



ALIEN (1979)

Without the unique contribution of Swiss artist H.R. Giger, *Alien* might well have been an all-but-forgotten film by now. An upscale remake of the 1950s monster-aboard-a-spaceship quickie, *It! The Terror From Beyond Space*, *Alien* succeeds precisely because visually it feels so damn... *alien* - and that can largely be credited to Giger, who adapted his unique "biomechanical" and quasi-sexual artistic style to create the unforgettably creepy alien designs that would be augmented and re-invented through three more movies. Today, Giger is curator of his own museum in Gruyere, Switzerland, having been ostracized by the Swiss art community for his Oscar-winning work, which included the first monster ever to feature a skull on the end of a penis as its head.

H.R. GIGER: "*Alien* was the first time my biomechanical style was represented on-screen. Before *Alien*, I painted the cover for Emerson, Lake and Palmer, and my work was in the book, *Necronomicon I*, which had the paintings *Necronom IV* and *V*. In these two paintings together, you can already see the Alien, so I didn't invent that just for the film. Ridley Scott looked at my book and saw this monster with this long head, without eyes. When Ridley asked, 'Who will make that?' I thought, 'Nobody but me,' but I said, 'I'll try to do it!' I modeled

this thing myself and tried to do something elegant and good as it could be, because I was terribly afraid that he would remark, very soon, that it looked like a man in a rubber suit. So I understood the danger with this, but the head changed this thing very much. Never before was there a monster with such a long head, no? I always liked that the Alien was not just a horrible, ugly monstrosity. I liked that it has an elegant, nice, beautiful head. For me, it's not ugly.

"I was very pleased with the mechanics by Carlo Rambaldi. In the special effects area, Rambaldi was not very well accepted because he was 'old style,' working with wires, not with radio control, which was modern. But without Carlo, I don't know how it would've come out! I never believed that the lips, which were so primitive in a way, made from contraceptives covered with slime, could be so real!

"Then Ridley wanted you to see things moving inside the head, so we filled up the head with maggots between the transparent shell outside and the skull inside. But it didn't work because the maggots fell asleep, and there was no more movement! Ridley also wanted the Alien's body to be translucent, so you could see the black actor, Bolaji Badejo, moving like a thing-spider inside of this half-transparent suit. They built special ovens for this plastic material, like hot-melt vinyl, but it was not

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transparent enough to see through to the person behind it and it didn't work.

"I was not satisfied with my work because I thought it would be better. There were many more shots of the alien environment and the derelict spacecraft. We worked so long on this, and then it was shown in a few seconds, and it was already old! I didn't understand why Ridley showed peoples' faces so long while the more interesting things were shown so short. He did everything himself. He filmed with all three cameras at the same time, and he would've liked to be behind each camera and behind each light if possible. Later, I saw that Scott did a good job. He filmed it very well because he knew exactly how it should look."