

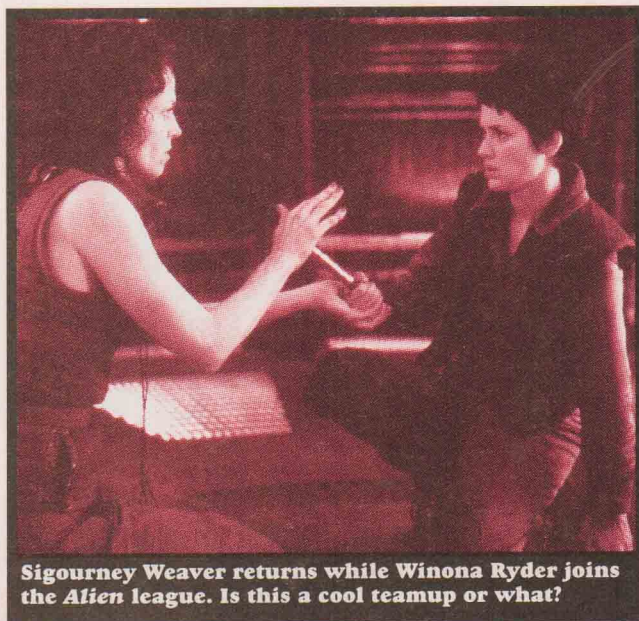
MONSTER INVASION

THE FANGORIA FRIGHT FILE OF UP-TO-THE-MINUTE NEWSBREAKS AND OTHER HORRIBLE HAPPENINGS

Alien *Resurrection* screenwriter Joss Whedon is well aware that it's hard to keep a secret anymore. And if your script gets on the Internet, there's no turning back—the whole World Wide Web can own a copy in a matter of a few E-mails. "Do you know the big surprise?" Whedon asks, knowing all too well that anyone with an online account and an interest in the SF/horror genre has had the chance to sneak a peek at his script for the fourth installment of the *Alien* saga. After a "yes" answer, Whedon sighs and adds, "It's funny, because the moment you write a script these days, next day it's already posted on the Net."

Despite the already spoiled plot twists, Whedon still prefers to dish out *Alien Resurrection* information selectively. "The recipe for this film definitely includes *Aliens* with the action and excitement, while evoking some of the visually grotesque strangeness and suspense of the first one," he reveals. "There are also a few heaping teaspoons of *The Poseidon Adventure* in there as well."

With *Alien³* a financial disappointment, it didn't look like



Sigourney Weaver returns while Winona Ryder joins the *Alien* league. Is this a cool teamup or what?

Photo: Suzanne Tenner

Alien Queen," Whedon explains. "They want that Alien, so they grow Ripley in a bottle with the thing inside her, take it out and start breeding it. Then they have this meat by-product, which is Ripley, who is now a bit strange. She came out a little different."

Much of the story is set on a smuggling spacecraft that is working with the military on their illicit operations. There also turns out to be a revolutionary terrorist spy on board causing trouble. Then the Aliens get loose, and once more it's up to Ripley to somehow save the day, with a little help from a smuggler with an agenda, played by Winona Ryder. Other cast members on board include Ron (Island of

Dr. Moreau) Perlman, Dan (Addams Family) Hedaya, Brad (Child's Play)

"ALIEN RESURRECTION"

Space creatures strike again

there would even be a fourth installment—let alone one with Sigourney Weaver (whose character Ripley died the last time around) involved. However, Whedon says that with a little help from 20th Century Fox executive Jorge Saralegui, they were finally able to greenlight a follow-up. "He said, 'We still have a franchise here,' and

wanted to take the next step," recalls the writer, who was called aboard to steer *Resurrection* away from the previous movie's oppressively dark tone. "Everyone was disappointed by how the third one did, but I was actually very fond of it," he says. "Sure, there were big old problems, but it's still an interesting movie. But don't worry; I didn't write a nihilistic film with a wimpy Alien and a bunch of bald British guys you can't tell apart."

What Whedon did have to figure out was how to "resurrect" Ripley. The answer: through the oft-reported process of cloning. "It's several hundred years after her death, and the military has decided to clone her because she was pregnant with the

Dourif, Michael (*The Crow*) Wincott and Dominique Pinon. "Hopefully, there will be more of what the fans love and some stuff they're not prepared for," Whedon notes, still carefully trying not to divulge much. "Certainly, they won't expect the changes in Ripley, and there's an Alien they're not quite familiar with."

One might expect that there would be directors lining up to helm a new *Alien* installment, but Whedon says that wasn't necessarily true. "You can't get A-list Joe to direct these movies, because they normally don't like to do sequels, even though the past directors have been able to put their own stamp on the *Alien* movies," he says. "So now you either have your B-list action hack directors or your crazed visionaries. Needless to say, you go for the crazed visionaries."

The first such maverick talent approached was *Shallow Grave* and *Trainspotting* director Danny Boyle, who ultimate-



Photo & Art: Copyright 1997 Fox

The Aliens still look basically the same, but writer Joss Whedon promises some scary new variations in his sequel.

ly bowed out after creative differences with the studio. "Danny's a sweetheart, but I like to say that he chickened out," says Whedon. "I was really bummed, because I loved his movies." Whedon's disappointment was soon allayed, however, when Fox hired Jean-Pierre Jeunet, one-half of the French team (with Marc Caro) responsible for the cult films *Delicatessen* and *The City of Lost Children*. "He's an incredible visual stylist and his stuff is very intense, but he's also a crowd-pleaser," the writer says. Among Jeunet's contributions to the film, in addition to his wildly elaborate and monochromatic visual style, were several stock players, including *City's* Perlman, who plays the film's "asshole" ("There's one in every platoon," says Whedon), and Pinon, from both *Delicatessen* and *City*, as the ship's mechanic.

Never one to sit idle, Whedon is currently active on the second season of the WB Network's *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* series. The first season garnered enough of a following that it's being brought back for another 12 episodes, which Whedon is executive-producing and occasionally writing and directing. "We've managed to create a delicate balance on the show that makes it worth doing," he says. "We can be incredibly whimsical and incredibly creepy at the same time. Luckily, this season we're getting a bigger staff, so I'll probably be writing less."

With *Alien Resurrection* being readied for a November 21 release, Whedon has certainly been quite prolific this year, and he asserts that with both *Alien* and *Buffy* he has come up with material for the fan within himself. "I have a basic agenda, and that's to deliver something I would be satisfied with," he says. "Alien Resurrection particularly. I'm the biggest *Alien* fan, so I know that when the movie comes out I'll be satisfied. I really believe we brought something new to the series and didn't just rehash it. It's the *Alien* movie people hope to see, and it's going to surprise them as well—even if they have already read the script on line."

—Anthony C. Ferrante

"I KNOW WHAT YOU DID LAST SUMMER"

The last words you'll ever hear

A terrible secret involving an unsolved murder from a year ago. Small-town youths stalked by a taunting killer. A cast of bright young faces, including a female *Party of Five* star. Sound familiar?

But that's where the similarities between *I Know What You Did Last Summer* and *Scream* end...well, actually, it isn't. Both were scripted by Kevin Williamson, screen horror's hot new writer, who has also penned the legitimate sequel to *Scream*. So what sets *Summer* apart? "This is a psychological thriller," says Ryan (Lifeform) Phillippe, one of *Summer's* stars, using the approved catchphrase for the movie. "It's not necessarily an out-and-out slasher film. It's a bit like a younger version of *Shallow Grave*. *Scream* was great, but to me there is a difference."

You heard it right—I *Know What You Did Last Summer* is officially "not a horror film." At least, not until distributor Columbia Pictures starts whipping up the marketing buzz for the film's October 24 release. And while the filmmakers are pleased to be following in the wake of Williamson's *Scream* success, they're also dead keen on making *Summer* more than *Scream* Again. They also insist that their film is not to be confused with the slasher boom begat by *Halloween* and *Friday the 13th* over 15 years ago.

"I *Know What You Did Last Summer* is unlike those movies," says Erik Feig, who's producing the film with Neal Moritz and Stokely Chaffin (both veterans of *Volcano*) for Peter Guber's Mandalay Entertainment. "There's no gratuitous blood. Our movie's a little more sophisticated, more complex. It's a new level in the genre, whether you call it a horror film or a thriller."

All involved do agree that *Summer* the movie is considerably more horrific than the book it's based on. Lois Duncan's young-adult novel, published in the early '70s, sets up the basic premise: Four teens accidentally run someone down in their car and, fearing manslaughter charges, flee the scene. A year later, their secret has been found out, and someone bears a deadly grudge... "The book has a classic first act," says Feig. "These kids are the best and brightest, the ones who are going to get out of their small town and pursue their dreams. One moment changes their lives forever. Once they make the wrong decision, everything goes wrong. And the consequences come back to haunt them a hundredfold, as they always do with these sorts of moral choices."

That core premise and the personalities of the four lead characters—played in the film by Phillippe, *Party's* Jennifer Love Hewitt, Sarah Michelle (Buffy the Vampire Slayer) Gellar and Freddie Prinze Jr.—are about all readers will recognize from the book. It's fair to say that Duncan herself will be surprised by the film's twists, which involve much more murder and mayhem. "Kevin has added a lot to the script," agrees Prinze. "He very creatively added tension. I read the book in the fourth grade and it terrified me. But you can't make [that version of] *I Know What You Did Last Summer* into a film. It wouldn't work."

Principal photography took place in late spring and early summer of this year, and bounced from North Carolina, where the film takes place, to California's North Bay, where the swerving coastline roads made an ideal accident site. Jim Gillespie, a first-time feature helmer who has directed for Scottish and British television, was chosen in part on the basis of his short film *Joyride*. Oddly enough, the short concerns a good Samaritan who gets out of his car to help a seemingly wounded person—the inverse of *Summer's* story. "In nine minutes or so with no budget, he created a great amount of suspense," says Feig of *Joyride*. "We wanted someone who could make the characters sympathetic, who has a keen visual sense and who could deliver the frights."

Also in the fear delivery business for *Summer* is Matthew Mungle, who won an Academy Award for his special makeup contributions to *Bram Stoker's Dracula* and was nominated for another for giving James Woods the full geezer treatment in *Ghosts of Mississippi*. You don't hire Mungle to splash bogus blood on a roadside injury victim, so is it possible that this "psychological thriller" with "no gratuitous blood" will be a bit more extreme than, say, *Rear Window*? Moritz offers a hint when he says, "One of the hardest technical challenges was filming a hand being severed. It's hard to make it look really real."

—Darcy Sullivan

Photo: James Bridges/Copyright 1997 Mandalay



I Know What You Did Last Summer—and in October, so will audiences. (Left to right: Sarah Michelle Gellar, Ryan Phillippe, Jennifer Love Hewitt)