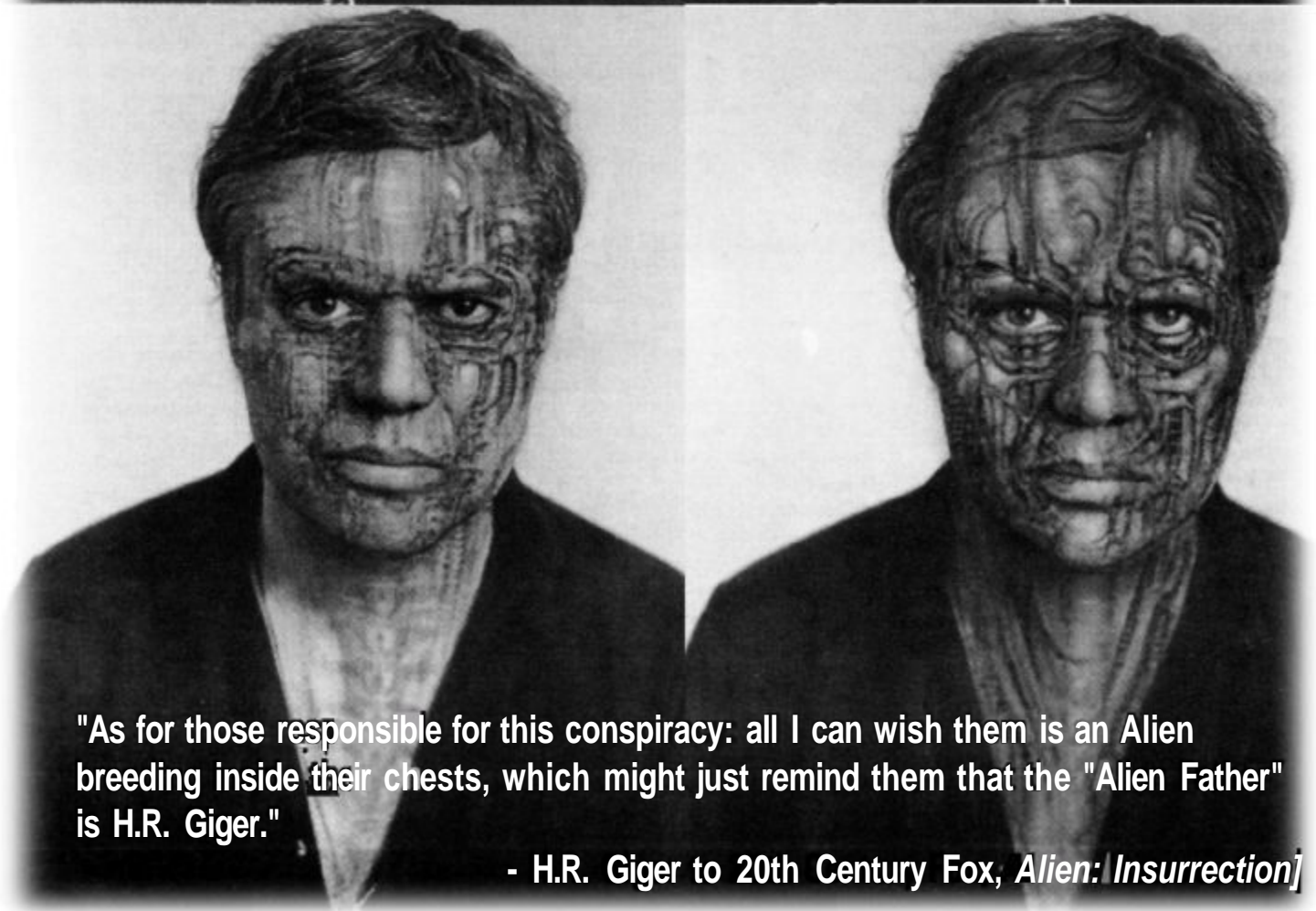


"There's a monster in your stomach. They [indicates the smugglers] hijacked your cryotube and sold you to him [indicates scientist Wren] and he put an alien in you. In a few hours it will punch its way through your chest and you'll die. Any questions?"

"Who are you?"

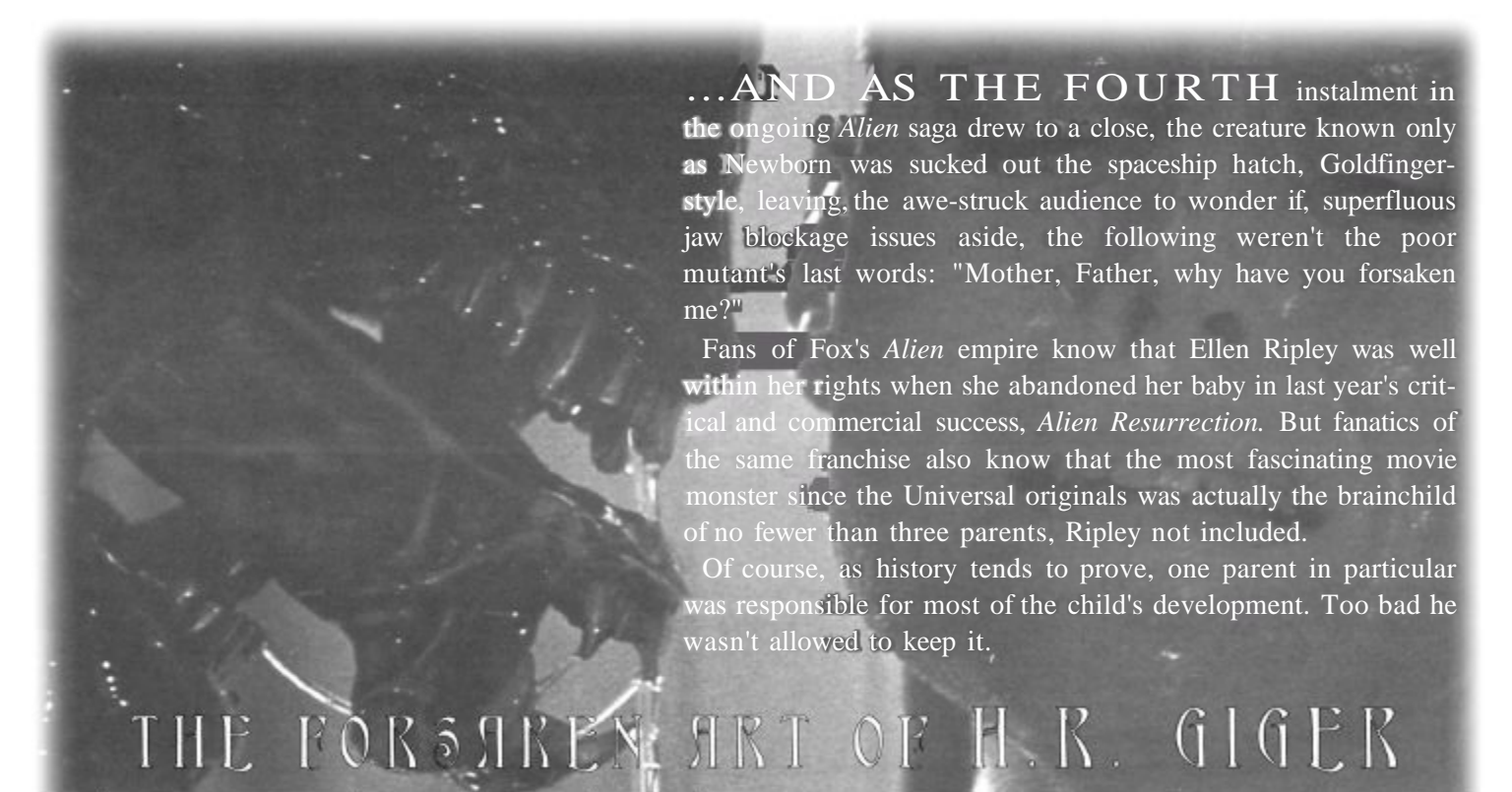
"I'm the monster's mother."

- Ripley to Purvis, *Alien: Resurrection*



"As for those responsible for this conspiracy: all I can wish them is an Alien breeding inside their chests, which might just remind them that the "Alien Father" is H.R. Giger."

- H.R. Giger to 20th Century Fox, *Alien: Insurrection*



...AND AS THE FOURTH instalment in the ongoing *Alien* saga drew to a close, the creature known only as Newborn was sucked out the spaceship hatch, Goldfinger-style, leaving the awe-struck audience to wonder if, superfluous jaw blockage issues aside, the following weren't the poor mutant's last words: "Mother, Father, why have you forsaken me?"

Fans of Fox's *Alien* empire know that Ellen Ripley was well within her rights when she abandoned her baby in last year's critical and commercial success, *Alien Resurrection*. But fanatics of the same franchise also know that the most fascinating movie monster since the Universal originals was actually the brainchild of no fewer than three parents, Ripley not included.

Of course, as history tends to prove, one parent in particular was responsible for most of the child's development. Too bad he wasn't allowed to keep it.

THE FORSAKEN ART OF H. R. GIGER

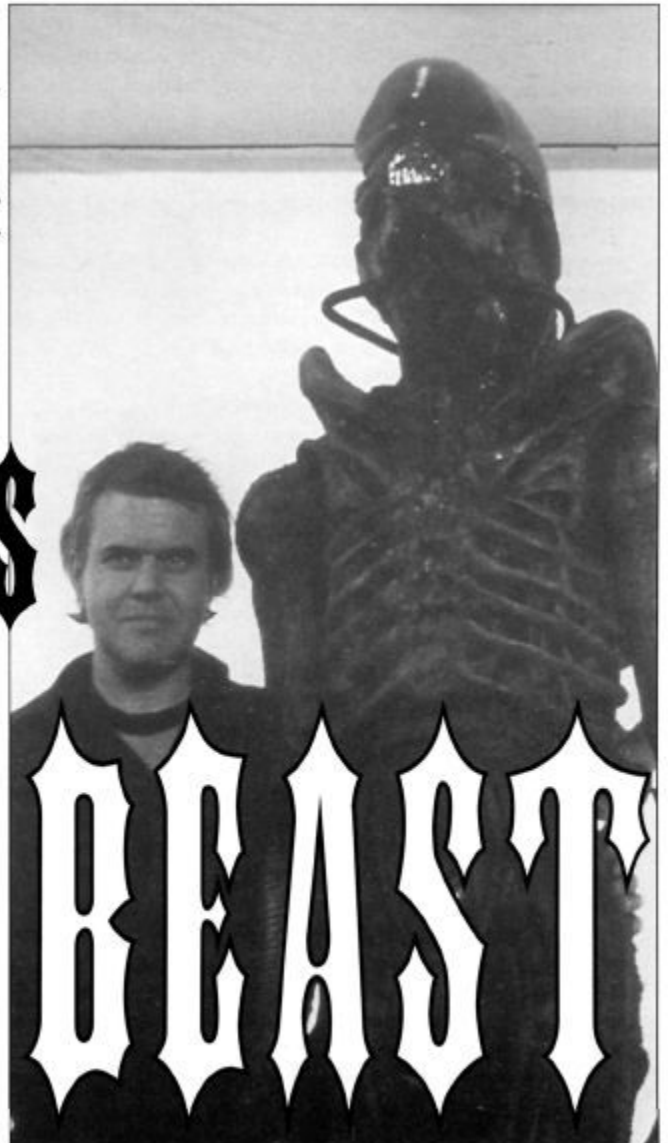
FATHER

In the beginning, the only *Alien* was an awkward, eccentric and dangerously intelligent young boy born in Chur, Switzerland on

February 5, 1940. Hans Ruedi Giger's natural artistic talents - and his disturbing perspectives - were not to blossom until his late teens, at which point they spread like nightshade-fuelled wildfire. His years studying industrial design at the School of Applied Arts in Zurich, from the ages 24 to 26, provided the first turning point in the radical artist's life, as Giger intersected practical knowledge (landscape design) with personal interest (dreamscape depiction) in a disquieting, sexually charged manner. And if the first turning point forged Giger's career, surely the second secured his future, when, 13 years later, the film *Alien* was unleashed.

Giger describes the fruits of his vision as "Fantastic Art." An effective summary, insofar as the word "fantastic" can simultaneously connote beauty, grotesqueness and unreality; when specifically

KNOWS



BY GARY BUTLER



"Beauty, grotesqueness and unreality."

applied to an artistic viewpoint, it suggests something not just surreal but *beyond* surreal. And certainly, anyone familiar with Giger's art would agree that his creations come from beyond.

It's tempting to further qualify Giger's speciality as "futuristic" fantastic art. Easily the man's best-known work is his ever-expanding canon of (again as described by Giger) "biomechanical" landscapes. Giger's concept of biomechanics is brilliant in its simplicity, as the term's prefix implies a living organism, while its root insists on a machine. The artist's masterstroke came from applying this fresh, dark idea not to the obvious choice - people - but to the obscure alternative: places. The master biomechanic doesn't draw living humanoid robots; he creates breathing industrial cities. Populated cities, granted, but in this instance, the inhabitants are a *part* of the landscape, and it builds them - they do not build it.

Hence the futuristic reading of Giger's work - for how else has the 20th century imagined humanity's future if not in terms of a technological Mecca that surpasses its wildest evolutionary dreams?

And nightmares.

When Ellen Ripley and the doomed crew of the *Nostromo* answer a distress call in *Alien* in the far future (real time: 1979), they learn that hell isn't other people so much as other species.

Alien earned Giger an Academy Award for Best Achievement in Visual Effects. In retrospect, this is hardly surprising, considering that the man had been dreaming of the Alien and its environment - and capturing those dreams in portraits - for well over a decade before the movie was even in its nascent stage.

The most critical step in the evolution of

the Alien creature came in the form of the companion pieces *Necronom IV* and *Necronom V*, painted by Giger in 1976 as part of a larger series devoted to a symbolic realisation of H.P. Lovecraft's *Necronomicon*. Even at this pre-production stage, the Alien was essentially complete; really, the only significant difference between the Alien in Giger's paintings and the one that would grace the screen three years later was the long-headedness, so to speak, of the Giger original (perhaps this is a good time to mention that the ever-dubbing artist uses the term "erotoscapes" to describe the majority of his pointedly sexual biomechanical landscapes).

Screenwriter Dan O'Bannon and director Ridley Scott became the aforementioned additional parents of the Alien. Inspired beyond words by the pair of *Necronom* portraits - Scott is famous for having been able to say little more than: "That's it!" - they worked closely with Giger after 20th Century Fox approved six original silk-screen prints that the artist based upon O'Bannon's script, and together the trio further developed and refined the look and feel of the Alien and its setting.

The result: a true monster.

In more ways than one.

Today, almost two decades later, as the millennium looms over the horizon, Giger's Alien has become an almost mythical creature the world over. For the artist himself, though, it has likely become a chimera that is equal parts angel and albatross. The reasons for the angel are apparent; those for the albatross are absurd. They are nonetheless real.

One is a matter of insurrection. As cited in the introduction, *Alien: Insurrection* is an on-

line protest housed on Giger's authorised homepage (www.HRGiger.com). The complaint: nowhere in the movie *Alien: Resurrection* is the artist credited for original Alien design, though the origins of the movie's creatures are undeniable. It's hardly arguable that this was an oversight on the part of 20th Century Fox, as the company was guilty of the same gaffe when *Alien³* was first released in 1992. That mistake was redressed at Giger's rightful insistence; the same, however, cannot be said in the current case.

"*Alien: Resurrection* is an excellent film," Giger writes in a letter to Fox posted on the site and dated Nov. 13/96, two full weeks before the official release of the movie. "[But] what would it look like without my Alien life-forms?" Though *Alien: Insurrection* also displays support from Ridley Scott, Timothy Leary, Clive Barker, Harlan Ellison, Dan O'Bannon and *Alien: Resurrection* director Jean-Pierre Jeunet, the power of rhetoric has done little to advance the unfortunate artist's cause.

The nature of Giger's other Alien albatross is simpler, though just as ironic. As fate - and good marketing - had it, a compendium of Giger art was published late last fall. Named after the aforementioned website (sans the dots), *WWW HR Giger.com* is by no means the first book of collected Giger art to grace a coffee table. But unlike its predecessors, which include the immensely popular *HR Giger's Necronomicon*, *HR Giger's Alien* and *HR Giger Arh+*, *WWW HR Giger.com* is the first book of Giger art to examine the man as a career artist. Think of it as his tickle trunk.

While Giger's thematic interests have remained consistent throughout his 30+ year



Landscape design and dreamscape depiction come together in "Landscape XVIII."



Freudian Grip: the proposed (and rejected) sandworm from Dune.

career, *WWW HR Giger com* introduces the world to a visionary artist who creates much more than mere Aliens and who has never hesitated to experiment with mediums of expression.

Granted, the Alien was an afterbirth of Giger's airbrushed erotoscapes, and it is for those works that he is best known. That said, significantly less than the majority of the book is comprised of either biomechanical studies or erotoscapes; the two categories combined likely account for 1/4 of the 280 illustrations represented, though theirs are admittedly the most lavish and sizeable when included (employed mostly as chapter dividers).

WWW HR Giger com also offers commentary from Giger throughout; indeed, the artist designed the book himself. As his works are presented for the most part sequentially, the result is a biographical odyssey through a heretofore undiscovered country. Though only a few true blue Aliens raise their heads for the passers-by, the sights are still well worth writing home about.

Here are just some of the highlights. Giger "confirms" Freud's dream theory in the early sketch series *A Feast for the Psychiatrist*. He shows off his personal and professional furniture design and interior decoration, the professional aspect of which includes planning maps and realised photographs of Giger-Bars in Tokyo and Chur (featuring the latter's bathroom, which inspires leg-crossing) as well as set design for a scrapped 1976 film version of *Dune*. Giger displays what are in his eyes the most important works in his private collection of art, the contents of which vary from the surreal to the surrealer (incl. Brus, Sandoz and one of his greatest inspirations, Kuhn). Some of his classic bio-mechanic studies are presented in rich, gorgeous 3D; *Necronom IV* is one of them. Pictures of the "open-air museum" of tattooed Giger fans receive an entertaining chapter. Album cover art evolution is examined, including the 1981 bio-mechanisation of Blondie's Debbie Harry and the 1993 Cronenberg-via-*Dead Ringers* sculpture entitled *Life Support* for metal band Carcass' *Heartwork*. The equally Cronenbergian "killer condoms" are shown in both their

“Necessity is the mother of invention, but for Giger, it has become the father of insurrection.”



Erotoscape: one of the many sights along Giger's Garden Train.

developmental sketch phases and their fully fleshed-(inside-)out phases; this section also includes the obvious killer condom prototype: the *Dune* sandworm, from the failed 1976 film project.

Artistic variety aside, though, truly the most surprising sections of *WWW HR Giger com* are humour-oriented, despite the fact that Giger undertakes every humorous project with an attitude of abject seriousness. His 1994 "modest" proposal plans for the Swiss transit system to be restructured in the shape of a pentagram must be read and studied for their arguable practicability to be believed. The chapter on Giger's real-life biomechanical Swatch watches features a joke page that contains 13 types of time-pieces ready to made upon commission, the best being *Gigers Watch-Off*, with its acid-filled, ceramic housing to help the wearer's hand "timelessly fall away." And while it's not immediately apparent, the Alien that graces the cover of the book itself is wearing

skis (pictured!)

The book concludes with photographs and plans of two Giger works currently underway, both inspired by the artist's original designs for the 1995 movie *Species*. The Garden-Train (now tracking in the artist's backyard) and the Giger-Museum (proposed to be built in the form of a spiral railway in a gutted castle in Gruyère, France) are easily the *biggest* visions that the man has ever attempted to realise. Gaudy as it may seem, it's arguable that these works could potentially be the first *physical* step in what promises to be the very long road to actual societal bio-mechanisation. Then again, maybe he just has a different kind of one track mind these days.

Regardless of the path that Giger chooses from hereon, there is no doubt that he will travel it on his own terms. The greatest irony that emerges from the *Alien: Resurrection* credit farce is that H.R. Giger is an artist who must now cry out to be evaluated in the limiting terms of his most famous creation, as the world continually fails to consider how much more he actually has to offer. Necessity is the mother of invention, but for Giger, it has become the father of insurrection. *WWW HR Giger com* paints the true portrait of the man; that this brave book was released only heartbeats ahead of *Alien: Resurrection* borders on tragedy. The com before the storm? Certainly. And the tip of the proverbial iceberg, too.

Keep up the good work, HR. In space, no one can hear you scream - but the audience is listening.

Gary Butler is a company man who thinks that "alienation" should never have been two words long. He is currently the editor of Watch magazine.



Beyond Hollywood: Giger's Alien continues to evolve.