Alien (film)

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(Redirected from Alien movie)

Alien (US title: **Alien: The Director's Cut**) is a 1979 science fiction film directed by Ridley Scott and written by Dan O'Bannon, based on a story by O'Bannon and Ronald Shusett. It stars Tom Skerritt, Sigourney Weaver, John Hurt, Ian Holm, Yaphet Kotto, Harry Dean Stanton, and Veronica Cartwright. The film follows the crew of the commercial spaceship Nostromo, who encounter a lethal extraterrestrial lifeform after investigating a distress call from an abandoned alien spaceship aboard the Nostromo. The film stars Sigourney Weaver as Ripley, the Nostromo's warrant officer, who emerges as the sole survivor after the ship's other crew members are killed by the creature. Alien was produced by Gordon Carroll, David Giler, and Walter Hill through their company Brandywine Productions and released by 20th Century Fox. Scott's previous film was the science fiction epic The Duellists (1977), which was his directorial debut and first feature film. The film accompanying artwork was designed by Chris Foss; H. R. Giger's designs for the film's alien creature and its environments were inspired by his work.

Filmed in Britain, Alien was the last movie to be shot at Shepperton Studios before it closed for a year-long renovation. Principal photography began in June 1978 and wrapped in early December, on budget and on time. The film premiered in 70 mm at Kansas City[4] and released in wide release on June 22 and was released in the United Kingdom on July 12, 1979. Alien received universal acclaim, earning the Academy Award for Best Visual Effects, Best Sound Effects Recording, Best Art Direction, Best Editing, and the British Academy Film Award for Best Supporting Actress (for Cartwright), and a Saturn Award for Best Science Fiction Film.

Critical assessment since then has tended to view Alien as a landmark in cinematic history, as a film greatness and influence, and as the best film of all time. Alien was selected for preservation in the United States National Film Registry in 2002, and was ranked the 57th greatest film of all time by the British Film Institute in the 2012 Sight & Sound poll. It was followed by Aliens (1986), which Scott produced, Giler and Hill wrote, and Cameron directed, and which also received Academy Awards for its visual effects and sound effects. The success of the franchise, which includes Alien 3 (1992), Alien Resurrection (1997), and Prometheus (2012), has spawned a variety of other media, including comics, novels, video games, and toys, and produced a crossover franchise with the Predator franchise (beginning with Alien vs. Predator (1990), which is a film crossover series. Alien is the first film in the Alien franchise, and the first film in the Alien vs. Predator crossover franchise.

Plot [edit]

The commercial space towing tug Nostromo is returning to Earth with a cargo mainland crew of Captain Dallas, Executive Officer Kane, Warrant Officer Ripley, Navigator Lambert, Science Officer Ash, and Engineers Parker and Brett, and their cat Jones. While the crew is in hyperspace, the ship's computer, Mother, wakes the crew. The company employer Weyland-Yutani orders Ripley to divert course to investigate a distress signal from a nearby moon. The crew disembarks and discovers a derelict alien spaceship and an engineering station. Kane enters the engineering station and discovers a large organic egg-like structure. Kane is attacked by a parasitic alien lifeform, which Ripley and the crew quarantine in a medical lab. Ripley and Dallas argue over the quarantine, Ripley disagreeing and Dallas ordering Ripley to stand down. Nevertheless, Ripley disagrees and the crew disembarks, determining that an alien being, the Xenomorph, is responsible for the alien organisms. Ripley and Dallas argue over the quarantine, Ripley disagreeing and Dallas ordering Ripley to stand down. Nevertheless, Ripley disagrees and the crew disembarks, determining that an alien being, the Xenomorph, is responsible for the alien organisms.

Tom Skerritt as Dallas, captain of the Nostromo, Sigourney Weaver as Ripley, executive officer, and John Hurt as Kane, the ship's warrant officer, in a publicity photo for the film

Kane is taken back to the Nostromo, where he is placed in a medical lab. Ripley and the crew quarantine the Nostromo, and Ripley and Dallas argue over the quarantine, Ripley disagreeing and Dallas ordering Ripley to stand down. Nevertheless, Ripley disagrees and the crew disembarks, determining that an alien being, the Xenomorph, is responsible for the alien organisms.

Jerry Goldsmith with scarcely audible, far-off metallic clatterings. It suggests the enormity of the crew's discovery by building up to it with small steps. The intimidation is huge (it is a warning to the audience). The entrance-music for Ripley, the listening by Brett and Parker, who are concerned only about collecting their shares. The masterstroke of the surface mock through which the crew members move, their helmet lights hardly penetrating the soup. The shadowy outline of the alien craft, the sense that it's about planted in the earth like a church chair. The enormity of the discovery inside the ship ("It's full of ... leathery eggs ...").[24]

David A. McIntee praises Alien as "possibly the definitive example of horror thriller with science fiction trappings."[25] He notes that it is a horror film first and a science fiction film second, since science fiction normally explores issues it how humanity will develop under other circumstances. Alien on the other hand, focuses on the plight of people being attacked by a monster. It's set on a spaceship, but it's about people being hunted and killed by an eight-foot-tall creature animal.[25] Along with Halloween and Friday the 13th (1980), he describes it as a prototype for a new horror genre: "The slasher movie, which has been dominant in horror movies for the last decade, is normally known on the genre, and the casual cinemagoer, is that it is a distillation of everything that scares us in the movies."[26] He also describes how the film appeals to a variety of audiences: "Fans of Hitchcock thrillers find the slow build-up to the shocks satisfying, fans of the more traditional science fiction film love the hard science fiction trappings and hardware. Men love the battle-for-survival element, and women love not being cast as the helpless victim."[26]

David Edelstein wrote, "Alien emerges the key text in the 'body horror' subgenre that flowered (or, depending on your viewpoint, festered) in the seventies, and Giger's grotesque concept of possible evolutions of aliens. Their reproductive cycle involves being impregnated, and dead ends giving birth to rampaging grey vampires dentate — how's that for future shock? This was truly what David Cronenberg would call the new flesh," a dissolution of the boundaries between human and alien, and man and alien, with a psychosexual interpretation that was hitherto mere shock. Cool, been equated."[27]

In 2008, the American Film Institute ranked Alien as the seventh best film in the science fiction genre as part of AFI's 10 Top 10, a CBS television special ranking the best greatest movies in ten classic American film genres. The ranks were based on a poll of over 1,500 film artists, critics, and historians, with Alien ranking just above Terminator 2: Judgment Day (1991) and below Scott's other science fiction film, Blade Runner (1982).[28] Three years later, Empire magazine ranked it 33rd on its list of the 500 greatest movies of all time, based on a poll of 10,000 movies, critics, and members of the film industry.[29] In 2011, the Film Institute ranked it 57th, ranked it number two in the "25 greatest sci-fi movies ever made". He described it as a "groundbreaking science fiction classic" and "a movie so influential that it's hard to think of a time before Alien".[30]

Cultural influences [edit]

Alien had both an immediate and long-term impact on the science fiction and horror genres. Shortly after its debut, Stan O'Brien was sued by another writer named Jack Hanmer for allegedly plagiarizing a script entitled Black Space. However, O'Brien was able to prove that he had written his Alien script in 1974, the year before Alien's success, a number of other filmmakers imitated or adapted some of its elements, sometimes by using "Alien" in titles. One of the first was The Alien Dead (1979), which has the tagline "Alien from Outer Space ate his way out of us Alien's popularity."[31] Contamination (1980) was initially going to be titled Alien Earth until Dutch Carlos Fonz's lawyers contracted intimidation Luigi Cozzi and made him change it. The film such as Alien, mainly having many similar creatures, which originated from large, slimy eggs, bursting from characters' chests.[32] An unauthorized sequel to Alien, titled Alien 2: On Earth, was released in 1980 and included another chest-bursting scene, this time with a human. Other science fiction films of the time that borrowed elements from Alien include Galaxy of Terror (1981), Inseminoid (1981), Forbidden World (1982), Alien Dead and Dead Space (1991).[33]

The "chestburster" effect was parodied in Mel Brooks's comedy Spaceballs. Near the end, in a dinner, John Hurt does a comic appearance as a customer who seems to be suffering from indigestion. He orders a meal, but when it arrives, it is hot, and moves. "Oh, not again!" the "alien" then does a song-and-dance, singing a line of "Hello, Ma Baby", from the classic Warner Brothers cartoon Fee Fingers.[34]

Nintendo's long-running Metroid video game series, created in 1986, was significantly influenced by Alien, both in stylistic and thematic elements. As an homage to Alien, where in the first Metroid installment were named Ridley and Mother Brain, after the movie's director and the ship computer, respectively.[35]

Notably, at Paisley Abbey, during a restoration project that took place in the 1990s, a stonemason from Edinburgh tried to replace twelve crumbling stone gargoyles erected one bearing a strong resemblance to the space creature from the film.[36][37] A picture of the gargoyle went viral in 2013, though a photograph of the statue first surfaced on the internet in 1997.[38] In 2002, it was confirmed the whole project would be subject to a 10-year long restoration project.

Paisley Abbey "Alien" gargoyle (c. 1995) (Photo: Ridley Scott)

"The 1979 Alien is much more central more than its sequels, with its mixture of sexy seductive geometry engaged in curiously about the human body. Ridley Scott's Alien, Cameron's Aliens, Jeunet's Alien 3 influenced studied its thrills but not its thinking."[39]

— Film critic Roger Ebert on Alien's cinematic impact.

In 2018, author J. M. Rhodes published The Making of Alien, a behind-the-scenes book about the making of the film with cast and crew interviews and previously unseen photographs. The Verge praised the book as "the definitive story of the iconic horror film".[40]

Eli Roth cites Alien as his primary influence, saying "I was Alien when I was 6 years old. To me, it was like a combination of Jaws and Star Wars and that's the movie that made me want to be a director. It haunted me. I actually threw up I was so nervous after I saw it for the first time. It was the highest compliment you can give a horror film."[41] Ty Franck, one of the authors behind the sci-fi series The Expanse, credits Alien as one of his major inspirations.[42]

Merchandise [edit]

Alan Dean Foster wrote a novelization of the film in both adult and "junior" versions, which was adapted from the film's shooting script.[43] Heavy Metal magazine published Alien: The Illustrated Story, a graphic novel adaptation of the film adapted by Archie Goodwin and drawn by Walt Simonson, as a 1980 Alien calendar.[44] Two behind-the-scenes books were released in 1979 to accompany the film. The Book of Alien contained many production photographs and details on the making of the film, while Giger's Alien contained much of H. R. Giger's concept artwork for the movie.[45] A model kit of the alien, 12 inches high, was released by the Model Products Corporation in the United States, and by Airfix in the United Kingdom.[46] Kenner also produced a large-scale Alien action figure, as well as a board game in which the crew of the Nostromo tried to destroy the studio pod while Aliens roamed the Nostromo's corridors and air shafts.[47] Official Halloween costumes of the alien were released in October 1979.[48]

School play adaptation [edit]

In 2016, students at North Bergen High School in New Jersey adapted the film into a play. The production had its budget, with props and sets developed from recycled toys and other items. Social media recognition brought Scott's attention to the play. He wrote a letter of congratulations to the students ("My hat comes off at you for your creativity, imagination, and determination") and recommended they consider an adaptation of his film Gladiator for their next stage production.[49] The film donated to the school to put on an encore performance at which Weaver was in attendance. She got on stage before the performance to congratulate the cast and crew for their creativity and commitment.[50]

Sequels and franchise [edit]

Further information: Alien franchise.

The success of Alien led 20th Century Fox to finance three direct sequels over the next eighteen years, each by different writers and directors. Sigourney Weaver remained the only recurring actor through all four films: the story of her character Ripley's encounters with the aliens became the thematic and narrative core of the series.[51] James Cameron's Aliens (1986) focused more on action and involved Ripley returning to the planetoid accompanied by marines to confront hordes of aliens.[52] David Fincher's Alien 3 (1992) saw Ripley crash-landing on a prison planet battling another Alien, attempting to survive amicably herself to prevent her employers from acquiring the creature.[53] Jean-Pierre Jeunet's Alien Resurrection (1997) saw Ripley resurrected through cloning to battle more aliens even further in the future.[54]

Sigourney Weaver became the star of the Alien films, appearing in four movies. The three sequels released 1986 and 1997. She did not appear in Prometheus (2012) and Alien: Covenant (2017), but expressed interest in doing a fifth Alien film.

The success of the film series resulted in the creation of a media franchise with numerous novels, comic books, video games, toys, and other media and merchandise appearing over the years. A number of these began appearing under the Alien vs. Predator crossover imprint, which brought the alien creatures together with the iconic predators from the Predator franchise. A film series followed, with Alien vs. Predator in 2004 and Alien vs. Predator: Requiem in 2007.[55][56][57]

Sigourney Weaver has expressed interest in reuniting with Ridley Scott to revive her character for another Alien film. In the 2003 commentary track for the Alien DVD release of the film, Alien Quadrology set, she and Scott both speculated on the possibility, with Weaver stating: "There is an opportunity for a film one, which is something I never expected. It's really hard to come up with a film story that's new and fresh. I was very pleased with the last one because it was a space adventure in a good thing for us right now, 'cause Earth is so grim, so we've been talking about it, but very generally."[58] Scott remarked that, if the series were to continue, the most logical course would be to explore the origins of the space jockey and the aliens.[59][60] Weaver supported this idea, saying "I think it would be great to go back, because I've asked that question so many times. Where did the alien come from? Where did the space jockey come from?"[61] Giger said that he, Walter Hill, and Gordon Carroll, the producers of the first four films in the series, would not be willing to produce another unless it was about the alienn homeworld and Weaver was on board (despite the fact that they were among the producers of Alien vs. Predator films). Weaver indicated that she would only return to the franchise if either Scott or James Cameron were to direct.[62] Cameron had been working on a story for a fifth Alien film which would explore the origins of the creatures, but caused work on it when he learned that Fox was pursuing Alien vs. Predator, which he felt would "kill the validity of the franchise".[63][64]

In July 2009, 20th Century Fox announced that Jon Spaihts had been hired to write a prequel to Alien, with Scott attached to direct.[65] The script was subsequently re-worked by Scott and Damon Lindelof. Titled Prometheus, it went into production in May 2011, and was released the following year. Scott said in a statement: "Alien was never indeed the jumping-off point for this project, of the creative process evolved a new, grand mythology and universe in which this original story takes place. The team we felt recognize strands of Alien's DNA, so to speak, but the ideas latched in this film are unique, large and provocative."[66]

Variety reported on February 18, 2015, that a new Alien film would be developed by Neill Blomkamp.[67] On February 25, it was confirmed that Sigourney Weaver would have a role in the film.[68] An intent being to produce a direct sequel to Prometheus, the film would feature the characters of Hicks and Newt,[69] Blomkamp's sequel was ultimately shelved by Fox in favor of Alien: Covenant, a continuation of Scott's prequel, Prometheus.[70]

Several computer games based on the film were released, but not until several years after its theatrical run.[71][72]

See also [edit]

- List of films featuring extraterrestrials
- List of monster movies

Notes [edit]

- Official documentation for the film states that the budget was $11 million, but other sources give different numbers. Sigourney Weaver has stated that it was $14 million, while Ridley Scott, Ivor Powell, and Tom Skerritt have each recalled it being closer to $8 million.[1]

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Citations [edit]

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