

ALIENS

Director James Cameron's sequel features an Alien army led by a giant Queen in RAMBO-like war action.

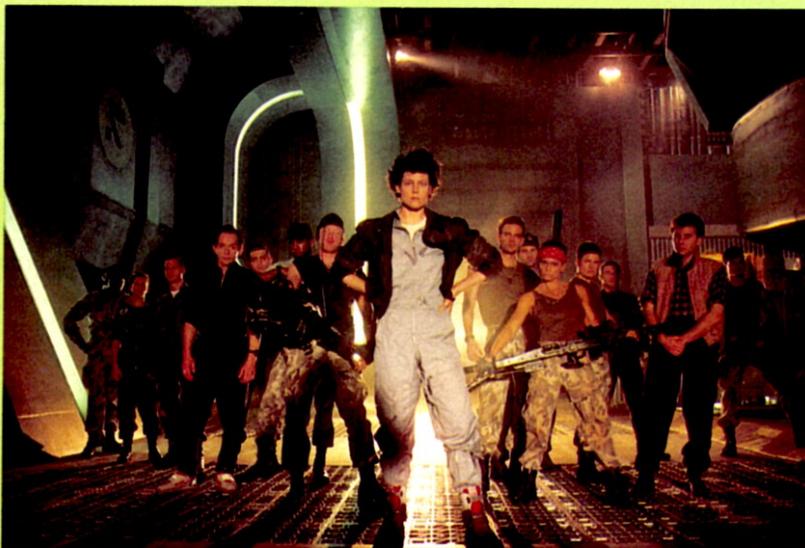
By Bruce Crouchet

On the desolate planet Acheron humans labor to transform the inhospitable world into one more amenable to colonization. Though undaunted by problems of inclement weather and a poisonous atmosphere, the terraforming team suddenly finds itself facing the unexpected challenge of a hoard of aggressive, and seemingly unstoppable, alien monsters. It falls on Warrant Officer Ripley, the only survivor of the ill-fated *Nostromo* expedition, and a group of high-tech Marines to save the day.

Such is the premise of *ALIENS*, the long-awaited sequel to Ridley Scott's 1979 *ALIEN*, which 20th Century-Fox opens July 18. Written and directed by James Cameron (*THE TERMINATOR*), the film is produced by Gale Anne Hurd (Cameron's wife), with special creature effects supervised by Stan Winston.

Rick Lazzarini, who worked with Winston on *INVADERS FROM MARS*, served as mechanical department coordinator for *ALIENS*' creature effects crew. "Some of the effects from *ALIEN* are repeated in the sequel," he said. "But they're repeated with more punch. Rather than just one alien menacing a ship, this time there's an army of 20 or more, which we did with about 12 suits. There's also a new chest-burster sequence as well as a *running Face Hugger* that I designed for a scene in which it attacks Ripley in a medical lab."

The sequel picks up 57 years after the original film. Ripley, again played by Sigourney



"Rambette" Ripley (Sigourney Weaver) and her interstellar SWAT team in the hold of the *Sulaco*, a massive military transport sent to do battle with the title menace in *ALIENS*, to open July 18.

Weaver, has returned to Earth in her ship in suspended animation. She finds that the 12-year-old daughter she left behind has died of old age. Her story of the alien on Acheron is not believed—in the interim the planet has undergone colonization. She is stripped of her rank for blowing up the *Nostromo*.

Cameron's script, which reads like "RAMBO in outer space," has Ripley appointed head of a team of commandos delegated to return to Acheron when contact with the colonists is lost. Cameron makes use of a weapon's concept for the film that got dropped from his script for *RAMBO*, a machine gun slung on a Steadicam harness—called the Smart-gun. Infra-red Helmet-mounted sights, like those used by helicopter pilots, target the weapon. There are shoot-outs galore.

Ripley's interstellar SWAT team finds all the Alien eggs hatched on the planet and is soon decimated by the resulting horde of extraterrestrial

predators. Only Ripley and a little girl colonist named Newt (Carrie Henn) survive to face the alien Queen at the climax. For characterization, Cameron focuses on Ripley's relationship with the little girl—a stand-in for her lost daughter—rescued by Ripley from inside one of the Alien cocoons.

The production is rumored to have proceeded less than smoothly. Shortly before filming began in September, Cameron reportedly threw the production into a tizzy by rejecting designs by artists Syd Mead and Ron Cobb.

The L. A. Effects Group, originally hired to provide the film's visual effects, had previously worked on Bill Malone's *ALIEN*-inspired cheapie *CREATURE*. Later, Oscar-winner Brian Johnson (*THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK*) was brought in to supervise the work.

The artistic temperament of star Sigourney Weaver is said by sources close to the production to have caused problems

throughout the shoot. Weaver refused to shoot scenes involving "gore" and would not allow her body cast to be taken for some planned effects for dream sequences—nightmares of the original expedition that still trouble Ripley. Gore still abounds in the film, reportedly replete with several chest-bursting scenes.

Weaver also is said to have rewritten parts of the script during filming which later caused editor Ray Lovejoy enormous problems in cutting scenes together. In November, actor James Remar, who played the villain in *48 HOURS*, was replaced by

Michael Biehn as a member of Ripley's SWAT team, midway through the shooting.

Because so many of the aliens—now called "drones" or "warriors"—were needed for filming, changes had to be made from the original film's design. "The creature's hands, feet, and head have all undergone slight changes," said makeup technician Rick Lazzarini. "It no longer has the shiny, chrome-like teeth it had in *ALIEN*." The alien extras wore body stockings with alien parts sewn on.

The centerpiece of the film is the giant Queen alien. Some 13 feet high and 20 feet long, the Queen was designed by Cameron, sculpted by Shane Mahan and others, with Lazzarini in charge of the basic mechanical design and a good portion of the construction.

"One of our major problems was how to get the Queen to move realistically," said Lazzarini. "She had a head that was seven feet long and we're talk-

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ing a lot of mass there. Cameron's idea was that the head should whip around, but something that big takes a lot of strength. We finally solved the problem by using hydraulic cylinders and cable-operated mechanisms to move the most massive parts. The Queen not only turned out to be mobile, but it moved around quite a bit more than we ever thought it would, especially in the film's climactic fight scene."

An early catch phrase considered by Fox to sell the film was "If ALIE scared you, here comes momma!" □