

Once again, those **ALIENS** and **PREDATORS** are tearing up humanity's home turf. But this time, we're promised, they'll be turning Planet Earth into...

PI PLANET



WE HEARD RIDLEY SCOTT SAY IN INTERVIEWS THAT WITH ALIEN HE TOOK AN A-MOVIE APPROACH TO A B-MOVIE MONSTER FILM. OUR TAKE ON THIS MOVIE IS TO GET BACK TO

the gritty, horror roots of *Alien* and the classic mission-movie aspects of *Predator*." So says Greg Strause, co-writer-director (with brother Colin) of *Aliens Vs. Predator: Requiem*, the, it must be said, less-than-eagerly awaited sequel to 2004's *Alien Vs. Predator*. That prequel/sequel/spin-off/video-game adaptation contrived, in its unconscionable silliness, to soil the legacy of two iconic movie monsters at once. In light of that singular achievement, one might fancy a whiff of hubris in Strause's invocation of Ridley Scott and his unalloyed 1978 masterpiece. What can AVP2 possibly offer other than a further instalment of the AVP debacle, which featured the titular terrors getting their freak on in a pre-Aztec pyramid underneath the North Pole (you heard) as part of a *Predator* rights-of-passage thrill-kill ritual while the D-list likes of Lance Henriksen (veteran of *Aliens* and *Alien 3*) got caught in the crossfire? Well, if Strause is to be believed, quite a lot actually.

First of all, the Strause brothers' inter-species bust-up very sensibly jettisons the Rider Haggard-meets-The-Crystal-Maze trappings of AVP for present-day smalltown USA. It also enlists the services of original Texas Chain Saw Massacre cinematographer Daniel Pearl and — even more sensibly — ramps up the chest-bursting, acid-blood-spurting carnage.

"Yeah," grins Strause, "people aren't going to be expecting what they're going to see." And he has the official sanction to buck that up. "Tom Rothman (*20th Century Fox* co-chairman) announced in an interview recently that this is going to be an R-rated hardcore horror movie. I think that's really going to set it apart from the first one (*which was a wussy PG-13*). Daniel is bringing an incredible look and style to the film, and we have plenty more surprises up our sleeve..."

WORDS SIMON BRAUND

PREDATOR



This picture: CGI or men-in-suits? AVP: Requiem features both. Right: Kelly and daughter Molly (Ariel Gadel) make a run for it. Bottom right: Laser Quest, Predator-style.



And opposite them are two of the greatest monsters in cinema history, so we're pretty happy about the entire cast."

And judging by 24-year-old Lewis' reaction at least, the cast themselves seem pretty happy too. "The Alien and Predator movies were so fuckin' cool," he enthuses. "There's a part of you that takes your craft very seriously, you study all the great filmmakers, the great actors. And then there's a part of you that just wants to kill shit."

"This is a movie that truly demands good acting," he continues, "but at the same time it's Alien Vs. Predator 2. The intent is awesomeness — not some deep existentialist statement about the human condition." These could quite possibly be the wisest words spoken on a movie set since Steven Spielberg said to Harrison Ford, "Okay, when the boulder starts rolling, run like fuck!"

"We're all going to be upstaged," laughs Pasquale. "But I came in with that expectation. And it's fun. It's not all CG — we're acting with a lot of 'live' Aliens and Predators, which really helps a performance. Like tonight, we're in icy rain so it's hard to act anything other than cold. It feels real, the way they fight the creatures and the way they slime them up. It's a throwback to my childhood when I pooped my pants at the second Alien movie." Literally? "Literally."

"I did think about it long and hard before I signed on," says a shivering Aylesworth, edging closer to a space heater after repeated takes in the rain. "I wanted to make sure it was a good

script before I committed. And as soon as I read it I went after it. I don't want to get too heavy because it's just fun, but I think the best sci-fi movies are metaphors for something. This movie has all the fun popcorn elements, but it also has a deeper metaphor."

Which is? "I can't tell you that!" (Hmm, alien invaders = Al Qaeda/Iraq/Katrina?)

AS FAR AS THE REAL STARS OF THE SHOW GO, THEIR CREDENTIALS ARE IMPECCABLE. AMALGAMATED DYNAMICS IS HANDLING ALL the non-CG creature effects. The company comprises Tom Woodruff and Alec Gillis, who have been performing as the Alien since James Cameron's *Aliens* in 1986.

"Tom helped sculpt the Alien suit for *Aliens*," says Strause. "These guys have been involved with these creatures for a very long time; they're experts." Most of the special effects will be state-of-the-art man-in-a-suit rather than CGI, a definite plus for purists. "Colin and I come from a visual effects background," says Strause. "We own a company that does CGI (*Hydralis*), but to get back to horror roots, nothing beats doing stuff in-camera. We're making every effort to do all the effects in-camera where possible."

All told, despite the stoic tight-lippery and the fact that the only glimpse of an Alien or a Predator Empire is afforded is of Tom Woodruff wearing a slimeless and, hence, unconvincing

Alien head, AVP 2 could well be creature-feature drawn along class lines with two of fantasy-horror enduring icons doing what they can, to borrow Johnny Lewis' phrase. Plus the added bonus of bathful

"I'll refer you to Tom Rothman word 'hardcore,'" says Strause... simon@empireonline.com

→ *Aliens Vs. Predator: Requiem* is released on January 18 and will be reviewed in a future issue.

2007: A Predator ship carrying Alien eggs crashes outside a small US town. Townsfolk are impregnated, chaos ensues and an elite Predator is sent to clean up the mess. **AVP: REQUIEM**

2122: Mining vessel *Rostrom* answers a distress call on planet LV-426. A ship containing alien eggs is discovered and the outbreak leads to the deaths of the crew. Ellen Ripley is the sole survivor. **ALIEN**

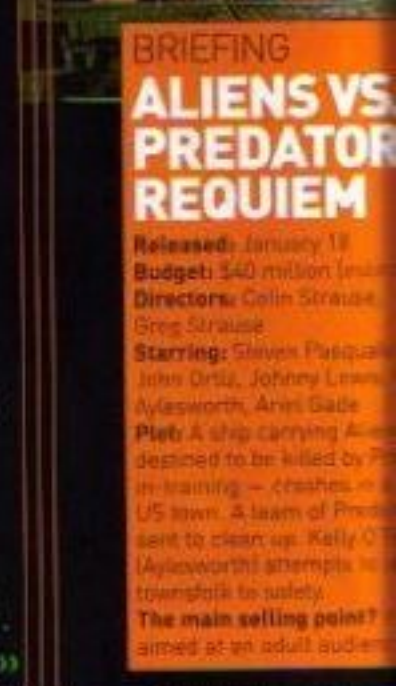
2179: Contact is lost with a human colony on LV-426. A marine detachment and Ripley investigate, eliminating the alien infestation. Ripley, two other survivors and the mission synthetic escape. **ALIENS**

2179: The ship's EEV crash-lands on penal colony Fiorina 161. Ripley is the only survivor. A subsequent Alien outbreak causes numerous fatalities. Ripley — now impregnated — commits suicide. **ALIEN 3**

2381: *Appaloosa* allows the NSA. An outbreak of the USM Army. The Betty, also surviving conclave. **ALIEN**



This picture: A Predator and an Alien do battle. Right: An Alien puts a new spin on 'car trouble'. Bottom right: Kelly (Reiko Aylesworth) and Sheriff Morales (John Ortiz) unleash their inner Ripley.



"THE INTENT IS AWESOMENESS, NOT SOME DEEP EXISTENTIALIST STATEMENT." **JONNY LEWIS**

OF COURSE, A FEW WEEKS INTO PRINCIPAL PHOTOGRAPHY, WHEN **EMPIRE** SPEAKS TO STRAUSE & CO. ON LOCATION IN CANADA, NO-ONE

is at liberty to divulge what those surprises might be. All concerned — Strause in particular — is playing it very close to the vest. "I really can't comment on that" becomes something of a mantra for Strause when pressed for details of any kind. What can be gleaned is that the action takes place in an anonymous Colorado town that — for reasons connected or otherwise to the revelation in *AVP* that Predators are breeding Aliens to hunt — has become overrun with the acid-slobbering, insectoid killing machines. And, in time-honoured fashion, the local residents must band together to survive. Whether or not a Predator enters the fray to rid the town of its deadly infestation is open to question.

Certainly nobody here, freezing their metaphorical nuts off in a drab Vancouver mini-mall that's flooded with artificial rain, is giving the game away. "Sorry, I can't really comment on that," mutters Strause for the nth time when asked if he can confirm rumours of a Predator-Alien hybrid — despite the fact that we glimpsed

the 'Predalien' at *AVP*'s end. "I wouldn't bet on it," he says with unusual candour when quizzed on the possibility of a Sigourney Weaver cameo.

Steven Pasquale (*Rescue Me*, *Six Feet Under*) is rather more forthcoming. "I guess I play the reluctant hero," he says. "Dallas Howard, he's this ex-con returning to his hometown to keep an eye on his baby brother when all hell breaks loose. He's only been home a few hours when the craziness ensues. By the time we get to the action, our gang is looking to him for some leadership. But it's all about getting out alive; he's pretty self-motivated."

Okay, so far, so formula. The cast is rounded out by Reiko Aylesworth (24, *The West Wing*) as the mother of six year-old daughter Molly (played by Ariel Gade); John Ortiz (*Miami Vice*) as the beleaguered local sheriff; and Johnny Lewis (*The O.C.*) as Dallas' wayward kid brother. It's not exactly a Fellini-esque ensemble of characters and, despite the solid talent, there is a notable lack of even Lance Henriksen-calibre names.

Strause denies that the low star-wattage reflects the film's slender budget. "We wanted to go with very good actors. If you look at our cast, a lot of them have strong theatre backgrounds; the entire cast is made up of very strong actors. >>

BRIEFING

ALIENS VS. PREDATOR REQUIEM

Released: January 17
Budget: 340 million (incl. marketing)
Director: Colin Strause, Greg Strause
Starring: Steven Pasquale, John Ortiz, Johnny Lewis, Aylesworth, Ariel Gade
Plot: A ship carrying Aliens is decided to be killed by Predator training — crashes in a US town. A team of Predators sent to clean up. Kelly O'Connell (Aylesworth) attempts to turn the townfolk to safety.
The main selling point? Aimed at an adult audience.

HISTORY OF VIOLENCE THE AVP TIMELINE

1997-98: Predators first arrive on Earth, where the natives build a pyramidal temple in their honour in Antarctica. Aliens are introduced as prey for Predator coming-of-age rituals. **AVP**

1995: While hunting human prey, a Predator takes a souvenir in the form of an old flintlock pistol, which will later find its way to Disney's *Gladiator*. **PREDATOR 2**

1987: A Predator begins a hunt in the jungles of Central America, only to be killed by a falling log courtesy of Major 'Dutch' Schaeffer of the US Special Forces. **PREDATOR**

1987: A Predator stalks downtown L.A. After wiping out a drug gang, numerous police officers and half a train of civilians, he's gutted by LAPD Lt. Mike Harrigan. **PREDATOR 2**

2004: An earthquake discovers the Antarctic filled with Alien eggs. Predators return and royale breaks out. **AVP**