



Clash of the Sci-Fi Titans

In a throwback to the classic monster movies of yesteryear, two of the genre's most beloved creatures go to blows in *Alien vs. Predator*

BY ERIC MORO

Sanaa Lathan, Lance Henriksen
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THE MERGING OF TWO FRANCHISES is never an easy undertaking—just ask the show runners and comic book scribes who frequently try crossovers with today's most popular characters. But when tackling the monstrosities that made both the *Alien* and *Predator* films a success, the recipe is quite simple—go light on the story and heavy on the extraterrestrial ass kicking!

Aside from this, there are a few tried-and-true elements within each individual franchise that writers must remain faithful to. So when it came time to make *Alien vs. Predator (AvP)*—the story of a modern-day Antarctic expedition that uncovers not only a pyramid buried beneath the ice, but also the very place where young Predators breed and hunt Aliens—a strong female heroine, à la Sigourney Weaver's Ripley, was indeed a must.

"She's an environmentalist. She's a woman who grew up in the military. She's really comfortable being alone," says Sanaa Lathan of the film's "Ripley for a new generation," Alexa Woods. "She's kind of unique in that she's somebody who loves Antarctica and is very familiar with that territory. In fact, that's how she makes her living, by being a guide in Antarctica. So she's the same as Ripley's character in that she's very strong and independent, but I think that's probably about it."

Aside from Woods and the titular nasties, the most obvious bridge connecting *AvP* to the previous four *Alien* films is the inclusion of Charles Bishop Weyland (played by franchise regular Lance Henriksen). A billionaire industrialist, Weyland is the man leading the Antarctic expedition, but perhaps more importantly, is the founder of the robotics technology that eventually becomes the franchise's all-too-human androids.

"The thing about this [movie] is you have technological advances [in regards to special effects]," notes Henriksen. "It's like going through

the looking glass backward because now we're going back in time to before *Alien*. What's happened, though, is because of the way [writer-director Paul Anderson] structured the script it all makes sense. We know those movies before and we're not denying that you know them. So when you see this movie, you're going to see something completely different. But it's got elements of both those genres in it."

Of course, the real stars of the film are the Alien and Predator—the latter of whom takes on a more sympathetic persona than his two predecessors.

"He's the ultimate warrior, in a nutshell," notes actor Ian Whyte of lead Predator, Scar. "As a warrior, he is so powerful that everything he does is offensive. There's no defensive side to him. So over the course of the film, as he starts to develop an understanding and an empathy for the humans—a human—it sort of develops his character further."

In regards to the Alien, effects maestro Tom Woodruff once again dons the H.R. Giger-inspired suit, much as he did in the beast's previous outings. But this time around, he is aided by a new creation.

"We built a hydraulic puppet for the warrior Alien—we call it the hero animatronic puppet," says Woodruff. "All of the body moves are powered by hydraulics, and it's all run through a computer system with software that allows us to record the moves. So even though it takes four puppeteers to operate, we can record those moves and, once we get a performance that we really like, play it back over and over from take to take. It's really been a great plus, especially for me because up until now I've always been 'the guy in the suit.' So now we can get this thing up and operating, and it's a lot faster than I am. It can overcome a lot of inertia that I have when I'm wearing a 10-pound head. This thing can get through all of that effortlessly and it just keeps going and going and going."

Much like the Aliens and Predators of the film's title. **np**

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BY DON E. PETERSON

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Harold and Kumar Go to White Castle
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The wacky adventures of two twenty-something stoners looking for the ultimate burger.