

THE FINAL WORD ON DR. WHO • GEORGE PAL'S PUPPETOONS

# FANTASTIC FILMS™

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# ALIEN

*DIRECTOR RIDLEY SCOTT INTERVIEWED*

**The 8th Annual Paris Science Fiction and  
Fantasy Film Festival • The Quatermass  
Films (Five Million Miles To Earth, The  
Creeping Unknown, The Enemy Within)**



# ALIEN

## FROM THE INSIDE OUT



An Exclusive Interview with the Director of *Alien*

# RIDLEY SCOTT

Part One by JAMES DELSON

*Before he began his career as a feature film director, an immensely successful television commercial director/producer named Ridley Scott flew to New York and met with executives of The William Morris Agency, the most prominent talent agency in show business. Although they conceded that Scott was gifted, their doubts about his ability to advance from television commercials to full-length movies prevented them from signing him for representation as a feature director. "I was amused by that," Ridley Scott remarked as he lunched in the restaurant of the E.M.I./Folstone Film Studio in England in May of 1979. "It was frustrating, because I knew I could make the transition, but I also knew I had to prove myself before anyone was going to accept me."*

*Acceptance has taken a while for the 39-year-old Yorkshire-born art director/photographer turned director. But the wait seems to have been worth it. The advance word on 20th Century-Fox's *Alien* has been so strong that Scott is already being referred to as the next Kubrick. The comparison, though a little premature, is not altogether misplaced. Both men are fanatical perfectionists, insist on having a hand in every aspect of a film's production, serve as their own camera operators and turn out pictures of gem-like quality. Though only his second film, Scott's *Alien* has the makings of a classic chiller, right up there with *Psycho*, *Jaws*, *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* and *Repulsion*. What's more, it has generally excellent special effects and a dense, gritty "hardware" look about it. With nods to screamwriter Dan O'Bannon (interviewed last issue in *Fantastic Films*), producer Gordon Carroll, special effects supervisor Nick Allder, associated producer Peter Poceell, and a host of fantasy artists led by the uniquely talented H.R. Giger, Scott has created what can only be called the first great SF hybrid—the hardware/horror film.*



**FF:** What was your contact with science fiction films before you began *Alien*?

**SCOTT:** Even when I was very young I was terribly aware of effects. My brain's in that direction. But even at a very early age I didn't quite believe the space-ships. I couldn't quite believe the monsters. There was always a barrier. The first time anyone really succeeded was Kubrick in 2001. Stanley's number one, the best in the world. I'd never, never, never, never had any big interest in science fiction before then, even with good films like *The Day The Earth Stood Still*, because I just stared at the effects... they didn't fool me. But Kubrick did.

**FF:** 2001 seems to be the accepted departure point from which quality science fiction films started.

**SCOTT:** It wasn't just fiction anymore. It went beyond that to create reality. That's a marvelous transition to have.



What I'm going to try and get into for my next film is the point where *fantasy* becomes reality.

**FF:** What drives you to make films?

**SCOTT:** Insecurity. I tend to look over my shoulder all the time, anyway. In some respects built-in insecurity is almost a requirement on a work level. It's really like your fuel.

**FF:** Some people have said that *The Duellists*, your first film, had the huge proportions, but lacked the story to support it.

**SCOTT:** A lot of people criticized the story, saying it wasn't strong enough to support the characters. A lot more people thought that the characters of the two men could have been done in greater depth and therefore one maybe would have understood the reason why they fought a little better. But that really means that they actually misunderstood the whole point of the story. So, I

always avoided that argument.

**FF:** It didn't do very well in release, though it has a large cult following.

**SCOTT:** I think that Paramount didn't quite know how to handle it. It won a good prize at Cannes and they could have released it very quickly, using that impetus to generate interest. But they seemed to categorize it as, and I hesitate to use the word, an "art" film. It's what the film business calls a "narrow margin" film. Meaning if it does make any money it'll be by a narrow margin. So they let it sit on the shelf for eight months before releasing it in America.

I mean, the film only cost a million and a half dollars. They could certainly have recouped five or six, which would have made a tidy profit.

**FF:** But that's when Paramount was making five or six or more millions a week with the initial release of *Saturday Night Fever*. Guess they didn't want to

bother with all the work they'd need do to sell *Duellists*, when they'd make the same amount by just collecting checks on the Travolta film.

**SCOTT:** I did feel pretty upset about it, and I'll never see any profits from it. One does like, actually, to make something out of what you spend a year doing.

#### **TRISTAN AND ISEULT (Unrealized Project—1977)**

**FF:** What was your next move?

**SCOTT:** Well, I had a deal with Paramount to do another two films. They asked what I was going to do next, and I told them I wanted to do a film version of the Celtic legend of *Tristan and Iseult*.

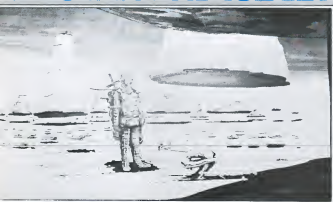
**FF:** As a period piece? The Middle Ages à la Scott?

**SCOTT:** At first, yes. They were immediately interested and gave us about a \$150,000 to develop it—writing, re-

## Pre-production Paintings by Ridley Scott



# TRISTAN AND ISEULT



Above, *Tristan and Gornwal* ride their mounts across a surrealistic landscape. Above, a *Nitsilic* priest and a "Froudian" creature stand amidst the floating rocks.



Above, watch towers are visible every few miles along the coastline as an early warning system against invaders from the sea.

search and so on. While the writer was preparing the script I sat down for the first time in five years and started art directing again, sketching out what I thought the film ought to look like.

**FF:** What did you use for research?

**SCOTT:** All sorts of historical books, and, funny enough, *Heavy Metal*, *Metal Hurlant*.

**FF:** For armor and costume?

**SCOTT:** Yes, but also for fantasy I was going to do *Tristan and Iseult* as a fantasy, with elements of *Star Wars*, Conan, Moebius, modern technology and Celtic legends.

**FF:** Your approach was to take the fantasy route, rather than knights in shining armor?

**SCOTT:** There were four main influences on it: the novel, *Dune*, by Frank Herbert, the fantastic art comic series *Arzach*, by Moebius, which really is *Dune*. I think he'll admit that, the film *Lawrence of Arabia*, by David Lean; and George Lucas' *Star Wars*. I thought *Tristan and Iseult* could be great if we could get these four elements working together.

**FF:** What led to this transition from your original idea of doing the film as a straight medieval romance?

**SCOTT:** *Star Wars*. Remember, I had seen 2001, and it was really the first time science fiction had worked for me. Well *Star Wars* was the second. Fortunately or unfortunately, it changed my film, and changed my life. I just couldn't believe it was so real. I thought, "Jesus Christ! What am I doing? How dare I develop *Tristan* as a straight Celtic legend?" I realized that in the back of my mind I was simply hoping for the best, taking a chance that people would gravitate towards my treatment of the story. *Star Wars* loosened me up completely and broadened my outlook about the way *Tristan* ought to be developed.

**FF:** What was Paramount's reaction to your change in outlook?

**SCOTT:** Well, I went a bit far at first. Take the dragon, for instance. In the legend it's the definitive, classical dragon which *Tristan* inevitably meets. I've never told anyone this, so I'll say this out of the corner of my mouth: The dragon became disguised. *Tristan* finds a sword in a stone and removes it, but the sword is actually a lever, and he sets off this I.C.B.M. which has been entombed for a long time. The missile shoots off and explodes half a mile away and *Tristan* just stares at it. It's almost biblical, and totally accidental on his part.

**FF:** And Paramount said, "I go for that."

**SCOTT:** They were confused by it. Simply didn't want it. They said, "Back to the drawing board." I agreed. I wouldn't go that far with it again.

**FF:** You came back to them with what we see in these drawings?

**SCOTT:** Yes, a sort of no-time-no-place world. An abstract world in which anything can exist. Yet I still hung onto

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Seven-foot-tall Salamander people live in the jungle glades.  
(Note native using salamander tongue to catch an insect.)



Tristan's King Ostrich is fitted with leather riding gear and billowing sunshades which also serve to collect moisture.

to the notion of the knight in armor.

**FF:** Two more elements are evident in the sketches: Japanese and Norse armor.

**SCOTT:** Well, the Norse influence was always there, but the Japanese armor came out of my desire to make things look other-worldly. They go nicely together. This will give an idea of *Tristan* and *Iseult's* production design. Some of the drawings are gone, <sup>has</sup> lost or put away for safe-keeping.

**FF:** Safe-keeping meaning protected against plagiarism?

**SCOTT:** Yes. Some of the ideas about engines, propulsion devices and a few specific visual images cannot be shown yet.

**FF:** Can you talk about them?

**SCOTT:** I'd rather not, at this point.

**FF:** Then let's get on with these examples.

**SCOTT:** I wanted to use these sort of characters from the Sudan, very tall, very thin, very black and very strong people. In fact, when it came to doing *Alien*, the man who played the alien, a fellow called Balagi, looked exactly like that.

**FF:** How did these characters fit into *Tristan*?

**SCOTT:** They live in the jungle, these guys, and they've got salamander's tongues. They live off insects. Imagine a seven-foot-tall guy just standing quietly in a glade. He slowly turns and ... Whap! He takes a mantis off a leaf and crunches it up in his mouth.

**FF:** The animals in this sketch look like an ostrich and a camel. Were you going to add things on to them to make them look different?

**SCOTT:** I was going to use body armor with the King Ostrich, and do something with the camel to make it look slightly odd. That's *Tristan* and *Gorival* riding across the landscape. Those sail-like things on the backs of the animals are not just sunshades. They were to be used to collect moisture and that sort of thing.

**FF:** And you did all of these yourself?

**SCOTT:** Just to give an idea of what I

wanted to the production designer. It's sometimes far too much. Take this for an example. These are rocks that just float into the air every sunrise and sunset. They just lift off the ground. Now to do one or two is feasible, but this lot would cost a fortune. Now see the little white creature? Know the work of the artist Froud? Weird, his stuff. Well that would play a part in *Tristan*. I don't know how we'll make these things work yet, but they'll work themselves out. Well this Froud-thing comes scuttling out of the shadows.

**FF:** Is the figure on the left some sort of robot?

**SCOTT:** No. He's what we call a Nitsilic priest. By penance he is welded into his armor because that's how they killed the martyr originally. They welded him into his armor and strapped him in the saddle and he cooked. So they now walk around in their armor. They're like walking newspapers, so if you pay them

something they will spout local news which may be ten months old.

**FF:** Is that design based on Chinese armor?

**SCOTT:** Yes. What I was trying to do in *Tristan* was drag a lot of things out of the air, but they were real things, based in history. I was saying to Paramount, "Look! This world is wonderful! And half the stuff you've already got here!"

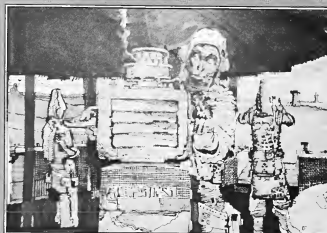
**FF:** Are these watch towers?

**SCOTT:** They're contact outposts, spaced every few miles along the coastline as an early warning system against invaders from the sea.

**FF:** The interior characters look very Moebius-like.

**SCOTT:** He was a major influence on *Tristan*. On *Alien* I had him work up costume designs for the crew which John Mollo (*Star Wars*, *Barry Lyndon*) made for us.

**FF:** The contact outposts have been set up to watch for ships?



The French Heavy Metal artist Moebius was a strong influence on Scott's visual concepts as can be seen in this watchtower interior.



*Huge battleships, reminiscent of Japanese wooden castles and Viking war vessels, transport warriors across the open seas.*

**SCOTT:** Well, the ships are coming. And here they are. That's the stern of the ship, looking at another one behind it.

**FF:** They look like a cross between a Japanese wooden castle and a Viking ship.

**SCOTT:** They were supposed to be vaguely reminiscent of both. Huge battleships that cross the open seas. They carry many warriors and their horses as well.

**FF:** The armor's a Viking-Samurai hybrid as well?

**SCOTT:** That'll probably be changed. When *Star Wars* came out there were a lot of Samurai motifs in it, Vader especially. I think my villain is just too close to him. But you can see how it developed. First he was in this Samurai-type armor. And there's that Moebius-Arzach character in the background. Off to the left of the Samurai is a brazier that's keeping him warm. In the detail you can make out the little armor plates that make up his suit. Those can be seen in *Alien* as the plates on the space suits. When this project came to a halt I wanted to get me rocks off some way.

**FF:** Now we go aboard ship to see your villain?

**SCOTT:** I just had to chuck him out. Too much like Vader. But you can see where his helmet came from. It's a real



*At left, this sketch of a fully armored invader shows the obvious Viking-Samurai motif to his attire. Middle, a Vader-like villain strides the deck as an Arzach-type character peers around a corner.*



Two knights hunt a five-ton walrus from the safety of the ice. Their spacesuit-like armor is made of bone, feathers and rubbish.



Right, the baroque spacesuit design from *Alien* was a direct descendant from these earlier Scott concepts. (Note the layered armor shoulder plates on the warrior at the far left.)

Norse relic. But he was too dark behind that helmet.

**FF:** Here we are on the ice.

**SCOTT:** We went to Iceland to scout locations for *Tristan* and it gave us some good ideas. These are knights and their outfits are all bone and feathers and rubbish. They're hunting this huge five-ton walrus on the ice. Just above the middle of the frame on the right side you can see a little boat. That's *Tristan's* body in a skiff. He lands against the ice, nudging it, and the walrus stares at him. Then the walrus slides noiselessly into the ice-blue sea. The water's so cold that it's close to freezing, and has the consistency of oil. Well, the two knights are furious that they've lost their quarry.

**FF:** They almost look like spacemen.

**SCOTT:** Well, this sketch is where I got the idea for the plumes of vapor that the spacemen give off as they walk across the planet in *Alien*.

#### ALIEN: ENTERING THE PROJECT

**FF:** When did you first become aware of *Alien*?

**FF:** While I was developing *Tristan* and *Beut*. I was receiving tons of screenplays. I always read everything myself. You can't employ a reader. You've got to go through the chore of reading the book, the screenplay, whatever. I read

one thing called *Alien* and I thought, "Jesus Christ!" It was so simple, so linear that no one would have spotted it for me. This is why you must read yourself I think, honestly, even with a Walter Hill screenplay, the normal director with a TV or theater background would have ditched it. But it hit me between the eyeballs. I thought it was amazing.

There came a time in the deal with Paramount when I said, "I can't see myself doing another nine months without filming. I have to film." I just called up Sandy Lieberman at 20th Century Fox, the guy who had sent it to me, and I was in Los Angeles within 48 hours.

over?

**SCOTT:** He brought in a book by the Swiss artist H.R. Giger. It's called *Necronomicon*. O'Bannon produced this book out of nowhere, like it was a dirty magazine. He wasn't actually quite sure about it. Didn't know what people would think when he showed it to me. It was a covert operation.

**FF:** What was your reaction?

**SCOTT:** I nearly fell over. I'd never been so certain about anything in my life. I tell you, I'd thought we would be arguing for months about what the Beast was going to be. I thought "If we can build that, that's it." I was stunned, real-

much time with my *Heavy Metal* magazines while working on *Tristan*. I was totally oriented towards their view of the material. To me, they had gotten inside the future. They managed to put their finger on what could be. It's speculative, not futuristic, as Cobb's work was. **FF:** Many devoted readers think *Heavy Metal* is going down hill.

**SCOTT:** Its early issues were extraordinary, quite extraordinary. Now they're getting weak, losing a bit of punch. They're losing its basic intrinsic value, if there is a value to obscene comics. Somehow their illustrators are just not as good. But in the beginning I was stunned by the illustrations, the thinking and its staggering outrageous obscenity.

**FF:** Nevertheless, you kept Cobb on through the production.

**SCOTT:** I wanted to have him along as an advisor to my art director. There are very few art directors in the world, other than say Tony Masters and John Barry, who are into real SF. I didn't want to be unfair to the man I wanted to use. He could do a great Georgian drawing room, he could do *The Duellists* and that sort of environment very well, something he could relate to from books. But I knew that I'd know nothing about it when I started *Tristan*. I spend a year every day being my own art director, going through all sorts of weird periodicals and finally psyching myself into not just understanding but really being fascinated by it. I knew I could never get an art director wound up to that degree.

To say "No, you mustn't have airlocks like that. No, the engines should be so and so, not such and such. By the way, there's this line of Teflon that we could use here." So along came Cobb, N.A.S.A.-level advisor.

**FF:** This part of pre-production was mostly the gathering of information then?

**SCOTT:** Absorbing things, like a computer. But I already knew a lot out of pure instinct. Whereas if you half-listen to O'Bannon and Cobb, they almost talk in technicalities, it's almost real. And a lot of it is based on N.A.S.A. half-knowledge and cinematic expertise.

**FF:** That's it.

**SCOTT:** Dramatic knowledge.

**FF:** What a time would look like up on the screen?

**SCOTT:** Yeah. So therefore there's a fundamental understanding of how it should probably work. And you can't just do a thing with a pointed nose and stick a few rockets on. It should look like it can fly, and you should have some idea what the engines are and what they would be. So I was absorbing this sort of information like crazy. It was just a matter of endless discussions with Cobb and O'Bannon about how everything should work and what it would look like.



The Ron Cobb pre-production drawing of the Mothership is one of the few designs which remained almost totally unchanged until its final construction as a miniature.

**FF:** When was that?

**SCOTT:** January or February, 1978.

**FF:** And what transpired?

**SCOTT:** Meeting with the producers, Gordon Carroll, Walter Hill and David Giler. We discussed different approaches to the film.

**FF:** And you also met Dan O'Bannon?

**SCOTT:** Yeah. He's great. A very sweet guy. And, I was soon to realize, a real science fiction freak. You see, even though I had immediately fallen for the screenplay, I was worried about one thing. That was the old Beast. How the hell do you make the monster? Because, in every film I'd ever seen, that's always something that let everyone down. Most films you finally see it and think "Eh?" Then you try to go along with it, like you would in the theater. Instead of just believing it, you have to put yourself in a new state of mind, prepared to accept what you see.

**FF:** What did O'Bannon do that won you

ly I flipped. Literally flipped. And O'Bannon lit up like a light bulb, shining like a quartz iodine.

It was then that I realized I was dealing with a real SF freak, which I'd never come across before. I thought, "My God! I have an egg-head here for this field." From then on, that picture I chose (which O'Bannon says he also chose) was our alien.

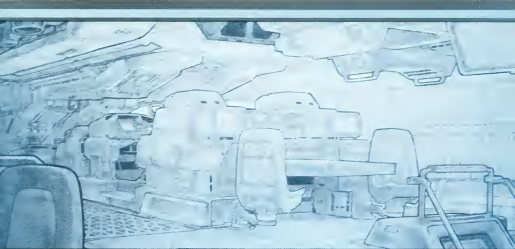
**FF:** Did you also see Ron Cobb's pre-production designs for the ship?

**SCOTT:** Yes. They were smashing visuals of a very realistic, N.A.S.A.-oriented, 2001-ish environment. They were very very good, but apart from his draftsmanship and imagination, I didn't feel he had gone far enough. He was still too much in touch with N.A.S.A., and not with fantasy.

**FF:** But if they were 2001-ish in feel, what was your objection?

**SCOTT:** I suppose it came down to a matter of taste. Because I had spent so





## ALIEN PRE-PRODUCTION: THE ARTISTS

RON COBB • H.R. GIGER

**FF:** The form of pre-production that most films take does not involve the amount of art direction that a Ridley Scott film takes.

**SCOTT:** That's because I come from an art school art direction background.

**FF:** Alien's historical importance may not only be as a hardware/horror innovation. This is the first film in a long time where serious artists have played so important a role in the creation of its visual concepts. If this film is an enormous success it could launch a cycle of movies where artists will be called on to make major contributions.

**SCOTT:** I certainly hope that's the case. The possibility of enriching the medium is fantastic. In *Alien* I was setting out to make a big-scale film with a small-scale film's intensity. The contributions of Giger and the other artists helped immensely in making this more of a unique experience. *Duellists* may have been regarded as an "art" film, and that's too bad. Calling *Alien* an "artist's" film would be a lot closer to the point.

**FF:** When *Alien* was brought to Fox was there hesitation on their part in getting involved with the artists?

**SCOTT:** Absolutely. Especially over Giger until I stamped my foot and said



MOEBIUS • CHRIS FOSS

"We've got to have him. You can't just take his drawings and say, 'Fine just go out and build them.' You've got to have him." Giger is a very obsessive sort of character, but he's also very realistic. Yet because of the image he has created some executives think he is unrealistic. On the contrary, he was an industrial designer, he understands deadlines and all the aspects of working to a schedule. We drove him mad to begin with just to get the right team to work with him. Can you imagine? He's a Swiss-German being brought to Shepperton Studios. He doesn't know anybody except his lady, who helped him a lot. And he had to trust us to choose a team of technicians and really good sculptors to form around him who were good enough. Peter Vorseley was able to carry out in three dimensional form everything that Giger wanted to do, with Giger's supervision.

**FF:** Had you talked to Jodorowsky or O'Bannon about the way they had worked with the artists on the abandoned *Dune* project?

**SCOTT:** Never. No. We had to railroad into *Alien* with incredible speed because Fox gave us a start date that was practically impossible. But we took the

Photo at top of page: this Ron Cobb drawing is one of the later designs for the Nostromo's bridge. Cramped, claustrophobic quarters and minute technical detail combine to create a fundamental reality necessary to *Alien*'s psychological credibility.

Photos, center top: this sketch by Chris Foss is one of the earlier concepts for the Nostromo; it was discarded as being too futuristic. Center below: this pre-production design for the spaceship by Jean Gullrud (Moebius) is amazingly close to the final costumes.



H.R. Giger's pre-production design for the Alien egg.

challenge and held to a July date even though people wanted to put it back. I didn't want to put it back. I wanted to get in and do it. Got moving. Because if you give a man seven days, he'll take seven days. If you give him the same job to do in 14 days, he'll take 14 days. And so it was better to hang in there and hold to the date. We did start slightly unprepared in certain ways so by the end of the film the tail was rapidly catenating up to the head. On some occasions it almost overtook it. But Carlo Rambaldi was able to make Giger's creature work. Rambaldi is like an artist together, really.

**EF:** You had Giger doing the planetary terrain, the derelict spaceship and the alien. Moebius designed the crew quarters in which John Mollo executed, but you are essentially responsible for the overall look of the interior of the ship. It's used, live-in space, like a ship at sea, with different levels of attractiveness, cleanliness, light and efficiency?

**SCOTT:** I thought of the *Nostromo* as different things on different decks. On the crew quarters level it's like where this gift of life from hotel would be. The



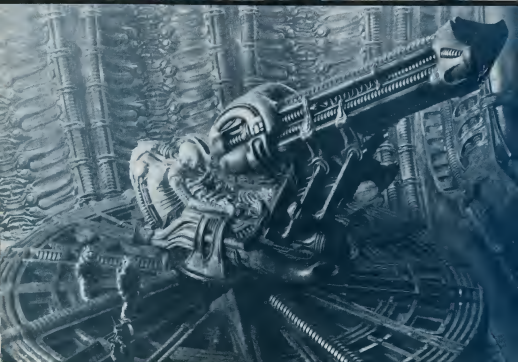
The upper figure in this H.R. Giger painting, "Necronom V" from his book *Le Necronomicon*, was the inspiration for the skeletal remains of the fossilized space jockey which the *Nostromo's* landing party discovers in the derelict spaceship.



The infirmary examination was another of Ron Cobb's designs which made its appearance almost intact in the final version of the film.



This Queen pinning, 'Necronom IV' with a few changes, is the basis for the final design of the Alien creature itself. Both Ridley Scott and Dan O'Bannon were unanimous about adapting this concept for the movie.



walls are covered with modularized padding designs. There are ten thousand of every item for the various ships of the fleet, but on a plastic, Hilton-ish level.

There was a strange, marvelous sort of reality in the early scenes of 2001, where he's going up to the moon base. And sitting asleep in the seats with just the food tray there. I took all that in and thought it was incredible. It's not that far ahead of a 747. I admired the reality of it, because all it was was a hull with some interior decorations.

We tackled "A" deck (the crew quarters, bridge, infirmary), much the same way. The "B" deck was more electronic and technical, with a certain amount of styling in terms of comfort and design for the crew. "C" deck was really the hold of a freighter. You know, all the open untreated pipes and electronics and whatever else you have down there. It had the garages where they parked the various bits of equipment that they might need for different purposes. The flying machines, tractors and so on. It was all very logically thought out.

**FF:** Was there ever a plan to use any of the machinery we see around the "C" deck garage?

**SCOTT:** Well, Walter Hill and David Giler had looked upon the crew of the *Nostromo* as truck drivers in space. The vehicles were part of their gear. When I came up with the refinery idea, the machines stayed on.

**FF:** Were there scenes laid out for the use of these toys?

**SCOTT:** I didn't want the crew to just sit around onboard. I hoped that we might find a reason to get them outside and away from the ship. Perhaps for repairs on *Nostromo* or onto the refinery itself. But it worked out as too impractical an idea.

**FF:** Was there ever a conceptualization of precisely what the inside of the *Nostromo* should be?

**SCOTT:** Not at the start, but we finally had to do it in order to plan the running choreography of the crew through the ship. It just got to the point where trying to hold the various geographical toings and fro-ings of the crew in our heads was driving the production designer, the art director and me mad.

Finally it became necessary to actually build a three-dimensional, three-deck model. We had to be able to know if it was feasible to get someone from point x to point y using the sets we had available. What we found was that it would have been too expensive to do what the script said, so we used a model to work out alternative routes. It was made of cardboard and balsa wood, and was very much what you would see were you to look at a cross-section of the ship.

**FF:** Does it still exist?

**SCOTT:** No it was smashed up.

**FF:** Was it photographed?

**SCOTT:** I don't think so. It was very crude. I mean, we built it at a very early



Photos, opposite page: top, the "biomechanoid" terrain of the alien planetoid was constructed from a model by Giger, made of conduit, pipes and human bones. The portals in the side of the derelict spacecraft were designed to be psycho-sexually symbolic. Bottom, Giger's set for "space jockey" sequence was a masterpiece of plasterwork. Above, Kane searches through "egg chamber."



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stage in the production, when we were still in my commercial office in London. We even had Giger coming in there. We were there for a few months until we decamped from there to Shepperton.

**FF:** How did you view the *Nostromo*?

**SCOTT:** The thing's like the bloody Queen Mary. Do you get a sense of scale in the interior? That it's big? We couldn't build the two to three hundred foot-long corridors which it would have but it's supposed to be like one of these huge Japanese super-tankers. Three-quarters of a mile long. The refinery behind it would be God-knows how big. I mean, well... I dunno. A mile square?

**FF:** Who designed the refinery?

**SCOTT:** I did. I didn't want a conventional shape, so I drew up a sketch and handed it to the model makers. They refined it, as it were, and built the model. I originally drew it upside-down, with the vague idea that it would resemble a floating inverted cathedral.

**FF:** It looks rather like *Close Encounters*' mothership.

**SCOTT:** I soon realized that as well, so it took on another form. But I knew I didn't want to do a conventional shape because I think the machine that they're on could in fact be 60 years old and just

added to over the decades. The metal work on it could be 50 years old because it's only going to grow old to a certain extent.

**FF:** It would never corrode, but just grow obsolete?

**SCOTT:** Yes, absolutely. So it was a sort of conglomerative objective which I didn't want to be spacey in any sense of the word. There's absolutely no reason for streamlining. I would have liked to see it covered with space barnacles or space seaweed, all clogged and choked up, but that was illogical as well.

**FF:** But the *Nostromo* had to be able to fly both in space and under atmospheric conditions?

**SCOTT:** I saw it as a gigantic maneuverable jump jet. Therefore it was able to get wherever it wanted on various planets, landing in quite narrow, rocky terrain. So that's the only streamlined object in the whole thing. The refinery itself is a conglomerative mountain of technology.

**FF:** What was the refinery carrying?

**SCOTT:** Ore, I suppose. They'd do all the work inside once the "picker" (the smaller craft) would put the stuff aboard. The ore would be turned into liquid or gas for easier transference

back to Earth, the home port.

**FF:** Two approaches to space films have emerged in the past decade, and while similar in many ways, they are ultimately opposite concepts. Both 2001 and *Star Wars* are realistic, in that you are lead to believe that you are in space. But *Star Wars* was glittery almost. Whereas *Space Odyssey* was much closer to what space is. You had to make decisions about whether there was going to be sound in space, and whether space was going to be a Kubrick-like sombre place where these guys were doing their work or whether it was going to be a Lucas-oriented playground.

**SCOTT:** I took the more sombre approach. I think that unless people's minds are controlled with drugs, one of the big things any spaceman is going to come up against is melancholia. Deep melancholia. I think this will become a massive problem. You see, most of the time there's nothing very much to do. Everything is being done for you. Suddenly, in a way, the human being becomes the automaton and the machine becomes the human being. One is either going to be sleeping or somehow be put on a programme to keep the

(Continued on Page 24)





## THE STARSHIP "NOSTROMO"

### An Authentic Technological Fairyland And A Movie Set

One of the most remarkable, complex and ingenious sets ever designed for a motion picture is that of the gigantic factory-starship "Nostromo," in the new Twentieth Century-Fox space suspense-thriller *ALIEN*.

The script called for a well-used, slightly battered starship which flew through space a series of three vast oil refineries—rather like a huge intergalactic articulated truck—the whole supposedly 1½ kilometers long and weighing an awesome 200 million tons.

The *Nostromo* has three levels or decks and the designers first toyed with the notion of building a huge three-story set, but it was decided that this would prove impractical for filming purposes. So the "A" (or top) level was constructed first, filling much of the giant "C" sound stage at Shepperton Studios.

The "A" level comprised the astronaut's living areas, mess-room, computer annex, infirmary, many linking corridors and, most important and spectacular, the operational bridge. Here, amidst a veritable technological fairy-



### To Remember

land, the seven astronauts sat at their own individual and immense, leather seats to navigate and operate the starship, surrounded by 40 television screens showing different pictures of computer readouts, technological and navigational information, maps, and views of the space area outside. Masses of other technical equipment was there, plus hundreds of switches and literally thousands of flashing indicator lights. The many TV screens were fed pictures and films from a special intricate video-center situated at the side of the sound stage.

The numerous banks of circuits and electronic equipment on the walls were prepared by the props and construction departments and largely made up ingeniously from old aircraft, automobiles, and radio and TV sets.

The operational bridge on the *Nostromo* is probably the most technologically detailed and authentic scientific movie set ever constructed. And especially when you realize that everything works! Walk on to the bridge, push a button or throw a switch and something



happens, whether it's a light flashing, a door closing, an alarm buzzer sounding or a TV picture zooming into closeup.

Walk down a corridor from the bridge and you come to the mess-room, where the crew eat and relax. To one side is a small kitchen area, with every mod-con you could wish for and various foods neatly capsuled into powder and tablet form and often easily identified by tiny models of the food available, e.g. a miniature banana, orange or apple.

Stroll down another padded and illuminated corridor and you come to the infirmary, equipped with everything a doctor or nurse might need, including medicines, drugs, an operating table which glides out-of-sight into the wall, and a fearsome overhead-suspended set of surgical instruments.

In another section of "A" level is the remarkable "hypersleep" area where, in flower-petal-like, perspex-enclosed beds, the crew are able to sleep for any period they choose, from an hour to a year or more.

In an interesting lobby you find two large, perspex-fronted wardrobe cases, containing spare spacesuits for the crew, complete with helmets and other accoutrements.

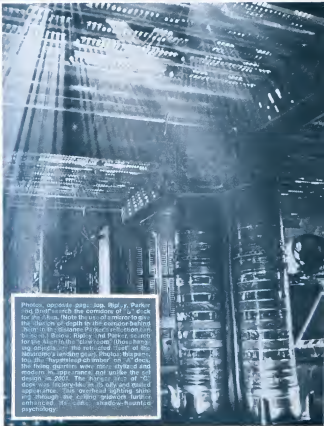
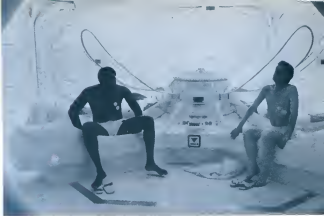
The *Nostromo's* movements are guided by a remarkable computer called "Mother" by the seven astronauts, who also rely on it for all kinds of other information and facts. Why "Mother"? Because its official technological identification is "MU/TH/UR/6000".

Later sequences for *Alien* were filmed on the two lower levels of the starship, built separately on other stages. "B" level, the general maintenance area and "C" level, containing the vast engine rooms plus a seemingly-endless network of complex machinery-filled corridors, and the giant "claw-room," into which the huge landing-claws of the starship retract when not in use.

"One of the basic ideas of all these complicated starship interior sets is that you can actually walk from corridor to corridor, from bridge to mess, from mess to infirmary, and so on, thus giving both the actors and the audience the feeling of being inside a vast starship—both huge and claustrophobic at one and the same time," says production designer Michael Seymour. "We want people to have the impression that it's a real place, that it's more science fact than science fiction, and also that the whole place is well used, lived in and slightly battered after years of service."

The *Nostromo* is a set to remember, a technological miracle come to life. While it doesn't actually achieve "lift-off" it does practically everything else.

*Alien* stars seven actors and the *Alien* itself. The *Nostromo* is the ninth wonder of this very authentic interstellar world.



Photos, opposite page: Top, Ripley, Parker and Brett search the corridors of "A" deck for the *Alien*. (Note the use of a mirror to give the illusion of depth in the corridor behind him.) In the distance Parker's reflection can be seen in Below, Ripley and Parker, search for the *Alien* in the "claw-room" (those hanging objects are the retracted "claw" of the *Nostromo's* landing gear). Below: the pairs, too, the "hypersleep chamber" on "A" deck, the flying quarters were more stylized and modern in appearance, not unlike the set design in 2001. The mirror view of "C" deck was intentionally as busy and dated appearance. This overhead lighting shining through the ceiling "placard" further enhanced the eerie, shadow-haunted psychology.



(Continued from Page 21)

body and mind fit. There won't be time or energy to allow yourself to enter depression.

**FF:** Was there any of that in the original screenplay?

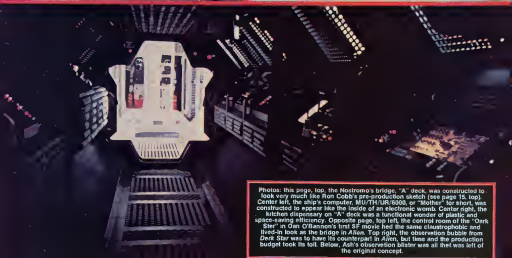
**SCOTT:** There wasn't room for it, there was no reason to have it. There were no private moments in that sense. It's simply not designed that way.

**FF:** One of the lovely touches in *Dark Star* was the guy sitting in the dome on top of the ship, just staring off into space. He's gone star-crazy.

**SCOTT:** They say actually that if you have a porthole you spend most of your time staring at space. Maybe it is a sort of space sickness. That you could become so entranced with the idea of what you're in.

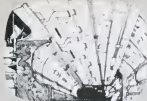
**FF:** I see Ash's bubble as a direct outgrowth of *Dark Star*.

**SCOTT:** There was a bubble in O'Bannon's original screenplay. That's where the love scene took place. And that's also where the body that's ejected from the ship was bumping around. But we



Photos: this page, top, the Nostromo's bridge, "A" deck, was constructed to look very much like Ron Cobb's pre-production sketch (see page 15, top). Center left, the ship's computer, MU/TH/UR/5005, or "Mother" for short, was constructed to appear like the inside of an electronic womb. Center right, the kitchen dispensary on "A" deck was a functional wonder of plastic and space-saving efficiency. Opposite page, top left, the control room of the "Dark Star" in Dan O'Bannon's first SF movie had the same claustrophobic and lived-in look as the bridge in *Alien*. Top right, the observation bubble from *Dark Star* was to have its counterpart in *Alien*, but time and the production budget took its toll. Below, Ash's observation blister was all that was left of the original concept.

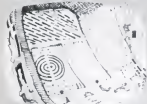




1 CORRIDOR-NOS FROMO  
Pneumatic Camera - Flickering Light  
Fast Mix Of Air Conditioning



2 BRIDGE-NOSTROMO  
Camera Pans Into Equipment and  
Closeup of Captain's Empty Helmet



3 BRIDGE-NOSTROMO  
Camera Thrills To Captain's Response  
SPX Of Advanced Electronic Wingers



4 CORRIDOR-NOS FROMO  
Sensometer - Conductor of Sound Flying  
Screen-Mechanical Maintenance - Wier



5 FREEZE VAULTS-NOSTROMO  
SPX: Hiss And Hum Of Support Systems  
Whisper of Computer - Communication

couldn't do that. I wanted to do it. I was trying to hold it in until the last dying stroke. But that involved... what that involved was involved.

There was also a decompression sequence where Lambert gets killed and Ripley saves Parker from the similar fate of getting sucked out into space through a little tiny hole in the airlock. That was closely linked with the bubble. Because the decompression went—mainly for budget reasons—the bubble went. I guess the Ash blister was all that was left of that intention.

## ALIEN: THE 20th CENTURY-FOX PRESENTATION STORYBOARD

**FF:** While you were in California for your first meetings, Ivor Powell was in England at this point, putting together your crew for the production.

**SCOTT:** Yeah, things were rolling forward over there. At that time the film had a \$4.5 million budget but it was fairly apparent that a higher budget was inevitable. So when I came back to start casting, I also began work on a storyboard presentation to show Fox where the additional money would be spent. O'Bannon had pressured for some sort of representation of what we wanted to do, so it served both purposes.

**FF:** How long did it take you to do?

**SCOTT:** About two months. Seemed like ages, especially as I wanted to do it properly. Can't just do scribbles, you know.

**FF:** How does this version differ from the final shooting script?

**SCOTT:** Mostly in the way we had to cut out lengthy dialogue scenes, a few major (and very expensive) effects sequences, and some quite marvelous visuals. Briefly, instead of the present situation where the "egg" is found aboard the derelict spaceship, the three crewmen went further after finding the fossilized "space jockey." They see what we called "the pyramid" and when they go inside that's when the eggs are discovered. There were other cuts as well, because with the derelict and the pyramid, plus some of the other things that happened, we were looking at a \$12 or \$13 million film. We just had to pare it down to about \$8 million.

**FF:** Even after the film was in production, were you still obliged to make major cuts to stay within budget?

**SCOTT:** That's true, but this initial meeting with Fox at least put us in the right area. Ultimately, it saved a lot of time, although I would rather have spent the extra money and made the film for a two and half hour release, not the present hour-57 minutes.

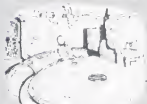
**FF:** Did you mention Giger when you



6 FREEZE VAULT-NOSTROMO  
Lights Close On Over Camera's Outburst  
Screen-Mix Of Life-Escaping Vapor



7 KANE-IN TCHEN  
Lights Close-Up On Kane's Proclamation  
Bulls - Altruistic Connoisseurs Banquet



8 DINING ROOM-KITCHEN  
Kane Seated Waiting For Coffee



9 FREEZE VAULT  
Lambert Reacts - "What Time Is It?"



10 KITCHEN-MONITOR ROOM  
Crew Members Fight In Room Freeze Vault  
And With Themselves To Collide

made your presentation to Fox?

**SCOTT:** Yeah, oh yeah. I showed them the *Necronomicon*. I thought it was totally necessary to have Giger.

**FF:** In your drawings, do you reflect accurately what you wanted to see on the screen?

**SCOTT:** Very close, yeah.

**FF:** If you had been able to magically say, "That's the film. Turn it into celluloid," would it have been what you wanted to do?

**SCOTT:** A lot of what you see on the screen is there. After we made alterations, when I started to do the film I then drew a day-by-day shooting storyboard which was printed and issued.

While I was doing this, I didn't really know what the *Nostromo* corridors were going to look like. This is where I got the idea of having the helmets on the back of the seats appear to be "talking" to each other. After the lights come on, the two computers start talking to each other. I was trying to get the storyboard to be more science-fiction-y.

I wanted to have small flying objects, like sensors, which flew up and down the corridors. They would find a problem, stop by a computer bank and fix it like little handymen. I wanted to call them "mice." At the beginning of the film they would be the only things that were alive on the ship. We'd have shot a long empty corridor so you'd hear them coming before you actually saw them. Then WHOOSH! It would pass by the camera, going through the corridor. I think Fox felt it was too much in the direction of SF, and we dropped it.

We went through to a huge nostril, which would have been timed to coincide with a music cue. Liquid would pour down and out of the nostril meaning the crewman, Kane, is defreezing in the life-supported sleep chamber.

The crew are still in their sleep vaults. Kane gets up. I was going to have them naked you know, but at that stage we were still thinking we might get a PG rating, so that was lost. He comes in, coughs, smokes, makes the coffee and sits around quietly in the breakfast room by himself. I didn't really know what it was going to look like at this stage but this is what I thought it might be.

**FF:** But this is still quite similar to what we see in the film. The freezing vaults are slightly different, because now they're in the shape of a flower, but the "kitchen" is quite similar.

**SCOTT:** Kane grinds some sort of ersatz coffee. Then one of the women comes awake. And he talks to her. "What time is it?" "What do you care?" and all that sort of thing.

**FF:** The television monitor banks were your idea?

**SCOTT:** Yeah. They were. You gradually montage into finally seeing the breakfast scene.

There were originally two people going into the computer room and talking to "Mother." I envisioned it at that time as being much, much smaller, a tiny thing. I wanted it to be like a barnacle-



11. KITCHEN/AIRING ROOM  
Conversations To Close Up And Wide Shots  
They Notice Computer Light On



12. COMPUTER ROOM NOSTROMO  
SFF: Computer Readouts Flash By



13. BRIDGE-NOSTROMO  
Conversation And Screening Sequences



14. BRIDGE-NOSTROMO  
Closeup Of Lambert "This Is Deep Space"  
Mother's Earth"



15. NOSTROMO-IN SPACE  
Detail Of Radio Signal Dish Antennae

encrusted interior.

**FF:** One of them looks unshaven.

**SCOTT:** Yes, right. At that time we were not as ship-shape.

**FF:** In that draft of the script, Dallas says he's forgotten the key and doesn't know how to turn the computer on. A little interchange between Dallas and Ash.

**SCOTT:** That's right. Then into the control room, where they're all sitting around scratching themselves, not quite knowing what to do. They gradually get into their jobs and contact Earth control. For the antenna, I wanted to devise an instrument that opens up like a flower. She says she's doing a long-distance message. These are the first scribbles of what the refinery would look like. The proportions changed as we developed it. They find out they have to do a repair on the engine. I really wanted to do this, desperately wanted to do this because the visual would have given the ship a huge sense of scale.

They would have come out of a small hatch on the side of the *Nostromo*, floated around on the flying bedstead, and gone inside an inspection hatch.

**FF:** You wanted them to fly in something that was not enclosed.

**SCOTT:** Right. Totally open. We called it the flying bedstead. Seemed to be logical as a maintenance thing. A man could stay on the vehicle, but still be able to use his hands to do delicate work. Because they have to check out the signal from the planet's surface, they decide they've got to go in. They start heading for the planet.

**FF:** Which looks like Saturn here.

**SCOTT:** That's what I wanted originally. I would have liked a much more sophisticated visual in the film, but with the equipment we had it was better to simplify it, rather than cock-up. I went vaguely through suggesting the idea of how the *Nostromo* would break away from the refinery.

**FF:** At some points you chose to use color in a basically all black and white storyboard.

**SCOTT:** I got bored! Very boring doing storyboards. The *Nostromo* lands, using the jump-jet principle. But as they land, they have an electrical fire, brought on by their having passed through a very dense dust cloud. The ship stands on the planet's surface, surrounded by a howling storm, which Ash sits watching from inside his blister.

They wait for sunrise and the dust storm to pass, checking atmosphere readouts which I was too lazy to draw in. The sun rises, or several suns rise, through the storm. In the engine room they're making arc-welder-laser repairs, while Dallas, Kane and Lambert prepare themselves at the hatch. The three crewmen walk out onto the planet's surface.

**FF:** What are the spacesuits in the storyboard based on?

**SCOTT:** These spacesuits are just based on me sitting down and dragging them out of me head.

**FF:** In the film the landing foot is a claw-



16 EXTERIOR-NOSTROMO  
Main Floodlights Side Of Ship With Main  
Light Watercolor Smoke Giger



17 EXT ENGINES-NOSTROMO  
Main Floodlights Engine Intake



18 INT ENGINE INTAKE  
Closeup Of The Two-Man Maintenance Rig



19 NOSTROMO-LANDER SEC  
Ship Discovered From Planetoid Through  
Layers Of An Invisible Oval Shave



20 COMPUTER CLUSTER INT  
Ash Slowly Slides Out All Stars Suddenly  
Hurtled Back By Undercarriage Air Lamp

like thing, but in the storyboard it's a tapered roller.

**SCOTT:** This is how these things change. After I'd thought about it for a while I decided not to have these huge steel rollers. Eventually it developed into a foot, and the foot became a claw after a while longer. We ended up using the claw in two places. Somehow when one does a storyboard you can suddenly work out a method to show how big the ship is.

**FF:** We can see the crew moving off away from the ship. Those little trails coming out of the top of their helmets are the progression of the frosty breath in *Tristan*.

**SCOTT:** Had a lot of trouble over that. Nearly drove me mad.

They come out of the ship and they're walking toward the signal they received while they were still in space. Now, in order to walk blind through a dust storm, or pitch blackness even with the space helmet's visor shut, we wanted to be able to let them navigate. The idea here was to have what looked like a car's dashboard put into the lower rim of the helmet, so that crewmen could "see" the terrain they were walking on on a miniature television screen.

This shows the readout, a three-dimensional picture which takes in not only the ground in front of you but to the side as well. It's like a holographic ordnance survey map.

This was a Moebius idea for the derelict. It's actually rather nice, slightly archaic and faintly Victorian for some reason or other. I quite liked it, but we finally decided it simply wasn't strange enough—not unearthly enough. It was too normal, so therefore Giger finally came at a much later stage and did another one.

**FF:** You had decided against using the Chris Foss drawings before this?

**SCOTT:** Yeah. They were wrong, somehow, a little too fantastic. And because Alien was rapidly becoming more and more real rather than fantastic I figured finally that we were going to have enough extraordinary things in it so it was better finally not to make the airship or the Earth people too extraordinary. You had to be able to identify with them.

**FF:** Giger also did the planet's surface?

**SCOTT:** Yes, but that came later as well.

**FF:** And what was created is mostly obscured in the dust storm?

**SCOTT:** Too bad, that. Well, the crewmen pick their way across the planet and see the derelict, which they enter through a large vagina doorway created by Giger. As they enter the derelict, I wanted them to come up over the edge of something and into this vast chamber that's dominated by a huge chair. In preparing this frame of the storyboard, I went through Giger's *Necronomicon* and took this character, whom we call the "space jockey," because I wanted a fossil, almost, one which you'd have a hard time deciding where he leaves off and the chair, on which he died, begins.

So here they are with this dead space



21 NOSTROMO UNDERCARRIAGE  
Selector Hatch Opens (Dusty Storm Ages  
Dusts) Main Landing Walk Towards Camera



22 UNDERCARRIAGE EXT DETAIL  
Ash Shows At The Landing Party From  
The Observation Slit



23 EXTERIOR PLANETOID (GIGER)  
Landing Party Takes Across Bizarre Landscape  
Of Planetoid's Surface



24 EXT PLANETOID (GIGER)  
Survive Shot To Be Used In Retrospect To The  
Finding Of The Alien Derelict Ship



25 EXT PLANETOID  
Landing (Crested Chair) in Chamber (Lowered  
Over Mir 8pm Sound of Signal



26 DERELICT SEEN THRU HATCH  
Two Large Objects Appear On Horizon As A  
Computerized Topographical Image



27 EXT. PLANETOID  
The Two Objects Are Revealed To Be Right  
As The Scene Parts Like A Curtain



28 EXTERIOR OF DERELICT  
Curtain Pulls Into A Closeup



29 DERELICT ENTRANCE  
Landing Party Climb Up Into Derelict



30 INT. DERELICT  
Landing Party Enter Strange Airlock Room  
Inside The Derelict Spacecraft

jockey, frozen in death to the weapon he was firing when he died. And he's kind of gargoyle-like and spooky.

Sometimes we got very close to the film's visuals in the storyboard.

Having found nothing but this long-dead gentleman in the chair, the three crewmen continue across the planet as the sun rises. In the distance they see what we called "the pyramid" in order to get into the pyramid, they have to climb a staircase. Now I got that right out of the Giger book. I didn't intend it to be exactly what we'd end up with. I threw it in really as a suggestion of what it may be like.

They climb the stairs and arrive at the entrance. The idea of a face for the doorway in the storyboard is dead wrong, because it's too normal. But there was an idea which was a nice idea of dropping down through a tube. Kane goes inside and finds a small housing and then goes down through a hole in the floor. I was doing this whole bloody thing as a vagina, going right through. And at the bottom is this membrane. It's like the pyramid is a virgin. I was going to have him slit the membrane and then gas or air or whatever would come wafting out. And he's got to go through this spooky thing of going through this slit. That went by the way as well when the pyramid and derelict sequences were combined.

That leads to the shape of him coming toward us down this tube. And he hangs in blackness. I was going to have a little pilot light ahead of him which winds down with a faint humming noise. It's got a little sensor that looks around, so the thing spins, giving off readings.

FF: Essentially the same thing as in the helmet? To see what's below?

SCOTT: Oh, sure. Touch ground before he does. Well, he's hanging there in complete darkness. Can't see a thing. Then he switches on.

Now this is an idea I wanted to do and we never again really got to develop it. But I wanted his suit to become a beacon light, illuminating what's around him. So I wanted like 10,000 bulbs on the suit. He said, "I am going to light myself up, can you boost me?" And he switches on and becomes like a Christmas tree. Would've been great. Never got to it. We'll use that again somewhere else. But it would've been really fantastic.

And he then walks around the interior, slips and falls in. He finds he's in one piece, so he doesn't panic. But he's curious about the large, egg-like things that fill the floor of the room he's in.

All the time this is going on, he's giving a report on his activities. He touches the egg and begins to examine it as it comes to life before him.

FF: Who's idea was it to have the thing inside the egg look like a hand with a tail?

SCOTT: It was Giger. I just followed a drawing of his in doing the storyboard. his is the way it appears on screen.

FF: So you'd talked with Giger at this



31 INTERIOR OF DERELICT  
Discovery Of The "Space Jockey"



32 EXTERIOR OF EGG SLO  
Crews Climb Up The Outer Surface



33 INT. OF SLO  
Kane Is Lowered Into SLO On Portable Winch



34 INTERIOR OF EGG SLO  
Kane Cuts The Virgin Membrane  
Which Protects The Eggs Below



35 CLOSE-UP OF ALIEN EGGS  
Kane Sees Inside Egg As It Grows



36. RIG INT SLO  
Action Inside Translucent Egg Which Explodes  
Ovis Kane's Mask A Burns Two



37. INT SLO RIG CHAMBER  
Kane Sluggs Back At The Tail Of The Alien  
Lashes About Kane's Work



38. EXT PLANT/DOOR THRU MONITOR  
Ash Watches As Landing Crew Returns With  
Kane's Body On A Tarmac



39. INTERIOR INFIRMARY-NOSTROMO  
Kane Is Brought Back To The Nostromo And  
Placed In The Auto-Doc For Surgery



40. INT INFIRMARY-NOSTROMO  
Auto-Doc Cuts The Mask From Kane's Head,  
Opening It Like An Orange

point?

**SCOTT:** Yes I had. The storyboard was done over a period of two months, so I'd already been to Switzerland. I'd seen one previous egg they'd had done in L.A. already. I just thought the egg was phenomenal. By then they'd either been too close to it or sitting on it too long because they really needed a shot of enthusiasm. I was just knocked out by it. I still think it should go on the poster.

While Kane watches, the egg turns translucent and something starts to move inside. He's just fascinated, and watches as the top of the egg parts, opening like the petals of a flower. As he looks inside, WHAM! It flies out, powered by its coiled tail, attaches itself to the faceplate of his helmet, burns through the faceplate and claps onto his face, its fingers holding his head and its tail coiling about his neck. He falls backward, crashing into the eggs with this awful thing on him. Dallas and Lambert haul him back up and improvising a travois, haul him back to the Nostromo through another dust storm. And they come up.

They are let on board by Ash, disregarding quarantine procedures insisted on by Ripley. Kane, with the alien still attached to his face is brought to the infirmary. This was a far more elaborate auto-dock than we ended up shooting. At that time I was thinking too logically, and Christ Almighty, if they brought an organism like that back on board, to begin with, everybody would stay in their suits. And they'd go straight into a hospital decontamination area. They would be isolated until they decontaminated the suits and were able to safely get out of them.

Then they'd place Kane in the auto-dock and they would be behind glass, completely insulated from him and the "face hugger." I was going to have all the work on the alien done with remote control tools, from trying to pry it loose to their futile attempts to cut it off.

**FF:** Why did this ultimately change?

**SCOTT:** In a way it just became too logical for the film, though I, personally, would have stuck with it. But there's no denying that the way we do it now is just easier. The action moves are faster. This version would have meant dwelling on it too long for the type of film we were supposed to be making. It would have meant more hardware, rather than people. Ultimately, that's the reason why I ditched it.

There was a question I had in my mind about the sequence's credibility level. I wanted some examination of Kane by the expert which is the auto-dock. It says, "Well there is no bacteriological danger in that sense of the word." Otherwise everyone's going to be talking to each other through sheets of glass all the time. That would be a hell of a hangup.

Eventually you've just got to get out of that situation. So I wanted that in there but then we finally didn't bother, because if you don't raise the question

(Continued on Page 34)



41. KITCHEN/DINING ROOM  
Kane Falls On The Table In A Fit As The Alien  
Burns Through His Chest



42. KITCHEN/DINING ROOM  
Alien Screams Out Its Birth Cry And  
Surveys Its Surroundings



43. KITCHEN/DINING ROOM  
Alien Guts Its Bowings, Lashes From Kane's Chest  
And Disappears Into Deck



44. EXT NOSTROMO  
Dallas Orders Ship To Light-Speed Eight  
Nostromo Blurs Then Fades To Nothing



45. EXT VENTRAL OBSERVATION DOCK  
Dallas Ponders His Fate From The Nostromo's  
Observation Dome. Classical Music



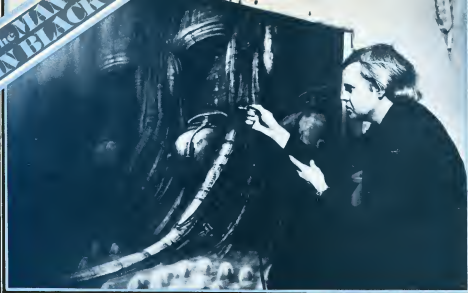


Photo above: H.R. Giger at work with his air brush

## H.R. GIGER

on a pre-production painting of the egg chamber.

# RIDING A NIGHTMARE TO SUCCESS

**D**istinguished Swiss painter and designer H.R. Giger has a unique and truly remarkable style. And it all began when, years ago in his youth, he had many strange dreams—and nightmares.

"When I awoke I would paint the things I had seen in my dreams, which made me feel much better and the dreams would go away. Until next time..."

Giger's paintings have been exhibited in leading art galleries throughout Europe, have appeared as best-selling posters and in magazines, and featured on television and in books. And they virtually defy description.

They combine eroticism, several kinds of symbolism, beautiful but highly-stylized women, machinery, bones, skulls, demons, intricate and exquisite designs, babies, blood, birds, landscapes, bondage, misery and despair and often beauty of a terrible but elegant kind. They hover on the edge of a three-dimensional hell, echoing the surrealist works of Hieronymus Bosch, Salvador Dali and Richard Dadd.

Several books have been published about Giger, an outstanding, large-format one being H.R. Giger's *Necronomicon*, published by Sphinx Verlag, Basel, Switzerland, in 1977, and the Big O Company in London in 1978. And in 1976 he designed sets for a projected French film production of Frank Herbert's classic science fiction novel *Dune*, which was subsequently abandoned.

As pre-production artist for the movie *Alien*, Giger's main assignments were to design the terrifying *Alien* itself, the surface of a mysterious planet and the interior and exterior of a strange alien spacecraft, apparently thousands of years old. He has done other designs for the picture, but these have been the major ones.

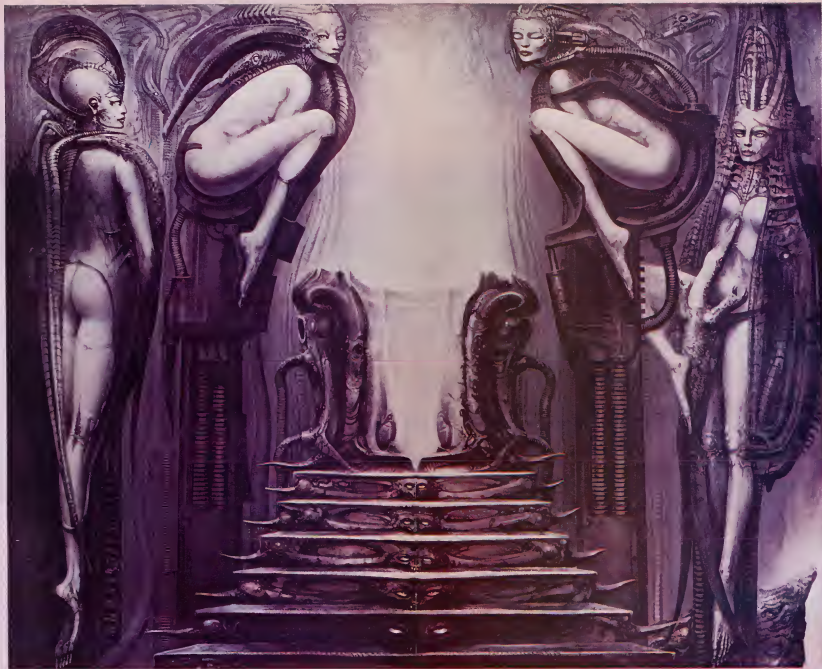
"I cannot describe the *Alien*," explains Giger, who always dresses in black, in his soft Swiss-German accent. "But it is elegant, fast and terrible. It exists to destroy—and destroys to exist. Once seen it will never be forgotten. It will remain with people who have seen it, perhaps in their dreams or nightmares, for a long, long time."

"Some people say my paintings show a future world and maybe they do. But I point from reality, I put several things and ideas together and perhaps, when I have finished, it could show the future—who knows? If people want to interpret my work as warnings about too much over population, disease and mechanization in the future, then that is up to them! I like to combine human beings, creatures and bio-mechanics. And I love to work with bones—they are elegant and functional and, after all, are part of human beings. I have many bones in my home in Zurich and I study them and use them as models. Skeletons too."

"Some people say my work is often depressing and pessimistic, with the emphasis on death, blood, overcrowding, strange beings and so on, but I don't really think it is. There is hope and a kind of beauty in there somewhere, if you look for it. The creatures I design and paint are very much like their own environment, one comes from the other."

"The colors I use are usually grey, white and brown—these are the colors of my beloved Siamese cat. I use black ink too and like to make use of an air brush quite a lot. I like white on black also—it gives my work a kind of translucent look and sometimes almost a three-dimensional appearance. The faces of women in my work are often based on women I have known in my life." The woman in Giger's life at present is beautiful, dark-haired Mia Bonzani, also from Switzerland, and she also works as his devoted assistant.

After viewing *Alien*, the world will have their first glimpse of H.R. Giger's unique work. They will either love it or hate it. For there are no two ways with Giger's paintings and designs. They produce an immediate reaction either way. Two things are certain. They're never boring. And they are unforgettable.



# ALIEN: THE 20th CENTURY-FOX PRESENTATION STORYBOARD

(Continued from Page 30)

nobody'll think about it. So while the machine is working on Kane, they take off. Docking with the refinery, they pull out of orbit and Dallas asks for light plus four. I wanted to go into an effect like a witch's broomstick-view of the thing as it hits light plus four, and distorts. It sort of breaks up somehow and then you lose it.

When they're in space, it is discovered that the alien face hugger has disappeared from Kane's face. He's very thirsty, and very hungry, so everyone goes in to have breakfast before returning to the sleep vault. He's joking and fooling with everyone when suddenly his face distorts and he's in terrible agony. He falls back onto the table, and they think he's having a fit.

Agony, screaming, blood, they're trying to hold him down when a blossom of blood appears on his chest. Then, without warning, this THING crashes out in what we call, "the chest burster." They all leap back, horrified, staring at him amongst all the food. The baby alien gives its birth cry and speeds away before they can stop it.

FF: What were you aiming for with the alien at this point?

SCOTT: I wanted it to be like an obscene phallic thing that was all mouth. Like a Francis Bacon image. That's really what I started to talk to Giger about. There's a triptych in the Tate Gallery of Bacon's horrible, obscene images that was just what I had in mind.

FF: Was the birth cry your idea?

SCOTT: Yeah. I wanted a birth cry and we've sort of got one. I thought it might work to have almost a lightly distorted baby's cry, but it didn't. It was slightly ridiculous rather than horrifying. It was one of those things where all we could do was try to invent a sound in the end.

This is Kane's burial. It was quite a nice idea, because I thought I'd be able to get outside with hardware. Rather than shooting them out, we were just going to give him a push and watch him slowly drift away. Meanwhile, the rest of them are watching it on monitor.

That's a view of the ship going through light plus four. Whoosh! That's the top of the craft. Later, Dallas is lying down and staring into space. Ripley comes up and says "I need relief." He says, "Oh Jesus, not now." You suddenly realize that she's asking him to make love to her. We lost that in shooting because of time pressures.

Right after that they start hunting the Beast. By this time in my work on the storyboard, the landing roller had turned into a claw. I wanted a huge claw room down in the bilge, where the ship's feet would be retracted during



46 INT. OBSERVATION GOME  
Ripley, Dallas, Gorman And Proprietors  
Moe To Make Love To Her



47 INT. NOSTROMO - C-DECK  
Brett Slashes Beneath Gonging Claws  
Alien Swarms Over Greenally And Slaves



48 INT. NOSTROMO - CLAW ROOM  
Alien-Landis Cuts Brett's Chest  
The Chest. He Screams His Heart



49 INT. AIR LOCK  
Alien Blood Oozes Corridor Of Air Lock



50 INT. PASSAGEWAY  
Alien's Appearance Cut Off By Air Lock Door  
Screams, Slashes, Pokes, Screams Out



51 INTERIOR PASSAGEWAY  
Dallas Opens Decompression



52 INT. COMPUTER ROOM  
Ash, Hicks, Ripley, Parker, Gorman And Gorman  
Have With One-Ash To A Room



53 INT. COMPUTER ROOM  
Ash's Blood Head Is Reconnected To His Body  
With Wire-It Connects With Them



54 INT. DORSAL OBSERVATION GOME  
Kane's Corpse Surprises Gorman's As  
They Search For The Alien



55 INT. CORRIDOR - NOSTROMO  
Lambert And Parker Search For The Alien

flight, like the anchor cable tier on an ocean liner. Massive, gigantic room with all this horrible old gear around it.

Brett somehow gets separated. And while he is standing in the claw room, the thing swings down acrobatically and they are suddenly face to face. I thought that would be quite a spooky image, actually. With the thing hanging there with these arms like a mantis. Almost independent suspension, seeming to move on their own.

FF: When you shot this sequence did you use a stuntman?

SCOTT: Yes, a wire-man.

FF: It appears to float.

SCOTT: Yeah. You don't know quite how it's got up or down, it's just there, like a fly. Takes him. Bang! Bingol!

FF: Is this where Fox got their first glimpse of the alien's head?

SCOTT: Yes, but the idea was that the thing wasn't full-grown yet. Also, at this time I didn't have the alien taking Brett away. I wanted it to remove his heart. When the others find him and turn him over, there's a huge cavity in his chest, reminiscent of the hole in the space jockey. But that was too much like Kane's death, so we eventually changed it.

Dallas goes after it in the air ducts, spraying all around him with an improvised flamethrower. At this stage I wanted to have it come at him so fast that it actually runs around the tube. It just comes roaring down the tube, floor, ceiling, everything. The idea was to have it be amazingly, frighteningly acrobatic. But, as in a lot of other places, I had to become realistic about the time it would take to shoot it.

By this time in the storyboarding I was prepared to just tell the rest of the plot to the Fox executives. The remaining pictures here are just the alien sequences which I wanted to do at the time. These three frames show what we called the decompression sequence.

They've tracked him to an airlock and try to blow him out of the ship by throwing the doors open and having him sucked out into space. But he's too quick for them. He's crouching, and as the airlock is thrown open, he does a flip backwards at the last moment.

A little bit of his ass is seen on the airlock door, and eats right through it, breaking the seal even after they close the door. So the ship starts decompressing. The thing smashes Parker in the face as it escapes, and one of the others is sucked out of the ship through a hole the size of a thumbnail.

The airlock opens wide and you get complete decompression. Parker is sucked against the open hatch and Ripley only manages to save him at the last minute. They both have to hold their breath until they can release some oxygen and restore the ship's atmosphere.

FF: Sort of like 2001, when Bowman has to get into the Discovery when HAL locks him out?

SCOTT: Well, decompression is decompression. If you want to do something exciting, it's probably been done



36 INT CONVEYORS-NOSTROMO  
Ripley Stops, Lets Lambert Advance/Allen  
Mortensen Out Of Blackness/Takes Him



37 INT PASSAGEWAY-NOSTROMO  
Allen Advances Along Ripley As A Shield  
Lambert Incinerates Parker/Allen Unhurt



38 INT NOSTROMO-KITCHEN  
Ripley Watches On Monitor As Allen Kills  
Parker Then Lambert (Audio Only)



39 INT PASSAGEWAY-NOSTROMO  
Ripley Finds 'Ass' Of Alien Where Dallas  
Is Being Absorbed/Incinerates It



40 INT ENGINE ROOM  
Ripley Enters Engine Room And Finds  
Off The Cooling Systems

before somewhere. We had to cut it in the end anyway. Too costly to shoot. Too much time. But it would have been a killer.

When Ash goes berserk and attacks Ripley, Parker, just trying to knock him out, really, hits him in the head with a bat or something. Ash's head was knocked off his body at this point, and he tries to put it back on. But when that failed, he just put it down on a table and talked to them.

When they're looking for the Beast, they hear a tap-tap-tapping coming from Ash's observation blister. When they check it out, it turns out to be Kane's corpse, floating along with the ship and bumping into it. Seems that when he was ejected, he got tangled up in one of the standhorns. That, along with the love scene and the decompression sequence, was a major cut made during production.

Ripley's now in command of the ship. She goes to speak with "Mother" to try and get some help. Ash shows up in the screen version, but things were structured differently here.

Parker and Lambert, wearing their helmets because sections of the ship are without oxygen, go out looking for the alien. They're going down these tubes when the thing just steps out behind Parker.

The alien's got Parker and while it's killing him it advances on Lambert. She tries to turn the flamethrower on the alien, but it uses Parker as a shield and comes straight through the flames. Would have been quite a lot of trouble to shoot that.

When Ripley is running around on her own at the end of the film, she discovers that the alien has actually started a nest aboard the ship. The walls are covered with this thick, butter-like stuff, and Dallas, still alive, is attached to the wall in a cocoon-type of thing. It's some sort of reproductivity cycle, because Brett, or what's left of Brett, is more fully absorbed in the background, slowly turning into one of the eggs. Dallas says, "Kill me!" and she incinerates the room, killing Dallas and Brett.

FF: It was to be assumed that the pyramid and later the derelict, when the eggs were aboard it, were "nests" created out of the victims of the alien?

SCOTT: That's still the idea, though there was never time to explain it in the film.

Ripley's going to blow up the Nostromo and escape in the lifeboat, the Narcissus. She runs through the engine room at this point, and I wanted to have a big, double-decker set.

FF: That's as far as you went on the Fox presentation storyboard?

SCOTT: I explained the rest to them. Afterwards there were numerous changes made, the major one being the elimination of the pyramid and the combining of its interior sequence with the derelict. But as I've told you, there were many compromises, cuts, alterations and changes made before, during and after shooting. There always are. ■