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ALIENS

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Prisoner of DR. WHO**

Jenette Goldstein
as Vasquez



Jenette Goldstein

Adios, "ALIENS"

When you are prepared to die—as are lifers Vasquez (Goldstein) and Drake (Mark Rolston)—you're willing to do anything, even take the point on a treacherous bug hunt.

Vasquez lives—and the charismatic actress behind the smart-gun-toting marine is armed against extraterrestrial trouble.

By BRIAN LOWRY

Somewhere beneath the makeup, sweat, ferocity and courage that made up Private Vasquez, the rippling heroine of *ALIENS*, there's a soft-spoken, freckled, 5'2" woman named Jenette Goldstein.

Goldstein, to her credit as a performer, shares precious little with her scene-stealing character; in fact, had the film been a true representation of the 26-year-old actress, it might have been titled *Beverly Hills Marine*.

Yes, far from the gritty deprivation of *ALIENS*, the actress was raised in that much-publicized community. Despite growing up so near the glamour of Hollywood, the trappings of celebrity remain foreign to Goldstein. She enjoys her anonymity, and she's still a bit amused by the flood of fan mail she received—ranging from the U.S. Marine Corps to offers of marriage (too late, but more on that later) to a seven-year-old girl who wrote to Vasquez, inviting her to stay in her home if she ever got out that way.

Ironically, Goldstein had ventured far from her own home when she took her first step toward joining the rather exclusive club

that makes a living in front of the cameras.

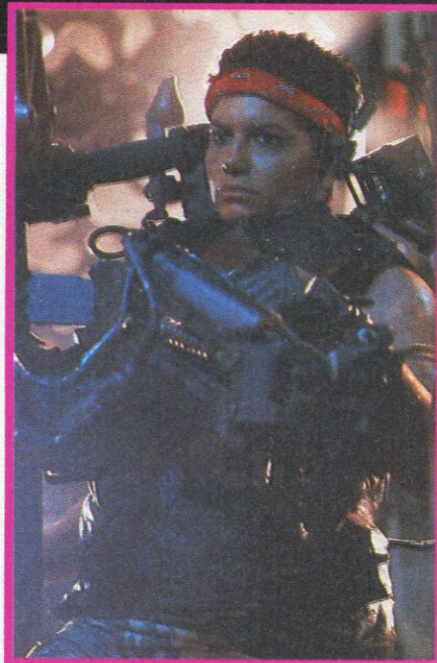
Goldstein began acting in high school, and, after going to college in Santa Barbara, left to study in New York on a two-year program. She then met and married an Englishman, following him to London to attend drama school.

Three years and numerous stage appearances later, in small productions ranging from Shakespeare to musicals, she answered an ad for a film role in the local trades. It read simply, "Genuine American actors, British Equity, for feature film, *ALIENS*, 20th Century Fox," she relates, over lunch near the old homestead in Beverly Hills.

"I had seen *ALIEN*, but I had no idea this was a sequel. It had been so long ago, it didn't even occur to me.

"I thought it was about actual aliens, you know, immigrants to a country. I was wondering why they wanted Americans. I figured the movie was about lots of different immigrants to England."

Since she didn't have an agent at the time, she answered the ad on her own, with rather surprising results. "I actually came in wear-



Goldstein downplays Vasquez's heroism by stating that her gun-toting is just part of her job as a soldier.

ing high heels and lots of makeup, and I had waist-length hair," she says.

Other auditioners, who had advance notice from their agents, were decked out in military

BRIAN LOWRY, veteran *STARLOG* correspondent, reports for the LA bureau of Advertising Age. He profiled Robert Hays in *STARLOG* #114.

Taking some time out from "flamenco dancing," Jenette Goldstein relaxes with a personal friend.

fatigues—Goldstein's first inkling she would be reading for the role of a marine.

A bit taken aback, Goldstein told the casting director that she had done some bodybuilding, so they asked her to return for a second look. This time, she came prepared—scraping her hair back and scrounging up a pair of army boots.

Though she wasn't auditioning particularly for the role of Vasquez, the producers—like much of America—liked what they saw. "I was in the shape I am at this moment. I had been training for years, going to a gym.

"Before the role, [director] Jim Cameron asked me how big I could get in four weeks," she laughs. "I had never tried, so I just ate a lot. I gained 10 pounds of, basically, fat, over my physique. But I kept training, and I had two years of groundwork underneath."

What was underneath was fine. It was Goldstein's outside that needed an overhaul, largely because blue eyes and Huck Finn-style freckles didn't quite fit the job description. "The makeup took an hour," she sighs. "The makeup woman said I had the most ornery freckles she had ever seen.

"It was freezing cold on the set, and we were oiled up all the time. The fake sweat and water made the makeup run a lot, so it was a toss-up between looking sweatier and having my white skin show through."

They also gave her dark contact lenses, and, rather unceremoniously, whacked off most of her waist-length hair. "They just brought out the buzzsaw," she quips. "But I was ready for it, to undergo a change. I didn't want to save it. I thought that was too gruesome."

Viva Vasquez

Physical preparation, however, presented only part of the challenge. Goldstein also had to capture Vasquez's anger, dialect and martial mentality.

Having grown up in Southern California, she notes, Goldstein had some awareness of the Chicano sub-culture. "I had to do it from memory," she explains. "I didn't have a dialect coach, or the time or money to fly back to Los Angeles.

"I had my parents send me some source material from libraries in Los Angeles—interviews with gang members, that sort of thing, because there was nothing like that in London. Just travel books to Mexico."

The research soon gave way to a crash course in filmmaking, as the novice screen actress tried to find her way around her first movie set. "I didn't know *anything* about film. I figured it was shot out of order, but I didn't realize what that meant to you as an actor," she says.

"I learned as I went along, and I asked the other actors—what things meant, what a 'two-shot' was or a 'master.' I just relied on the actors who had been in other films, and they were great."

Sequencing did come as a shock. The introduction to the marines, for example, as they awoke from hyper space and gnawed on breakfast, was filmed at the production's

end. That way, the cast had several months to get acquainted.

By then, Goldstein had already befriended Mark Rolston, who portrayed Drake—Vasquez's huge, blond compatriot, who comes down with a severe case of Alien-induced acne in the first confrontation.

Though military life isn't exactly her idea of a good time, she felt at home among the mostly male company. "I grew up with brothers, so I was used to it," she says.

Like most great films, *ALIENS* possesses a richness of detail that can't be absorbed in one viewing. Director Cameron prepared a background dossier on *each* character, and the actors personalized their uniforms in the spirit of their characters.

Goldstein, appropriately, scribbled the phrase "Adios" on her gun, signifying the last word someone who crossed her would hear. On the back of her shirt, it said simply, "Loco."

That's one reason why Vasquez, to the delight of feminists everywhere, was frequently told to "take point"—the most dangerous position on the patrol: "It was just logical," the actress says. "Who would you want to take point? The craziest person, the one who doesn't care about dying, because who else would do something like that?"

"It's never mentioned in the film, but in the characters' background, she and Drake



Vasquez (Goldstein) and devil-may-care Drake (Mark Rolston) were both recruited from juvenile prison while serving life sentences.

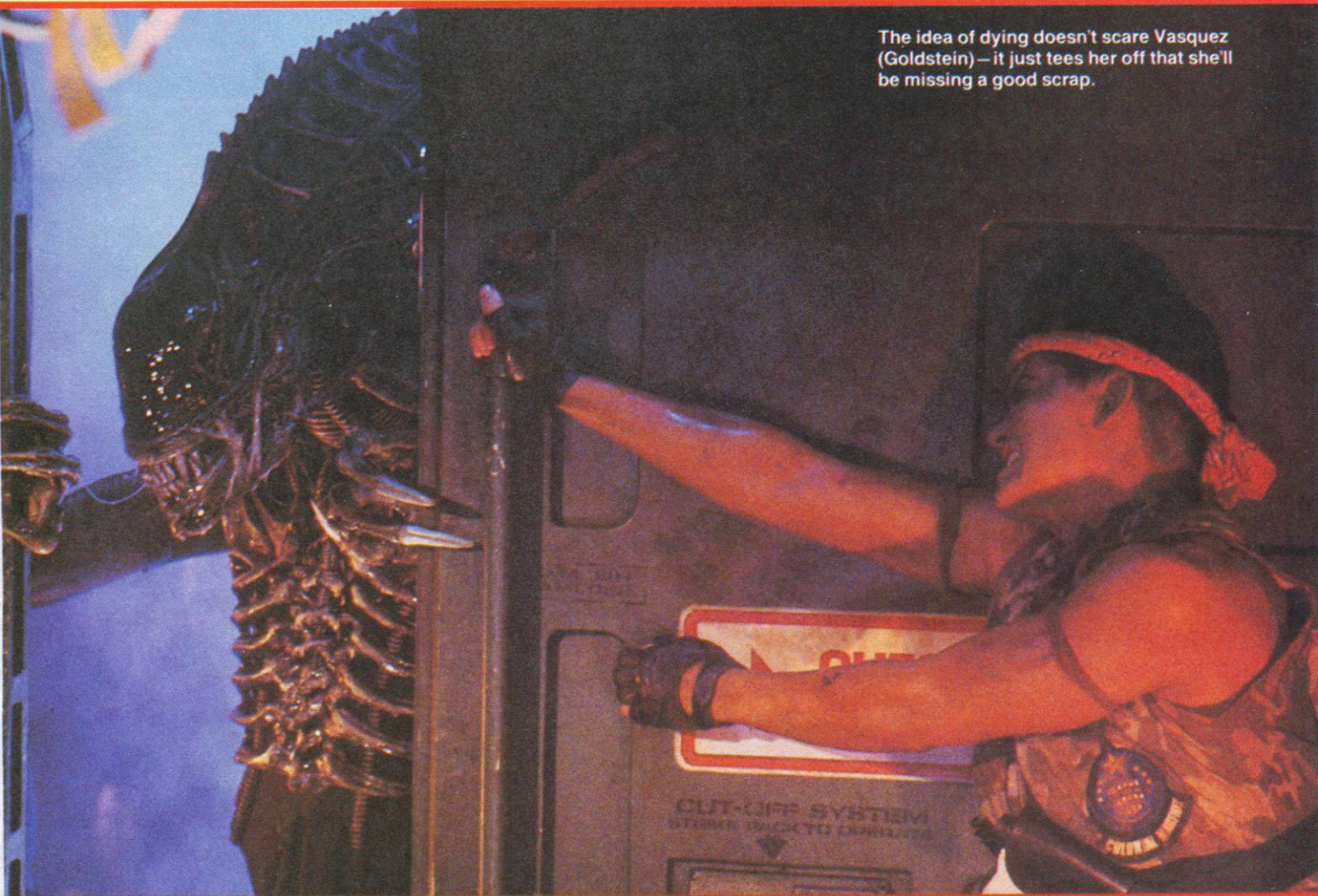
are recruited from juvenile prison, where they're under life sentences.

"Therefore, they were different from the others, who were on a time limit. Hudson was supposed to get out of the marines in four weeks, which is what made him flip."

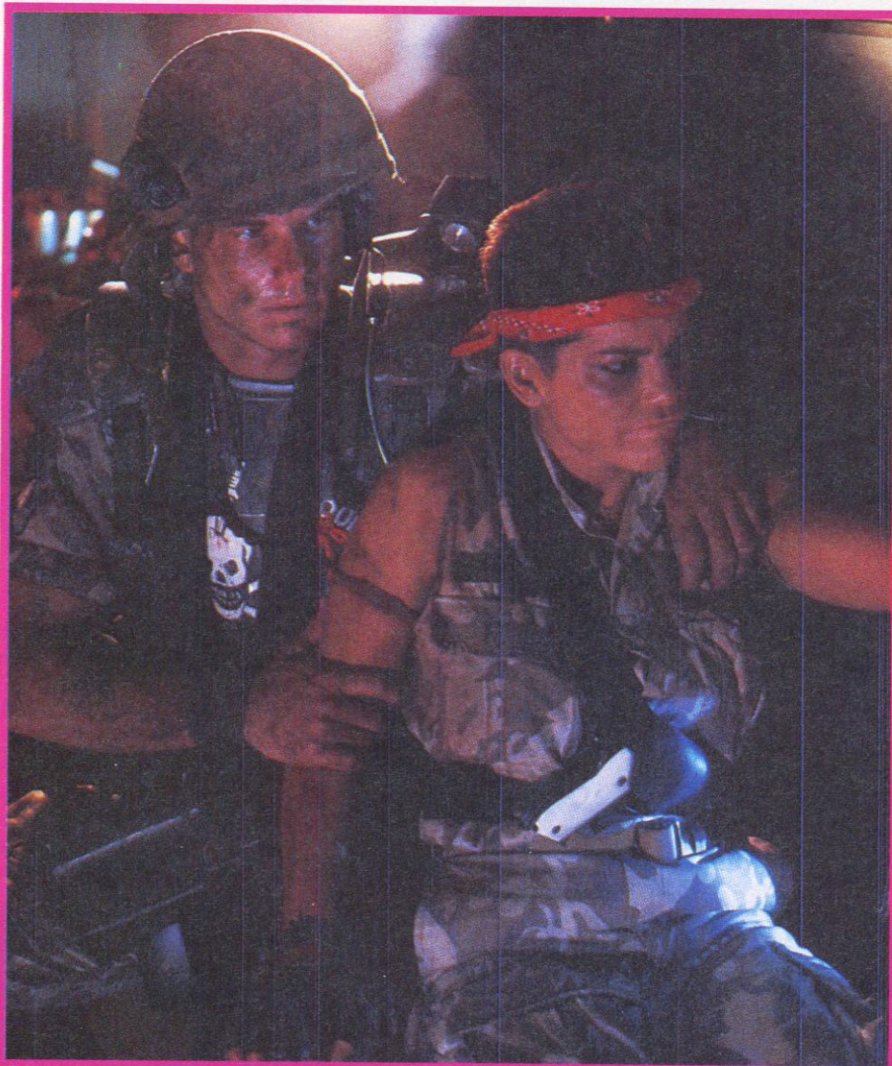
That also explains the back of Hudson's vest, tailored by actor Bill Paxton to read, "Contents under pressure. Do not puncture."

"Vasquez and Hudson are paired throughout the film as each other's foil," Goldstein observes. "He says everything, whether it's important or not, and she says absolutely nothing unless it's important."

"That was Vasquez' attitude: She had no one or nothing, so she was the logical choice for point. It made perfect sense to the commander. Who would you put in that suicidal position? Someone who couldn't care less,



The idea of dying doesn't scare Vasquez (Goldstein)—it just tees her off that she'll be missing a good scrap.



"Vasquez and Hudson are paired throughout the film as each other's foil," notes Goldstein, explaining the balance between Bill Paxton's hysterics and her grim determination.

and whether it's a man or woman doesn't really matter."

Goldstein downplays the excitement generated by *ALIENS*' strong female characters—as Vasquez and Ripley (Sigourney Weaver, *STARLOG* #109) emerge as the film's two most heroic combatants. "Vasquez is gun-toting because she's a soldier. That's her job," Goldstein contends.

"Ripley is forced to carry a gun. It's not the weapons, but the human spirit. At the end, the weapons are shown to be ineffective. It was showing how ill-prepared the army was, and how all the bluster counted for nothing."

Still, the actress does admire Cameron's deft handling of female characters, even those in (literally) short-lived roles. "All the women's roles were good, particularly the little girl [Carrie Henn]. Little girls are usually shown to be such idiots," she notes.

Fighting Finish

Goldstein spent most of her time on the

James Cameron gave the actors background dossiers on each character and allowed them to personalize their uniforms.



film playing with big girl's toys, including "unbelievably loud" guns that weighed 65 to 70 pounds. Designers created the smart-gun by connecting an anti-aircraft gun—the kind that usually sits on a tripod—to a cameraman's steadicam unit.

The actress' grace wielding the massive weapon led one critic to describe her as moving around like a "flamenco dancer." "I wanted Vasquez to seem like she only really lived when she was carrying a gun," she explains. "It became part of her, and everything clicked into being.

"Then again, that gun was so heavy, there was only a certain way you *could* walk with it," she laughs. "As every steadicam operator knows, you have to walk like that, or you'll fall over."

When Vasquez's luck runs out in the film, however, she hardly falls over; rather, she claws, crawls and grimaces, blasting Aliens and grappling with one creature *mano a mano* before a grenade saves her from a serious case of indigestion.

In the scene, a stuntman in Alien costume was lowered by a harness onto her from one of the air vents, then promptly dispatched with a barrage of gunfire into its face.

It was a juicy scene in more ways than one. "I had to get all slimed up," she grimaces. "I think Vasquez is just so angry that it has finally gotten her. Rather than being scared, she's pissed off she's about to die."

Goldstein's character stands so tall in those scenes it's hard to imagine that much courage coming in such a small package. "I'm teeny, I know," she says. "I can't believe people say I exude height, because everyone else was over six feet tall.

"I was the smallest one besides Carrie Henn. A few times, they would say, 'Carrie, honey, would you stand on that box?' so they could get everyone in the shot. Then, they would say, 'Oh, Jenette, would you mind standing on it, too?' and everyone would break up laughing."

If not height, Vasquez radiated power—a byproduct of the six days a week Goldstein spent weight lifting when she auditioned for the film.

Out of work at the time, Goldstein stumbled into bodybuilding almost by accident. "I was going to four dance classes in London. They were on the West End, and I lived on the East End. There was a man's gym with a boxing ring that I passed every day.

"It was a good discipline to have. When you're unemployed, you need some sort of a discipline. I needed something that I could do that—if I put in the time and effort—I would get results, which you're not guaranteed as far as acting. That's frustrating.

"I enjoyed lifting weights, and I got hooked on it. It was something to keep me busy. I didn't see it as a tool to get work, though my friends used to joke that maybe they'll do a film about an American bodybuilder, or something like that, that it'll pay off. It's funny that it did."

While she still works out regularly and jogs to keep in shape, Goldstein has *no* intention

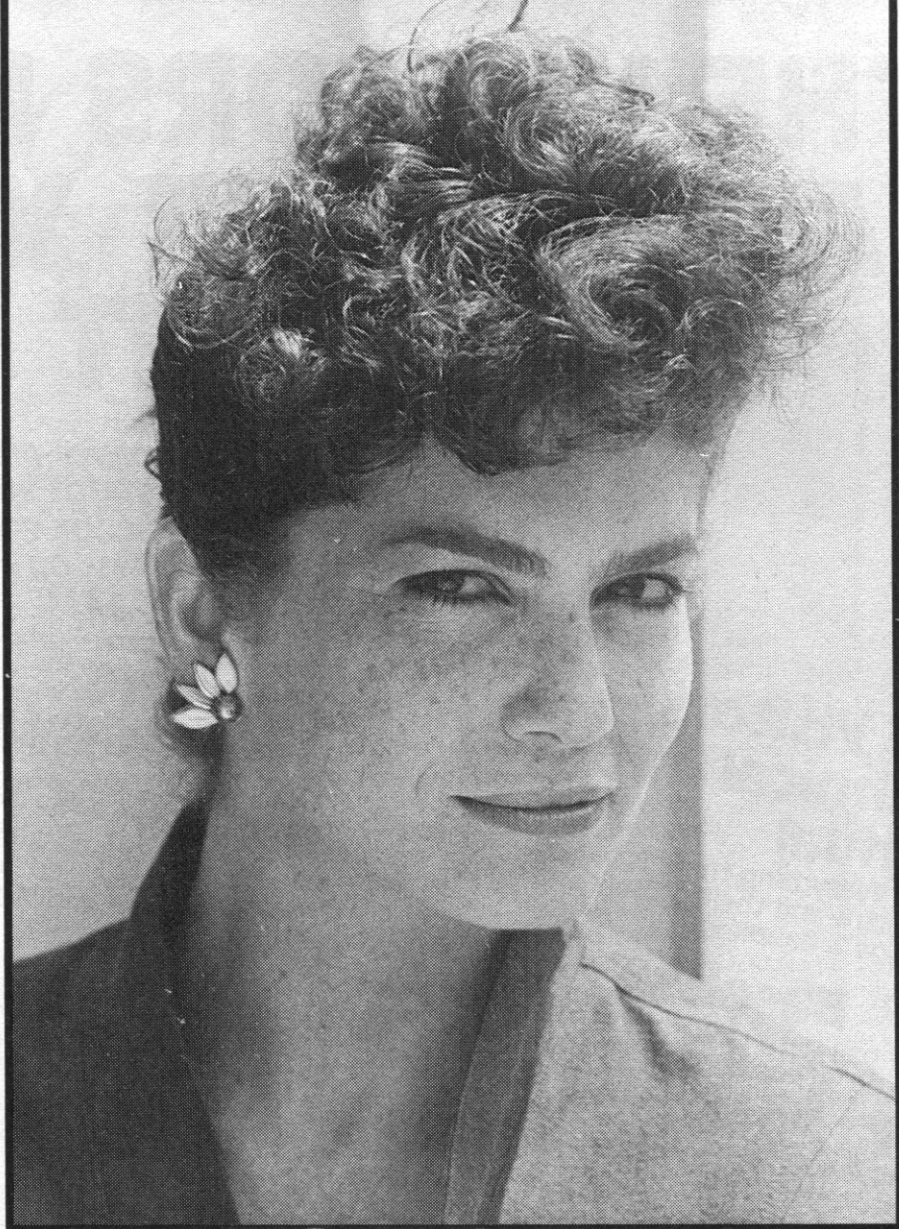


PHOTO: COURTESY JENETTE GOLDSTEIN

Beyond her blue eyes and freckles, the Beverly Hills-bred Jenette Goldstein is quite a different person from the volatile Vasquez.

of getting typecast as a female Rambo. As far as she's concerned, the gunplay stops here.

Unfortunately, producers haven't been able to see beyond her role in *ALIENS*, despite her decidedly un-Spanish surname. "At first, I was offered Hispanic roles, and a lot of science fiction, just the same. You know, 'Oh my, she can shoot a gun.'"

The spate of similar parts remains a sore point to Goldstein, and a frustrating limitation. "I'm looking for something *different*," she says hopefully. "There's nothing yet, I'm just waiting to hear on a few things, but believe me, they're very, very different.

"I wouldn't believe I could get cast as a Mexican marine," she adds, "but people have seen my work, they haven't met me. That's why I've been trying to get out, and have people see me."

The appearances have included a couple of morning interview shows and that bastion of show business journalism, *Entertainment Tonight*. "Once they see you're actually an actress, and you're not just playing yourself, then they have to use their brains a little bit.

"And next time, I'm going to get billing," she laughs, referring to her relegation to the closing credits in *ALIENS*. "That's all negotiated through agents. I thought you came in, they looked at your part and assigned billing."

Nevertheless, moviegoers tended to search for her name, evidenced by the flood of fan mail 20th Century Fox has received. "That's nice," she says. "That means people actually took the time to sit through the credits and see who it was."

With sequels so prevalent—and talk of a second *ALIEN* sequel—would she consider coming back as Vasquez if some script-writing wizard could conjure her up? "How, scrape her off the walls?" Goldstein chuckles. "Or *Vasquez: The Early Years*?"

Space, fire-arms and slime may not figure prominently in her immediate plans, but Goldstein hopes Vasquez's death won't be in vain. With a little luck, that brief sojourn into space may have put Jenette Goldstein on the path toward becoming an earthbound star.

