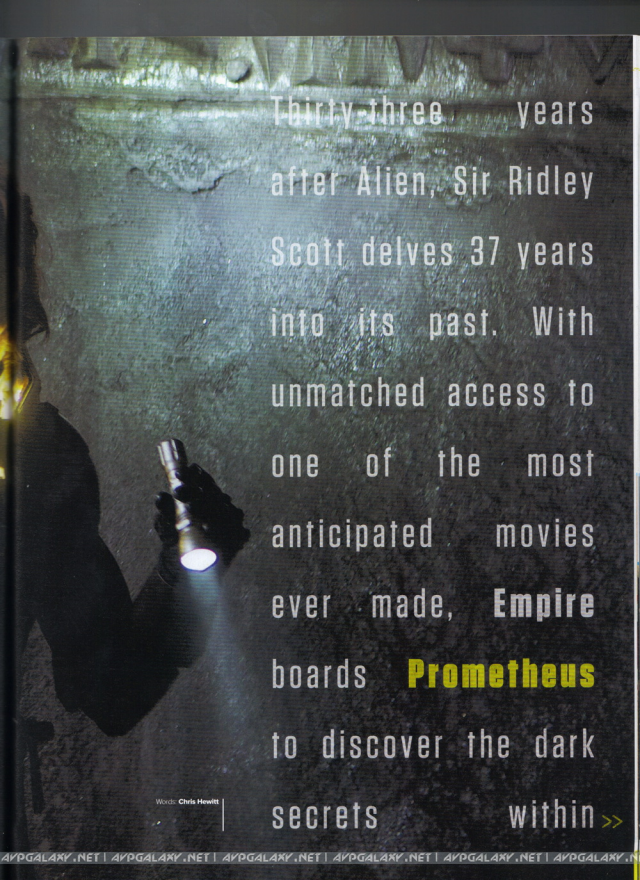


THIS
TIME
IT'S
BEFORE

ON-SET
EXCLUSIVE



A person in a dark, industrial setting, possibly a spaceship or a mine, is holding a flashlight. The flashlight beam illuminates a textured, metallic wall. The overall atmosphere is dark and mysterious.

Thirty-three years
after *Alien*, Sir Ridley
Scott delves 37 years
into its past. With
unmatched access to
one of the most
anticipated movies
ever made, **Empire**
boards **Prometheus**
to discover the dark
secrets within >>

Words: Chris Hewitt

SINCE THE DAWN OF
MANKIND, WE HAVE
STRUGGLED WITH THE BIG
QUESTIONS. WHO ARE WE?
WHERE DID WE COME FROM?
AND THE BIGGEST, MOST
EXISTENTIAL
HEAD-SCRATCHER
OF THEM ALL:

WHY ARE WE

WE'RE HERE BECAUSE SIR RIDLEY SCOTT

has had big questions gnawing away at him for the last 33 years, and he finally needed to answer them. If you've ever seen *Alien* (and if you haven't, stop reading now, watch it and write "I should have seen *Alien* before reading this feature" 50 times), then you've probably asked the same questions. They come up during the film's early stage, when John Hurt's Kane, Tom Skerritt's Dallas and Veronica Cartwright's Lambert have entered the sepulchral shadows of the derelict alien spaceship whose distress signal they have answered. They soon stumble into a cavernous antechamber, with dread-inducing bio-mechanical decor by H. R. Giger, which is dominated by what appears to be a large cockpit. At the controls lies an enormous

skeleton, with an elephantine skull and a hole in its chest from which *something* appears to have escaped. Something that kills people with what appears to be a penis with teeth.

This is the Space Jockey. We never see it again. Instead, *Alien* plunges into its feverish melange of iconic images: facehuggers, chestbusters, that dark, dangerous devil punching a hole in Harry Dean Stanton's head and, eventually, Sigourney Weaver stripping down to her smalls before blowing it out of the goddamn airlock. You could be forgiven for never giving the Space Jockey a second thought.

But Scott did. In fact, even as his career took him away from sci-fi, and as the *Alien* series continued with increasingly diminishing returns (James Cameron's *Aliens* aside, of course), he



Briefing

PROMETHEUS

Released: June 1

Director: Sir Ridley Scott

Starring: Noomi Rapace, Logan Marshall Green, Michael Fassbender, Chandler Theron, Idina Menzel, Kate Spill, Guy Pearce, Sean Harris, Kate Winslet

Story: Thirty-seven years before the events of *Alien*, inspired by the surprising revelations of archaeologist Elizabeth Shaw (Rapace), British billionaire Peter Weyland (Pearce) funds an expedition into the depths of space to discover the true origins of humanity.

couldn't stop thinking about it, and found himself asking those same questions. Questions unanswered by any of the sequels. Who was the Space Jockey? Where did it come from? What was it going with that particular cargo? What on LV-426 happened to him? And, perhaps most important of all, why was he there?

To answer those questions would require a film that would function as a prequel to *Alien*, but also as its own self-contained story (and possible franchise). To answer those questions would require *Prometheus*.

"If *Alien* is Z, this movie should not be A through Y," says Damon Lindelof, former showrunner on *Lost*, and the man who wrote the shooting script for *Prometheus*. "The idea of having lots of facehuggers and xenomorphs running around — we've seen all that, it's all >>>

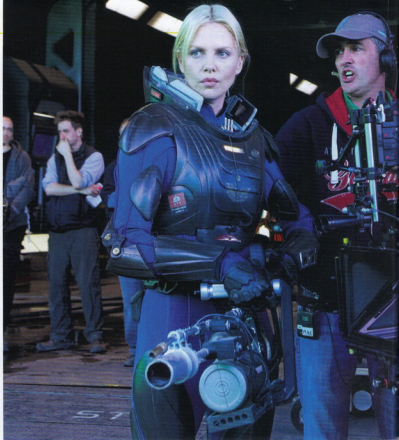


Sir Ridley does an android impression to inspire Michael Fassbender.

been done. It shouldn't just be a progression of the events you totally expect. There should be some surprises in there."

That's something *Empire* experiences first-hand when we make our first visit to the Pinewood Studios set of *Prometheus* (Alien was shot at Shepperton) on a blustery April day. Across the lot, the BBC is filming the latest series of *Dragons' Den* (the one where James Caan bowed out to be replaced by the woman who voiced Pazuzu in *The Exorcist*), while preparations are beginning for Bryan Singer's *Jack The Giant Killer* and the Keanu Reeves-starring *47 Ronin*. But the bulk of the legendary studios' soundstages belong to Sir Ridley and his return to the genre on which he left an indelible mark.

We're taken around some of Arthur Max's stunning sets, shown the eponymous *Prometheus*, a shining, brand-new interstellar craft carrying a convoy of scientists on a mission that may change mankind forever. We walk through the ship's cavernous docking bay, with its bulky but functional transports and trucks, and then explore its pristine chambers, including a medlab, corridors that have padded walls in case the ship suffers a loss of gravity, some crew members' quarters and escape pods, and, intriguingly, a duplex bridge replete with a see-through floor (which takes *Empire's* weight comfortably) surrounded by a green-screen canvas on which the outer reaches of space



The Crew

SHAW Noomi Rapace

Let's be honest. Most of us saw Alien before we were legally allowed to. Noomi Rapace certainly did, and it stayed with her. "I was quite young, and it blew me away completely," she confesses. "It was the first time I was shocked by a whole movie, and the first time I saw a woman doing things that men had always done before." That woman was, of course, Sigourney Weaver's Ripley, the archetypal strong movie female. "She was so sexy and kick-ass hardcore," recalls Rapace. "It changed a lot of things in me."

A couple of decades later, and that's abundantly clear. In her native Sweden, Rapace has cornered the market in strong women, most famously as Lisbeth Salander in *The Girl With The Dragon Tattoo*. That caught Hollywood's eye and led to a role in *Sherlock Holmes: A Game Of Shadows*, but it also put her on Sir Ridley Scott's radar, and led to her casting as Elizabeth Shaw, the scientist who leads the expedition to discover

the truth behind the dawn of humanity and who, when the chips are down, channels her inner Ripley. "I think there are a lot of similarities to Ripley," says Rapace, "but she's not a clone. In the third act, she feels like a relative of Ripley in a way. They both can switch on some sort of warrior mode."

But for Rapace, there is much to separate the two. Shaw (who's British; Rapace was working with a dialect coach on set—not bad for someone who couldn't speak English three years ago) is a thinker, for one, while her relationship with Holloway also sets her apart. "Ripley was quite alone, but Shaw and Holloway are a team," says Rapace. Shaw's faith in God, which drives her to seek the ultimate truth, means that she's more than just Ripley 2.0. "Ridley and I had many interesting conversations about that," says Rapace. "There are moments when she's asking herself, 'What is God? If there's so much darkness and destruction and hate, how can it be God's will?' But she can turn that into some kind of strength." She laughs. "It's the first time for me that I'm playing a character who's not totally messed up! I'm used to people that are more destroyed in their souls, and moving in the shadows."





Charlize Theron gets into character as Weyland Corp's icy Vickers.

will later be digitally daubed. Prometheus takes place almost 40 years before Alien, but this is a world away from the dilapidated bulk of the Nostromo; this is no-expense-spared space luxury. If Apple designed spaceships—and one day, you can bet your bottom dollar, they will—they would look a lot like this.

And then, lying on the floor of a set that seems to be some sort of operating room, we find the elephantine in the room.

This is the Space Jockey.

Or, to be more precise, the disembodied head of the Space Jockey, ready for its close-up. Mr. Scott. Or, to be more precise still, it's not a head at all, but a helmet; a breathing apparatus, designed to help our old friend cope with hostile atmospheres. For—and this is the first surprise, the first sign that Prometheus has more up its sleeve than toothy terrors picking off people one by one—that Merrick-like mask merely conceals the *true* face of the Space Jockey. Helpfully, that face is also on set, awaiting a spot of prosthetics jiggery-pokery, and it takes *Empire's* breath away. Whatever we were expecting from Prometheus, whatever we were expecting the Space Jockey to be, it's fair to say we weren't expecting it to be a grey/blue-skinned creature, about nine feet tall, its sneering face marked with scars. Its humanoid face. Its face that looks just like one of us. Its face that

prompts as many questions as it does answers, and chief among them is the biggest one of them all. The one with which Prometheus is *really* preoccupied.

WHY ARE WE HERE?

Imagine if Alien had been called Nostromo, Aliens Sulaco or Alien Resurrection Auriga. Had those films shared a name with the ships on which much of the action takes place, that would have been the case. Prometheus is the first movie in the Alien universe to share its title with the ship (Alien³ was set on prison planet Fiorina 161, and Prometheus has rather helpfully rendered Alien Vs Predator and its godawful sequel obsolete, non-canon fan-fiction), but don't read too much into that. The significance of the name lies elsewhere.

In the fake TED 2023 lecture by Guy Pearce's Peter Weyland (founder of The Company whose



“There should be some surprises...”
Damon Lindelof

The Crew

FIFIELD Sean Harris

This is going well. *Empire* is five seconds into our interview with Sean Harris, the spiky Brit who has carved a career out of playing intense (read: “psychopathic”) types, about his role in Prometheus, and already he’s giving us a look that says he wants to hug our face and burst our chest. We only asked about his hair.

“Seriously—?” demands Harris. *Empire* trembles, and *remotes* something about being afraid of not knowing please. After all, in Prometheus’ futuristic world, only Harris’ space geologist, Fifield, is sporting a look that is truly out there: a bright red mohawk shaved on one side, straight out of 2000AD. He considers the question, and deems *Empire* worthy of living. “It’s a combination of me and Ridley. There’s a drawing that Ridley did, and this guy had a severe haircut, and I ran with that. There were worries about looking too crazy, but we pushed on through.”

That’s uncomfortable moment out of the way, Harris is happy to chat about Fifield. “He’s done one mission too many, and is a little bit shot to bits,” says Harris. “He’s someone who can sense when things are up. He’s your audience guy, going, ‘Don’t go in that tunnel, we should not be doing this!’”

Fifield represents Harris’ first foray into blockbusters, at the age of 43. “I’m not really into these types of films,” he admits. “But this is Ridley Scott and Alien—it’s the biggest thing I’ve ever done and ever will do. When I met Ridley, they got me a car home. I came by the Underground. I’ve arrived!”

nefarious activities are threaded throughout the franchise) that appeared online at the beginning of March, Weyland recounts the legend of Prometheus. If you don't know your Greek mythology, it goes something like this: Prometheus, a Titan, stole fire from the gods and gave it to mankind, kickstarting and accelerating our evolution. As Weyland notes, "It was our first piece of technology."

For his transgression, Prometheus was punished by Zeus and forced to spend an eternity tied to a rock where, every night, an eagle would peck out his liver. It would regrow by the morning, only for the process to be repeated until Hercules happened along and freed Prometheus during one of his labours.

"That myth is everything that we wanted to talk about," says Lindelof. "In a literal sense, it's the name of the ship they're on. In the figurative sense, you have to think about the man who named the ship (*Weyland*). This is the guy who funded the entire journey and he sees himself as Prometheus in many ways. The great thing about Prometheus is he defied the order of the gods. This entire movie is about defiance. There was something very cool about that idea. The idea of mankind being given a tool that the gods were denying them. And what happens to you when you defy the gods? It's not good."

Taking place in 2085, some 62 years after

"There are a lot of similarities between Shaw and Ripley." Noomi Rapace

The Crew

JANEK Idris Elba

Following in the footsteps of the grizzled Tom Skerritt in *Alien*, the 39-year-old Brit, better known as Stringer Bell or Luther, is the captain of the good ship Prometheus. But, insists Elba, "It's not a similar character. Janek has a military background."

Which, presumably, comes in handy when things go south on his watch. "He's a realistic, pragmatic character. He has to get involved... In a film with huge ideas, you need a character like this, who can go, 'Well... why are we doing this?'"

Elba was offered the role by Sir Ridley Scott, with whom he had previously worked on *American Gangster*. "Ridley's very meticulous," adds Elba. "He's very aware of what actors should and shouldn't be doing!"

All of Janek's scenes took place on the stunning, Arthur Max-designed spaceship set, complete with glass floor surrounding Janek's captain's chair. "A lot of detail went into that," laughs Elba. "I tested my weight the first time I stood on it, and the whole thing shook." But it didn't scare him, right? "No, deadpan Elba. "I'm not afraid of heights..."



Weyland's TED speech but 37 years before the events of *Alien*, Prometheus follows Elizabeth Shaw (Noomi Rapace, in her first Hollywood lead since the Swedish *Girl With The Dragon Tattoo*) and Charlie Holloway (newcomer Logan Marshall-Green), a pair of loved-up scientists who uncover clues dotted around the globe that indicate the hand of an alien intelligence, and a potential star map to its point of origin. Positioning the idea that these extraterrestrials had a hand in the evolution, and perhaps even birth, of mankind, Shaw (a believer in God) and Holloway (a live-for-the-now sceptic) persuade the Weyland Corp to fund an expedition to the other side of the universe.

That expedition will include Idris Elba, as the ship's gruff captain Janek (a throwback to the blue-collar crew of the ill-fated *Nostromo*); Kate Dickie, Rafe Spall and Sean Harris as scientists-for-hire who aren't quite sure what they're getting themselves into; a mysterious old man that nobody, but nobody, is willing to go on the record about (but take a look at the content of Weyland's TED speech again for possible hints); Charlize Theron as Vickers, a representative of The Company; and last but not least, Michael Fassbender as the ship's android, David, who is shunned by his human creators. In the grand tradition of *Alien*, we will meet these people, get to know them, and then in all likelihood watch them die in horrible, grisly



Noomi Rapace as her latest feisty heroine, Elizabeth Shaw.

fashion as the 'gods' they encounter (who turn out to be anything but) unleash upon them a punishment of Old Testament proportions.

"What elevated this material were these grander conceptual designs," says Lindelof. "As opposed to a traditional sci-fi movie like *Alien*, where unknowing characters find themselves coming upon something horrific, it's always more interesting when those characters are seeking out something horrific, or potentially horrific. That's a little more in the old-school 1950s sci-fi genre, where the best of intentions are often rewarded with the idea that some things are better left unknown, and that there's a line that should not be crossed."

There is much we still don't know about *Prometheus*, and that's the way that Scott and Fox want it. But this we know for certain. It's going to be a damn sight better than the last major science-fiction movie that involved characters searching for God and the truth behind everything. That was *Star Trek V: The Final Frontier*, notable only for William Shatner's delivery of the line, "What does God need with a starship?", Spock's anti-grav boots and the fact that it was The Shat's first (and last) time behind the camera for the franchise.

Prometheus, on the other hand, is easily the boldest, bravest movie of the summer. It's an *Alien* movie without *Alien* in the title (at the



The Crew

VICKERS Charlize Theron

Whether it's issuing orders to Ash to bring back the creature at all costs or Burke in *Aliens* locking over Ripley and co. for a goddamne percentage, the *Alien* series has taught us one thing: do not trust the Weyland-Yutani Corporation, aka The Company. In *Prometheus*, The Company's rep is Charlize Theron's Melacca Vickers, sent by Peter Weyland to keep an eye on the little expedition he's funding. So is she the true villain of the piece?

"She's a lurker," laughs Theron. "She's always somewhere in the back, being very suspicious. She's the red tape everyone has to go through, but I liked the idea of playing someone who came across as cold and unapproachable, and then slowly revealing she's a human being — one that's flawed and heartbreaking. She turns out to be the one with the biggest agenda."

Theron won't say what that agenda is, but Vickers does have close links to two *Prometheus* passengers. She's also interestingly considering Theron is the only Oscar-winner in the cast, not the lead. "I'd much rather be a smaller character in a great film than the lead in some shitty movie," she says. But her third lead status means Vickers doesn't venture onto the planet's surface. "I'm not really around for a lot of the action," she admits. So what of the scenes in the trailer where she's clearly running away from something? "She's running to the cafeteria," laughs Theron. "She's been smoking a doobie and I got the munchies... Look, I'm sure Fox will hunt me down if I start giving away that stuff." She cackles, as *Empire* lets out a sigh. "It's going to be easy writing this interview!"



"I've never felt like I've been part of movie history before!"
Rafe Spall

behest, believe it or not, of Fox studio chief Tom Rothman). It's a summer blockbuster that, according to executive producer Michael Ellenberg, is "harrowing". It doesn't feature giant robots punching the nuts and bolts out of more giant robots, but instead tackles some of the weightiest sci-fi ideas and themes seen since some guy in an ape suit threw a bone into the air and it transmogrified into a spaceship. It is, in short, "proper science-fiction", of the sort that precious few people have made since, well, Sir Ridley brought Blade Runner to the big screen in 1982.

"It takes balls to make a film that is going to try to answer the question of where do we come from?" says Charlize Theron. "We've been struggling with that question for as long as mankind can remember. What I love about this is that it is really playing on the past as well as trying to foresee the future. We'll look back at this film, just as we did with Blade Runner or Alien, and say it was cornerstoned on a theme that mattered and that people actually gave a shit about..."



Mouthy double-act Rafe Spall and Sean Harris spark a hunt for Spall's glasses.



The crew, headed by on-screen couple Rapace and Logan Marshall-Green, look out for E. T.

WHY ARE WE HERE?

We're here because of Sir Ridley Scott. We're here because, when one of cinema's true masters decides to play in the sandbox he helped build, you should pay attention. And it's not just *Empire* that feels this way. The excitement is palpable on set, with actors and crew members united in their sense that this is something special, a comeback that's up there with Elvis '68 and Istanbul '05. "Everyone from the caterer to the lead actors felt like they were part of something special," says Rafe Spall. "I've never felt like I've been part of movie history before!"

Today's particular slice of movie history, as *Empire* returns to the set on a June day clogged with rain, involves the scientific crew of *Prometheus* (another contrast with *Alien*, whose crew was composed of working-class space truckers). Having landed on the planet they reckon is the home of the Engineers, an away team comprising Shaw, Holloway, David, Harris' Fifield, Spall's Milburn and Kate Dickie's Ford sets out to explore and, hopefully, make first contact. Their journey, echoing that of Kane, Dallas and Lambert 33 years earlier (although 37 years in their future), is filled with foreboding, and takes them into the bowels of an alien pyramid.

As the actors stand outside the soundstage, its set scattered with black rocks and pools of water stretching as far as the eye can see, they laugh and joke around. Fassbender waits until the last possible moment before donning his cumbersome goldfish-bowl helmet (between this, *X-Men: First Class* and *Shame*, 2011 was quite the year for Fassbender and his helmet), lifting his lantern and walking in with the others. >>

The Crew

HOLLOWAY Logan Marshall-Green

If you ever find yourself in a pub quiz with Logan Marshall-Green, best not to hand over the TV & Films round to him just because he's an actor. Case in point: *Empire* has just put to him that his *Prometheus* character, reckless scientist Charlie Holloway, is the Scully to the *Malden* of Noomi Rapace's God-fearing Elizabeth Shaw. He pauses for a second and then "fesses up." "I think I know your reference," he says, tentatively, "but I've got to say I've never seen one *X-Files* episode. Or is that *Lethal Weapon*?"

But when talk turns to the movie that beget *Prometheus*, Marshall-Green redeems himself. "On set, I was a character, an actor and a fan," says the 35-year-old American. "*Alien* is one of my

favourite movies. It was the first R-rated movie I ever saw. And I think *Prometheus* is a beautiful mix of the first two movies. It's going to make quite an impact."

Presumably it's also going to make quite an impact on Marshall-Green's career. He's appeared in a few movies (*Devil*, *Brooklyn's Finest*), but *Prometheus*' casting director spotted him on stage "off-off-off Broadway". As one half of *Prometheus*' lead couple (a first for the franchise), Holloway is the bothead, the "X-Files type scientist". "I liked his leap-before-looking philosophy," says Marshall-Green. "He, simply, doesn't want to meet his maker. He wants to stand next to his maker. He's willing to go to the edge to get that."



MILBURN Rafe Spall

"I got a call from my agent, saying Ridley Scott wants to talk to me about the new *Alien* film," recalls Rafe Spall. "I said, 'Fuck off!'"

But his agent didn't fuck off, and Sir Ridley did indeed want Spall, who'd had a small role in *A Good Year*, as part of his *Prometheus* crew. "I did the screentest for another part," says the 30-year-old. "But Ridley wanted me as Milburn. That feels special, because he's got good taste, and he knows about acting."

Botanist Milburn forms one half of a mouthy double-act with Sean Harris' Fifield, neither of whom are particularly happy to be on the expedition when it starts going wrong. So, does that make them...? "We're definitely the Harry Dean Stanton and Yaphet Kotto," laughs Spall, way ahead of us. "I think I'm Yaphet and he's Harry Dean. I'm happy with that. I'd like my career to mirror Yaphet Kotto's. I'm working on my funk album now."

Like Fifield, Milburn is mocked out by a slightly futuristic look. Well, he's wearing rimless glasses. "Oh, the Dame Edna glasses!" sighs Spall. "Ridley said, 'I think you should wear glasses.' They brought a whole load in, and I put them on, and he said, 'Perfect.' I'm in the *Alien* film, looking like Dame Edna!"

The helmets have headsets so the actors can hear each other, and are sleeker and more streamlined than the *Alien* vintage, but clearly modelled on the same principle by costume designer Janty Yates. And they play a crucial role in what unfolds. As the group spreads out around a dark hole that leads God knows where to who knows what, Holloway, without warning, reaches up and takes his helmet off, despite Shaw's anguished pleas not to. "Outside the structure, the air is lethal," explains Marshall-Green, "but our suits tell us that inside the structure it's reasonably similar to our atmosphere on Earth. So I leap before I look, and taste the air."

He stands, lets water drip down from the ceiling onto his face, then inhales deeply. Rather than breathing his last, the scientist finds that, somehow, he can breathe in here. Letting out a whoop of joy, the others follow suit. Rapace's Shaw, with an almost imperceptible nod of admonishment at her lover, continues on and out of the frame, until a satisfied Sir Ridley calls, "Cut!"

They reset quickly while *Empire* further admires the set that wraps around us. We're on Pinewood's 007 Stage, the largest soundstage in Europe, and yet that wasn't large enough to accommodate Scott's vision so he had it extended by 25 per cent. Looking around,

as rivulets of water run down the walls and blackness engulfs all but the most brightly lit areas, it's easy to see why. Not for Sir Ridley is the idea of doing this with swathes of CGI, his actors fighting off invisible foes while surrounded by a giant green curtain.

"You saw the way that Ridley mixes the old school with the new technology," says Fassbender, later. "What was great about Ridley was to see someone using a *fishy line* for one effect. Ridley comes from an art background, so the idea of texture and the physicality of a set around the actors registering on camera was something he didn't want to lose."

That could be the understatement of the year, as we discover when we wander over to the adjacent soundstage, the home of what Scott, disturbingly, refers to as the Ampule Chamber, and see it. It is the reason why the 007 stage needed an extension. It is the single-most impressive piece of production design we've ever seen. It is so awe-inspiring that we take some time to walk round it, and almost get lost.

It is a giant head. Well, of course a film with ideas this big has a giant head. But this head is something else. It is, approximately, 30 feet tall, and is meant to be a stone structure that's been here for, perhaps, millions of years. It resembles the Engineer (*sans* mask) in appearance, down to the markings and pockmarked scars, and also >>>

"Ridley mixes the old school with the new technology."
Michael Fassbender



Sean Harris' eccentric Fifield spots a great pattern for his next head tattoo.

The Crew

DAVID

Michael Fassbender

So far, in the *Alien* series, there have been three androids — they prefer synthetics themselves — operating in plain sight alongside their human counterparts. And their names lend themselves neatly to a game we're calling *Alien Android Alphabet*. So A is for Ash (the main in the original), B is for Bishop (since Henriksen in *Alien 2*), C is for Call (Winona Ryder in *Alien Resurrection*), and D is for... David. He actually predates all of them. Not that that particularly affected Michael Fassbender. "I didn't reedit or rewatch what I actually did, but I remember it," he says. "I didn't want to have as advanced an android as that."

Fassbender describes David as "fastidious" and "almost like an anal butler." But the man who's arguably the most magnetic actor of the moment didn't sign on just to do his C-3PO impression. While David may not be as malevolent as Ash, there's something lurking beneath his iSkin, which could

have serious ramifications for the crew. "The first thing I wanted to do was make him ambiguous. Is he fucking with you, or is he being sincere?" says Fassbender. "I don't think he has any real moral compass. The humans are not very nice to him — he's a robot, there's prejudice there. It's interesting that human traits start to bleed into the robot."

Which brings us firmly into *Blade Runner* territory. *Empire* notes David's blond hair is reminiscent of Rutger Hauer. "I'm not as butch as Rutger Hauer in this," laughs Fassbender. Instead, the look is modeled on T. E. Lawrence, a key inspiration for David's creator, Peter Weyland. "I liked the idea of having a feminine quality to him," says Fassbender. "Both Lawrence and David Bowie have elements of that." Bowie? "I haven't suggested this to Ridley, but I want David to be doing a robot dance, in a secret disco room on the ship!" he chuckles. "I want him sitting there with a disco ball, and a floor that lights up!"



THE ALIEN LOGS

Salvaging the mixed-up history (with margin notes) of the Alien Universe - reliable and otherwise

I. THE PREHISTORY

[Sources unreliable and widely derided by contemporaries. Treat with small sample of sodium chloride]

2896 BC First contact between Alien and human, the former introduced by 'Predator' aliens who taught humans to build pyramids as hunting grounds for 'Predator' rites of passage.

1897 AD Alien-head trophy spotted on the wall of a 'Predator' spaceship in drug-war-torn Los Angeles.

2004 AD Charles Bishop Weyland of Weyland Industries leads team to buried pyramid in Antarctica, where 'Predators' hunt Aliens. Weyland killed by 'Predator'.

2004 AD 'Predator' ship crashes in Colorado, unleashing Aliens on local populace, along with Alien-'Predator' hybrid. US government *nukes town*. A 'Ms. Yutani' sent a 'Predator' arm cannon.

[Not technically Predators]

[Physical similarity to Michael Bishop/ Bishop line of Hyperdyne synthetics purely coincidental]

[Not from orbit]

[Suspected hoax]



[Seriously?]

[Inconsistent with all xenozoology data]

[Riiight]

II. 'THE RIDLEY CANON'

[ID of 'Ridley' unconfirmed; some kind of early 21st century bandicoot? aficonado? Must cross-reference with Mother's database]

2023 AD Peter Weyland of Weyland Industries delivers rousing talk at TED conference, outlining his ambition to "change the world".

2005 AD Weyland ship *Prometheus* launches into space.

2122 AD Weyland-Yutani contracted mining vessel *Nostromo* picks up signal from planetoid LV-426. Crew find derelict spaceship containing Alien eggs. One hatchling kills all crew, except warrant officer Ellen Ripley. Ripley destroys *Nostromo* then blows Alien out of orbit - thereby foxing Weyland-Yutani's plan to bring it back to Earth.

[See full transcript for some astonishing symbolic relevance]



[Awaiting full details]

[Must read more Conrad]

[Goddamn]

III. 'THE RIPLEY CANON'

[Note overlap with 'Ridley Canon' from 2122]

2179 AD After 57 years in hypersleep, Ripley taken back to LV-426 on USS Sulaco to help investigate loss of communication with Weyland-Yutani terraforming colony *Hadley's Hope*. Alien colony encountered, Ripley *nukes site*, then blows Alien Queen out of orbit with help of Bishop synthetic - thereby foxing Weyland-Yutani's plan to bring an Alien back to Earth.

2179 AD Fire breaks out on Sulaco. Ripley's hypersleep pod ejects and crashes on prison world *Floria 161*, where another Alien goes on the loose. Ripley inseminated with Alien Queen, which she destroys via suicide. Weyland-Yutani's Michael Bishop witnesses, his plans to bring an Alien back to Earth foxed.

2366 AD Traces of *Ripley's blood* recovered from *Floria 161*.

2380 AD After seven attempts, United Systems Military successfully clones Ripley aboard *Proto-orbiting USM Auriga* - although Ripley has Alien DNA. USM also extracts from Ripley an Alien Queen and breeds Aliens for experimentation.

2381 AD Aliens break out and rampage. Ripley escapes with some mercenaries. Encounters Alien-human hybrid, which gets *sucked out of porthole*, and crashes *Auriga* into Earth, destroying all Aliens.

Dan Jolin

[From orbit]

[Malfunctioning?]

[This took 177 years? Investigate improbable tech-slowdown in mid 24th century]

[Sloppy]

[Goddamn]

[Ironic name alert]

[Goddamn]

[Not made of wood or populated by medieval monks]

[Not the dog]

[What could go wrong?]

[Log ends. 205 years after it should have.]

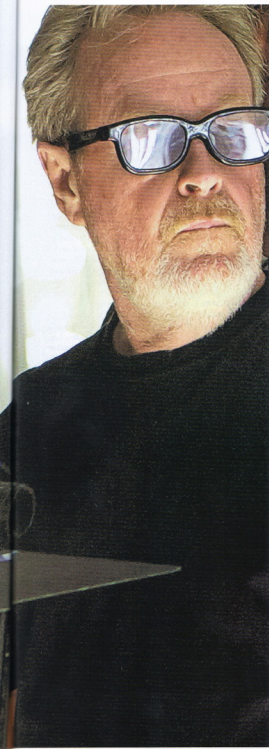




"IT'S NOT
JUST ABOUT
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STRESSFUL..."

Prometheus marks Sir Ridley Scott's return to science-fiction — and also, for the first time, to a universe of his own making. *Empire* joins him at his London office to talk Space Jockeys, Blade Runner 2 and whether there's any intelligent life out there.

Words: Chris Hewitt



"THE LIGHT IS WRONG,"

grumbles Sir Ridley Scott. "What's wrong with the light?" Over 35 years of ambitious world-building, during which he's transported us from the glorious vistas of New Mexico, to the opulence of ancient Rome, to the dust and blood of the medieval Middle East, to the dystopian murk of future America, Sir Ridley has probably got to the stage where, when he asks for light, he bloody well gets as much as he needs.

Not today, though. Today, he's being thwarted by real light and the real world. *Empire* is in a conference room at the London offices of his production company, Scott Free (con-run with his brother Tony), where posters for *Gladiator* and *Black Hawk Down*, appropriately enough, adorn the walls. It's 10.30 in the morning, it's overcast, and the 74-year-old knight has, apparently, taken it as a personal affront that *The Almighty* has not deigned to bathe the office in a warm, magic-hour glow. "How do we get more light in here?" he asks, before taking matters into his own hands and fiddling with the blinds. It helps. Not much, but it helps. Satisfied, he sits down with a bemused *Empire* and talks — passionately, knowledgeable — about his long-anticipated return to perhaps the most impressive and influential world he's ever created, with *Prometheus*.

EMPIRE: You've been away from sci-fi for 30 years. Why come back now?

SCOTT: I never really had the urge before. I was too engaged in doing other subjects I hadn't touched upon. I'd always had this idea hanging in the back of my mind relating to the original *Alien* franchise. I raised that question, starting off as the possibility of a connection, but now it's moved away from that and is independent, in a funny kind of way. If this were to be successful, we could easily be looking at a sequel. What this film does do is open up a whole different door. A much bigger door, away from monsters and demons.

EMPIRE: You've come close to doing sci-fi again, though.

SCOTT: I am *Legend*, specifically. I am *Legend* was taken right to the wire and it was only brought down because the budget was too high at the time. It was a mere \$106 million, which to me now seems a medium-sized film, but it was shot down because I said I couldn't reduce it any further. So I crossed the street and made *Gladiator* instead. It was a good move.

EMPIRE: You're working on a new *Blade Runner* as well...

SCOTT: That has kept tapping on the door frequently. But it was always tied up, and now it's less tied up. Alcon bought it and

we're moving forward into planning what to do. It's not a remake at all. If you're going to go in and do *Blade Runner*, do you do a sequel? A prequel? What exactly would it be about and what exactly was the world that everyone seemed to fall in love with?

EMPIRE: With that and *Prometheus*, is there a sense that you're protecting your legacy?

SCOTT: I really don't give a shit, honestly. What makes a good film? That's where I come from. I'm a yarn-teller. My job is to engage you as much as I can and as often as I can. I love the process and still continue to adore the process, actually. I don't get attached to anything. I'm like a good antique dealer. I'm prepared to sell my most valuable table.

EMPIRE: Are you impressed with modern sci-fi?

SCOTT: It's mostly dressing. With science-fiction you have the opportunity of being able to do anything you want, with the digital assistance, and it's up to you to not do anything foolish or silly or daft, or non-credible. Within that universe, you have to stick to your own rulebook. That's what's happening, we're not drawing up enough rules when we start.

EMPIRE: Are you tired of seeing films that have so clearly been influenced by *Alien* and *Blade Runner*?

SCOTT: No. It's always amusing. But you can tell who's trying to hide it. Now they don't even hide it.

EMPIRE: You made *Alien* and *Blade Runner* consecutively. Were you a sci-fi fan at that time?

SCOTT: No. *Blade Runner* and *Alien* were more by accident than plan. I had done a film called *The Duellists*, so I was baffled why some bright spark would ask me to do a science-fiction movie. *The Duellists* won Cannes, but Paramount didn't know how to release a film about two guys in bizarre breeches, waving swords around. I actually think it's a pretty good Western. But the idea of science-fiction came out of the blue. I'd seen *Star Wars* and that had knocked me sideways with all my plans. I was planning to do *Tristan And Isolde* in France, and I thought I would try to convert it into another arena. So I sat down for about five weeks and redrew a plan to do *Tristan And Isolde* as futuristic. When I was doing that, I was already carrying myself forward into science-fiction, partly to do with the inspiration from Jean Giraud Moebius and his marvellous original illustrations in magazines such as *Métal Hurlant*, and all those publications which I used to look at and hide from my children, because they were so violent and sexual. They were adult comic strips, but they didn't pull any punches. I thought, that's the way to go. Moebius designed my spacesuits for *Alien*. (This interview took place before Moebius' >>

death in March.)

EMPIRE: How did you go from that to *Alien*?

SCOTT: Well, I was the fifth choice. I think Robert Altman was even on the list ahead of me. How the fuck do you ask Bob to do that? Crazy? I think it was random. I called them and within 32 hours I was standing at Fox. "What do you want to do?" Nothing. No rewrite. You can make this film right now. We were catapulted off. I never changed a word. It was spartan in its writing, which is what I thought was good. It was a B movie done in an A way with an A+ cast. It took a long time to cast. I drove them crazy with casting. I didn't cast Sigourney Weaver until almost two weeks before principal photography. Laddy (*Alan Ladd Jr., then-head of Fox*), who is normally a paragon and absolute representation of calm and cool, lost his cool and said, "Where the fuck is the leading lady?" I was ten days off. I tested her in the sets I was building for *Alien*, that's how close I was, and it worked out.

EMPIRE: You've always been a world-builder, creating these all-encompassing universes on film. Was the chance to do that again, on an epic scale, what drew you back to Prometheus, where you could build giant sets?

SCOTT: Yes. It's still practical to be able to build and design everything, rather than trying to fit it in digitally. As planned as a screenplay can be, so are the visuals. I really worked with Arthur Max and four other absolutely brilliant designers — the best, maybe, in the business — in LA before we even knew we had a film. Fox were smart enough to fund the visual prep process while the film was being written.

EMPIRE: That must have been fun.

SCOTT: I loved it, yeah. I'm still a designer at heart and I loved getting in there with designers with pads and papers and pencils. I've just learned how to start an iPad. I hope it was the right thing to do.

EMPIRE: Was it challenging integrating designs with the Space Jockey's world, but coming up with fresh stuff like the Prometheus itself?

SCOTT: It's all challenging now, because there have been so many science-fictions done that we're almost designed out. It's trying to find something that doesn't become too outrageous, or so outrageous that it becomes fantasy. I try to keep these films in an area of reality, so it has to feel real. The design challenge is, if I think I've seen that before, I can't do that.

EMPIRE: And you extended the 007 stage, the biggest in Europe, because it wasn't big enough for your purposes...

SCOTT: I worked on it for... Legend, and I burned the stage down! (*Chuckles*) It never is big enough, you know. You stand at one end and put a viewfinder on and get someone to go down and stand at the other end. You go, "Uh, it's not that big." I'm a great recycler. I wanted to recycle spaces so the more big spaces I've got, the bigger my film will appear to be. I'll recycle every goddamn space. I'll reshoot a corridor 13 different ways and you'll never recognise them. It's like in *Gladiator*, to give you an example. The Senate, where they stood talking and Joaquin (*Phoenix*) span his sword on the marble, that is later his office, his bedroom, his living room, and her quarters. That was simply by moving around dressing, changing the angles, and changing the drapes. If you look carefully, you'll realise the columns are the same on all those sets.

EMPIRE: How long have you had the notion to revisit the story of the Space Jockey?

SCOTT: Years. Years, years, years. I always wondered when they did 2, 3 and 4 why they hadn't touched upon that, instead of evolving into some other fantastic story. One was set on a prison, wasn't it? Jim's (*Cameron*) was more military, going back to what happened to the people... what was it? Whatever happened to the space station and the

pioneers that were on it. That was all logical at the time, and yet they missed one of the biggest questions of all, which is: who's the big guy? Who's flying the ship, basically? And where were they going? And with what? Why that cargo? There's all kinds of questions.

EMPIRE: The search for our makers, the dawn of mankind, the nature of God... these are big themes.

SCOTT: They're old questions, which have been asked many times and presented in various forms in quite imaginative fashion. In the '60s, there was a guy called Erich von Däniken who did a very popular book called *Chariots Of The Gods?*, and he proposed pre-creation, which we all pooh-pooched. But the more we get into it, the more science accepts the fact that we're not alone in this universe, and there's every feasible chance that there are more of us, not exactly as we are, but creatures that are organically living in other parts of this particular galaxy. (*Stephen*) Hawking said he thinks that there are and that he hopes they don't visit. Because if they do, they're way ahead of us.

EMPIRE: Do you believe in pre-creation?

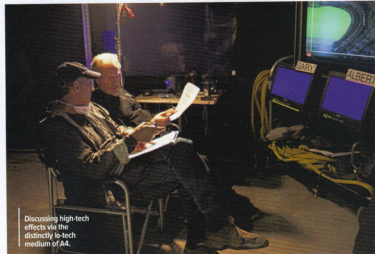
SCOTT: I think it's entirely logical. The idea that we've been here three billion years and nothing happened until 75,000 years ago is absolute nonsense. If something happened here two billion years ago, if there was a civilisation at least equal to ours, there would be nothing left after two billion years. It would be carbon. We talk about Atlantis and cities under the water that have long gone, long submerged, but they're in the relatively recent past. I'm talking about one-and-a-half billion years ago — was this planet really empty? I don't think so.

EMPIRE: It's been 33 years since *Alien*, 30 years since *Blade Runner*. How has the filmmaking landscape changed for you in that time?

SCOTT: It hasn't really changed. The bottom line still is: what's your story? How good are your characters? How good is the dialogue? Then I also say, it doesn't matter how good the thoroughbred is; you'd better have a good jockey. And that's us — we're jockeys.

EMPIRE: In 1978, when you were shooting *Alien*, you didn't have to contend with the internet and people analysing your every move.

SCOTT: I don't get where that comes from. It annoys the shit out of me, actually. So we started to do advertising in a different form. We thought it would be a good idea to advertise and never mention the name of the movie. That's why we opened up to TED (*the global Technology, Entertainment and Design conferences*) and did that piece with Peter Weyland where he says, "We are the gods now." That went down extremely well, and we never mentioned the film! That's a good trick we learned from advertising. The next one will go out and talk about David, the Michael Fassbender character. Again, it's utilitarian advertising on a laptop where suddenly this guy is talking to you about being a robot, and you don't know what the



Discussing high-tech effects via the distinctly hi-tech medium of A4.



Sir Ridley surveys the world of Prometheus. Below: Blade Runner, another iconic universe to which he will return. Below right: With Spourney Weaver on the set of Alien, 1978.

"Science says we're not alone in the universe... There's every chance there are more of us."
Sir Ridley Scott



fuck he's talking about. At the very end he has a fingerprint that he puts onto the screen and in his fingerprint, in his natural skin, is a 'W', which is for the Weyland Corporation.

EMPIRE: You're working with Fassbender again...

SCOTT: He's great.

EMPIRE: ... On The Counsellor, Cormac McCarthy's first original screenplay.

SCOTT: It's fantastic. There are five wonderful characters with honesty some of the best dialogue I've ever read. It revolves around the world of a cartel, but you never go into it, you never meet a member of the cartel. It's really frightening, and it's really saying don't play with the devil, don't step across the line, don't think you can do it and get away with it because you can never get away with

it. It has a classic Cormac McCarthy darkness to it which makes you sick to the pit of your stomach. We start that in mid-June, a week after this comes out.

EMPIRE: Have you decided on the rating for Prometheus yet?

SCOTT: Right now I don't know where we are. The question is, do you go for the PG-13, or do you go for what it should be, which is R? Financially it makes quite a difference, or the risk makes quite a difference, and yet you also have to apply the question — if you soften it, will you financially suffer? As opposed to just going for the throat and gambling. Essentially, it's kinda R. The little bastards will still get in anyway, so what's the difference? It's not just about blood, it's about

ideas that are very stressful. I'm not an alien, but I'll do everything I can to get the most aggressive film I can.

EMPIRE: It's interesting that the title doesn't have the word 'Alien' in it.

SCOTT: It's Tom Rothman's title. It's a good title.

EMPIRE: Is part of you perversely proud that you're releasing a mammoth summer blockbuster with a title people will struggle to say, let alone understand?

SCOTT: If you've got a lisp, it's pretty tough. Prometheus (*Chuckles*) I can barely say it, actually.

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Prometheus is out on June 1 and will be reviewed in a future issue.