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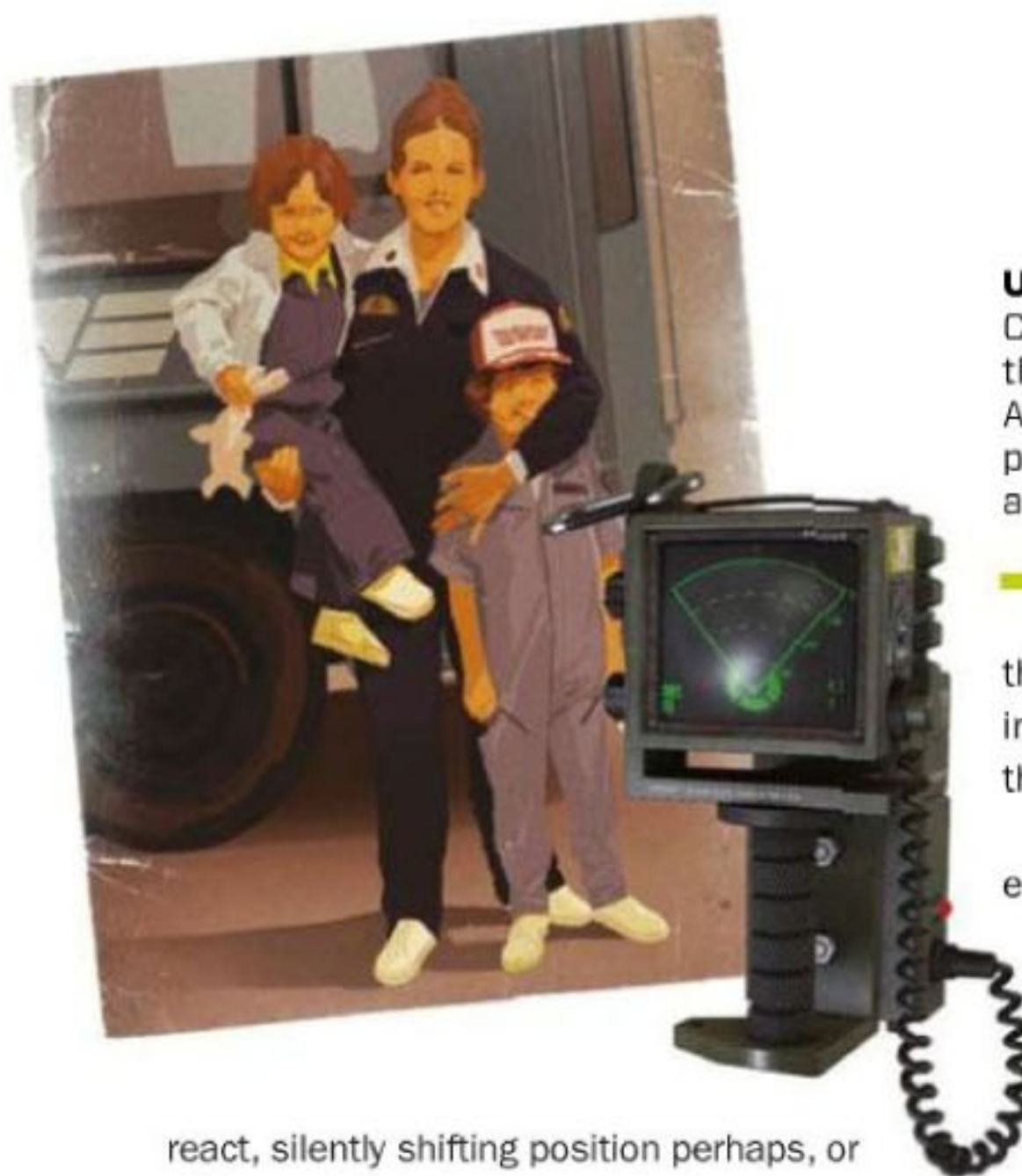
WHERE NO ONE CAN

ALIEN: ISOLATION
DEVELOPER CREATIVE ASSEMBLY
DUE LATE 2014
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38 PCPOWERPLAY

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UNCOMMON ACCESS The Creative Assembly team has worked closely with 20th Century Fox on the storyline, with full access to the original movie's vaults and files including the original soundtrack. As the soundtrack featured just 90 minutes of music, Creative Assembly has taken the original score, re-recorded it with many of the same musicians who played on the original, as well as adding in new material that's based on the original's sounds and composition.

react, silently shifting position perhaps, or sliding quietly into an empty locker.

Later in the game you will be able to craft items that allow you to distract the Alien (although, in time it will supposedly learn to overlook these tricks) but at this stage there's nothing to do but creep, breathe lightly and hope for the best.

At nine and a half feet tall, the Alien is incredibly imposing, especially in the cramped corridors of a space station. His rangy height allows him to move from a creep to a sprint in seconds and, with three years' worth of animation and AI work already invested in this single monster, it's a formidable beast.

At the end of the demo section we have to

the subject of any books, movies, or games in the Alien extended universe and as such is the ideal candidate for the game's protagonist.

The game's story begins 14 years after the end of the film, as Amanda – who now works as an engineer – begins the search to find out what happened to her mother. She heads to a nearby space station, which is in the process of being decommissioned in order to locate the flight recorder from the USSC Nostromo, Ellen's ship. This is where everything begins to fall apart.

The station feels in direct keeping with the dusty high tech of the film's aesthetic. It's something the team has worked hard to achieve. Storyboards were drawn up in felt tip in the same style as those that were created for the original film. The icons and signs seen in the movie are recreated in the game as the UI to guide the player around the environment. The colour palette of an screens are based on Spectrum and Amstrad computers with a low colour, almost garish look and feel.

The 'motion tracker', the player's most important tool that shows a green dot if the

player could endure twelve or so hours of that level of tension. The abandoned space station provides some opportunities for, if not comic relief, then at least a moment's sanctuary.

"It's about tension and release," says Hope. "You can't expect players to endure this kind of intensity. When people finished the demo they let out a sigh of relief and that's every bit as important as the trauma that came before it."

There's also the challenge of how to expand upon the basic game of cat-and-mouse, something that is tough when there's only one primary foe in the entire game. Hope is eager to emphasise there will be other threats to the player's safety.

"We do have wider threats and peril," he says. "There are lots of things other than the Alien to keep the player engaged and fearful. But it's very much about the one-on-one encounter between the player and the Alien. The level designers have spent so much time trying to make the monster something very different to a bad guy with a bunch of heavy armour. You should instantly know to cower, rather than engage."

The team continues to balance the game's basic interactions in an attempt to eke out the most amount of tension. That means restricting information - like the Alien's location.

"As soon as you knew everything all of the time any sense of tension was destroyed. That showed us how much horror games are about the trade in information: how much does the pursuer and the flier know about the other. With omniscience, the tension was ruined and it became a kind of dance."

One thing that doesn't need to be balanced is the fleeting amount of time that the Alien is on screen. One of the original film's taglines read: 'Sometimes the scariest things come from within.' Hope agrees: "So often it's the empty spaces that provide the canvas for our horrors. We paint our worst fears onto the walls. The players do the work for us." **PC**

"We keep the player fearful. You should instantly know to cower, rather than engage."

make a dash for an airlock, making it through the closing doors seconds before the Alien slams its full weight into the other side of the steel. It's terrifying, intense and, above all, entirely reminiscent of Scott's tense film.

GENERATIONAL CHANGE

The story – co-written by the DC comic book writer Dan Abnett – is also reminiscent of the film not least because it features Amanda Ripley, daughter of Ellen Ripley, the character that made Sigourney Weaver famous more than 30 years ago. Amanda has not yet been

Alien is nearby, has a low-fi tech aesthetic. It's not just a visual choice: it also informs the game design as the tracker is something that must be heaved up to eye level before use, slowing the pace and upping the tension.

Rather than using middleware, the Creative Assembly team built its own engine and tools so they could have full control of the game's rendering in order to ensure all props in the game were to the exact size and scale as those in Scott's film. Every chair is the correct height. The detail is exhaustive.

The demo is incredibly intense, but no



WITH FRIENDS LIKE THESE...

Like her mother in the movie, Amanda Ripley is thrust into close contact with co-workers, a community forged by circumstance rather than friendship. Before recording the dialogue the cast of actors did read-throughs, implementing their feedback into the scripts, before being scanned using cutting edge 3D techniques to bring their likenesses into the game.

