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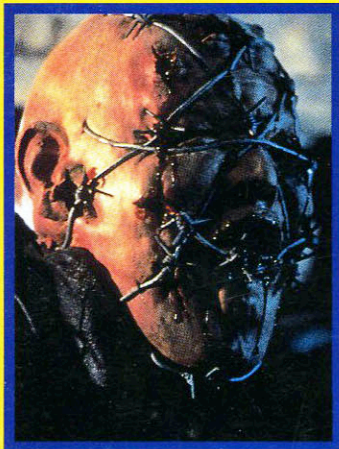
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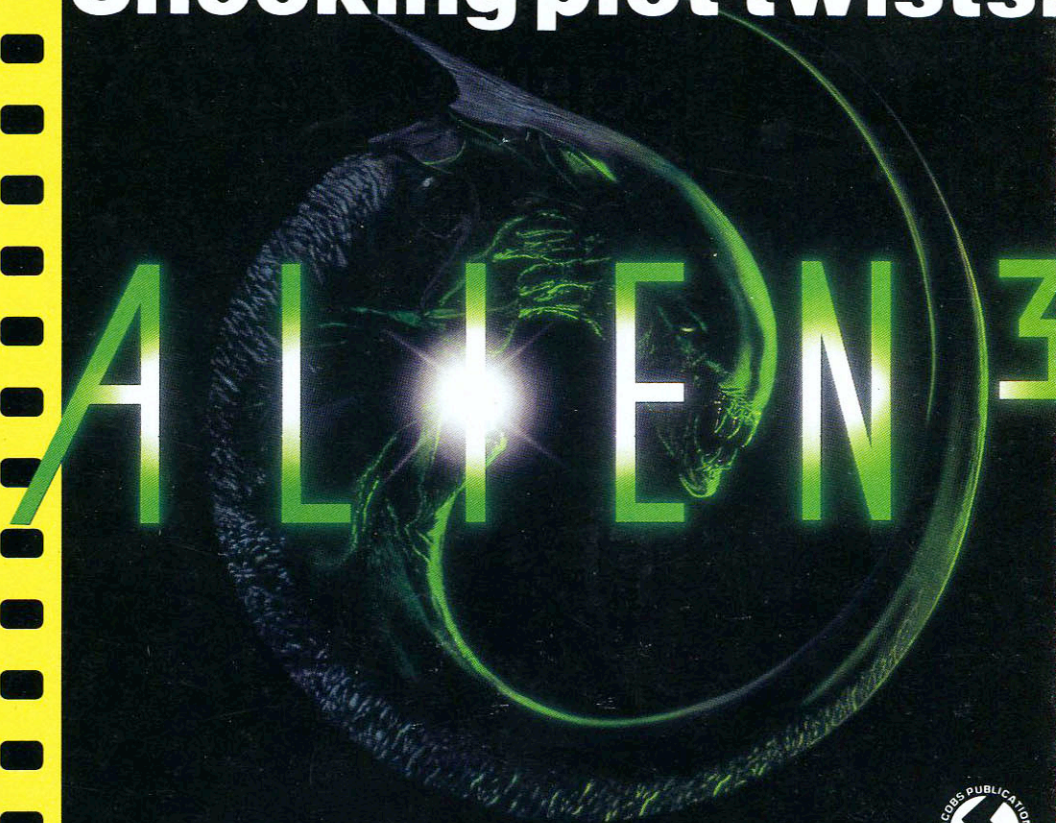
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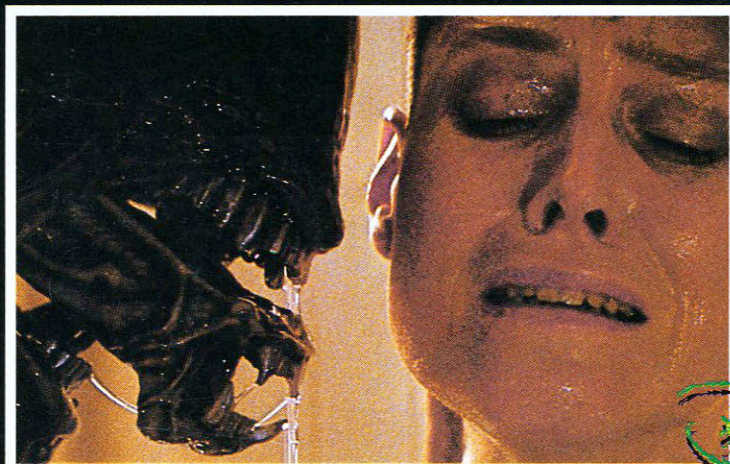
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## Shocking plot twists!



## Ripley's final battle?

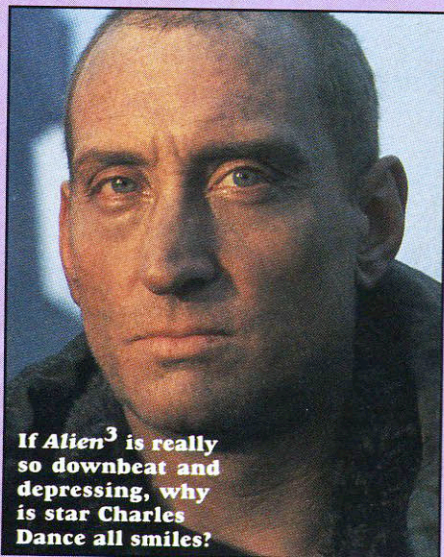


**Bonus: Aliens invade comics!**



**With no military hardware on hand in "Alien<sup>3</sup>," can medical science, as performed by British actor Charles Dance, save the day?**

By MARK KERMODE



**If *Alien<sup>3</sup>* is really so downbeat and depressing, why is star Charles Dance all smiles?**



# DANCES WITH A

**I**n the black, gaping abyss of deepest space, a miserable planet spins in solitude, its surface ravaged by freezing winds. Only the lonely dwell here, prisoners condemned to eke out a wretched existence, laboring endlessly in penance for their sins.

Into this desolate world falls Ripley (Sigourney Weaver), recently triumphant over the Alien terror which once gripped the distant colony of LV-426. All others have been lost in the crash: Ripley's traveling partners, Hicks and the youthful Newt, are dead on arrival. A savage twist of fate? Or a merciful release from the living hell which awaits Ripley in this dark and desolate wilderness?

The scene is set for the final chapter in the acclaimed *Alien* odyssey. Directed by David Fincher from a script by Walter Hill, David Giler and Larry Ferguson, *Alien<sup>3</sup>*

promises to be the darkest episode of this superior series. For all those involved in the production, the creation of *Alien<sup>3</sup>* has been long, arduous and highly fraught. Rumors of internal strife which beset the grueling 15-week shoot (and subsequent postproduction reshoots) evoke a working environment as bleak as that of the prison planet itself. "Deep space on this particular planet is not zip-fasteners and lycra," explains acclaimed British actor Charles Dance, who stars in *Alien<sup>3</sup>* as Ripley's unlikely savior and lover, Dr. Clemens. "The look is deeply depressing—very gray, underlit and somber."

*Alien<sup>3</sup>* began life many moons ago as a script treatment concerning the misfortunes of a monk-populated planet to which the hapless Ripley brings destruction in the shape of a stowaway Alien. Originally slated to be directed by

*Navigator* helmsman Vincent Ward, the troubled project has undergone more mutations than the average Alien experiences in a lifetime. By the time Dance signed on, former music video whiz and first-time feature director David Fincher was in the driver's seat, and the setting had been moved from a monk planet to a prison colony.

"Actually, this script has retained the look of a religious community," explains Dance, who's best remembered by genre fans for his title turn in NBC's *Phantom of the Opera* miniseries and as the villain Sardo in *The Golden Child*. "The men have embraced a sort of strange religious cult in this prison. Some of the prison inmates are homosexual, but they've all taken a vow of celibacy, so nobody does anything to anybody. All the costumes are very monklike, colored in grays and browns. We



**Being this close to the Alien would be a hair-raising experience for Ripley—if she had any.**

threatened by Ripley's presence, and to some extent, they blame her for bringing this disaster—the Alien—with her."

Unlike the Marines in *Aliens*, the prisoners of *Alien*<sup>3</sup> have no hi-tech weaponry with which to fight off the monster. Instead, the characters have to rely on their intuition and cunning to outwit the beast. "The audience must wait and see how ingenious these characters are going to be," Dance elaborates. "The whole set is a cocoon of tunnels and shafts, divided up by lockable steel doors. Basically, what they try to do this time is to trap the creature."

Dance sees this as a return to the intelligent tension of Ridley Scott's original *Alien*, and a move away from the explosive, gung-ho action of *Aliens*. "I'm a great fan of *Alien*, but I didn't really like the second one very much," he confesses. "When the first one was made, it was totally original. As far as I know, it was the first time you'd ever seen the chestbuster effect, and there was a feeling throughout the film of imminent danger, although you were never quite sure what form the danger would take. Also, *Alien* had a small group of characters who were very real, and very well-written."

"The second one really got rather Ramboesque," Dance continues. "There were too many guys charging around with bandanas and heavy armaments, blowing away a creature that before was not supposed to be able to be killed by regular gunfire. Also, you saw too much of the creatures in *Aliens*. *Alien*<sup>3</sup> is very much a return to the style of the first film. You hardly ever see the creature, and

# ALIENS

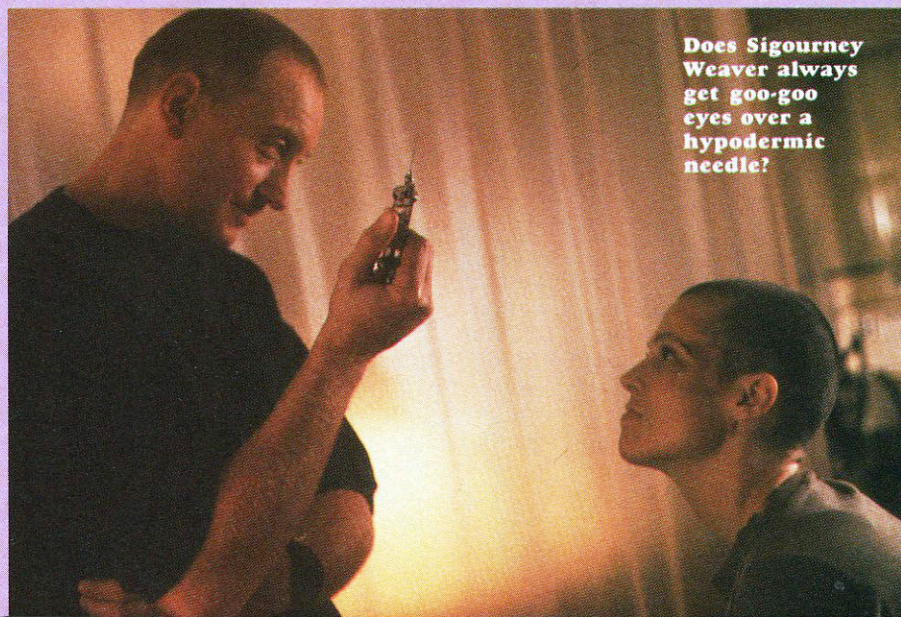
Photos: Bob Penn/Copyright 1992 20th Century Fox

known in many years: love. "To be honest, the powers that be at 20th Century Fox simply decided it was time that Ripley had a man," Dance candidly admits. "That's my principal role in this picture. We find each other, because neither of us has had a partner in God knows how long, and we're drawn to each other. Clemens reacts to this pretty nervously—he's not sure whether he can handle it, since it's been such a long time for him. The other men on the colony are very

have these wonderful hooded coats which reach right to the floor, and which are made out of government surplus tents. The look is both monklike and menacing."

Dance describes his character, prison physician Clemens, as "very much a loner, and not at all popular with the other members of the staff." For reasons explained midway through the film, Clemens is condemned to spend the rest of his life amongst some of the galaxy's most horrible criminals. "They're all double-Y chromosome types," chuckles Dance. "Murderers, rapists and other generally unsavory characters."

While Ripley's malfunctioning spacecraft could hardly have found a more inhospitable planet on which to crash, the presence of Clemens, who saves Ripley from the wreckage, ironically offers the flight officer something she has not



**Does Sigourney Weaver always get goo-goo eyes over a hypodermic needle?**



**As the satanic Sardo, Dance memorably menaced a misplaced Eddie Murphy in *The Golden Child*.**

that works much better."

But the question remains whether this will satisfy the hordes of fans who were delighted by James Cameron's upfront depiction of the Aliens, and who applauded his decision not to shy away from showing the monsters in all their glory. "Well, I do know that some people think completely the reverse of what I believe," Dance admits. "But *Alien<sup>3</sup>* features a sufficiently interesting bunch of people who will grab your sympathies. They're a pretty sad lot, but they've all managed to survive long-term imprisonment against all odds in this dreadful environment."

Although the picture Dance paints is that of a downbeat and grim film, he stresses that high-speed thrills are definitely on the agenda. "For the first time, we have Alien point-of-view shots," he enthuses. "These are shown as having a slight fish-eye quality. For much of the time, the camera was slung upside down on the rig, and it was traveling along these ventilation shafts at a phenomenal speed while spinning 360 degrees. It's a great effect! There's one extended chase sequence which is really exhilarating. Once the first kill happens, the pace never drops at all; it's quite relentless."

Moreover, Dance believes that the electrifying horror of Scott's stylish original has been potently revived in *Alien<sup>3</sup>*, and promises "a couple of moments of *real* repulsion, both graphic and weird." For one of these, Dance himself happily submitted to the usual latex indignities. "They had to make a full head mold of me for one scene which is, let's say, very violent," he relates. "But actually, I've had head molds done three times



**A more romantic and less horrific *Phantom of the Opera* resulted from Dance's portrayal in the recent NBC miniseries.**

before for films, and once in the theater, so it wasn't a problem."

According to Dance, things were much tougher for Weaver, who endured the grueling working conditions of the 15-week shoot without complaint. "She's incredibly gutsy, and she works really hard," he says with admiration. "Sigourney really carries these films—there wouldn't have been an *Alien<sup>3</sup>* if she hadn't agreed to do it. Along with the Alien itself, she is the principal pulling power for these movies. At one point during filming, she had to wear this really uncomfortable full-eye contact lens to simulate a bad eye injury. That thing was hell

to wear! All the sets that we were working on were very cold and very dusty. For everybody, working in that environment for 15 weeks was pretty hard, but Sigourney was there *all* the time, *every* day. That took a lot of stamina."

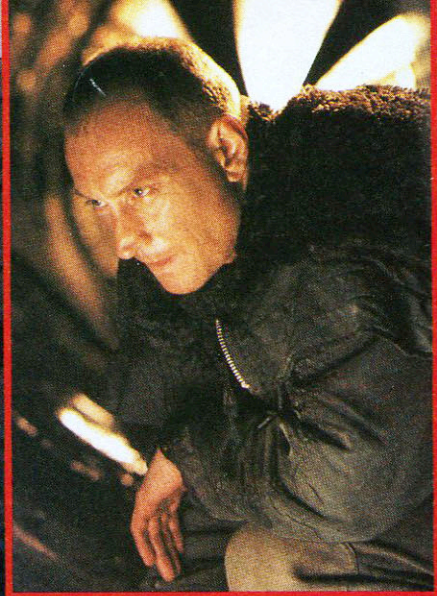
Ironically, the work which Dance found most physically draining was for an eerie early sequence which has now been cut from the finished film. "The movie originally began with me walking along this strange, weird, desolate beach, with a lot of huge, derricklike constructions all

**"*Alien<sup>3</sup>* is very much a return to the style of the first film. You hardly ever see the creature."**

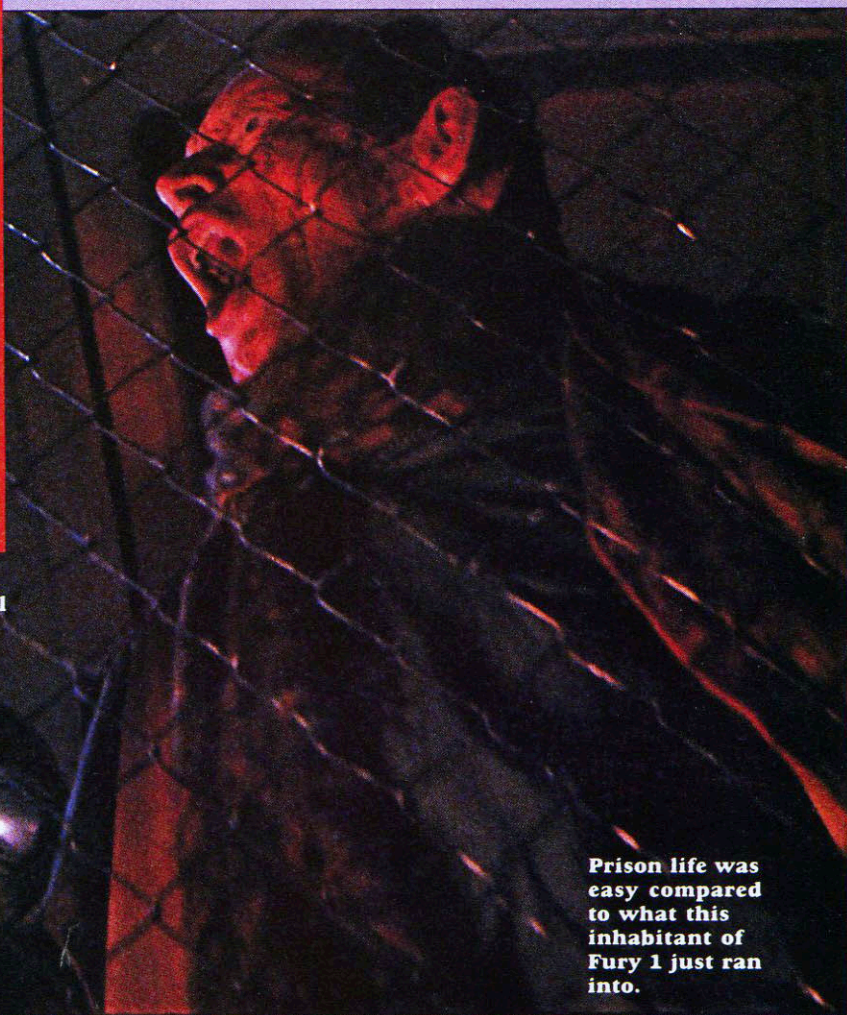
around. We were going to shoot it in Newcastle, but Fox decided they couldn't afford it, so in the end we built this wonderful, great big beach on the backlot of Pinewood. It was very cold, and we had these huge wind machines, so I was breathing in dust all the time. And I was running along this ridge carrying Sigourney, having just rescued her from the crashed ship. The scene was shot over two days, and was very uncomfortable."

Despite the pains which Dance endured while shooting this sequence, it sadly fell victim to the rewriting and re-editing which has plagued *Alien<sup>3</sup>*'s production. Although Dance was not personally involved in the widely-reported reshoots, he confirms that an altered ending for the film was shot, and then rejected. "The principal reason for the reshoots was that the original ending was thought to be too much like the end of *Terminator 2*," he explains, adding, "I think you'll like the new ending."

In addition, the actor also confirms that Fox's involvement on the film was very much hands-on throughout the production, and concludes that for director Fincher, this was something of a burden. "Fox's presence was felt quite a bit," Dance states. "There were always at least three executives around. And because of the time difference between LA and London, David was always getting phone calls at 3 a.m. So he very rarely got a decent night's sleep. The com-



**Dance happily reports that *Alien³* recreates the claustrophobic appeal of the original Ridley Scott film.**



**Prison life was easy compared to what this inhabitant of *Fury 1* just ran into.**

pany was spending a lot of money, so they wanted to know how the production was going.

"But I really haven't got enough superlatives to describe David Fincher," Dance adds. "He's only 29, and I honestly think he's another Steven Spielberg. I would jump off Waterloo Bridge for him! He was an apprentice at Industrial Light & Magic when he was 17, so he has an extensive knowledge of special effects. Also, he's been making home movies since he was about 8, so he's very much a film animal. This is his first feature, with a budget which is now \$53 million. David wasn't fazed by that, nor was he fazed by the pressure of having people from Fox on his back all the time. He could walk onto one of three \$5-million sets at Pinewood at 8:00 a.m. with a three-camera crew of about 60 people, and 25 actors, and reel off a list of 12 shots with utter confidence."

But with all the changes and external pressures which have haunted the creation of *Alien³*, how much of the integrity of Fincher's vision remained intact? "Well, obviously, David doesn't have final cut on the film," Dance concedes.

"In my opinion, it's often a case of too many cooks in the kitchen with many big-studio movies—the film ends up being made by committee. But David has actually been very clever with *Alien³*; he's shot the picture in such an original way that it would be very difficult for the studio to cut it any way other than how he intended it to be cut."

Dance is clearly relieved that Fincher has shown such foresight, for he has previously experienced firsthand the negative effect which extensive studio tampering can have on a film. The ambitious comedy/fantasy *The Golden Child*, in which Dance bedeviled Eddie Murphy, was seriously compromised by just such interference.

"Initially, *The Golden Child* was a very interesting script with a lot of weird resonances," Dance recalls. "but Paramount basically chickened out. When they first screened it, it was a very different sort of film for Eddie Murphy. Paramount took too much notice of the preview audience's unease about the unfamiliarity of Eddie's character. They had gotten to know him so well through *Beverly Hills Cop* that they wanted the character

to be much more like that. So the studio went back and reshot a lot of footage of Eddie doing 'Eddie Murphy-isms,' and put them into the picture. Then they took out a really sumptuous, weird and beautiful score by John Williams, and replaced it with something more funky. So basically what you got was *Beverly Hills Cop in Tibet*."

Postproduction problems aside, Dance retains fond memories of making *The Golden Child*, particularly the special FX work, all of which stood him in good stead for his role in *Alien³*. "I love all of that sort of thing," he declares with glee. "I had to do a great deal of bluescreen work for *The Golden Child* at ILM, which to me was a fun factory, an extraordinary place. That was my first experience with special effects. When it came to working on *Alien³*, I went straight down to the effects workshop and had a good look around. I ended up spending quite a bit of time with the effects guys—those guys are really clever. Also, I have two sons, both of whom are special effects fans and who read FANGORIA. So really, this stuff is going on around me all the time."

