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# ALIEN: COVENANT

**THE MOST COMMON** criticism of Ridley Scott's 2012 *Alien* prequel *Prometheus* was that it wasn't terrifying enough. Hardened fans expected more creeping dread with their space exploration and less philosophy. After all, while other directors had added action beats or conspiracy theories to the series, Scott's original was a straight-up horror, a haunted house in space that chilled generations. The good news is that his *Prometheus* follow-up, *Alien: Covenant*, should keep everyone happy.

"It's going to be really scary, this film," says Michael Fassbender, the only returning cast member. "It's going to be scarier than *Prometheus*, definitely. More along that line of *Alien*."

The tonal blend of Scott's two previous instalments reflects the film's timeline, since this is both sequel to *Prometheus* and prequel to *Alien*.

Fassbender returns as android David, restored to function (no longer a severed head) and escaped from the Engineers' planet with Elizabeth Shaw.

David is now marooned on a new world, alone. A colony ship called *Covenant* hears the distress call and comes to investigate — bringing aboard David's doppelgänger Walter (Fassbender again), a more advanced but less emotional synthetic lifeform. The two have very different views on life and humanity, setting up fresh *Prometheus*-style musings. "After *Prometheus* a lot of people said, 'Well there's a lot of philosophising,'" acknowledges Fassbender. "But Ridley has merged those questions and the thriller element together here really, really well."

The course shift causes *Covenant*'s crew to awaken early from hyper-sleep — among them







The calm before the alien hits the fan. Below: Ridley Scott directs his new Ripley — Katherine Waterston's Daniels. Bottom: Michael Fassbender (as Walter) with crewmate Carmen Ejogo.

Katherine Waterston's Daniels, set to be the Ripley figure. Waterston, however, tries to ignore that legacy. "These are the things you actively don't think about until you get interviewed to remind you that you should be pissing yourself," she laughs. At least she can channel that terror. "Unlike Sigourney in *Alien*, [Daniels] is in a survival mode of sorts from the beginning. She's not the captain, but she's a natural leader so in times of crisis she falls into that position quite easily."

And times of crisis will find Daniels, as the paradise the crew discovers has a sting in the tail and acid in the blood. "It's cool to weave in some of the elements from the original *Alien* and have those beats in there," says Fassbender. If all goes to plan, Scott's new *Alien* movie could match its ancestor for chills as well as smarts. **HELEN O'HARA**



## THOR: RAGNAROK

**WHERE THE FIRST** two *Thor* movies ping-ponged the thunder-wrangler between Earth and Asgard, the latest one goes full cosmic. In the words of producer Brad Winderbaum, it's an "intergalactic adventure" which has allowed Marvel "to try something new and send him off into space in a very linear plot". Up until now, space has been the territory of the Guardians Of The Galaxy on screen, but in the *Thor* comics the hero often headed off to the stars. "And that's where a lot of fun, trippy stuff that we're bringing to the screen has come from," says Winderbaum.

For director Taika Waititi, recruited fresh from 2016 fave *Hunt For The Wilderpeople*, that

meant going "over the top — but not in a negative way". So not only is Thor reunited with his Asgard-destabilising brother Loki (Tom Hiddleston), but he also winds up on a wormhole-ridden trash-planet run by a combat-arena-owning Jeff Goldblum (as the Grandmaster), where he discovers the star gladiator is an old, green and very angry frenemy. Meanwhile, his latest nemesis is none other than Hela, queen of the underworld (above), played by Cate Blanchett, with huge, elaborate CG-antlers of darkness.

All of that sounds like a lot to get to grips with. Will it be too much weirdness to handle? "It's what it needs to be," insists Waititi. "Especially to live up to a name like *Ragnarok*, you know? If we're gonna do Ragnarok, we gotta do it properly. We just gotta throw it all in there." **DAN JOLIN**



## TRANSFORMERS: THE LAST KNIGHT

"**IT'S GOT ROBOT** dementia," says Michael Bay. That's his medical diagnosis of a shapeshifting World War I tank we'll see in *Transformers: The Last Knight*, the franchise's latest and, says Bay, biggest outing yet. The director has lots to say about upgrades, revamps and new characters, as *The Last Knight* sets the stage for the expanded mythology we're going to get from here on (the next two films are already outlined). "This movie is much more of an adventure than the others," he explains. "There's a ton of legend stuff."

He likes legend stuff. *Age Of Extinction* had terraforming alien 'Seeds' destroying the dinosaurs, and this one will feature Arthurian knights and, for good measure, Hitler. Bay, then, is fiddling with history again? "Absolutely," he grins. "That's the fun of it, right?"

If this is Bay's final stint at the *Transformers* helm, he's going out with the mother of all bangs. "Listen, we're literally the only movie in the world shooting in IMAX 3D," he says when we ask about scope. "We're shooting a lot of IMAX 3D. To do that is very expensive. It's hard, it's the first time an IMAX 265 camera's ever been in 3D. But that's what it takes to get *great* 3D. All the other 3D's *bullshit*. It is, it's just bullshit. I really want people to see this in 3D, especially in IMAX!" In conclusion: this is going to be big. **ALEX GODFREY**