



Biomechanoid III, 1974, acrylic on paper on wood, 13x41.03cm

Presenting...

The Sci-Fi Art Masters HR Giger



Photo © Annie Bertram



Welcome to this very special issue of ImagineFX. I'm hugely excited to be

featuring a legend such as HR Giger. His work on Alien is obviously a high point, but he has done so much more - and has had such a massive influence on modern sci-fi artists. Enjoy the issue, and let me know what you think.

Full mag contents on pages 21 & 23

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We talk to HR Giger about his past, present and future...



The legacy of...

How HR Giger has influenced popular culture.



Inspired by...

Barringer Fox Wingard III creates a Giger-inspired piece.

Rob Carney, Editor
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ALIEN EGG

One of the early designs for the egg stage of the Alien, in the film of the same name.

Alien Egg III, 1978, acrylic on paper, 140x100cm



ALIEN
HR Giger 78



HR GIGER



Love or loathe his unique style, there's no denying that Swiss fine artist **HR Giger** is the master of dark nightmarish visions

*F*irst, the bad news: we will never again see a new painting from Hans Ruedi Giger. "I'm not working any more - I'm not doing any more paintings," the world-famous surrealist explains. "I'm already 68 years old and it's time to retire! After all, that's normal."

As devastating as that might sound, rest assured that Giger - pronounced "Geeger" with a hard 'G' - doesn't intend to sit around wearing his slippers and reading the paper. "It might sound very strange that an artist can say he's retired, but just because I'm not doing any more paintings, it doesn't mean that I'm not thinking about things," he continues. "I still write my diaries and my dream book, where I record my dreams. And drawings too, sometimes. But now I'm mostly concentrating on sculptures and overseeing my bar and museum."

Fortunately, there's an awful lot of Giger's work still to admire. Over the



Necronom IV - 1976, acrylic on paper on wood, 134x130cm

past 40-odd years, the Swiss artist has gradually transformed from a cult figure into an acclaimed master of dark, nightmarish visions. His trademark style, often incorporating biomechanical mixtures of flesh and machines, is as much copied as it is admired, and like them or loathe them you're almost certain to recognise one of his creations.

REAL-WORLD PROJECTS

Now, though, Giger has his sights set on real-world projects, as he explains in his sometimes halting English. "I'm working on the fountain in my garden. That will be in Gruyères, just in front of the Giger Museum... the local people wanted to erect it. It looks fantastic, right next to the bar.

"I'm also working on a show in Berlin, in the citadel in Spandau, for the end of June. It's a kind of castle surrounded by water. It's quite famous in Berlin and was also named by Hitler," he chuckles. "During the war, the Nazis' money was hidden there."

The museum and bars are very important to Giger, a sign of the

NECRONOM IV

The original painting that caught Alien director Ridley Scott's eye and led to Giger's involvement with the film.

recognition it has taken him many years to achieve. There are two bars, one in his hometown of Chur and one as part of the museum - both featuring custom interiors and furniture designed by Giger. The museum is 10 years old this month, and plans are in motion to celebrate that.

"We've produced a commemorative book, *HR Giger in Gruyères: The First Decade*," he explains, (available now for

so big. "Some of them were. The bigger ones could be 2x2.4m. That was important to me somehow, because at that size you're surrounded by the image. I liked to say these works went from one ear to the other! The size makes them more impressive."

BELLY ART

Whether it's because of language difficulties or because he's simply reluctant, attempting

“ In the beginning I had no idea what I was doing. I just did some clouds, then I would make an eye or something... ”

\$25 from the museum website, www.hrgigermuseum.com) as well as a catalogue, in conjunction with his friend Martin Schwarz. "It has everything I've ever done in it - older sketches, the diaries, and so on. The works are printed very small, postage stamp sized, mostly to act as a reference for all my work."

It must be strange, we muse, seeing them that small when his paintings are famously

to coax any analysis of his work from Giger is nigh on impossible. "I had some ideas in my head, ways of realising images I had in my brain," he tries to explain. "In the beginning I had no idea what I was doing - I just did some clouds or whatever, and then I would make an eye or something. It was just, you know, from the belly."

As a boy, he says, he was always interested in trains - especially ghost





THE AIRBRUSH APPROACH

Rather famously, Giger used an airbrush to lay the foundations of his biggest paintings, despite the tool's reputation for being somewhat unwieldy. "Well, you can't do small things with an airbrush - I never did smaller paintings that way," he adds. "It's not ideal for fine drawings really."

"I would use mostly black ink. Later on I put some white acrylic paint and overworked with that, to make different colours - kind of a sepia effect. My work isn't very colourful, it's mostly monochromatic, perhaps with some red or green. The airbrush is great for that. But I stopped using it as a tool in 1992."

Although he says he's aware of digital technology and the use of computers to create art, it's not something he's interested in pursuing - especially after his retirement. "I'm too lazy to learn that!" he laughs. "If someone shows me something then I'm fine with it, but I'm not familiar with computers at all. If I was younger then I would probably learn how to do it."

ALIEN III

A refinement of the full-grown Alien concept, very close to that which appears in the film.

Alien III, side view III, 1978, acrylic/iron paper, 100x70cm

trains - castles, skulls, mummies, "and all that mystery stuff. I couldn't find many images about that so I had to do it myself. That's how I started. I didn't think it would ever really be important to other people..."

EROTIC ELEMENTS

But what about the erotic element in his work? Many images feature subtle (and often decidedly unsubtle) depictions of various human body parts, entwined in peculiar ways. He appears to ignore the question entirely: The strongest thing in my work, I think, is the claustrophobic stuff. I still sometimes have shitty dreams with that in... being inside rooms that are like graves, a stone grave, a tomb. And I always think in the dream, "Oh my god, why am I here?" He laughs.

"Claustrophobic things are terrible. I used to think all that was finished but it's still here. That's more important to me than the erotic stuff."

He adds that it was "never in my mind" to try to shock people with that sort of imagery. "I like my work very much and

“ I sometimes have claustrophobic dreams, being inside rooms like graves, a tomb, and I think why am I here? ”

I'm free to realise my dreams, all these childish dreams. Everyone has the freedom to think what they want about them."

ALIEN AUDIENCE

It was Giger's design work for *Alien*, of course, that really brought him to the attention of a worldwide audience, and he's still proud of his collaboration with director Ridley Scott. Much to his regret, he missed the opportunity to work on *Aliens* due to his commitments with the film *Poltergeist II*, and other film collaborations such as *Species* didn't fare so well.

Perhaps having been somewhat spoiled with the level of hands-on enthusiasm that Ridley - a trained artist - brought to the concept design process, Giger found his ideas being diluted and changed in subsequent films. In any case, he has no plans to work in film again - at least, not other people's films.

"When I worked on *Alien*, I was in Shepperton Studios for about seven months," he explains. "If you want to do something really good, something effective, then you have to travel and work with the people making the film. If you work long-distance, it's really not possible

SAMURAI

One of Giger's earlier explorations of the biomechanical concept, which later went on to become his trademark.

ATOMKINDER

Sketches of the "Atomic Children" - early Giger work from the 1960s.

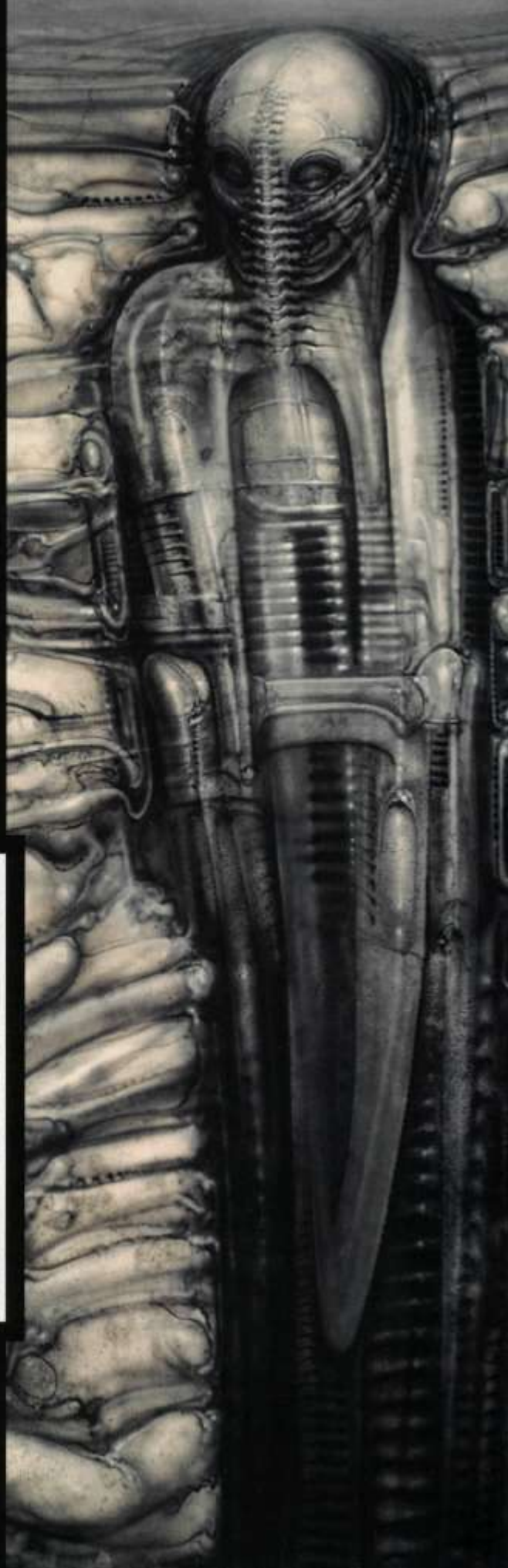


Atomkinder (left), 1964, ink on paper, 9x15cm. Samurai (right), 1976, acrylic on paper on wood, 100x70cm



CATARACT

The distinctive snake-like floor in this painting was later repeated in the Alien ship.



THE SKULL BENEATH THE SKIN

"When I was a kid, there was a mummy in the museum in Chur that fascinated me," Giger reminisces. "It wasn't in a very good state - there wasn't much flesh, so the bony structure seemed stronger. It fascinated me... the skull is a very important thing for me."

Giger describes with similar enthusiasm a recent museum exhibition in Zurich, an exact reproduction of Tutankhamen's grave. "Everything was reproduced to the last detail," he says.

Perhaps inspired by the exhibition, he talks excitedly about a "Giger urn" he has been creating - a stylised version of the sort of thing that stores cremated ashes. "He looks a little bit like the little man in the bowling centre, what do you call it? The pin. I don't know which material it should be though - maybe aluminium, maybe polystyrene.

"You close it by turning the top, like a skull. You turn the head to open it. The eyes go right the way around the urn, and also the eyeglasses and the nose, so you have seven noses and seven glasses and so on. And a bunch of teeth."

PROTOTYPE URN

One of Giger's latest creations, a stylised urn for holding the ashes of the cremated.



Giger Bar, photo: Matthias Belz

GIGER BAR

The world-famous Giger Bar in Gruyères is filled with sculptures and furniture designed by the man himself.

to get a good result. I realised that and so it's not for me any more."

SEEDS OF MEMORY

The same, it seems, applies to video games. In 1992, he collaborated on an adventure game called Dark Seed, which sported unmistakably and very impressive (for the time) Gigeresque graphics. It's intriguing to think of how his visions could be interpreted with today's graphic capabilities, we suggest. But Giger isn't interested, and indeed doesn't seem to remember much about Dark Seed at all.

"I didn't have much to do with that," he claims. "That was done without my real

“ If you want to do something really good, something effective, you have to travel and work with the film makers ”

involvement, they just used my name. I didn't create any new stuff for it. I wasn't very pleased with that..."

Giger has said he was "painfully shy" as a boy, and in some senses that still appears to be true. He does what he does because he's fascinated by his subjects and enjoys creating them. "I'm sorry I can't say much about my work... it's somehow very simple," he apologises endearingly. "I can't invent new stuff. What I'm saying to you I've said already, a long time ago. I'm sorry, you're probably a little bit disappointed..."

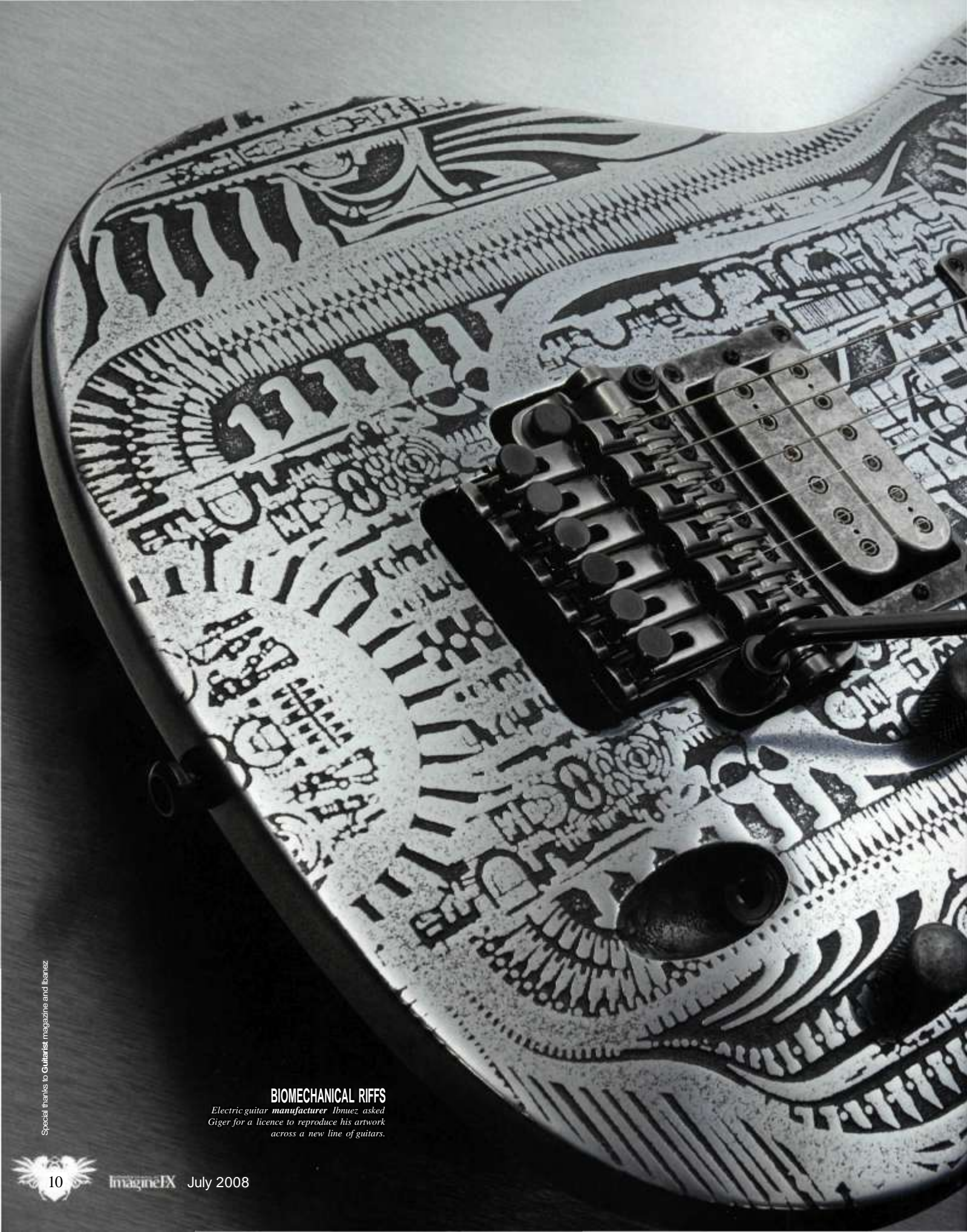
It probably goes without saying, but nothing could be further from the truth. ●

Flip the issue over to read our Syd Mead interview

Paint like Giger
Read on to learn how Barringer Wingard Fox III created a Giger-themed image.



Urn (prototype), 2007, polystyrene, 32x15cm. Photo: Matthias Belz

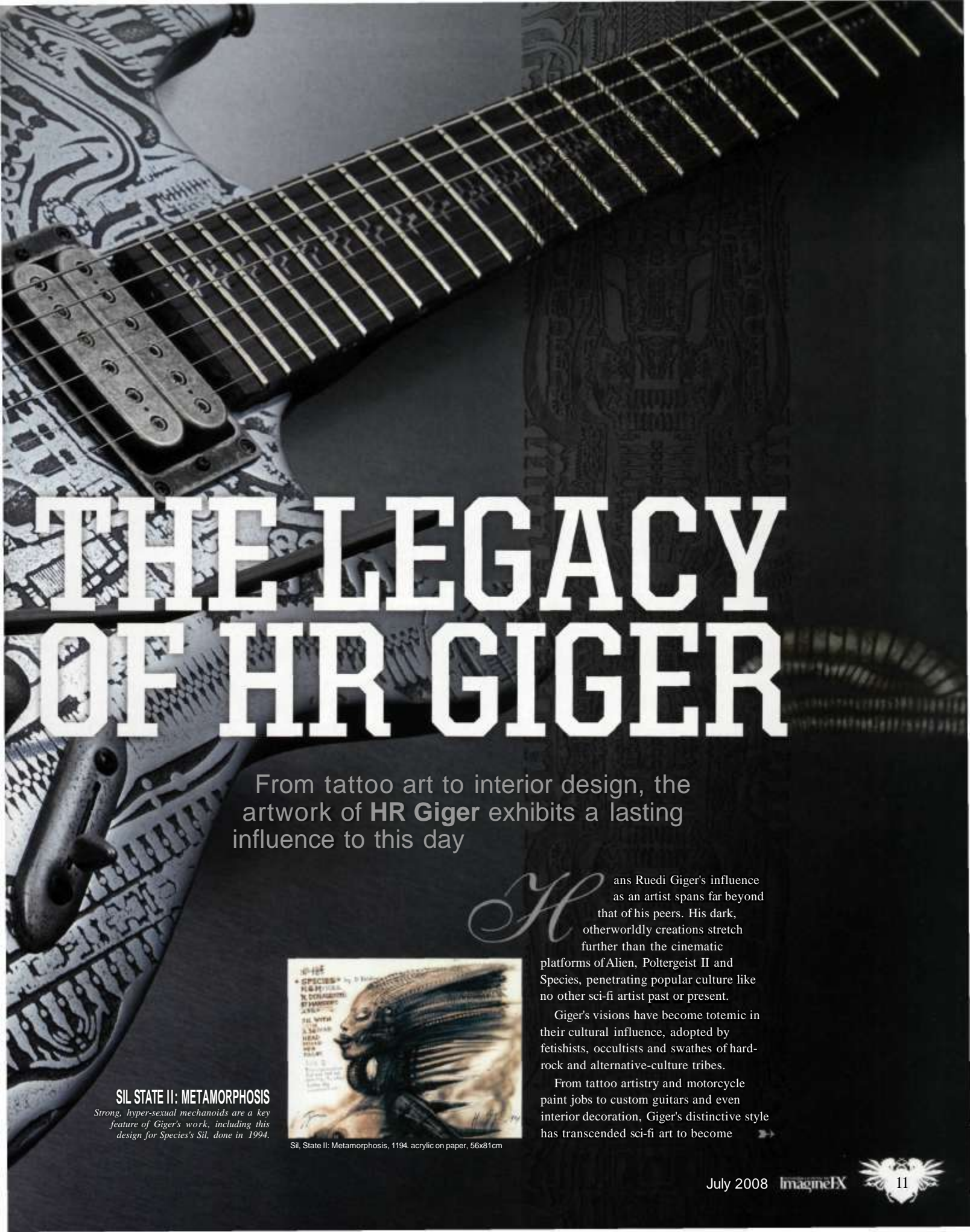


Special thanks to Guitarist magazine and Ibanez

BIOMECHANICAL RIFFS

Electric guitar manufacturer Ibanez asked Giger for a licence to reproduce his artwork across a new line of guitars.





THE LEGACY OF HR GIGER

From tattoo art to interior design, the artwork of **HR Giger** exhibits a lasting influence to this day

*H*ans Ruedi Giger's influence as an artist spans far beyond that of his peers. His dark, otherworldly creations stretch further than the cinematic platforms of *Alien*, *Poltergeist II* and *Species*, penetrating popular culture like no other sci-fi artist past or present.

Giger's visions have become totemic in their cultural influence, adopted by fetishists, occultists and swathes of hard-rock and alternative-culture tribes.

From tattoo artistry and motorcycle paint jobs to custom guitars and even interior decoration, Giger's distinctive style has transcended sci-fi art to become



Sil, State II: Metamorphosis, 1194. acrylic on paper, 56x81cm

SIL STATE II: METAMORPHOSIS

Strong, hyper-sexual mechanoids are a key feature of Giger's work, including this design for Species's Sil, done in 1994.



© The Kobal Collection

emblematic of his legacy as an artist. Giger himself has encouraged and often guided the infusion of his style into contemporary design and more widespread culture. He is, after all, an artist whose work spans mediums including jewellery, sculpture and product design.

Take, for example, his necklaces, rings and pendants - all of which are available from the official Giger webstore. There's a sense of commercialisation to Giger's work, but it stems from the artist himself.

"Giger is an artist who creates these pieces of design," says Giger fan and collector Richard Fursdon, whose love of the artist has so far cost upwards of £5,000 in memorabilia and artwork. "No matter

“ He makes chairs because he wants to see and feel his internal visions... ”

what it is he makes, it has the Giger feel to it, and that's what makes his work so collectable. Each piece you can buy [from the website] is an original Giger design - unlike the piles of crap you get on eBay pretending to be Giger originals.

"He makes chairs because he wants to see and feel his internal visions, and people like me buy them because we want to share in that. It's not about the man himself, or necessarily his artwork, but about indulging in the worlds that Giger creates."

ROCK ACTION

Giger's influence has led to many commissions from those outside of sci-fi and fantasy art, who appreciate the Gigeresque for its style rather than its legacy.

When the crossover rock band Korn broke into the mainstream in 2000, lead



Korn Microphone Stand, 2000, aluminium, 160x15x40cm, edition of 5
Photo: Louis Stalder

ROCK THE GIGER MIC

The microphone stand that Giger designed after Jonathan Davis commissioned him to produce one for Korn.

WHAT GIGER MEANS TO ME



"Alien was a turning point. If you think what science fiction films looked like before that movie, they were all bright, clean - all very Buck Rogers. But Giger came along and blew all that out the water." **Richard Fursdon, Giger collector**

"Giger has been such a major influence on modern style in general - in art and design and style... Giger should be in the Museum of Modern Art. It's really crazy, and a perfect example of what happens to artists in this society, because the guy should be a multimillionaire and he isn't." **Chris Stein, Blondie**

"My favourite artist has always been HR Giger, ever since I saw the first Alien film. Giger's work challenges a lot of people, but the themes he explores have always fascinated me and I like the idea that many people are still shocked by his images." **Kib, tattoo artist**



"What Giger's created is the standard by which dark sci-fi visuals and characters are judged against. It's almost as if everyone expects a sci-fi horror film to have that Giger look. If it doesn't, it somehow doesn't seem right." **Alexander, Giger's style editor at VampireFreaks.com**

singer Jonathan Davis commissioned Giger to produce a custom-built microphone stand for the band. The resulting design mixed Giger's trademark biomechanics, surrealism and hyper-sexual female forms.

According to Jonathan - quoted on Giger's website - the singer had always been a Giger fan and after sending him some Korn albums was elated that the artist accepted his commission. "I've always liked the dark, vile, biomechanical stuff he creates, but then I got into the erotic side of his art," said Jonathan. "All I did was ask him to make a functional piece of art. So later, he sent me a bunch of drawings and I approved the design of this really sexy, vile, mechanical creature."

Through this exposure, Giger's popularity grew with fans of the band, and guitar manufacturer Ibanez asked the artist for a licence to reproduce his artwork across a line of their guitars.

The popularity of the range came about precisely because of nu-metal bands such as Korn, POD and Slipknot, according to Ibanez, who admit that such bands broke into the mainstream at the same time, playing a similar sort of music and referencing the same artwork. Giger was clearly a big influence on them all.

TATTOO YOU

While Giger's work gained popularity through the nu-metal bands of the early part of the decade, these influences in turn were picked up by tattoo artists and fans.

"People often come in, point at a piece of artwork for reference, and don't even know it's a Giger hanging on the wall," says Florida-based tattooist Mike 'Pooch'



BIRTH OF THE XENOMORPH

Giger's highly original concept for the alien in the film of the same name cemented his status as a serious artist.



MAN MEETS MACHINE

Barringer Fox Wingard III's work is heavily influenced by Giger's dark compositional style.

ALIENS EVERYWHERE

Cover artist Barringer Fox Wingard III, aka Bif, reveals the influence Giger has had on his artwork



LI II

Li Il bares all the hallmarks of Giger's style, and remains a lasting influence on today's digital artists.



"When I saw *Alien*, I was hooked. I drew Giger's aliens everywhere, from drawing pads to schoolbooks, even on a wall or two... All kids my age were a fan of *Alien*, which clearly shows what this man has accomplished.

"In many regards, H.R. Giger created dark and erotic fantastic art. Much of the sci-fi art you see today reflects imagery from his paintings, whether directly, or simply the moody, sensual feelings that his work projects on the viewer. Giger has a way of bringing you into his world. For better or worse, appalling or alluring, there is always a connection with the viewer.

"I've always leaned towards the dark and creepy, and H.R. Giger has had a big influence on my creative path. I'm a fan of biomechanical engineering in character design, and Giger leads the way with his melding of bodies and environments.

www.bfw3.com



Giger Museum. Photo: Matthias Belz

SURREAL SEATING

Giger's visionary work has also extended into the realm of furniture design. These chairs feature in the Giger Museum.

Pucciarelli. "Everyone knows *Alien*, but not everyone knows that that style of work - that dark, metallic and sexual look - is pure Giger. They'll say they want a skull and point one out from our books or whatever and it'll be a mechanoid head from Giger."

A SECURE LEGACY

Mike believes Giger's style is popular among hard-rock and tattoo fans because it's dark without being clichéd, and presents a style that hard-rock counter-culture naturally gravitates towards. But an artist in any other trade, leaving such a cultural

legacy, would be far more widely celebrated. Giger isn't in the Museum of Modern Art, has never been feted with touring exhibitions or lecture series, yet his influence is as perceivable as that of Warhol or any number of popular modern artists.

But Giger's legacy as an artist is certainly safe - and not just due to his groundbreaking *Alien* work. His style has permeated mainstream culture, from Levi's ads to record artwork, and been assimilated by tattoo artists and interior designers.

What's more, his reputation is ever-growing, as those he influences in turn inspire the next generation of artists and designers (see Barringer Fox Wingard III's mini-interview, left). Giger's legacy is so much more than facehuggers and biomechanoids; it's a legacy that redefined and then came to stand for contemporary surrealist art.



LEVI'S JEANS

Even the world's most pre-eminent denim name craved the Giger look for one of its adverts.

TURN OVER FOR BIF'S TUTORIAL