (footage filmed by Robert Skotak and Pat McClung).

"I love that in a villain," Hurd agreed.

Ripley obliges the corporate peon by handing him a grenade. Moments later, she hears him blow up. When Ripley finds the child's locator on the ground, but not Newt, it seems all is lost—until she hears a shriek. Newt, cocooned, has spotted a Facehugger coming toward her. For that moment Cameron asked Henn to let out a good scream. "She screamed so loud and so well everybody was surprised," he said. "Carrie could shatter glass."

"The cocoon part was probably one of the most tedious parts of filming," said Henn, who was covered with slime for the time it took to film. She had to crawl through a hole and sit on a stool, and described the ordeal as "horrible. Jim told me, 'Do not move. We can only pull it apart once.' I didn't get scared of all the other stuff, but that I was scared of."

"I personally installed Carrie in her cocoon," Cameron said decades later, "because I wanted to make sure it was done in a way that wouldn't hurt her. So I'm smearing this goop all over her and she's had to stay still for about 20 minutes, and she looks up to me and says very quietly, with a slight English accent: 'It should be illegal for you to do this to little kids.' [laughs] She was winding me up; she wasn't serious."

Weaver then had to rip away the cocoon webs, made of fiberglass, which Henn said ripped her hands and made them bleed.



ABOVE: Winston puts the necessary materials on Carrie Henn to create a life-mask of her face and upper torso. His crew would then create a life-like, lightweight dummy of the actress for Weaver to carry in many shots.

RIGHT: Henn as Newt in her cocoon—and rescued by Ripley—before stumbling into the queen's egg chamber.

FOLLOWING PAGES: Crewmembers and Winston work on the queen's live-action head, prepping for a shot; Ripley, Newt, and the queen in the egg chamber. Made as a hollow fiberglass shell, the eggs had hot-glue veining that looked like oozing mucus, complemented by a leathery brown paint finish. Viewed from the top, each had an X-shape opening from which a Facehugger might emerge. Winston's crew (mainly Shane Mahan) devised a new way of doing the queen's teeth out of a translucent material, instead of metal as used in the first film.



"When we were done for the day," Henn said, "I tried to wash all the slime out of my hair in the trailer, but couldn't get it all out. We got to the usual hotel, our Holiday Inn, and there was some big, fancy ball on because it was around Christmas time. We got into the elevator, me still in full costume, and these people in their suits and gowns got in after us. They looked at me with all this slime in my hair and scooted away to the other side! I was so embarrassed."

On following days, Cameron filmed Ripley carrying Newt. When explosions force her to take another route, she winds up in the egg chamber facing the alien queen. At Acton, Cameron didn't use much of the full-sized queen; only a couple of shots from above and behind the queen's full-sized head looking down at Ripley and Newt. Most of the queen's footage was slated for later and would use either the miniature queen and/or rear projection.



"It's the largest effects film I've ever been involved with," Winston said. "I can't think of any one, historically, that has its scope, with a completely articulated moving, screaming, killing 14 ft monster and dozens of little screaming, killing monsters—and numerous humans that are killed by these screaming creatures!"

The egg chamber set itself was finished only hours before Cameron shot on it. Due to the "wrong initiative" by plasterers, according to a production note, too much polyurethane had been used in the molding of Winston's full-sized egg sacs. There had been a general concern that the substance, which was in "short supply," would therefore not be enough for their needs (it was).

After a moment's reflection, Ripley decides to annihilate those eggs, the queen's progeny, and to mow down her drones. "I really feel like Ramboлина," Weaver joked in her dressing room at the time. "I've had to go to











OPPOSITE: Cameron directs Weaver as she hunts for Newt in the alien hive.

FOLLOWING PAGES: Ripley unleashes hell on the alien queen's eggs; Weaver and Henn waiting to shoot their scene on the platform where Bishop and the dropship are at first AWOL.

flamethrowing, machine gun, and grenade-launching practice. The only hard part of *Aliens* for me is carrying a gun and shooting. I don't even like shooting the alien. I'm not into bloodlust. Ripley feels the alien is a destructive species, but she's not carrying out a personal vendetta. Unfortunately, she knows the most about them. She's reluctant to take up this battle, and when she does do it, it's for purposes beyond saving her own life."

"I know that Sigourney still has liberal guilt over this whole scene," Cameron laughed. "But this is the cathartic purging of fire. Purging a nightmare by burning it out. This is the only way she's going to have psychological closure, though it probably doesn't have a lot of basis in real human psychology. It feels right, but I think if you were really that traumatized it wouldn't help you that much. But she sure unleashes hell on these guys."

"The grenade launcher was the most fun," Weaver said decades later. "Because it had a big explosion when you used it. But I'm Ripley, I don't believe in any of this martial stuff. I mean, I'll use it, I'll wing it for Newt, but not for myself. It takes forever in the film for me to ignite that instinct. I try to think my way out of tight situations, and it's only when I have to, only when my child is threatened, that I become that fighting person. And vanquishing the alien—it's like killing a dragon." (Weaver's reference to the alien as dragon was a holdover from the first film, during which Scott had often spoken of the alien as a mythical dragon.)

When asked how Henn was handling these emotional, violent scenes, Weaver said at the time: "She's nine, so there's a whole person there and I try to be there for her as a fellow actor—like yesterday, we were shooting and I thought she showed a lot of guts. It's hard to stand next to someone shooting flames. And I felt good because I felt that she trusted me."

Cameron had intended to use the miniature queen for a close-up in which she reveals her second jaw and teeth structure, but days before the live-action shoot he decided to shoot it with the large queen, even though its head was not equipped for that. "Stan pulled me aside," Richard Landon recalled, "and said, 'I need you to set everything else aside and get this thing built.' So he gave me a crew and we built that sliding-face queen. I found different pieces of the queen from test runs and things like that, and I quickly put those together with John and Shane."

To escape the enraged queen and the impending meltdown, Ripley runs through several corridors carrying Newt. To lighten Weaver's load, the art department had fabricated a lightweight dummy of Henn, who had sat for an upper body cast (another person's legs were cast). Still, Weaver found the sequence tough going: It was freezing cold in the abandoned power plant, and everything was watered down and slippery; in some shots she was carrying the real Henn and heavy armament.

"The only risky part for me was at Acton," Weaver told another reporter at the time, "where I was running up and down the stairs with lit flamethrowers. You have to be terribly careful that when you reach for your gun, that you reach for the right button, so you don't accidentally flame somebody."

Indeed, the effects team had trouble with inadvertent fire in a subsequent APC scene. "We were doing the sequence," Paxton said, "where Drake has just been hit and his flamethrower shoots an arc of butane right into the

APC—and it's total anarchy. Part of the set caught on fire, and it was this plastic stuff they use to age material. Now, sometimes, we would improvise. There would be certain dialogue that we would have to say, and the cameras would still be rolling and they would want us to keep playing the moment. So, I heard Jenette next to me go, 'I can't breathe!' and I thought, *Wow, she's really going into the whole smoke thing. That's good!* But the very next second, I took a breath and it was like something had just—*whoosh!*—taken my breath away. We didn't pass out or anything, but they pulled us out of there and gave us oxygen.

"They let us go to lunch, and when we came back it was supposed to be all fixed. On the very next take, the same exact thing happened. This time I really did need a little oxygen. I was hacking hard."

For the third take, to avoid the toxic gas, crew took off the APC's roof so the flames had somewhere to go.

"We went to lunch," Goldstein recalled, "and got back and Jim said we can cut around it and we were back up and going."

"There's so much action involved," Biehn said at the time, "which takes so much time to prepare, the actual scenes between characters where their conflicts are really stretched are few and far between. So it's very easy to fall out of your character, and when the time comes for that characterization to be there you don't have it because you've been sitting around for two and a half days waiting for the aliens to do whatever they are supposed to do."

"I wanted a long shot of the APC driving and, at the last second, I decided to operate the cameras remotely," Cameron said. "And on that take the brakes failed and the APC completely took out the cameras; fortunately there were no camera people behind them." (Another time, the APC driver went into reverse instead of forward, and almost killed a couple of the camera crew.)

"When they had the accident with the real-life APC that crashed and almost took out Jim and the cameramen," Rolston said, "the thing actually hit the side of the power plant. When it hit, little flakes started flaking down from the ceiling. And Sigourney was like a general: 'All right, everyone stop shooting, everybody leave the set, we're getting HAZMAT out here, this could be dangerous.' She stepped forward: 'Jim, I'm not staying here in this.'"

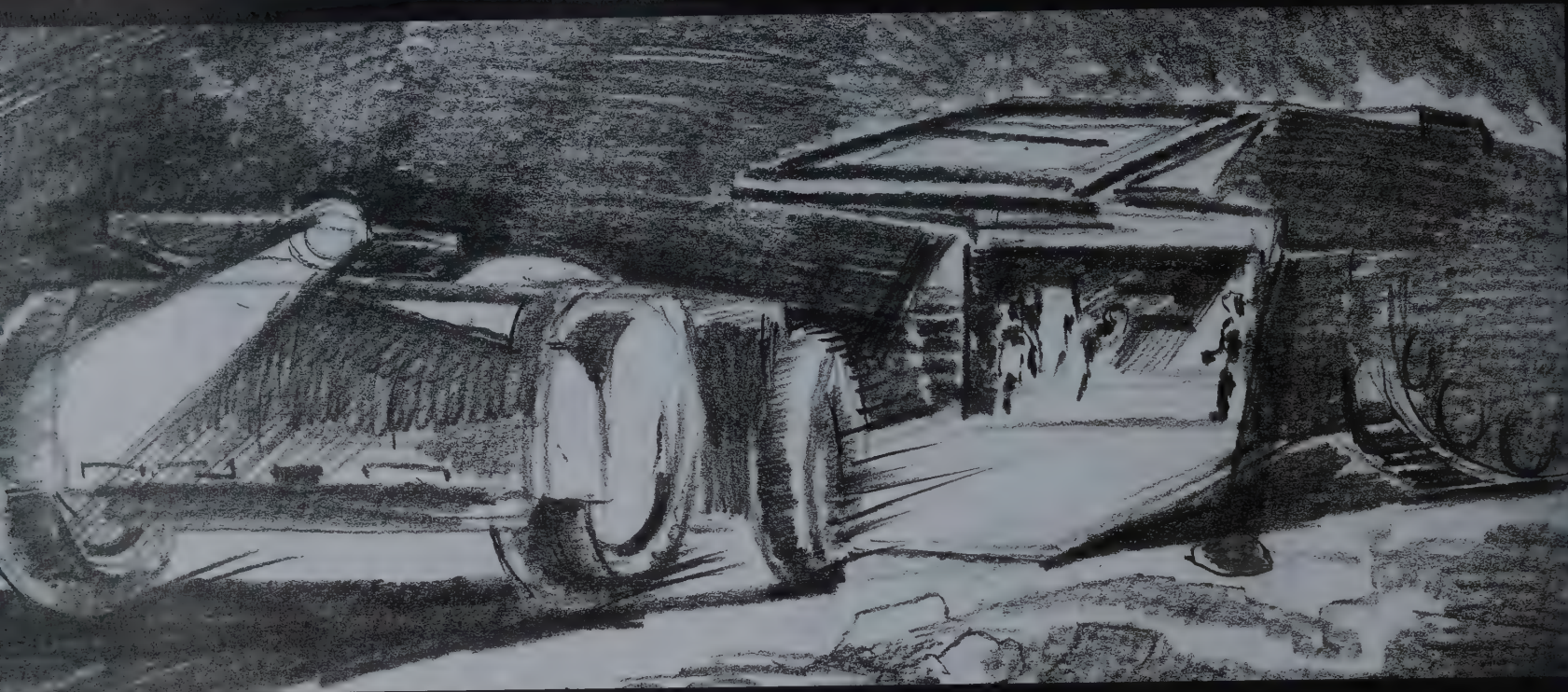
"And they actually got HAZMAT guys out with counters and stuff to say it was in fact asbestos from the power plant. They did a test and said, 'Everything's okay.' But every time Jenette and I would blast off our guns, shit would keep coming down..."

After the APC, Cameron returned on following days to shoot Ripley's escape from the queen. The idea of her climbing the stairs with the queen hot on her trail (scenes 180, 181, 184) was omitted. Instead, both humans and queen would take their respective elevators back up to the landing platform. With Weaver on camera, after she pushes the elevator button, Cameron cued her—"Queen!"—and the actress turned stage left to gaze at what would later be the approaching monster.

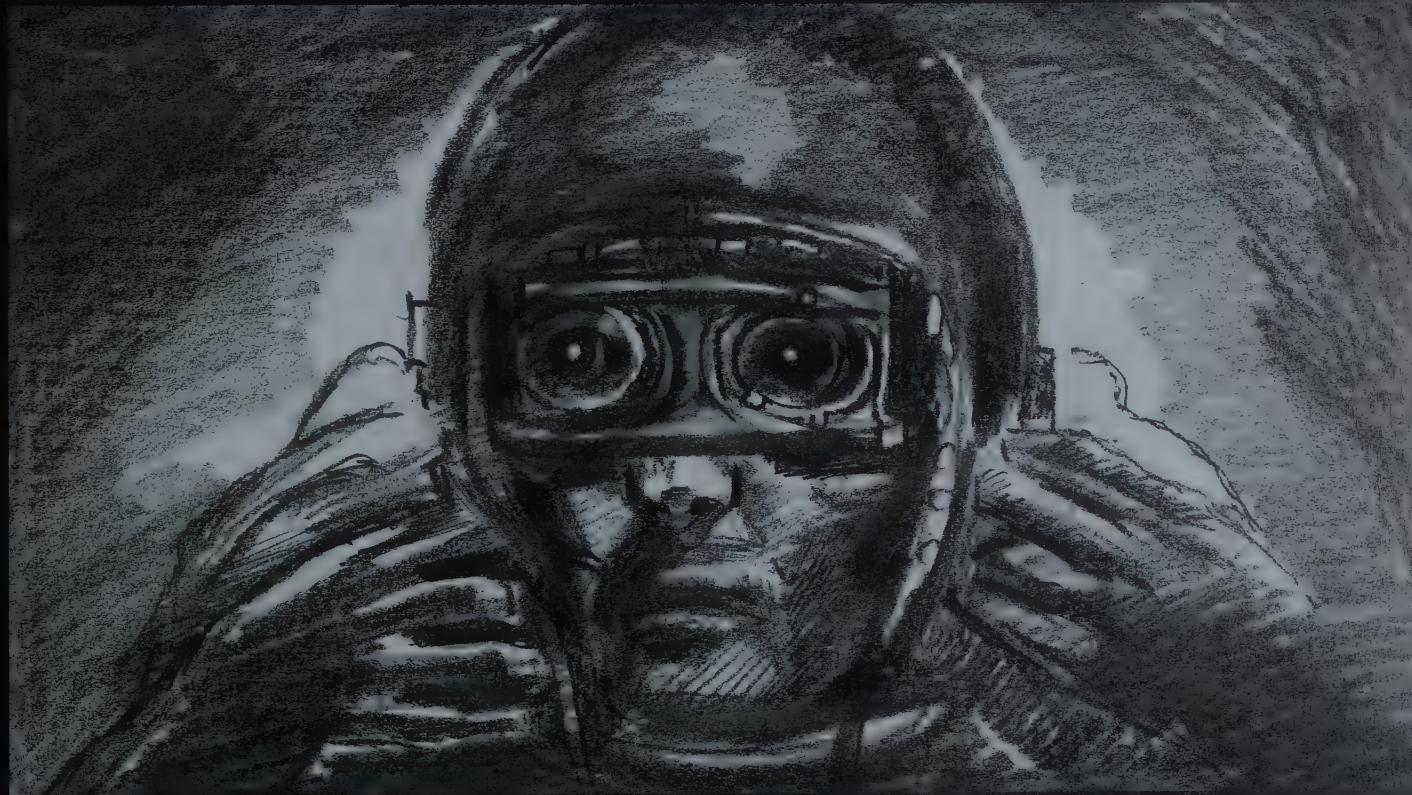
On their last day at Acton, December 10, Winston and his crew prepared the queen for her first full-sized shot: waiting and studying the elevator. "Since today was the first time we put her on film, I'm quite pleased with the way she came out," Winston said for the camera.

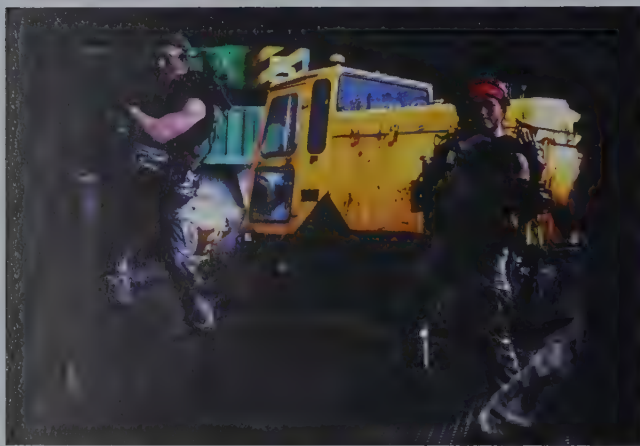






THIS SPREAD: Storyboards of scene 53: "APC hits the ground; troopers hit the ground running, spread out; Apone scans with intensifier; visor lowered; reverse on Apone, scanning through vision intensifier."





BOSOM BADASSES

SHOOT DAYS 57 to 65, Thursday, December 12 to Tuesday, December 24, 1985

LOCATION: Pinewood, Stages 'E' and 'L'

EXT. COLONY: scs. 65 (Frost and Hicks emerge from south lock as APC rolls up); 54 (Hudson runs a bypass); 53 (crew exit APC and run up to north entrance); 166A (Ripley urging wounded Hicks on)

INT. HYPERSLEEP, LOCKER, MESS: scs. 29 (marines awake); 31 (Ferro: "She saw an alien once"); 32 (knife scene); 200 (Newt: "Can we dream?")

INT. CORRIDOR: 166 (completion of scene, Hicks wounded in elevator)

EXT. COLONY—DROPSHIP: sc. 109 (Spunkmeyer re-enters dropship, touches slime)

EXT. COLONY—UPLINK TOWER: sc. 139 (Bishop patches in, punches key "enable")

The *Aliens* production was still considered a small film at the studio and sometimes rivalry between films could be felt, which at least once manifested itself in the plaster shop. "At one critical point around Christmas, the all-important alien queen egg sac was being cast," Robert Skotak says, "and the guys in the plaster shop threw some big plaster molds on top of it, either deliberately or by accident, which threatened to wreck it. We weren't the most popular film on the lot, because some people felt it was too cheap, the director was a 'mad man', and there was some good-old rivalry and resentment at the constant need for frugal approaches."

While Winston and his second unit stayed behind at Acton to shoot inserts with doubles in the egg chamber, Cameron and the main unit moved back to Pinewood and Stage 'E' to shoot exterior scenes on the colony complex set.

"They turned this soundstage that had been one thing," Rolston said, "in four days, into a moonscape with a complete painted scrim, rocks and boulders, and rigged for water coming down."

On set, Cameron directed the marines: "When you're coming out of an armored personnel carrier," he said on set, "everyone is supposed to know where they're going. You come out like greased lightning. Trust me. If you just stick your head out, that's how you get shot."

"Jim was really heightened about that scene," Rolston added. "We rehearsed numerous times the order in which we would deploy, because once they put the rain bars on, we'd be soaked. It would have taken forever to re-dress everybody, so Jim was adamant: 'Guys, come on, we need precision here, because I'm doing this in one take and that's it.'"

Scott would recall the scene: "Cue rain, cue wind!"—loud rain and wind machines would roar—and between takes the marines were wrapped in silver "space blankets" to keep them warm. She called it "the day of the baked potatoes."

The North Lock entrance was then re-dressed to become the South Lock exit, where the APC would roll up to meet Frost and Hicks. (Scenes 66 and 67—in which Ripley hesitates and is by herself outside until Frost scares her accidentally—were omitted.)

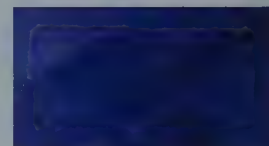
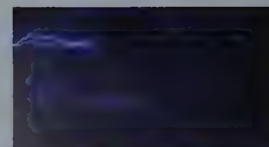
Production then moved to Stage 'L' for more scenes on the *Sulaco*. Weaver would tell the *Daily Express* in 1986 that Ripley's reliance on nicotine had resulted in her renewed dependence on cigarettes by this time in the shoot; on set, smoking was a way of relaxing during the long breaks. She also confessed to a craving for take-away hamburgers.

The connected sets of hypersleep, the lockers, and mess table formed a fairly large area. Cameron had originally wanted 12 sleep capsules, but Lamont's budget had been dwindling to nothing.

"I had to go and see Gale," Lamont said. "I said, 'We've run out of money' and she said, 'I think you better tell Jim.' I said, 'You're married to him—you tell him.' She said no. So when Jim was sitting on another set, I sat beside him. He said, 'What's up?'"

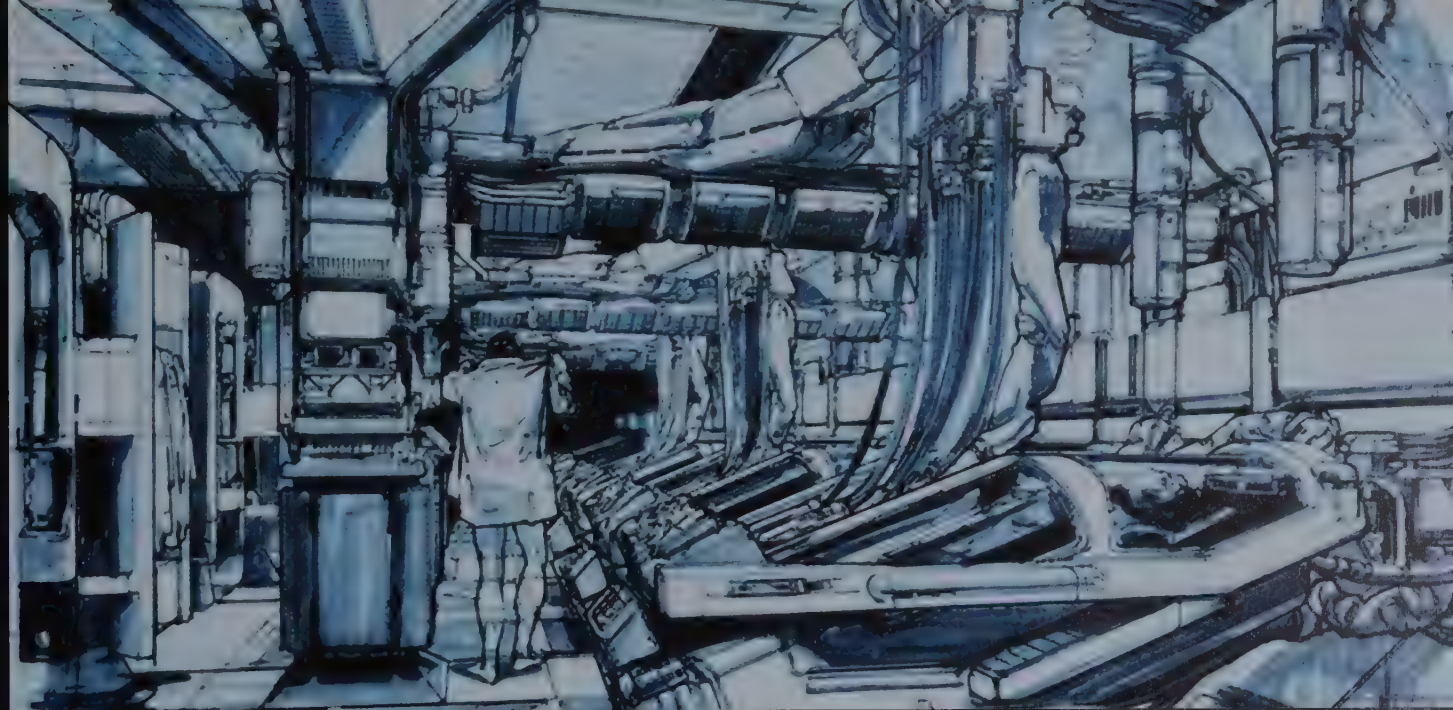
Lamont told Cameron of the problem, but sold him on the idea of opening the chambers via wires instead of expensive hydraulics. His crew then cobbled the chambers together from leftover parts. A mirror transformed six chambers into twelve (each costing about \$4,300).

The morning they were to shoot on these connected *Sulaco* sets, crew



ABOVE: Under the Skotaks' supervision, Begg storyboarded a pan from the venting AP station to Bishop in the foreground pushing the "enable" button. The final shot required several passes: stop-motion on rear-projection screens around the model, and a beauty pass with the model with simulated light effects from the lightning. The station's electrical arcing effect was an element from Gene Warren's *Fantasy II* Film Effects studio (which Cameron had also used in *The Terminator*). They also made use of a beam-splitter system. "A very complicated effect," Begg said. "The lightning element was actually black and white. We colored it on top of that projection screen. Very laborious, very boring. Terrifying [if something went wrong]. But we got some fairly spectacular results from the beam-splitter system." (Note that many of the rear-projection shots involved Pinewood regular Charles Staffell, who made use of his three-head process projector setup.)

LEFT: Vasquez and Drake leading the marines as they begin to search the colony.



ABOVE: Continuity Polaroids of Hiller and Reiser in their sleeping pods. Reiser's stand-up comedy act had earned him opening spots for musical writers and performers John Denver, Melissa Manchester, and the Pointer Sisters. He'd also done bits on *The Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson* and on *Late Night With David Letterman*. He'd won parts in *Beverly Hills Cop* (1984), as well as the television film *Sunset Limousine* (1983).

RIGHT, ABOVE: Mead's concept art for the *Sulaco's* hibernation area.

RIGHT, BELOW: Cameron directs and shoots the marines awaking in their pods, as well as Newt watching Hicks being put into hibernation.

FOLLOWING PAGES: Weaver in the sleeping chamber between takes.









were still working on them at 6 a.m. Lamont asked how long they'd need to finish and, after rushes at seven, managed to stall Cameron until 8:30 a.m. Director and production designer walked onto the soundstage just as crew were putting the last gun in place. "It was photo finishes every time," Lamont said. "But with all this old rubbish we made a great set."

"The opening shot of the marines was us waking from deep-space sleep," Al Matthews said. "An actress accused me of taking her light. I told her I could take her light without even leaving my dressing room; I also told her that I could make the camera do anything I wanted it to do. She said, 'BS.' I said, 'Okay, watch this.' That's when I put the cigar into my mouth. The camera was shooting from the opposite direction, but when James saw me put the cigar in my chops, he made them move the camera for a single on me. I just looked at the actress and winked."

Ripley awakes with the others. "I didn't think it was appropriate to show Sigourney in quite as sexy underwear as in the end of *Alien*," Cameron would say. "I'm sure much to the fans' disappointment. For me, the first film stepped over the line. I thought I could make a movie with a compelling female character who doesn't have to do that."

"It was a long, long, long, long day," Rolston would recall, "because Jim wanted the lids to all simultaneously open at the same rate, but he was doing it with simple pulleys and wires, so getting them to do that was difficult. So we ended up sitting in the hypersleep chambers forever and ever, bored out of our minds. I was right next to Sigourney, and at one point she yawned and said, 'Oh, Mark. You know what?' She put her arms back and looked down at her armpit. 'I'm not very hairy here. But down here...' And I went, 'Sigourney—what?!' I blushed, I was so red—and she laughed and said, 'I got you, I got you.' Boy, did she get me."

"Sigourney was cutting up all the time, funny, slapping everyone on the back, pulling practical jokes," Biehn said on set. "A lot of people have a perception of Sigourney that might not be totally accurate. I did. But she was a lot of fun, kind of one of the guys. She is a sweet lady, very professional and easy to work with."



"When we wake up, I'm wearing shorts and I had psoriasis," Goldstein recalled. "I had this big, red outbreak on my knee that looked like I had fallen off a motorcycle. So I said to Jim, 'Ooh, my legs are a mess!' And he said, 'Who cares? You're a marine!'"

"All that stuff Al did was improvised," Kash said. "People weren't sticking to the script. I was losing my mind. I'm actually impressed that I got my lines out, because I was shitting bricks."

"I made up all my own lines," Matthews said. "James let me do my thing, he placed his trust in me. James let me do that!"

The marines emerge from their pods and, in Scene 30, Hudson asks the tough Vasquez if she's ever been mistaken for a man.

"When we went to film that scene, I thought, *Man, I'm wearing this tight undershirt—there's no way anyone would ever mistake me for a man*," Goldstein recalled. "I have these big boobs. Then I thought, *Ha! I can do these really difficult pull-ups behind the neck*. I was in incredible shape at this point. But it was a big thing to stop everything and ask Jim about this idea, because of course there was no pull-up bar rigged. I could be wasting time and he was scary, but I explained the logic and why it would make the scene work. So Jim thought for a moment—and then it was, 'Great. Good. Stop.' He called everyone together and said, 'We're going to rig this up here and we're going to shoot it from over there,' and we did it."

By this time, Goldstein and Rolston had become good friends too, which helped their onscreen relationship and playfulness after Vasquez replies to Hudson: "No. Have you?" Drake says: "Hey, Vasquez, you're just too bad," a line that was ad-libbed.

HOLIDAY RUPTURE

Scott would remember that the edibles on the *Sulaco* mess table had been sourced from local Chinese dim sum restaurants: "The food looked like it was from outer space," she said, "wrapped up or on translucent dishes. Jellied sweets..."



PREVIOUS PAGES: Ripley and the marines in the mess area.

BELOW LEFT: Bishop plays the knife game with Hudson (with Drake's help).



FRUSTRATION

A Partial List of Special Effects Shots, December 1985

LOCATION: Stages 'K', 'M'

EXT. APC: Limpes to a halt again

INT. ELEVATOR: Background plate for elevator descent

EXT. DROP SHIP II: Moving toward AP station, "gains in frame"

INT. CARGO LOCK: Set up

EXT. DROP SHIP: Wide shot as ship skims ground and makes initial contact

INT. AP STATION: APC strikes wall on right, veers and strikes wall on left, sparks fly at impact, more driving through AP Station

EXT. PARK: VistaVision plate

EXT. ACHERON: Jordan tractor approaches crack in derelict; BP plate for interior tractor for live-action (derelict shots)

EXT. AP STATION: View of maw, minor explosions, fire, smoke; plate for lateral shot of Ripley turning, moving onto platform, background explosions for Ripley to react to

On December 2, an effects progress report noted: "We are still trying to overcome delays on the dropship (mechanical/flying version to work via live action). It is questionable now as to which dropships will be ready first: the mechanical or the crash versions."

The next day in dailies, Cameron requested that the APC be given a "faster, more fluid movement" (Robert Skotak was absent due to a case of stomach flu).

"I think all the pressures made Bob ill at one point," said Begg.

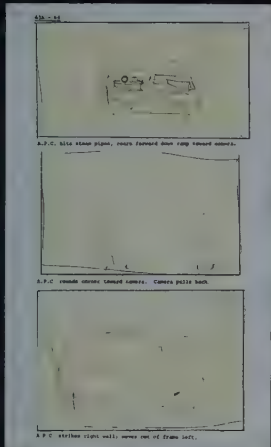
"It was a horrendous winter," Lee said. "Absolutely horrendous. People were falling down, dropping sick, including Bob and Dennis Skotak."

The effects team shot more of the smaller APC exiting the dropship on December 6; a subsequent shot used the larger APC model in the foreground. Because Cameron wanted the APC to slide around corners and smash into walls at high speed, the effects crew built a scaled-down miniature to match a few of the Acton interiors, according to McClung, which were designed by Robert Skotak and Peter Russell. The crew shot from low angles, overcranked a little, and used a special mechanism that could generate showers of sparks when the vehicle scraped against the walls.

When the APC exterior is on fire and races back through the AP station, Begg operated the camera for those tracking shots while lying on a moving skateboard.

On December 9, a meeting was held with Cameron to discuss process plate shooting and live-action re-photography and, two days later, the "model shop crew worked long overtime hours in an attempt to have the mechanical dropship ready for Friday 13."

On that day and following, the ship was mounted on an overhead rig for test shots of it landing on Acheron (with a 55mm lens). In a subsequent shot, the ship was damaged when a front wire broke and it fell to the stage floor; repairs would take until the end of the month.



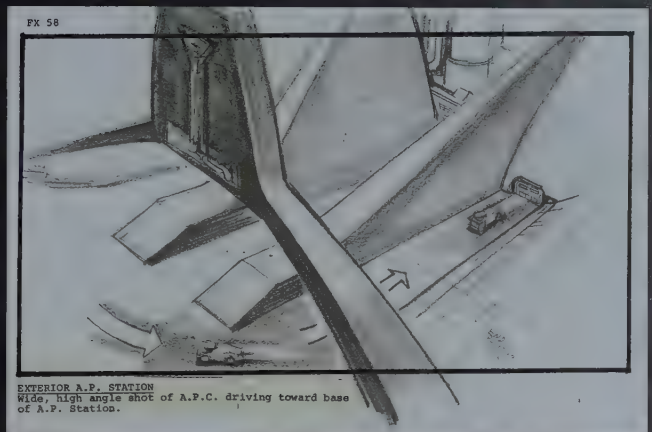
ABOVE: Thumbnail sketches of the APC's rampage through the AP station and a final frame of same: "APC hits steam pipes, roars forward down ramp toward camera; APC rounds corner camera—camera pulls back; APC strikes right wall, moves out of frame left."

RIGHT (FROM TOP): Storyboard of the "wide, high angle shot of APC driving toward base of AP Station"; the model for inside the maw of the station; the dropship model flying by the pipes of the maw. The interior maw set was basically two 15-ft-tall by about 30-ft-long pieces, essentially scaffold rigging (plastic and metal pipes with a few silo tubes), each constructed at different scales that could be repositioned into a variety of forced-perspective configurations (visual-effects art director Peter Russell oversaw the construction by modelmakers, riggers, and carpenters). Detailing included cut wooden dowels and blocks, miniature ladders and ramps, and so on. "We must have put 500 explosions through that set," Robert Skotak said, "some of them pretty big bombs, and at the end it was still standing."

Another production note read a few days later: "At the point where they were ready to shoot, the Jordan tractor broke down—gears went!"

Viewing tests of the maw, Cameron requested "less wimpish" explosions and shorter lightning bursts. Then the Jordan tractor broke down again.

The atmosphere on the miniature sets was tense. No set was ever struck until Cameron had approved the final shot, but those shots were not forthcoming... Begg left the production for another show. "I didn't stay all the way through the movie. The atmosphere was unpleasant for me as well. So I left. I feel bad about it, and I regret it. But it was deeply unpleasant. It really was."





LEFT: On the exterior Acheron set, cast and crew sing Weaver's humorous Christmas carol: "Twelve days of *Aliens* Christmas."

After marine banter, Hudson asks Bishop to do his knife trick. Henriksen had been rehearsing. "He wanted me to put my hand down," Rolston said, "and I did it once, and he didn't hit me with the knife. But I said, 'Okay. No thanks, I don't want to do that again, thanks.' Then on set Lance said, 'Hey, Mark, Mark, come on real quick, Jim's going to shoot this little bit—you're going to hold Paxton down and I'm going to do the thing with the knife!'"

"When we got onto the set," Henriksen said in 1986, "and finally were ready to shoot the scene, I dragged Paxton into it. I said, 'Jim, this is about his character.' I said, 'What if I put my hand on Billy's hand?'"

"Lance said, 'Why doesn't Hudson ask for it and get suckered into it?'" Paxton recalled. "What's nice is that moment defines my whole character; it's a microcosm of what I will do throughout the whole film—get flipped out."

Hurd recalled that Biddle filmed the moment with a new type of camera that had a variable frame rate one could alter without cutting. "Jim did the whole thing shooting at a lower frame rate," Rolston confirmed.

After the stunt, Drake releases Hudson, and Bishop joins Ripley and Burke. When Ripley sees that Bishop is 'bleeding' white 'blood' and is therefore an android, she turns on him. Henriksen played his character at this moment as a forsaken child.

"I'll put it personally," Henriksen said on set. "Bishop's the first time I got a role where I was so aware of what I could learn from it, and how far I could

go with it. I've been working my ass off. I never got a chance to play an innocent before, and I have a streak of that in me... and I never get to play that. I'm not talking Pollyanna innocent, but an innocent vision of life."

His director approved; he liked the fact that Henriksen played his role "nice," but looked sinister enough so the audience would never be sure of his loyalty until the end.

Cameron gave the comedic line about Ripley not liking the cornbread to Frost (after she bats the food tray across the room). "Some lines you don't know if they're gonna work or not," Ross said. "That was one of those lines—I thought it worked—but I wanted to just throw it away [in his delivery of it]. That was scripted, but there were a lot of lines that were thrown in. When I started talking about 'Arcturian poontang,' Mark threw in, 'But the one you had was a male!' And I said, 'It doesn't matter when it's Arcturian, baby.'"

Production broke for Christmas, from Wednesday, December 25 to Sunday, December 29. "Just before Christmas, Jim and Gale threw this fantastically elegant party," Rolston said. "It was a black tie event, it was tuxedo time. I remember coming down to this grand ballroom, my wife was dressed to the nines, and it was a fun night for everyone."

"Jim threw one at a place called Monkey Island Estate," Rosengrant said, "and the vast majority of the people there were American. So we were all having our American... let's put it this way: There was lots of wine flowing

RIGHT: Ripley and Hicks. In December, Cameron filmed an "insurance shot" of Hicks's vest being splashed by alien acid on Stage "M." "There were a lot of problems with 'A/B smoke,'" the director said. "It's very bad for you. We used it in the elevator shots and to simulate the acid burning through the armor."

and things and English country roads..."

Biehn would recall that Weaver wrote a poem for their party: "It was a 'Twelve Days of Aliens Christmas,' which was very funny," he said. "It's one of those things she does as a morale booster. It was such a physically draining shoot that anything that could pick up spirits was a good thing. She got all of the actors together. We learned the lines to it and sang it to the crew."

Unbeknownst to the carolers, more trouble was taking place behind closed doors. Suzanne and Steve Benson had arrived from LA for talks on December 11. Hurd would say that some of the LAE executives had been learning that they couldn't "pull the wool over the director's eyes." He was technologically too savvy. And the director was having conflicts with the Bensons because, according to some, he felt like he'd been saddled with an unnecessary layer of bureaucracy in his efforts to get things done with the Skotaks.

"I had talked to Gale before I left," McClung recalled. "Td said, 'Something's up with LA Effects.'"

After viewing rushes on Saturday, December 14, Cameron and Hurd met with Suzanne and Steven Benson, Robert and Dennis Skotak, Alan Markowitz, and Fox executive Tim Hampton. LAE had its own version of the situation and related cost overruns. They claimed that Cameron was working with the Skotak brothers as if they were answerable only to him. The company's attorney, Brian Lysaght, would tell *Cinefantastique* their version and why they were making certain financial demands.

"One thing that should be mentioned here," Robert Skotak said, "is that at this meeting, Jim made some very smart, very big, sensible changes which meant considerable savings for a few of the major sequences to be shot in the next couple of months. This is what we'd discussed early on—ways to keep the budget under control via creativity."

The dispute was brought back to Fox in Los Angeles.

"I was hearing that Jim was having problems at Pinewood," Brian Johnson would say. "LA Effects were not producing the material that Jim wanted." Meanwhile, motion-control test shots had been done at Johnson's studio, Arkadon Ltd., which were due back on December 19.

"We knew they were getting into legal problems," said Julian Parry, who was helping them dress the north entrance set. "We just couldn't believe it, but we were getting vibes and gossip that there was something going down. Bob and Danny and Pat were a bit consumed by this. The Skotaks had gotten themselves aligned with a management that didn't really work for the creativity of the show."

During the Christmas break, the crisis came to a head and LAE was let go.

"I believe that at some point it became easier for Fox," said Lysaght, "economically and every other way, to get rid of the Bensons, keep the Skotaks, and hold on to all of the work done up to that point."

"There was a bit of a falling out there," Lamont said. "I think LAE had overstepped what they actually could do."

"The production couldn't support the long hours," model-maker Lee said. "The budget wasn't there. Close to Christmas the model crew were told it was a hiatus period. None of us knew if we would be re-contracted in January because of the problems, so some crew looked for other film work."



During his holiday in the Caribbean, Johnson was asked if he would come on as an effects co-supervisor. "I got a call from Gale," he said in 2019, "saying Jim had dismissed LA Effects and would I come and talk about taking over ASAP. Well, that cheered me up and I saw Jim a day or so later. I started working with Jim on the motion-control sequences. We agreed to do the work on a subcontract basis."

Back in Los Angeles, McClung also received a call that holiday season. "Robert asked me to call Pat—'We've got to get him back,'" Dennis Skotak said. "I really didn't want to make that call."

"I get a call from Denny," McClung said. "I'm driving in a short-sleeve shirt on Christmas day. It's sunny. I've got my sunglasses on and he says, 'They're gone. Can you come back?'"

"He so desperately did not want to do it," Dennis added. "He was just about beside himself."

"I did not want to go back. Every fiber of my being didn't want to go. I thought, *I just can't do it, but I owe it to the guys. I've got to go back.*"

McClung made plans to return, for Robert and Dennis Skotak would continue the model work and related effects, while Johnson and his crew at Arkadon Motion Control would tackle the spaceship and dropship shots. Johnson now had a formidable stable of equipment, rare in Britain: four motion-control rigs, a complement of VistaVision cameras, and a custom-built optical printer capable of 4-perf anamorphic and spherical reductions.

As of December 18, 44 of 142 shots had been completed, leaving 98 to go, including the complex miniature egg chamber and the rod-puppet battle. The number of shots were in flux; Robert Skotak would discuss with the director about which shots to add or cut or combine or re-shoot, storyboarding with Roger Deer throughout. What was on paper were



MARKETING MISFIRES

In December 23, 1985, Fox circulated a memo listing dozens of possible taglines and/or subtitles for the film. None them were chosen, but below is a selection of the candidates:

TAGLINES

ALIENS The darkest side of space
 ALIENS From one came many
 ALIENS They want more
 ALIENS The people eaters
 ALIENS The people destroyers
 ALIENS They want us
 ALIENS There's nothing nice about them
 ALIENS War in space
 ALIENS War with mankind
 ALIENS The rest of the story
 ALIENS Meet the mother of them all
 ALIENS Terror on LV 326
 ALIENS The last one was only the first one
 ALIENS The scream continues
 ALIENS They can't live without us

SUBTITLES

Back and Out of Control
 The Space Cannibals
 The Death Travelers
 The Earth Enders
 Invisible and Invincible
 Enemies of the Universe
 The Space Scorpions
 Mission: Termination
 Mission: Annihilation
 Back for the Kill
 The Creature Chamber

estimates and “guesstimates.” There still was a lot to do.

A few days later, Cameron added two shots to bring the total to 144—100 to complete, a fair number with money nearly gone. Although he was unaware of it, he was in danger of losing his effects unit supervisor, too.

“I came down with pneumonia,” Robert Skotak said. “I was shaking from the chills. While we were working on the dropship landing, I had to lay down for part of a day. My sinuses were clogged up. I was working with fever and very sick for a couple of weeks, but I didn’t want Jim to know, I didn’t want him worrying about it.”

“Robert’s flu was so bad that I was getting a little concerned,” his brother said. “He was wearing a heavy jacket and he was down on the floor, stooped over this electric heater with the blanket wrapped around his head and around the heater. He just could not get warm, and had a fever. But there was no time to stop. Taking care of health was secondary.”

“Around Christmastime,” Robert said, “Dennis and I were dragging in the cold, walking between the stages, we were so beat up. It was the dead of winter in the snow, and we ran into Stan Winston, who was also dragging along, just totally beat up. The movie was just really, really hard to make. Every possible difficulty—getting materials, trying to get shots done on time, dealing with the unions. We looked at each other and huddled, and we were almost in tears. I said, ‘We have to stay in love. This is such a great movie...’ Stan was saying, ‘It’s going to be so... People will love this.’ We hugged each other and I said, ‘We have to stay in love with this project. It’s the only way we’re going to get through it.’ Denny, me, and Stan were hugging in this freezing cold blizzard.”

ONE ENDING

SHOOT DAYS 66 to 76, Monday, December 30, 1985, to Saturday, January 11, 1986

LOCATION: Pinewood, Stages ‘L’, ‘E’

INT. CORRIDOR: sc. 21 (Gorman and Burke: “They’ve lost contact with the colony”)

INT. RIPLEY APARTMENT: scs. 22 (Ripley invited as advisor); 20 (door buzzes; Ripley is haggard, smoking cigarette); 24 (Ripley vid-calls; wants confirmation they’re going to kill aliens)

EXT. JORDEN TRACTOR: scs. 15 (Jordan family discovers derelict); 16 (parents trudge to derelict)

INT./EXT. APC: scs. 104-105 (Hicks tells Ripley to “ease up” on gas pedal); 112 (marines out of APC to wait for dropship)

INT. SULACO CARGO LOCK—IN ORBIT: sc. 190 (dropship safe, damaged)

INT. DROP SHIP: sc. 191 (Bishop explains Hicks is okay but comatose)

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM, GATEWAY: scs. 6, 8 (Ripley interrogated by suits)

INT. CORRIDOR, GATEWAY: sc. 9 (Ripley asks why they don’t check out planet; learns about colonists)

INT. CONDUIT: sc. 131 (Bishop squirms forward)



ABOVE AND FAR RIGHT: Ripley being grilled by corporate stooges on Gateway station. The conference room on Stage "L" was a simple set with chairs made from Recaro (a German company) car seats with headrests removed. Behind Ripley, her dead colleagues appear, projected on a screen. On the autopsies under the subject of "sex," "male or female" was sometimes followed by the word "natural"—which has suggested to some that sex-change operations might be standard procedure in that future.

RIGHT: Reiser and Weaver on the apartment set. Ripley's apartment set included an actual toilet and sink sourced from a 707 jet airplane's bathroom.



On the first day of the new year, Fox officially dismissed LAE and required its executives to leave the set and Pinewood, but, as negotiated, retained the services of the Skotaks. The studio also re-hired most of LAE's other employees at Pinewood, and kept LAE's equipment. "We were brought back," Lee said. "We stayed on the film. Our contracts had been stopped and in fact monies were owed, but we did get that money eventually."

The next day, the number of effects shots was reduced to 141. The day after that, Cameron had a meeting with his surviving effects team about the egg chamber and queen miniatures, followed by more discussions between Cameron, Hurd, and Brian Johnson.

Suzanne Benson would tell *Cinefantastique* that by that time LAE had already contributed between 70 and 80 percent of the effects work. LAE's attorney was compiling "a stack of depositions" from those involved swearing that they'd never heard complaints on set.

The dispute intensified: Fox threatened not to give LAE screen credit, and refused to pay outstanding third-party debts incurred by the company or, according to LAE, the agreed-upon termination fee of \$160,000 (as well as the eventual cost of shipping LAE's equipment and/or personnel back to Los Angeles). "Fox tried to charge LAE for all of these debts," Lysaght said in 1986, "as well as the cost of completing the special visual-effects work on the picture."

The legal battle would continue.

"There was a point towards the end of 1985," Lee said, "when the production put together a 20-minute cut of the film so far to take to Twentieth Century Fox to try to release more money. This roll of film was in the covered way on a Steenbeck editing bench—and at one point it went missing! Luckily they found it."

The effects budget went up slightly. "Once Fox realized that they might have something on their hands," said Begg, who heard the news, "they increased the resources for the effects unit. It was very, very threadbare, very minimal to start with. A lot of in-camera, very home-made effects, but it had gotten more elaborate as the movie went along."

"When the studio saw that this was going to be a good film, they weren't so nervous," Dennis Skotak said, "That's when there was more money. It still wasn't much, but it allowed for more things than we would have had otherwise."

Meanwhile, Cameron went to work on the last 11 days of principal photography, knowing that at least a couple of weeks of additional postproduction photography was already planned with a reduced crew for January.

He quickly filmed the Jordens' approach to the derelict (using a matte painting of the alien ship). On another stage, Weaver rehearsed in the powerloader, and she and Lees almost tipped over a couple of times. Bodybuilder Lees would climb in first and be behind the actress to make the legs and arms move. As a joke, Lees once put a balloon between them without telling the actress, and inflated it. Weaver couldn't figure out what was going on back there. "It lasted for a couple of hours," she said. "I was thinking, *This is interesting...*"

On January 7, a list was drawn up for discussion with Johnson of pending motion-control shots: camera moving toward the *Narcissus* in space; the *Sulaco* approaches and moves past camera; the dropship emerges from clouds and advances toward camera, and so on. The number of shots requiring motion control totaled 16 (with about 30 motion-control elements).

"We had about 24 shots to do," Johnson said in 1986, "and by the time we started there were only a couple months left in the schedule. So our objective was to get the shots done and get approval on them as quickly as possible."

"Myself and a couple of other young guys," Lee recalled, "we unloaded Brian's car and moved everything into Pinewood, and he basically got things moving—because things were really behind schedule. He created, I think, a healthier environment, and certainly screamed and shouted and got stuff done. Brian was brought in to possibly heal some of the wounds that may have surfaced. And they'd had to get more money from Fox. When that money came in, Brian had

to make sure that it was made on budget.”

“We had brought in a guy named Peter Russell from the art department,” McClung said. “Peter was great. He could [do technical drawings]. I didn’t know any better. We should have had him from the beginning.”

Back on set, Weaver was filmed in a number of emotional scenes on Gateway Station, in her apartment and in a meeting room. Cameron had approved of Lamont’s spartan look for the latter set. Production didn’t want to create a futuristic world; it wasn’t the focus of the film. In terms of costumes it was the same; Cameron had decided that even a couple of hundred years in the future, people would still wear coats and ties.

“I didn’t want to overwork any of it,” he’d say, “because I had to have a place to go design-wise when we got to the colony.”

The Gateway Station sets hadn’t been designed by Mead or Cobb during the short preproduction period. Instead, they were worked out among the art directors and Lamont, with input from their director, who omitted a couple more scenes late in the game: one in which Ripley kicks a wall next to Burke, who is getting coffee and donuts at a vending machine. Cameron also moved dialogue about the colony’s establishment originally intended to be spoken outside an elevator to inside the meeting room.

He also deleted a shot of an alien snapping its jaws at a tiny grate above Bishop squirming through the underground corridor. “They were dragging a camera on the tiniest little wheels you ever saw in your life ahead of me,” Henriksen said.

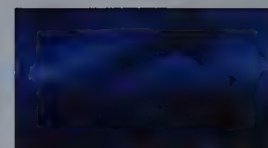
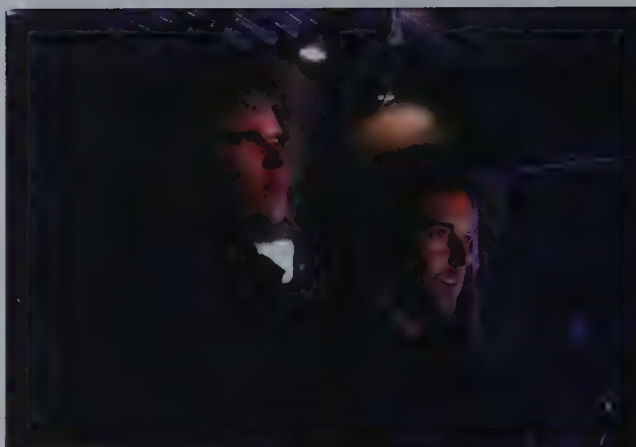
January 11 marked the last day of principal photography, after 76 days of shooting. Many of the cast went home. Though numerous scenes were left to film, including the climactic showdown of Ripley vs. the alien queen, they featured only a handful of actors.

“If I had my preference for the next one, it wouldn’t be as physically grueling,” Biehn said in 1986. “All this action has been very physical, and the film has been very difficult to make.”

“By the end of the shoot, all the English people, the crew, they ended up loving us,” Rolston said. “They loved the production, they loved the people. I don’t know if they loved Jim. The thing about Jim is he just doesn’t suffer fools. If you’re not doing your job, well, then he’s going to say something to you.”

Sallis would remember a wrap party taking place at the famous Kensington Roof Gardens. Cameron was happy with the work of many—he’d asked Sallis to design his next film—he would also be quoted as saying in a farewell speech to the main unit: “This has been a long and difficult shoot, fraught by many problems. But the one thing that kept me going, through it all, was the certain knowledge that one day I would drive out the gate of Pinewood and never come back, and that you sorry bastards would still be here.”

“Jim spawns tough dialogue from the moment he wakes up in the morning to the moment he goes to bed,” Sallis said. “If there is any truth in that speech, it would have been a tongue-in-cheek sort of reverse-respect statement—at the end of what can only be described, quite honestly, as an insanely tough shoot. Weirdly, Jim’s words could come across as a compliment.”



LEFT: The Jordan family—father (Jay Benedict), mother (Holly De Jong), brother (Christopher Henn), sister (Carrie Henn)—have an unfortunate encounter with a Facehugger.

ABOVE: For shots of the Jordan family tractor approaching the derelict, production set up and filmed through a beam splitter to capture both the moving vehicle and a matte painting of the alien ship on one in-camera strip of celluloid; no compositing in post would be necessary.



OPPOSITE: A portion of the derelict, damaged by a lava flow; Mr. Jordan enters here, oblivious of his peril, for the alien ship’s warning beacon is no longer functioning.

FOLLOWING PAGES: The life-sized front half of the white and orange Jordan tractor on the Acheron exterior set (with painted backdrop).











C H A P T E R

08



C O N T E N T S U N D E R P R E S S U R E
J A N U A R Y T O F E B R U A R Y 1 9 8 6





POSTPRODUCTION SHOOT DAYS 1 to 16, Monday, January 13 to Saturday, February 1, 1986

LOCATION: Pinewood, Stages 'E', 'L'

INT. PARK: sc. 4 (Ripley, daughter's death)

EXT. LANDING FIELD/UPLINK TOWER BASE: sc. 167 (Ripley: "We're not leaving!")

INT. CARGO BAY: scs. 198 (Newt screams as airstream sucks her across floor; Bishop grabs her); 38 (Ripley in powerloader: "I've got a Class Two rating"), 194 (queen turns to Newt, in service channels); 196 (queen sees Ripley in powerloader; Ripley: "Get away from her, you bitch!")

INT./EXT. DROPSHIP II: scs. 186/187 (Ripley and Newt into dropship II)

INT. DROPSHIP II: scs. 189 (post-explosion; Ripley: "It's okay, baby. We made it."); 169 (Ripley prepares pulse gun, armament...)

INT. DARK CHAMBER: sc. 193 (Ripley gets into the powerloader)

INT. CHANNEL: sc. 195 (Newt tries to escape queen)

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM: sc. 3 (Ripley nightmare)

INT. OPERATIONS: sc. 151 (Hicks's POV: aliens crawling along ceiling)

INT. SUB-BASEMENT: scs. 163 (Newt in grotto-like chamber, climbs pipes toward the overhead grill); 165 (Newt screams as alien shadow engulfs her)

INT. MED LAB: sc. 72 (discovery of Newt in her nest)

EXT. LANDING PLATFORM: sc. 185 (Ripley and Newt discover Bishop and dropship II are gone; lift doors begin to open... dropship appears)

INT. LOADING DOCK: scs. 197 (powerloader and queen fall into dock; Ripley opens outer door to space); 199 (queen grabs Ripley's ankle, but is sucked into space; Ripley climbs back into ship)

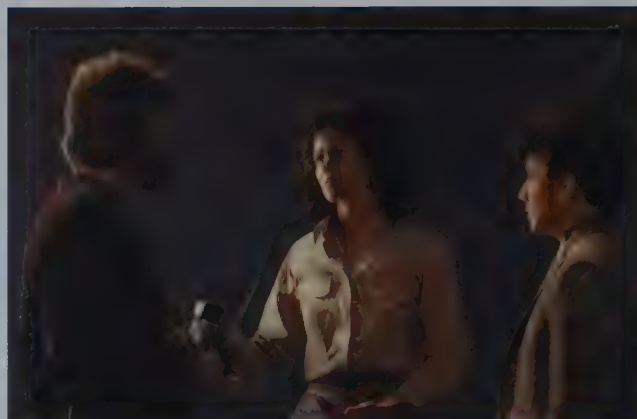
INT. CORRIDOR: 164 (Hicks and Ripley find Newt below them; Hicks cuts through grating)

INT. CARGO LOCK—DROPSHIP II: 192 (Bishop maimed by queen)

INT. CORRIDOR—ELEVATORS: scs. 182/183 (queen studies elevator)

INT. NARCISSUS: sc. 2 (black velvet; torch cutting and rescue of Ripley)

Second Unit Partial Shot List: (inserts with hands only) Newt bites Hicks; M.41A being loaded; Vasquez sealing door. Close-up Newt reacting to Facehugger; egg sac explodes, three explosions; Ripley in foreground, projection shot; close-up of Newt: "I knew you'd come"; various shots of alien warriors; Facehugger inserts in med lab...



PREVIOUS PAGE: Half of Bishop in the cargo bay.

LEFT: Cameron, Weaver, and Reiser discuss and then film the scene in which rear projection was used to create a virtual park.

Three days over-schedule, Fox distributed its postproduction timetable: A complete assembly of the film would be viewed immediately; in two weeks, a rough cut was due; four weeks after that, the director's cut would be screened for studio execs; final cut was due two weeks afterward; music and sound effects were allowed another two weeks; complete pre-dub and

BELOW RIGHT: Cameron studies his shot of Weaver convulsing in a dream sequence in which Ripley is "pregnant" with a Chestbuster.

FOLLOWING PAGES: Cameron, Winston, and crew prepare Henriksen for Bishop's impalement by tail, which is then filmed.

re-recording (ADR, or 'additional dialogue recording') in two weeks; then four weeks for final mix, previews, and changes "if necessary."

Total postproduction time was clocked at 16 weeks. The final film could not be delivered later than June 6, 1986.

"There was so much going on," Hurd said. "We had a pretty short postproduction schedule."

Indeed, they had many scenes and many effects shots to complete, while Cameron would be needed nearly every day in editorial. His would be a round-the-clock job.

His editor, Ray Lovejoy, had begun as an assistant on David Lean's *Lawrence of Arabia* and Stanley Kubrick's *Dr. Strangelove* in the early 1960s. He'd got on well with Kubrick and had edited the director's *2001: A Space Odyssey* and *The Shining*, as well as numerous other films.

"I hired Ray for one simple reason," Cameron said, "because he had worked with Stanley Kubrick."

"Ray Lovejoy was our editor, and it was a tremendous responsibility," Hurd said, "because there was so much film that he had to work at a speed that he'd never really worked before. Luckily, he was on the same page as Jim."

"When you do effects, you learn to edit through storyboards," Cameron would say. "In special effects, you don't do coverage. You have to very accurately predict the scene in your mind, because you don't shoot more than an extra couple of frames. So I learned all my editing by the back door, by doing effects work. On *Terminator* I'd also been fortunate enough to work with Mark Goldblatt, a very good action cutter, and I learned a lot of the tricks of the trade from him. Editing is your greatest control over the images, what you show the audience, what you don't show."

While Cameron supervised Lovejoy's rapid advance from assembly to rough cut, he spent most of his days shooting with a reduced unit of about 25 people, still including first AD Cracknell.

First up was an emotional moment in which Ripley learns about her daughter's death. "It was a little scene after I woke up," Weaver said. "I'm sitting in this fake patio, and Paul Reiser comes in and says, 'Your daughter died two years ago, and this is all I have left of her.' [A photograph of Weaver's own mother.] I based Ripley's whole trauma on the fact that she'd lost her family. She'd paid horribly for her success in surviving the alien."

Before Burke's arrival, Ripley would turn the 'park'—actually a projected image—off. That rear-projection VistaVision plate had already been shot by the effects team, so the final shot could be done in-camera on set (the idea of Jones the cat trying to catch a fake flying bird had been dropped).

That same day, the call sheet contained a "Social Note," veteran gaffer Jack Theford (*Battle of Britain*, *Superman*) was retiring: "Dear old Jack Theford has finally made it. After 40 years of moviemaking at Pinewood Studios, his patience has been rewarded and the luxury of retirement is now his. As of Tuesday, 14th January 1986, he can start driving his wife crazy and give us all a break. Crew and cast of *Aliens* all join in wishing Jack a long and happy period of retirement. We'll all miss him, but maybe our memories of him will, in part, make up for that."

Another note cautioned the crew: "Please be careful when striking models, equipment and set pieces. Do not deposit dangerous or non-burnable

items in stage barrows or in any of the skips. Old CO2 cylinders found their way into a pile of rubbish on Tuesday, which ended up on a fire on the back lot—they exploded!!! This sort of thing should not happen again."

TWIST AND SCREAM

Cameron filmed Weaver in a hospital room designed by Lamont on Stage U.L. "It's sterile and a bit bleak, but not threatening," Cobb said. "Some people might see a hospital that way, but a hospital is also a sanctuary. When you see those white walls, it tells you instantly that you are safe and in medical hands. That design is worth 50 pages of dialogue."

Ripley's nightmare is thus that more surprising—she dreams that a Chestbuster is inside her and punching its way out. "It's actually a wonderful effect," Winston said. "She pulls her top up and you see her whole body stretch as the Chestbuster pushes out from the inside. It was particularly effective because anyone who's seen the first film knows exactly what it is, but it never actually bursts through."

Tom Woodruff was largely responsible for the effect: With Weaver on a slanted board under the bed and a duplicate appliance body on top, an operator underneath operated the Chestbuster above.

(continued on page 226)











"I firmly believe that Ripley's mind never stopped working while she slept," Weaver said in 1986, "and that period should be added to her age, so in a strange way, she wakes up in a different time and she's actually that much older, even though her physical appearance hasn't changed. She's probably been over that experience in various nightmare forms through the years."

To get Jones the cat to react and hiss, crew placed another cat close to it. Cameron shot the fake dream handheld at 48 frames per second so when they projected at 24 fps, the sequence would appear to be in slow motion.

"Jim took care of that Chestbuster thing in the first scene in the movie," said Henriksen, who was still on hand for his scenes. "That was so smart."

They filmed more of the queen studying the elevator. Cameron, based on the first film, figured that the species were quick learners. "I think it's clear by the end of the film that the queen knows how to operate an elevator," he said, "if nothing else."

"The queen alien was the only actress," Winston said, "who could get pissed off and make Jim back off."

In the cargo bay, Ripley, Newt, and Bishop think they are safe, but then realize that acid is dripping from somewhere. For that effect, John Richardson and his team "went back" to a polystyrene approach, but with a different look: Instead of acetone, they used carbon tetrachloride mixed with dyes, soaps, and other chemicals. "So that when it hit, not only would it dissolve the polystyrene," Richardson told *Cinefex*, "but it would smoke and bubble while doing so, which was much better than just seeing something melt through. Also, I found that by adding metallic powder onto the surface of the polystyrene, as it dissolved, the powder floated on top of the solution and looked very much like molten metal."

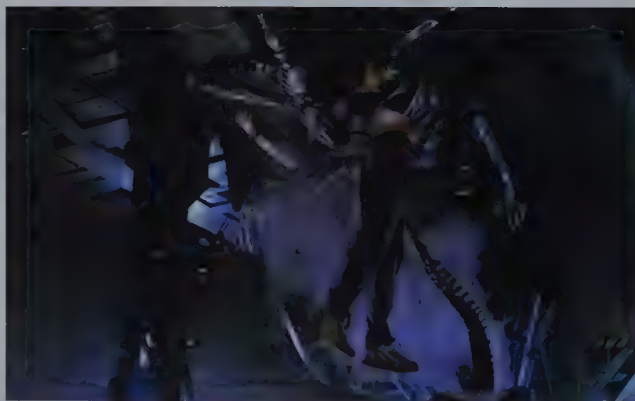
They then filmed one of the film's more gruesome and complex effects: the impalement of Bishop by the queen, who then rips his body in half at the waist. The tail jutting through Bishop took several days to get right. Back on January 4 they'd filmed what was probably a test of the effect, yanking the tailpiece through the chest by wire. For each take, Henriksen had to drink yogurt and milk, which he'd then spit out like android blood. On January 6, they'd shot more, but the milk went bad and Henriksen had food poisoning. "I went home and spent the whole night up," he said.

The next day he asked for fresher dairy product.

"When they had the robot throwing milk all over Sigourney," Hume recalled, "my loader would say, 'Milk it. I mean, mark it.' You know, with the sticks. She'd say, 'Oh, Martin, you put me right off.' But we were having a good time."

In post, they completed the effect, with a flexible tail tip coming up through a tube and "literally pulled out of his body by a wire," Winston said. "The front of Lance's body was built out slightly with a false front to allow the flexible tail to come straight out of his chest, although, in fact, it made a curve."

To sell the piercing effect, the next shot revealed the other end of the tail inserted into Bishop's back. Henriksen stood on a see-saw, so they could elevate him off-camera to make it look like the tail was lifting him into the air. "Jim set up the shot in such a way that it starts out tight on Lance with the tail sticking through his chest," Winston said, "then widens out to reveal that it is in fact an alien tail that has come through from behind, and finally



PREVIOUS PAGES: The alien queen in the undercarriage of the dropship.

LEFT: The Bishop dummy being torn in half at the waist.

RIGHT: Preparing the upper half of the Bishop dummy and (below) Winston pouring milk onto the dummy to simulate the android's "blood."

follows that tail all the way up and into the dropship where the queen is looming overhead."

The queen's ripping of Bishop in two took two days to prep. On January 21, the effects crew was ready for the difficult shot.

"Lance said they weren't paying him enough to do that shot," Winston joked, "so we had to come up with a dummy rig."

The full-body dummy of Henriksen was rigged by Richardson's team to break apart at the waist. Makeup on the duplicate head matched the expression on Henriksen's face in the previous shot, right down to the milk spewing out of his mouth. The queen's hands were attached to the dummy.

"Jim wanted Bishop to be held from behind, facing down," Richardson said, "then be torn in two with a twisting motion, so the top half of his body would turn and fall one way and the bottom half would turn and fall the other. Jim was very adamant about how far the bits of the body had to go and at what angle they should travel."

An armature within the dummy held everything together until the top and bottom turned a certain number of degrees, at which point they separated and milky blood burst out in pyrotechnic squibs, one in the head and several in the body. Then one wire attached to the upper-left shoulder of the dummy and another attached to the lower right hip enabled the crew to rip the body as the director had planned.

"Fortunately, the break was right at the belt line," Winston said, "which allowed us to put him back together, clean up all the milk, give him a new shirt and do it all over again. It took several takes to get everything just right."

"In the rushes, there were minutes and minutes of this footage where the Bishop dummy is being ripped in two," Lee said, "spewing out milk and guts etc. to get it just right."

SUPERGIRL

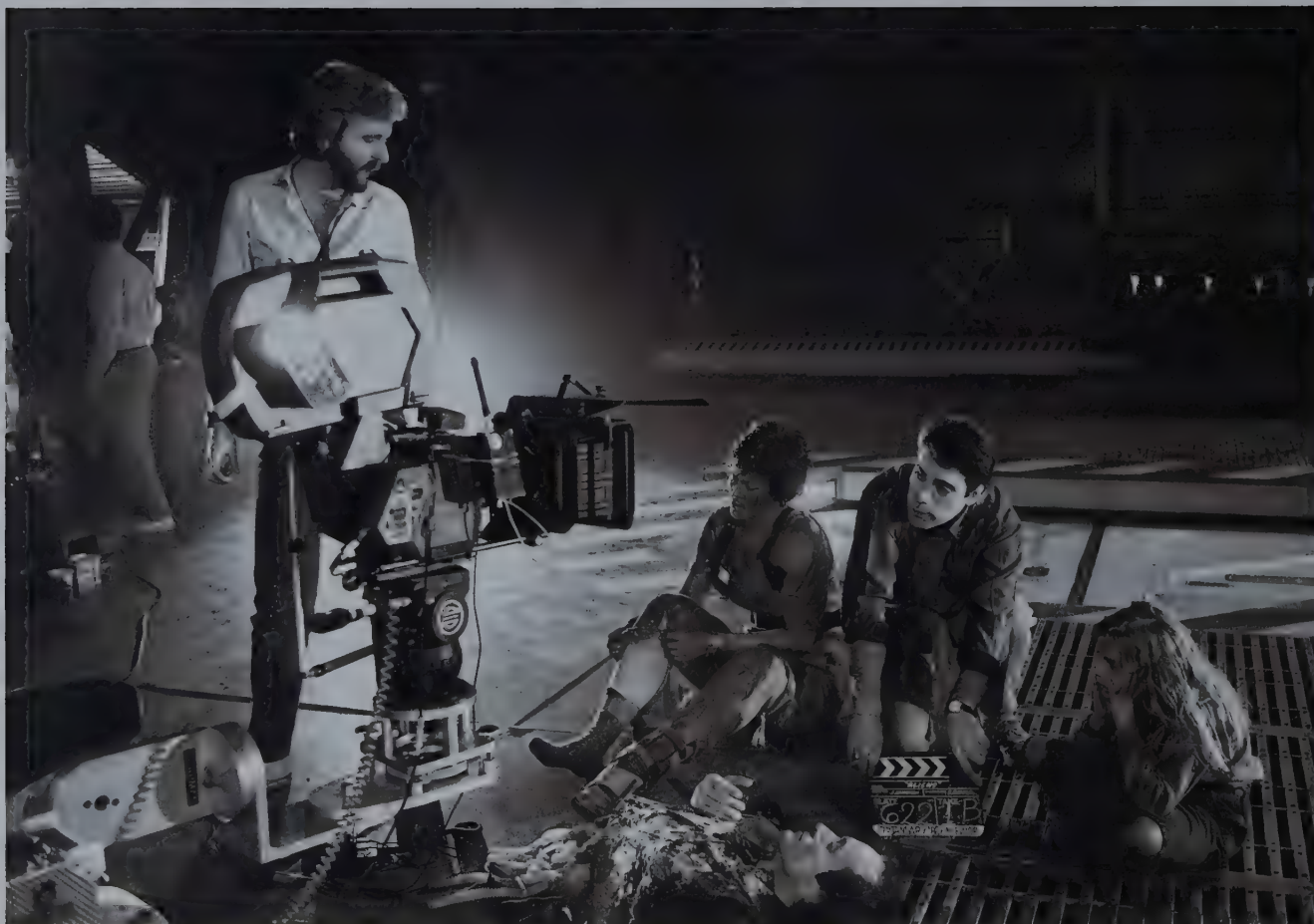
Behind-the-scenes footage shot on January 17 shows crewmembers throwing another dummy of Henriksen (his gory upper half) onto the cargo bay floor repeatedly, with Cameron studying each toss. He wanted it to land in a "cool, interesting way."

The actor found it "very creepy" looking at himself.

"Tom Woodruff and Alec Gillis developed an upper torso with lots of organic and inorganic android innards hanging out," Winston said. "Since Bishop had been tossed to the floor, it was fairly simple to cut a hole in the deck and have Lance's head and arms come up from below with the fake torso attached to him just under his armpits and over his shoulders."

As such, the heroic Bishop would prevent Newt from being sucked into space. "They got me all hooked up on the harness," Henn would recall, "and I said, being a typical nine-year old, 'I have to go the toilet now.' So they had to unhook me and take everything off. I came back to do it, and they said, 'Carrie, if we can get this done quick, then over on such-and-such a stage they have another set built...' This was where the aliens were actually flying around. It was really cool. The harness that was being used for pulling me across the ground was also the harness for flying. So they let me fly around





LEFT: Cameron, Weaver, clapper crewmember, and Henn look at Bishop (Henriksen) in the aftermath of Ripley's final defeat of the alien queen.

OPPOSITE: The art department maquette of the *Narcissus* model and (below) a final frame of the model being absorbed into the "belly" of a salvage ship. Motion-control shots of the *Narcissus* and salvage ship were accomplished using 8-perf holdout mattes generated by high-contrast passes and developed in Arkadon's own development tank (effects supervisor Brian Johnson's studio) so they could control the matte fit.

like Superman! But when I get pulled across the ground, that set was massive and it was pretty tiring constantly being dragged around. It doesn't sound like it would be, but it was mentally exhausting."

"I felt so bad for Lance Henriksen when we shot that scene," said Lindsay MacGowan. "He was underneath the floor, on the slant board, and the fake chest piece was there at his head, writhing around, squirting out this white fluid. I believe Lance was in that setup for two or three days of shooting, and after a while it was really rank because the milk had spoiled. It smelled disgusting. Every time I had to go near him to adjust something, I'd have to hold my nose and hold my breath. None of us wanted to go near him. But Lance never complained."

January 17 was probably Henriksen's last day on the film, but he would recall, "After the movie was done we went out and drank a lot of beer. But then a voice in the middle of the night said, 'You gotta come back, because when they sped the knife up it looks phony.' And so we actually did have to

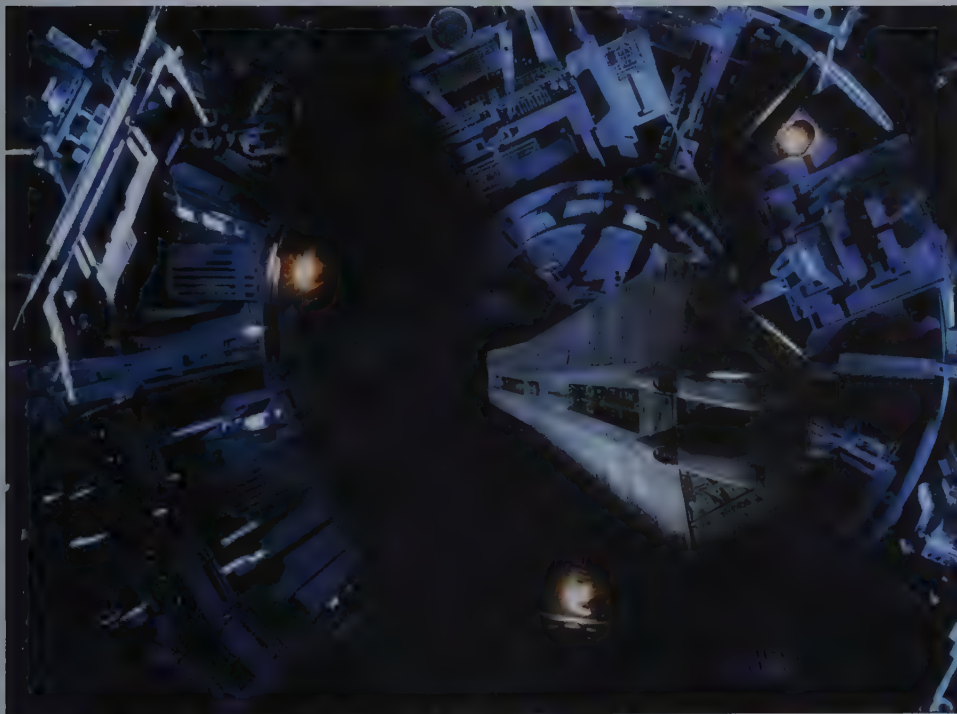
go back and re-do it, and that's when I caught Bill's pinky."

"The first time we'd undercranked the camera to make it look superhuman," Cameron would say. "But we wined up not using it because it was too fast. The take of Lance actually doing it fast himself [worked better]."

That same day, Brian Johnson met with the Skotaks and the production manager to "map out the remainder of the schedule and basic requirements."

Afterward, Johnson watched rushes with Cameron on the Steenbeck. His motion-control shots were needed somewhat urgently in editorial.

"One of the first things that Brian told us," Robert Skotak recalled, "was, 'You boys just continue with what you're doing. I'm here to help you and to get what you need.' You could really talk to Brian about effects, and he had empathy and knowledge. A lot of these guys had not been used to the rigors of an American, Jim Cameron-driven movie, but eventually there was solidarity; everybody fell in. It took four or five months before we were all on the same page and good friends, but it was happening."



Johnson and his crew had already started work on the motion-control stages at Arkadon, Johnson's facility in rural Bourne End. Their first four motion-control shots, which Cameron would be looking at closely, were of the *Narcissus* cruising aimlessly until 'swallowed' by a salvage ship. These would be done in-camera with bipack composites; no optical printer would be necessary to combine the elements.

The 2-ft-long *Narcissus* miniature, finished in preproduction, had been shipped over to Pinewood, where McClung had detailed the window area and touched up its paint job. In the first shot, Cameron wanted to have a nebula, the perspective lines of which converged on the *Narcissus*. Robert Skotak did a concept sketch for Arkadon's reference, which Dennis Lowe helped turn into a background matte for the motion-control shot.

"Jim never wanted to show the salvage ship in its entirety," said McClung. "All he wanted was this dark, ominous shape to engulf the *Narcissus*."

To that end, Cameron had found a large jet engine in a junkyard at the studio; McClung and his team then hot-glued "little sticks and so forth coming out of this thing" for an early video-storyboard, which became the basis for the final design of the underbelly. Robert Skotak made more design sketches, and turned the project over to model-maker Faisal Karim to detail it.

"I used to take each shot to Pinewood for Jim to view, as he was tied up getting the live-action shots in the bag," Johnson said in 1986. "After the first *Narcissus* docking shot was to Jim's satisfaction, he never visited Arkadon, so I think he was glad he reinstated me and my crew."

"James Cameron was tough, but very talented," said Stuart Galloway, one of the crew at Arkadon. "He kept on changing the opticals, right at the very last moment. He's a real perfectionist and knows what he wants to see. Cameron was one of the few directors I worked with who actually knows what he's talking about. It was months on *Aliens*—and during that time we were working flat out."

GIANT PUPPETS ATTACK

Cameron and company then tackled another shot of the queen in which she appears to lower herself down from the dropship. Crew ran wires from the pivot point on her back through the vehicle to the top of the stage. With various operators, the queen became a "giant marionette," according to Winston.

So her moves wouldn't look "floppy," they ran more wires from her ankles to landing points to make her step down into a "dynamic position," he said. "Jim had multiple cameras going and we did it a multitude of times."

For approximately four days, Cameron directed the film's choreographed climax: mother vs. mother, starting on January 20, Postproduction Day 6 (though Cameron would later recall the duel with the full-sized queen taking about a day and a half). It had been decided that if the queen had to move across the floor, the miniature would be used later; if she was in place or in close-up, they'd use the full-sized queen; if the powerloader was making big swings and knocking the alien down, they'd use the miniature to take the hit. The moment that Ripley smacks the queen, however, then grabs her by the neck and lifts her into the air was to be filmed live-action.

Weaver was placed in the powerloader with Lees. The live-action queen was a more complex operation: two puppeteers lay almost back-to-back inside her body; her head and neck was hydraulically controlled; her face, lip, and jaw movement were cabled-controlled; her legs were puppeteered externally; the base of her tail was also hydraulically controlled, the tail itself manipulated by wires. For close-up work, they used an insert tail or arms with fingers, cable-operated. An additional queen was used for rear angles.

Like the powerloader, during most of the shots, the weight of the queen was supported by a crane arm from above by wires or from below via a rigid bracket mount. The wires were used mostly in full-body shots; when filming her upper body, the bracket was enough.

On the call sheet, the queen's operators were listed as Stuart St. Paul and Malcolm Weaver (Nick Gillard and Terry Cade were also part of the team). "The alien queen was operated mainly by people," Cameron said. "There were off-camera puppeteers and there were two guys inside the body operating the arms and all that."

"During the fight," Richardson told *Cinefex*, "the whole stage was full of special-effects people pulling wires and pushing levers. It was quite a sight. Frankly, though, I was a little bit worried about our loader's ability to take all the knocking about. Being vacuformed plastic, it would have been easy enough to knock out a few spare arms or other bits and pieces, but essentially we'd built only one of them. Fortunately, it came through with flying colors. Nothing got broken. Sigourney Weaver, incidentally, was very quick to pick things up, and very tolerant in terms of standing on the set for hours at a time doing take after take after take. As an effects person, no matter what you do, in the final analysis you're totally at the mercy of the artist."

Depending on the shot, Winston's team would position the longer arms in dynamic poses or loosen them up so that they could move around freely.

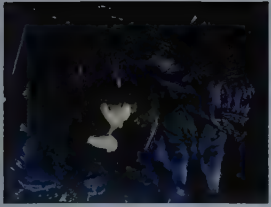
"With all the thrashing around the queen did," he said, "it was impossible to tell if the hand movements were free or directed. For our fighting arms, the ski poles were formed right into the forearm section, which could thus take quite a beating."

"We felt sure that the queen would hold up [as alien] because it clearly isn't a person," Cameron said. "It has extra limbs and spines and other features that defy normal human geometry, and we therefore knew we could show it longer without blowing the game. All we had to do was make it look non-mechanical, which proved not to be a major problem given Stan Winston's handiwork and my own tendency to shoot action scenes in very quick cuts. We were even able to speed things up a bit by shooting some of the shots at 12 or 16 frames per second."

On Thursday, the director prepared to film Newt in a grotto-like underworld, which made use of Pinewood's sub-surface tank. Henn and Cracknell had become close, and the first AD made a crewmember stay the entire night to make sure the water was warm the next morning.

On Friday, Henn waded in and found the water to be, in fact, too hot. After that problem was solved, she was filmed trying to escape from her predicament by standing on machinery to let Ripley and Hicks know where she is. Cameron said, "I consciously imitated a shot in *The Third Man* where her fingers come up through the grill" (in Carol Reed's 1949 film, the fingers of Orson Welles's character reach through a sewer grill).





ABOVE: A puppeteer inside the alien queen.

RIGHT, ABOVE: Winston working on the alien queen, and the queen in action.

RIGHT, BELOW: Filming the alien queen's arm, solo, for insert shots of claws pulling up the cargo bay in search of Newt.

OPPOSITE: A humorous shot of Weaver and the alien queen.





OPPOSITE: Cameron and Weaver prep and then the actress performs in the powerloader—shouting out to the alien queen: "Get away from her, you *bitch!*"

RIGHT, AND FOLLOWING PAGES: Duel between humanoid and alien mothers. Pivot action of the queen was hydraulically controlled by a power-steering unit off the crane arm. Trevor Butterfield supervised all of the alien queen's hydraulics, including a device that enabled the queen to tilt forward and back. The queen had two slightly different heads: a fighting head, built to take abuse; and a 'hero' head, more detailed and lighter weight. Each had about the same functionality.







"There was one scene where Sigourney comes up and I'm supposed to stick my hand up through the grate," Henn recalled. "I was laying underneath the grate and James was up top—Sigourney wasn't actually up there yet—and he was just saying her lines to me. On a cue I was supposed to stick my hands up through the bars and say my lines. James said, 'When I say XYZ, you say your line.' I said, 'Okay.' But he didn't say it in the way he said he was going to say it, so I never said my line. So he asked, 'Why didn't you say your line?' and I replied, 'You never said it how you said you would.' To which he could only say, 'Well, I guess she got me on that one!'"

For the shot of the alien monster looming up behind her, Henn said, "Everyone asked if it scared me, but the stuntman in the alien suit and I would sit on the pipes between takes, drinking tea and practicing our swim kicks."

The discovery of Newt was also filmed in post on Monday, January 27. "When Ripley finds her, her life means something again," Weaver said. "In a

strange way, Ripley and Newt are kind of sisters and, ultimately, Ripley manages to take care of her and protect her like a parent."

That day, Cameron wouldn't allow Henn's brother or mother near her because he wanted her to feel isolated, like her character. "I remember I was kind of upset," Henn said.

On the 'flying' soundstage, Stage 'E', the one Henn was allowed to visit, Cameron re-shot Hicks's view of 'crawling aliens' with all six alien warriors in an air duct set, which had been built vertically so crew could drop the aliens down via wires.

It was around this time that Henn worked her last day. "Sigourney and I had really bonded," she said. "Because everybody had left us, we used to joke that we were the orphans that nobody wanted."

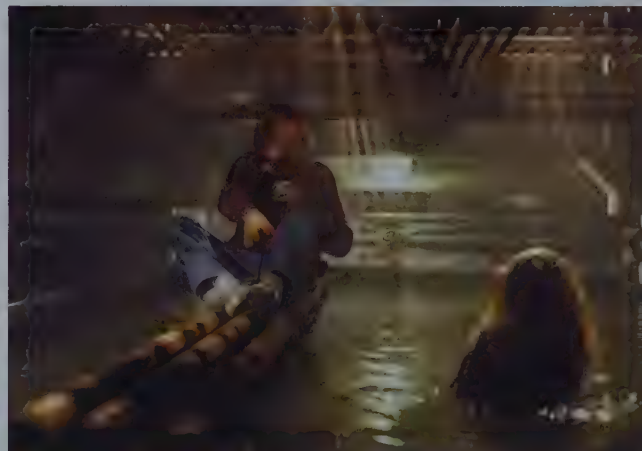
"I was in England for three and a half months," Biehn said. "They shot through January and even a little bit into February doing process shots. Some of the actors were still there when I left. Sigourney was still there."



ABOVE: A shot of Newt's hands stretching up through a floor grill was Cameron's homage to a similar shot in Carol Reed's *The Third Man* (1949).

LEFT AND OPPOSITE, AND FOLLOWING PAGE: Cameron filming Henn in the grotto, as Newt is abducted by an alien. Cameron said: "Several scenes play on the fear of being trapped in a very tight space with a lethal presence nearby but unseen, the intense, claustrophobic environment where characters build tension between themselves. Real fear has to touch a primal spot deep in the brain."; Newt in her nest.

PRECEDING PAGE (ABOVE): Winston and Cameron check on Weaver in the powerloader; (below) four puppeteers at the cable controls of the full-sized alien queen.









Because their dressing rooms were next door to each other, Henn would know when Weaver's husband visited and saw that she was sad when he left. Henn brought Weaver flowers the next day.

"Being the only child on set meant that I probably got a bit spoiled," Henn would say. "And when the shoot was finished, I don't think I really realized that it was over."

On January 27, they also filmed the queen and Ripley in the air hatch.

The next day, Winston and his second unit were busy shooting inserts of the Chestbuster. Cameron had instructed Winston to pull back on the blood and so on. The first film had established the visuals, "so I didn't feel like I had to one-up the gore factor," Cameron said. "Even a little of that would be enough for the audience. You don't create fear with gore; you create disgust, which is a whole different emotion."

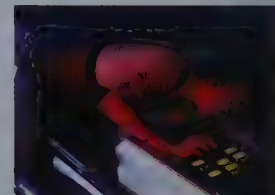
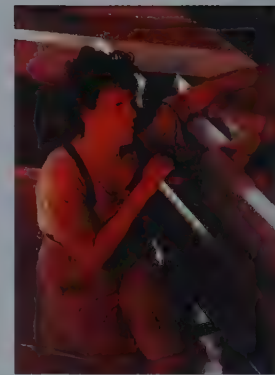
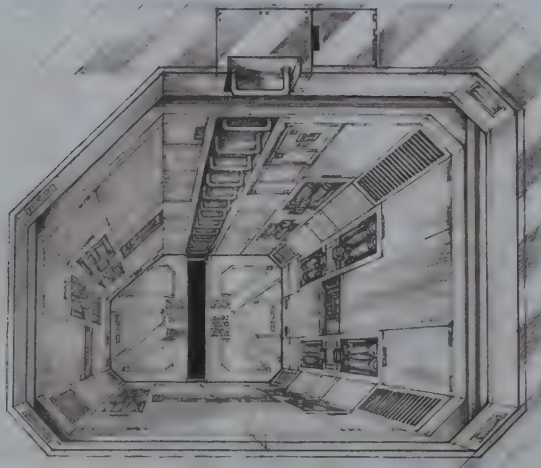
Cameron wanted the second film to have less of an emphasis on horror and more on "terror."

As is sometimes the case, one of the last scenes to be shot with the principal artist was one of the first in the film's story: the discovery of Ripley in the *Narcissus* (the first set built, it had been stored until needed in post). Hurd would remember Cameron trying to figure out how to make the beginning of the movie more "impressive," she recalled. "He said he wanted to use a robotic laser. It was an afterthought, and it wasn't in the budget. I told him, 'If you want it, you have to pay for it.' And he did."

The salvage crew entered wearing suits that were actually leftovers from the movie *Outland* (1981), which the costume department had tweaked and adorned with stencils. On the day, the batteries in the crew's flashlights kept going out.

All Weaver had to do was lie still in the craft's hypersleep chamber to wrap her part.

With nothing but effects and pickups left to do—quite a few, in fact—Cameron sped over to editorial, where things were not going well...



TOP: Weaver between takes and (above) pulling herself out of the airlock and pressing the button to close it.

LEFT: A Cobb concept drawing of the airlock, and unit photography that reveals how the set was built to conceal the fact that the ladder wall was in fact on the ground (so Ripley is climbing along the floor, not upward). Effects technician Julian Parry had painted his initials on the model of the airlock, "JP12," which were then dutifully transferred to the full-sized set.

FOLLOWING PAGES: More unit photography of Weaver/Ripley in the airlock, ridding herself of the alien queen at last; Ripley is discovered by the salvage team aboard the *Narcissus*.

W

MINI DOUBLE INDEMNITY

RIGHT: Shots of models, rear projection and live action as the dropship comes to a fiery end on Acheron.

On January 2, the effects crew filmed on Stages 'K' and 'M', and on Stage 'E' for FX 112, a 'process project': a shot of the dropship as it rescues Newt and Ripley from the exploding AP station. A note read: "Approved, but Jim pointed out, for the first time, the 'obvious' fact that the ladder should be visible on the dropship. Rather than re-shoot the whole shot, he is happy for it to be shown in an inset—straight miniature."

The note attests to the ongoing effects-crew complaint that their director was often cursory in his shot descriptions and liable to modify them after the fact. Because of this and other challenges, personnel changes, etc., a list of remaining shots was drawn up on January 7; numerous process plates, visual-effects re-photography, hanging miniatures, live action, lock-off elements, and more. A few days later, the list was complemented by a visual-effects progressive shooting schedule, which specified which models were needed for which shot. The number of effects shots was further reduced to 138.

Time was the chief factor now—at least one shot had to be completed and approved every day or two.

The initial sequence of the dropship explosion was completed around this time; the dropship's smash into the AP station was scheduled for later.

"We had to break the action into two pieces," Robert Skotak said.

The first was done on a wire rig: two parallel lines through the ship to support and direct it, and then a third one to pull it along—until it struck a rock. The effects crew used three cameras shooting at 120 frames per second for multiple takes.

"When the dropship hit the ground," Richardson told *Cinefex*, "a small explosion had to go off inside. The ship had to roll once, explode again, and then keep exploding as it tumbled along the ground and over the camera—all at what would appear to be about 200 miles per hour."

To achieve the effect with the proper timing, Richardson and his crew rigged four or five explosions to go off at approximately one-second intervals (at 120 frames per second; when projected at 24 fps, that would slow down to five-second intervals). Richardson used additional tricks to alter the timing as needed and to avoid having the first explosions preempt those following.

Dennis Skotak remembered the shot as one of the hardest of the film "for obvious reasons because of the dynamics that were needed for the action that Jim wanted," he said. "Jim wanted specific parts of the dropship to break away and fly off at certain points in the crash. It was coming right at the camera, so John Richardson rigged it so that that would happen, but so much is unpredictable, and take after take..."

For the second part of the first part, the dropship was set up low to the ground and yanked through the set toward the 'plate camera' via a tug wire. When it hit and started to tumble over, a series of explosions were triggered sequentially.

This plate was then used for the process shot on January 30, FX 76, with doubles for Burke, Hicks, and Vasquez diving to avoid debris as the dropship explodes.

Cameron had planned to use front projection so he could do a pull-back as they ran toward the camera with the ship tumbling after them in the process plate. After a test, he decided to do a pan-off instead, with the ship exploding and doubles exiting to the side with a rock that concealed the edge of the screen (beyond that was a scenic backdrop that continued the same background as on the process plate).

"When we did the shot, there were two other cameras off to the sides just to get cutting pieces," Skotak continued. "As a result, the set had to be dressed and lit to work from three different angles, which was difficult."

More doubles were used for an exterior shot in which Newt and Ripley watch the AP station vent after the crash.













CHAPTER 09

09



S M A S H I N G M A N N E Q U I N S

F E B R U A R Y T O J U N E 1 9 8 6





After Cameron wrapped postproduction pickups, Winston and his crew were done. Some of them traveled through Europe before returning home. (Previously, Mahan and Rosengrant had been invited by the film's stuntmen to the 'Stuntman's Ball,' where they met actor Christopher Lee—"That was more fun than anything," Mahan said). At Pinewood, production shut down the effects unit for a week or two so Cameron could concentrate with *Lovejoy* on his rough cut, which was late. It was 16 or 18 hours a day, seven days a week.

"Without a doubt," Winston said, "*Aliens* was the most difficult film I've ever been involved with, and, hopefully, the most difficult I'll ever be involved with."

"I think everybody was happy to see the film wind down," Hurd agreed. "Every day we ran them into overtime, so it was more of a marathon than a sprint."

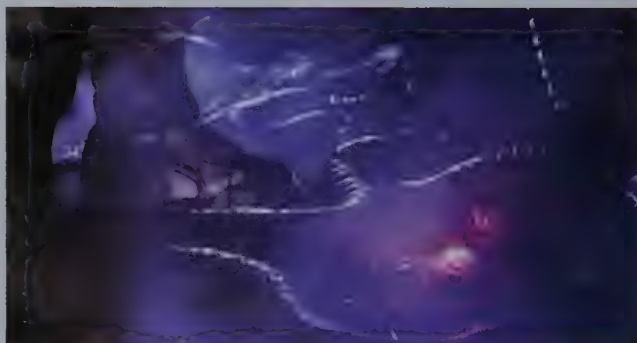
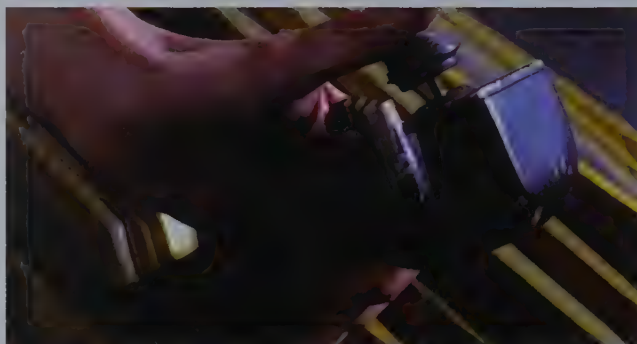
It was far from over, however. Cameron continued his perfectionist ways by making it hard on the editorial assistants when he told them to insert a blank frame in-between the discharge of each weapon, a 1/24-second "white out," Hurd said. "Which was very time-consuming because people had to make hundreds of splices. It was driving them nuts to cut together individual frames. There were so many one-frame cuts in reel 12 that the negative cutters said there were more cuts in that one reel than in entire films they'd done."

Lovejoy was also feeling the pressure. "It took him a while to really get what I was trying to do with this movie," Cameron said, "and a lot of his early cuts quite honestly I didn't really care for. It's not that there was tension between us, it's just that I didn't feel like I was getting what I wanted."

Cameron reflected on their material at the time while sitting in front of a Steenbeck editing table: "We got half as much as I wanted and twice as much as we need. We're looking at some material I shot in a previous life. Three weeks ago. Part of the airlock sequence, the finale."

After whipping a rough cut into shape, he would continue with *Lovejoy* nearly every day, while supervising and/or reviewing dailies of an additional three weeks of postproduction effects and insert photography on a small stage adjacent to the production offices. At times he was juggling four or five different setups at a time (or more).

"Quick close-up shots, all those inserts were set up on one stage," Lee said. "When there was an assembly of the film, Jim was missing crucial shots—for example, a hand punching buttons in the rain on the door to let



PREVIOUS PAGE: The alien queen.

LEFT: During postproduction several insert pickups shots were filmed, such as Ripley's hands and feet in the powerloader, and of flares dropped in the hive.



RIGHT: The two powerloaders in action aboard the *Sulaco*. During the last week of postproduction, Cameron had shot footage of Weaver in the full-sized powerloader against a bluescreen. The Ripley puppet inside the mini powerloader was then re-dressed as Spunkmeyer for a shot to establish two loaders in an cargo bay scene (the only live-action/bluescreen optical in the film, to this author's knowledge). The bluescreen shot was optically composited by Peerless. According to Begg, Peerless was considered the best bluescreen outfit in London at the time, thanks to their work on the 1985 Terry Gilliam film, *Brazil*.

them in. So Jim divided that stage into about a dozen small shooting spaces. Us model-makers and the art department dressed those sets, and Jim walked around with a camera and the first AD, and shot whichever one was ready next. They were one after the other—Ripley drops a flare on the floor, those kinds of insert shots—lots of them were all shot at the end.”

“All kinds of close-ups of hands on guns and pressing buttons on the powerloader,” Robert Skotak said. “One of our guys, his name was Nigel, and he had long fingers. His hands looked like Sigourney’s hands. So Jim would yell across the stage ‘Nigel, Nigel, I need your help over here right now!’ And we’d stop because Jim always had priority.”

During a rehearsal in a med lab setup of a Facehugger flying toward camera, Cameron sighed, “That wasn’t terribly convincing. I want you to pull it so it doesn’t look like it’s being pulled by a cord. Don’t you have gloves? Get some gloves. You can’t pull hard without gloves. Get some gloves and call me when you’re ready for this.”

“That Facehugger was shot in reverse, I think, pulled away from the camera,” Lee said. “That’s another quick insert shot that was done. Jim was very fast. It was business—‘Get the fucking shot,’ basically. It was exciting to be on set with somebody who seemed really passionate about it.”

On February 18, Cameron re-shot an insert of the six alien stuntmen ‘floating’ down the air duct. Two days later, he shot warrior aliens in the queen’s lair.

A few days before, the Motion Picture Association of America had written to Fox to say that the teaser trailer for *Aliens* had been judged “suitable for all audiences.”

By this time, the studio had agreed that Cameron’s own tagline for the film—“This time it’s war”—was the best of their marketing options. Fox embraced the idea of the sequel being touted as a combat film.

Winston would recall that after his return to Los Angeles, one of the first movies he saw had a teaser for *Aliens*. The 1 minute, 51 second trailer began with the movie logo and a high-pitched alien screeching, followed by shots of the marines, glimpses of the powerloader and the APC, then cut back and forth between those images and an alien landscape, the dropship, the AP station—and Sigourney Weaver. Various scenes were teased: the alien nest, finding Newt, the dropship explosion (part one), and Ripley vs. the queen. It finished with high-pitched music from the first film. The teaser trailer had no sound effects and no dialogue, except for the sound effect of a flamethrower at its end, but it did reveal quite a bit of the story.

In conjunction with the teaser, Fox sent out a press release on February 21: “*Aliens*, starring Sigourney Weaver and directed by James Cameron from his own screenplay, has wrapped principal photography in London.”

The movie, which was far from being finished, was now locked in to an announced release date: July 18, 1986.

DEMON LARVA

From circa February 19 to 25—Day 109 for the effects crew—they shot the queen in her chamber when two grenades punch into her egg sac; “flash goes off, beginning of explosion.” Cameron also filmed the queen lashing “in frenzy as she struggles and detaches from egg sac, surrounded by flames and smoke.”

The egg chamber miniature set was built at quarter-scale. The queen in this environment was a cable-controlled puppet attached to an abdominal distention, hung from ductwork above. On the floor of the set were dozens of vacuformed eggs, each eight to ten inches high.

“As usual, Jim was very specific about how everything had to be,” Dennis Skotak told *Cinefex*. “The egg sac had to operate in a certain manner, the eggs had to move in just such a way, and the ovipositor had to deposit an egg

precisely and with the right amount of goo.”

To make the ovipositor come alive, a crewmember, hidden by a mirror reflecting the set, slid his or her hand through an opening into the egg sac to guide the egg out. Another crewmember, under the floor, guided the egg to its landing spot so it wouldn't roll away. A boiler was placed underneath to create the right temperature so steam would rise into the set.

“One of the biggest problems,” Skotak added, “was that there was so much slime that we'd get an egg all positioned and ready to go, and it would pop out before we got to shoot it... It got messier and more disgusting every time. In fact, everything about that set was unpleasant. There was K-Y jelly and ‘superslime’ dribbling all over the place, and it was extremely hot. We had steam rising from below, and smoke, and all kinds of smelly things, even cans of Freon spurting from both sides. It was like shooting in hell.”

“It never seemed to be right all at the same time,” Cameron said.

BELOW LEFT: The miniature alien queen attached to her egg sac. The cable-operated queen on egg sac was constructed by Graham High and Werner Gresty.



RIGHT: The alien queen puppet in agony before tearing off her egg sac to pursue our heroes.



The grenade launcher effect was also “messy” given that the most energetic way of shooting it was up close, so the sac exploded right into camera. Skotak remarked that their work was drawing an audience. “We’d warn people to keep their distance, but invariably someone would wind up with a face full of slime.”

Some reported that a sharpshooter was brought in for inserts of the sac being punctured by the grenade launcher.

However, with live action wrapped, Robert Skotak said, “the ongoing need to ‘feed the monster’ with in-camera process plates, which were some of the most complicated things we had to do, was at an end. This helped speed things up to some degree, and allow better access to working with Jim on the ongoing work.”

SMALL PUPPETS ATTACK

Much of February and probably some of March, about three weeks total, was spent on the battle of miniatures. The queen had taken about four months of work to create and, at showtime, required 49 cables connected to 10 joysticks controlled by 5 puppeteers. Two more crew helped operate from above, and two from below for the queen’s legs.

“The queen is our most complicated cable-operated puppet to date,” Beswick said in 1986.

The Ripley puppet had its hands attached to the pistol grips so that when

the loader arms moved, her arms followed. Her head would follow the powerloader’s ‘torso turn.’ Like the queen, the loader took several puppeteers to function, was cable/joystick-operated, and had its legs controlled from below.

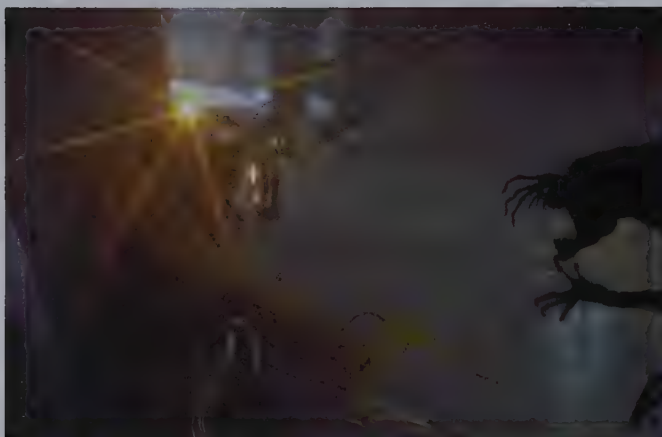
Phil Notaro made the trip to London to advise and consult during the key shoot, because Beswick wasn’t available and because nobody else knew the mechanics as well (and because it was difficult to obtain work permits).

“When I first got there,” Notaro said, “the puppets had arrived, but none of the tools or controls. So my first week was devoted to last-minute detailing on the powerloader and coordinating with Jim as to what he wanted.”

He also spent a lot of time with Barry Saunders, the construction manager. The quarter-scale cargo hold had already been built, but needed some adjustments made for the puppets and puppeteers. Big slots were cut into the set floor to accommodate those who would be operating the miniatures from below, and there was some last-minute spray-painting.

The queen was about 3 ft tall, taller than the powerloader and Ripley, and heavier because of her more complex interior mechanics. However, she appeared to be about the same size because she was usually bent over, crouched in a stalking pose in most shots (“she was still suffering from having her egg sac removed,” Notaro noted).

“I love to have cable-actuated things that have been worked out and tested on video and take eight people to operate,” Cameron said. “*Aliens* is a blend of upscale and downscale techniques, whatever a specific shot required. I guess it’s what you’d have to call a ‘no pride’ approach. But if the shot can



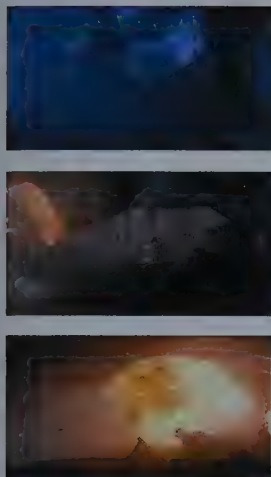
LEFT: The duel continues between the puppets, aided by the puppeteers, Cameron, and crew. Cameron said, per the climactic duel, "when you analyze this scene, it's really a bunch of quick cuts."

OPPOSITE, LEFT: Final frames of the dropship exploding into the AP station maw. A 12-ft cutout of the AP station, painted by studio veteran Ernie Smith, was placed at the far end of the colony street miniature for a shot of the dropship's explosive demise (part two of its crash). That painting was dressed with props, including a radiating fin. The effects crew then cut a 3 x 8-ft hole in the painting and built an "inside" for it from plastic pipes and leftovers from other miniatures. They also placed small-scale rocks in the foreground landscape. The exploding dropship was really a foot-long piece of plastic, roughly the right shape, which was yanked into the station as real explosions were triggered by the pyro technician and filmed at 120 fps.

OPPOSITE, MIDDLE: Concept art of the AP station entryway.

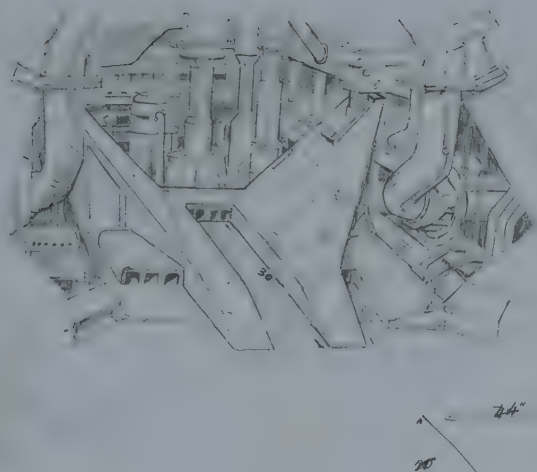
OPPOSITE, FAR RIGHT, ABOVE: Robert Skotak on the miniature cargo bay set. This quarter-scale partial build of the cargo bay, with one dropship, was built for a shot designed to augment the live-action briefing scene. That scene had been shot as a locked-off VistaVision plate on the full-sized cargo set. To make a 90-degree panoramic pan from miniature to live action (far right, middle), the effects crew took five photographs of the miniature, which they enlarged and pasted together; the point where the two sets joined was behind the full-scale dropship. Combining the two "halves" required tremendous and skillful preparation: re-touches with chalk and white paint, spot-lighting to boost the tonal values of the photographs; and 36 C-stands with various color-correction filters to darken certain areas and make the blacks purer. A three-person crew using a field recorder started on the photograph

(continued in margin opposite)



paste-up, before panning left into a dark area where a beam splitter reflected the projected live-action footage on a process screen. A few quarter-scale cargo bay elements filled in the edges where the plate ended.

FAR RIGHT, BELOW: A twelfth-scale miniature of the cargo bay was 8 ft wide by 20 ft deep, and housed two 6-ft dropships; it was also elevated so puppeteers could fit underneath. For the dropship launch, motorized telescoping tubes were attached to overhead tracks so the ship could be lowered at variable speeds. Its lights and landing legs were operated by radio control; the doors of the airlock were opened manually from below. For the actual launch sequence, dropship lights and landing legs were operated by radio control and the *Sulaco's* doors were opened by the Skotaks. The down-angle from the cockpit with the doors opening was also done by Peerless, supervised by Kent Houston. White polystyrene sheets lit by 10k lights were moved around on the ground to create reflections of the light coming in when the doors opened. "There is a lovely displacement of the image of the opening doors through the cockpit glass," Begg says. "This is years before this kind of detail that you'd expect nowadays with digital effects."



be achieved by grabbing what is the equivalent of a rubber chicken and throwing it against the wall, that's fine; I'll do it that way too."

The effects unit planned to complete about one shot a day using two cameras: one on the queen, one on Ripley in her powerloader. The powerloader wasn't ready until the first day on the miniature set because it hadn't been detailed before being shipped. Their first shot was the queen striding across the cargo bay, hell-bent on killing Ripley. "We had everybody working on that shot," said Notaro. "The queen was capable of about 30 movements, but Jim wanted one more when we got to shooting: a rotating move right at the top of the tail so that she'd be able to turn more quickly."

The crew was able to add a tiny mechanism that allowed her whole body to turn farther and faster. After choreography and rehearsal, smoke was pumped in, and after multiple takes, Cameron approved the first shot in dailies.

In editorial he would use what worked. "We hid a lot with smoke and steam and strobe lights," Cameron said. "I can guarantee you that one frame after whatever we used and one frame before sucked completely."

The next day, the queen was supposed to slam into the closing cargo bay doors, still trying to get Ripley. "Jim really got carried away with those puppets once he had them on the set," Notaro said. "We were shooting with virtually no storyboards, so nobody had any idea what Jim wanted except for him. We had two puppeteers literally ramming the puppet into the sliding doors as hard as they could, over and over again, but after about ten takes, Jim said, 'Here's how I want you to do it.' And he smashed it three times harder than anybody else had!"

The puppets hadn't been designed for their director's roughhousing, and had to be repaired at least once. On set or between shots, Notaro had to "constantly" make adjustments to meet Cameron's requirements. "Sometimes I'd try to second-guess him," Notaro said, "but every time I did, sure enough, he'd want something other than what we'd set up for. He'd ask how long it would take me to get ready and I'd say, 'Oh, two hours.' And he'd say, 'I'll be back in an hour and 45 minutes.' An hour and a half later, he'd be back



saying, 'Are we ready?'"

Fortunately, Cameron reduced the number of shots, with longer takes and fewer setups, because in editorial he was seeing that he had more usable footage from the live-action shoot than he'd thought.

Circa February 27 and 28, the effects team shot the tumble into the airlock, during which the queen was supposed to break one of the hydraulics on the right knee of the powerloader, which buckles, and they both crash over. They then moved to the miniature airlock and filmed its doors opening into outer space: the powerloader falls out, but the queen holds on.

A floppy stand-in was used for the queen (made of hard and soft foam pieces), but they had only one powerloader. Both puppets were dropped about 5 ft into the airlock. "We did about eight takes on it," Notaro recalled, "and each time the loader crashed into pieces. We'd then superglue it back together and do it again."

Subsequently, they shot the powerloader and queen being sucked into space (Ripley has crawled up a ladder to safety). The effects crew therefore took the airlock set/minature out of the cargo hold and bolted it to the soundstage ceiling, about 30 ft up. They positioned the puppets, opened the airlock doors, and let them drop. They were supposed to fall into a big 'starfield' blanket.

"They had a kind of space net to catch the powerloader because they only had one," Cameron said, "but it hit the floor anyway and exploded."

"The powerloader hit the edge of the starfield," Notaro said, "struck the





concrete floor and shattered into a million pieces. There was nothing to do. But Jim was very pleased with it. He looked over the edge and said, "That's it! We don't have to do that again." (The rotating glass beacon on top was the only piece that survived intact and functional.)

Only another shot or two of the miniature queen was needed. On March 4, they filmed her coming down a hallway in the AP station.

"She just barely fit in the hallway," Notaro said. "I managed to get everything all set up and ready to go before my flight home. After I left, they shot it for two days."

A SCORE TO SETTLE

While Cameron supervised the last of the effects shots, spent hours in editorial, and interfaced with Fox, he was also creating many of the film's sound effects in the living room of his home with Hurd, using a synthesizer. "At the time, people weren't using synthesizers in England," she said. "But a two-person crew and Jim used one to create the sound of the alien queen, and the dropship going down [and others]. It really was a home movie."

On March 18, he was back on stage shooting the miniature queen separating from her egg sac, one of the hardest shots to complete according to Robert Skotak. To make the surrounding flames more realistic he placed a mirror, positioned to reflect a flame bar emitting 7 ft-high flames, about 15 ft behind the queen. Another flame bar was positioned so it could be filmed through a beam-splitter and more flames would appear in front of the mini-queen. Using these practical methods, Cameron could move the camera during the shot, and crew could rain down debris in front of the background flames.

"It just wasn't breaking right," Dennis Skotak recalled his brother saying. "It was a relatively innocuous close-up of her breaking free from the egg sac, of her lower body and the stretching of this elastic material that attached her to the egg sac. It had to hang on just long enough, but it would either snap too fast or it wouldn't break free at all. Take after take after take after take... That sequence, which looks like a nightmare on film, was actually a nightmare to shoot."

By March 21, composer James Horner had arrived in London to write the score. He had only six weeks in an already tight schedule, and expected to find the editing completed and the film locked; instead he couldn't even view a cut, at least at first. When he visited editorial at Pinewood, he saw an area overflowing with film cans, celluloid, and trims. "It was a nightmare," he said. "Ray was inundated and just barely keeping up with the film still coming in."

He also discovered that they were still shooting, that the vanishing days were coming out of his time, and he was told that the sound mix was in trouble. At this stage they should've been in pre-mix already, and at least one or two of the sound crew were criticizing Cameron's need for perfection at each step.

"There was no picture to score when I got there," Horner said.

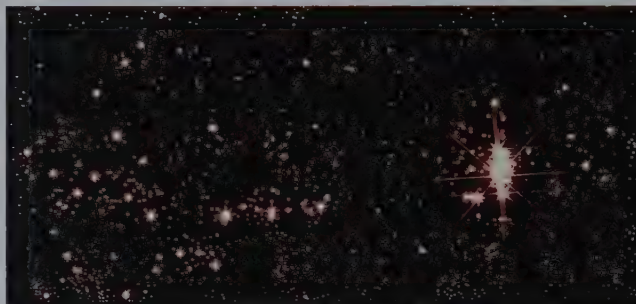
Horner pleaded with Hurd to move the picture back four weeks, but of course the answer was no.



PREVIOUS PAGES: The powerloader and alien queen puppets in the miniature cargo bay. Most of the powerloader's visible joints were for appearance; its pulleys and cable mechanisms were hidden inside the fiberglass shell.

LEFT, MIDDLE, AND OPPOSITE: Elements for shots, a starfield and a cloudscape (for the massive colony explosion).

LEFT, TOP: The dropship escaping the explosion.



LEFT, BELOW: Press for the film was ramping up, so Julian Parry was asked to stage the queen's head for a PR shoot (in a studio annex). He set it up, adding gel to the monster's head, and had a smoke machine running while Cameron and Hurd posed for photos.





He would recall Cameron spending “two days” with the sound-effects crew to perfect the sound of key weapons. Eventually, Cameron found time to ‘spot’ the music with Horner, the process in which director and composer discuss in detail each scene and sequence, and decide what needs music and what kind of music. They chose not to score the climactic fight. “I just felt it would have a greater sense of reality,” Cameron said. “It would be driven a little over the top if it had music. It was playing very real without it.”

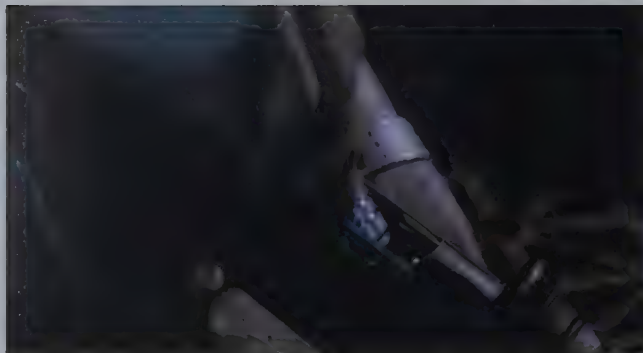
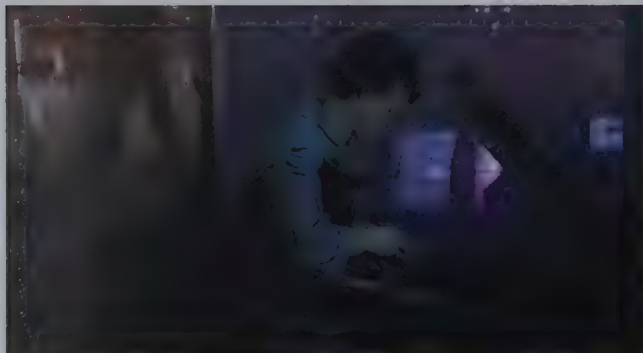
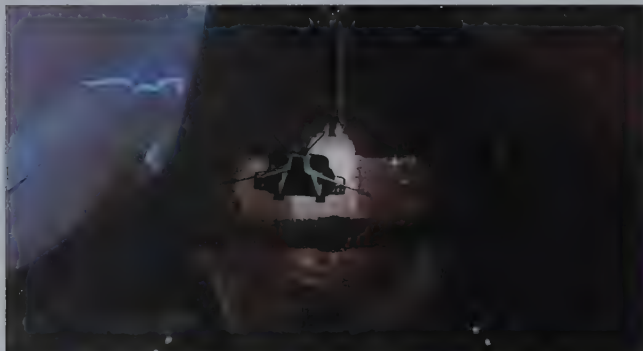
Thursday, March 27, Cameron was back shooting the bomb bay doors

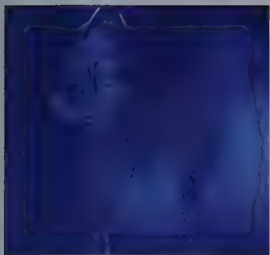
opening on the twelfth-scale cargo lock as the dropship exits. Another setup on that day (or the day after) was dropship II getting its “landing legs fouled in tangle of conduit” of the AP landing platform. “Pull free and retract,” a production note read.

The chain-reaction explosion of the AP station was actually a big light bulb surrounded by cotton. “We didn’t have any money left for a big effect so we just made something up,” Cameron said.

At Arkadon, Johnson and his crew were also filming the dropship. “The dropship shots were among the most difficult and time-consuming,” he said.

LEFT: Final frames of the remarkable elevator sequence in which Weaver/Ripley prepares her armaments and herself for the rescue of Newt and the inevitable battle against the aliens. Cameron felt that the key to the film was to take the story “absolutely seriously”: no camp, no winking at the audience. “Don’t give the audience a chance to question what you’re doing. And if the actors can sell it, then it works.” For the approach of the dropship, the background AP station was shot non motion-control at 4fps on a regular dolly with a pinch contact roller turning the wheels super slow, according to Begg, creeping along in order to achieve a greater depth of focus on a tiny scale model and “helped us hand-flicker the reactive light effects of the lightning bolts on the model.” The dropship and bolts were optically comped on afterward.





ABOVE: A black curtain was draped behind the queen alien when she comes out of the elevator, because the set wasn't big enough to hold the monster. Only the front half of her was inside; her back half jutted beyond the rear onto the soundstage.

"Jim's whole philosophy was to keep everything simple, but Jim was progressively speeding up the action. The problem was that Jim wanted the action to be a lot faster than originally envisioned. As a result, the models, and sometimes the camera, had to be moving really fast. There were some terribly fast tracking maneuvers. Unfortunately, we didn't have time to devise any major rigs to accomplish these kinds of moves. All we could do was adapt what we had."

FIGHTING WEIGHT

The rough cut and the editor's cut were a good roadmap for the director's fine cut, according to Hurd. But when Cameron presented it to executives at Fox, who flew in for the occasion, there were serious problems.

"The complaint from the studio was that it went on too long without anything really happening," said Cameron, who had been trying to "draw out the suspense. You have to remember that *Aliens* took its time revving up, since I was doing a lot of character [development] at the beginning."

A series of conversations took place. The upshot was that director, producer, and studio agreed to make cuts in the film's running time. After a few trims, it was still too long. The studio wanted the film reduced by close to 20 minutes. "I just could not see how it was possible," Cameron said. "But Gale said, 'I've been thinking about this for a few days. Reel three. You can take out reel three.' Of course I immediately rejected that as absurd. I couldn't imagine the film without the cognitive tether to the previous film: the spaceship, the alien derelict. And then I thought about it..."

After thinking about it, the director agreed to cut those and the early colony scenes. All that was necessary was a dialogue bridge to fill the story gap so that most of reel three could be omitted. Other scenes also fell to the cutting-room floor. Chronologically, the first to go was the 'virtual park,' which meant no backstory with Ripley's daughter.

"I cut the scene at Gateway," Cameron said, "because when I first watched the movie cut together, I thought, *Oh, how convenient*. Burke lets us know that Ripley has lost a daughter, but guess who the one survivor of the entire LV-426 colony is? A little girl. That struck me as real Hollywood storytelling, overly convenient and symmetrical. I also thought the Gateway sequence slowed things down too much.

"That's the same reason the Jordan family's expedition was removed," he added. "We didn't need it. Both scenes were mainly cut for reasons of pacing and length. Though that's not the reason I dropped the scene of Ripley handing Burke a hand grenade to commit suicide. I cut that simply because I felt we hadn't done a good job on the scene. I didn't like the way it looked, so I removed it."

Another story sequence made up of a number of mostly short shots featured the sentry guns. "The studio talked me into taking them out," Cameron said. "The studio felt like we were taking too much time getting on with the story."

"The miniature shot in the hive was elaborate," said Begg, referring to the opening foreground miniature. "We tilt up, we see suddenly a dozen levels. Because the shot was too long, however, they used only the last two-thirds of it in the cut."

"The colony complex was one of the biggest, most difficult models, and that got cut," Robert Skotak recalled. "It was like, *Wow*. If we hadn't had to shoot those 17 or 20 shots, it would have been a much, much, much easier film to make. It was heartbreaking when Jim came in and said, 'All that stuff is going to be lost.'"

In fact, the Skotaks and their crew had yet to complete four or so shots on the colony set, so those were omitted.

Length was not the only issue. As Horner had observed, editor Ray Lovejoy was having his own challenges. "Ray was feeling very frustrated," Cameron said. "Toward the end, he cut the alien queen battle and he was really nervous because he hadn't been doing the kind of action cutting that I really wanted; I'd had to mess with it a lot with another editor. I liked the other editor's action-cutting better than Ray's. So finally Ray just grabbed all the film and locked himself in his room—and said, 'Don't bother me!' Not mean, but just because he had to do it.

"It took him about a day or two, but he cut together the last eight minutes of the picture. He showed it to me very nervously and I watched the whole thing—and I said, 'It's perfect. It's absolutely perfect. Don't change anything.' He felt it was a huge victory because he had mastered the style for the film. Stylistically, *Aliens* owes much more to *Terminator* than it does to *Alien*, in the sense that *Terminator* was intended as a full-on adrenalin rollercoaster ride, with a solid emotional base and accessible characters. And that's the intention with this film as well."

FOLLOW THE LEADER

Actors were scheduled for ADR—additional dialogue recording (or looping)—throughout March and April in a London studio. A few of them learned at this time that their parts had been diminished or that scenes had been cut. Cynthia Scott went in and found that her close-ups during the Chestbuster sequence had been omitted.

"I guess the biggest deal with this whole thing is I'm not going to be cut from this movie," Henriksen said at the time. "I've done many movies in the last ten years where the cutting has just wiped my parts out. I've always known if I just hang on, I'll have the chance—and I'm getting it."

Other lines were recorded 'wild,' meaning the actors didn't have to match their reading to a lip synch. Such was the case with Biehn's line as Hicks in the APC before blowing an alien head off: "Eat this!"

"It was like—what do I do?" said Goldstein, who was looping for the first time. "You'd hear *beep beep beep*" as prompts (in her earphones while watching herself onscreen).

Before Bill Paxton's return, Cameron and his sound crew had spent hours trying to understand what he'd ad-libbed as the alien warriors were pulling him in to his death because the actor was shouting over the noise of his own noisy machine gun. "He made up different dialogue on every take," Cameron said.

Then Paxton was able to loop his lines—"You want some of this?!" etc. "The last time I saw Jim in England, when I had to do my ADR work, he had a very subdued demeanor," Rolston said. "He shook my hand and said, 'Hey man, you did a real good job.' And that's all he said."

Perhaps close to exhaustion, Cameron added a female computer voice counting down the seconds in the AP station as an intentional tie-in to the first film's computer countdown in the *Nostromo*.

As April passed by, Horner was becoming even more impatient. "We just had so little time," he said. "Jim was still shooting, it was crazy. And the producer on *Aliens* was somebody that I didn't care for and whose opinions I didn't even care [for]—my relationship was supposed to be with Jim."

Horner had already devised a few musical "ideas," but he couldn't write anything specific because the film still wasn't locked; to provide music for the orchestra, he'd have to match up "all the tiny little matches" between image and sound—and that wasn't possible until each reel was completely final. Horner said that Hurd didn't understand that. Nor did Cameron. "They didn't know what they were asking, how inhuman and how difficult it was."

"I didn't really know how to work with an orchestral composer," Cameron would say. "And I don't think James knew how to work with directors, to be perfectly honest. He had a lot to learn and I had a lot to learn."

"James was not very collaborative," Horner would say, "and I had my own limitations. It makes me feel so crazy when I can't deliver perfection because of some imposed time schedule."

Although the film wasn't locked, Cameron was feeling better in editorial. He liked the idea that at a certain point in the story, with the alien onslaught, the industrial complex "completely collapses, and they are following the lead of a little girl," he said in 1986. "I also like trip-hammer editing and the incredible forward momentum you get from an action sequence that's really well orchestrated—where 'A' follows 'B' and there's a domino principle at work—once something starts, it just goes on and there's no stopping it. I think people are exhilarated by that, especially if they understand the characters and are rooting for them. The entire last half of the film is an absolute pressure cooker."

He told one journalist: "There's an emphasis on action and character. Fast cutting. Good storytelling. Hopefully trying to stay away from visual pretension as much as possible. Just go for fun and exhilaration and people that you can relate to as human beings, which I think is very important."

Except for studio executives and Cameron's core team, of course, no one else was seeing the different iterations of *Aliens*. "You just sweat it until you see it all cut together," said Cobb, who often worried what sets would look like in their final form.

Cameron emphasized at the time: "It's the characters, I hope, who are memorable—unless I botched it in the cutting room."

Strangely, though executives at Fox had liked what they'd seen, the studio was backing *SpaceCamp*—a teen comedy—as its big summer picture.

"They were putting all their guns on that," Cameron said in 1986. "I don't understand that. They were really pushing it. They pushed the hell out of *SpaceCamp* and it's not because they felt they had to back a dog, because that's not the way Fox works. They had seen a rough cut of that picture long before it was done, before any of the effects were in it, and they honestly thought that they had a hit in that film."

Aliens, meanwhile, was almost at its final running time of 2 hours 17 minutes, which Fox still considered too long (and that may have been one

more reason to back *SpaceCamp*, which was clocking in at less than two hours). According to the *L.A. Times*, Fox really wanted a movie of two hours or less. Anything longer than 2 hours 5 minutes would limit the number of daily screenings from five to four, and would substantially reduce a film's box office. Executives were therefore pushing Cameron hard to cut 12 more minutes.

FORKED TONGUES

Cameron's reputation preceded him when it came time to start the pre-mix. Chief dubbing mixer Graham Hartstone had heard about the director's clashes with the crew before he was called to a lunchtime meeting with Hurd and Fox executive Tim Hampton in the middle of April.

"They told [me] that they wanted me to do *Aliens*, and asked how long I would need to mix it," Graham Hartstone said. "We used to take about ten weeks for a James Bond film, and *Superman* was 12 weeks, so I said about 10 to 12 weeks. And they said, 'Ah, well, if we take it back to the States, they'll do it in seven.' So I said, 'Okay, I'll do it in seven.' I subsequently learned, rightly or wrongly, that their seven weeks in the States was excluding pre-mixes."

Locked into a minuscule timeframe, Hartstone previewed the movie. He recalls that it was by then a pretty fine cut—probably the director's fine cut—with most of the reels locked; it had no temp-music track. "My palms were sweating, just watching it there," he said. "I thought, *There's nothing I can do to spoil this picture—because it works*. Even in that raw situation it held you from front to end."

He attended an ADR session and witnessed Weaver looping her lines. The actress had to add intense, very physical breathing and gasps to many sequences, including her rescue of Newt. Hartstone would remember her completing the latter shots in one take. Weaver also had to loop her dialogue during Ripley's nightmare to match the slow motion.

Hurd had told Hartstone that Cameron had hated the mix on *Terminator*. "So I got the movie down to run in our preview theater. I thought it was pretty good, so I felt, *That's quite a high bar*. In fairness, it was in mono and I had 70mm six-track to play with."

"I was walking through Pinewood Studios on another job," said Martin Hume, "and James was sitting in the cutting room and also doing the dubbing and everything. I walked past and I looked in this room, and he said, 'Hey, man, come in here. Have a look at this.' It's fantastic.' 'Oh, thanks so much.' And actually, he was a very nice guy."

On April 21, Hartstone and his two mixers, on permanent staff at Pinewood, started the 'dialogue pre-mix.' (The studio had three mixing theaters, a Foley recording theater, and so on.) "We had to get all the dialogue into shape," he said, "because everything else is subservient to the dialogue. We played that into the theatre monitor for reference while we pre-mixed the effects. We recorded them on six-track pre-mixers."

Cameron arrived on that first day of the pre-mix, though he was still scrambling to finish the edit, various effects shots—and, above all, the sound effects. "We had at one point about 48 sound-editing staff on

RIGHT: At the sound mixing console (left to right) dubbing mixer Michael Carter, chief dubbing mixer Graham Hartstone, and dubbing mixer Nic LeMessurier. Hartstone says: "Nic and Mike were with me as effects re-recording mixers on many films. We'd all sit together to premix the effects. One of them on the panning console, which was down in the front, because everything had to be panned. Two of us played the elements, the tracks, at the back."



FAR RIGHT: The same lineup (actually working on another film)—Carter, Hartstone, and LeMessurier (with sound editor Peter Musgrave, who was not on *Aliens*, to the right)—but with a better view of the mixing board.



effects," Hartstone said. "There was one sound editor who had to put a *squelch* sound on the front and on the end of all the transmissions through the whole movie. The sound editors, I would safely say Jim gave them a pretty hard time."

While the Hartstone trio premixed the dialogue, the effects were grouped into six separate stereo premixes: Foleys, atmospheres, guns, explosions, alien sounds, doors (and perhaps one or two other categories). Each completed premix was then added to a composite stereo track for reference. "The idea was to build up the track with layers of premixes," Hartstone explained, "which are panned, equalized at a level we think will be right for the final mix. We started with whatever the editors and sound engineers had got ready for us." (Sounds were 'panned' across the screen through left, center, and right speakers, or into the theater on the 'surround' speakers. Dialogue was almost always located in the center speaker, because moving it about was distracting to the audience over reverse cuts.)

While Cameron had created some effects in his living room, "they didn't do it all, by any stretch of the imagination," Hartstone adds. Don Sharpe and his 48-strong sound-effects staff contributed the lion's share, as described on cue sheets provided to the mixers. Hartstone himself made the sound of the aliens from animal noises (processed pig squeals) with pitch shifters and so on.

"A lot of the material I was presented with by Don Sharpe were conventional sounds that I had to try and make spacey or a bit better," he said. "We had an early harmonizer called a Publison, which allowed us to pitch and bend the sounds. I always liked more than one sound, especially working in stereo. So when you get a *plunk* from the dropship locking in or something, I would put it through the Publison and make it go *clunk-plunk-clank*, on three different speakers, all reverb, to make it bigger."

In late April, while Cameron was working on the premix with Hartstone, Fox's new president of production, Scott Rudin, only 28 years old, suddenly flew to London to see the latest cut. He was going to make a strong gambit to cut those 12 minutes the studio was eager to see disappear.

After Rudin, Cameron, and Hurd watched the movie, "we were standing on this London sidewalk and Rudin asked us if there was anything that could be cut," Cameron said in 1986. "But we felt that if we had to take out 12 more minutes, the movie wouldn't make sense."

It was a tense moment, and there was some tense give-and-take, but Rudin agreed.

Then it was back to editorial and the premix.

"Jim would be having his fingers in everywhere," Hartstone said. "He was

running stuff on two Steenbecks to check grading. He was checking everything, working everywhere at the same time. And when he'd come to see me, if I was struggling with something, he'd say, 'No, that's rubbish. Go do it again.' He frequently sent stuff back to the cutting room saying, 'That sounds no good—come up with something else.' He was very, very sound conscious, and he wasn't the easiest man to get along with because he's a perfectionist. And he was always right, to be honest. One of the things was the quality of the footsteps in Foley. They'd made an attempt to match with the sync, but the sync was on the wooden set. That wasn't any good, so I had to do a certain amount of that again to make it more metallic" (to match what was supposed to be metal in the film).

"Obviously, a film has no touch-feel; it's all sound and vision," Cameron said. "But everybody knows what it feels like to have water dripping on you. So if you can create a scene into which you can project yourself and know what it would feel like to be standing where the actor is standing, then anything that happens to that character is happening to you. I think that's why people pay hard-earned dollars to see a film like this: to participate in it, to have their senses affected, to feel emotions."

"We also discussed at great length the necessity to maintain light and shade in the soundtrack," Hartstone said. "It's all too easy to smother a soundtrack edit with a continuous loud level. We were very concerned to be able to manipulate it so it would be like a series of sawtooths, with actual quiet patches, like when Newt puts her finger through the grill, before we hit a loud sound. You build up to some level, and you want and you need the time to get it quiet again so you can build up again. A loud sound on top of a loud sound becomes less impressive."

"The soundtrack drops down almost to nothing when they first come inside the colony," Cameron said. "The shots are very long and very slow. And nothing happens until the Facehugger slaps itself against the side. It's a little bit of a cheap thrill, but it works very well."

Hartstone would frequently turn the sound down to what they referred to as "granny level" to detect any dialogue that was too hard to understand for audiences. Those moments would be turned up a couple of decibels.

Because quite a few effects shots were not in when they were mixing, "we had to imagine them," Hartstone said. "When the dropship was coming, we were trying to premix it, not knowing where it was on the screen, so Jim grabbed a broom and he went down to the screen and he moved the broom where the dropship was going to be, and we panned for the broom."

For shots such as the APC bursting out of the hive and the climactic

STAGES OF THE GUNSHIP

The *Sulaco* model was started early in preproduction. Its 6 ft fiberglass body had been constructed by Peter Aston, who had a UK company, Peter Aston Models; later at Pinewood, Pat McClung and Robert Skotak began detailing the camera side of the model with plastic pipe and other bits and pieces (the other side was never filmed). They did their work after each day's stage work wrapped, in the dead of winter, wearing their heavy coats, X-Acto knives in their cold fingers.

"The *Sulaco* was one of the first designs to come in and one of the last to be built," said McClung. "We also had to do some of our own design work. Syd hadn't drawn the back end of it, so Bob Skotak and I had to come up with a look for the engines. Jim told us to give him something that didn't look like a heavy thruster; he didn't want to see a big engine bell like on the *Saturn V* [rocket]. So we came up with a series of plates and vents and so forth."

Bob and Pat were detailing parts of the *Sulaco* during their down time, whenever that was! John Lee said. "Eventually, I was brought in to push it forward quickly, as they knew I could create the sort of fine detailing needed on such a vast ship, and they needed to get approval from Jim Cameron."

Lee was moved into McClung's office near Stage 'G', where they had a suite, some rooms inter-connecting, for the Skotaks, McClung, and Dennis Skotak's wife, DC Fontana. On the wall of Lee's room was Mead's concept sketch on a table was "a whole load of EMA parts plus plastic kits," Lee said. "I had a lovely quiet time up in the office drinking ground coffee, away from the noise and bustle of the main workshop, which was on the ground floor. It will show me an excellent way to create very thin paneling which looks in scale, which was to use magic tape: It sticks really well and is thinner than paper. I could build up some really fine paneling along the sides of the ship, which caught the light well. I spent several weeks adding detail and airbrushing the paint finishes, until eventually I was taken off to do something else and Bob finished off the spiky parts on the front of the ship in the evenings."

Because the *Sulaco* was a military ship, Cameron didn't want to have letters on it. McClung then polished a number of the surface panels and used a dulling spray on some to "give the illusion of panel breakup" and to provide what he called the "Syd Mead feel."

The *Sulaco* model was then shipped over to Arkadon, where Johnson used frontlight/backlight traveling mattes to get the work done more quickly, in three or four days (blue-screen would've taken a couple of weeks). "Photographically, most of the shots were fairly routine," Johnson said, "although we did do a couple of interesting things. One was to cover the model with tiny strips of Sellotape. Jim wanted the ship to have a somewhat reflective surface, and with the tape we were able to pick up a few little glints of light as it passed through."

Shots of the ship were then combined with various planet elements as needed.

A very late shot of the dropship as it falls away from the *Sulaco* toward camera, and then a second shot as it turns toward Acheron took Johnson and his crew more time to finish to Cameron's satisfaction. They generated

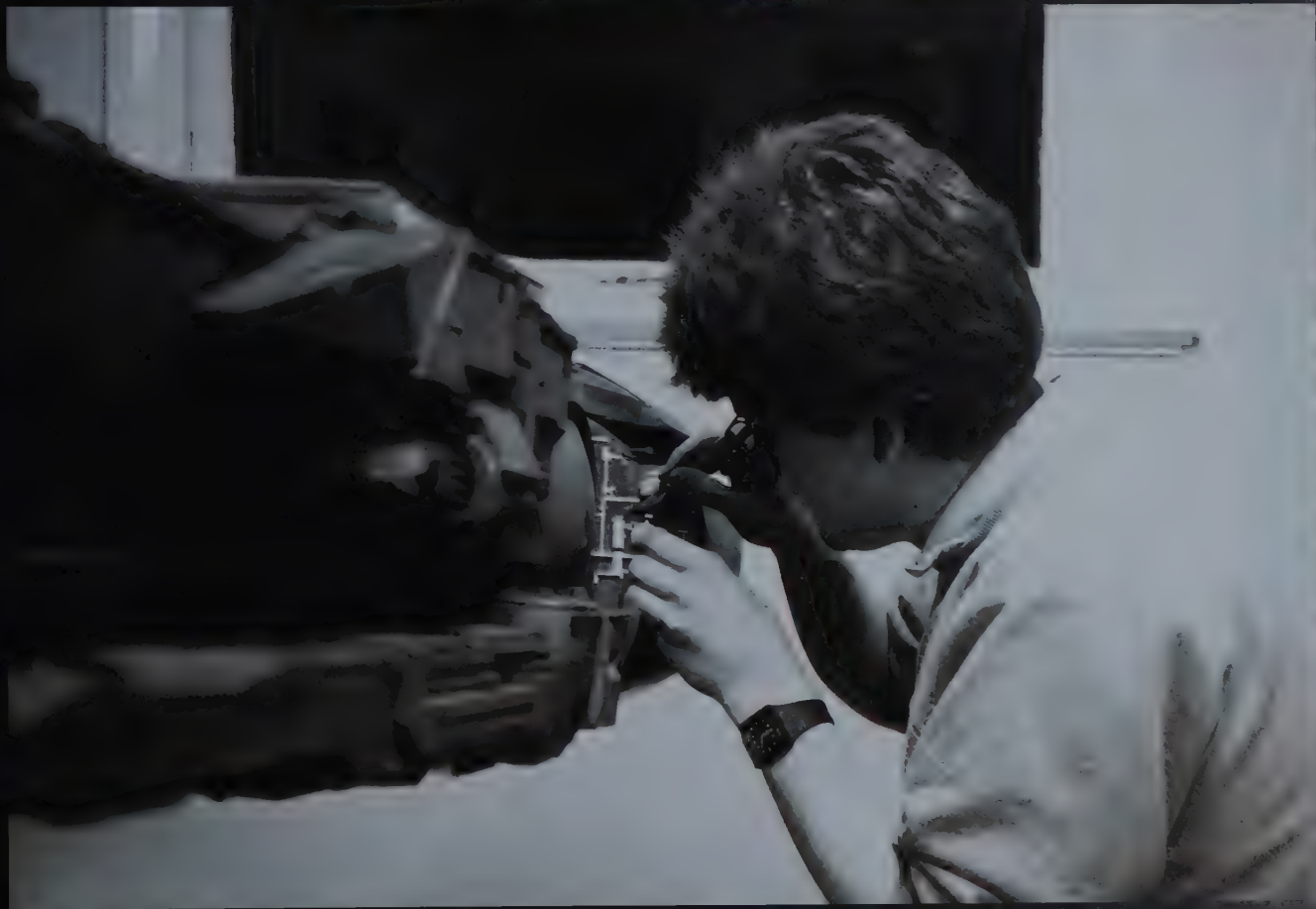
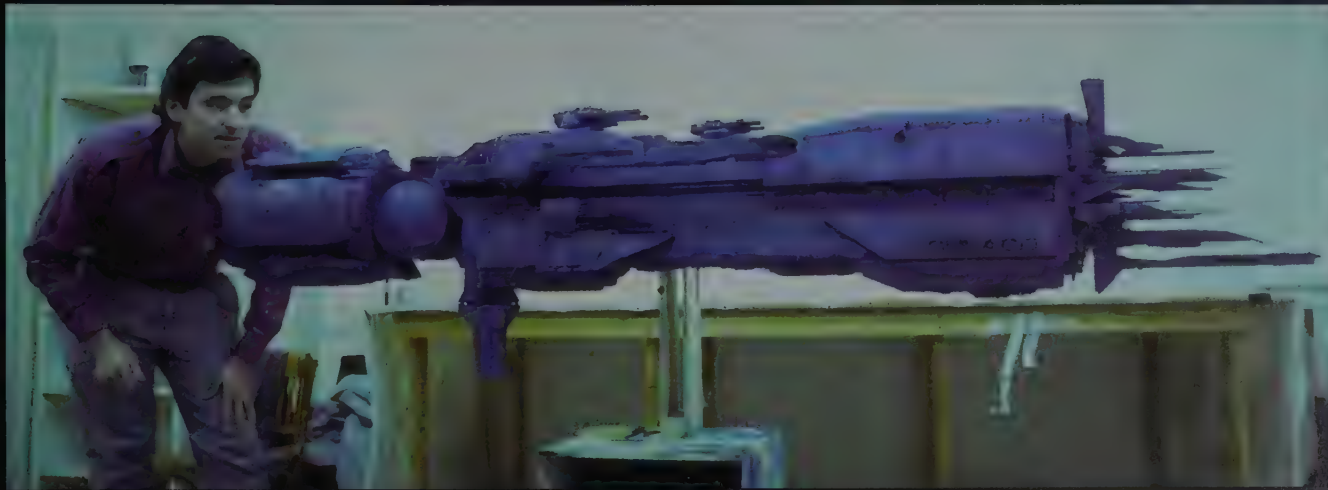
mattes and made color separations and put all the elements—*Sulaco*, dropship, starfield etc.—together on the optical printer.

"Jim decided he wanted to see the dropship accelerate quicker, so we re-did it," Johnson said. "The second time, we re-designed the move so the camera tracked up to the model and then continued on past it rather than returning along the same route."

The cloud bank through which the dropship plummets in one shot created at Arkadon was an element that had already been filmed on a Pinewood effects stage. "We did a motion-control pass on the dropship and just popped it in," Johnson said, "adding a bit of diffusion and low-contrast flashing at the end to make it look as though it actually disappeared into the clouds."



LEFT AND ABOVE: One of the dropship shots was also shot bluescreen. "When it came time to do the dropship unfolding the wings and gun pods," visual-effects supervisor Brian Johnson said, "we had to use radio-control servos and little gadgets like that to motorize everything, which worked fine, but it wasn't a repeatable system so we had to go with bluescreen."



TOP AND RIGHT: The *Sulaco* model taking shape with Pat McClung.

ABOVE: The *Sulaco* as seen in the film.

RIGHT: SFX model maker John Lee adds fine detail to the *Sulaco* miniature. (photo courtesy of John Lee)

AP station explosion, Hartstone had them cut the sound out for two frames just before the big audio. “Silence just ahead of it,” he said, “which gets lost in the cinema, but it does give the explosion a nose, rather than running into it with a heavy score.

“But we were slipping behind,” he added. “We needed to work overtime—and from then, in fact, we actually worked overtime the whole time.”

When it became apparent the mixing and sound-effects team wasn't going to meet its schedule, a night shift was put on and a 12-hour day became the norm. “Jim brought us in an exercise machine to keep us fit while we were in there,” Hartstone laughed.

At around this time, Dennis Skotak and his wife, DC Fontana, left. “When we did our last shots that we gave to Jim, he said, ‘Well, that’s it. You’re all done,’” Dennis recalled. “We were just happy to get the hell out of there. My wife and I went on a short trip. Robert stayed behind. We left earlier than he did, and he tells a story of a horrendous thunderstorm...”

“It was one of the hardest, if not the hardest, film I’ve worked on to date,” McClung said in 2019.

VULCAN'S FORGE

On May 5, Fox sent out another press release, this one touting that James Horner “will compose, conduct, and arrange the soundtrack.”

The problem was, with only about five or six days to go before that composer was due on the scoring stage of Studio 1 at Abbey Road, Horner was complaining to Hurd that he needed more time (or perhaps access to a more complete cut) in order to at least “get about 80 percent of what Jim wanted.” The crisis was such that the copyists had to have something soon or the musicians in the London Symphony Orchestra would have nothing to play. “Gale’s response,” he said, “was icy cold: ‘Then I guess we’ll just get somebody who can.’ And I said, ‘Please do. If you can get somebody with more experience and better able to produce this than me, I’d like to meet him because I’m sure I’d learn something.’”

Although Horner would say decades later that their exchange was mostly bluster, emotions must have been raw at the time. Everyone had a lot to lose, and he had to complete over 90 minutes of music.

“He ran out of time,” Hurd said. “He hadn’t finished writing his cues when we were sitting down with the London Symphony Orchestra.”

“James wanted time I could not give to him,” Cameron said. “The production was just too demanding, and I had the money guys breathing down my neck.”

Things only became worse for the composer when he arrived at Abbey Road to find what he considered facilities about 30 years behind the times. And although Horner had done his best, and the copyists had written out the orchestrations, when the London Symphony picked up their instruments and played, the score wasn’t good enough for the film’s director.

“When I went to the scoring session, I was expecting to hear the movie,” Cameron said. “And the orchestra started to play stuff that didn’t work. The music was beautiful, but it didn’t necessarily work on a scene-by-scene basis. I didn’t know what to do about that. There was no second round. It was like, ‘Okay, here’s your score.’”



LEFT: Composer James Horner conducting the orchestra for the soundtrack recording.

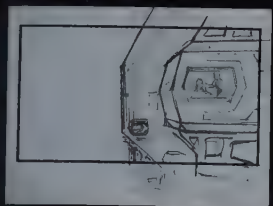


LEFT, BOTTOM: Horner, Hurd, and Cameron posing for a PR shot.





IN-CAMERA MARVEL



ABOVE: A drawing for an effects shot at Gateway station; the view outside the Gateway hospital (FX shot #6) was designed by Cameron Skotak and painted by Peter Melrose.

RIGHT: Robert Skotak's painting of Earth was used for a complex dissolve that went from Ripley's sleeping face to the *Narcissus* to the Gateway, eventually ending Earth.

With the picture locked in late May/early June, Johnson and the Skotaks still had to accomplish one of the trickiest shots of the picture: the reveal of Gateway Five. "I got a call from the production office," said Syd Mead, "and they wanted me to come up with some ideas for Gateway Five. I thought in terms of building something in space out of modular parts. I came up with a three-dimensional hexagonal structure, which would create six-sided cabins, lozenge-shaped, putting two hexagons together and so forth. I faxed that over and it was never used."

Instead, Lamont had to quickly design Gateway. The model-making crew then grabbed the oil-refinery towers from *Alien's Nasstrom* model and transformed them into the right side of the station; the left portion was a painting on glass by Peter Melrose.

The reveal of Gateway, FX shot #6, was designed by Cameron and the Skotaks, and put together at Arkadon by combining several elements into one very complex in-camera composite: Sun, Earth, starfields, the station, and ships rigged on wires. The shot started on Ripley in her sleep capsule, then match-dissolved to the curvature of the Earth as it panned over to Gateway, an orbital space station (half painting; half model, reflected in via a beam splitter); Earth was also a 9 ft painting by Melrose, photographed while mounted on a starfield, then re-touched by Robert Skotak (one of two background spaceships was from the Gerry Anderson TV series *TerraNova*, 1983, built by Steven Woodcock).

"At the end, I got very ill with pneumonia a second time," Robert Skotak said. "I had to do the Gateway Station matte shots, and I was delirious while doing it. But we had to do it, there were no two ways about it."

The effects crew did three passes, according to Skotak: a "beauty pass" for Earth and all the structures; a light pass for the red warning lights and other practicals on the miniature; and a final pass for the counter-matte of the starfield.

"We started out with a backlit effect," Skotak said, "but then Jim decided it would look better if the sun were more central in the shot, so that light would rake across the structures. That was no problem for the miniature, but for the artwork, where the lighting effect was painted on, it meant re-doing it almost from scratch. Time was short, so in one 17-hour period, I re-painted over the whole thing and we shot it again. And Jim was right: It looked much better."



Horner would point out that Cameron was still editing, which had made—and was still making—his job extremely difficult. Indeed, a day or two before Horner was to record the cue for dropship II escaping the AP station's explosion, the director changed the sequence around—"massive changes," said Horner, who had to stay up for something like 36 hours re-timing and re-writing for that shot "like crazy, like crazy, like crazy."

"The incredible thing was that he wrote it essentially overnight," Hurd said, "in a miraculous burst of creativity—and it became the film's signature cue."

However, Cameron was not pleased with the music on the whole. And with only two months before the movie's release date, and not yet started on the final mix, he decided to take Horner's recorded music and re-arrange it (Ridley Scott and his editor Terry Rawlings had done something similar to Jerry Goldsmith's score for *Alien*).

"Jim was very dissatisfied with the score," Hartstone said. "So some of the musics were premixed on a night shift with another mixer, Otto Snel, and the sound editor, Robin Clarke. Jim had a lot to do with it, and they re-edited James Horner's tracks and premixed some of them to make them work. One piece, the very, very driving piece, which we called 'Anvils' was played about six or seven times in the film, I think. Some of them I did in the room, but some of that was on night shifts because it was quite a lot of work."

Cameron, Snel, and Clarke worked in stereo and altered nearly everything but Horner's opening and closing cues; they replaced several cues with Goldsmith's original music (for example, when the alien queen is chasing Ripley and Newt) or with percussive rhythms written by other composers; some of Horner's were cut beyond recognition. One percussion piece, used over the marines getting into the APC, was written by Harry Rabinowitz, according to Hartstone, and recorded at Pinewood.

Cameron at first thought Horner's music for the moment when the 'impregnated' colonist's eyes open in the hive to be "over-the-top," but when he saw film and music put together, he said: "Yeah, that's what we need." But we did end up doing a lot of different music, editing and moving stuff around. Music can provide a sense of dread, but you don't want to be told to be afraid. You can't be ordered to be afraid."

SHAKE - N - BAKE

On May 19, Cameron reviewed a very late stop-motion optical shot of the queen puppet tumbling from the *Sulaco* through space toward camera (along with some jetsam); the queen had to rotate while being moved by cable operators, non-repeatable actions, which meant using blue-screen.

"Months later, in postproduction, I did get a call from Gale about the loader," Sallis said. "Crispian, got to ask you a question. Did you ask Caterpillar for permission? And I said, 'Yes.' And she said, 'Can you prove it?' And I said, 'Yes.' And I furnished her with the correspondence, and that was the end of that."

The same day, Cameron joined Hartstone for the first day of the final mix. "We got the music only just in time," Hartstone said. "The final mix

is when we put all the premixes and the music up for a glorious run-through. I handle the dialogue and music, and the other two mixers handle all the effect premixes."

On average, the final mix for each of the approximately 14 reels took about a day and a half, depending on the complexity of the sound. The final mix was recorded to three STEMS (Stereo Masters of separate Dialogue, Effects and Music). All the Print Masters—six-track 70mm, 35mm Dolby Stereo, Mono, International Version—and M&Es—music and effects—were mixed down from these final STEMS. On completion, each reel was played back for Cameron, Hurd, Lovejoy, and their core postproduction team to discuss. "In fairness, everybody was allowed to make a note," Hartstone said, "and Jim would take notice of them or not, and then we would put them down in an order of priority and start working, and maybe some of the less important ones got swept out of the clock."

Thanks to an automated console, it wasn't difficult for the mixers to "drop in and out of the STEMS to update."

"The very first thing you have to learn as a director is that you're never going to get it perfect," Cameron said. "The place to make it perfect is in the cutting room or on the mixing stage, where you bring all the other tricks out of the hat. If the characters are good and the story works, the audience will go with it. If the story doesn't work, the best special effects in the world aren't going to keep them in their seats."

"Obviously I used a lot of subwoofer," Hartstone said, "which was done with the Publison again. I would pitch down any sound that needed more weight, to make it sound right. But, interestingly enough, we didn't have a THX theater, so I was saving my big subwoofer for where I thought it was needed (I knew it was on the track, but it didn't come back out through the loudspeakers). When Ripley's on the platform waiting to be picked up with Newt, there were a couple of big explosions that filled the screen, so I really went to town on those."

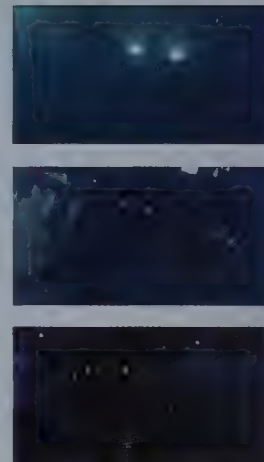
"The mix can be made to simulate that sense of hyper-awareness when your adrenaline glands kick in," Cameron said. "Then all the minute sounds become louder. You're simulating a physiological experience."

"The 70-mill had to be recorded in real time," Hartstone said, "and we would have to check it. And it was always quite frustrating because you'd sit through a 2,000 ft reel and just pray that all six tracks played successfully all the way through. You'd think, *Right, that's great*—but then the cameraman would say, 'No, that's no good, the color's all wrong.'"

While doing the final mix on the final reel, Hartstone suggested putting in the sound of a Facehugger scuttling across the screen after the credits. "Right at the end of the end roller on the 70mm prints, in the black," he said. "And Jim went for it!"

"We finished the last effects shot on May 26 or 27," Robert Skotak said.

Cameron, Hartstone, and the team finished the final mix on May 30. The next day, the 70mm master was ready.



ABOVE: To guide one of the 6-ft dropships onto the colony landing pad, a flying rig was built: a 12-ft boom arm on top of an elevated track-mounted platform, from which wires were attached to the ship at four points (controllable via a steering-wheel mechanism). "When that rig was put together," said Robert Skotak, "all we had was a sense from talking to Jim of what he wanted. Some of the shots weren't storyboarded, at least in final form, and our schedules were such that we couldn't afford the time to sit down with a piece of paper and engineer this thing with any great detail. So we improvised." Four to eight operators were required for each model move. Senior effects technician Jonathan Angell devised the steering mechanism that enabled the dropship to fly like a helicopter. John Brown and Darryl Guyon were mainly responsible for flying the dropship. Shooting the landing was challenging because they had to overcrank it and move quickly, but the model's legs were fragile and kept snapping off.

RIGHT: A moment featured in the trailer had the lights go off and Hudson's reaction: "That's impossible! They're animals!" "You didn't see anything in the first [movie] that said the aliens could manipulate human technology," recalled Cameron. But he figured "these aliens have been around for a month, not just a day, and had time to figure out how the electricity worked."



MIXED SIGNALS

On June 6, Fox distributed an internal memo noting that the film's late effects shots and "postproduction sound" were adding \$125,000 to the budget.

"It's not that we didn't have the money," Cameron said in 1986, "it's almost that we didn't want the money. I know nobody will believe that, but it's true. People tend to use the budget of a film as a yardstick for how good the movie is, but a lot of recent productions have really killed the viability of science-fiction films in general because the people making them seem to believe in throwing enormous amounts of money at them just to get the job done. And it doesn't work that way. It's diminishing returns beyond a certain point: The extra money just allows you to polish. All you're really doing is putting a slightly higher buff on something you already had. And sometimes the difference between a shot that costs twice as much and one that didn't is pretty negligible."

The final theatrical trailer for *Aliens* ran about 1 minute and 54 seconds, and used what sound effects and music had been ready. It started with Ripley's question: "Just tell me one thing, Burke: You're going out there to destroy them, right? Not to study." The trailer segued into rapid cuts of the marines on the *Sulaco*, the dropship ride to Acheron, and cut between finding Newt and the first battle in the hive and general mayhem. The trailer ended with a voiceover of the tagline: "*Aliens*: This time it's war." (The international trailer was only 32 seconds and featured a voiceover talking about Ripley: "She thought the nightmare was over. It hadn't even begun." A domestic TV spot was also 32 seconds, and used the same voiceover actor as the international trailer, but speaking the tagline.)

At Pinewood on June 8, the post team generated a 'show copy' for Fox executives in New York. A few days later, Cameron called them. "They

generally got very good reception," Hartstone said. "As opposed to a lot of movies, there wasn't any getting back into it. When Jim came back from the New York screening in the THX theater, he said, 'Oh, the explosions were fantastic!'"

The festering dispute between Fox and LAE came to a head only weeks before the film was scheduled to be in theaters, but in time to be reflected in the film's credits. LAE had taken steps to copyright its shots and structures, and then forbid their use in the film. Litigation had followed when LAE learned that the studio intended to use the footage anyway. LAE and their attorney, Lysaght, were certain that suing for copyright infringement would hold up in court.

Perhaps for this reason (and/or others) the two entities came to an out-of-court settlement. At the time, LAE exec Larry Benson said through his representative that he was satisfied with the outcome; Cameron and Hurd declined to comment. "The matter," said a Fox attorney, "is part of the public record."

On June 22, a nearly final budget was drawn up. Final script cost: nearly \$400,000; director: \$847,508; above-the-line cast: \$2,033,934; total above-the-line costs: \$3,954,444, which came to only \$139,516 over budget. Set costs were \$2,414,651, or \$563,884 over budget. One of the biggest overages was for the models/minatures, which cost \$3,124,927 or \$1,174,927 over budget (as the studio had predicted). Total budget came to \$20,325,828, or \$3,263,726 over.

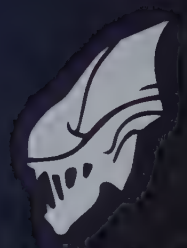
The same day, Fox received an important tracking study from The National Research Group. Based on a telephone survey conducted on June 20 and 21 of 400 moviegoers aged 12 to 49 in 18 geographically stratified cities, the marketing folks announced that *Aliens* was known to 45 percent of its potential audience, which was considered good for a film opening in four weeks. However, two other sequels—*Poltergeist II: The Other Side* and *The Karate Kid, Part II*—had tracked higher.

"Definite interest" was tracking "below average," even among those who had seen the first film. "This below-average interest level is a particularly serious problem," the report read. Those "disinterested" didn't want to see a "scary horror movie." Younger kids felt that they didn't know enough about the film to want to see it. Quite a few potential theatergoers thought, due to the title, that *Aliens* was just a re-release of the first film. That was an ominous sign, for at least a few sequels had been damaged through that sort of confusion (for example, 1979's *More American Graffiti*).

Fox's marketing team scrambled to remedy the public's misconceptions. A June 27 internal memo warned against supplying color photos to *Newsweek* magazine because it would jeopardize *Aliens* getting the cover of *Time* magazine, a deal already in place.

Weaver was appalled that the studio was promoting the picture as a straight action adventure with an emphasis on guns and war. "I guess that's why I didn't want to make another one, partially," she said at the time. "Because it's such a fight. I'm doing it for my reasons, the studio's doing it for their reasons. And sometimes they hardly intersect."

Of course, Fox was sticking to its guns only a few weeks before its over-budget movie was due to be released to a somewhat confused public.



CHAPTER 10



BITCHDOM
JUNE 1986 TO MARCH 1987





"There were no test screenings because I didn't have time," Cameron said. The first preview, toward the end of June, was mainly for magazines and newspapers. "We heard they were screening *Aliens* for the press, but we couldn't go over there," Biehn said. "We'd only seen it in pieces, Jim hadn't shown it to us yet. So Bill and I snuck up to the projection booth and watched the movie. As soon as the credits ended, Bill stood up and shook his fists in the air—'Ahh!! We're on a rollercoaster to hell, man!' We both knew it would be big, but he really knew."

"I went to see the final print at an invitational press screening out in Westwood and waved to Jim Cameron—he was surrounded by reporters," Syd Mead said at the time. "And that's my last drifting memory of *Aliens*. But it was a dynamite picture."

After the showing, Cameron noted that the dream sequence had really "cranked up" the attendees and set the tone for the film. "They went crazy," he said. "It was an industry audience, and they can go either way on you. They can be very negative or they can be very celebratory."

He added decades later, "but we didn't know if it was going to be a hit." And Paxton couldn't know either. Anyone who's worked in Hollywood knows that it's nearly impossible to predict if a movie will be a success until it's actually in theaters. Previews are a barometer only, good or bad; strange things can happen in real time.

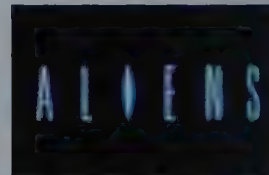
The reporter for *Prevue* magazine had been at the screening, and described the experience as "terrified preview audience lumping together like fans doing the wave in a football stadium." The next day, he interviewed Cameron, who was "resplendent on a recent June afternoon in a black open-neck shirt crawling with virulently purple orchids. The strawberry blond, 6' 2" 31-year-old director speaks so softly a listener could easily miss his gleeful observations."

Cameron told him: "*Aliens* is the movie I would have died to see when I was 14."

HOLDING ONE'S BREATH

On June 30, all versions—70mm, 35mm, etc.—and safety prints of the film were complete and shipped out.

Bill Paxton's publicity schedule included radio station interviews all afternoon on July 1: Entertainment Coast-to-Coast, CBS radio, and other local LA stations. Hurd and Cameron would also be hitting the airwaves



PREVIOUS PAGE: A PR shot of Weaver and Henn posing as Ripley and Newt.

ABOVE, LEFT, AND OPPOSITE: Marketing material and marketing concepts for *Aliens*.

There Are Some Places In The Universe You Don't Go Alone.

ALIENS

This Time It's War

TWENTIETH CENTURY FOX Presents A BRANDYWINE Production A JAMES CAMERON Film ALIENS SIGOURNEY WEAVER
Music by JAMES HORNER Alien Effects Created by STAN WINSTON Creature Special Visual Effects Created by THE L.A. EFFECTS GROUP, INC. Executive Producers GORDON CARROLL
DAVID GILER and WALTER HILL Based on Characters Created by DAN O'BANNON and RONALD SHUSETT Story by JAMES CAMERON
and DAVID GILER & WALTER HILL Screenplay by JAMES CAMERON Produced by GALE ANNE HURD Directed by JAMES CAMERON

R RESTRICTED
UNDER 17 REQUIRES ACCOMPANYING PARENT OR ADULT GUARDIAN

STV
Dolby Stereo
DOLBY DIGITAL
REPLICATED THEATRES

864050
ALIENS

101.5 WIBA FM
ROCK RADIO

THURSDAY
JULY 17, 1986
7:30 P.M.

WEST TOWNE MALL
CINEMA
833-1000
W. BELLLINE & GAMMON RD.

ADMIT TWO
Seating limited to theatre capacity.

BRANDYWINE
TWENTIETH CENTURY FOX Presents A BRANDYWINE Production A JAMES CAMERON Film ALIENS SIGOURNEY WEAVER
Music By JAMES HORNER Lyrics By STAN WINSTON Large Special Music By THE L.A. EFFECTS GROUPE INC. Location Gordon Carroll, David Giler
and Walter Hill Based on Characters Created by DAN O'BANNON and RONALD SHUSETT Story by JAMES CAMERON and DAVID GILER, WALTER HILL
and RONALD SHUSETT Screenplay by JAMES CAMERON Produced by GALE ANNE HURD Directed by JAMES CAMERON
READ THE WARRIOR BOOK. Prints by Bellini. Original Soundtrack Available On Varese Soundtracks Records And Cassettes. © 1986 TWENTIETH CENTURY FOX

TWENTIETH CENTURY FOX, ALAN HORN AND SCOTT RUDIN
INVITE YOU AND A GUEST TO A SPECIAL SCREENING OF "ALIENS"
MONDAY, JULY 14 AT 8:00 P.M.
AVCO CINEMA I
10840 WILSHIRE BOULEVARD, WESTWOOD
NON-TRANSFERABLE

ADMIT TWO

TWENTIETH CENTURY FOX Presents A BRANDYWINE Production A JAMES CAMERON Film ALIENS SIGOURNEY WEAVER
Music By JAMES HORNER Location Gordon Carroll, David Giler and Walter Hill Based on Characters Created by DAN O'BANNON
and Ronald Shusett Story by JAMES CAMERON and David Giler & Walter Hill Screenplay by JAMES CAMERON
and Ronald Shusett Produced by GALE ANNE HURD Directed by JAMES CAMERON
READ THE WARRIOR BOOK. Prints by Bellini. Original Soundtrack Available On Varese Soundtracks Records And Cassettes. © 1986 TWENTIETH CENTURY FOX



July 1 and 2, and were scheduled for many phone interviews. Biehn was being sent on the road to publicize the film.

On July 2, an internal memo at Fox analyzed the results of an "Aliens Trailer Test": a misnomer for a print ad test of two images: "Landscape" and "Weapon"—that is, Weaver without a weapon on a landscape; and Weaver with a big gun and no landscape (both also featured Newt). The studio was anxious about the film's ability to draw women into theaters, and was hoping a solo mother/daughter combo might work better than an armed mother with her daughter (and perhaps Weaver was making her opposition to the 'war' campaign known to studio executives).

"Weapon" generated "below average interest" for females, but "Landscape" generated "far below average interest" among females. And "Weapon" generated "above average interest" among younger males. That image was chosen for the campaign.

The next day, another studio memo noted that the film's budget had increased by \$135,000 due to story rights, producer airfare, more model-

effects work, and the final mix. The cost of the laser equipment for the opening salvage sequence, about \$5,000, originally charged to Cameron was "now part of negative costs."

A press release issued on July 11 touted that, "due to overwhelming exhibitor demand," Thomas Sherak, president of domestic distribution and marketing at Fox, was increasing the number of 70mm prints to 151. "Of the 1,400 prints booked in theatres, approximately 11 percent will go out in 70 millimeter," Sherak said. "There was an even greater demand, which unfortunately was physically impossible to fill. This is one of the largest commitments ever made by a studio to release in 70-millimeter format."

Two days later, Fox received another tracking report: "Aliens, one week prior to its opening, has reached a 66 percent awareness, which is above the hoped-for opening weekend threshold level (60 percent). Awareness is somewhat higher among older (25 years and over) moviegoers, especially older males."

The studio's TV campaign was apparently paying off.

The film's competition consisted primarily of six movies, "which seem to be jockeying for best positions and are very close to each other in their specific strengths: *The Karate Kid Part II*, *Back to School*, *Ruthless People*, *Top Gun*, *Legal Eagles*, and *Running Scared*." Strong competition for younger moviegoers was anticipated in *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*. That film had come out on June 11, but was still going strong. John Carpenter's *Big Trouble In Little China* wasn't tracking well, so wasn't considered a threat.

Two days before the film's release, a report to Fox's director of national field operations announced the results of a press junket in the Western region. Reporters from newspapers *The Arizona Republic*, *The Denver Post*, *Tempe Daily News*, as well as TV stations in Phoenix, Denver, Portland, Seattle, and Reno had been shown the film and had interviewed Cameron, Hurd, and Paxton (the report also noted that Paxton was in a band called Martini Ranch, and they had sung a song—"How Can a Laboring Man Find Time for Self Culture?"—as part of the promotion).

The Fox rep concluded: "Never have I seen such positive responses to a film!"

Nationwide, the campaign included free T-shirts, one-sheets, and buttons for giveaways. In the Los Angeles area, local radio station KROQ-FM went on the air to give away tickets to a special showing of *Aliens* at the Avco Theater in Westwood (1,150 seats/70mm). The station reported to Fox that "the phone is ringing off the hook!"

Two radio stations in San Francisco were promoting a screening at the Alexandria Theater (700 seats); the city's "newest, hippest, wovest night club, DV8" was hosting an *Aliens* party. All over the Bay Area and in Sacramento, radio stations were giving away tickets. In San Diego, a screening was held for press and 'opinion-makers' at the UA Glasshouse Theater (225 seats). "The turnout was terrific," the report read, "only two seats were empty. The film ended to a standing ovation."

In Seattle, Anchorage, Fairbanks, and Honolulu, Fox affiliates and agents were doing their best as well to promote the film and create excitement. The Fox manager of publicity/promotion in the Western region concluded, perhaps dutifully: "*Aliens* is every inch a winner!"

"Because of the highly competitive summer season," Sherak told the press and the public, "Twentieth Century-Fox felt it should extend its

LEFT: Front and back of tickets to see previews of *Aliens*.

RIGHT: Cameron, Hurd, Weaver, Henn, and many of the cast reunite to celebrate the opening of their movie.

marketing edge in every way possible. Exhibitors have obviously reacted to that enthusiasm. This film is an event.”

No reviews had yet to appear, however, and Fox was hemorrhaging marketing dollars in the hopes of recouping its investment.

AT LAST

Cameron and Hurd reunited with the cast for the film’s Hollywood premiere at the Avco Cinema One, Wilshire Blvd., on Monday, July 14.

“I’m sitting with Paxton,” Rolston said, “and we see all the suits from Fox, this sea of penguins. And when the alien jumped out of the chest and the whole audience leapt out of their seat, Paxton grabs my arm and says, ‘Dude, this is going to be so amazing.’ We just felt the energy and the audience reaction.”

“At the premiere my sister punched me in the stomach,” Reiser laughed. “Burke was just following the corporate manifesto, but I thought, *This doesn’t bode well.*”

“I was excited to see all my friends from the shoot again,” Henn would say. “And I was excited because Arnold Schwarzenegger was there!”

Other filmmakers present that evening were Steve Martin, Michael Douglas, Robin Williams, Mel Gibson, Michael Keaton, Demi Moore, Penny Marshall, Harold Ramis, and John Landis.

Throughout principal photography, Cameron had teased Henn because she’d never been afraid of anything, and “there was a scene that I had not seen being filmed,” she said, “where the marines are going to the medical lab and an alien in a tube jumps out. At the premiere, I screamed and didn’t realize James Cameron was sitting behind me. He patted me on the shoulder—and I screamed again because it scared me! And he said, ‘I didn’t get you once, I got you twice in five minutes! That’s great!’”

Weaver threw an after-party in her hotel room for the cast. Her parents attended the small gathering. Paxton remembered them leaving early and her father, Pat Weaver, a long-time industry executive, advising, “Be sure to drink *all* the bottles.”

“I don’t think my mother knew what to make of that movie,” Weaver said later.

Aliens opened in the United States on July 18. At that time, as anticipated, *Top Gun* was dominating the box office.

Cameron and Hurd were having dinner in a Los Angeles restaurant hosted by Barry Diller, president of Fox, and Rupert Murdoch, the studio’s owner. A newspaper article reported that, “too nervous to enjoy the meal, the group drove to a theatre that was showing the horror sci-fi flick and caught the closing minutes.”

“It was very emotional,” Cameron said of that evening. “The crowd was cheering. There was a kid sitting behind us who was giving a running commentary on every scene. Gale and I just looked at each other and said, ‘Can you believe this?’”

Cameron would recall going to see the first midnight screening as well, with Winston and Hurd, and making the rounds to different theaters. “I remember seeing the midnight show on Hollywood Boulevard,” Hurd said.



“And that line—‘Get away from her, you bitch!’—brought down the house. People stood up and cheered.”

“I went to the Egyptian theater with my wife, Elaine, and Denny and his wife,” Robert Skotak said. “Jim was also there. It was one of the first screenings with a regular audience, and the sound was really quiet. This is one of those movies where you want really loud music and sound. So Jim, he goes to the manager: ‘You really need to turn the volume up.’ And he said, ‘That’s how the film was recorded.’ Jim says, ‘Well, I’m the fucking director. It wasn’t recorded that way.’ All of a sudden the sound goes up—and the audience cheers!”

Two days after the film’s opening, the National Research Group reported to Fox execs: “*Aliens* has reached a very strong position among moviegoers-at-large. Awareness has reached 92 percent; interest has reached 43 percent ‘definite.’ This has been achieved mainly by an extraordinary leap forward in interest among older males 25 and over... A strong response from younger males... has also increased even more (51 percent), females younger and older have increased in their interest to at least slightly above average levels from significantly below average levels in earlier trackings.”

There are some places in the universe
you don't go alone.



ALIENS

The New Movie

TWENTIETH CENTURY FOX Presents A BRANDYVINE Production A JAMES CAMERON Film ALIENS SIGOURNEY WEAVER With JAMES HORNER
Music by GORDON CARROLL, DAVID GILER and WALTER HILL Story by DAN O'BANNON and RONALD SHUSETT Screenplay by JAMES CAMERON
Directed by JAMES CAMERON Produced by GALE ANNE HURD Edited by JAMES CAMERON Printed by DeLuxe



READ THE WARRIOR BOOK

Original Soundtrack Available On
Various Soundtracks Records And Companies



ALIENS

THEY'VE GOT TO WANT



TWENTIETH CENTURY FOX Presents A BRANDYVINE Production A JAMES CAMERON Film ALIENS SIGOURNEY WEAVER With JAMES HORNER
Music by GORDON CARROLL, DAVID GILER and WALTER HILL Story by DAN O'BANNON and RONALD SHUSETT Screenplay by JAMES CAMERON
Directed by JAMES CAMERON Produced by GALE ANNE HURD Edited by JAMES CAMERON Printed by DeLuxe
R RESTRICTED UNDER 17 REQUIRES ACCOMPANYING PARENT OR ADULT GUARDIAN
DOLBY DIGITAL
READ THE WARRIOR BOOK
Original Soundtrack Available On Various Soundtracks Records And Companies

OPPOSITE: A poster concept (left) and the final one-sheet (right) to promote *Aliens*.

RIGHT: Two German lobby cards for *Die Rückkehr*.

In its first ten days, *Aliens* grossed more than \$25 million; industry analysts predicted it would top \$100 million by the end of the year and might even surpass *Top Gun* (\$102 million to date at that time) as the year's biggest hit. It had already broken *Supergirl's* record for highest weekend debut for a movie starring a woman.

Internal reports noted that in fact the film's first box-office duel would be with *Friday the 13th Part VI: Jason Lives*, which would be in theaters on August 1. That film was tracking at 40 percent awareness and a 21 percent "definite" interest among younger males. (*Heartburn* had just come out, starring Meryl Streep and Jack Nicholson, but was considered a non-threat because it "skewed toward older females.") *The Fly*, a remake of the classic 1958 horror film, was due out on August 16 and was also big competition.

MOTHERS AND DAUGHTERS

Aliens was not the kind of movie designed to please critics. *Variety's* review read in part: "Weaver does a smashing job as Ripley. Henn is very appealing as the little girl, and Jenette Goldstein makes a striking impression as a body-building recruit who is tougher than any of the guys in the outfit... Although film accomplishes everything it aims to do, overall impression is of a film made by an expert craftsman, while [Ridley] Scott clearly had something of an artist in him."

"The film suffers from a prolonged buildup," wrote *The Hollywood Reporter*, "but after an initial encounter with the title characters, Cameron switches to high gear and reverts back to the relentless action-and-suspense approach that helped make *The Terminator* such a massive hit. Cameron isn't as concerned with scares or atmosphere, the staples of traditional horror films, as he is with setting up difficult situations for his characters to get out of, leaving audiences deliciously on edge."

Roger Ebert, the influential critic for the *Chicago Sun-Times* and on TV, had an emotional reaction: "The movie is so intense that it creates a problem for me as a reviewer: Do I praise its craftsmanship, or do I tell you it left me feeling wrung out and unhappy? It has been a week since I saw it..., but when I walked out of the theater, there were knots in my stomach from the film's rollercoaster ride of violence... It filled me with feelings of unease and disquiet and anxiety. I walked outside and I didn't want to talk to anyone. I was drained. This is not the kind of movie where it means anything to say you 'enjoyed' it. *Aliens* is absolutely, painfully, and unremittingly intense for at least its last hour... I have never seen a movie that maintains such a pitch of intensity for so long; it's like being on some kind of hair-raising carnival ride that never stops."

Ebert's TV co-host on *At the Movies*, Gene Siskel, was dismissive of the film: "Toward the end, the film resorts to placing a young girl in jeopardy in a pathetic attempt to pander to who knows what audience."

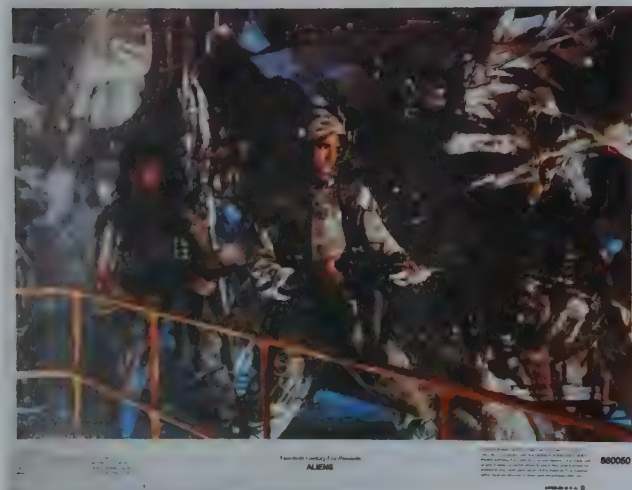
"He had a big problem with the movie because of the jeopardy of a little child," Cameron said later. "That never occurred to me. But I wasn't a parent when I made this film. Probably it would bother me more now. But I wasn't too concerned because Ripley was going to rescue the child no matter what it took."



Another syndicated critic, Rex Reed, panned the movie as "absurdly long and badly in need of cutting," but also wrote that "nothing in movie history that I can recall will fully prepare you for the shock" of the alien queen.

New York Times reviewer Walter Goodman didn't like it: "Adrian Biddle's camera goes for the closest close-ups you've ever seen. They don't do much for anybody's complexion, but you can tell the pores from the beads of sweat on each marine's neck. When it comes to those aliens, however, the camera, understandably, doesn't get too close. It veers about, often at high speed to the quickened beat of the music."

Gary Arnold on Washington DC TV was positive: "A sensational movie, combining almost unbearable suspense and awesome action spectacle with an intensity guaranteed to unite audiences in a richly satisfying illusion of panic and heroic struggle."



Critics for the smaller local papers—*The Buffalo News*, *The Providence Journal*, *The Syracuse Post Standard*, *The Miami Herald*, *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, *The Atlanta Journal/The Atlanta Constitution*, *The Boston Herald*, and so on—for the most part praised the film. The *Herald* wrote, “What *Aliens* is is an encyclopedia treatise on terror at the movies. It’s not a sequel at all, really. It’s a diabolically cunning thriller that should serve as a benchmark for films of this type for years... the film’s final hand-to-hand combat is a catfight between enraged mothers from different species that will have you cheering on Ripley—and the human race.”

Peter Stack wrote in the *San Francisco Chronicle*: “*Aliens*, an intense, gritty, harrowing sci-fi thriller, is arguably a better action movie than the original *Alien*.”

“I think the gulf of time between the two films works in our favor,”

Cameron told a reporter. “Also, a lot of people have been exposed to *Alien* through the video cassette. It’s not my intention to give people the ultimate scare. There’s more emphasis on character, action, and story, with special emphasis on action. I think the audience will find it more exhilarating than terrifying. If I had to tell the plot in one line, I’d say, ‘Ultimate grudge match plus a story about motherhood, although not in a conventional sense.’”

“Everybody may think we’re making a monster film,” Weaver told the press, “but we’re really making a film about motherhood.”

“*Aliens* is really more of a combat film than a film about an evil lurking in the shadows,” Hurd told one magazine “It’s a rollercoaster ride, with spills and chills and scares, and at the film’s end everyone will be out of breath. They’ll feel as if they definitely got their money’s worth and that they haven’t been pandered to. There’s also a little bit more depth, perhaps, than you would expect in a film of this nature.”

Fellow artists voiced their opinions.

“What makes Jim interesting is his sense of surprise,” said director Martin Scorsese. “Every scene builds on the last, then tops it.”

“If you look at it from the aliens’ point of view,” wrote author Clive Barker, “*Aliens* is a Vietnam movie! You go into their territory, you try to colonize the fuckers, the damn things fight back... so you wipe them out! Now I love *Aliens*, which is a brilliant picture for all kinds of technical reasons, but in our enthusiasm for the imaginative we often forget that the subtext is politically reprehensible.”

Dan O’Bannon, the first film’s screenwriter, said, “James Cameron did one of the few things one could have done to make a half-decent sequel, which is he turned it on its head and made an action-adventure film. But it still wasn’t different enough. If I had been involved, I would have turned the whole project upside down altogether, or I would have been much more radical in the treatment of the alien itself.”

“Well, obviously, mine was more of a terror film,” director Ridley Scott would say, “whereas Cameron’s was an action movie. So we’re talking two very different things here. I suppose my main criticism of *Aliens* would be that there were too many of them. You were exposed to too much of the warriors and even the mother alien, which, by the way, I thought was a very good idea. Therefore, there was no catatonic fear. And you know Sigourney is going to win. So right there you’ve saddled yourself with a problem. But there’s also no question that Cameron made an excellent film with *Aliens*. It really is an achievement.”

On July 27, yet another tracking report submitted to Fox announced that “the primary” motivator driving audiences to see *Aliens* was “word of mouth”—the most sought-after elixir of studios and filmmakers. People were telling their friends, and the friends were buying tickets and telling their friends. Surprisingly, this turned out to be “especially true among older females.”

Hudson and Vasquez were proving very popular. “Hudson is the voice of the audience,” Hurd said. “He’s saying things the audience would say and asking the question the audience would ask.” “Vasquez and Hudson are paired throughout the film as each other’s foil,” Goldstein said. “He says everything, whether it’s important or not, and she says absolutely nothing unless it’s important.”

LEFT: Spanish (top) and American lobby cards. Upon release of the film Vasquez became a favorite character (and was featured in Spanish publicity); Goldstein received a flood of fan mail, delivered to her by Fox. “That’s nice,” she said in 1986. “That means people actually took the time to sit through the credits and see who it was. But at first, I was offered Hispanic roles and a lot of science fiction, just the same. You know, ‘Oh my, she can shoot a gun.’”

One of the American lobby cards featured a shot from the defunct Acton station. After wrapping the Acton location, crew locked the doors and left everything in place. A few years later, the production team for *Batman* (1989) returned to the station to discover much of the *Aliens* set decoration intact. “I didn’t use the sets quite as well as I could have,” Cameron said in 1986. “The sets are really better than they look in the movie. I think I focused so much on the story and characters that I never really pulled away in long shots to show the sets.”

"Being the hysteric of the group," Paxton said in 1987, "I was always yelling and screaming. I was worried the audience would think, *Oh God, when is this guy going to get killed?* I thought the audience is going to be so ready for this guy to die."

"Bill had this odd, unique mixture of can-do bravado and a really self-deprecating sense of humor about his perceived limitations," Reiser said. "And that's what came out in the role of Hudson. He was this big, macho guy: 'We're gonna kick their asses!' Then he's the first guy to go, 'Oh man, we're dead, we're dead!'"

GENDER GENRE REVOLUTIONS

The London premiere of *Aliens* took place at the Odeon on July 27, and the film opened wide in the UK circa August 29. "I couldn't attend the UK premiere," Henn said, "so my grandparents went in my place and were treated like royalty, so it was really special."

"Jim thanked the whole crew in attendance," John Lee said, "and told us to belt up!"

"Jim stood up and said, 'This is the fruit of our labor—and I think you'll enjoy it,'" Parry recalled. "I think he added, 'We had an issue with the credits, but you all know who you are—so thank you very much.'" Parry was "fucking stunned" by the film and felt that the music and sound effects lifted it to another level that the crew couldn't have imagined. However, his experience was "blackened" when the anticipated onscreen credit for the model unit didn't appear. "Instead, LA Effects got a very strange credit: 'Certain Special Visual Effects Created by The LA Effects Group, Inc.'"

In mid-August, Fox executives were pleased to see that *Aliens* was vanquishing *Friday the 13th* at the box office and was still #1. On August 16, Cameron received a surprise from Hartstone, who called from Pinewood: "We phoned Jim up at six o'clock in the morning, his time, and sang 'Happy Birthday' to him!" However, the day afterward *Aliens* was knocked from the #1 position by David Cronenberg's remake of *The Fly*.

In September, *Half Moon Street* opened, so Weaver was starring in two movies on release simultaneously. Many critics, as they had for *Alien*, singled out Weaver for praise in the sequel. *Time* magazine called her "the world's most beautiful, tall, smart woman." In October, at a gala dinner hosted by America's cinema owners, Weaver was voted "Female Star of the Year." On October 11, Weaver hosted the premiere episode of *Saturday Night Live's* twelfth season.

By year's end, *Aliens* had sold about \$85 million worth of movie tickets in North America to become the seventh highest earner (according to boxoffice Mojo.com), well behind *Top Gun's* \$176 million; it was also a worldwide hit, especially in Japan and Britain, where in all it had earned another \$44 million.

On February 11, 1987, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences announced the nominees for the Academy Awards and *Aliens* was nominated for seven: Best Art Direction-Set Decoration (Peter Lamont, Crispian Sallis); Best Sound (Graham V. Hartstone, Nicolas Le Messurier, Michael A. Carter, Roy Charman); Best Film Editing (Ray Lovejoy); Best Original Score (James Horner); Best Visual Effects (Robert Skotak, Stan Winston,

John Richardson, Suzanne M. Benson); Best Sound Effects Editing (Don Sharpe)—and Best Actress (Sigourney Weaver).

"Even though James Horner got an Academy Award nomination," Cameron said, "he was never really happy with the outcome because it didn't reflect what he'd created."

"The Academy Award nominations shocked the hell out of us," Hurd would say. "And we were really pleasantly surprised when Sigourney got nominated."

It was Weaver's first nomination, and the first time in cinema history that the Academy had nominated an actress in a sci-fi-horror-adventure genre film. Non-drama genres were generally snubbed (the last actor to win an Academy Award for a performance in a horror-type movie was Frederic March in 1931's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*).

The actress was in a meeting with producers about her next film, *Gorillas in the Mist* (1988), when she heard the news. "I was shocked," Weaver would say. "But I don't think I recognized the significance of the genre getting recognized like that."

"Myself and Brian were in charge of all the opticals in *Aliens*," said Stuart Galloway, "although we weren't actually credited for our work. If you were to watch the opening credits, you will notice that it says, 'Certain Special Visual Effects created by the LA Effects Group Inc.' I was told there was some kind of contractual reason for them taking all the credit."

"I wasn't nominated," Johnson would say. "Jim lobbied the Academy for my inclusion, but rules are rules and LAE had a contract that had to include Suzanne's nomination, so, sadly for me, I missed out. I know it's sour grapes from me, but it hurt at the time, and 30-odd years later, it still pisses me off and my crew, who worked so hard. Jim and Gale, however, presented me with a huge engraved Tiffany's crystal as compensation, which I deeply appreciated." (Johnson was also cheered by a BAFTA award for his work.)

Two days after the nominations were announced, Cameron replied to Les Barany, who had written on behalf of his client, H.R. Giger, and his "initial sense of disappointment at not being contacted for *Aliens*." Cameron began by apologizing for the delay—Barany had written him on March 21, 1986—but that the intense pressures of finishing the film had prevented him from doing so earlier.

Cameron went on to explain that Giger's "bizarre, psycho-sexual landscape of the subconscious" had "initially attracted me to the project of a sequel," but that, being a designer himself, Cameron had wanted "to put my own unique stamp on the project... I felt the risk of being overwhelmed by him and his world if we had brought him into a production where, in a sense, he had more reason to be there than I did."

The director also cited Giger's involvement in *Poltergeist II* as a roadblock.

"I offer all this commentary by way of apology and explanation," he concluded, "in the hope that Mr. Giger can find it possible to forgive me for abducting his 'first-born.'"

"I thought the whole mechanization was very well done," Giger would say in 1999. "*Aliens* was terrific. I am sorry I was not asked to work on it. At first I thought, *This is like a war film*, but it is really powerful. I didn't like the ribbed cranium of the alien warrior, however I loved the alien queen designed by James Cameron."

THEFT AND TRIUMPH

For the Oscar telecast, Cameron called Mead again and asked if he could do a color drawing of the *Sulaco*. “The Academy Awards show clips of each film,” Mead said. “And the original shot in the movie of the *Sulaco* happens so fast you can’t freeze-frame it. So I did a real quick tempura sketch and sent that up to his house.”

“At the pre-Academy dinner, Sigourney came over and shook my hand,” Robert Skotak recalled. “And she said, ‘I want to thank you for making me look so good.’ And she hugged me and gave me a kiss. I’m not sure *how*, in her view, I could’ve made her look good, but I really appreciated the thought. In fact, I don’t think I could’ve made her look any better if I *had* tried!”

On March 30, at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, the industry gathered to find out who had won what. According to Lamont, Cameron and Hurd were sure *Aliens* would be “hands-down winners” for Best Art Direction, but *Room with a View* won (a film for which not many, if any, sets were actually built, Lamont pointed out; it had been filmed on locations in Italy and the UK). *Aliens* also lost Best Actress to Marlee Matlin (*Children of a Lesser God*); for Best Score to Herbie Hancock (*Round Midnight*); and both Best Sound and Best Editing went to *Platoon*.

“I didn’t have any great expectations, but I thought I had a reasonably good chance,” Hartstone said. “I think we and the nominees for *Top Gun* were surprised that it went to somebody else. They thought we were going to get it, and I thought they were going to get it, but it went to *Platoon*. So when that was announced, they were in the row in front of us and they got up as a man and went to the bar. So I went to follow them and we commiserated.”

However, Don Sharpe won for Best Sound Effects Editing. In the category of Best Visual Effects, *Aliens* was up against *Little Shop of Horrors* and *Poltergeist II*. The presenters were the famous *Star Trek* duo, Leonard Nimoy (Spock) and William Shatner (Kirk). They opened the envelope and announced that *Aliens* had won. On stage, Winston said: “Speaking for us all, including Dennis Skotak and Brian Johnson and the entire effects team, we’d like to thank the members of the Motion Picture Academy, our producer Gale Anne Hurd, and most of all the creative genius responsible for it all, Jim Cameron. Thank you, Jim.”



“We’d also like to thank our respective crews,” John Richardson added, “who went to make up the Anglo-American team, because they did all the work. Thank you, fellows. Thank you, Academy.”

Susanne Benson said, “Thank you so much.”

“We’d agreed ahead of time that although I was listed first in line as visual effects supervisor,” Skotak said, “that due to the conflicts with LAE we’d have Stan speak for us. And we thought that John could say something re: the British crew. Neither Suzanne nor I were going to say anything. But I saw her or sensed her leaning toward the mic, so I jumped in ahead of her and said something, like a basic ‘great recognition, thank you.’ I think the music started just when she started to try to say something. I do recall being squeezed into the elevator with her, Stan, John, Shatner, and Nimoy, and her pulling me over and kissing me, all excited. Talk about a strange moment—one in which I decided to just... behave like a gentleman!”

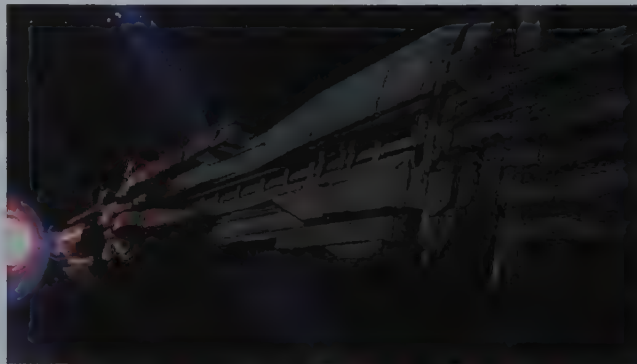
“I heard that it was in the contract that she would get an Oscar if it was ever awarded,” Parry said. “If true, that seems wrong.”

“What happened ultimately is the Motion Picture Academy changed the rules,” Dennis Skotak said, “so that if anybody’s going to be awarded an Oscar, they actually need to have had experience in doing what they’re receiving it for, for their skills.”

“From that point on, you had to be somebody who actually worked on the creative part of it,” said his brother. “A supervisor on the set, somebody who contributed to the conception, conceptualizing, and carrying out of the artistry.”

(Today, the “Special Rules for the Visual Effects Award” reads that the Oscar can be given only to those “directly involved with, and principally responsible for, the visual effects achieved... Additional names will not be considered. The Visual Effects award is a craft award. Producers, coordinators, and other executives are not eligible for this award, unless they are also craftspeople with primary creative responsibility for the achievement.”)

Back at the studio, given the sequel’s box-office success and awards, Fox was already considering a third film. They had closed a two-picture deal with Cameron before *Aliens* opened, but the director-writer of the second wasn’t interested in a third. He told the *LA Times*, “We’ve said about all we can about aliens.”



ABOVE: Cameron and Hurd sent a consolation award to Brian Johnson, who was not eligible due to Academy rules for the visual-effects Oscar. (photo courtesy of Brian Johnson)

BELOW, LEFT: Art by Steve Begg for a dropship model kit (not approved).

BELOW, RIGHT: Syd Mead’s illustration of the *Sulaco*, which Cameron had requested he paint for the Oscars telecast.

RIGHT: Polish poster art for *Aliens*.

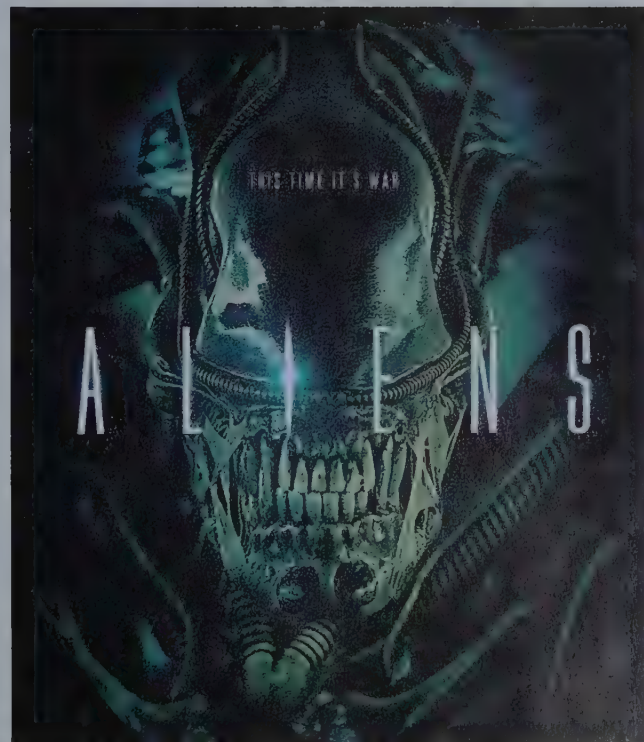
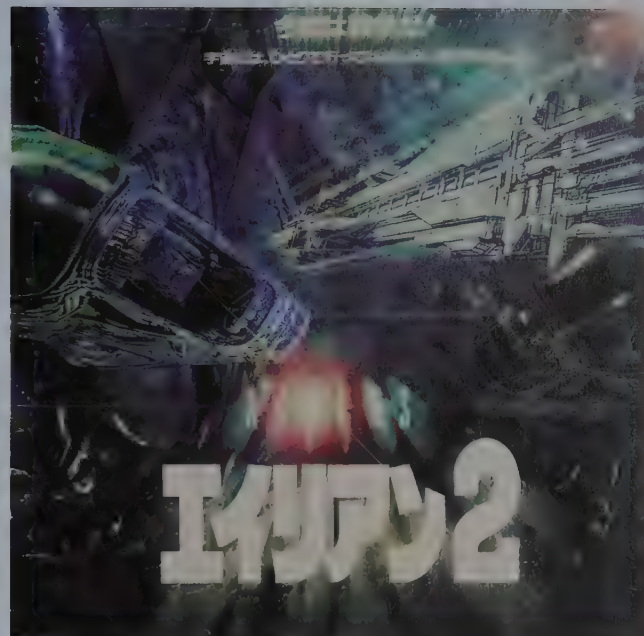
FAR RIGHT, ABOVE: The Japanese poster for *Aliens*.

FAR RIGHT, BELOW: Artwork for the audio book cover of the film's novelization, narrated by William Hope (Gorman) and written by Alan Dean Foster. Only a limited amount of licensed merchandise was manufactured for *Aliens*. Fox had been burned by its over-enthusiasm for product tied to the previous R-rated *Alien*. On their second go-round they played it safe, with only tie-in publishing, T-shirts, posters, pins, and a few other items.

"I don't think it will happen," Weaver said in 1986. "But then, I didn't think this one would be made, either. Luckily, Jim Cameron really wanted to make his own film, and he did. But I would doubt another one. Maybe they can go ahead, but I don't know where you go after *Aliens*."

Goldstein was even asked by reporters if she would appear in a sequel "How, scrape her off the walls?" she laughed. "Or 'Vasquez: The Early Years?'"

"It's entirely in the hands of people other than myself," Cameron replied to another journalist. "The only thing I can say definitively right now is: From my involvement as a writer, the story was not constructed with an eye toward another sequel. But then, the first one wasn't either."



FIRST TIMES

At the premiere in Hollywood or in London, at previews or with audiences in their local theaters, cast and crew had their own reactions to the movie on which they'd labored so intensely.

"I didn't know quite what to expect when I went in to finally see the movie," Henn would say. "It was neat seeing how it went from the filming to actually becoming a movie. That's when I realized that the director really makes or breaks a movie, and I truly appreciated what an amazing job Jim had done."

Lance Henriksen saw it with Cameron at a preview, but was tongue-tied afterward and told the director he'd write a letter explaining his feelings. He never wrote the letter, so for years Cameron thought he hated the movie. "But in fact I loved it so much," Henriksen said. "I was shaking when I left the theater."

"We would go to rushes," Lamont said, "but it was amazing to see it in the theater."

"I was able to walk into about 17 different [theatrical] agencies just by virtue of the fact that *Aliens* was such a hit," Rolston said. "I had my choice of representation. I walked into my bank three days after the movie and the security guy goes, 'Hey, man—you're Drake! Dude, I love this movie. I've already seen it 25 times!' I said, 'How is that possible?' He said, 'I bought a ticket for the first screening and I never left the theater. I'd hide and just watch it over and over again.'"

"I saw it at the crew showing and I was blown away by it and really saddened I hadn't stayed [on the model unit] until the end," Begg said. "But the pressure just got to me. It did. When I left the movie, I felt like a massive weight off me. However, I still think I should've stayed."

A note of discord was from Weaver. She continued to be embarrassed by the film's martial components. The tabloids were hailing her as cinema's toughest new champion and gloated over the fact that a woman was "out-muscling Schwarzenegger and Stallone at the box office," wrote one.

"People now say to me 'You out-Rambo Rambo,'" Weaver said. "I just shiver down to my shoes." She was also very disappointed to find that the scene where Ripley learns about her deceased daughter had been cut. "I think Jim Cameron is upset with himself that he let that happen."

"When she first screened the film, she said she didn't like the scene," Cameron would say, "but then we were overwhelmed reading a lot of interviews where Sigourney had a big problem with that. We really didn't have a chance to talk about it because we were on such a tight postproduction schedule."

Cynthia Scott attended the London premiere and "was spellbound," she said. "I hadn't seen the other parts of the film, so the whole thing was a revelation to me."

John Lee was there as well: "It wasn't until the cast and crew screening at the Odeon Marble Arch in London that we realized Jim Cameron knew exactly where to put the camera and that the director of photography did an astonishing job. Literally everybody's jaw was on the ground. Everyone

absolutely loved it. I've seldom left a crew screening where the atmosphere was as good as it was after *Aliens*."

"When the sound came up—it was breathtaking," Sallis said.

"It impressed me," Kash said. "I thought it would be just another chase movie, just an action movie, but it went a hell of a lot further than I expected, and the characters were better than I expected, to be honest."

"We had a screening at Fox," McClung said, "and I was pretty blown away with everything. I was really happy with it, which was a relief. I knew it was going to be good, but I didn't know it was going to be that good."

"*Mad* magazine did a whole *Aliens* satire," Goldstein said, "and Bill was so excited: 'Oh my God, I'm gonna finally be in *Mad* magazine!' So we went down to a newsstand right across from Canter's Deli in LA, got a copy, and sat down at the counter with our marzo ball soup or whatever. We were opening it up really fast to see ourselves—and he's drawn with a chicken head. He was like, 'I finally make it into *Mad* magazine and they don't draw me!' I thought that was so funny."

"I'm flipping through it," Paxton said. "There's Jenette, there's Mark, there's Ricco—the guy didn't even take the time to do a caricature of me—fuck *Mad* magazine!"

"I did do the movie and I am responsible to a certain extent for the content," Weaver told the *Daily Express* in August 1986, as she continued to cope with the film's fallout. "I can't defend it." Although according to the article's author "leading psychiatrists, discussing the film's social implications, praised Weaver's 'kick ass' character for helping the feminist cause," Weaver said, "I won't do any more Ripley-like roles. I'm not cutting a career out for myself playing macho women."

"There are two equally balanced arguments," Cameron said in 1985 when asked about violence in movies. "One is that people will be inspired to be violent by screen violence, and the other is that people who might be violent will have a cathartic experience watching screen violence and leave the theater purged. I would say that the chances of those arguments being true are about equal, and so I don't worry about it. I just do what I like, what's exciting. You can't have conflict without violence, whether it's emotional, verbal or physical violence. If, as a filmmaker, you like action, excitement, visual movement and editorial panache, you could do music videos or a musical or you can do action. Now, I say 'action,' you say 'violence.' Choose your word."

20th Century Fox cordially invite you to the SPECIAL PREVIEW

ALIENS

20th CENTURY FOX PRESENTS A BRANDYVINE PRODUCTION A FILM BY JAMES CAMERON ALIENS SIGOURNEY WEAVER
 MARCH PARRISH • JOHN WAINSTON • THE L.A. EFFECTS GROUP INC. • GORDON CARROLL • DAVID GILER • WALTER HILL
 JOHN OTSANG • RONALD SHUSSETT • JAMES CAMERON • DAVID GILER • WALTER HILL • JAMES CAMERON
 WAKE-AMBA-HARD • JAMES CAMERON • JOHN DEWINTER • GAIL • JAMES CAMERON

at the ODEON CINEMA MARBLE ARCH London W2
 Sunday, July 27th at 11.00am (Doors open at 10.30am)

ADMIT ONE

BELOW: Invitation to the UK cast and crew screening of *Aliens*.

OPPOSITE: A proof sheet of photos by unit photographer Robert Penn that showcase the "Rambolina" aspect of Ripley—one of which was used for publicity.



2A
XP1
400

3

AS
SAFETY

4

AS

4A

ILFORD

5

5A
XP1
400

6

AS

8A
XP1
400

9

AS
SAFETY

10

AS

10A

ILFORD

11

11A
XP1
400

12

AS

14A
XP1
400

15

AS
SAFETY

16

AS

16A

ILFORD

17

17A
XP1
400

18

AS

20K
XP1
400

21

21A
SAFETY

22

22A

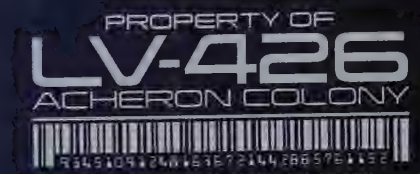
ILFORD

23

23A

24

24



EPILOGUE



GLORIOUS GRUNTS



TV 5





The duo of Cameron and Hurd were now players in the industry, and formed their own production company, Tech Noir (named after the club in *Terminator*). They planned to film a number of projects over the next few years, including two for Fox.

In conversation with still another journalist, they talked about their mutual passion: scuba diving. After a vacation in the Cayman Islands, Cameron was looking forward to writing his next film in their Hollywood Hills home. “We’re obsessive workaholics,” Hurd said. “We don’t do drugs and we don’t drink. We’re not the kind of people you want to invite to a party.”

In the aftermath of its release, word leaked out about the omitted scenes in *Aliens*. A process began almost immediately of restoring those elements. “There’s about 10 minutes of film that was cut,” Cameron said in 1986, “and it just happens to be part of the film where I did a lot of establishing shots. It’s all in one long sequence. There’s some talk about restoring that for network TV. They want to stretch it out and fill a timeslot.”

Replying a few months later, in 1987, to readers’ letters in *Starlog* magazine, Cameron expanded on the subject: “The missing scenes also provide a more solid connecting link in the process of the colony’s infestation.... These scenes, as well as four or five others, which would certainly be of interest to fans, will be restored for the ABC airings of the film and, if all goes well, in a ‘special edition’ video cassette, running roughly 12 minutes longer than the release of 137 minutes. No confirmed release date is set for either of these, but stay tuned...”

(To queries as to whether there was an alien onboard the *Sulaco*, Cameron added, “By the way, it’s not in the goddam cat and it’s not in Newt, either. I would never be that cruel.”)

“Jim called us and said, ‘We’re going to put out a ‘special edition’—we’d like you to finish those four shots,’” Robert Skotak recalled. “We’d shot elements for them, but we hadn’t finished putting the composites together. So four years later, when I had my own company back in the States, we finished those four shots of the colony.”

The ‘special edition’ was lengthened by 17.5 minutes, but, when aired on CBS in 1989 instead of ABC, only about eight minutes of the additional footage was actually included, while other moments deemed too violent or profane were cut. The promised ‘special edition’ of 154 minutes didn’t come into existence until a home video cassette version was released in the UK in April of 1990; that iteration was released in the USA on laserdisc as *Aliens: Special Collector’s Edition* in December of 1991.

Cameron has stated his preference for the longer version. “At two hours and 37 minutes, this is the ride we intended you to take,” he said.

“I prefer the original cut,” Al Matthews said. “The director’s cut was all about riding that horse into town just one more time.”

OFFSHOOTS

Cameron and Hurd worked together on *The Abyss* (1989), but they also divorced that year.

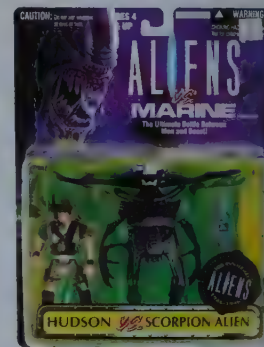
“It could have been all business,” Hurd said in 2018, “where people basically said, ‘Eh, we’re going to close the door and you’re going to be an outsider,’ but I actually got an overall deal with Fox. There were a lot of people who believed I’d earned my stripes.”

Hurd would go on to produce dozens of films, TV shows, and documentaries, including *Armageddon* (1998) and the hugely successful series *The Walking Dead* (2010–present).

And while Cameron had vowed never to return to Pinewood, he did make a cameo. “We were just installing a new console in one of the theaters,” Hartstone said, “and all of a sudden Jim and Kathryn Bigelow bounce in through the big side doors. Completely unexpected. He was telling me all about what he’d done on *The Abyss* and particularly what he’d done in the Foleys. So I took him and Kathryn to lunch, and that was the last time I’ve seen him.”

As Cameron and Hurd had predicted, neither of them were involved with the third film in the franchise, *Alien³* (1992), directed by David Fincher and starring Weaver. That film’s story revealed that only Ripley had survived hypersleep; both Newt and Hicks were dead. “It’s kind of a slap in the face for the fans who had invested in Newt and Hicks; I thought it was dumb,” Cameron said. “There’s an art to making sequels: You’ve gotta make it cool and fresh, but not at the expense of the things that the audience really cared about from the previous film. That David Fincher—I wanted to wring his neck, but I got over it because he’s such a good director, the bastard. He did a really good job, photographically; it’s a really well made film visually. And I understand the instinct, of course, to make it your own. And you learn to get over it, because it’s the nature of this business. Fincher and I are really pals, so it’s not like that lasted very long.”

Weaver also starred in the fourth film of the franchise, *Alien: Resurrection* (1997). Cameron was amused in watching the third and fourth films to see



ABOVE: For the film’s tenth anniversary a new line of action figures was released, one of which was “Hudson vs. Scorpion Alien.”



TOP: The Italian poster for Cameron's *The Abyss* (1989) hyped the new film by saying it was from the same director as *The Terminator* and *Aliens*.

ABOVE: Marketing material for *Aliens: Ride at the Speed of Fright* (1994).

that Weaver succeeded in having Ripley never use a gun, procreate with an alien, and, finally, die. “When she attained a position of power as a producer, Sigourney got to do all three of those things,” he said. “When I saw the third film I cracked up because it was all the things she asked for in the second film.”

He and Weaver would reunite on *Avatar* (2009), the biggest box-office hit of all time. (The director would go on to plan and direct several sequels.)

Cameron would employ Stan Winston and his crew, as well as Goldstein, on *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* (1991), another outstanding sequel. He would also work with the Skotaks on several films and many projects up to present day.

Aliens reunions had begun even earlier on Kathryn Bigelow's *Near Dark* (1987), which starred Goldstein, Henriksen, and Paxton. (Bigelow would also marry Cameron, then divorce.)

“Movies happened because Jim took a chance on me, stood behind me and gave me this great opportunity,” Goldstein said. “He’s a really, really loyal guy and he calls when he needs me. If I’m right for the role, we do it. If not, we don’t. He’s so honest and hardworking and loves his tech. He also casts actors, then steps back and says ‘I trust you.’”

“When Shane and I went back to Pinewood,” Rosengrant said, “several years later [circa 1993] to work on *Interview with a Vampire*, the very same people that had been looking down their nose at these Americans were greeting us with friendly, open arms and talking, laughing about what a great movie *Aliens* was. They’d realized that we’d ended up coming together and working on how to negotiate all these different things.”

James Remar was even re-united with Walter Hill. “Getting fired from *Aliens* alienated me from him for 12 years,” Remar said. “He didn’t hire me again for 12 years. And I know why: because I made him look bad.” But Remar bounced back from that experience and has never stopped working since.

Horner and Cameron even managed to work together again—on *Titanic* (1997), the world’s number-one film at that time. “And Jim was so damn good,” Horner said. “We talked it through, and we ended up having such a great working relationship that we’ve stayed friends since.”

Peter Lamont worked on that film, as well as *True Lies* (1994). For years Lamont had one of the alien eggs in his backyard. Biehn also worked with Cameron on *True Lies*. More reunions and working relationships spun off from *Aliens* too numerous to list.

As for Henn, she didn’t choose to continue in the industry, though she must have received offers. “She has a normal life,” Hurd said. “She did not pursue acting as a career.”

In the immediate aftermath, she’d been teased at school. “Girls can be mean,” Henn said decades afterward. “If you’re a little bit different from anyone else, they home in on that. I was bullied. So I just blocked out *Aliens* for many years.”

Goldstein also eventually retired, and opened what turned out to be a string of brassiere shops on the West Coast called ‘Jenette Bras.’ “I, a movie actress in Los Angeles for Chrissakes,” she said, “arrived at middle age and was still wearing crappy bras not even close to my right size (30G, in case you’re interested). I was overdeveloped and underserved.” She has since

remedied the situation for herself and thousands of other women.

The cast, including Henn and Goldstein, would also reunite in successive anniversaries of the film’s release and related celebrations. “We met again for the *Entertainment Weekly* 25th-anniversary shoot,” Henn said, “where they got the whole cast together again. I was there with my husband and children, including my daughter, who is my clone. Sigourney suddenly appeared, and before she saw me, she saw my daughter. She just stopped and stared, and said, ‘Who is this?’ And she immediately started talking away to her. We still email. My kids even send her a video for her birthday. Who knew it would be such a big thing 30 years later?”

In 2016, a large part of the cast was indeed reunited for a 30th-anniversary panel at San Diego Comic-Con, in front of a packed-house, enthusiastic audience. Cameron and Hurd were also on the panel. “Jim threw this amazing party for all of us,” Rolston said, “cast, crew, special-effects guys, at the Japanese restaurant Nobu, which was extraordinary. Jim gave this really lovely speech, the thrust of which was how amazed he was. He had no idea when first conceiving and writing *Aliens* that it would be this event that has now transcended generations.”

Cynthia Scott also attended. “We all genuinely like each other,” she said, “which is not necessarily like that on every movie.”

“To this day,” Goldstein said, “I’m still really close with a bunch of the cast. Mark Ralston and Ricco Ross, I see their families all the time.”

ENDINGS

Inevitably, some of those who worked on the film passed away. Tip Tipping was tragically killed in a parachuting accident in 1993, at only 34. “We all got very close with him,” said Ricco Ross. “When I heard what happened to him, it really shook me up. But if he was gonna go, what better way to go than doing what he loved?”

“He was a great guy; I really liked him,” said Henriksen. “He was full of that can-do attitude.”

James Horner died in a plane crash in 2015.

Trevor Steedman (Wierzbowski) passed away in 2016.

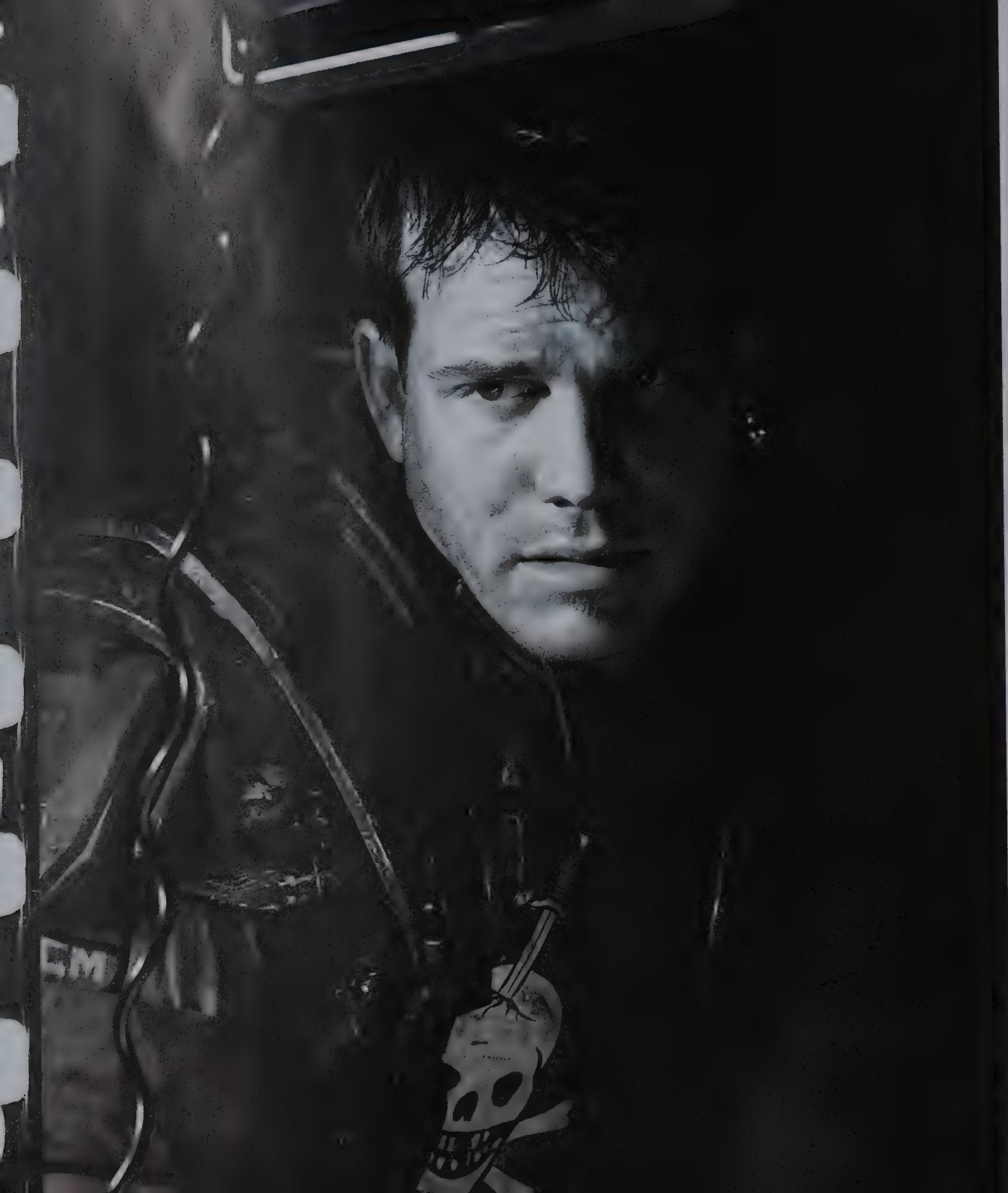
Several of the crew passed away due to natural causes, among them Derek Cracknell in 1991 and Ray Lovejoy in 2001.

Stan Winston passed in 2008. “He inspired a generation of fans,” said Cameron at a private memorial service at the Hillside Memorial Park and Mortuary. “I think that just maybe the words of a bunch of people who didn’t even know him personally may be his best tribute,” and he proceeded to read aloud a number of online tributes from fans culled from the website Ain’t It Cool News.

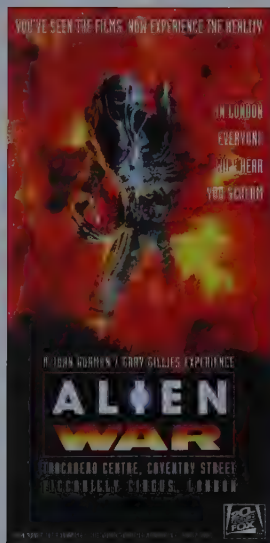
Bill Paxton died unexpectedly in February 2017.

“There’s never gonna be anybody like him again,” Biehn said. “I wrote for his memorial, ‘You made me laugh for 35 years, and today you make me cry.’ I didn’t know that he was going in for any kind of surgery. He didn’t tell me. So it was really, stunningly sad. I always thought of him as my little brother. I just walked in circles around my house that day.”

“One of the last conversations I had with him,” Goldstein said, “he was



LEFT: A year after the film came out, Paxton was still receiving fan mail from around the world. "And most of the time they say they really like Hudson," he said. "They really identify with him. He was the most relatable to audiences because he was deathly afraid, as most of us would be. I mean, for every Ripley or Hicks, there are a million Hudsons."



ABOVE: *Alien War* opened in London in 1993 (and ran till summer of 1996), touted as the first “total reality” attraction in the world. It was housed in the basement of the Trocadero Centre off Piccadilly Circus. Attendees interacted with actors costumed as marines and aliens on an adventure that took them through decors based the colony complex from *Aliens*, as well as an egg chamber area, an escape vehicle, and an elevator (a mechanical alien warrior head, open jaws and drooling, pierced its roof!).

RIGHT: Ripley, the mother; Ripley, the survivor.

FOLLOWING PAGES: A PR shot of Ripley and the colonial marines (and Burke).

talking about how he had all these projects to direct. He was gonna start doing *Training Day*. He was going on and on about how he was excited to get these different projects to go. ... I had seen him like four months before, and I wasn't aware that there was this heart problem. I woke up, listened to NPR, and was, *What?* Just complete disbelief and shock.

“You'd think, *Oh, he's just a good ol' boy from Texas*. But one of the things that really impressed me, and I asked him about it, ‘God, how do you remember everybody's name on the set, of the crew?’ His dad was this wonderful salesman and he said, ‘That's what I learned: You learn every single person's name and you don't forget them.’”

“Bill Paxton's passing was a tremendous blow to all of us,” Rolston said. “Sigourney said at his memorial that Bill was the glue to the entire film. And he was, because Bill was probably the sweetest man in Hollywood. His enthusiasm was unparalleled, and just his joy and zest for life was the same.”

“You always knew when Bill was on set,” Henn said. “He made going to work fun. He would always stop by my table on set when we were in-between takes. I often had coloring, clay, or other art activities to keep me occupied. Bill would join us and color, or create something fun with the clay.”

“Three summers ago, at Calgary Comic Expo's *Aliens* cast reunion,” Reiser recalled, “everybody said, ‘Oh, let's get together after this!’ Suddenly, Bill goes, ‘I got a restaurant.’ And he called a restaurant and got 'em to open, and got the kitchen to stay up late and cook for everybody. It comes time to go and he picks up the check for 30 people. That was him in a nutshell. We went to pay and they said, ‘Oh, Mr. Paxton's already taken care of the check.’ Bill was the bridge. He was the guy who made sure, ‘Hey, man, let's all have lunch together,’ or ‘Let's all hang out.’ There was a lovely Southern hospitality about him. He just got along with everybody. He really liked people.”

THE LONG WAY

Since its release, the legacy of *Aliens* has grown and its classification has been upgraded from genre pic to classic film.

“In terms of actual technique,” Cameron said decades later, “it's crude compared to the films that are made now. But in terms of storytelling, it's as good as I'll ever probably be.”

“Jim created a human interest film,” Scott said. “That lasts through time. And everything you see on the screen really existed in life. That gives it verisimilitude. It's not reacting to a green-screen. It was a massive art installation project.”

“On my gravestone,” Kash said in 2017, “it'll say, ‘His career wasn't that great, but he did *Aliens*.’”

Related merchandise and publishing expanded. In 1996, there was even *Aliens: Ride at the Speed of Fright*, a motion-simulation ride experience located at Pier 39's TurboRide Simulation Theatre in San Francisco; another opened at Granada Studios in Manchester, England, and in three theatres in Japan.

In 2007, *Entertainment Weekly* named *Aliens* the second-best action movie of all time behind *Die Hard* (1988). Two years later, *Empire* magazine voted *Aliens* “The Greatest Film Sequel of all Time.” Its editors wrote: “This

is a defiantly different film, one that's as good as (or arguably, better than) Ridley Scott's *Alien*, but not directly comparable because it remains true to the spirit of its predecessor without ever threatening to retread its steps.” (Like several critics, the magazine also judged the film's special edition to have “too much tension-deflating filler.”)

In terms of visual and special effects, *Aliens* had come at what was in retrospect a zenith of practical in-camera tricks and model and miniatures expertise. “I remember Jim talking on set during *Aliens* about how he was going to use digital technology to make the aqua hand in *The Abyss*,” Julian Parry said.

That effect, those in Cameron's own *Terminator 2*, and then *Jurassic Park* (1993) eventually contributed to the demise of the model unit and anything but digital technology in moviemaking. *Aliens* therefore stands as one of the last great examples of those abandoned crafts.

“*Terminator* was my first real film,” Cameron said in 2010, “and you can directly contrast 1984 to 2010. No single technique we used then is used today. We shot *Terminator* on film, and we don't shoot on film today. All of the visual effects are digital now. Back then we used glass paintings, foreground miniatures and stop-motion animation. We thought we were being tremendously innovative—and we were.”

One of *Aliens*' most important cultural effects was to change how audiences viewed women, what kind of roles they would pay to see women incarnate. It didn't just star Weaver as Ripley, the heroine, the mother of all mothers—it had several strong women, even if they were killed off: Ferro, Dietrich, and of course, Vasquez. Consequently, the movie's perceived feminism, or lack thereof, has been debated in hundreds of articles, academic theses, and books on cinema.

“What Jim Cameron did with female action,” Goldstein said, “that was really groundbreaking is that he treated it as perfectly normal, as though there had already been 20 movies about tough-girl marines blasting monsters. You know you've really been empowered when it's not worth mentioning anymore.”







CAST & CREW

Note: Onscreen credits were taken from the Director's Cut of *Aliens* on the *Aliens* *Ultimate* Blu-ray of 2010. Additional credits were taken from numerous unit lists generated by the production, IMDb, and cast and crew recollections.

[opening credits]

Twentieth Century Fox Presents
A Brandywine Production
A James Cameron Film

Sigourney Weaver
Michael Biehn
Paul Reiser
Lance Henriksen
Carrie Henn
Bill Paxton
William Hope
Ricco Ross
Al Matthews

Executive Producers: Gordon Carroll, David Giler,
and Walter Hill

Music Composed by James Newman

Alien Effects Created by Stan Winston

Certain Special Visual Effects Created by
The LA Effects Group, Inc.

Visual Effects Supervisors: Robert Skotak,
Dennis Skotak

Visual Effects Supervisor-Post Production:
Brian Johnson

Editor: Ray Lovejoy

Production Designer: Peter Lamont

Director of Photography: Adrian Biddle

Story by James Cameron, David Giler & Walter Hill

Based on Characters Created by Dan O'Bannon
and Ronald Shusett

Screenplay by James Cameron

Produced by Gale Anne Hurd

Directed by James Cameron

[end credits]

Ripley: Sigourney Weaver
Newt: Carrie Henn
Corporal Hicks: Michael Biehn
Carter Burke: Paul Reiser
Bishop: Lance Henriksen
Private Hudson: Bill Paxton
Lieutenant Gorman: William Hope
Private Vasquez: Jenette Goldstein
Sergeant Apone: Al Matthews
Private Drake: Mark Rolston
Private Frost: Ricco Ross
Corporal Ferro: Colette Hillier
Private Spunkmeyer: Daniel Kash
Corporal Dietrich: Cynthia Scott
Private Crowe: Tip Tipping
Private Wierzbowski: Trevor Steedman
Van Leuwen: Paul Maxwell
ECA Rep: Valerie Colgan
Insurance Man: Alan Polonsky
Med Tech: Alibe Parsons
Doctor: Blain Fairman
Cocooned Woman: Barbara Coles
Alien Warrior: Carl Toop
Powerloader Operator: John Lees
Doubles for Newt: Louise Head, Kiran Shah
Newt's Mother: Holly De Jong
Newt's Brother: Christopher Henn
Newt's Father: Jay Benedict
Lydecker: Bill Armstrong
Simpson: Mac McDonald
Stunt Coordinator: Paul Weston

Stunt Performers: Chris Webb, Sue Crossland,
Jason White, Malcolm Weaver, Stuart St. Paul,
Simon Crane, Sean McCabe, Jazzer Jeyes, Eddie
Powell, Steve Dent, Bill Weston, Eleanor Bertram,
Stuart Fell, Tom Delmar

Casting-U.S.: Mike Penton, CSA; Jane Feinberg,
CSA; Judy Taylor, CSA
Casting-U.K.: Mary Selway

Original Alien Design: H. R. Giger
Conceptual Designer: Ron Cobb
Conceptual Artist: Syd Mead
Special Effects Supervisor: John Richardson
Second Unit Director: Stan Winston
Costume Designer: Emma Porteous
Production Supervisor: Hugh Harlow
Production Controller: Paul Tucker
Unit Production Managers: Mo Coppitters,
Gil Whelan
First Assistant Director: Derek Cracknell
Second Assistant Director: Melvin Lind
Script Supervisor: Diana Dill
Production Coordinator: Joyce Turner
Sound Recordist: Roy Chapman
Camera Operators: Shaun O'Dell, David Worley
Gaffer: Jack Thetford
Camera Focus: Martin Hume, Martin Kenzie
Production Accountant: Jill Bennett
Location Auditor: Jay Roberts
Unit Publicist: Geoff Freeman
Stills Photographer: Robert Penn
Producer's Assistant: Polly Apostolof
Video Effects Supervisor: Richard Hewitt
Supervising Art Director: Terence Ackland-Show
Art Directors: Bert Davey, Fred Hole,
Michael Lamont, Ken Court
Set Decorator: Crispian Sallis
Construction Manager: Vic Simpson
Property Master: Bert Heam
Production Buyer: Sidney Palmer
Costume Supervisor: Tiny Nicholls
Make-up Supervisor: Peter Robb-King
Chief Hairdresser: Elaine Bowerbank
Special Effects Workshop Supervisor:
Norman Baillie
Senior Special Effects Technicians: John Morris,
Nick Finlayson, Ron Burton, Ken Morris,
Peter Pickering, Ron Cartwright, Joss Williams,
Michael Dunleavy, Paul Whybrow
Creature Effects Coordinators: Shane Mahan,
John Rosengrant, Tom Woodruff Jr., Alec Gillis,
Richard Landon

Creature Effects Crew: Graham High, Nigel Booth,
Lindsay McGowan, Christine Overs, Gregory Figiel,
Matt Rose, Stephen Morrington, Julian Caldwell,
John Robertson, Ian Rolph, Willie Whitten,
Rick Lazzarini, Ray Lovell, David Kean,
Philomena Davis, Trevor Butterfield, Bill
Sturgeon, Mark Williams, Werner Gresty

Visual Effects Unit Production Manager:
Paul Tivers

Production Secretary: Sarah Spooner
Assistant Directors: Chris Knowles, Paul Frift
Art Director: Peter Russell
Cameramen: Harry Oakes, BSC, Leslie Dear, BSC
Camera Operators: David Litchfield,
Michael Anderson

Miniature Floor Effects Supervisor: Brian Smithies
Senior Special Effects Technicians: John Brown,
Jonathan Angell, Digby Milner

Miniatures Technical Supervisor: Pat McClung
Mechanical Armature Design: Doug Beswick,
Phil Notaro

Titles and Video Graphics Design: Tony White
Process Photographers: Charles Staffell, BSC,
Roy Moores, BSC

Special Effects Editor: Robert Gavin
Gaffer: Wally Wheeler

Construction Manager: Barry Saunders
Motion Control by Arkadon and
Peerless Camera Company, Ltd.

Cable-Rod Actuated Puppets by Doug Beswick
Productions, Inc.

Telescoil Effects Provided by Fantasy II
Opticals: General Screen Enterprises, Ltd.,
Peter Govey Film Opticals,
Peerless Camera Company, Ltd.

Supervising Sound Editor: Don Sharpe
Dialogue Editor: Archie Ludski

Foley Editor: Rocky Phelan
Sound Editors: Peter Horrocks, Alan Paley,
Jack Knight, Dev Goodman

Chief Dubbing Mixer: Graham V. Hartstone
Dubbing Mixers: Nicolas Le Messurier,
Michael A. Carter

Associate Editor: Peter Bolta
First Assistant Editor: Phil Sanderson
Second Assistant Editor: Simon Harris
Music Editors: Robin Clarke, Michael Clifford
Orchestrator: Greig McRitchie
Music Recording Engineer: Eric Tomlinson
Additional Synthesizer Effects: Ian Underwood,
Robert Garrett, Randall Frakes
Music Performed by The London Symphony Orchestra
Music Recorded at Abbey Road Studios,
Camera and Lenses by Moviecam, supplied by
Cinefocus, London
Sound Re-recorded by Pinewood Studios
Color by Eastman Kodak
Processing by Rank Film Laboratories
Prints by DeLuxe
Dolby Stereo in selected theaters
Released by Twentieth Century Fox
Film Corporation

Made by Twentieth Century-Fox Productions Ltd. at
Pinewood Studios, London, England, with location
sequences filmed at Acton Lane Power Station,
London, England

[uncredited cast and crew]

Hicks (for first two weeks of shoot): James Remar
Salvage Team Leader: Stuart Milligan
Salvager: Tom Woodruff Jr.
Salvage Team Leader (voice): Bob Sherman
Spaceship Worker: Jill Goldston
Amanda Ripley-McLaren (in photo): Elizabeth
Inglis (Sigourney Weaver's mother)

Stunt doubles (some listed elsewhere, but re-
listed here as group): Clive Curtis (Frost);
Denise Ryan (Dietrich); Shaun McCabe (Gorman);
Jason White (Hicks); Shaun McCabe (Hudson); Elena
Bertram (Vasquez); Sue Crossland (Ripley)
Alien Warriors (listed elsewhere but re-listed
here as group): Chris Webb, Simon Crane, Jazzer
Jayes, Bill Weston, Steve Dent, and Carl Toop

Director of Photography (for two weeks at Acton
Power Plant): Dick Bush
Lighting/Operator: Richard Hill
Focus: Nick Wilson, Simon Fulford
Focus Puller: Paul Kenward
Operator: Barry Brown, Sharon Parker-Frazier
Steadicam Operators: Pete Cavaciuti, Jan Pester
First Assistant Camera: Michael Condro
Clapper Loaders: Nick Soyer, Terry Nightingall
Camera Grip: John Fleming
Assistant Camera: Nigel Seal
Camera Trainee: Graham Martyr
Grip: Phil Aylward
Boom Operator: John Stevenson
Sound Maintenance Engineer: George Rice
Video Operator: Mike Heaviside
Video Electronics Engineer: John Fisher
Video Assist Operator: Chris Warren

3rd Assistant Directors: Tim Lewis, Julian Wall
Continuity: Allison Odell

Video Effects Technician: Simon Hewitt
Video Operator: Kevin Brookner

Assistant Art Directors: Dennis Boshier,
Michael Boone
Draftsmen: Stephen Bream, Roger Bowles,
Anthony Rimmington
Art Department Secretary: Moira Butt
Art Department Assistant: Simon Lamont
Scenic Artists: Ernest Smith, Jacqueline Stears
Assistant Set Decorator Technical: Brendan Alimo
Sketch Artists: Roger Deer, Maciek Piotrowski
Storyboard Artist/Illustrator: Denis Rich
Technical Designer: Mark Harris
Armor Designer: Terry English
Armorers: Simon Atherton, Andrew Fletcher
Art Department Trainee: Sarah Tozer
Assistant Set Decorator: Jille Brown
Production Buyer: Sidney Palmer
Wardrobe Assistants: John Brady, Jimmy Smith,
Renee Heimer
Chief Makeup Artist: Jane Royle
Makeup Artist: Beryl Lerman

Assistant Makeup Artist: Melissa Street
Special Makeup Effects: Everett Burrell
Hairdresser: Chris Taylor
Dresser: Caroline Quilter
Artists: Janet Aspinall, Jack Ross,
and Graham, Paul Kilduff

Visual Effects Editor: William Parnell
Assistant Editor: Robert Hambling, Steve Maguire
Sound Editors: Scott Bross, Severil Goodman,
William Parnell
Assistant Sound Editor: Patricia Gilbert
Assistant Visual Effects Editor: Adrian Trent
Assistant Sound Editor: Chris Blunden
Recording Mixers: Jeffrey Perkins, Otto Snel
ADR Mixer: Michael Strutt

Creature Effects, Stan Winston Studio
and its Subsidiary: Tony Gardner, Howard Berger,
Drew Jones, Lindsay MacGowan
Special Effects Technicians: Peter E. White,
Cyril Barber, Daniel Dark, Trevor Butterfield,
Dave Chapman, Aashish Chanana, Edward J.
Franklin, Garth Inns, Andy Williams
Special Effects Department Runners: Simon Cockren,
Dennis, Models Modelers: James (Jamie) Thomas,
Neil Williams
Special Effects Technician: Julian Parry
Additional Alien Queen Crewmembers: Nick Gillard,
Terry Coope
Production Effects/Special Effects Trainee:
Sarah Emery
Special Effects Model-Making Technician:
Nigel Brackley
Model-makers: Brian Cole, Faisal Karim, John Lee,
Anton Prickett, Steven Woodcock, John Brown
Visual Effects Miniatures Second Unit and
Technician: Steve Begg
Visual Effects: Larry Arpin
Miniatures: Crit Killen
Miniature Effects Assistant: Tim Turner
Rotoscope Artists: Martin Body, Andrew Coates
Visual Effects Trainee: Zoe Cain
Sculptor: Peter Voysey
Matte Artist: Peter Melrose

Miniature Effects Unit: Michael Burnett,
James Belohovek, Brian Penikas, Kevin Yagher,
Shannon Shea, Margaret Beserra, Teresa Burkett
Sculptor: Stuart Land

Visual Effects Assistant to the Skotaks:
Rashid Khares

Optical Camera Operator: Alan Church
Optical Compositing: Tim Ollive
Motion Control Programmer: Andrew Eio
Camera Grip: Tony Rowland
Motion-Control Camera: Peter Truckel
Special Photographer: Rolf Konow
Production Assistant: J. Randolph Harrison

Property Master: Bert Hearn
Assistant Property Master: Rodney Pinott
Property Assistant: Robert A. Kennedy
Chargehand Standby Propman: Tommy Davies
Standby Propmen: Alf Hurley, Peter Godfrey
Chargehand Dressing Propman: Michael Matthews
Dressing Propmen: Steven Wilder, Charlie Miles,
Adam Blizzard, Paul Maloney
Prop Storeman: Colin Thurston
Special Effects (Action Props) Supervisor:
Terry Reed
Action Prop Makers: Ron Walden, Mark Bullimore
Special Effects Action Props Maker: John Davies
Animatronics: Dennis Wu
Special Effects Technician: Janice Body
Gaffer, Second Unit: Michael McDermott

Carpenter: Graham Britton
Stagehand: Graham Blything
Painter: Jeffrey Sullivan
Supervising Plasterer: Paul James
Plasterers: William Clayton, Mick Chubbock
Plasterer's Laborer: Roy Grove
Rigger: James St. John
Sculptors/Modelers: Anthony Freeman,
Andrew Holder, Keith Short, Allan Moss
Assistant Sculptor/Modeller: Martin Smeaton
Chargehand Electrician: Frank Clissold
Generator Operator: Stewart Hadley

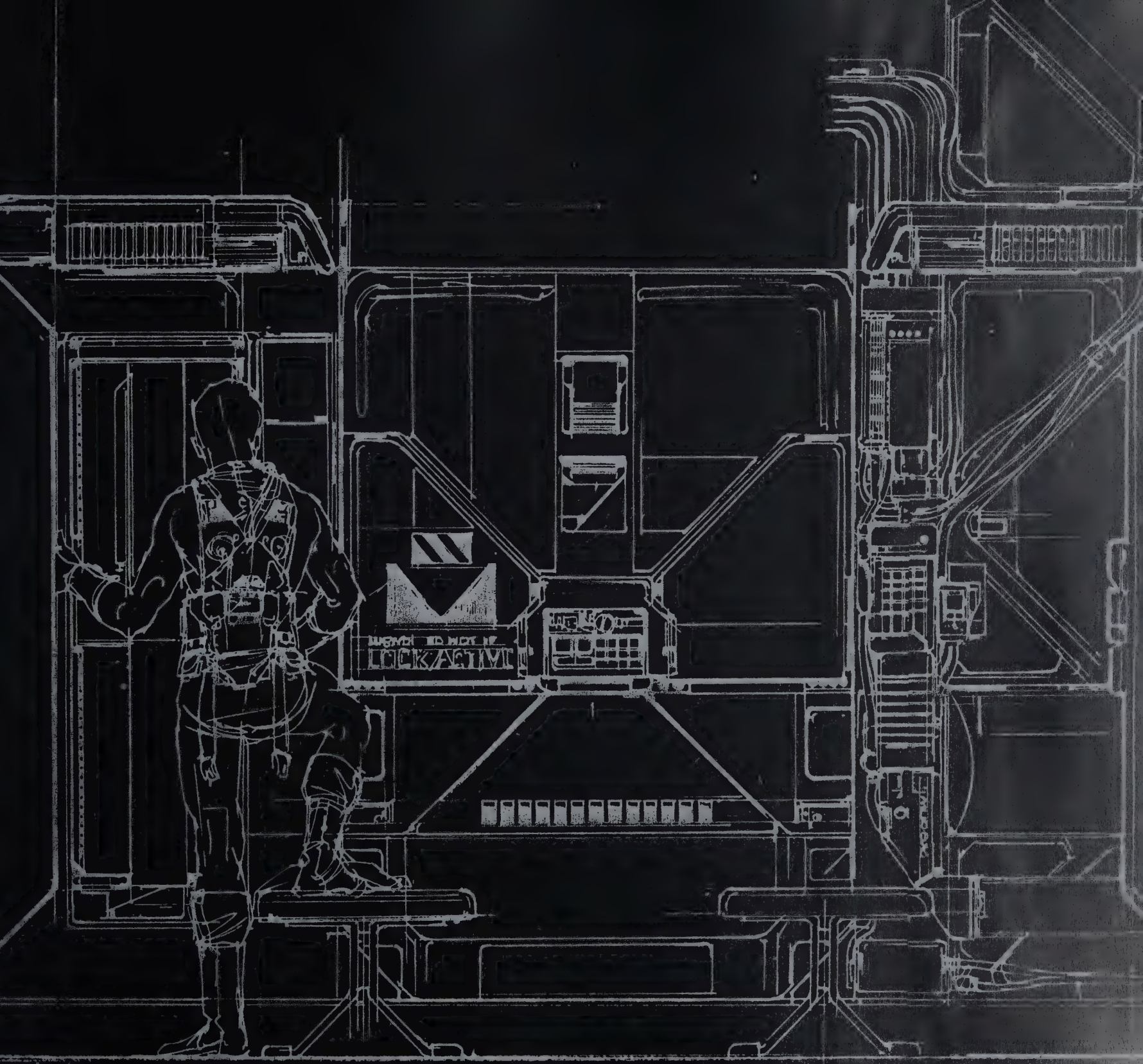
Electricians: Stuart King, Dennis Cane,
Richard Donnelly, Clint Mills, Edward Paduch,
James Hunt, Michael Bradley, Kevin Cottrell,
Mark Ingleton, Pat Miller

CASTING ASSISTANT: Tessa Topolski
Additional Casting-UK: Sarah Jackson
Producer's Secretary: Alison Odell, Marion Gray
Accounts Secretary: Pip Harrison
Drivers: Ray Reece, Terry Reece, Joe Reece, Danny
Tutor/Chaperone: Anne Mellor
Physiotherapist: David Allen
Insurance Brokers: Bayly, Martin & Pay
Lawyers: Allison and Humphrey
Location Catering: Lewis and Clarke

LA Effects Group Limited
Executive Producer: Larry Benson
Producer: Suzanne M. Benson
Secretary: Sarah Spooner
Special Visual Effects, Opticals and Animation
Consultant: Alan Markowitz
Model-Maker: Jay Roth

ADD'L PRODUCTION PHOTOGRAPHY: Douglas Kirkland
Public Relation Photos: Terry O'Neill

OPPOSITE - A Syd Mead concept
drawing of an airlock aboard the
Sulaco.



B I B L I O G R A P H Y

BOOKS

- Duncan, Jody. *The Winston Effect*. London: Titan Books, 2006.
- Dunham, Brent (editor). *James Cameron: Interviews*. University Press of Mississippi, 2012.
- Keegan, Rebecca. *The Futurist: The Life and Films of James Cameron*. New York: Crown Publishers, 2009.
- Nashawaty, Chris. *Crab Monsters, Teenage Cavemen, and Candy Stripe Nurses—Roger Corman: King of the B Movie*. New York: Abrams, 2013.
- Rinzler, J. W. *The Making of Alien*. London: Titan, 2019.
- Sammon, Paul. *Aliens: The Illustrated Screenplay*. London: Orion Books, 2001.
- Sellers, Robert. *Sigourney Weaver*. London: Robert Hale Ltd., 1992.
- Ward, Simon. *Aliens: The Set Photography*. London: Titan Books, 2016.

MAGAZINE AND NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

- Bunn, Gary. Interview with Brian Johnson and Stuart Galloway, *Facebugger* (fanzine), no. 2 (date unknown).
- Calio, Jim. "On set or off, moviemakers Jim Cameron and Gale Hurd are never *Aliens* to each other." *People Magazine*, August 1986.
- Cameron, James. "Answers about *Aliens*." *Starlog* magazine, no. 125, December 1987.
- Chute, David. "James Cameron Interview." *Film Comment*, February 1985.
- Cleaver, Thomas McKelvey. "How to Direct a *Terminator*," *Starlog* magazine, no. 89, December 1984.
- Drennan, K. M. "The Howling Commando" (Bill Paxton), *Starlog* magazine, no. 126, January 1987.
- Jamison, Stewart. "David Giler interview." *Starburst* magazine, October 1992.
- Jones, Alan. "James Cameron Takes a Second Plunge." *Starburst* magazine, no. 136, December 1989.
- Kaplan, James. "Sigourney Weaver Interview." *Entertainment Weekly*, May 1992.
- Lowry, Brian. "Jenette Goldstein: Adios, *Aliens*." *Starlog* magazine, no. 115, February 1987.
- Moseley, Bill. "20,000 Leagues Under the Sea: The Movie Director as Captain Nemo." *OMNI*, 1998.
- Pirani, Adam. "Stan Winston's Killer E.T.s., Parts One and Two." *Fangoria* magazine, nos. 56 & 57, August & September 1986.
- . "James Cameron: In Deadly Combat with *Aliens*." *Starlog* magazine, no. 110, September 1986.

- . "James Cameron: Directing." *Fangoria* magazine, no. 56, September 1986.
- . "Gunning for *Aliens*." *Fangoria* magazine, no. 55, August 1986.
- Rhetts, JoAnn. "Writer-Director Shows the Special Effects Energy Can Radiate." *The Charlotte Observer*, July 13, 1986.
- Richardson, John H. "Iron Jim." *Premiere Magazine*, August 1994.
- Shay, Don. "*Aliens*." *Cinefex*, no. 27, August 1986.
- Schickel, Richard. "Help! They're Back! *Aliens* storms in as this summer's megahit." *Time* magazine, July 28, 1986.
- Staff writer(s), "The Terminator: Director James Cameron." *Fangoria* magazine, no. 41, January 1985.
- . "*Aliens: The Official Movie Magazine*." O'Quinn Studios, 1986.
- Wells, Victor. "*Aliens*: An Out of This World Communication with Director James Cameron." *Prevue Magazine*, August 1986.
- Teitelbaum, Sheldon. "Special Effects: *Aliens*." *Cinefantastique*, 1986.
- Wooton, Adrian. "James Cameron." *The Guardian*, April 13, 2003.

INTERNET SOURCES

- Associated Press. "James Cameron and Sigourney Weaver on *Aliens*, and *Avatar*," Cleveland.com, 2009.
- Bowles, Duncan. "The Ultimate Michael Biehn Interview." DenOfGeek, 2011.
- Dawson, Kevin. Interviews (podcasts) with Graham Hartstone and Terry Ackland-Snow, ReelFeedback, PlayerFM.com, 2017.
- Ebert, Robert. "Film Review." RogerEbert.com, 1986.
- Fischer, Dennis. "Film Review." HollywoodReporter.com, 1986.
- Flexiblehead. "*Aliens*" (interviews with the Colonial Marines), Flexiblehead.com, 2013.
- Goodman, Walter. "Film Review." NYTimes.com, 1986.
- Hicks. "Al Matthews Interview," ElegantAstronaut.com, 2006.
- Hughes, Roger. "Gale Anne Hurd, James Cameron Talk *The Terminator* and *The Walking Dead*." Forbes.com, 2014.
- Lammers, Tim, "Roger Corman reflects on *Battle*, James Cameron," Kvia.com, 2016.
- Leon, Melissa. "Game Over, Man: *Aliens*' Cast Remembers the 'Irreplaceable' Bill Paxton on Alien Day." TheDailyBeast.com, 2017.
- Martin, Jean-Baptiste. "The Reconciliation Between James Horner and James Cameron for *Titanic*," JamesHorner-FilmMusic.com, 2019.
- Muñoz, Lorenza. "James Cameron on the Future of Cinema," SmithsonianMag.com, 2010.
- Siskel, Gene. "Film Review." ChicagoTribune.com, 1986.
- Staff writer(s), archival: *Hollywood Reporter* interview with James Cameron, SciFied.com, 1986.
- . AlienExplorations.com. (*L'Ecran Fantastique*, no. 73, October 1986; "Bloody Best of *Fangoria*," v6, 1987; "Science Fiction Film Making in the 1980s," *Starburst*, 1998; Interview with James Cameron by Alan Jones, October 1996; "Easy Reader," July 1988)
- . "A Drive of *Titanic* Proportions." Achievement.org, 1999.
- . "The Other Hicks—James Remar"; "I Love the Corps." Alienseries.wordpress.com
- . Interview with Lance Henriksen, EveryJoe.com.
- . Interview with Jenette Goldstein, TooFab.com, 2016.
- . --. AOL.com, 2010.
- . --. HitFix.com.

RIGHT: Concept drawings for the dropship decal, the "Bug Stomper" by Cobb.

--. --. Birthmoviesdeath.com, 2016.
--. "Actress Who Played Gun-Toting Bulldyke in *Aliens* Now Sells Oversized Bras to Jews and Blacks." HeebMagazine.com, 2009.
--. "Paul Reiser interview." JamesCameronOnline.com
--. "*Aliens* Review." FilmTracks.com
--. "Film Review." Variety.com, 1986.
--. "91st Academy Awards Rules." Oscars.org
Topel, Fred. "*Aliens*' Producer Gale Anne Hurd Shares Her Hollywood Sexism War Stories," SlashFilm.com, 2018.
Williams, Owen. "Daniel Kash interview: *Aliens*' Private Spunkmeyer," DenOfGeek.com, 2012.

OTHER MEDIA

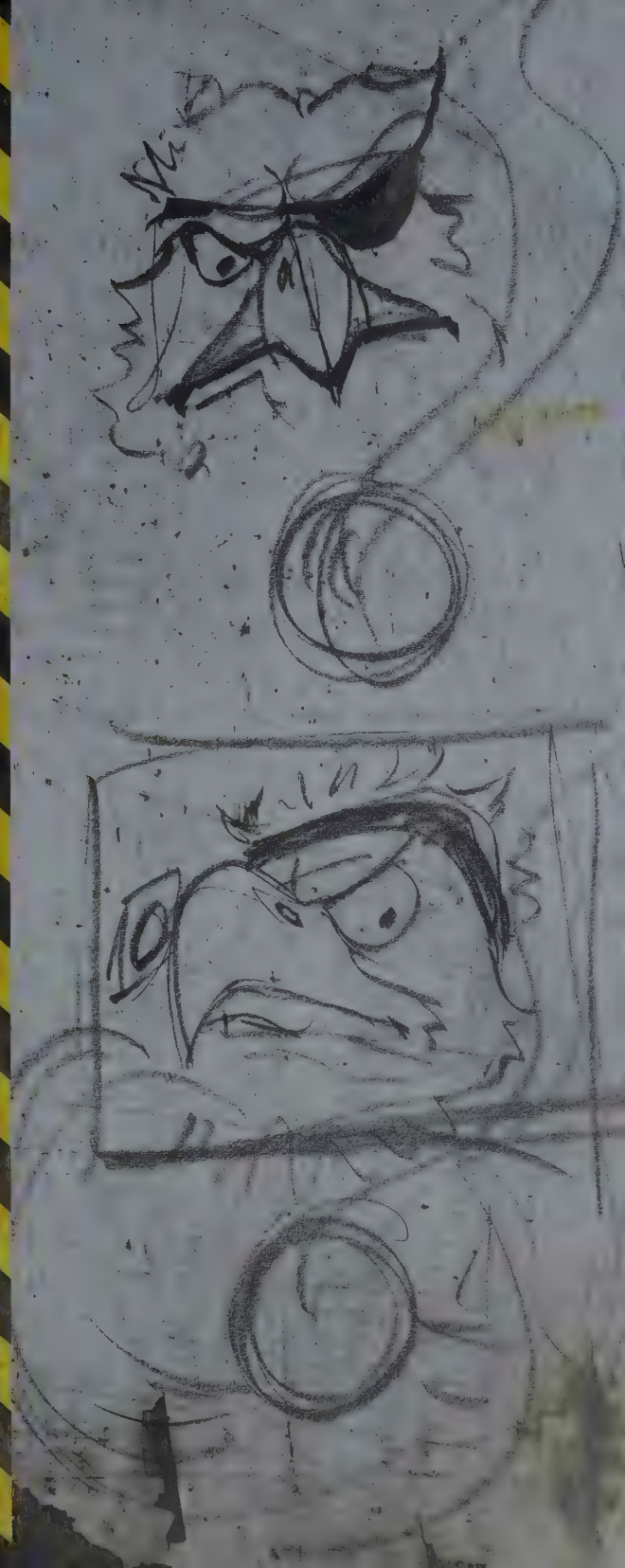
de Lauzirika, Charles. *Superior Firepower: Making Aliens*, 2003.
--. Pods and extras for *Aliens*. *Alien* Anthology Blu-ray, 2010.
Percival, Aaron (interviewed by). Podcast with Cynthia Taylor. AvP.fandom.com, 2017.
YouTube.com: "*Aliens* 30th Anniversary Panel at San Diego Comic-Con": Michael Biehn, James Cameron, Carrie Henn, Lance Henriksen, Gale Anne Hurd, Bill Paxton, Paul Reiser, Sigourney Weaver (moderated by Anthony Breznican), FilmsThatRock.com, 2016; "*Aliens* EXPOsed Calgary Comic Expo, Cast Reunion": Mark Rolston, Ricco Ross, Jenette Goldstein, Bill Paxton, Michael Biehn, Lance Henriksen, Paul Reiser, Carrie Henn, Sigourney Weaver (moderated by Garret Wang), 2014.

JWR INTERVIEWS JUNE-JULY 2019

Steve Begg
Jenette Goldstein
Brian Johnson (emails)
Peter Lamont
John Lee
Shane Mahan
Pat McClung
Martin Hume
Julian Parry
Mark Rolston
John Rosengrant
Crispian Sallis
Dennis Skotak
Robert Skotak

PHOTO CREDITS

Unit Photographer: Robert Penn
Add'l Production Photography: Douglas Kirkland
Public Relation Photos: Terry O'Neill



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This is my third book for Twentieth Century-Fox. Director of publishing Carol Roeder started me out on *Planet of the Apes*; production executive Steve Asbell was nice enough to offer me *Alien*; and fortunately *Aliens* was a natural follow-up. Steve Tzirlin and Carol kept me going throughout. Once again, Nicole Spiegel saved this present book; without her it wouldn't exist. Heather Hoffman in Image Archives was instrumental; without the archives and her help, you'd have nothing but text pages in your hands.

At Titan Books, the wonderful Simon Ward and fantastic editor Andy Jones helped make *The Making of Aliens* a reality by handling much of the image clearances and actual bookmaking with the printer.

I'm ever grateful, again, to Charles de Lauzirika and to those who gave me advice or essential archival information not available at Fox: Alan Tomkins, Craig Barron, Harry Harris, and Willie Goldman. I'm also grateful to Matt Winston and Erich at Stan Winston School of Character Arts for supplying several key images.

A big thanks to those who made themselves available for interviews: Jenette Goldstein was first, and introduced me to Mark Rolston, who was

very generous with his time. John Rosengrant and Shane Mahan took a break from their extremely busy schedules to remember what it was like to go and work in London. Crispian Sallis had many fond memories, while John Lee and Steve Begg were extremely helpful both in their interviews and in supplying photographs, a few reproductions of storyboards, and links to other cast and crew. Begg introduced me to the Skotaks, and it was a privilege to talk to Robert and Dennis, as well as Pat McClung and Julian Parry. Their memories and help were essential to the behind-the-scenes story.

Once again, Cameron + Company is the unsung hero. There, in the still beautiful and bucolic town of Petaluma, California, art director Iain Morris and designer Rob Dolgaard transformed my chosen images into a well-crafted book. Again, I'm grateful to you both and your publishing firm.

Thanks also to Lightstorm, LA, and to Vera Meyer at RSA and my agent, Peter Beren.

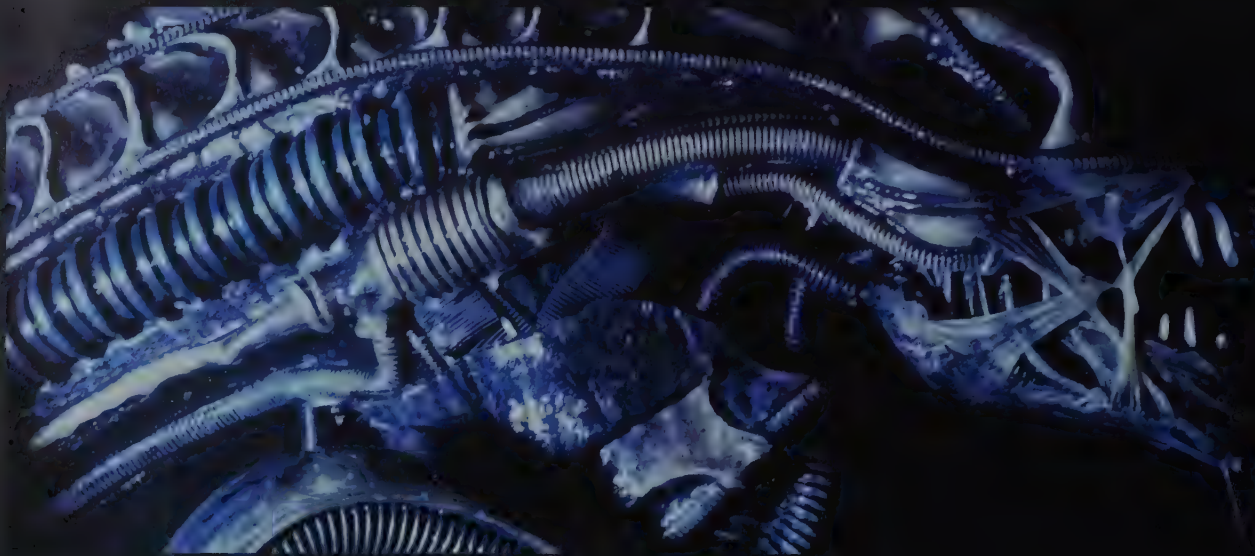
Lastly, once more, a special thanks to Robert Penn, unit photographer on *Aliens*, whose work is featured in the chapters dedicated to principal photography.

BELOW LEFT: An alien.

OPPOSITE: A proof sheet of photos taken on set by unit photographer Robert Penn.

FOLLOWING PAGES: Ripley and Newt asleep at the story's end. "Ripley and Newt can dream again," Cameron said. "Their dream landscape is not going to have these creatures in it. Ripley survives the first time, but she didn't survive mentally. At the end of this film you feel that not only has she survived physically, but she's out of the woods. It's actually a better ending in that sense."

"A film like *Aliens* is just one long bad dream. I get a lot of imagery from my own dreams; I find them to be a cathartic experience. Movies and dreams offer us a chance to explore other realities, it ties into a lot of primal and subconscious fears. You 'wake up' at the end when you leave the theater."



ALIENS

Photographer

Bob Penn

SAFETY

FILM

ILFORD

XP1 400



6 AS 4067 AS 4068 AS 4069 AS 4070

3

SAFETY

FILM

ILFORD

XP1 400

6

6A



2 AS 4073 AS 4074 AS 4075 AS 4076

9

SAFETY

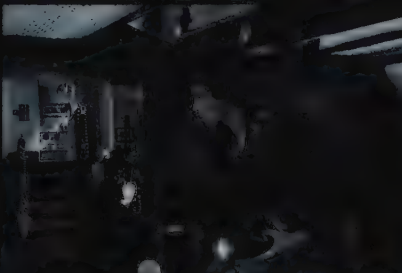
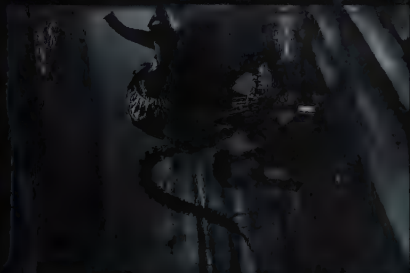
FILM

ILFORD

XP1 400

12

12A



8 AS 4079 AS 4080 AS 4081 AS 4082

15

SAFETY

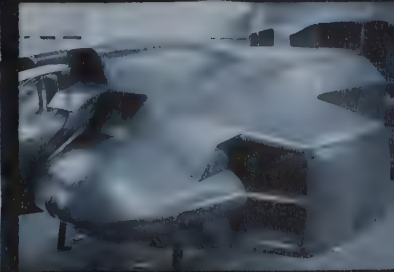
FILM

ILFORD

XP1 400

18

18A



4 AS 4085 AS 4086 AS 4087 AS 4088

21

SAFETY

FILM

ILFORD

XP1 400

24

24A





COLOPHON

THE MAKING OF ALIENS

ISBN 9781789028100

TITAN BOOKS

Published by Titan Books

A division of Titan Publishing Group Ltd

144 Southwark St

London

SE1 1UP

First edition: May 2020

© 2020 Titan Books

All rights reserved. © Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation

All Rights Reserved

To receive exclusive information, news, competitions, and exclusive offers online, please sign up for the Titan newsletter on our website: www.titanbooks.com

Do you ever miss books? We love to hear from our readers. Please email us at readerfeedback@titanemail.com or write to Reader Feedback at the above address.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, without the prior written permission of the publisher, nor be otherwise circulated in any form of binding or cover other than that which it is published and without a similar condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

Every effort has been made to source and contact copyright holders and those requiring likeness approvals. If any omissions do occur, the publisher will be happy to give full credit in subsequent reprints and editions.

A CIP catalogue record for this title is available from the British Library.

Printed and bound in China.



Cameron+Company
PUBLISHER: Chris Gruener
CREATIVE DIRECTOR: Jani R. Morris
DESIGNER: Rob Deigaard

RIGHT: A PR shot of Hero and Weaver.





J. W. Rinzler has authored more than a dozen books, three *New York Times* bestsellers, a #1 bestselling graphic novel, and a *London Times* bestseller, including: *The Making of Star Wars*, *The Complete Making of Indiana Jones*, *The Making of Alien*, and *The Making of Planet of the Apes*. *Rick Baker: Metamorphosis* came out for Halloween 2019. Executive editor at Lucasfilm for 15 years, Rinzler's first historical-fiction thriller—*All Up*—will be published by Permuted Press in July 2020, and will take readers behind the scenes of the first Space Age.



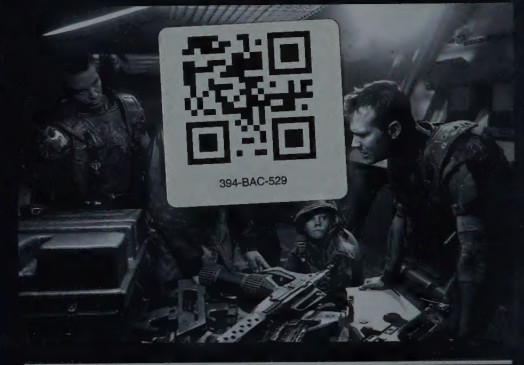
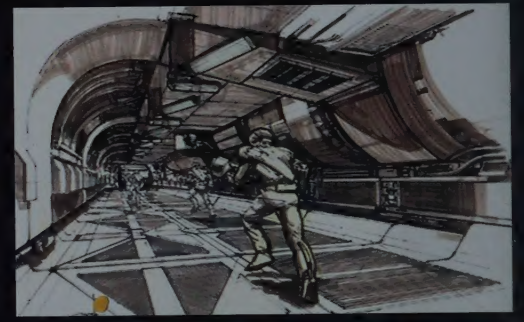
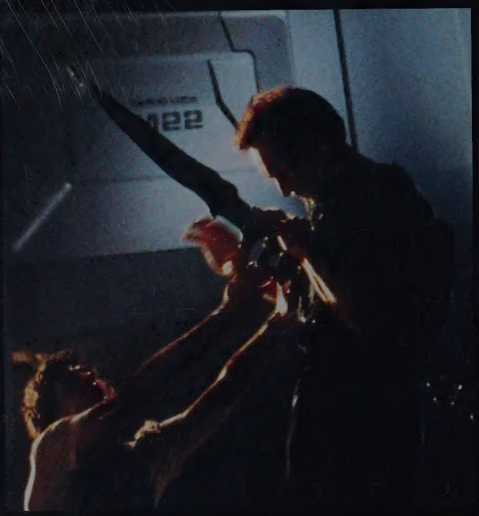
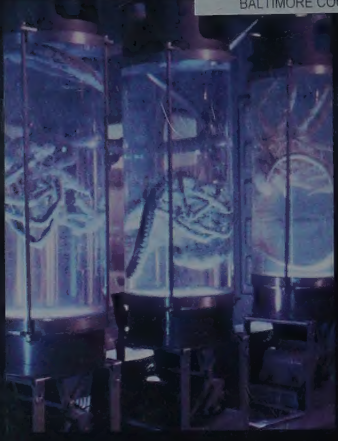
TITAN BOOKS

A division of Titan Publishing Group
144 Southwark Street
London SE1 0UJ

www.titanbooks.com

Printed and bound in China

BALTIMORE COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY



PROPERTY OF
LV-426
ACHERON COLONY

FILM US \$60.00 / CA \$79.00 / UK £44.99

ISBN: 9781789093100

56000



9 781789 093100