

Alien Versus Predator

Two of Hollywood's most fearsome creatures battle it out to the death, but Earth may be the ultimate loser



If *Freddy vs. Jason* was the preliminary bout, then *Alien vs. Predator* is certainly the main event, bringing together two of Hollywood's most savage creations and pitting them against each other with modern-day Earth as a backdrop. Like the film's ad campaign says, "No matter who wins, we lose."

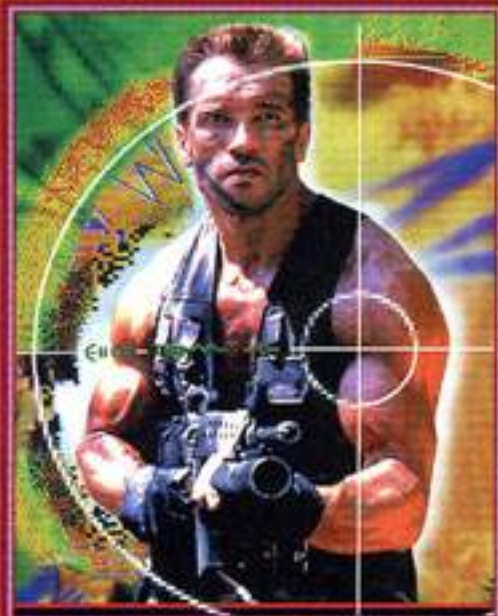
In This Corner: Alien

The *Alien* franchise began with Ridley Scott's 1979 original, in which a crew of space laborers come into contact

with a strange egg that implants its fetus within one of the crewmembers. Using that crewmember as a host, it literally bursts forth for the next stage of its evolution as it hunts down the crew (including Sigourney Weaver's Ripley) one by one. James Cameron's 1986 sequel, *Aliens*, brought the concept to a whole new level as he went from the original's claustrophobic and unnerving setting, to an all-out action movie with Earth marines battling a horde of Aliens on another world. In David Fincher's

Alien 3, released in 1992, Ripley arrives on a bizarre prison planet that is infested with Aliens and, upon learning that an Alien Queen has been implanted in her, commits suicide to kill the creature. Not that this really worked: *Alien Resurrection* (1997), directed by Jean-Pierre Jeunet, had Ripley cloned, resulting in a new human/alien hybrid, as she had already acquired the Alien Queen within her when the blood from which she was cloned was taken.





In 1987's *Predator*, muscle-bound hero Arnold Schwarzenegger led a commando team against the alien invader.

In This Corner: Predator

Predator kicked off in 1987 under the direction of John McTiernan, and cast Arnold Schwarzenegger as a commando who leads his team into battle against a warrior from outer space who has decided that humans would make good prey. The first film was set in the South American jungles, whereas 1990's *Predator 2*, directed by Stephen Hopkins, had the Predator moving the hunt to Los Angeles.



Actress Sigourney Weaver starred as Ripley, who took on the fearsome Aliens in four films spanning 1979-1997.

The Alien Vs. Predator Universe

The notion of bringing the Alien and Predator together began about 10 years ago in the form of comic books published by Dark Horse Comics. So popular were they that they spawned a number of original novels, several video games for different platforms and talk of a feature film version, which is finally coming to fruition this August 2004.

"Most people don't understand how big this *Alien vs. Predator* world has gotten over the last 10 years,"



muses Shane Salerno, the new film's screenwriter. "Video games, novelizations, graphic novels — each one of those comes with its own story, and different fan groups are beholden to different stories."

So fervent is the following for both franchises, that Salerno and director Paul Anderson admit that there was some trepidation in taking on the project. "If you're going to make a horror movie, *Alien* is as good as it gets," says Anderson. "If you're going to make an action movie, *Aliens*, for my money, is as good as it gets as well. So it's very intimidating as a filmmaker to try and follow up on perfection, but at the same time, I wouldn't have made an *Alien* movie for that reason. Or even a *Predator* movie. But the fact that it's *Alien vs. Predator*, it's a slightly different film.

"No matter how much pressure we as a filmmaking entity felt from out there, we've put even more pressure upon ourselves to deliver a fitting follow-up."
— Director Paul Anderson



Left and above are panels from Dark Horse Comics' series in which the *Alien Vs. Predator* war is already underway.

It's a different kind of franchise. I knew there would be a lot of skepticism and a lot to live up to. No matter how much pressure we as a filmmaking entity felt from out there, we've put even more pressure upon ourselves to deliver a movie that is a fitting follow-up to both of those franchises."

Staying True To The History

Salerno believes this film will surprise a lot of people. "When people hear the title *Alien vs. Predator*, they assume it's like *Freddy vs. Jason*; that these guys are out there hacking each other up," he points out. "That's not this film. This film is incredibly respectful of the six films that came before it. — obviously more the first two *Aliens* and the first *Predator*, but we don't do anything that destroys the lineage or destroys the special worlds of the piece.

"We worked very hard to make

Alien Versus Predator

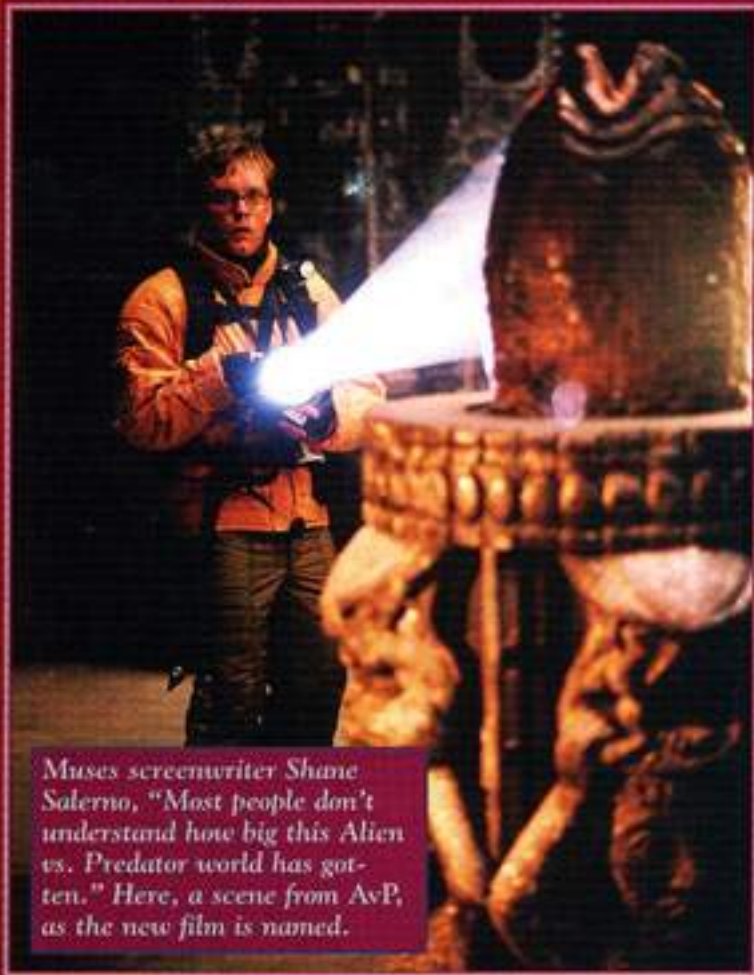
a film that people who don't know the previous movies could love, and that people who treasure them could embrace," he continues. "What I think people will be really surprised about is that we've made a very serious science fiction film that has some things that really distinguish it from its predecessors — the biggest being that it takes place on present-day Earth. That's a

**"It had gotten to the point where you could pull into McDonald's and an Alien served you a happy meal."
— Screenwriter Shane Salerno on the Alien films**

whole other ballgame and the stakes of just that alone separate it."

Nobody is talking much about plot, but what can be discerned is that the film involves a group of human archeologists in Antarctica who come across Alien eggs and then get caught in the middle of an Alien and Predator war.

"The choice of Antarctica was very specific," Anderson allows, "because it's definitely the most hostile environment on Earth and probably the closest to an Alien surface you can get. So it seemed like an appropriate environment for the Alien to be in. I didn't want them running around the streets of New York, plus



Muses screenwriter Shane Salerno, "Most people don't understand how big this Alien vs. Predator world has gotten." Here, a scene from AvP, as the new film is named.

I wanted this film to dovetail perfectly between the two franchises. In many ways, it's a sequel to the Predator movies but a prequel to the Alien franchise. Of course, in the Alien films, Sigourney Weaver's character does not know about Aliens or the existence of Aliens, and neither does the public. This means you can't have an Alien running around the city now, because it would have been written up and everyone would know about it. So there's nothing in this movie that contradicts anything that already exists."

The most important thing for Salerno is to give the creatures, particularly the Aliens, a bit of their mystique back, which he felt began to get watered down with the third and fourth Alien films.

"I think Alien vs. Predator gets back to the first two Alien films, where you didn't see an Alien in every corner," he says. "There was a demystification that happened in Alien 3 and Alien Resurrection that we were aware of and wanted to correct. I think by Alien Resurrection, it had gotten to the point where you could pull into McDonald's and an Alien served you a Happy Meal."



"Antarctica is probably the closest to an Alien surface you can get on Earth," says Paul Anderson of the new film's stark setting.