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ALIEN RESURRECTION

DRIVER 2

PARASITE EVE II

PLAYSTATION REDESIGN

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Official UK PlayStation Magazine

ALIEN RESURRECTION

THEY'RE COMING OUT OF THE WALLS! WHY CHUCKLES HERE IS THE NEW FACE OF HORROR

LARA R.I.P.?

IS SHE ALIVE? IS SHE DEAD? TURN TO PAGE 24 NOW FOR WORLD EXCLUSIVE NEWS ON TOMB RAIDER: CHRONICLES!

"GET OUT OF THE CAR!"

EXCLUSIVE INSIDER INFO ON WHY DRIVER 2 WILL RAM-RAID YOUR PLAYSTATION THIS WINTER

SMALL (BUT PERFECTLY REFORMED)

IT'S SMALL, IT'S CUTE, IT'S GOT A MOBILE PHONE STUCK IN IT - HOW PS ONE WILL REVOLUTIONISE GAMING



REVIEW INFESTATION!

- | | |
|------------------|------------------------|
| FRONT MISSION 3 | MOHO |
| WIPEOUT SE | DRAGON VALOUR |
| ALUNDRA 2 | RESCUE SHOT |
| ETERNAL EYES | TRON BONNE |
| DISNEY RACING | ALL STAR TENNIS 2000 |
| DRACULA | NIGHTMARE CREATURES II |
| ASTERIX & OBELIX | AND MORE! |

PARASITE EVE II ■ VIB RIBBON ■ GRIND SESSION ■ SILENT SCOPE
READY 2 RUMBLE 2 ■ TITAN AE TICKET GIVEAWAY ■ DIGIMON WORLD
TONY HAWK ■ FIFA ON PS2 ■ SIMPSONS WRESTLING ■ PROJECT EDEN



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Words: Andy Lowe Photography: Jude Edginton

MONSTER! MONSTER!

FACT ATTACK

Publisher: Fox Interactive

Developer: Argonaut Software

Number of players: One

Release: November

Format: PlayStation 1

AFTER THREE YEARS AND A COMPLETE ENGINE FACE-LIFT, IT SEEMED DESTINED FOR DEVELOPMENT HELL. BUT ARGONAUT SOFTWARE'S ALIEN RESURRECTION IS ALMOST HERE, AND IT LOOKS DESTINED TO BE A CLASSIC. PSM TOOK A SHOT AT THE ULTIMATE BUG HUNT...

We're in a heavily tooled-up demo studio at Argonaut's London HQ, fumbling our way through an apparently calm and featureless level of *Alien Resurrection*. There's a chewed-up body crumpled in a chair, blocking a switch on the wall. No problem. Pump a couple of shotgun shells into the congestion, hit the switch. Now, what's that sticky scuttling sound? Turn around... **FACE-HUGGED!**

"Not fair. Didn't see it coming!"

"No," says designer Paul Crocker.

"But you heard it."

Unless you're an ultra-arch chin-stroker, your favourite *Alien* movie is either Ridley Scott's original (clammy, tense, controlled bursts of gore) or James Cameron's shoot

'em up sequel (gung-ho space marines get their badasses chomped, the *Alien* life cycle is explained, the bit with the android and the knife).

"I prefer a kind of mix of the two," says associate producer Erik Larson.

"I hope that's about where *Alien Resurrection* lies in terms of the atmosphere/action balance. I think people are getting tired of out-and-out fragfests. They want something with a little more intelligence."

When Argonaut first picked up the *Resurrection* licence (over three years ago), Acclaim's decent-enough *Alien Trilogy* had just, uh, burst on to the scene. Creepy, first-person, intelligent *Aliens*... Shame about the level design. No point following that format, then. The original plan was for a top-down, third-person

action-adventure. Drop in the odd first-person wriggle through a murky vent, slow down the pace with a few well-planted puzzles...

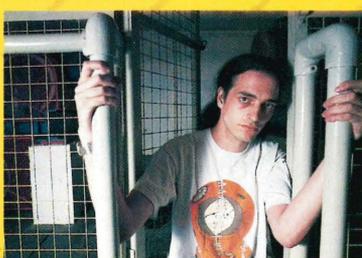
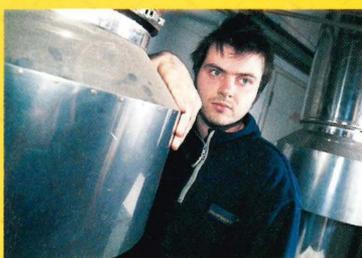
"It wasn't scary," says Crocker. "It looked great graphically but there was never any worry about what would be around the next corner. It was more like a straight shoot 'em up – you could see everything coming. We eventually came round to the idea that it would be a waste to have the *Alien* licence and not actually scare people."

If you dare to remember, *Alien Resurrection*, the film, dealt with the problem of Ripley committing suicide at the end of the third movie by having the

Alien Resurrection



FEATURE



(Top) The Argonaut Software team that developed *Alien Resurrection* and, underneath the crew does its best Alien impressions



Take no prisoners, these Aliens are playing for keeps. The solution? Take it out with extreme prejudice (right)

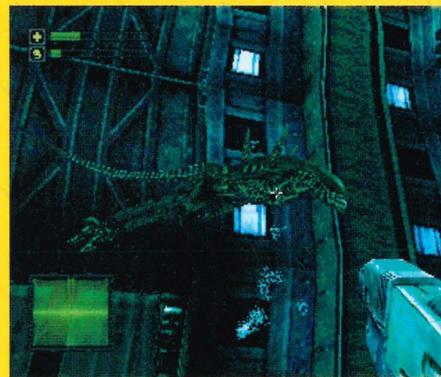
► self-serving military scientists clone her Alien-infested body for the purpose of breeding tame Aliens to use as bio-weapons. Uh-huh. The breeding station is a big spaceship with lots of dingy corridors and a security system controlled by Father, a computer who speaks. Of course, the Aliens escape, get busy slashing and stalking, and, with the ship on course for Earth, only the disturbingly Alien-like Ripley can save the human race from messy extinction.

With mixed results. Only the most hardcore Giger geek would deny that the series had shot most of its ideas-bolt by the end of Cameron's sequel. But that doesn't mean an average film can't be turned into a great game. With full access to pre-production storyboards and dailies (rough cuts of the day's filming), Argonaut had the luxury of being able to carefully pace itself along with the film's development (as opposed to the usual film-to-game way of twisting one finished art-form into another). The close connection to Fox led to further boosts in authenticity, particularly the access to cast members,

who recorded the standard exclamations and grunts of agony in filming breaks. It's not just a cosmetic gimmick. Steven Gilborn/Father is practically the voice of the game and, since the voice has the calm distinction of a professional actor (and not, say, the bloke from the post-room), it adds a touch of genuine cinematic class.

The original, *Tomb Raider*-style version featured a choice of five of the film's characters, 13 interconnected levels and a dinky option to strap rubber-faced,

wheelchair-bound mercenary Vreiss to your back, allowing both forward and backward shooting. Last September, the game was around 85% complete when Argonaut finally decided it could ignore the focus groups no longer. After a minor creative tussle with 20th Century Fox, it was back to the first-person drawing-board. Out went many of the action-adventure elements, in came a more immersive, heart-pounding style with a set narrative loosely based on the fourth film and with relevant character



The levels are set on the human-cloning/ Alien-breeding ship, the USM Auriga. If those crazy scientists knew what they were doing...

THAT INTRO...

TAKE ARGONAUT'S ADVICE. LIGHTS OFF, NEIGHBOUR-WORRYING VOLUME LEVEL... AND SIT BACK FOR THE MOST CLOSELY STORYBOARDED GAME INTRO SINCE, OOH, *TEKKEN 3*



1. Big, rangey *Star Wars*-style shot of the USM Auriga gliding through the void



2. A fully-cloned Ripley lies in theatre



3. The mercenary ship Betty swoops in to dock

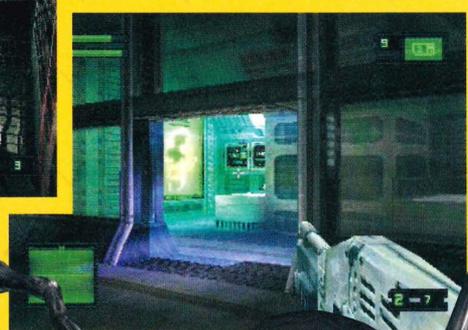
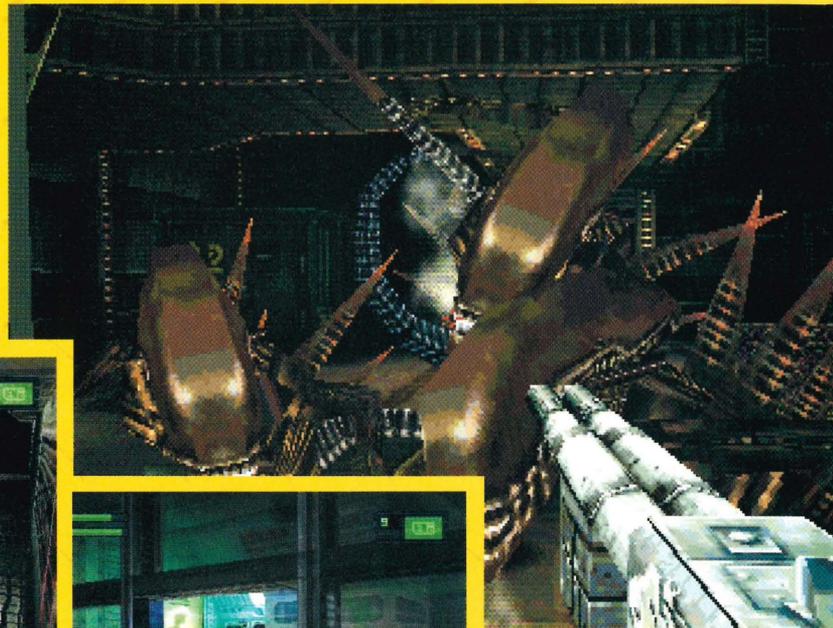
Alien Resurrection

“And, yes, they have ditched the multiplayer factor in favour of story and, crucially, atmosphere”

switches at the end of levels. Ripley is the tough, generic one; android Call is nimble and can access the computers; the assorted space-pirate roughnecks are slow but can take more punishment. And yes, they've ditched the multiplayer factor in favour of story and, crucially, atmosphere.

The game takes place entirely on the evil, corporate, human-cloning/Alien-breeding ship the USM Auriga. The ten massive levels are split into 79 sub-levels all in similar, *Doom*-y style; each with added puzzle-based subtleties. Argonaut admit that the main challenge was finding a balance between following the specifics of the fourth film and keeping the edgy creepiness of the first and second (let's just forget the stupid prison-planet thing with Brian Glover, shall we?). There was also the problem of over-familiarity with the format. Paul Crocker, “We've worked hard on the player's movement. With many first-person shooters, there can be a sense that you're just gliding around, on rails, at a single speed, with no real physics. In *Resurrection*, the player moves in a more natural way, and if you try to just back off from an Alien, you move slower, and it'll catch you. There are plenty of the usual switch-based puzzles in there, but we've tried to give the game more long-lasting appeal by genuinely varying the difficulty levels. On Easy, you get a nice, cosy automatic reload. On Difficult, it's manual.

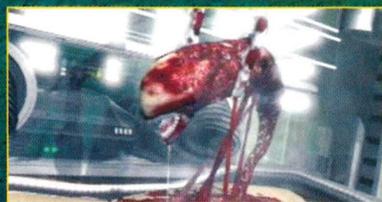
So, not only do you have to worry about aiming at and hitting a charging Alien, there's also the small matter of keeping an eye on your clip level and remembering to reload, otherwise it's *click... Click!* “We wanted the manual reload as standard, but it would have been a little too intense for beginners.” Larson admits to being heavily inspired by PC classic *Half-Life*, mostly by the style of narrative and the sense of a huge, real-feeling space, broken down into individual scenes. Missions include a search-and-destroy of the mangled Ripley clones; a tense tiptoe around a heavily infested area to reroute the ship's power; a spot of scenery-dodging as the ship breaks up; an underwater level with the swimming aliens; and the final confrontation with the



“They're coming out the Goddamn walls!” When these fellas get in your face there's really only one way to react. Shoot them. All



4. Assorted hot-head smugglers disembark



5. A squawking Alien queen is plucked out of its human mum.



6. Elsewhere on the ship, the imprisoned Aliens escape. Blackout...



7. Face-hugger leaps up and it's game over, man...

FEATURE



If you don't like surprises, maybe this isn't the game for you. It's a lights off, maximum volume shocker of a title



“We’ve tried to avoid predictability. Aliens don’t appear in the same place when you restart a level”

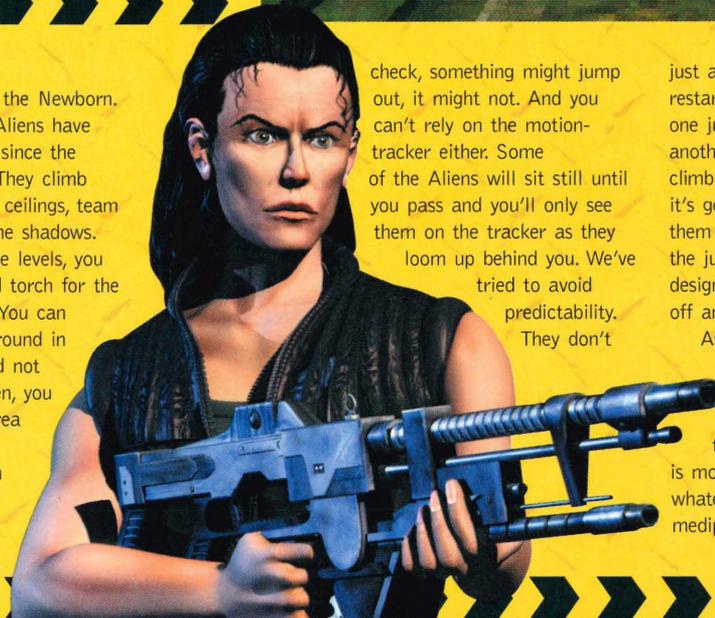
▶ brattish re-evolved Alien, the Newborn.

The generic Aliens have improved hugely since the original version. They climb walls, drop from ceilings, team up and lurk in the shadows. Crocker, “In some levels, you have a hand-held torch for the really dark bits. You can shine the light around in all directions and not see anything. Then, you shine it on an area and just, maybe, think you’ve seen something. The next time you

check, something might jump out, it might not. And you can’t rely on the motion-tracker either. Some of the Aliens will sit still until you pass and you’ll only see them on the tracker as they loom up behind you. We’ve tried to avoid predictability. They don’t

just appear in the same place when you restart a level, and just because you see one jump across from one wall on to another and then go back to the floor and climb the first wall again, doesn’t mean it’s going to repeat that motion. We want them to feel like a real threat. We’re after the jumps and the scares. This game is designed for people to play with the lights off and the sound turned up high.”

As expected, your assorted Xenomorph-stalkers are fully equipped with pistols, shotguns, pulse rifles and a particularly satisfying laser-zapper thing that, power-cell permitting, is more or less a one-shot kill. But whatever your weapon, however many medipacks you’ve stockpiled, be assured:



“THEY’RE ALL OVER THE PLACE”

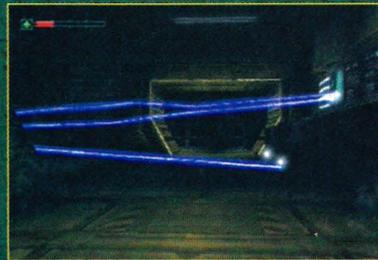
LEVEL ONE FOCUSES ON RIPLEY’S ESCAPE FROM HER SPACE-CELL – THROUGH A DANK, STROBOSCOPIC NETWORK OF GLOOMY CORRIDORS. AND ALL UNDER THE COVER OF THE CHAOS CAUSED BY THE RECENTLY SELF-LIBERATED ALIENS...



1. Totter out of that cell. Through the door on the right is a security card next to a chewed-up crewman. Use it on the wall-panel and head through the door



2. Walk straight down the corridor and out of the door to catch a first glimpse of an Alien attack – luckily, for you, on a couple of hapless marines



3. A deft nip through some fizzing electrical sparks, down a ladder for a bit of mild relief from the gloom – a torch



4. Stand well back from the marine being tossed aside by an Alien, slide down the ladder and shine a light on the pistol in the corner. It’s a popgun, but the ammo is unlimited. Scout around for another security card.

Alien Resurrection

it is scary. Everything is perfectly geared for a slow-paced creep-about, punctuated by minor puzzly bits and sudden outbursts of extreme violence. But isn't that a bit like... Uh-huh. As Larson readily admits, "It's survival-horror, only in first-person." And, as in *Resident Evil*, the jumpy set-ups are brilliantly engineered in the finest popcorn-scattering tradition. For instance, you're cautiously tiptoeing through a room when your motion-tracker suddenly chirps into life – BEHIND YOU! Nothing there, but the blip is getting closer... ABOVE YOU! Too late. Or, you're crawling through a maze of steaming vents, trying to locate those annoying squelching noises... Ah – some shotgun shells. Relax. Next corner... ALIEN! The whole thing is shot through with a definitive *Alien* movie ambience. From the nerve-tickling sound (fan whirrs, humming generators, ominous clunks and clatters, distant screams – direct from the film's sound department), to the commendably graphic details (steaming pools of acid-blood left behind by a fresh kill, chopped-up crew-members slumped over dinner tables). It's a 15 Cert. Just.

Back to that face-hugger. We were hugged. Now, we're an unwilling host to

You can't kill a face-hugger (right) without breaking eggs (below). Make sure you kill them all, or they'll hunt you down



a grinning little chest-burster tyke, and so, on top of the more general hassles of the mission, a sordid little sub-plot kicks in. Find The Emergency Extraction Device Before Mr Chest-Burster Gets The Urge To Flee His Ribcage Nest. The whole face-hugger/chest-burster cycle was a major late-night head-scratcher for the Argonaut crew. "Initially," says Crocker, "when you were face-hugged, you became one of 'them' and, naturally, the other Aliens would ignore you. The problem was, you could work it to your advantage, get



caught on purpose and just steam through the level safely in your human-Alien state. So, we had to just make the Aliens hang back for a while until you shoot, which you're going to have to do eventually."

Or you could just avoid the face-huggers completely.

"No. Once they're out of the eggs, you can't leave any of them alive. They will hunt you down – across an entire level if necessary. It's harsh, but entirely faithful to the spirit of the film. Oh, and make sure that when you shoot one, he's definitely finished. Some of the nastier ones play dead and creep up to surprise you later."

Resident evil, indeed. ■

"Make sure that when you shoot one he's definitely finished. The nastier ones play dead and creep up on you"



5. Back up the ladder, and there's a Save point to the left. Now use the card to enter the lift. Fight the marines and kill the alarm



6. Use the third security card on the door to the right and proceed – with extreme caution. You'll soon shudder at that familiar hiss, and it's one-on-one with your first Alien. Blast him while walking backwards



7. Dive down the ladder by the strobelight, release the pressure via the wheel on the wall



8. Back up the ladder, and more marines are waiting. Waste 'em and go through to the lab area. Release Dr Wren, hear him whinge and head into his room for another card. Almost there... What could possibly go wrong now? To be continued...