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VOLUME 27 NUMBER 7

The magazine with a "Sense of Wonder."

MARCH 1996

This magazine has followed the career of H. R. Giger closely since 1979, when his Oscar-winning design work for ALIEN literally burst on the scene and changed the look of science fiction. This, our third cover story on the Swiss surrealist artist and film designer, takes a detailed look at his extraterrestrial concepts for last summer's hit movie SPECIES, now out on video.

L. A. correspondent Les Paul Robley interviewed Giger at his home and studio in Zurich, surrounded by the artist's work, which makes the building a kind of shrine or museum with exhibits that showcase Giger's unique biomechanoid vision, including a working, rideable train that snakes through its grounds. Giger spoke frankly about working in Hollywood and the compromises made on his designs for SPECIES. In separate articles, Robley, a working effects technician, details the motion simulator filming of ALIENS: THE RIDE and the CGI effects by Boss Film for SPECIES, projects on which he worked himself. Robley also spotlights the superb creature fabrication by Steve Johnson's XFX, Inc., which highlights this issue's cover, as well as Giger's Ghost Train design that was all but dropped from SPECIES' final cut. In companion pieces, Dan Persons interviews Dennis Feldman, SPECIES' screenwriter and co-producer, and Dan Scapperotti profiles actress Natasha Henstridge, who talks about playing Giger's creature, a role that has catapulted her from fashion model to motion picture star.

When Giger saw the magazine's cover mockup, printed in our previous issue, with only his name listed above the title SPECIES, he called to ask—even implore—that his name be listed smaller, below the title, with only those of his many collaborators. "I am only the artist," he said, quite humbly. "I played but a small part in making the film." We call this issue "Giger's Alien" instead. Though Giger's designs may have been realized by others, his SPECIES monster is as much his as the Picasso, built by other craftsmen, that graces the Loop here in Chicago.

Frederick S. Clarke



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H. R. GIGER

ORIGIN OF SPECIES

The design genius of ALIEN on his new foray into extraterrestrial anatomy.

By Les Paul Robley

SPECIES marks the continuing saga of H. R. Giger's battle with a major Hollywood studio over another of his creations. The world-famous Swiss surrealist artist who changed the look of science fiction with ALIEN, for which he won an Oscar in 1979, suffered major indignation at the hands of 20th Century-Fox studios and the director



of ALIEN³, David Fincher [see *Imagi-Movies* Vol. 1 No. 3]. On SPECIES, Giger found fault with not only the realization of his designs on the screen, but also with the compensation and credit he received from MGM. The movie arrived at video stores last December after a hit theatrical run at the boxoffice last summer.

Transferring Giger's ideas to movie form has, in the past, frequently left him feeling com-

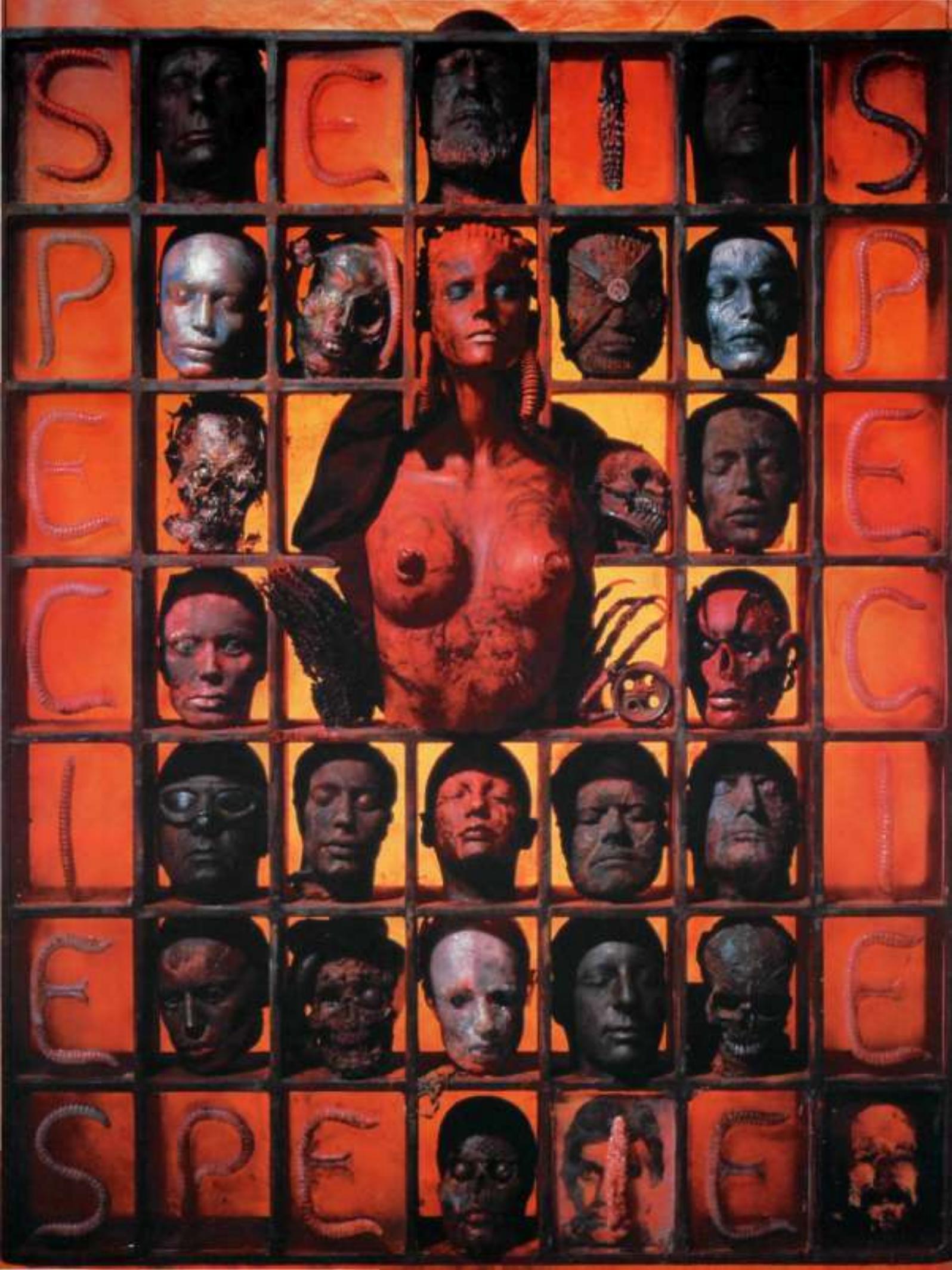


Above: Giger's Sil design for SPECIES, realized by Steve Johnson's XFX, Inc. Left: Giger's design takes shape in polyester, metal, silicone and rubber at Atelier Formart in Switzerland. Right: Giger, ALIEN's design Oscar-winner. Facing Page: A sculpture (187x131.5x32 cm.) designed and fabricated by Giger to honor his behind-the-scenes collaborators (l to r 1-49)—2: producer Frank Mancuso Jr., 4: Boss Films' Richard Edlund, 6: director Roger Donaldson, 11: Sil's Natasha Henstridge, 30: XFX supervisor Steve Johnson, 32: young Sir, Michelle Williams, 33: Giger, 34: assistant Andy Schedler, 40: James Cowan, Giger's U.S. publisher, 47: Leslie Barany, Giger's agent, and 49: screenwriter Dennis Feldman, issued as a signed, limited edition silkscreen.

promised after he sees the finished product on screen. In his own assessment of SPECIES (see page 28) Giger goes to great lengths to criticize the computer effects provided by Boss Film Studio for the film's climax.

SPECIES is the story of a ruthless, genetically engineered female being called Sil, manufactured from an extraterrestrial formula, that has escaped from a lab and is searching for mates with which to procreate its species. The scientists who created it, headed by Ben Kingsley as Fitch, are charged with the formidable task of finding and destroying it, before knowledge of its existence penetrates the wider population.

The movie was produced by Frank Mancuso Jr. and Dennis Feldman, from a screenplay by Feldman. Mancuso is the producer of Paramount's FRIDAY THE 13TH movie sequels, beginning with PART III, as well as Ralph Bakshi's COOL WORLD. Feldman wrote the Eddie Murphy fantasy THE GOLDEN CHILD. The initial genesis for SPECIES evolved from an article Feldman saw in 1987 about the insurmountable odds against an extraterrestrial craft ever locating and visiting Earth.





SIL'S DESIGN PROTOTYPE

Giger designed and built a transparent, glowing Sil.

By Les Paul Robley

Giger conceived Sil in his famous "Biomechanical" style of design that melds flesh with machine. He envisioned this new being as a unique creature—a half-human, half-alien being armed with an array of natural defenses. He imagined her to be far different from the life form in the ALIEN series, possessed of a beauty that went far deeper than the skin.

Said Giger, "I always wanted to have something transparent. Before it was not possible." Ac-

Giger sketch of Sil's transformation highlighting the glowing concept that was abandoned by the production.



ording to his agent, Leslie Barany, the idea of transparent beings has always been in Giger's work. But Giger had to fight every step of the way to convince the filmmakers that the idea of a transparent creature had merit. He was initially told that it was going to be too expensive to do, and that the only way to achieve the effect was through computer graphics. Insisting that it was possible, he built a rough model of Sil with his own crew in Zurich and inserted holograms into its cut-away limbs to show how the transparency aspect would enhance the design and could be incorporated.

Out of his own pocket and at a considerable expense, Giger commissioned CFX Creature Effects at Pinewood Studios to cast for him a transparent bust of Sil. Giger had originally hoped he would be able to provide a working model of his creature that the production in L.A. would be able to use. However, his stiff creations sold the producers on the idea of transparency.

"I had a very good relationship with Frank Mancuso Jr. because he called me every night to talk about the movie," Giger remembered. "We made the pre-production here in Switzerland." He employed help from friends Cony De Fries and Andy Schedler, with whom he had worked on the Giger Bar at his birthplace in Chur (pronounced "kooor"). Together, they created the first SPECIES heads and skulls, using a live Swiss model named Nadia as a basis for his designs.

Giger never had the kind of



Giger's early design sculpt of Sil based on model Nadine, draped with a pendant of Sil's tongue, made with shark's teeth. Below: Building Giger's Sil's design prototype with glowing skeleton at Atelier Formart in Switzerland.



working relationship with director Donaldson that he had previously shared with Ridley Scott on ALIEN. In fact, the two rarely spoke. Giger felt from the start a horror specialist would be better. The filmmakers had wanted Giger to fly to Hollywood, but problems with his mother's health prevented him from leaving Zurich. As it happened Melly Giger passed away during the night with Giger at her side.

Similar to the way he worked on ALIEN³, Giger faxed many ink drawings of Sil to Hollywood, later supplying some air brush paintings. "I was convinced we could do this thing here in Switzerland," he confessed. "But eventually I realized the people here have not the experience or technology."



Daniel Rieser works on Giger's transparent prototype at Andy Schedler's Atelier Formart studio.

"I read in a scientific report that the phenomenal distances between stars made traveling here in a spaceship virtually impossible," said Feldman. "So, I hypothesized that contact more likely could be via information. In order for 'them' to find us, however, we had to give out directions. Maybe we shouldn't be so freely broadcasting where we live to life forms that might prey upon us."

Feldman wrote the initial draft of the script on spec. He then submitted it to Mancuso, with whom he was already working on a project called *CAST OF KILLERS*. Later, Australian-born Roger Donaldson stepped in to direct. No stranger to thrillers, yet a horror-genre novice, Donaldson previously helmed the remake of *THE GETAWAY* and *NO WAY OUT*.

"I've always loved science fiction," said Donaldson. "But there was a particular quality to this one that interested me on another level as well. It's also a terrific thriller, with plenty of good scares, lots of tension and unpredictable twists and turns as the story unfolds."

The script underwent eight different drafts, written over a eight-month period, before Donaldson was content that flaws in the story's logic had been corrected. At one point another writer, Larry Gross, tried his hand at perfecting the story, but the script ultimately came back to its originator. Despite some budgetary constraints which completely reshaped Feldman's original bizarre John Carpenteresque ending (a finale that required Sil's face to crawl off her head, slide down her shoulder and mix with an arm), a great deal of his first draft remained in the final shooting script.

To create *SPECIES'* creature, Mancuso sought out Giger's particular genius. Mancuso was first introduced to the idea of using Giger when Donaldson visited a Southern California comic book shop with his son, and saw *Necronomicon*, a collection of Giger's early works and the same one that had inspired Ridley Scott on *ALIEN*. Donaldson knew at that moment that Giger

GIGER'S SEXY SHOCKER

"We wanted Sil to be scary but at the same time have a sensuality," said producer Frank Mancuso Jr. "Giger was the only one who could accomplish this."



Giger directs a video storyboard of his underutilized *SPECIES* Ghost Train in Zurich. Inset: Giger's skull-like train design.

was the perfect choice to design the female, Sil. Donaldson showed the book to producer Mancuso and MGM president Michael Marcus, who were equally impressed.

Mancuso contacted Giger's California publisher and representative, James Cowan. "I thought this would be a worthwhile project for Giger," said Cowan, "because it allowed him the opportunity to design a very beautiful and special creature, perhaps the most elegant design since the Maria robot in Fritz Lang's *METROPOLIS*." Added Marcus about Giger's involvement: "[We were] equally delighted to have accomplished the enormous coup of securing H. R. Giger. This extraordinary artist has been sought for other projects, but it was the strength of this terrific script that brought him on board for *SPECIES*."

Noted Mancuso, "What I liked about this project was the

opportunity for all of us to be as creative as we wanted to be. It also presented the challenge of walking that fine line between believability and pushing something as far as it can go. After all, there has never been anything quite like Sil on screen before.

"We wanted her to be scary, but at the same time have a sensuality that isn't lost when she appears as the creature. There needed to be a constant level of elegance and grace to her character, and H. R. Giger was the only person we could think of who could accomplish this.

"Roger and I flew to Zurich to meet with him face-to-face. English is not his first language, so we thought his reading the script would not be sufficient. It was like discussing the structure of a building. We outlined her functions and worked closely with him by phone and fax during her creation. He was an extraordinary man to work with, and his design is superb."

From his home in Zurich, Switzerland, Giger recalled his initial contact concerning the film: "I was told this time I could do something I always wanted—to create a monster in another way—an aesthetic warrior, also sensual and deadly, like the women look in my paintings. Usually, they ask me to design monsters with bad-looking, ugly faces and horrible teeth. I wanted Sil to turn into the monster and still look beautiful. This opportunity was, mainly, why I was attracted to the *SPECIES* project."

Of course, beautiful to Giger may be a little different from how you or I perceive beauty. Anyone with a knowledge of his incredible *Necronomicon* paintings of women, such as Li and the females in his *Spell* series, would realize this straightaway.

Giger had specific ideas con-

cerning how the creature should change in the film. Sil is first seen in the lab as a young girl, played by Michelle Williams. Later, after breaking free, she quickly matures into the striking five-foot ten-inch model Natasha Henstridge.

Originally, Giger wanted the character to go through four distinct stages of evolution. "She's looking for good-looking, healthy men to breed her race on Earth," he said. "If her lover's not healthy, she sees a green aura around him. When she gets angry she first becomes dark red, then orange-red hot. Her clothes and hair burn off and on her back there are these sharp spikes coming out. Her body weapons are like red glowing steel. Then she cools to transparent carbonized glass and you see her inside bone construction: veins, body organs and discs." It is at this stage when her killing cycle begins and she loses her trans-



THE MYSTERY OF SAN GOTTARDO

Animated limbs wreak havoc in Giger's own script for his next movie project.



By Les Paul Robley

The project Giger's most interested in filming is his own story, **THE MYSTERY OF SAN GOTTARDO**, which Giger described as a unique love story. "It is about a man and his love for a freak of nature, Armbeinda, which is really a sentient limb combining an arm and a leg. It is the further development of a recurring image in my work over the last 30 years."

The concept stems from a 1963 creation called "The Beggar," Giger's very first sketch, featuring a leg and an arm holding a hat. Giger has filled several sketchbooks with the stories of these "reduced" beings.

The story concerns a race of biomechanoids created by a military organization. The premise: your arms and legs are slaves that do your bidding, but what if they have a mind of their own and were set free? Ink drawings depict the disembodied parts attacking their creator (Giger's self-portrait) in the San Gottardo border tunnel which links Switzerland and Italy. To insure that his vision remains intact, Giger hopes to retain creative control as a producer on the film...and not be forced to rely on CGI.

Giger's disembodied "reduced" beings attack their creator, bathing in the San Gottardo border tunnel which links Switzerland and Italy.

Far left: Armbeinda, the freak of nature at the heart of a unique love story, penned by Giger. Left: The bizarre biomechanoids, created by the military, fight back. Design sketches by H. R. Giger for a long-in-development pet movie project.

parency.

"But then they cut out the color changes and the glowing aspects," he lamented. "They didn't like someone else making suggestions, saying how the script should go. I gave many ideas...In the beginning, I was not happy because I saw my suggestions were not welcome. I think the director always wanted to make her ugly and I wanted to keep her beautiful. I think he's a great action director, but for the horror scenes, he and I did not share the same vision."

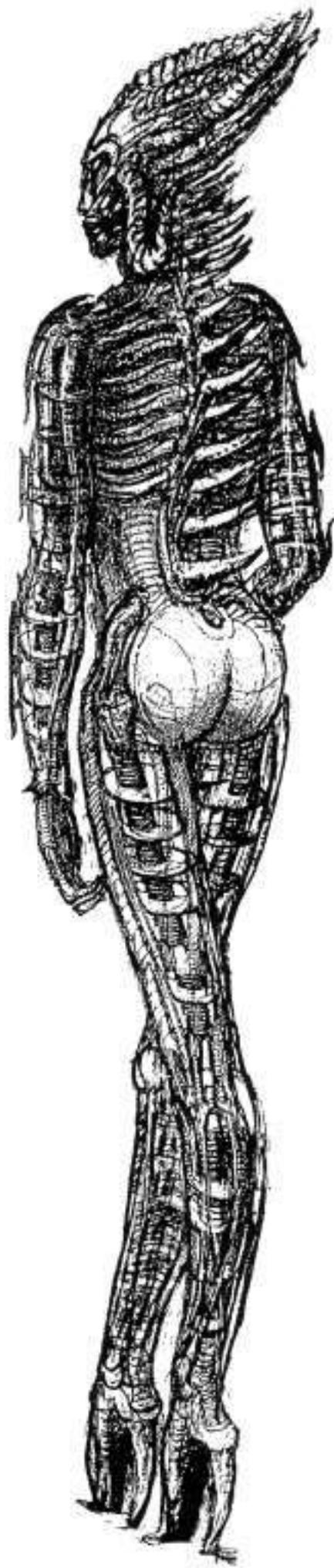
According to Giger, the producers finally embraced his concept to design Sil with a transparent skin (see sidebar page 18) when they realized they could show Sil being pregnant with another creature growing inside her. But Hollywood has a problem showing a



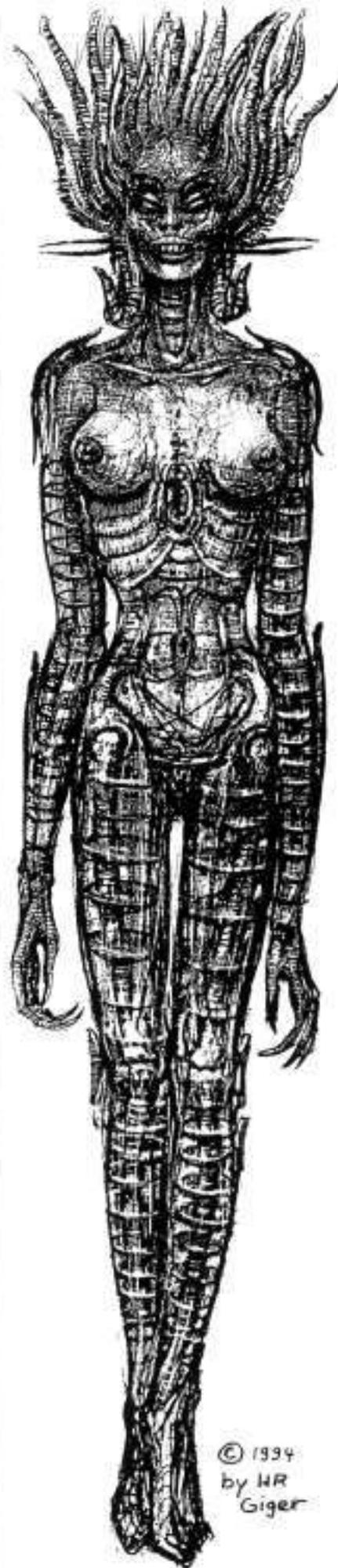
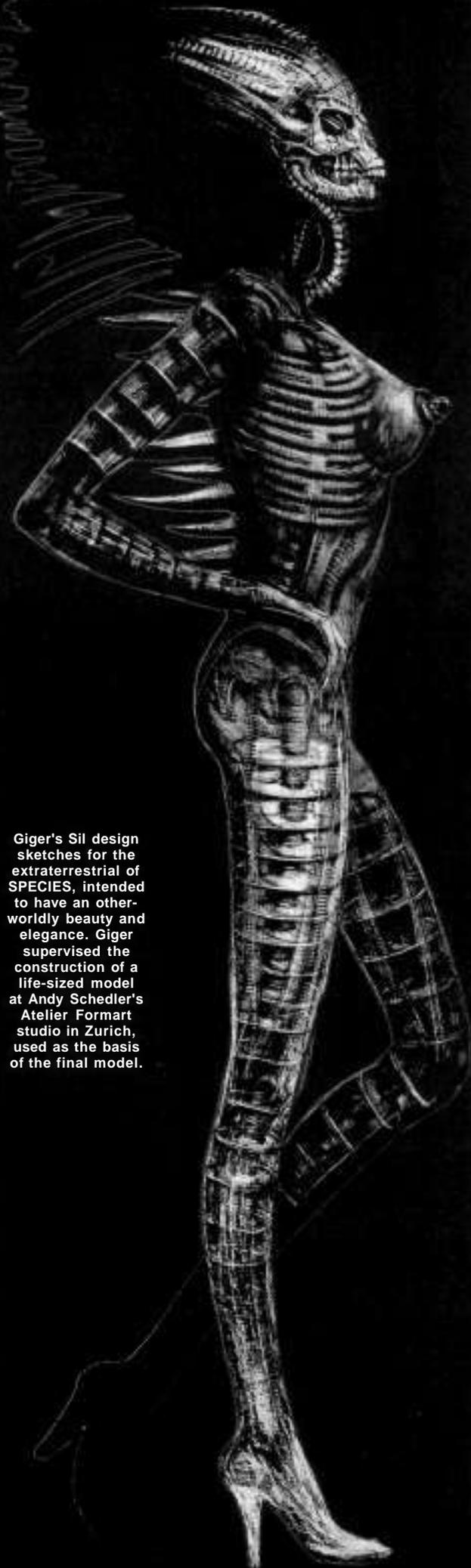
Giger, with agent Leslie Barany (l) and collaborator Andy Schedler (r) at the Swiss Atelier Formart Studio.

pregnant woman and her offspring—however alien—being wasted on screen. She must have her baby first, and it must grow to a substantial size before the ratings board will let you kill her. Giger felt that if they made the lady and her baby look like red-hot steel, the creatures would look significantly alien enough to where this wouldn't pose a problem. "But they said we can't make her glowing," added Giger. "They never did tell me why."

Giger also wanted to incorporate an unused idea from **ALIEN**³ whereby the creature's tongue would be composed of barbed hooks. Sil would kiss her lovers, forcing her tongue into the victim's mouth and down their throats, then yank the insides out. To help Giger conceptualize this unusual



Giger's Sil design sketches for the extraterrestrial of SPECIES, intended to have an other-worldly beauty and elegance. Giger supervised the construction of a life-sized model at Andy Schedler's Atelier Formart studio in Zurich, used as the basis of the final model.



© 1994
by HR
Giger

tongue idea, agent Leslie Barany sent him a set of shark jaws from New York, to which Giger acknowledged: "Leslie is more than an agent, he is my close friend and also happens to be a good art director. The razor-sharp shark teeth were a big help. I transformed them into Sil's dangerous, one-way tongue."

Unfortunately, Sil's Deadly Kiss was rejected in favor of the old ALIEN standby, an object bursting through bone. The Chestbuster from ALIEN has become the American icon of rebirth in horror films, and is now used far too much to suit its original creator. In SPECIES it has become the "Chest-



C L O N I N G G I G E R ' S A L I E N

"Why must SPECIES be made so much in a repeat way?" asked Giger. "We must have better ideas and should not be known as the rip-off people of other films."



Natasha Henstridge as Sil emerges full grown from her chrysalis on the train. Inset: Chrysalis design by Steve Johnson's XFX, Inc. Giger objected to the notion of a cocoon as too similar to ALIEN.

birther," Giger joked, made clean by MGM so that the Pope might not find it objectionable.

Giger also objected to the script's idea of using flame throwers to kill the beast. "I was against the use of fire during the climax because that's an old-fashioned Middle-Age weapon, like the way they used to burn witches," said Giger. "When they asked me how to kill Sil, I said the best way was to blow off her head. Nobody can live without a head." Even George Romero's zombies proved that.

Throughout the production, Giger expressed much concern over the way SPECIES seemed to copy the elements of previous films, namely ALIENS I, II and III. He sent numerous faxes to Mancuso and Donaldson, even submitting his own version of how he felt the film should end. Giger scripted an all-out war between Sil and the military, filled with helicopters and explosions, climaxing in a drive-in theater showing 20th Century-Fox's ALIEN. Laura, the molecular biologist-turned-commando (played by Marg

Helgenberger) blows off Sil's head with a rocket launcher. As her body hits the ground, her glowing baby slips out through an opening in her chest and rolls under one of the patron's cars watching the show. The car heats up and explodes, causing the baby's end.

Another version (with which the MPAA would've had a field day) involved one of the soldiers picking up the baby by the legs and bashing it against a wall, until all he holds is the baby legs in his hands. This would occur as a surprise ending, following the main end credits.

All along, Giger had been assured that the finished film would not follow other films too closely. He strongly felt that Hollywood horror always seemed to share some final confrontation with fire. He believed a fiery end in a burning oil pool echoed the finales of ALIEN³ and TERMINATOR 2. Giger noted that Sil should be resistant to fire, and even went so far as to fax a humorous drawing of a man with a flame thrower between his legs, standing over a kneeling woman crouched dog-style and bathed in the flames.

He titled his design the Flame Thrower F**ker, and it is rumored the production even made a T-shirt out of it.

In a visionary fax sent to producer Mancuso in August of '94, Giger insisted that any bad press the film received would be a result of the derivative elements used in the final version. Giger outlined five elements which he claimed "borrowed" from ALIENS 1 through 3: the Chestbuster, the punching tongue, the cocoon, the use of flame throwers, and finally, Giger himself.

Argued Giger, "Why must this film be made so much in a repeat way? I think we must have better ideas and we should not be known as the rip-off people of other films. Not only this, but a bad light is shed upon me for being so redundant. You assured me that we would have a film without having to copy other highlights so closely. The tongue looks too much like a carrot. This tongue is not for pulling out, but is to punch through his head just like the design I made for ALIEN.

"You can say whatever you want about me. That I'm a bad

designer, that I'm late and don't understand the ways of Hollywood. The one thing I can feel, however, is when the film comes too close to ALIEN I, II & III, that is very bad for all of us. I don't work with you for only money. I work hard to make SPECIES the most special it can be."

Added Barany, Giger's agent, "The film's lack of originality is not because Giger has chosen to imitate himself. It should be clear that he has tried to surpass himself, and in many ways he has succeeded. Too bad it is not all on the screen. It should be clear from his writings that he recognized every scene and effect which bore similarity to his early works, immediately, and tried very hard to convince MGM to listen to his new ideas.

"Giger worked harder and longer on SPECIES than any film before. He even got involved in script change suggestions which would have added true horror and human depth to the story. He even wrote an entirely new dream sequence which could have been a major highlight of the film. Another first, he built a fully operational train with terrorizing effects built into it, plus a claustrophobic train station designed specifically for the action to take place upon. He storyboarded the action with specific camera movements leaving only the need for some relatively simple and inexpensive blue-screen shots, proving that CGI is not the only way to go. Reasons given for leaving it out ranged from it doesn't advance the story, no budget to do it, even though, at one point, it was incorporated into subsequent scripts and also storyboarded by MGM." (For more on Giger's unrealized Ghost Train, see page 39.)

Perhaps Giger's biggest dissatisfaction with SPECIES lies in the CGI work by Boss Film, which the artist felt failed to do justice to his concept of Sil. Noted Giger, Boss Film's "computer-controlled frog-like ugliness...had nothing to do with my concept" (see page 28 for Giger's own full post-mortem on the film).

Richard Edlund, supervisor

continued on page 27



BUILDING GIGER'S ALIEN

Steve Johnson's XFX, Inc. built Sil to Giger's specs.

By Les Paul Robley

Despite the innovation of Boss Film's motion capture work (see page 32), there were sequences in *SPECIES* that required a physical model of Sil. Steve Johnson, founder of XFX, Inc., was brought onto the project to realize the life-size images of the alien. Having previously worked with Giger's designs at Boss Film on *POLTERGEIST II*, Johnson was familiar with the artist's style.

"It was great to work with Richard Edlund again; he was the real reason I got this job," Johnson admitted. "They had written off so much of the beginning of this as a digitally created character, and I'm not sure they had really done this for a feature before. I think the reason Richard wanted me to do the job so badly was because we had a good working relationship together when I was head of the Creature Shop at Boss on *BIG*

TROUBLE IN LITTLE CHINA and *PREDATOR*. There was an entire X-factor eliminated at the beginning.

"What was brilliant about this film was, from the beginning, [producer] Frank [Mancuso], [director] Roger [Donaldson], Richard and everyone all sat down and had very long brainstorming sessions, trying to figure out exactly how to best approach this stuff. So my input was taken very seriously. I was involved in the lab creature sequence almost in writing the thing."

Johnson never worked with writer Dennis Feldman at this stage of the production. "Dennis was definitely involved and his ideas were listened to," continued Johnson, "but the brainstorming as far as what our technology would allow wasn't in the script at that point. Whenever you have a writer write a script who is not a special effects expert, they're not sure what's possible to do."

XFX supervisor Steve Johnson with the puppet Sil, only briefly glimpsed in the film. Johnson sought Giger's design input long distance via fax and phone.



XFX's animatronic Sil puppet on the sewer set for the film's climax.

Johnson looked forward to realizing Giger's designs. His main challenge on the project was to please the highly critical artist. He and his crew tried to "think like Giger," remaining true to his work, and constantly referenced his books throughout their immense effects ordeal.

"Giger's designs are fluid, marked with raw motion on the canvas, and they are incredibly erotic," Johnson pointed out. "When you're asked to bring one of his creations to three dimensions, it's a difficult thing to achieve, because you have to take a loose, fluid approach to it. I think one reason the entire process turned out as well as it did is that we stayed in very tight communication with him

through faxing, phone calls and Fed Ex. We kept him very much in the loop and always listened to what he had to say."

The most unique and challenging characteristic of the creature to capture on film was that its body is translucent, as opposed to transparent. "Our creature has a complex skin process that allows light to penetrate, as well as play across the body structure," said Johnson. "It is a unique and horrifying being, yet a thing of beauty as well. One of the coolest elements of the creature was that it's translucent and you see through it, so it couldn't be done in the normal way. One thing that helped us out a lot was all the materials research

we'd done for *THE ABYSS* previously for the floating aliens at the end."

Early on, Johnson had decided that he wasn't really thrilled with the way puppets were normally built. "You do a sculpture, a mold, a mask, then a paint job," he said. "I feel it doesn't always move naturally or organically, or doesn't wrinkle upon itself naturally. I wanted to make something a lot more organic than that for this film. It was my major goal to do that and make Giger happy."

To realize Sil, the ruthless, genetically engineered female creature manufactured from an outer space formula, XFX made several full-body animatronics with replaceable arms, heads and torsos which could clip on and off. The interlocking mechanics were designed by Eric Fiedler. At first, Giger was not very happy with the face, saying it was too "ape-like." Johnson took Giger's suggestion and made it the way the artist and designer wanted. "You're talking about a creative change of about a 1/4-inch, and the untrained eye wouldn't even be able to notice it," explained Johnson. "Not a big deal—we just added a clear dome over her forehead."

Johnson and sculptor Mike Hosch work on realizing Giger's designs in clay on a life cast of Dana Hee.



REALIZING GIGER'S VISION

"Giger's designs are fluid, marked with raw motion on the canvas, and incredibly erotic," said Sil puppet supervisor Steve Johnson. "We tried to think like Giger."



At XFX, Steve Johnson (l) supervises fitting Dana Hee in the Sil body suit.

Sil's head was made up of two layers—a Giger skull with a lovely face on top. Bands of texture were placed beneath the exterior skin so that shapes moved underneath like muscles to create expressions. Giger was extremely pleased with the final result. He sent Johnson a fax claiming that the animatronic of Sil was the best 3-dimensional realization of a female Giger creature. Johnson proudly displays the fax on his office wall.

Sil was put on the screen in four different ways: full-body animatronics, Boss Films' CGI, a combination of the two, and a woman in a suit. The Sil suit was worn by kick-boxing Olympic Gold Medalist Dana Hee for brief shots of the creature jumping into the water and bursting from her hotel suite.

For the nightmare flashes, Johnson also used a man in the suit, filmed in 35mm underwater. They reversed the film in post to give it an eerie, otherworldly quality, with strobe lights flashing behind and in front. "I wanted to really break up the human form, [similar to] what Giger did with the Alien using tubes running off the back

and length of the head, so you didn't quite know what you were looking at and it didn't look so much like a man-in-a-suit."

Johnson added three 12-foot phallic tubes growing off the back of the head, as well as a series of eight 12-foot crab claws on its back. "In the water they moved beautifully and really served to great purpose in breaking up the human form, because there are tentacles and things flying all over the place," Johnson said. "It looks like a Giger painting come to life and when Giger got the 20-minute [footage I sent] he said he could

watch a whole movie of it." Unfortunately, MGM saw fit to use only a few seconds of it in the film, which makes it difficult to see what's going on.

Johnson claimed he and his shop were given only 13 weeks to create the actual film puppet of Sil. The very first shot she appeared in was made doubly difficult because she had to work in a jacuzzi filled with water. "Anytime a puppet works in water it's always very difficult because it's harder to move in, and what you build has to work mechanically and cosmetically in water," said Johnson.

Johnson's most complicated sequence, however, was in the lab when the creature is reproduced in its "pure" state. "We used over 20 different puppets to create a two-minute sequence. It was one shot after another, with each shot requiring a separate strategy: gravity tricks, different puppets, opticals... We were very excited about it—and very nervous.

"We took a real lateral approach to the cocoon and several of the lab creature effects. We show this organism grow from a single cell throughout twenty different effects all the way into a 10-foot chrysalis. Chrysalis supervisor Bill Bryan and I came up with a way to actually create creatures without using rubber molds. A real organic, lateral approach to actually creating animatronics... What it basically involved was forming layers of polyurethane plastic that we then manipulated with pneumatics by applying negative and positive air pressure. We then painted them with colored gels, overlapping them. So we ended up with something

At XFX Gino Acevedo (l) and Norman Cabrera paint the animatronic Sil.





The finished Sil sculpt (l) and the final animatronic puppet (r), Giger's designs brought to life by XFX craftsmen. Right: The transparent Sil head prior to painting and final detailing, showing the interior mechanics of the puppet.

that moved much more organically than a foam rubber piece ever could. Like muscles moving underneath, skin sliding on top of that and wrinkling where it naturally would—I'm very pleased with that. It's probably one of the most innovative things we did in the film."

But it wasn't just Sil and aliens that XFX provided. Johnson's team of 40-plus effects artisans created the illusion of reality for many other shots in *SPECIES*. For the scene where Michelle Williams breaks through her glass cage, the crew made a life-casting of her arm in a fist and built a duplication of it over a hydraulic ram. The mechanical "fist" literally smashed through a 2-1/2-inch piece of real glass. The little throwaway effect would never look as real if it had been break-away glass. It really sells the shot,

making it more powerful.

Later, when Williams hides on the train and gorges herself on chocolate bars, Johnson fashioned her with fat makeup. Her skin writhes as in *ALTERED STATES*, as if worms are moving beneath the flesh. Then worm-like objects begin oozing out of her face.

"I'm pleased with that and think it's really magic," Johnson said. "First of all, it's done very simple, but in a way that no one will be able to figure out. It's a combination of two very distinctly different techniques—one being makeup effects and the other CGI. She has appliances on her face and underneath those are little buttons and we attached mono-filament to those buttons, and just out of frame, pulled the wire. The computer department took care of removing the wires.

And there's really no other way you can get that direct kind of movement.

"Then we went to another method and had the worms actually break through the skin using the same technique which had pre-scored skin on top of the buttons, so it would look like a worm beginning to grow out. Once that had gone three or four inches, then the CGI took off." A definite advantage over *ALTERED STATES*.

Johnson told a funny story about why the worms growing out of Williams' face were so fat. It wasn't from the chocolate bars in the plot. Giger had told him by phone that they should resemble "pickles" growing out of her face. But, in Giger-ese, "pickles" was meant to say "pimples" and so Williams ended up instead with kosher dills



coming out of her skin.

When the older Sil (played by Natasha Henstridge) falls out of her cocoon in the bathroom, the crew filmed it upside-down so that Sil would appear to defy gravity. Sil simply stands up through a hole cut in the set and works her way out of the chrysalis. She reaches her arms straight up out of frame, grabbing a trapeze bar. The pulley yanks her up and out of frame,



This is spinal tap: Filming Lisa Liberati as the Bathroom Bimbo who gets removed from the competition by Sil, scouting for a human mating partner. Right: XFX makeup artist Kenny Myers (0 and Bill Corso apply the design.

so that it appears she's falling down. It sounded like some of Johnson's early PREDATOR ideas were finally being put to good use, such as shooting in reverse and upside-down.

For the grisly cutting of Sil's thumb, XFX physically cut off a rubber thumb. Then Boss Films grew it back with CGI. For the birthing scene, they constructed a special puppet that would allow its chest to split open and have a mechanical baby within a cocoon. Once the baby started to grow, CGI again took over. The production would not allow the baby to come out from between her legs. So, the wicked Giger submitted a humorous fax showing the art of new species insemination.

XFX technicians Eric Feidler (l) and Bob Newton construct the transparent animatronic Sil puppet.



The rat featured in the twist ending was built oversized at about two-feet in length. Shot in reverse, the puppeteers yanked the tongue in. When viewed correctly, the tongue appeared to shoot out. Another rat built real-size was pinned to a false rod on a quick release. They filmed the scene by jamming a fake tongue into it, stabbing it in a pre-scored area, then released the pin at the same moment so that the victim rat whipped right out of frame. "It took about a million tries to actually get it in the right area," Johnson laughed. The tongue sequence with the child eating the rat was entirely computer-generated at Boss.

Even a form of CGI is slowly working its way into Johnson's studio. "Adobe Photoshop is really a good tool for design, plus programs particularly made for character, like Metaphor," Johnson admitted. "What's really neat about it is you can spend a day on the computer and print-out a photograph of a makeup that is so photo-realistic, it looks like you did the makeup and put it into any environment. It's a brilliant tool to show to clients."

Some of Johnson's best ideas failed to make it into the film. "We planned on quite a few things for the lab sequence that didn't end up being shot," he said. "It involved other versions of the creature that we built with our new technology out of this polyurethane fabrication. The



only thing not in the film that I'm unhappy about is the animatronics aren't in it as much as I would like them to be. However, on the other hand, Roger Donaldson is a very strong director and he directed the movie he wanted to make and you can't argue with that. If he had wanted to see the creature more then I'm sure she would be there."

Was Johnson unhappy about not getting poster credit like Giger and Edlund after all his efforts? And does he share the same feelings as Giger over how little his creation appears in the film? The effects artist was disappointed about the lack of poster credit, but, Johnson's young and will eventually be on billboards alongside Stan Winston and Rick Baker. XFX followed their stint on SPECIES by working on special effects for EVOLVER, Jim Jarmusch's DEAD MAN, THE MUNSTERS and STUPIDS for John Landis, BAD PINOCCHIO, more Duracell commercials and THE MUPPETS for Universal.

As for Giger's disappoint-

ment, "I had one phone call with him after he saw the film where I commiserated with him," said Johnson. "I feel badly for him that he didn't get his image necessarily shown a lot. And for the first time it was one he really liked, so he would've been very happy to have it seen. It's probably more of a disappointment for him than me because I understand the Hollywood process a little better. The reason I have no bad feelings is it was just such a wonderful, positive experience. I know that we were all on the same team and made the movie that was ultimately their choice to make. But I really can't complain because as much as Giger's unhappy, I think he's unhappy because he's not as directly involved in the film and doesn't quite understand as well that it's a group effort all the time.

"It's not really fair to criticize after the fact until we're out there producing and directing our own film. I don't think we're ever going to get our artistic images exactly the way we want them." •

GIGER'S LEGAL NIGHTMARE

"When the contracts first come it's always an unnecessarily long time and a lot of tricks," said Giger. "And I'm not used to people wanting to cheat me."



Natasha Henstridge as Sil seeks to perpetuate the SPECIES with Whip Hubley. Inset: Giger's rejected story idea for Hubley's death scene.



of the Boss Film computer effects responded to Giger's criticisms. "When the movie came out, he [Giger] was so happy," said Edlund. "He was full of accolades. Two months later he changes his mind, and he does this historically. He did it on POLTERGEIST 2 and on ALIEN³. He always hates his work when other people do it because he doesn't do it. As long as he's the sculptor and he puts his finishing touches on the thing, he's happy. It's sad that he does this, because a lot of people worked incredibly hard on this film. But it's not uncharacteristic of him to rain dislike on people who attempt to interpret his work on the screen, as with Ridley Scott and David Fincher. It's the artist's need for control over his baby, I think."

Countered Leslie Barany, Giger's agent, "Edlund here tars with too broad a brush. Giger loved Steve Johnson's rendition of Sil in SPECIES. Giger is a generous collaborator who has often praised the work of others, especially Ridley Scott. But what is at issue here is the animation of Sil by Boss Films, and that is another matter." (For Giger's response, see Letters, page 62.)

Noted Giger of his relationship with SPECIES producers, "When the contracts first come it's always an unnecessarily long time and a lot of tricks, and I'm not used to people wanting to cheat me. The legal part was more horrible this time than on ALIEN³. It seems to be the normal thing in Hollywood. But in the end, it's the result that you see which is important and not how much it cost. It has to look good. If it looks bad, I would be ashamed. I want it to be a good movie because I've already worked on two that weren't terrific films: POLTERGEIST 2 and ALIEN³."

Giger's future contracts will now opt for gross percentage points and stipulate that no work shall begin until the final agreements are signed. It will also be insisted that the copyright for all concepts and designs *not* incorporated into the final cut of the film shall remain with Giger. Given his experience, would Giger ever consid-

er working on another sequel if the opportunity presented itself?

After seeing a final cut of SPECIES last June, Giger was none too thrilled by what he saw. He loved the makeup effects supplied by Steve Johnson's XFX company. Giger faxed Johnson a compliment that the latter has framed on the wall, saying that the animatronic model of Sil was the best 3-dimensional realization of a female Giger creature come to life as they appear in his paintings. He even went so far as to commission the young makeup artist to build him a second Sil, exactly like it, but stiff. Giger told Johnson that if he is called again to work on a similar film, he wants him to fabricate the monster.

Giger also fought very hard to get dream sequences involving Johnson's Sil mating with a fellow creature extended, as well as his own train segment. Giger loved the first nightmare showing the creatures making love underwater. Johnson had sent him a 20-minute tape for his approval, so he had no way of knowing it would be so abbreviated in the finished film. He thought the editors may be

so familiar with their cut of SPECIES that their sense of time may have been distorted. They trim it down until someone watching in the theater is shown only a three-second shot, and it is sometimes not long enough for a viewer to assimilate the information. However, the filmmakers have this footage imbedded indelibly in their brain and may not be aware it's too brief. He felt the same about the birthing scene and others where Johnson's puppet was utilized. Giger felt confused by the introduction of the baby creature, believing it killed the focus of the movie. Giger never wanted the son in the script in the first place, refusing even to design it.

As for Boss Films' computer effects, it was Giger's feeling from the start that CGI was hardly needed in the film. He thought it could've been done with a combination of makeup effects and someone in a rubber suit, much like the first ALIEN. Now that the technique is available, people are too quick to want to use it in situations where it's unnecessary, Giger believes.

The only digital effect Giger

liked was Sil's second eye transformation. But he never understood why a creature with this kind of duality was never shown as a full-body morph, especially when the effect is readily available and fitting to the story. Perhaps it is to the director's credit that full body shots were limited in length to what appears in the finished film, since many of Giger's earlier criticisms seem to agree with other SPECIES reviews.

Giger sent a letter to Mancuso stating that the film could be much better if they just gave it a little more time. He suggested a radical solution of delaying the

opening for two months and re-doing all of the computer effects at the end. "Sometimes I ask myself why I talk to you all night long on the phone without seeing any of my good advice in the film," Giger sadly concluded.

Giger also disliked the style-A poster used in the SPECIES ad campaign. He noted it looks like the ALIEN poster with Sil curled up inside the egg. About it he wrote: "What really hurts me, is to be mistaken in the way the audience must think, that Giger is responsible for the movie poster design made with photo and air brush!" Whoever did it went to great pains to simulate the artist's biomechanical style.

Barany even suggested MGM wanted Giger's name as much as his designs, for they referred to the creature as H. R. Giger's in some of their telephone campaigns. After dialing the 1-800-5-SPECIES telephone number, callers listen to the coming attractions trailer. Then they hear: "Academy Award-winning artist H. R. Giger gave movie fans nightmares with his creation in the ALIEN films. Now he's created

Sil, the half-human, half-alien creature at the center of the sci-fi suspense thriller from MGM, SPECIES." No other names are mentioned. Not Donaldson.

Giger's negotiations with MGM for proper credit and compensation for his work continued until the month of the film's theatrical release last July. To finally receive his "reduced" fee of \$50,000 for designing and building the film's Ghost Train (the artist claims to have spent \$100,000 of his own money building the train), Giger gave in to two points for which he and his agent initially fought with great zeal. Originally, Giger wanted main title credit for the concept, the design and the fabrication of the train, and the credit by name of all the companies who helped him put it together in Zurich. He finally settled for an end title credit on the train, and for the inclusion of only the names of individuals—not the companies—of the people involved. The reference made these professionals seem like mere assistants to H. R. Giger, causing the artist difficulties in his relationships with his collaborators.

"Why would MGM do this when they credit every catering company?" asked Giger's agent Les Barany. "Perhaps to obscure the fact that there were other companies besides Boss

SPECIES biology à la Giger: The artist's unused designs showing how Sil would give birth to her baby.



THE DESIGNER'S MOVIE POST-MORTEM

Giger disowns the CGI rendition of his Sil design concept as "unaesthetic."

By H. R. Giger

Translated by Sandra Hathaway

I realized many things after seeing SPECIES. For example: I was hired because of my name, which seems to be closely linked to ALIEN—even if they say things to the contrary. Working closely with producer Frank Mancuso Jr., we were in agreement on the design of Sil. She was to remain aesthetically beautiful and elegant, even after her transformation into a lethal creature. Transparent, with a rather massive skeleton, the shape of her body accentuated by saucer-shaped plates around the joints. Filmed suspensefully, she would produce a sense of horror.

Visual effects supervisor Richard Edlund once called the mechanized puppet of Sil, built by makeup effects expert Steve Johnson, a "transparent pin-up girl." Thus, two completely different Sils appeared in the movie. There was the—for me, aesthetically convincing—transparent puppet built by Johnson and the other, absolutely not transparent, teeth-gnashing, unaesthetic computer-Sil, which has nothing to do with my ideas. Unfortunately, this computer-controlled, frog-like ugliness appears in the last ten minutes of the film and I can only hope that viewers will not consider it synonymous with my work. I want to distance myself from this Sil, which has nothing to do with my concept. I assume there was not enough time or enough means to



Giger with his mother Melly, who passed away during his assignment on SPECIES.

present Sil in a way that retained her transparency and beauty.

The scene I especially like is the birth of Sil's son. Here Steve Johnson's Sil, the beautiful monster, was used. She had class! Sil's grown-up son, however, is an aberration from the original script and is unnecessary and confusing. It seems there was a lack of confidence that one monster, just my Sil, would be enough.

Since I couldn't travel to the States, I didn't want to leave Sil to just anybody, so I produced my sketches in such a way that they conveyed an impression of Sil, but would never have enough detail to construct her from. I wanted to make the model myself, as I had the Alien in Ridley Scott's movie. The pre-production model started in Andy Schedler's studio in Switzerland wasn't bad. But the work morale was counterproductive from the beginning. We had no specialist and too little

know-how. There is no film industry in Switzerland.

I asked producer Frank Mancuso Jr. several times to send us someone like Steve Johnson. We were made to feel guilty during an attack-like visit from Mancuso, Donaldson, production designer John Muto and screenwriter Dennis Feldmann, who wanted to move the production of Sil to Hollywood. Even though we hadn't even started production, we were collectively ashamed and left Sil to the Americans.

Now I had to make up 1:1 plans of Sil (which would not have been necessary if she had been produced in Switzerland) almost overnight, using an airbrush, which I hadn't done in years. What was presented to me—in half size—was a clay model with a fish face, which even MGM didn't seem to like. The second clay model, made by Steve Johnson in actual size, was better, although the upper body was too big and the head with its low forehead looked a bit ape-like. I corrected the figure's appearance, using faxes and phone, so that she would remain beautiful even after her transformation. We managed this, even though Donaldson always wanted to make Sil more fierce-looking and more fearsome.

Steve Johnson was stuck between two camps. Since he was starting with the skeleton and skull, which had nothing to do with a beauty, Donaldson let him be. Then he built the sur-

"I realized after seeing SPECIES that I was hired for my name, which seems to be closely linked to ALIEN," said Giger, "even if they say things to the contrary."

face of the skin around them, using PVC, just as we had done during pre-production. The difference was that he had put in joints, while we had made a stiff puppet, since Mancuso always said our puppet would later be digitized and animated using CGI. But to finally bring Sil to life, apparently a moveable puppet was needed. Thus, in the scenes where Sil is seen briefly, we see Johnson's "computer-free" puppet. The huge difference between the "animatronic Sil" and the "computer Sil" cannot be overlooked in this case.

Had we sent the rigid puppet we had manufactured in Switzerland to Hollywood, it would have become a total computer product—a true horror figure. Seen from that point of view, Steve Johnson saved my Sil. Had she appeared more often in the film, in all probability, this text would not have been necessary. Since there was not a final version of Sil until the movie was finished, only then could Johnson's Sil be compared to the computer Sil, and show up the discrepancies.

After the Ghost Train was taken to LA and filmed according to the vision of director Roger Donaldson and producer Frank Mancuso Jr. it was no longer my nightmare sequence for Sil. The whole scene is about eight seconds long. Sil runs in front of the locomotive, which quickly catches up with her. She wakes up bathed in sweat. Edlund did the scene in high Hollywood style, and it is, in its own way, successful. I want to thank Mancuso and Edlund for that scene. They did a great job with it. At least, my Ghost Train was preserved in the film in some way.

The reason the movie still did so well has to do with Donaldson's fast-paced direction, the heavy promotion utilizing my name, and the two real Sils, Natasha Henstridge and the

child actress, Michelle Williams.

A scene I didn't like was the beginning of the cocoon scene, which I described in detail. The worms were supposed to screw out from bursting pimples in Sil's skin. Instead, as it was done in the film, the skin breaks and red-brown computer sausages pull out (but very, very quickly to hide the computerized embarrassment).

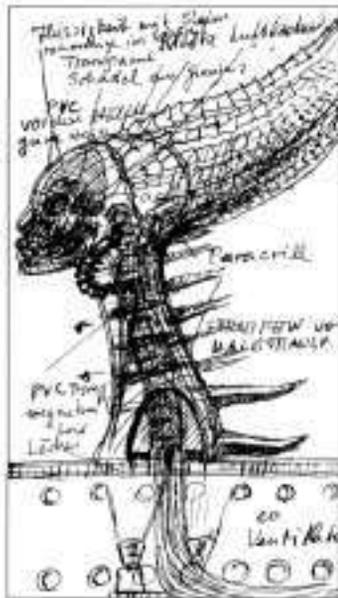
The scene of Sil's birth, however, compensates for that. There was a prototype for that scene: the Spanish theater group "La Fura dels Baus" has naked women tumbling head over heels out of rubber tubes. I liked the blue "shrimp soup" Sil is always dreaming about, which is skillfully repeated throughout the film. These dream sequences show two E.T.'s attempting chest-to-back copulation. They were created by Johnson, and filmed by Donaldson in Edlund's tank in the Boss Film studios. Another effect particularly well done was the transformation of Sil's eye.

Building Giger's Sil, Marco Wust and Brigitte Von Kanel (l) cast model Nadia at Atelier Formart.



Giger's early design sculpt of Sil, Version IV, 1994, fashioned of polyester, zinc wire and bones. Inset: Boss Films' CGI rendition which Giger disowned as "ugly."





Giger's designs for the mechanics behind Sil's lethal tongue. Giger wanted to avoid the use of CGI to create Sil just with the use of makeup and puppetry.

on the picture." Giger's merchandising contract with MGM for the little-used Ghost Train called for only limited use, and only as it appeared in the film. According to Barany, MGM violated this agreement regarding the train almost immediately.

"I found out about it only accidentally during a conversation with Dark Horse Comics," said Barany. "I happened to mention to them that I had seen the first issue of their SPECIES comic book and noticed they substituted another dream instead of the Ghost Train and mentioned, not to worry, Giger is not likely to mind since it helps preserve the value of the train for future projects. There was silence on the line. I was told the Ghost Train was moved to the last book of the series. I asked for a fax of it. It was changed, as well, another violation of the contract. Since it had already gone to the printer, nothing could be done about it."

Dark Horse Comics had no idea that the whole concept of the train was Giger's. They assumed it was a script element provided to Giger by MGM, and that they could use and interpret it like any other element. Robert Conte, an associate editor for Dark Horse who has since left the company, told Barany that MGM never advised Dark Horse that the copyright on the train belonged to Giger. Noted Barany, "For that reason, and also because we lost the Main Title credit fight with MGM over the inclusion of the

train design, the only credit Giger got in the SPECIES comics was 'Sil Design, H. R. Giger,' which implies that it was the *only* element of SPECIES he designed. Dark Horse feels terrible and promised to make it up to Giger, somehow, in the continuing series."

Giger actually plans to use the Ghost Train in his own film project, THE MYSTERY OF SAN GOTTARDO. "I have been working together with Giger on this story as the editor for the last six years," said Barany. "We shall publish it under ARht Publications in book form with all the text and drawings, even before it becomes a film. The only way this will ever become a film is if we can get a deal in which we retain ownership, and Giger's interests in the property can be assured both financially and creatively. I don't see how that can be done without Giger as the producer."

Mancuso reportedly told Giger that if he had any ideas concerning the advertising he could feel free to send them. So Giger offered many sketches for poster ideas. One of them was a box-like structure showing seven wormlike letters in the word SPECIES surrounding an image of Sil. (Giger designed and cast the unused typeface for SPECIES, see opening illustration page 17.) Interspersed throughout are death mask likenesses of various members of the production crew who Giger felt get

continued on page 35



SCRIPTER AND CO-PRODUCER

Dennis Feldman on using horror metaphorically.

By Dan Persons

One should consider carefully before telling Dennis Feldman that SPECIES is "just another summer film." Author and co-producer of the feature, Feldman explained his regard for "escapist entertainment" with a uniquely generational example: "My father [Charles K. Feldman, president of First Artists] had a movie that they were making at the company, a very distinguished movie called AGATHA. It starred Dustin Hoffman, it was photographed by Vittorio Storarro, it had Vanessa Redgrave—very classy, distinguished picture. At the same time I was trying desperately to buy for the company a movie called DAWN OF THE DEAD by George Romero. DAWN OF THE DEAD is a much more serious, much deep-

er, picture. For all that a superficial viewer might think it's a crass, cheap, commercial picture, it's not. It's a very powerful metaphor for our consumer society with all these zombies in the shopping mall. It is a brilliant, deep motion picture that's changed more about my view of life than almost all of the pictures I've ever seen. On the other hand, AGATHA, which appears to be a serious, deep movie is actually very unmemorable and not very powerfully meaningful.

"There's a real dichotomy to my view of how a movie can be meaningful. It can be meaningful more with metaphors and central images that are strong and powerful and that grab you even if they're kind of crude and direct. It's that kind of a medium, and AGATHA, for all its class and sophistication, was rather trivial and banal."

In light of that outlook, it comes as no surprise that Feldman considers his own film—in which an alien taking the singularly toothsome form of Natasha Henstridge, goes man-hunting in L.A. while she herself is being tracked down by a scientific team bent on her extermination—not just another two hours of empty entertainment. "My approach to the material was biologically and evolutionary. One of the things I wanted to point out was that we are the controlling or dominant species of this planet, as we see it, and we are the superior species. That's at some debate,

Feldman, visiting Giger's Sil workshop in Zurich, interested in directing the sequel to SPECIES.





Sil seeks to mate with a reluctant Whip Hubley. Feldman wrote the script on spec and revised it ten times in seven years to shepherd it to the screen.

SCI-FI/HORROR HYBRID

"I had this biological view that nature is about predation and mating," said scripter Dennis Feldman. "The original script was much more science fiction than horror."

overseeing the novelization, overseeing the comic book—which I wrote and am proud of—the video game, which is coming up in about a year. I spent a lot of time with the story material. I spent a lot of time of the script.

"Frank spent a lot of time on the set. Frank was also primarily in charge of the budget and the money concerns. We kind of divided things up—we did a lot of casting together, we did a lot of story stuff together, we did a lot of targeting of specific needs and desires, we did a hell of a lot of advertising together. And since, we've done some celebrating together."

Celebrations are clearly in order. Despite the generally hostile attitude of critics toward the film, the public embraced SPECIES, and many responding to advertising that positioned it as the ALIEN of '95. Not surprisingly, there's already talk of a sequel, although Feldman stated he'd involve himself with a second go-around only "if I was doing the directing."

Beyond that, Feldman sees no shame in the current production atmosphere, in which a science fiction concept only makes it to the screen if it's mated with elements of horror or action-adventure. "I love science fiction,

but let me say this about genre: it always seems to me that there's a root or really important, archetypal human experience in every genre. As I worked on the script I realized that the horror genre has a very biological root, in which teeth and claws—whether they're Dracula's teeth or Freddy's claws—are kind of our primal fear of other species attacking us or ripping us up. It's about the fear of what nocturnal animals are out there in the dark, or of the unknown. That is the base of the genre, and I do my best, when I see a genre, to rediscover its base meaning, and not to find a genre cheap if it survives hundreds, sometimes thousands, of years. I don't find science fiction, in its way, any more advanced or higher than horror. The mixing of the two—especially [since SPECIES is] such a biological film, with horror being the ultimate, biological genre—really makes sense to me and works.

"Yes, I'd love to do a pure science fiction. But action-adventure is also a medium that has a base meaning. If you really dig into a genre and rediscover—not just cliché over—its base meaning, I think these things have an incredible, tremendous force." •

Young Sil is grown in isolation as a scientific experiment with alien DNA. Feldman likes wedding the metaphoric power of horror with science fiction.

because ants, for example, have a greater biomass than we do and they run their lives perfectly well, and just because they're smaller we don't consider them primary competition or consider them as running their world as successfully as we do ours.

"Putting that aside, what I wanted to point out was that if another species that felt it was superior was to somehow get on this planet, all our views of the lower species would reverse. We'd say, 'Hey, that's not fair, you've got to treat a species in a certain fashion. A species has rights, a species is not just something that tries to survive and propagate.' I had this very biological view that nature was about predation and mating, and I feel a lot of that comes across. [My original script] was more specific and scientific, it was much more science fiction than horror. There was a good deal of horror, but there was a great deal of science fiction. Now, there's a great deal of horror and a good deal of science fiction."

To create the project—started as a spec script and subjected to about ten revisions over seven years—Feldman took the unusual (for the film industry) step of actually researching his sub-

ject matter. "I spent a lot of time reading and a lot of time talking to scientists. I made a lot of good friends amongst the scientific community. I spent a lot of evenings over at UCLA at a group that studies the origins of the universe, and I became fascinated with the idea of answering these childhood, basic questions: What are we doing here? What are we? Why are there two different genders? Why do we propagate? Are we a species that just pursues selfish, individual gain or are we altruistic? Are we destructive and predatory or are we benign? What is love? A lot of these questions—really childhood questions—I [applied to] biology to see if I could find the answers, and I found a great number of them. It was a very gratifying experience for me."

Less gratifying, possibly, was the production process itself, where, it was rumored, Feldman was barred from the set by his co-producer, Frank Mancuso Jr. Feldman's own description of how production responsibilities were divided does not contradict those rumors: "We did a lot of things together, we did a lot of things separately. I spent a lot of time working with things like merchandising. I spent a lot of time



little credit after the film is completed. Two of the likenesses are actual photographs of agent Les Barany and writer Dennis Feldman, who were left out when the face molds were struck. Giger envisioned this merely as a teaser poster that didn't reveal much about the plot, but acknowledged the efforts of people behind the scenes.

With MGM's cooperation, Giger produced the poster as a valuable signed and numbered graphic by the artist, intended as a "Thank You" gift from the studio to the various department heads, film principals and promo partners.

The idea to use this image as a publicly displayed poster for the film was killed in its earliest sketch stage when Giger first presented it to MGM through Frank Mancuso Jr. However, since Giger believed strongly in the artistry of the image and the validity of the gesture, honoring, for once, the usually unsung behind-the-scenes personnel, Giger suggested to produce it as a limited edition silkscreen given away as presents by the studio, exactly as it was done with an ALIEN portfolio, by 20th Century-Fox in 1978. Everyone involved thought it was an excellent idea.

Although the production was in full swing at the time, Mancuso, Donaldson and Edlund juggled their busy schedules to make themselves available for a two-day, very uncomfortable life-cast session at the Boss Film Studios. Steve Johnson's XFX, Inc. donated their time to the effort as the three executives subjected themselves to the painstakingly slow and claustrophobia-inducing process. At the second session at XFX, molds were taken off Steve Johnson himself and Giger's publisher, James Cowan. The five molds, together with an existing one of Michelle Williams, were sent off to Giger with everyone's blessing. Giger already had in his possession a bust of Natasha Henstridge, supplied to him earlier for the design of Sil. Screenwriter Dennis Feldman and Giger's agent Leslie Barany, who could not be at the

SPECIES' CGI BREAKTHROUGH

"This is past anything," noted effects supervisor Richard Edlund. "With today's technology we can do things we couldn't have dreamed of even two years ago."



Michelle Williams as young Sil begins to undergo a terrifying transformation. Right: Williams with XFX makeup artists Kenny Myers (r) and Bill Corso. Inset: H. R. Giger's makeup design.



casting sessions, provided their own photographs to Giger, and Giger's collaborator Andy Schedler was cast at Atelier Formart in Switzerland. Putting aside whatever creative differences that might have existed among some of them, everyone was united in their willingness to participate in the creation of an art-piece which would commemorate their involvement in SPECIES.

MGM publicity liked the poster so much they requested the rights for "two" gigantic billboard murals to herald the film's release in New York and Los Angeles. Much to Giger's surprise, they also plastered one-sheet versions of the poster all over some major U.S. cities, without crediting the artist and devaluing the seven-color Limited Edition silkscreen.

For months after the film's release, Giger continued to negotiate for the payment for his work on the misused poster. MGM paid the printer, Uldry & Sohn \$21,000, directly, and another \$15,000 to Giger, which barely covered his materials for the 187x131.5x32 cm. sculpture,

and the cost of photographing it. MGM also paid for the cost of shipping to Los Angeles the huge crate containing the carefully packed silkscreens.

Giger had been contacted by MGM to explore the possibility of obtaining permission for the usage of this original artwork, limited to the two billboards. MGM suggested that this could be of great publicity exposure to Giger in this country. An agreement was reached for this very limited display. According to Giger that is as far as it went. No additional usage rights were requested or transferred to MGM in the silkscreen, or the image contained in the silkscreen for advertising purposes.

According to Barany, MGM claimed all rights to the image on behalf of the studio. "In our opinion, MGM never secured all rights. Giger must have been an employee for hire of MGM with respect to the silkscreen (which he was not) or there must have been a signed document transferring all rights in the silkscreen to MGM."

Giger viewed this unauthorized poster reproduction as a serious violation of his rights,

and an even greater concern that the existence of cheaply produced and mass-distributed posters destroyed the value of the limited editions, not only for Giger, but for the poster's intended recipients. In his mind, the restrictions imposed by European law, protecting the so-called "moral rights" of authors, had been seriously violated. Giger also heard that the studio hoped to use the posters to promote the release of the picture in Europe in a similar manner. Since this was in excess of MGM's rights in the U.S., it was also in excess of their rights



in Europe and, Giger felt, would require them to supply him with significant, additional compensation. Giger's attorney, Jerome Sussman, sent a letter to MGM and was told that a response to Mr. Giger would be forthcoming shortly.

MGM instead sent a reply stating, in effect, that they had licensed the use of the sculpted image for all promotional purposes without limitation, worldwide, in connection with SPECIES, and asserted all rights to the image on behalf of the studio. They claimed that a buyout had been made for the "world of promotional possibilities" and that Mr. Giger would not be entitled to additional monies. Finally, they also accused Giger of being in breach of his agreement with MGM with respect to the studio's copyright ownership in the designs of the alien creature "Sil." They claimed that Sil had been incorporated in the sculpture and silkscreens that have been sold by Giger without prior authorization from MGM. They closed their correspondence with the statement that MGM had paid Giger a "substantial amount of money" for a total



SPECIES

CLOSE ENCOUNTER NATASHA HENSTRIDGE

The Canadian model-turned-actress on her high-impact movie debut as Sil.

By Dan Scapperotti

The premiere monster designer of the last decade is H.R. Giger, the creator of the terrifying creatures in *ALIEN* and its sequels. His latest unearthly creation is a case where beauty is the beast. In the person of the stunning newcomer, Natasha Henstridge, Sil, a new breed created in a laboratory by combining human and alien DNA, wanders the landscape with an increasingly violent urge to mate.

Henstridge, the 20-year-old beauty who snagged the plumb role is a native of Alberta, Canada. Henstridge turned to modeling at the age of 14, and moved to Paris. She eventually wound up in New York where she continued her modeling career, appearing in commercials for such products as Old Spice and Oil of Olay. When Henstridge's commercial agent moved into movie casting he set up the young actress on interviews. "SPECIES came at the perfect time because I was ready to move into something else," said Henstridge. "I auditioned and went through the whole process, meeting the casting director and then the director, and the producers and that sort of thing. They gave me a couple of screen tests. It was a long process getting SPECIES."

The fledgling actress found that most of her movie direction came before the cameras were set up. "We discussed it more than directing me on the set, except for the little technical things," she said. "We discussed

it before hand and came to an agreement as to what we were looking for. It was more of that than actual every day direction."

For Henstridge the character of Sil seems to shift with each successive viewing. "It's funny," said the actress, "because every time I watch the movie I begin to see different things about Sil. For a long time I was saying that she's really naive and kind of lost in this world. Anybody can understand what that's like. Her feeling of having no parents, no family, that sort of thing. She's naive and out there in the world alone, just running on instinct because she's this half-alien character. After a while I started to realize that she's not that good. She begins to feel human behavior in a way. Like when the woman walks into the bathroom and Sil gets pissed off about it. For the first time she's starting to feel these human emotions. She becomes territorial. She's very instinctual, which I thought was

kind of interesting about the character and was the fun part to play. But in a way, it changes every time I see it."

Since most of the creature effects were computer generated, Henstridge was not forced to undergo extensive makeup. However, she didn't escape the rigors of makeup altogether and was a frequent visitor to Steve Johnson makeup studio. "I had to cut my thumb off," said Henstridge, referring to a scene where Sil cuts off her own thumb and that of her victim's to make it appear that she died in a fiery car crash. "Some people who are playing aged people or whatever and who have to go through serious makeup would be laughing at me when I say that, but I did have a prosthetics thumb. The thumb was the longest makeup period because they kept testing for the right color. They make a mold, a cast of my thumb, in the position that it would be shot in. Then, they recreate my thumb by

Stranger in a strange land: Henstridge has a hot tub close encounter with Whip Hubley, operating on instinct to mate and perpetuate her SPECIES.



Henstridge as Sil, with wrong turn barroom pickup Anthony Guildera.

making one up out of a plastic, rubbery material. Then they put it on with spirit gum and then match the color of your skin with airbrushes and things like that. They pull my thumb behind and attach the fake thumb. I cut it off. I had to cut it right too! I didn't want to spend another four or five hours having that put on again.

"My biggest effect," continued Henstridge, "was coming out of the cocoon, being wet and cold and slimed up. That kind of thing. That was kind of difficult."

While escaping her pursuers aboard a train, the young Sil, played by Michelle Williams, transforms. She becomes encased in a cocoon and emerges as Henstridge. "They built a cocoon on a stage making it look like a train restroom in one of the little compartments," said Henstridge. "They built the set upside down and tested it. They had the cocoon on the ground and the toilet on the ceiling and had a hole in the corner of the box. Then they had the cocoon made and slimed down a bit. They had wires going into it which made it pulsate. I would come in the bottom of the cocoon. My whole body wouldn't fit through the opening, so I had to go in one leg at a time, sort of a split. It looks like I'm falling out but I was actually coming up out of it and grabbing onto a trapeze bar that pulls me up. I pull my legs up so it looks like I make that fall. It was a very clever technique, I thought. It was very cold. They were heat-



Sensed as a genetic undesirable, Gulldera gets insistent and killed.

ing up this jelly and stuff that they put on me for the slime. They were heating it up in crock pots, but it was still very cold."

The maturing Sil is still a child, a fast-developing child with an ever increasing sexual urge. Consequently, the role called for extensive nudity. "I didn't have a problem with the nudity," said Henstridge. "I knew in advance that there was going to be nudity in it and I knew why there was going to be nudity in it. I think that if there wasn't any nudity in this picture it would be kind of ridiculous in a way. The character has a child-like quality about her. A naivete which sets the character within context. She starts to realize that showing your body and stuff like that is suggestive of sex and she begins to have the urge to procreate."

Director Donaldson was very sensitive to Henstridge's situation regarding the nude scenes. "Roger was so good about that," she said. "So good that he would close off the set to everybody. It could be a little awkward in the beginning and he wanted to get the best out of it. There is one scene where I come running out nude behind some cars at a supermarket. They had the whole block blocked off so no one would come around there. So they were really very sensitive to that."

Next up for the beautiful actress is Albert Pyun's ADRENALINE: FEEL THE RUSH. •

ON WORKING WITH MGM

"Giger feels used and betrayed," said agent Leslie Barany. "He is reminded that the only true nightmare that Hollywood is capable of producing is a legal one."

promotional buyout of the SPECIES sculpted image and MGM was not otherwise obligated to pay more. Up to that point, all Giger had received was the initial \$15,000 to cover his expenses and a promise of \$3,000 for the billboard display.

H. R. Giger's faxed response was "I do not want to work with MGM liars!" His lawyer reasserted that no written or oral permission had been given, either by Giger or his representatives for use of the sculpture image beyond the rights for two billboards. He also indicated that Giger felt strongly that the studio had taken advantage of him in every aspect of their relationship.

Noted Giger's agent, Les Barany, "MGM's letter was full of distortions and lies regarding their every assertion and they have since backed away from it after it was refuted, point by point. They instinctively went on the attack without, I suppose, even looking at the silkscreen, which did not include the creature Sil, only the lifecast of actress Natasha Henstridge provided to Giger by Steve Johnson's XFX, Inc., with the approval of MGM and Frank Mancuso Jr., the producer. And to this date, not one silkscreen has been sold by Giger. His one-third of the edition had not yet been printed! All their letter

finally managed to achieve was to enrage Giger."

On September 28, 1995, MGM sent Giger's attorney a fax stating that they would pay a total of \$20,000 for a release of claims regarding the use of the lithograph, and set a deadline that the offer was good only until 6 p.m. that Friday evening. The trouble was, the letter was sent at 4 p.m. in the afternoon, Los Angeles time, forwarded by fax to Giger and his agent at 5:50 p.m., nearly 3 a.m. Switzerland time. MGM was, in effect, "putting a gun to his head," demanding that the artist make up his mind in ten minutes—in the middle of the night!

The sum of \$20,000 was only half of what Giger had billed MGM on July 23 for the two billboard installations, the photography of the sculpture, his own creative compensation for its design and for the after-the-fact settlement of its unauthorized use as posters. As of this writing, the poster issue is still not settled and "the bastards are just running up our legal bills," said Barany.

Added Giger's agent, "Giger feels used and betrayed. He set out, with the best of intentions, to honor SPECIES in an art piece through a joyous collaboration. Now, every time he looks at the silkscreen he is re-



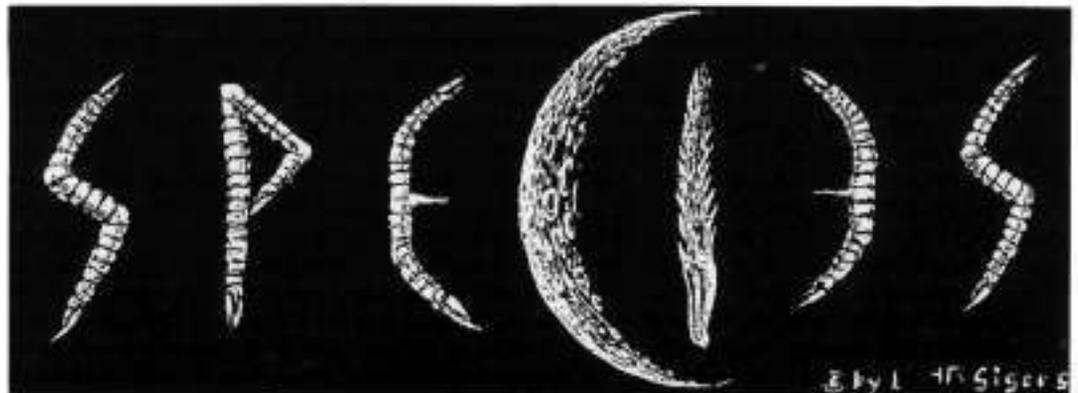
Keeping it tense, SPECIES director Roger Donaldson rehearses Susan Bartsch and Ben Kingsley.

minded that the only true nightmare Hollywood is capable of producing is a legal one."

To add insult to injury, an incident occurred at the Deauville Film Festival which seemed symptomatic of Giger's treatment throughout his relationship with MGM (20th Century-Fox, Giger maintains, was never the nightmare that MGM has been). Giger claimed that the studio did everything in their power to seduce him to come to France for the festival premiere of SPECIES. But Giger hates to travel, and even worse, to dress up and "smile like an idiot." It is not something he's good at.

It happened that Giger, his girlfriend Sandra Beretta (of the famous Italian firearm family) and the cast from SPECIES (consisting of Natasha Henstridge and Ben Kingsley) had been invited to attend a special

Giger's unused title design for SPECIES. MGM's final design retained the shape of Giger's letterforms, but the poster utilized a cocoon image that the artist felt aped the campaign for ALIEN too closely, as did the film itself.



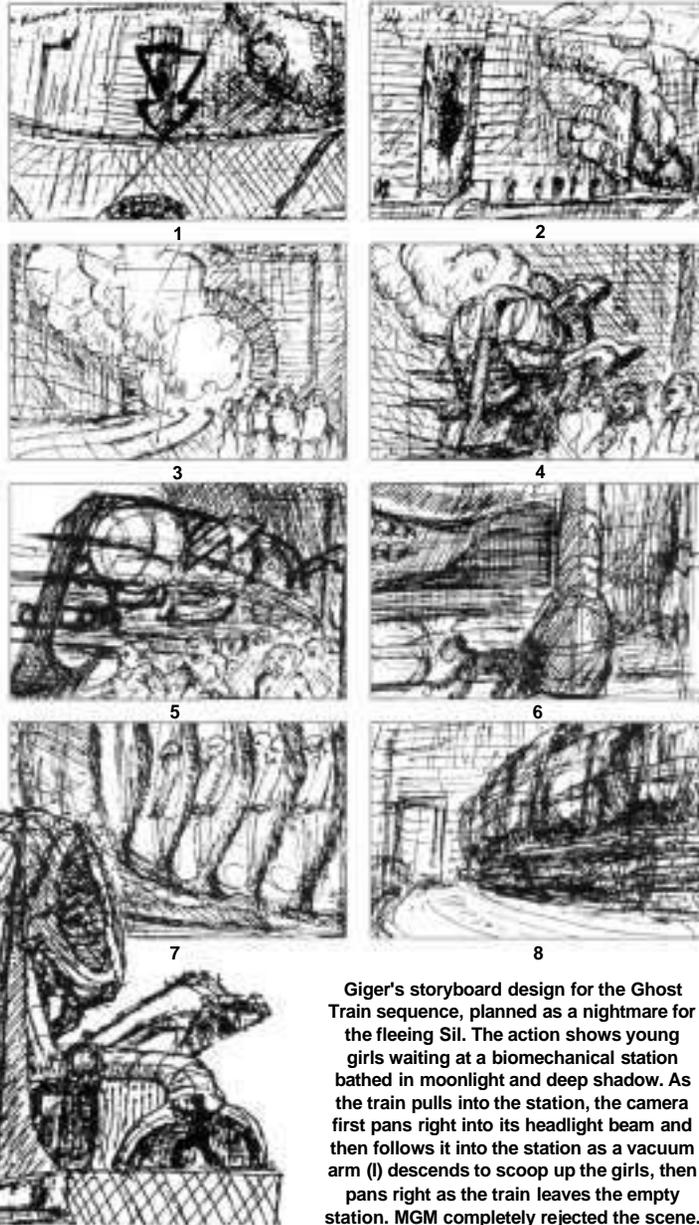
screening of Universal's *WATERWORLD*. After the screening (which Giger particularly enjoyed), the *SPECIES* group was invited to a VIP black-tie dinner hosted by star Kevin Costner. As photographers and video cameras were shooting, Giger and Sandra were guided to a waiting taxi. Suddenly an MGM executive intervened and told Giger that he was not allowed to enter the taxi, as it was only for guests invited to the party. This was despite the fact that everyone else in the *SPECIES* group had been invited, and that Giger had appeared together with all the other principals on daily panels and conferences. Giger and his companion had to march red-faced through the gauntlet of photographers, as they were led away on foot, clearly not of sufficient stature to warrant a ride in a taxi or an invitation to the dance. Giger later told friends that he had never been so humiliated in his life, and that he and his girlfriend had to walk back to their hotel in the rain. Also, his name had been completely left off the official show catalog of those involved in the making of *SPECIES*.

MGM later explained their version of the incident to Giger's representatives. They pointed out that it had not, in fact, been raining and that the whole confusion over the taxi had merely been a misunderstanding. Furthermore, even though it was unfortunate that Giger had not been invited by Mr. Costner to the dinner, it was entirely out of their control. Noted Barany, "The missed dinner invitation did not offend Giger, since he dislikes formal events anyway."

All of this regrettably has left a bad taste in the artist's mouth over future possible work in the event this successful film spawns another *SPECIES*. Giger said that if by some miracle he should be asked to work on a sequel, it would only interest him if he was asked to design totally new concepts, not just rehashed

GIGER'S GHOST TRAIN

"The script had nothing about the train or a 'Ghost Train' nightmare," said Giger. "That was entirely my idea. They had no budget for it, but promised to consider it."



Giger's storyboard design for the Ghost Train sequence, planned as a nightmare for the fleeing Sil. The action shows young girls waiting at a biomechanical station bathed in moonlight and deep shadow. As the train pulls into the station, the camera first pans right into its headlight beam and then follows it into the station as a vacuum arm (I) descends to scoop up the girls, then pans right as the train leaves the empty station. MGM completely rejected the scene.

variations of tried-and-true imagery.

It is interesting to note that at the end of 1995 "The Great Illusion," an exhibit commemorating the 100 years of cinema coincidental to the theatrical release of *SPECIES* in Switzerland, will be opening in the Kuntshaus in Zurich where Giger lives. In the course of 1996, it will travel to Venice, Vienna and Barcelona. Chosen

to stand at the entrance to the science fiction exhibit are Giger's most recent contributions to the genre, the Ghost Train (now back in Zurich) and a second model of the Steve Johnson Sil maquette. It is ironic that this is the same Ghost Train MGM found unworthy to feature more extensively in their film. The press conference which Natasha Henstridge attended in Zurich was held at the

Kuntshaus next to these artifacts being prepared for the exhibit.

Giger has a new book in preparation, to be published by ARht Publications/Les Barany Communications: *H. R. Giger Under Your Skin*, a collection of the hundreds of tattoos that have been made of Giger paintings.

As for films, Giger is ambivalent, now more so than after his bad experience on *ALIEN*³ [see "Alienated" in *Imagi-Movies* Spring '94]. *ALIEN*⁴ is a special situation, and if it happens, it will depend largely upon who is doing it. If James Cameron is involved as director, then Giger will be happy to work on it, if asked.

It is interesting how nearly every key member of the *SPECIES* production—a creative bunch to be sure—went to great lengths to stress, in the production notes, that they did not want any comparisons drawn to *ALIEN*.

"If they were truly serious about this, they would probably have approached someone else to create their Sil," mused Barany. "Or at least trusted Giger more to steer the designs in a fresh direction. In retrospect, I would say they did everything to invite comparisons. In my opinion, the producers wanted Giger's name attached to the film at least as much as they sought his designs."

The extensive use of Giger's name in the marketing of *SPECIES* has finally convinced Giger of that. In all modesty, he is not perceived strictly as a behind-the-scenes person anymore. Based on reviews and word-of-mouth about the film, it seems that the name H. R. Giger translates to increased revenues at the boxoffice. Said Barany, "I am certain MGM agrees that Giger's name, alone, was worth every dime they did pay."

H. R. Giger may be reached through his agent Leslie Barany in New York City at 212-627-8488/Fax: 212-463-7983.

Special thanks to KLM Airlines, German Rail and Eurail Pass for their help in getting L.A. writer Les Paul Robley to Giger's Planet.



GHOST TRAIN NIGHTMARE

Constructing and filming the dream you never saw.

By Les Paul Robley

Giger had long wanted to build his "Ghost Train," an idea dating back to his childhood, borne from a fascination with trains. It later became a recurring theme in his artwork. He tried incorporating it into former aborted film projects, such as the Alejandro Jodorowsky version of *DUNE* and Ridley Scott's *THE TRAIN*. In fact, the locomotive skulls on the *SPECIES* train bear a resemblance to the 1976 painting he made for *DUNE*. Giger thought *SPECIES* a natural fulfillment of his dream, as it could allow him to realize, in a working 3-dimensional form, a life-long passion.

The scene written by Giger called for the train to rumble in caterpillar-like, with each section moving independently and connected by accordion bellows. Vacuum cleaner arms extend and suck up younger versions of Sil who try to run from it. We hear

the awful sound of grinding machinery—like a garbage disposal. At the rear trail bony tiger ribcages for various life forms with hanging contraceptive baby Sils, similar to the artist's recurring dead babies theme seen in many previous paintings.

"That was entirely my idea," said Giger. "The script had nothing about the train or a 'Ghost Train' nightmare. Years ago, I worked on several train concepts with Ridley Scott. When I saw in the script of *SPECIES* that the little Sil escapes on the train and has strange nightmares, I had the idea I could work my Ghost Train into her dreams. They had not planned money for it in the budget, but they promised to consider it. I was so fascinated that I started with train ideas right away. Mancuso said, 'Be careful,' but I told him I will do this train anyway.

"The first version of the train, which we made out of normal skulls, was not so good. Then



Giger poses in his backyard in Zurich, holding the head of the Ghost Train. The designer filmed a video storyboard with his model, largely abandoned.

Cony de Fries visited me and saw in the garden one of my older sculptures, a biomechanoid head without eyes, one I made about 20 years ago. He suggested that we use this head but with bigger teeth. I could see this could work much better. Cony and I started on the locomotive skull together, and it was completed by Andy Schedler of Ate-

lier Formart, who built with me the other cars. The wheels and motors were made by Ball und Sohn, Modellbau, of Stein am Rhein, the finest model train manufacturer in the world. They make trains in all sizes.

"In the beginning, I wanted the train to function like a caterpillar, with an accordion-like structure between the cars, but

Setting up Giger's Ghost Train at its station for filming at Boss Film. Right: The brief train shot as seen in the film, chasing young Sil (Michelle Williams).



that idea didn't work out well. Atelier Kasper Wolfensberger Egmatigen motorized and activated the vacuum cleaners, installed the lights in the train and wired it for radio control. With another company, Atelier Steel and Dreams, I built the structure of the train station, the waiting platform and the two tunnels. Then Tanya Wolfensberger and I worked together on dressing the station with all the detailing. Everything in the station was planned and designed carefully for function. On the platform there was no way to escape from the vacuum cleaners.

"I am very happy with the train we did. If there was more time, we could have also made the vacuum cleaners function perfectly. I thought Boss Films could fix it easy in L.A. With only the help of the companies here in Zurich, a terrific Ghost Train was built, proving that we can make not only cuckoo clocks in Switzerland. It cost me a lot of my own money, but many of the rights still belong to me after the film."

When Giger first proposed the train scene to MGM it was rejected on the basis that the sequence was going to cost \$600,000 to execute it in the computer. They wouldn't consider it could be done any other way. So Giger went ahead and started building it himself. When MGM realized he was doing it, they told him to make a small model, and Boss Film Studios, the company providing the computer effects, would digitize it into the computer. But Giger ended up constructing the large model, and initially sent only photographs, which didn't give any indication of scale.

When Mancuso finally saw a videotape and realized how large

GIGER'S DREAM TRAIN

"A terrific Ghost Train was built in Zurich, proving that we can make not only cuckoo clocks in Switzerland," said Giger. "It cost me a lot of my own money."



Giger works on the model of the Ghost Train at Atelier Formart in Eschikon, Switzerland. Giger shipped the finished train to Hollywood for final filming.

it was, he instructed Giger to keep it under \$100,000 and warned him to go slow since he still had to sell MGM on the scene. Giger sank about \$80,000 of his own money into building the 20-foot-long, five Zoll, fully working model, whose teeth, vacuum hoses and tongues all functioned by way of rotating cams attached to the wheels. This did not include any salary for his time, which he assumed would be forthcoming. Giger felt he had to show them that his nightmare sequence was indeed possible to

achieve without CGI.

Once Giger had the train to his satisfaction, he realized he needed a station to execute the sequence properly. He spent another \$20,000 to construct the station, still keeping the total cost within the range Mancuso suggested. Giger was certain his scene would be accepted and become one of the highlights of the film. He believed viewers would come over and over again just to see this scene, and the train would ultimately pay for itself.

However naive this sounds, the Giger-conceived nightmare

sequence did not appear in the final cut, nor did it even materialize in test versions of the special effects. When the production balked at the cost, Giger's people began looking for other options. They contacted several effects companies, such as Chandler Group and Industrial Light & Magic, to see if they could save the sequence. Chandler quoted a figure of \$100,000, but this did not include any blue-screen digital compositing.

The sequence eventually wound up back at Boss, and visual effects supervisor Richard Edlund elected to shoot the train as a high-speed miniature, sans motion-control. When Boss shot the test, they filmed it without the vacuum cleaner effect and without the station. Giger had made very clear storyboards of how the 30-second sequence should be filmed in one shot. But the vacuum cleaners weren't working to Giger's satisfaction when he sent the train from Switzerland. They weren't dropping far enough to the platform and were moving too fast and unsteady. Also, the jaws of the locomotive were opening and closing too fast. Giger felt that with all the technical know-how at Boss, all of it could be corrected. He sent faxes to Edlund explaining how the timing of the vacuums were based on how fast the wheels turned. He suggested this could be slowed down by creating a different circumference on the size of the cam.

Giger had hoped that work would be done on the train before the test was shot. After he received the test he realized that no work at all had been done on it, and that it had been filmed exactly the way he had sent it. Obvi-

Giger's Ghost Train roars out of the tunnel (l), races down the tracks (c) and pulls into the station (r), during filming of a video storyboard in Switzerland.





Giger supervises the filming of the video storyboard in Switzerland. The 20-foot-long, fully working model will be used in Giger's own film of *THE MYSTERY OF SAN GOTTARDO*, to be published as a book later this year.



ously, MGM was not interested in the sequence as he had envisioned it originally.

Giger's most amazing film effort rated only eight seconds of screen time, and no main title credit for the design of the train. In a behind-the-scenes promo film, more time is devoted to the making of the train than is the actual length of the scene or scenes. However fleeting its appearance, Giger's train still manages to make its jarring presence felt. It tears across the screen without explanation and, unlike the other nightmare shots, it is never referred to again.

The train's jaws and descending vacuums were powered with wheel cams.



Said Barany: "Soon our fears were confirmed. The sequence as Giger had designed it was not going to be in the film. Some hard choices had to be made, quickly. Mancuso early on told Giger over the phone to keep it under \$100,000 in expenses, and of course he also thought he was going to be paid, besides! But even if he misunderstood, if what was really meant was \$100,000 in total, it changed once the train was delivered. We were told \$50,000. That's all we have...are you in or out?"

"At first I advised him against it. I said to Giger, if they're not going to use the whole sequence, let's keep the idea intact and save it for a future project. Since the train wasn't in the original screenplay and no contract existed for it, it was clear Giger maintained

copyright. Giger said no, he didn't want to take the chance that it may never be seen. The most important thing was that it be in the film. He said, 'It will give it life.' He was also down a lot of money and at least he could get half of his investment back."

Giger took a \$50,000 loss on the train. MGM agreed to limit the ways the train could be used in merchandising. Giger retains all three-dimensional merchandising rights to the train because he was not properly reimbursed by MGM. The studio owns 2-D merchandising rights, *but only exactly as the train is used in the film*. They cannot, for example, in comic books, show the complete sequence as Giger designed it, or expand further upon it. MGM owns the copyright only on the 8-second sequence. Giger keeps the copyright to the train itself. The contract also allows him the right to use the train in any other future film. This unusual concession on the studio's part was granted only because the artist was not compensated entirely for his creation.

Noted Barany, "Giger had the simple idea that the train could be like any living actor, free to appear in a variety of films, sometimes for a large fee, sometimes for less. Sometimes in a big role, sometimes a small one. As the train appears in *SPECIES*, I would rate it an uncredited cameo, perhaps as a coming attraction for a larger role in a fu-

ture film."

If the studio recoups enough money to make a sequel, as the ending with the mutated rat leads us to believe that they may want to, they will have to get back to Giger and talk *new* numbers if they would like the train to make a scheduled stop. MGM will first have to reimburse Giger for the \$50,000 he is still out of pocket on his expenses, *plus* a respectable fee for designing it for the *original* film, *before* Giger will be willing to talk. Giger assumes that if the final tally of profits should deem a sequel worthwhile, clearing the books on the first film should not be a problem for the producers and the studio, plus they will be in a better position to pay him an additional fee for the use of the train in a sequel. For now, future film rights remain with Giger.

Although the film is long done, Giger continues to explore his fascination with trains, now as part of his fine art, and is currently building a different, much larger 7-1/4 zoll train which rolls through his house, out into the backyard and over a bridge above the "swimming pool." (It is actually a black lagoon; no one has swum in it for 20 years, save for a few creatures.)

A fascination with trains: Giger on board the larger train model he designed to run through his house.

