

TWILIGHT: ECLIPSE **BACK WITH BITE?**

# SFX

**148  
PAGES!**

The world's  
number one sci-fi  
magazine

SUMMER  
2010

#197

THE SFX  
**HOT  
50**

THE SCORCHING  
TALENTS SHAPING  
SCI-FI IN 2010

**TRUE  
BLOOD**

SHAPESHIFTER  
SAM TALKS  
SEASON 3

## THE HUNT IS ON **PREDATORS**

FINALLY: THE SEQUEL THEY DESERVE

THE SUMMER  
OF SF READING  
THE SFX GUIDE TO  
MUST-READ BOOKS  
PART TWO

BITE MY  
SHINY METAL  
COMEBACK!  
EXCLUSIVE NEWS ON  
FUTURAMA'S RETURN



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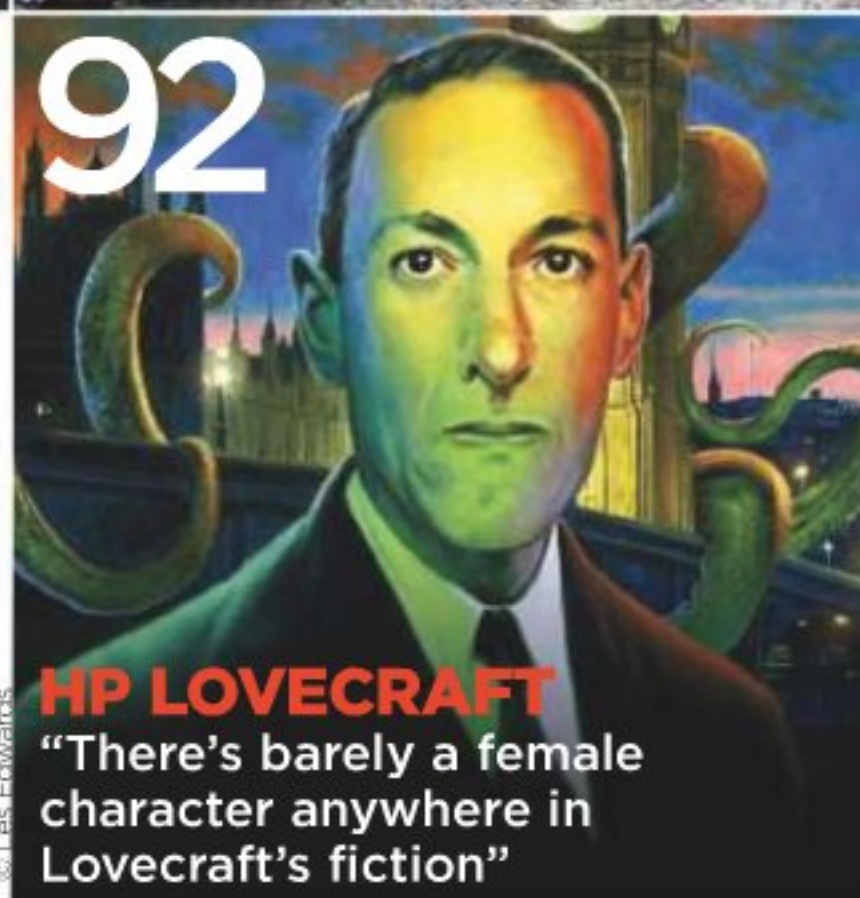
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# TWO TRIBES GO TO WAR

War – what is it good for? Absolutely nothing, apart from a bruising new *Predators* sequel, as Jeffrey Renard discovers

**R**obert Rodriguez isn't much help. You'd think after spending the past 12 months masterminding the return of the *Predators* to the top of the food chain, he'd know a thing or two about what to do if you ever found yourself face down in the mud with one breathing down your neck.

"I don't know what I would do. You'd be pretty well screwed after about a minute," laughs Rodriguez, the producer of *Predators*. "No-one can survive. So I guess, I'd give it a try for a bit but eventually I would just wimp out."

But don't let Rodriguez scare you. The maverick filmmaker behind such hits as *From Dusk Till Dawn*, *Spy Kids* and *Sin City* assembled a cast and crew that will give humans a fighting chance this summer against the alien »





race that previously faced off against Arnold Schwarzenegger, Danny Glover and a horde of overbiting chestbursters from that other horror/sci-fi franchise.

Rodriguez's involvement with the *Predator* universe began more than 15 years ago, when – fresh off his breakout hit *El Mariachi* – he wrote a script for a possible sequel to the 1987 blockbuster at the invite of Twentieth Century Fox.

The story Rodriguez cooked up sat on a shelf until early last year when the studio approached him and asked him if he'd like to revisit it. Locked in to directing the forthcoming *Machete*, Rodriguez said he was game but only if he could produce instead of direct. He nabbed up-and-coming director Nimrod Antal (*Armored*) to oversee duties on the movie and the two got along like Dutch and Blain.

## ROBERT'S CHOICE

"It's a very strange thing to go and hire a director. I've never had to do that before," explains Rodriguez. "You sit in a meeting and you meet somebody and you're going basically off instinct. You watch their movies. You hope that was all of their work.

But you don't really know if it'll all work out. But Nimrod felt like the right choice. He had a strong vision and a great personality and he was very communicative."

Antal, who grew up loving the original *Predator* movie, not to mention the films of his producer, says Rodriguez gave him more than enough space to create the world he envisioned but was never so far away that the director couldn't bounce an idea off him or cry on his shoulder.

"I was a guy coming in to direct a film and I wanted to direct the film. I had a lot of concerns about how much leeway he [Rodriguez] would give me. How intrusive will he be? But he was a gift. And the biggest acknowledgement and the biggest compliment that I ever could have received was seeing him trust me and letting me do my thing," explains Antal.

His *thing* is telling the story of Royce, a stone-cold mercenary played by Oscar winner Adrien Brody (*King Kong*) whose only allegiance is to those who pay him. He reluctantly leads a group of ex-soldiers (Laurence Fishburne), drug cartel enforcers (Danny Trejo) and serial killers (Topher Grace), who come to realise quickly in the film that they've been brought together to the *Predators*' hunting planet as prey.

"We have this motley crew of



Never mind *Predators*, this ponytail is far more terrifying.

individuals who are literally thrown together and they're all predators in their own right," says Antal. "A lot of them are very selfish and stubborn and they are suddenly thrown into a situation where they have to function as a unit. Early on, they come to the realisation that the only way they are going to survive this nightmare is to work as a group.

## THRILL OF THE HUNT

"It's the most dangerous game – man hunting. It's just such a wonderful base to start from. And the range of emotions that you can milk from a situation like this is just endless."

Rodriguez says the whole idea of *Predators* was that the name could



Sigh – will man and monsters ever live in harmony together?

# LEADERSHIP CHALLENGE

## Adrien Brody

In *Predators*, a man plummets through the void at terminal velocity, his parachute deploying only seconds before certain death. He has no idea where he is or the circumstances that brought him there. But as a soldier-for-hire, Royce has faced tough challenges before so he reluctantly becomes the leader of a band of humans, who are being hunted by Predators – for their own amusement. Oscar winner Adrien Brody (*The Pianist*) was cast as Royce and he shared his thoughts on the role with *SFX*.

### What can you tell us about Royce?

Royce is a contractor. He's a professional soldier and former Special Forces. He has high-level military training and now he's gone into business for himself, basically [laughs]. With that comes a tremendous amount of actual experience in the field and a hardness that is a result of witnessing and being a part of the tremendous violence that exists in war. And so there is a weariness that I try to convey and an inner strength. Leadership comes from knowledge and inner strength rather than overt physicality and brute force. And I think that it's clear to the others that while they might be highly trained killers in their own right that Royce has the knowledge and the determination to survive in that environment and they take advantage of that and decide to follow him.

### How do you go about choosing the varied roles you take on? From pieces like *The Pianist* and *The Thin Red Line* to big budget action thrillers like *King Kong* and *Predators*?

My philosophy has always been to find things that are different from things that I've done in the past, to find roles and opportunities that challenge me and that provide a level of excitement to me and to people that see my work. I hate to repeat myself and I like to explore different techniques of working. It was a real learning experience to work with Peter Jackson and Rodriguez and Nimrod were wonderful, as well.

### You mentioned Peter Jackson and working on *King Kong*. You've faced them both so who wins: the King of the Beasts or a team of *Predators*?

That's an unfair assault [laughs]. Not much can hold their own against even three Predators. That said, I'm sure Kong would bash a few of them in.

Adrien Brody and Alice Braga are on the *Predators* menu this time.

mean two things. "It could mean the creatures but it could also mean the humans," he explains. "I wanted them to be as dangerous to each other as the creatures are. They could kill each other before they even meet a creature. So there is a good tension that goes on within the group, as well. Even if they stayed in one spot and never met a Predator, half of them would probably end up dead. What they need to survive is out-predating the Predators."

Antal and Rodriguez agree that part of what made the original *Predator* such an incredible success was the slow reveal of the hunter. Rodriguez notes that it was nearly half-an-hour into *Predator* before viewers caught even a glimpse of the titular character.

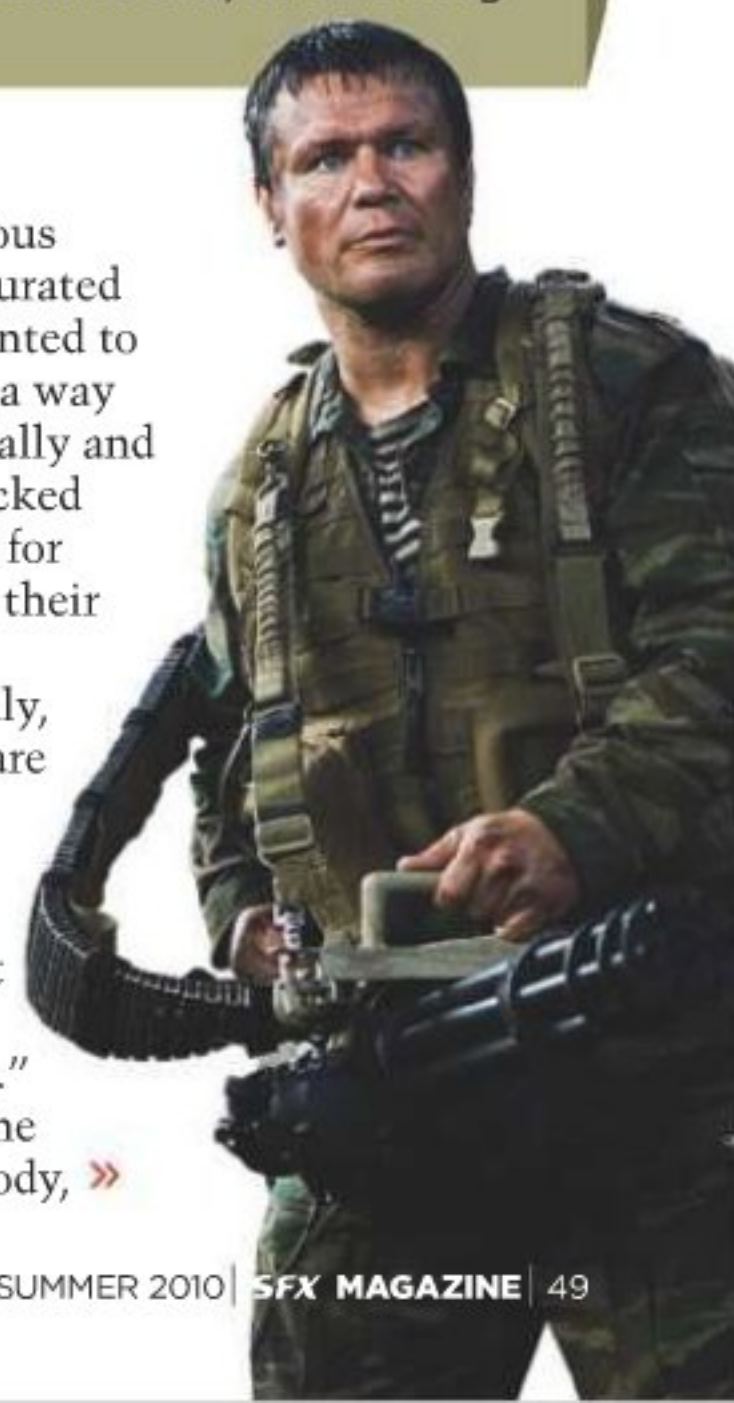
"I wanted to build up a lot of tension, just like the first one. That was Nimrod's thought, as well. I hired him for the position he had – he really wanted to make it about the hunt. And if you're the hunted, you don't know anything about the people hunting you and it builds up," says Rodriguez. "It builds up two things. It builds up fear but it also gives you more time to spend with the characters, so that you believe everything that is happening."

"One of the most important elements that made the original film as superb as it was and something that seems to have disappeared in the latter films was suspense. And tension," adds Antal. "So that was definitely something that we wanted to bring

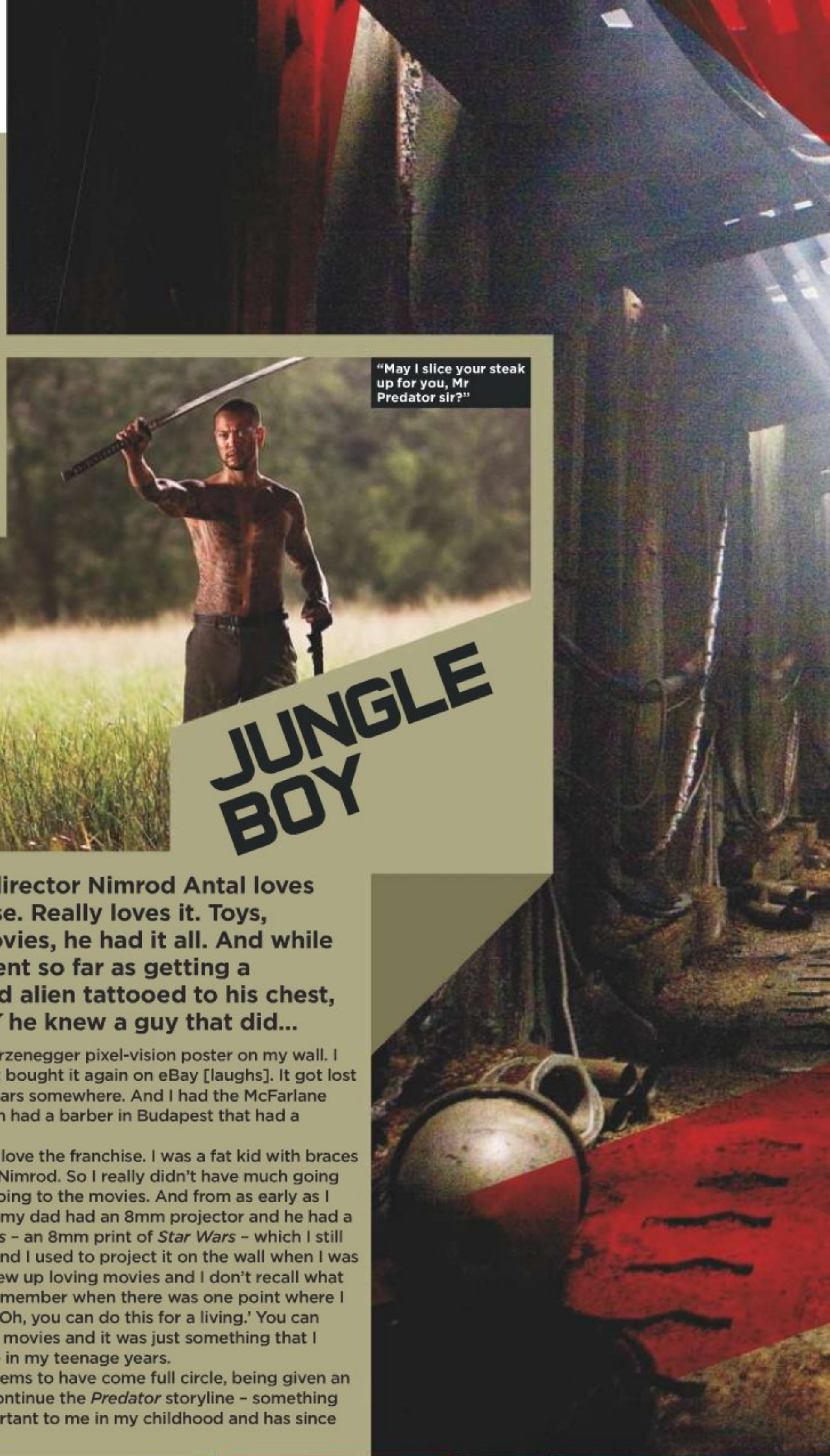
back into this film – that ominous atmosphere that really feels saturated in the original film. And we wanted to cast and form the characters in a way that you become intrigued initially and then all of a sudden, you are sucked into it and you're really rooting for them as they are going through their own personal version of Hell.

"To this day, Dutch, Mac, Billy, Blain, those characters' names are just kind of embedded into our brains and the filmmakers achieved that by taking the time to allow the viewers to get to know these characters. And we wanted to do that again here."

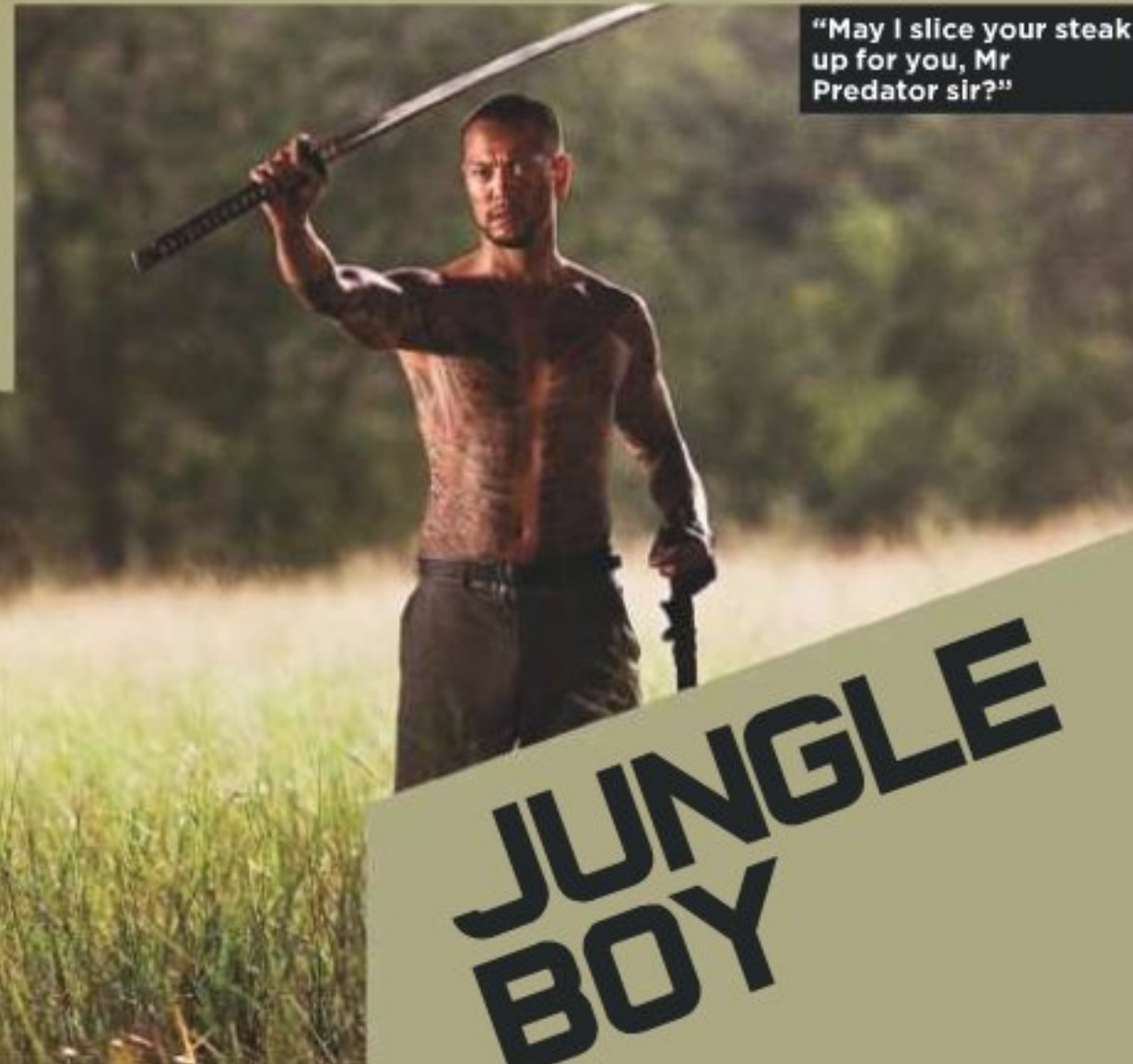
And while both men praise the work and professionalism of Brody, »



Filming in the jungle was a challenge in itself.



"May I slice your steak up for you, Mr Predator sir?"



## JUNGLE BOY



Laurence Fishburne is Noland. And he's not a happy soul.

Fishburne, Trejo and Grace, the star of the movie is the Predator or as the title implies, the Predators. Because this time around not only is there more than one Predator, there are two competing tribes.

"In my original script, they always stumbled across what we call Classic Predator, which is the exact one from the Arnold movie," teases Rodriguez. "We haven't really seen that one since the first movie because they've changed the line so much from picture to picture. And I thought it would be cool that if we were introducing a new tribe we should have them on-screen along with the original one so that you could see the difference – tell the difference between the two tribes."

"One of the characters actually describes it as the difference between wolves and dogs – just these two different tribes that are kind of at war. I don't want to give away too much because there is a lot of that in the movie but I wanted both of them so that you could really differentiate them. And it's great just to see the original again."

### MEANER AND LEANER

With nicknames like Dog Handler, Falconer, and Mr Black, these new "upgraded" Predators are meaner, leaner and deadlier versions of the original.

"Personality-wise, they're different. The one that they call Mr Black, we've nicknamed Berserker because they don't have the code that the other ones do," says Rodriguez. "The Classic Predator probably wouldn't shoot you if you were unarmed. But these guys really don't care. They are more brutal, nastier. They kill their own. They are pretty out there."

Antal says what adds to the fear factor of these new Predators is the fact that actors in costumes were actually walking around on set in Hawaii versus

**Predators director Nimrod Antal loves the franchise. Really loves it. Toys, posters, movies, he had it all. And while he never went so far as getting a dreadlocked alien tattooed to his chest, he told SFX he knew a guy that did...**

"I had the Schwarzenegger pixel-vision poster on my wall. I was 14. And I just bought it again on eBay [laughs]. It got lost in my teenage years somewhere. And I had the McFarlane figures too. I even had a barber in Budapest that had a Predator tattoo."

"I love it. I just love the franchise. I was a fat kid with braces and acne, called Nimrod. So I really didn't have much going for me beyond going to the movies. And from as early as I could remember my dad had an 8mm projector and he had a copy of *Star Wars* – an 8mm print of *Star Wars* – which I still own to this day and I used to project it on the wall when I was a kid. So I just grew up loving movies and I don't recall what age I was but I remember when there was one point where I kind of realised, 'Oh, you can do this for a living.' You can grow up to make movies and it was just something that I started to pursue in my teenage years."

"And now it seems to have come full circle, being given an opportunity to continue the *Predator* storyline – something that was so important to me in my childhood and has since become iconic."

being added in later using computer-generated imagery (CGI).

"When you are doing pure CGI visuals, even though there are a lot of talented people out there today, it's not there yet. It doesn't resonate," offers Antal. "There is a plasticity to it that's just present and I think it was very important to have real explosions going off, real fire and real guys in suits. And if you can allow yourself to do that as a filmmaker and you're not putting anyone in danger and you're not hurting any of your stunt men or actors. Then why not, it's the best way to do it and it smells real."

And if it smells like a Predator and quacks like a Predator, it must be a Predator, right?



You want to see a doctor about that, mate.



Topher Grace discovers something nasty down below.

"One of the characters in the movie actually gives a lot of information about the Predators – that's a whole sequence," says Rodriguez. "But I can't say any of that right now. It's good because it gives the audience and the characters in the movie what they want to know."

"It's like you have been waiting so many movies to get more insight into that world and what a Predator really is. So that was something big for us, getting into that world and adding more to the mythology with this movie. And suggesting things of where the Predators could go in the future." **SFX**

*Predators opens in the UK on Thursday 8 July courtesy of 20th Century Fox.*

What this year's well dressed Predator is wearing.



## MEET... THE IPRED?

Greg Nicotero, the "N" in the title of special effects studio KNB Efx, was charged along with his team with re-creating the classic Predator from the original 1987 movie and developing a new breed of extra-terrestrial hunter for *Predators*. A long-time collaborator of Robert Rodriguez, Nicotero has worked on a wide range of sci-fi movies over the past 25 years, including *Spider-Man 3*, *Transformers* and the upcoming *Piranha 3-D*. He shared his thoughts on the design of the new Predators with us.

"Not only did we get to re-create the Classic Predator and re-create him faithfully from the original film but there is also a new breed of Predators, which is incredibly exciting."

"In one of my first meetings with Robert [Rodriguez] and Nimrod [Antal], Robert gave me a clue to what he was thinking about [in terms of the new breed] and it was a line from the script, which was something like: 'If the Classic Predator is a cassette tape then the new breed of Predator is like the iPod version. It's the upgrade.'"

"And I don't know what it was about that description but it literally started firing all these flares off in my head and instantly thought about what the Classic Predator looked like and the shape of his armour. The armour was very squared off and kind of boxy and I wanted to re-design it and have the performers be taller and thinner."

"I really wanted them to be sleek and elegant looking. That was really important to me. These things are very deadly and the fact that they use their weapons, they only use their weapons when they absolutely have to. They're kind of like the Dirty Harry of the hunting world. It's more like stalking and

tracking, so it was really exciting to be able to sort of conceptualise what the new breed of Predators would look like."

"For instance, the shape of the face shares traits with the Classic Predator – we're in the same species – but the placement and the direction of the dreadlocks are very different. The Classic Predator has that kind of Rastafarian look because the dreadlocks come out the side and sort of spill down over his shoulders. Whereas with our new Super Predator, we sort of re-designed the dreadlocks to make them more streamlined and they actually sweep backwards, so that the head appears to be narrower. He just looks more aerodynamic."

Welcome to the new breed...

