

# THE HISTORY OF ALIEN VIDEOGAMES

PRIORITY ONE: RETRO GAMER CREW TO TELL THE STORY OF ALIENS VIDEOGAMES, THE STORY OF A PERFECT ORGANISM, ITS STRUCTURAL PERFECTION MATCHED ONLY BY ITS HOSTILITY. A SURVIVOR, UNCLOUDED BY CONSCIENCE, REMORSE, OR DELUSIONS OF MORALITY. ALL OTHER PRIORITIES... ARE RESCINDED

Words by Graeme Mason



« This map to the Spectrum version of *Alien* UK demonstrates the size of the task that awaits Ripley and co.



« [ZX Spectrum] Things are getting a little tense and dark in Argus Press Software's *Alien*.

It begins with a simple distress signal, a light blinking somewhere on the bridge of the commercial tug, *USCSS Nostromo*. Owned by the Weyland-Yutani corporation, the *Nostromo* is en-route between a planet named Thebus and our very own Earth, lugging a mobile ore processing refinery behind it. As with all spacecraft, it's obligated to answer the beacon and investigate its source. Unless you've been in hypersleep for the last 40 years, you'll know that the signal is fake and the crew are expendable assets as the nefarious company attempts to procure the grisly creatures that reside on the planet of LV-426.

Despite *Alien* being little more than a haunted house movie, only set in space and featuring a slobbering Xenomorph rather than ghosts, it managed to spawn two direct games and instigate a long-running series. Firstly, in 1982, 20th Century Fox's own videogame arm did its best to reproduce the terror in a single-screen maze where the aim is to dodge aliens and stomp on eggs, represented by dots; yes, it's *Pac-Man* in space, albeit with a few modifications. The power pills are now 'pulsars', which enable Ellen Ripley to turn the tables and temporarily distract the hunting aliens. Destroy all of the eggs on each level and there's a bonus game in the form of another clone, this time *Frogger* (or *Freeway*, depending on your gaming heritage). Guide Ripley across the room, evading a suspiciously large horde of Xenomorphs, and a special bonus item is yours, before it's onto another identical maze full of eggs. A commendable, if bland, movie licence, *Alien* was released solely on the Atari 2600, and had little hope of realistically recreating the masterful slow-burning dread that inspired it. Nonetheless, thanks to its unremitting and monotonous tone, there's a sincere element of panic and fear as the player is stalked throughout the blue maze, valiantly crushing those icky eggs.

Two years later, and five years after the release of the film, British publisher Argus Press Software picked up the licence from 20th Century Fox, developing an entirely different game to the Atari 2600 effort. Having been a part of Imagine Software's 'megagames', Paul Clansey helped set up Concept Software, and *Alien* became one of its first games. "I don't know the constraints Paul was under," says John Heap, coder of the ZX Spectrum version, "but to do a film licence like *Alien* as my first published game was absolutely fantastic." In stark disparity to the Atari 2600 game, Paul and John's game is a strategy title, lacking instant thrills and accessibility, but gaining a forbidding sense of doom as the player, controlling all the members of the spaceship *Nostromo*, must somehow find a way to defeat the deadly creature that erupts from a random member of the crew. Hang on, how come John Hurt got off so lightly? "If it always came out of Kane, you'd keep away from him," smiles John, "or dispatch him to the far reaches of the ship." The spaceship *Nostromo* is presented over three decks in a schematic style, with a series of ducts laying behind each level. A menu allows the player to control each crew member, move them from room to room, pick up objects and monitor their mental state, with the method of defeating the alien ranging from the laser pistols stowed in the armoury, blowing it out of an airlock or escaping in the shuttle, complete with that elusive cat, Jones. The emotion concept, each character's frame of mind, is a neat addition, as is the parity of sound that accentuates the remote loneliness and peril of the player. "[The emotion concept] was a good idea which meant that [characters] might not always do as they were told," says John. "In a lot of my games after *Alien* I had an emotional attribute to my characters. It makes them unpredictable and allows man-management features to be added. I guess in a way I want both the NPCs and player's character to show ▶



« [Atari ST] Despite capturing the feel of the movie, this Atari ST *Alien* strategy game is a little on the dull side.



« [MSX] A odd, naked-looking Ripley in the MSX game *Alien*: *Alien 2*.



## THE HISTORY OF: ALIEN VIDEOGAMES



• Jaz Austin worked on the Game Boy version of *Alien III* for Bits Studios.



• Joe Bonar was involved with the *Alien 3* games and *Alien Trilogy* for Probe.



• Jon Dean found himself working on an early *Alien* game for Activision.



• Mark Eyles used a first-person viewpoint to terrify 8-bit gamers with *Aliens*.



# THE ULTIMATE HUNTER

WHAT MAKES THE XENOMORPH SUCH A TERRIFYING CREATURE?

## CLAWS

With four fingers on each hand, including an apparently opposable thumb, the aliens are extremely proficient at grabbing helpless victims and dragging them off to their lair.

## TAIL

Each alien possesses an elongated tail, bookended with a lethal spike. Used to impale victims with ferocious speed, some *Alien* lore even gives the tail a poison, making it even deadlier.

## JAWS

It's not just the Xeno's outer razor-sharp teeth that pose a threat: inside its mouth sits a second set of gnashers that extend out at speed and snap viciously at the unfortunate victim.

## REPRODUCTIVE SYSTEM

It's the most invasive of reproduction systems, and that's what makes it so horrific. Seemingly able to lay a limited amount of eggs itself within each victim, via a facehugger, the result is a violently dead host and a new lifeform.

## BLOOD

One of the alien's most famous attributes is its acidic blood, capable of dissolving metal, plastic and flesh upon contact. It's the ultimate defence mechanism – you don't dare kill it.

## AGILITY

Once awakened, Xenomorphs move with frightening speed, scaling floors, walls and ceilings alike. When an alien attacks, it could be from any direction.



► intelligence." The intensity of the game, the helplessness in front of a killing machine, was upped as best the Concept team could, bearing in mind the limited tech. "Having the door sound as either your crew or the alien moved around was a stroke of genius, and a lesson to us all: less is more." *Alien* was well-received, but for its sequel, the tone turned to something far more adaptable into an interactive format that mostly employs shooting elements. Mostly.

**A** *liens*, starring Sigourney Weaver, reprising the role of the *Nostromo*'s sole human survivor, takes place 57 years after the events of the first movie. Considerably more action-packed, there are both guns and aliens galore as the fight is taken to the planet of LV-426. In the face of stiff competition, Activision acquired the licence, and soon two separate games were under development. Software Studios developer Jon Dean takes up the story of why. "It was down to politics. Activision US didn't like anything about 'our' game, so decided to make their own. One of the arguments was that they could make use of disk drives for faster loading and more seamless gameplay, whereas European formats relied on single loading from cassette." The result was two diverse games, one with multiple levels offering variety streaming from disk, with the UK version more repetitive in terms of both graphics and gameplay, but none the worse for it. *Aliens UK* is presented in a first-person tile format as the player takes control of six members of the USS Sulaco, including Ripley, android Bishop, company slime Carter Burke and a trio of marines. Over the pond, *Aliens US* closely follows the movie as several minigames mimic scenes such as the dropship descent, med lab defence and the final confrontation with the Queen. "No doubt the Software Studios version is superior!" claims Jon Dean, unsurprisingly. "It

did a better job evoking the atmosphere – to my mind that is key to movie tie-ins, you need to figure out how you allow someone to play what they feel. Literal translations don't serve the purpose as well, despite being faithful." *Aliens UK* was designed by Mark Eyles, formerly of Quicksilver, and Mark notes that his objective was to use the premise and make a game from there. With *Aliens* adopted from just its script, it was a sensible approach. "The *Aliens UK* game was based on the idea that the player would create their own story from the locations and characters in the film, and this is my preferred approach. *Aliens* is such a well-known franchise now that it's hard to envisage what it was like getting the script for the movie. As far as how it would look and feel, all I had to go on was the original *Alien* movie." Taking the core facets, the characters, locations, weaponry and adversaries, Mark and the team created an atmospheric game where progress throughout the maze-like colony was frantic and tense. "The developers did a brilliant job of implementing the design," he says. "The room graphics were built of many modules, or panels, so that a room could be created by pasting them together alongside each other. I tried to pick out the most important characters in the movie to make an interesting team, and I preferred our version to the US [version]. But they both sold well, so I'm sure there were many players that enjoyed that alternative approach."

"I TRIED TO PICK OUT THE MOST IMPORTANT CHARACTERS IN THE MOVIE TO MAKE AN INTERESTING TEAM, AND I PREFERRED OUR VERSION TO THE US [VERSION]"

JON DEAN

in 1987 sees an apparently naked-looking Ripley venture into a *Metroid*-styled platform game, complete with giant boss aliens and weapons hidden inside Facehugger eggs. The same year, the Atari ST was treated to a public domain turn-based strategy game that, while including impressive digital scans and sound samples from the movie, lacked much in the way of excitement. Finally, a full four years after the film appeared in cinemas, Konami released *Aliens* (1990) into arcades, shoehorning a familiar run-and-gun gameplay model to the Xenomorphic theme. Despite a few aberrations, this is a fun blast, and there's even some welcome variety to the by-now tired format – who doesn't want to sit astride a speeding APC blasting oncoming aliens?

The oft-delayed and tortuous *Alien 3* arrived in cinemas in 1992, mercilessly killing two of the surviving characters from the previous film before it even began. Sigourney Weaver, allegedly at odds with the large



# GAME OVER, MAN!

SHIT THAT DIDN'T GET SECURED

Given the rich history of *Alien* comics, an interactive CD-i comic book must have seemed a good idea. For whatever reason, *Aliens Interactive* failed to appear, at least on the Philips console, although it's possible that it inspired the 1995 PC game, *Aliens: A Comic Book Adventure*. How far the Lynx version of *Alien Vs Predator* got is also debatable, although it's likely it was jettisoned in favour of a full-on focus on its fellow Atari hardware, the Jaguar. In 2002, Fox and Electronic Arts cancelled their mutual *Aliens: Colonial Marines* PlayStation 2 game, despite the presence of the game at E3, with some rumours citing the game's poor impression at the conference. Rebellion itself created a demo for the same console in 2004 for Vivendi called *Aliens: Hadley's Hope*, which also failed to materialise, as did *Aliens: Crucible*, from Obsidian Entertainment, apparently scuppered by a lack of faith in the mix of aliens and RPGs, plus the re-emergence of the *Aliens Vs Predator* spin-off franchise.



[SNES] Now where's that flamethrower when you need it...



# SCARIEST MOMENTS

PANTS NOT WET ENOUGH FOR YOU? TRY OUR FIVE SPECIALLY SELECTED FRIGHTSOME SCENES FROM ALIEN GAMES



## CORNERED IN THE MAZE

While the imagery is never likely to incur much fear in even the most timid of players, the Atari 2600 reimagining of *Alien* cranks up the tension with its constant pressuring tone and the hunting aliens, which can only ever be discouraged for a short time. Getting cornered is, as always, a bad idea.



## OPEN VENTS

It's quiet in space. Very quiet. And in this 8-bit *Alien* game for the ZX Spectrum there are no screams, in fact very little sound at all apart from... what was that? A vent opening in the next room? Yes, the panel... it's been completely removed! Something was here. We should head inside and see what's going on...



## OH, HE LIKES YOU...

This mashup of the first three movies in *Alien Trilogy* wisely focuses on the second instalment, as Ripley investigates the colony on LV-426. While there's little sign of the adult aliens to begin with, slipping out from behind boxes and barrels come the slithering little Facehuggers, eager to give you a big kiss.



## BUG HUNT

Initially playing as an isolated marine, negotiating the dark and spooky corridors of *Aliens Vs Predator* is bad enough. But when your superior advises you switch to 'image intensifier' mode, the world suddenly becomes even more frightening, before an alien pops up, right on cue. Definitely need more than harsh language here...



## I GOT READINGS

The motion scanner maximises the tension, and its use in the games reached culmination in *Alien: Isolation*. Stalked by the Xeno, Amanda Ripley can use the device to detect its position, but beware: it can also give away your own location. Never have beeps and blurred visuals inspired so much eye-widening terror.

New York studio. It was an incredibly new and exciting technology back then, but expensive, and every reshoot or mistake would cost a bunch of money." Despite fellow Fox licence *Die Hard Trilogy* employing a variety of genres, Probe felt keeping the game consistent across all three movies would work better for *Alien Trilogy*. "We wanted to keep it dialled back a bit – okay, a lot – and the team worked bloody hard to get it done. It was a struggle given the new ground we were treading, but it turned out amazingly well." The result was an experience that, while slightly at odds with the plots of the films, manages to impressively reproduce the tension and environments of *Aliens* in particular.

1997 saw the fourth film of the franchise debut in cinemas and a new wave of derision and disenchantment from fans that even *Alien 3* had failed to inspire. Clumsily reintroducing Sigourney Weaver's deceased central character was bad enough for most; the mutant human/Xenomorph newborn of *Alien Resurrection* pushed the majority into barely disguised scorn for the famous series. For its PlayStation, Saturn and PC tie-in, Fox contracted another British developer, London-based Argonaut, which

attempted to follow the film's protracted and constantly shifting script for an initial idea that emulated the PlayStation hit, *Loaded*. Alas, for Argonaut and Fox, the videogame landscape was shifting faster than a hungry Xenomorph, and complex third-person adventures such as *Resident Evil* and *Tomb Raider* were becoming the new benchmark. But it wasn't until one of *Alien Resurrection*'s designers suggested a shift to first-person that the game finally became workable, eradicating almost immediately a set of problems that ranged from poor camera angles to unwieldy AI. The result was a game that manages to trump its source material, at the same time introducing the left/right thumbstick combination popularised by *Halo* a year later, and still accepted as an industry standard control method almost a decade later.

Finally, in 2014, gamers got what many consider the most accurate elicitation of the franchise, harking back to the Argus Press game from 30 years earlier. *Alien: Isolation*, developed by Creative Assembly and released by Sega, is notable for an utter absence of the testosterone-fuelled soldiering that has featured heavily since 1986. "I think it was always the intention to move away from the gun-focused space marine version of the *Aliens* experience," notes Clive Lindop, lead designer on *Isolation*. "The stealth focus was at the heart of what the team wanted to build, with *Alien* as the guiding principal, the horror and fear being much more personal, a relentless alien hunting for you specifically." Creative Assembly's attention to detail, recreating every prop and location from the movies is a key element in sucking fans into its world. No longer can the player,



[PlayStation] Delayed and then cancelled on all formats save the PlayStation: *Alien: Resurrection*

representing a terrifyingly vulnerable Amanda Ripley, simply grab a pulse rifle and blast away – this is a menace that can never be destroyed, only evaded or temporarily discouraged with fire. "For the creative director, Al Hope, and the whole team, one of the primary goals was to imbue the alien with the fear, horror and suspense of the original," explains Clive. "Rather than massed waves of Xenomorphs, could we make a single alien a terrifying entity to be hunted by, and return to the origins of the franchise?" Judging by the public feedback and critical acclaim, it's clear the developer's aims were met, and there are few gaming experiences as brutal and relentless as *Alien: Isolation*.

Today, while the cinematic bar may sit low, the potential for *Aliens* videogames remains high. "Ultimately, it's about humanity, human beings and dramatic moments," concludes Rebellion's Jason Kingsley. "There's a backstory that's implied, but it's all about human endeavour, and often human failing, and one heroic character succeeding. That's a trope that works well in videogames." Whether it's a towering predator, Colonial Marine or quivering Nostromo crew member, there's a host of videogames waiting for you to become that hero. Let's rock! ★



[Xbox 360] About to bring the pain in *Colonial Marines*



# THIS TIME IT'S REALLY WAR



**RETRO GAMER CHATS TO GARY GILLIES, COCREATOR OF AN EXPERIENCE LIKE NO OTHER: THE TROCADERO'S TOTAL REALITY EXHIBITION, ALIEN WAR**

## What was *Alien War*?

It was a 20-minute walkthrough (with some running!), just like watching [an *Alien* movie] except you were there with the actors, the action and... the alien! The public were taken on a tour of the base and the creatures got loose, making it a race to survive.

## Was it based on any of the movies?

I suppose *Aliens*, due to us having the marines in their armour together with the pulse rifles.

## Using ten-millimetre explosive-tip caseless, we hope. Why base it in London's Trocadero?

Because it was in the centre of London, and it has a great basement, which apparently is haunted!

## Is it true the experience began from your own personal *Alien* memorabilia collections?

It was my good friend John Gorman [co-creator of *Alien War*] who had a collection of items, and we had a display of props and costumes at a film theatre here in Glasgow. One day, after everyone had left, we were sitting in the dark and thought that rather than the items being in glass cases, would it not be much better if they were let loose and running about, actually part of the action?

## You got Sigourney Weaver for *Alien War*'s opening! How did that happen?

We got to Sigourney by meeting her husband, who was doing a play in London, and he gave us her production company details. We got in touch and John and I went over to New York and met up with her and her agent, the mighty Sam Cohn, the top agent in the world! She was lovely. When John and I went to meet her at her hotel in London the day before *Alien War* opened, she could see we were under pressure and were so skinny, so she sat us down and got us something to eat and drink. Sigourney's a class act!

## Million dollar question: favourite film in the series?

*Aliens*, and also *Prometheus*, which I loved. We managed to get onto the space jockey set and creature department as I had an ex-*Alien War* tech guy working on the set. I like all the questions it put up, the look and feel of the whole movie. Ridley [Scott, director] used on-set live guys in costumes whereas I felt *Covenant* was ruined by using CGI aliens. I wish it had been a true sequel to *Prometheus*.

## What happened after the show ended?

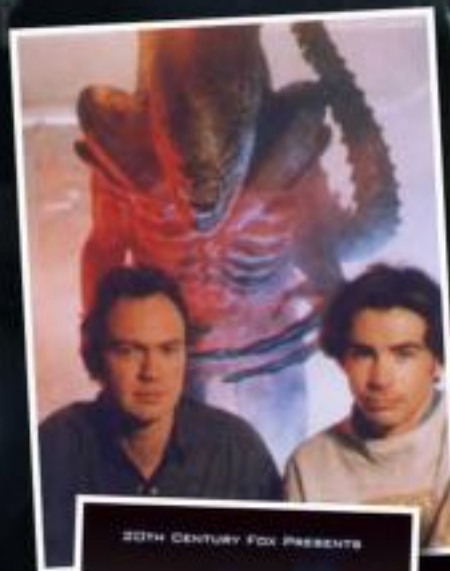
We took a break, and I went back into music, John into film. Then, for the 15th anniversary, we brought it back to the Arches in Glasgow.

## Do you think something similar could appear again?

We would love to do it again, and nearly did in London a few years ago. We had the contract and backing all in place, but then Madame Tussauds went to Fox and did a deal behind our back before opening a tame version in London.

**"THE STEALTH FOCUS WAS AT THE HEART OF WHAT THE TEAM WANTED TO BUILD, WITH ALIEN AS THE GUIDING PRINCIPAL, THE HORROR AND FEAR BEING MUCH MORE PERSONAL"**

CLIVE LINDOP







## YOU STARTED THIS SHOW ME EVERYTHING

### THE BEST OF THE REST OF ALIEN VIDEOGAMES

Predating Rebellion's first *Alien Vs Predator* game by a year is Activision's scrolling fighting game of the same name, released exclusively on the SNES, and there's also an unrelated arcade game from Capcom, notable for including a character modelled on Arnold Schwarzenegger's Dutch Schaefer from *Predator*. 1995 saw the *Aliens: Comic Book Adventure* released on PC while *Aliens Online* was a short-lived GameStorm title that pitched the Colonial Marines against an alien hive. 2002's *Primal Hunt* extended the AVP 2 storyline, while 2003's PlayStation 2 and Xbox game *Aliens Vs Predator: Extinction* took the franchise into the world of real-time strategy. The long-delayed release of that film inspired a mobile game in 2004, before Global VR's *Aliens: Extermination* took the fight back to arcades in 2006, a conflict upheld by manufacturer Raw Thrills and *Aliens: Armageddon* nine years later, cheekily reskinned into *Alien: Covenant* upon that film's release. Rounding off the AVP games, there's an obscure 2007 Japanese Pachinko machine and AVP: *Evolution*, a third-person mobile game that also got release on the ill-fated Ouya. Sadly, since the success of *Alien: Isolation*, there's been little for fans of the series to get their piston-fired jaws into. 2016's *Alien Vs Pinball* pinball videogame was released on multiple platforms, failing on all to represent the tense atmosphere of the movies, while most recently, *Alien: Blackout* continues the story of *Isolation*'s Amanda Ripley, disappointingly consigned to the mobile platform. And the less said about Gearbox's 2013 game *Aliens: Colonial Marines*, the better.

amount of gunplay from *Aliens*, preferred that the weaponry was almost totally absent, and the result is a leaner, grimmer movie that imitates the first film in its singular and contained threat of a lone alien. Having burned through a number of writers and directors, the troubled production concluded with director David Fincher, and was tipped to become a hot summer blockbuster. That didn't transpire as audiences were distracted by more upbeat fare such as *Lethal Weapon 3*, but it didn't stop Acclaim Entertainment acquiring the licence to create a game adaptation. Producer and project manager for Acclaim's developer, Probe, was Joe Bonar, and handled all versions save the SNES and Game Boy. "It was the golden age of platform games," remembers Joe, "and we had this amazing tile-based engine called CRISP that made the creation of really solid platform games very straightforward. We used to joke that during negotiations about licences, people would say, 'Can you provide a game out of our IP?' And we would reply, 'Yes. How many platforms would you like?'"

*Alien 3* led on the Sega Mega Drive, with spec-driven changes to each subsequent platform. "I read the script under an NDA and helped pitch for the game itself," recalls Joe. "I also visited Pinewood Studios, the handler told us to squeeze inside a gap, and led us right into the tunnels of Fiorina 161. We went around all the corridors, taking photos and seeing blood all over the place. Very surreal." Also in the UK, the one version of

» [PC] Stalking marines as the Xenomorph in AVP (1999).



*Alien 3* that differs from the platform template was being designed and coded by Jas Austin of Bits Studios. Like the Probe team, Jas only had the film's script to work from, and with Bits contracted to make the Game Boy port thanks to its experience on the platform, he was able to try something a little different, as Jas explains, "I guess a run-and-gun platform game would have been the obvious choice, but my previous game, *Terminator 2*, had been like that, so I was keen to try something different. Secondly, I had the feeling the other versions of *Alien 3* would be like that, too. And finally, after reading the script, it was clear the film was not action-focused like *Aliens*, so we felt a slower-paced adventure game would suit it better." The result is an excellent and atmospheric handheld game that evinces the movie well, despite its coder's own reservations. "I would have liked to have made the final Queen boss fight more exciting, or perhaps included more puzzles," notes Jas. "And it was all a bit too hit and miss and random. But looking back I think we did pretty well capturing the feel of the film."

Back on the other platforms, the film's lack of weaponry created a brief discussion at Probe/Acclaim. "We always liked to keep things simple," says Joe, "and we decided that having no weapons would be dull, and difficult, so we just said, 'Let's add weapons!' and away we went. Looking back, I'd have loved to have made something different, or even a change of pace in the main game, but I like all the versions and am very proud of them. We had a lot of

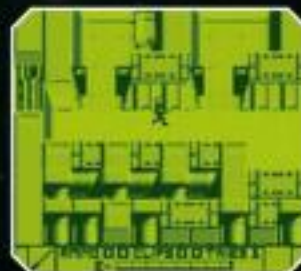


» [PC] "I like to keep this handy, for close encounters."

## HANDHELD HORRORS

### ALIEN 3 GAME BOY

*Alien 3* spawned a range of variable games, including this disparate effort from Bits Studios. Eschewing the standard Game Boy platformer fare, *Alien 3* is a maze game by programmer Jas Austin, and is actually a decent stab at creating a survival horror game on the Nintendo handheld.



### ALIEN VS PREDATOR: THE LAST OF HIS CLAN GAME BOY

Not quite as impressive is this side-scrolling platform game where the player guides a huge predator across a world infested with aliens and, finally, the Queen itself. Not particularly deep or original, yet a decent effort that has some nice touches, such as blobs of deadly acid dripping from the ceiling.



» [PC] Aliens: The Comic Book Adventure

» [Arcade] Aliens: Armageddon



» [Jaguar] Someone is gonna have to clear up this mess in *Alien Vs Predator*.

"I THINK SOMETHING LIKE 84 PER CENT OF PEOPLE WHO BOUGHT A JAGUAR BOUGHT ALIEN VS PREDATOR"

JASON KINGSLEY

fun making it." The SNES game, coded by Nick Jones, remains probably the most impressive, with improved visuals, sound and a more accurate rendition of the film's backdrop, along with its open world structure and an ending that emulates the downbeat conclusion of the film. Also of note here is Sega's *Alien 3: The Gun*, a lightgun shooter that put the player in the role of a marine, sent in to investigate the events of the movie after they've transpired.

**N**ext up for Probe was *Alien Trilogy*, but before we get to that, there's a big spin-off series to discuss, inspired by a set of fantastic comics from Dark Horse and a famous scene from the 1990 *Predator* sequel, in which an alien skull is glimpsed inside the antagonist's trophy cabinet.

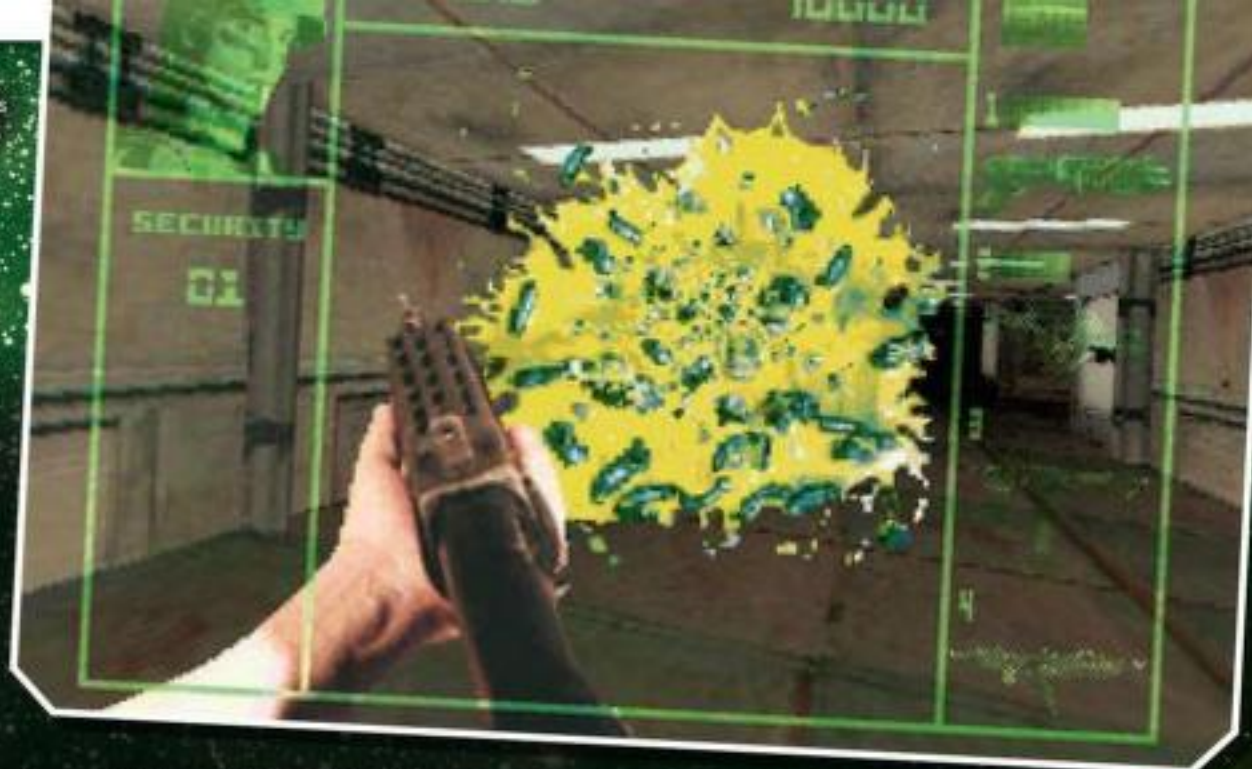
"We approached Alistair Bodin of Atari in Slough with a demo of a *Dragonflight 3D* game," says Rebellion cofounder Jason Kingsley, "and he was so impressed that he asked Bob Gleadow, the managing director, to come and look at it. They thought it was fantastic, and said it'd be great for their new Jaguar console – the first time we, and even Alistair, had heard about it." A few days later, Rebellion had its hands on a prototype development kit and the company was expanding to include permanent staff as it embraced two Jaguar exclusives from Atari: Formula One racing sim *Checkered Flag*, and *Alien Vs Predator*. "What we wanted to do was boil down the essence of the *Alien* and the *Predator* movies into the protagonists and the types of settings, and then add in the Colonial Marines so you have this three-way split," Jason continues. The result was a unique set of three factions, each heroic when

played, regardless of their origins or objectives. The *Predator* hunts, as its culture demands, the chief Xenomorph aim is to reproduce, while the marines are left simply trying to survive by repelling the other two races. Despite not lifting any scenes directly from the movies, *Alien Vs Predator* is impressively evocative of the films, and sold an astonishing amount on the ill-fated Atari console. "I can't remember the exact number, but I think something like 84 per cent of people who bought a Jaguar bought *Alien Vs Predator*," notes Jason proudly, although this success failed to inspire an immediate sequel due to Atari's own struggles with its hardware.

Let's jump into hypersleep and leap forward five years to 1999. 20th Century Fox, impressed with Rebellion's AVP approach, approached the developer to ask if it would be interested in developing a similar game on PC. With 3D graphics cards now transforming the home computer into a powerful gaming machine, the potential was there to greatly improve upon the 1994 game, most notably when the player controls the athletic aliens. "We did wall-walking and running, which was a huge technical achievement at the time," continues Jason, who helped make the decision to create three separate storylines for each race, replacing the first game's shared plot. "It was making a real rod for our own backs, because we had to make three games instead of one, and we couldn't have lower detail polygons on the ceiling because that would become the floor for the alien. But because it was all our own tech, we managed to make it work." *Aliens Versus Predator* became another smash, putting the British developer firmly on the map, yet with Fox Interactive preferring Monolith's engine for its

sequel, Rebellion's next game in the series would come in 2007 with the PSP exclusive based on the second AVP movie, *Requiem*. At the same time, Rebellion worked with *Requiem*'s publisher, Vivendi, on another instalment in the main series, AVP3, before Vivendi's merger with Activision (forming Activision Blizzard) meant Sega Europe picked up the licence and the series effectively rebooted in 2010. "We had much better visual and audio fidelity and were able to significantly improve the AI and animations," notes Jason of this game. "Plus, the expectations of control systems were different because the industry had moved on, as had the complexity and depth of gameplay." Another success for Rebellion, this game marks the end of the publisher's distinguished association with the franchise, and it's a helluva sign off thanks in part to a gory selection of trophy kills. "They're not cute, cuddly creatures!" laughs Jason. "The source material is horror sci-fi, and we wanted to be faithful to that. The *Predator* skins people and hangs them upside down as trophies while polishing their skulls. It's not exactly nice!"

15 years earlier, the release of the three original films as a VHS boxset compelled Fox Interactive to devise *Alien Trilogy*, with Probe once more handling the majority of development duties. Merging much of *Aliens* with a dab of *Alien* and *Alien 3*, the extensive use of motion capture reflected the status the series now occupied. "We wanted to make a real blockbuster of a game," explains Joe Bonar, "as the franchise was so well-established by then. We worked with Wes Trager and his crew [at Acclaim Studios] to direct and produce mocapped aliens in their



## ALIENS: THE THANATOS ENCOUNTER

GAME BOY COLOR

"The abandoned spaceship Thanatos has been occupied by aliens and must be cleared out," begins this 2001 Game Boy Color game from THQ and Australian dev Wicked Witch Software. Portrayed in a top-down viewpoint, it's a fun game with enough variation and nods to the movies to keep fans entertained.



## ALIEN VS PREDATOR: REQUIEM

PSP

Rebellion was back in the chair for this PSP exclusive adaptation of the second AVP movie. "They didn't want us to put the big bad guy, the 'Pred-Alien', in the game to avoid spoilers for the movie, so we ended up replacing it with a tank for the end boss," Jason Kingsley remembers. "And then they put the big bad guy in the trailers for the movie!"



## ALIENS: INFESTATION

NINTENDO DS

Developed alongside Gearbox's maligned *Colonial Marines* console game,

*Infestation* takes place between the events of *Aliens* and *Alien 3* as the player investigates another derelict spacecraft, this time the USS Sulaco. A horizontally scrolling platformer, *Infestation* boasts a particularly graphic (and therefore pleasing) Chestbuster scene.

