

aaaaargggghh!!!

If you fail to rescue one of the captives, this happens to them. It is neither funny nor clever. The moral: "If you see a Jelly Baby wearing dungarees hanging from a wall, do not cross the road to the other side." (Pretty useless moral. Ed.) You never know.



Aliens recommend Wash'N'Go

plotty, plotty, plotty

Sigourney Weaver, some bloke and a girl are asleep in this spaceship. They crash on a prison planet, the bloke and the girl are killed, and Sigourney is unconscious. She is rescued by some bald geezers who are criminals, except there is an alien in her stomach. Sigourney realises this after writing to John Hurt. Now she has to kill all the Aliens before the criminals can cut off her hair. But The Company want the Aliens alive!

(Actually, this game has very little to do with the *Alien 3* film. It's more like *Aliens*, although Sigourney is bald here.)



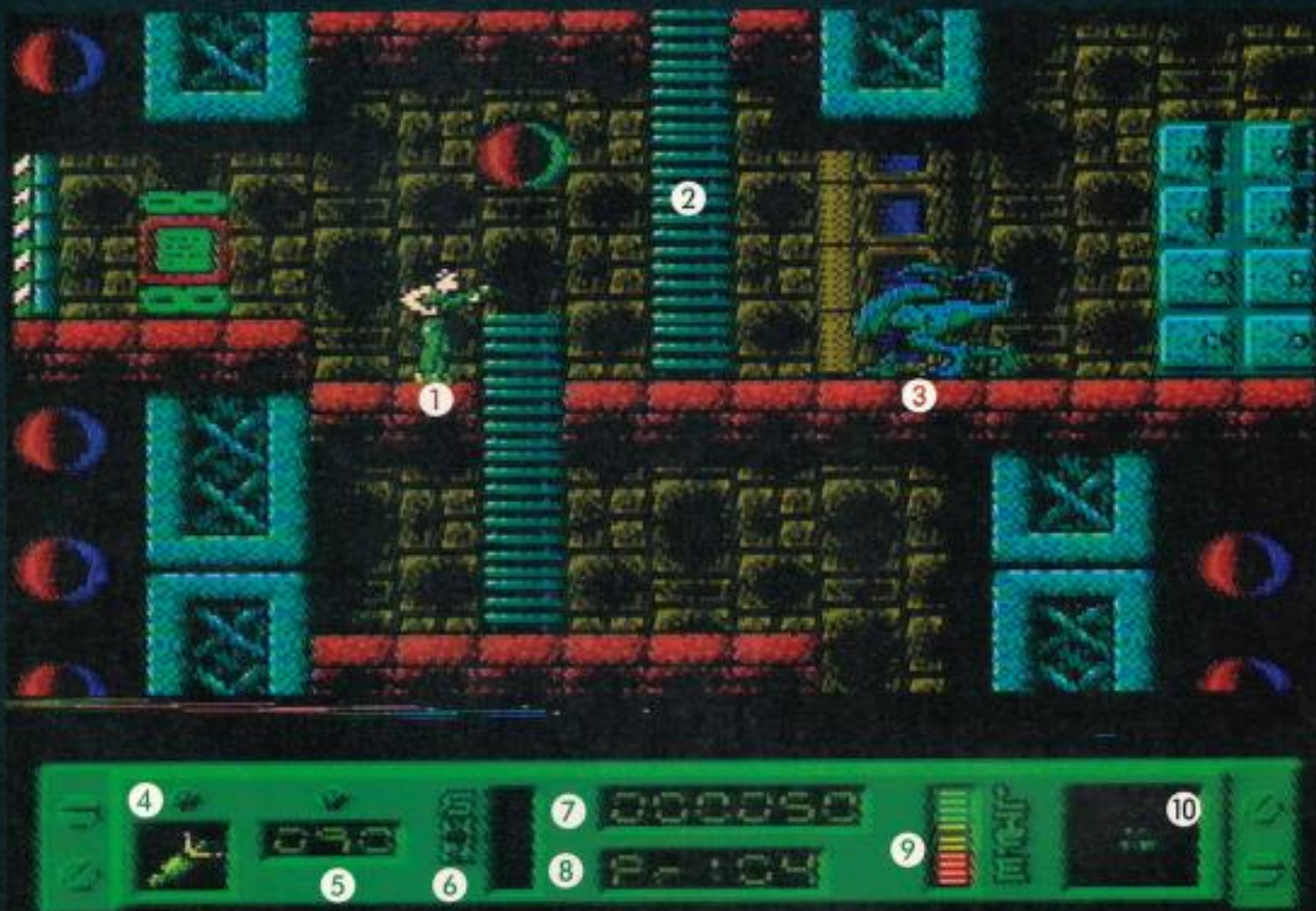
...and you can't see the moving platform!



Nick Griffiths owns a book on UFOs and claims to have been the alien out of *Close Encounters Of The Third Kind* (Special Edition). Who better to review *Alien 3*, then? (Anyone. Ed.)



alien 3



Aliens have been portrayed as cute with big eyes (Mac of Mac & Me), as cute with big eyes (ET of ET) and as cute with big eyes (Gizmo of Gremlins). Children are growing up learning to trust weirdies from other planets, which is not a good thing.

They're not allowed to trust people who offer them lollipops, so why? Given a choice between befriending a bloke with a bag of sweets or some potential lunatic with a flying saucer, I know which I'd plump for.

So these Aliens come as a breath of fresh air. They aren't cute and they don't have big eyes. They even kill cats, which do no harm to anyone (other than spending their lives eating, sleeping and 'doing it', and no one moans at them or closes their bank account). Aliens are the negative publicity that beings from other planets deserve. Remember: ET wanted to phone home. Why, eh?

aubergine

This NES version of *Alien 3* is based not on the excellent SNES version, but on the Sega versions. Oh, yeah - "Booo!" Right. Listen, Sega and Nintendo are as bad as each other. They have taken the kids' pocket money (£50 a week nowadays, presumably - used to be a farthing a year and a good hiding in my day, etc etc) and they have rubbed their hands together, making the same dastardly laughing sounds that all baddies make in films that aren't Russian.

It's an eight-level game, with four Guardian Alien (much bigger) levels. That's 12 levels altogether. And it's a platform shoot 'em-up set in mazes of tunnels. Oh dear.

You are a balding Sigourney Weaver, let loose on the planet Fiorina 161, which sounds more like a car. Your mission - should you choose to accept it (although you've wasted £40 if you don't) - is to release a load of tied up people who look like Jelly Babies in dungarees.

ratatouille

There's a time limit of roughly four minutes for the completion of each level, which involves rescuing all the prisoners and then making it through the air ducts into the next level. There are four weapons of varying power at your disposal, though you'll end up using the grenade launcher for most of the game.

When, inevitably, you fail the level first time around, you're shown the position of the prisoners you failed to rescue. So, next time it's simply a matter of remembering where they are, remembering where the Aliens appear from, and going like Billy-O. (No idea who Billy-O was, nor why he was going so fast. Sorry.)

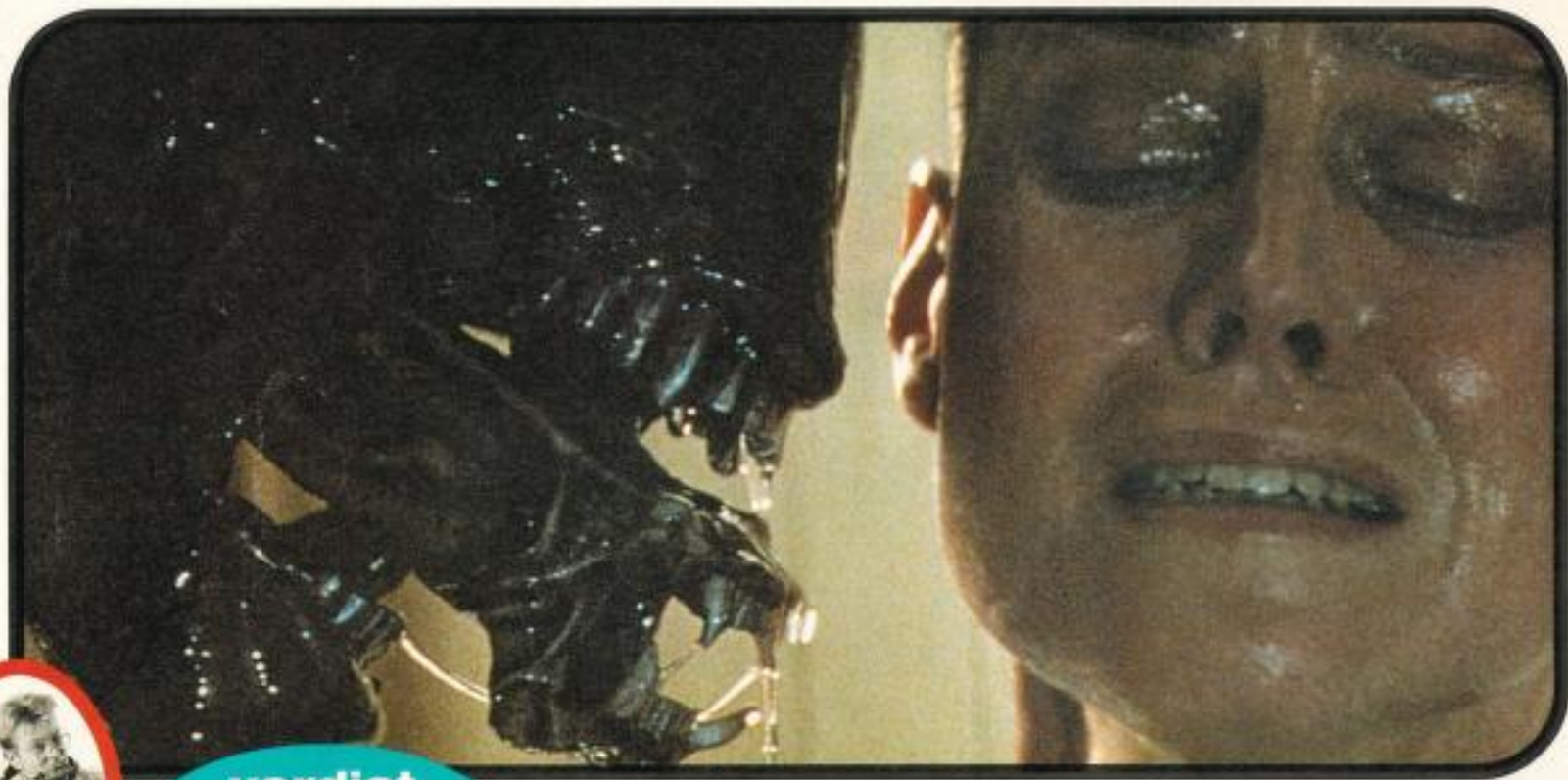
But I'm being harsh. Initially, there is some tension and, er, the Alien sprites



what's what?*

- 1 You. This is you. It's also Sigourney Weaver. Weird, huh?
- 2 Ladders. Some ladders.
- 3 An Alien. They're scary, but remember: "In space, no one can hear you let wind."
- 4 Weapon select. You have four weapons at your disposal. This shows which you are using.
- 5 Ammo meter. How much ammo you have remaining (maximum 99 rounds).
- 6 Gun meter. If used for too long, your weapon overheats. This shows you when. Very handy (if you have nothing better to look at).
- 7 Score. Your score.
- 8 Time/Prisoners remaining. How many prisoners still to be rescued, alternating with your time remaining.
- 9 Life meter. How much life you have left. It says it all about '90s society that life is reduced to a few ill-formed lines on a TV screen.
- 10 Radar. Pick up batteries to activate this. When activated, a few white dots appear, along with a bleeping sound. This could be either the captives or the Aliens - whatever, you'd be better off making your own bleeping sound and drawing small dots on a piece of paper. Technology, it seems, is not what it used to be.

(*you may well ask)



verdict
It isn't cute and it doesn't have big eyes.

look quite good and, erm, you can toy with your weapons and make things go 'Bang!', and... well, those are the best bits.

courgette

It doesn't take long for the initial attraction to wear off. Even the final levels differ only vaguely from earlier ones. There's a rather nice waterfall background, admittedly, but that's not awfully space-age. Not as space-age, say, as an astronaut or as vacuum-packed, freeze-dried ice cream.

It's all a matter of climbing ladders, descending ladders, blowing a door open, killing a couple of Aliens, rescuing a Jelly Baby and then trying again.

There are the boss levels, too, of course. The Guardian Angels wander around the London Underground system wearing red berets, beating up young people who have turned on the busker singing 'American Pie'. They do not spit (unlike footballers). The Guardian Aliens, on the other hand, do not wear berets and they spit acid. Still they are not very hard to defeat once you work out where's the best place to stand.

asparagus

If this was the first game of its kind, we'd all play it and go "Eeeeeee!", "Wooohah!" and stuff like that (since we're all pretty childish here). Instead, it's the 368th of its kind and, frankly, we've seen it all before but better. The sound is tiresome and uninspired, the gameplay is adequate though little more, and there's been a noticeable lack of imagination at work here. In the world of vegetables (since an analogy is undoubtedly required), *Alien 3* on the NES is a carrot. Better than a potato, but still only suitable for stew and for vegetarians. ☹

the arms trade

Dangerously insane Middle Eastern gentleman: "Psst, got any weapons for sale?"

The British government: "Certainly. Just one thing: you're not going to use them against 'Our boys in the Gulf', are you?"

Dangerously insane Middle Eastern gentleman: "Maybe."

1 pulse rifle

Fires continuously, not very powerfully. Rifle tends to overheat if used for too long, rendering it useless (and you dead).

INSET: spare ammo

2 flame thrower

'Throws' flames (not possible manually). Useful during close combat or inside the air ducts.

INSET: spare ammo

3 grenade launcher

Launches grenades. The most powerful weapon. Two shots kill aliens in early levels, and three later on.

INSET: spare ammo

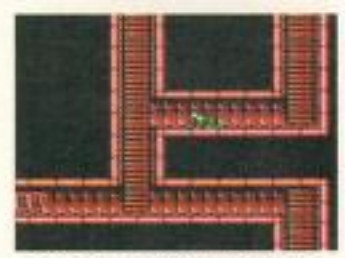
4 hand grenade

A grenade without the launcher. Drop them while you're on ladders. Alternatively, hoist ladder over shoulder and turn round several times, knocking the same person over repeatedly. Pretend to be oblivious to this and call yourself Charlie Chaplin. Make a career out of this ladder 'gag', then die of old age some years later.

INSET: spare grenades



Guardien Alien: "Do you like my beret?" Sigourney: "Oh very stylish!"



"Where did I leave that umbrella?"

LEAD ZONE

Graphics: [Progress bar]

Sound: [Progress bar]

Addictiveness: [Progress bar]

Playability: [Progress bar]

OVERALL 60

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