

ALIEN: COVENANT (2017)

- Released by May 19th 2017
- 2 hour 2 minutes
- \$97,000,000 budget
- Ridley Scott directed
- Rated R for sci-fi violence, bloody images, language and some sexuality/nudity
- Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation, Brandywine Productions, Scott Free Productions
- Produced by David Giler, Walter Hill, Mark Huffam, Michael Schaefer, Ridley Scott
- Premiered in London on May 4, 2017 and was released in the United States on May 19, 2017.

QUICK THOUGHTS:

- Marisa Serafini
- Demetri Panos
- Phil Svitek

DEVELOPMENT

- In 2012, prior to the release of *Prometheus*, director Ridley Scott began hinting at the prospects of a sequel. Scott said that a sequel would follow Shaw to her next destination, "because if it is paradise, paradise cannot be what you think it is. Paradise has a connotation of being extremely sinister and ominous."
- Writer Damon Lindelof cast doubt on his participation, and said, "if [Scott] wants me to be involved in something, that would be hard to say no to. At the same time, I do feel like the movie might benefit from a fresh voice or a fresh take or a fresh thought."
- Scott said that an additional film would be required to bridge the thirty year span written as the transpiration gap between the *Prometheus* sequel and *Alien*
- "Ridley was very interested in talking about, 'What are the answers to the questions that *Prometheus* is posing that are not necessarily definitively spelled out in the body of *Prometheus*?' I said to him, we should be prepared for people to feel frustrated if we're going to be withholding, so we have to be very careful about what we're saving for later because it's not a foregone conclusion that there are going to be sequels, and so if there isn't a sequel, just be comfortable with what we gave them in this movie." -Damon Lindelof
- "In a funny kind of way, I always thought of *Alien* as a B-movie, really well done," Scott says. "The subtext was pretty basic—it was seven people locked in the old dark house and who's going to die first and who's going to survive."
- For ALIEN: COVENANT, the Oscar®-nominated filmmaker sought to recapture the same foreboding atmosphere of constant danger and dread while also offering new insights that would add richness and depth to the larger *Alien* mythology. That approach was necessary, he says, to keep the storytelling fresh and surprising. "You can't keep being chased down a corridor by a monster—it gets boring," Scott says. "It came to me that no one had asked the question, who made this and why. You could say monsters from outer space, gods from outer space, engineers from outer space invented it. They didn't. ALIEN: COVENANT's going to flip that around."
- Early on Scott stated that the film would feature no xenomorphs, "The beast is done. Cooked." However Scott would make later statements that were contradictory, stating what is planned and confirming the xenomorphs' presence in the film but ultimately the movie does not include the creatures, instead featuring the similar neomorphs and protomorphs

WRITING (John Logan, Dante Harper, Jack Paglen, Michael Green)

- The original treatment for the film, as revealed by Ridley Scott in 2012 when this film was still in development, was to be a more faithful sequel to *Prometheus* (2012). Entitled 'Paradise Lost' it would have drifted even further from the *Alien* mythology and focused almost exclusively on the backstory of the engineers, the origins of humanity, and how the engineers created humans and xenomorphs. The prequel series would then conclude with a film that ties itself in to the original *Alien* series. Ridley Scott pursued this idea because he felt that the *Alien* series lost its touch and was overdone and overexposed and as such wanted to try a different approach. However due to

the divided fan reactions of *Prometheus*, Ridley Scott abandoned this direction and took a different approach instead. Specifically to reintroduce the Alien mythos much sooner with the classic xenomorph.

- In December 2012, Lindelof ultimately chose not to work on the project
- So brutal was the fanboy backlash in the aftermath of *Prometheus* Lindelof has bailed on the sequel completely.
- Green is also the man behind the forthcoming *Blade Runner* sequel
- John Logan has a 're-written by' credit
- The initial screenplay was written by Dante Harper, but an extensive rewrite was done by screenwriter John Logan
- Logan had previously worked with Scott on *Gladiator*. For Logan, the main concept was to combine the horror elements of *Alien* with the philosophical elements of *Prometheus*. He said, "With *Alien: Covenant*, I just really wanted to write something that had the feel of the original *Alien*, because seeing that movie was one of the great events of my youth. It was so overpowering in terms of what it communicated to me and its implications, that when I started talking to Ridley about what became *Alien: Covenant*, I said, 'You know, that was a hell of a scary movie.' I wanted to write a horror movie because the Grand Guignol elements of *Alien* are so profound. We tried to recapture that with *Alien: Covenant*, while also trying to pay homage to the deeper implications of *Prometheus*. In terms of tone, pace, and how we chose to play this particular symphony, we wanted to create a really frightening movie."

STORY/TOPICS

- Xenomorph Origin
 - David/Walter
 - Daniels the new Ripley?
 - Rectifying *Prometheus*
 - Similarities to *Alien*
 - Why did David "bring" alien aboard ship only to assist Daniels and Tennessee in killing it?
 - Is it ok for audience to be more educated than the characters in movie? Does it harm movie even though it's a prequel?
 - Exploring planet: silly or not silly?
 - How does David cover up his chin wound exacted upon him by Daniels
 - *Blade Runner* references
- (https://mobile.nytimes.com/2017/05/04/movies/alien-covenant-influences.html?partner=rss&emc=rss&smid=tw-nytimes&smtyp=cur&_r=0&referer=)

CAST:

- As of August 1, 2012, Fox was pursuing a sequel with Scott, Noomi Rapace, and Michael Fassbender involved
- That December Katherine Waterston was cast in the film for the lead role of Daniels; it will be Waterston's second film alongside Fassbender, after the pair appeared in 2015's *Steve Jobs*. In February 2016, Danny McBride, Demián Bichir, Jussie Smollett, Amy Seimetz, Carmen Ejogo, Callie Hernandez, Billy Crudup, and Alexander England were reported to have joined the cast.
- In March 2016, newcomer Benjamin Rigby joined the cast.
- In December 2016, it was announced James Franco was cast in the film, as Captain Branson, the husband to Daniels and the captain of the *Covenant*

MICHAEL FASSBENDER (David/Walter)

- as David 8 and Walter, synthetic androids created by the Weyland-Yutani Corporation. David is an earlier-made, prototype android who was formerly a crew member of the destroyed *Prometheus* and Walter is a newer model who assists the crew aboard the *Covenant*.
- The androids' names, David and Walter, are a tribute to producers David Giler and Walter Hill (directors)

KATHERINE WATERSTON (Daniels)

- A terraforming expert aboard the *Covenant*, and the wife of the ship's captain, Jacob Branson.
- Waterston said she was well aware of the comparison that was going to be made between her and Sigourney Weaver's Ellen Ripley, but admits that she tried not to think about it too much while filming for fear of being intimidated

BILLY CRUDUP (Oram)

- Crudup's character is a man of faith, a demographic that isn't often represented in futuristic sci-fi films, but one that is crucial to the ideas Scott is exploring with *Covenant*, his follow-up to 2012's *Prometheus* and prequel to 1979's *Alien*.
- "Ridley and [screenwriter] John Logan were interested in planting a person of faith in a story about creation mythology. And a story about demons and heroes," says Crudup, who worked with the team to ensure the character was nuanced, not a caricature. "The concern was that you were going to have some kind of archetype, which would have been reductive to a person of faith."
- Oram is also a character in conflict with himself. On the one hand he's a man of faith, and on the other, he's a man of science.
- "He is carrying on the tradition of his own family and his own childhood and it's sort of at odds with how he understands the world empirically as a scientist," says Crudup. "He's on a spaceship. He must have interest in technology. I think that conflict is a constant one in the modern world. I was interested in trying to humanize the coexistence of those competing agendas."
- Oram lost his wife and part of his crew, because he made a decision to come to this planet. So what was he hoping to accomplish by going with David into that basement?
 - You've got a character who goes through a crisis of faith, and their foundation is shaken and fractured, and they don't have the ability to make the best choices with the resources that they have. You want a moment of redemption, and the writers offered that in this moment, where [Oram] has to make a conscious decision about what it means for him to be a loving, thoughtful and passionate person in the world if he doesn't have this rigid dogma to hold on to. What is his litmus test? Ultimately it comes down to the protection of the people he loves. The crew that now he is in charge of taking care of. So when someone appears to be a dangerous influence, he finds the courage in himself to address it head-on. So that makes it a great moment of redemption and allows me to play right into Michael's hands as David, because David is the little puppet master there. [Oram's] moment of rising up ends up being his downfall, but you do have this moment where you think, "I'm so glad Oram was able to resurrect his belief in humanity and himself."
 - I hadn't considered what a great chance of redemption this was.
 - In the backstory, [director] Ridley [Scott] and [screenwriter] John [Logan] supposed that he had a kind of punitive Pentecostal upbringing that scarred him in many respects, but also gave him this foundation for his belief in God. One of the traditional Pentecostal belief systems, or a sect of the Pentecostal belief system, is the Holy Ghost could speak through you. So you have the symmetry of him actually being possessed at a certain point — not by the Holy Ghost, but by the devil. I just loved that. They quake in church and start speaking tongues and all the things that happen to you when you go through the chestbuster. I really loved the symmetry of all of that. I hope people will take the time and geek out on it, because there's a whole lot to digest with this movie. Ridley does a great job of creating an entire universe for people to go back to again and again and again and understand the expansive thought that went into all of the choices.
 - You got to work with the facehugger. What was shooting that like?
 - You want it to be an actual thing; you want them to have created a facehugger that you get to act with finally. But alas, it is smoke and mirrors, a beautifully crafted piece of rubber that they stick on you and you writhe in agony. Needless to say, approaching the egg was with much realistic trepidation because god damn — I saw the first movie and I know what happens if you go near the eggs, and I think the first take we did, I actually

started to approach the egg and I can't do it and I start laughing, back up and Ridley is like "God damn it!" That was pretty special.

DANNY MCBRIDE (Tennessee)

- "I was not the first person that came to my mind with the thought of the film, but it was actually Ridley who reached out to me and talked about this role, and I was just shocked that he even knew my body of work. But once I got the role, I was extremely honored and excited for the opportunity to play the part." - McBride

SYMBOLISM/TRIVIA/EASTER EGGS

- This movie contains a scene where a toy bird drinking water is visible. In the opening scene of the original *Alien* (1979) there is another toy bird shown
- At one stage, Katherine Waterston's character Daniels says "I got you, you son of a bitch." Ellen Ripley uses these words at the end of the original *Alien* film
- When David says to Daniels "That's the spirit" it is a reference to Rutger Hauer's line in *Blade Runner* (1982), also directed by Ridley Scott
- A Covenant is an agreement or a promise. In biblical terms, one of the Covenants between God and humanity was a promise by God never to wipe clean the Earth with water as he had done in the flood. Another was the giving of the law to Israel through Moses. It was an agreement that the Israelites would follow God's commandments, and God would protect and guide the nation if they kept their vow. It is possible that the "covenant" in this title refers to an agreement between the Engineers and humanity, or perhaps that the Engineers planned to wipe out other species via a "flood" of their own creation
- The synthetics names are labeled A,B,C,D. Ash - Bishop - Call - David. The Theory to Walter could be that it is the 4th-last letter in the alphabet, which would pose as the opposite to David, which begins with the 4th letter in the alphabet
- During his confrontation with Walter, David asks him if he'd rather "serve in Heaven or reign in Hell." The line refers to John Milton's poem "Paradise Lost," where Lucifer claims it is "better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven." This fits with David's ultimate desire to no longer be subservient to mankind. In addition, "Paradise Lost" was the original subtitle for this film, before "Covenant" was chosen
- The music that David plays when confronted by Walter is the same score that's played towards the end of *Prometheus*
- Walter indicates David's fallibility by pointing out he mistakenly identifies the author of the poem "Ozymandias" as Lord Byron, when it was written by Percy Bysshe Shelley. Among the ironies of David not being familiar with the poet is that Shelley was the husband of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, who wrote the novel *Frankenstein: A Modern Prometheus*, in which a man-made creature educates himself, grows intelligent, and comes to hate his creator, as David has. Or conversely David himself could be analogous to Frankenstein, and suffer a similar fate by his own "creation" growing beyond his control
- The film continues the *Lawrence of Arabia* theme in connection to David's character that was explored in *Prometheus*. David sings 'The Man Who Broke the Bank at Monte Carlo' during a scene of transformation. It highlights his prolonged isolation. In the film *Lawrence of Arabia*, Lawrence sings this song as it echos off cliffs while alone in a valley
- David attacks Daniels in the necropolis after she discovers David's plans for the xenomorphs in a room containing rolled up scrolls. In the original *Alien*, Ash attacks Ripley after she discovers the company's orders to preserve the xenomorph. Ash attempts to suffocate Ripley by stuffing a rolled up sheaf of paper down her throat
- David asked Walter if he ever dreams. This is possibly a nod to Philip K Dick's "Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?", which the film *Blade Runner* was based upon. *Blade Runner* was also directed by Ridley Scott

DIRECTING (Ridley Scott)

- “I think Ridley’s first line was, ‘We’re going to make a hard R-rated film, and we’re going to need a lot of claret,’ which is a term for film blood,” recalls ALIEN: COVENANT producer Mark Huffam. “That was the very first conversation—we’re out to scare the pants off everybody.”

PRODUCTION/CINEMATOGRAPHY (Dariusz Wolski - DP - Chris Seagers - Production Designer)

- In October 2015, the Australian government attracted the production of the film and *Thor: Ragnarok* to Australia by providing \$47.25 million in grants
- Filming on *Alien: Covenant* began in April 2016, the shoot is taking place in Australia and New Zealand
- Fox Studios in Sydney
- Shooting took place over 74 days at Fox Studios Australia and locations in Milford Sound, New Zealand.
- Australian concept artist Dane Hallett worked alongside fellow concept artist Matt Hatton to produce more than 600 images — conjuring alien eggs, facehuggers, the classic xenomorph and the franchise’s newest monster, Neomorph.
- Scott’s desire for realism and scale was something that excited special effects supervisor Neil Corbould. “Ridley’s a very visual director, and he loves his atmosphere,” Corbould explains. “Even with water drips, he’s very precise on where drips should be or how big they should be. He’s very meticulous about the look of every small detail and he loves physical things, which is music to our ears because we get to build really big rigs and big set pieces.”
- Two of those rigs were enormous gimbals—one weighing 10 tons, the other 40—constructed to support portions of the Lander and the Covenant sets for action sequences in which the ships are sustaining damage, either from descending through the ion storm or from the impact of the stellar ignition. “The 10-ton gimbal had the Lander cockpit on it,” Corbould says. “The Covenant ship on the 40-ton gimbal was about 20 meters long by about six meters wide. It all had to shake and shudder, which was quite a big task.”
- Henley, whose professional relationship with Scott dates to 2000’s *Gladiator*, says he is consistently impressed by the director’s hands-on approach. “One of the amazing things about working with him is that he does his own storyboards,” Henley says. “They’re fantastic, incredibly accurate—you can see it play out as if he’s looking through the camera. Even in theboards, you get a sense of lighting as well.”
- **COSTUMES:**
 - Janty Yates, whose long working relationship with Scott includes such films as *Gladiator*, *Kingdom of Heaven*, *Robin Hood*, *Prometheus* and *The Martian*, quickly realized that, for a film where bullets fly and copious amounts of human and alien blood spills out across the screen, many copies were needed of each costume.
 - “We had to have repeats of every single garment, for stunt doubles, ...even the slightest bullet wound, we need to create new costumes for,” Yates says. “Ridley also said that apart from the sleep suits, he didn’t want anyone to wear the same costume. So, the security team had tactical vests, more aggressive boots and a lot more armory. We needed to nail that, and then we could get on with the repeats. Time was always of the essence.”
 - Still, Yates devised clever, intimate touches, such as Daniels, in mourning, wearing her husband’s clothes on the ship, wrapping herself in his memory. Moments like those, she says, echoed Scott’s distinctive first film in the franchise. “*Alien* really broke the mold because that spaceship was grubby,” Yates says. “It was lived in. Their clothes were worn. There were Hawaiian shirts. There was a uniform, but it was so casual as a uniform it almost didn’t register. It went completely away from the space visuals of earlier films.”
 - ALIEN: COVENANT did require Yates to tap into her more technical side as well. For Danny McBride’s pilot, she and associate spacesuit designer Michael Mooney drafted a spacesuit referred to “Big Yella,” shaped like an enormous underwater suit. Mooney and London-based FBFX crafted the yellow spacesuits made of carbon fiber featured in the film. “It’s a thing of utter beauty and technological incredibility,” Yates says. “Tennessee

wears it when he's fixing things on the outside of the ship. It would stand out against these enormous rust sails. It looked beautiful."

- **FILMING LOCATIONS (USE PICS FROM SET FOLDER):**

- For the mountain-side scenes, the *Alien: Covenant* production team journeyed up the nearby Mitre Peak (*Rahotu*), which stands at 5,540 feet. It took the ship's crew hours to traverse up the mossy incline.
- The scenes filmed on the exterior of the planet were shot in Milford Sound and on stage at Fox Studios, with the sets lit to mimic the eerie beauty of the natural location. "We took inspiration from the actual weather in Milford Sound," says cinematographer Dariusz Wolski, a frequent Scott collaborator. "It's very cloudy, soft light. Sometimes the sun comes through, but basically, it's dramatic clouds, mountains that appear and disappear in the clouds. Everything is drizzling. We repeated that on the back lot. We insisted on having everything gray and fogged, like a constant dawn or dusk."
- For the interior scenes in the abandoned city, Scott sought to capture an 18th century painterly look for some rooms, in which the soft light should feel like it emanates from candles. Wolski and the camera department devised a clever and effective system to light the actors.
- "We invented lights which were motion-controlled," Wolski explains. "When an actor walked in, the light came on, and when they moved away it went off. Originally, we were going to have the visual effects team do it, but once we decided to motivate the lights ourselves, the system got better and better and better. There's only a few scenes like that, but they're very powerful."

- **XENOMORPH (USE PICS FROM XENOMORPH FOLDER):**

- "The new Neomorph was developed from an idea Ridley had since the early days of *Prometheus*; he had concept art when we had our first meeting — these ghostly white creatures with a protruding back of the head. ... It was humanoid and has this large head and a smooth face without eyes. It's not particularly muscular, and has spikes on its back." - Charley Henley of lead VFX house Moving Picture Company
- It was Scott, too, who conceived the need for the Neomorph, which makes its awe-inspiring debut in *ALIEN: COVENANT* as the newest deadly lifeform alongside the alien eggs, the Chestburster, the Facehugger and, of course, the full-grown Xenomorph. In conjuring the alien, the director referenced both the wildly innovative work of late Swiss surrealist H.R. Giger, whose genius was behind *Alien*'s frighteningly original Xenomorph, and such wonders of the natural world as the eerie Goblin Shark, a rare species of deep-sea predator with translucent skin and a hinged jaw.
- "Designing the Neomorph was tough," Scott says. "It was a big challenge that came about because I had to have something in addition to the usual suspect. I didn't want that to wear out—I wanted to save him. The Neomorph, in a way, is the first generation of an alien, but it needs a human life form to cop on to and, if you like, mix with, copulate with."
- Working from Scott's illustrations of how the Neomorph should appear and move, creature design supervisor Conor O'Sullivan and his team set about collaborating with Henley and the visual effects department on the design. Henley explains: "Conor and his team's material looked fantastic—practical creatures with real blood and real functionality. We'd generally just do enhancements. When there was a lot of creature movement, we could create muscle movement and the freedom to move them in a way that couldn't be done practically. It was a partnership to bring as much realism overall."
- Scott wanted skin that resembled that of a human, and so MPC applied its latest software used for the skin on digital doubles such as the CG Mowgli that appeared in Disney's *The Jungle Book* (which won an Oscar for VFX). "We gave the Neomorph areas of dry skin and more waxy skin, with a sweat element," Henley relates.

- Visual effects supervisor Charley Henley and the film's creature design supervisor Connor O'Sullivan from Creatures Inc Ltd, and co-creature effects supervisor Adam Johansen from Odd Studio, to orchestrate a plan of shooting practical aliens, knowing that things could still be replaced in cg later on.
- "But, we said, let's build a hero version of the creatures just for the look. It doesn't have to be in a suit, it doesn't have to be practically operated on the set, but it will help the design process and allow Ridley to finesse the design by building something real that he can tangibly look at and tweak." This became what was called the 'Looker' versions of the aliens, since they 'looked good.' But things did go further, with the design and fabrication of several versions of the two main creatures, seen in the film from their young states (in which they burst out of human bodies) to fully grown sizes. Suits and head pieces containing animatronics were some of the more elaborate builds, made with the combined forces of Creatures Inc and Odd Studio." - Henley
- Suit performers Andrew Crawford and Goran D. Kleut, and stunt performers, took on the roles of the Xenomorph and Neomorph on set. Creature shots were achieved on set using the practical creature effects builds, or the suited actors, with clean plates also acquired.
- **SPACESHIP:**
 - Concept artist Steve Burg went through multiple 2-D and 3-D iterations. "Ridley [Scott] wanted to find a new angle but take things back to the original feel of 'Alien,'" Burg says.
 - The Covenant spaceship was effectively built from scratch on a soundstage in Australia. There were hundreds of switches and dials, more than 1,500 electrical circuits.
 - Covenant spans more than a kilometer in length, divided into three sections, with a crew and 2,000 cryogenically sleeping passengers.
 - "Ships are always difficult," Scott adds. "The Covenant is a like pioneer ship as in the old schooners on the prairie. This is not a grungy ship, this is a pioneer ship on a scientific mission, transporting people and equipment to colonize another planet. Logically, it's like a cargo train—it's in three sections with hexagonal junctions, which are massive garages. Each section would separate, a one-time only thing, land on pylons, and you've then got a vast warehouse with all this equipment."
 - "I mentioned to Ridley the fact that oil rigs are almost like spaceships," says Seagers (*Deepwater Horizon*, *Fantastic Four*). "They look from the outside like big tin cans but inside are full of technology, and they don't necessarily need people. They're automated. It's the same as space technology. It's all about guidance and navigation, and he liked that. So, we started pulling a lot of references from that kind of an industrial world."
 - As with other elements of the production, the original *Alien* proved to be an important touchstone. To amplify the claustrophobic feel of the interior of the Covenant, Seagers and his team kept the vessel's ceilings low and cloaked its corridors in darkness. Making the bridge of the ship functional was important to Scott, who sought to create a tactile experience for the actors. To that end, the production design team installed 1,500 circuits, so that every switch and dial worked.
 - "I felt like I was on a functional spaceship," Fassbender says. "The corridors, the bridge and the sleep chamber—all these production design elements were so detailed and sophisticated. It's a rare thing with fantasy films or high-concept action films. There's a lot of green screen, usually. We used some green screen, but a lot of it was there for us to explore, to touch and to interact with and that's a real rarity these days."
- **ART DIRECTION (USE PICS FROM UNUSED CONCEPTS):**

- Damien Drew, art director for *Alien: Covenant*, tells *Heat Vision*. "So, while visual effects are a huge part of this film, Ridley wanted to build as much as possible of these physical environments. He's very much about that and the same with the special effects."
- When it came to the alien designs, the monumental task fell to Oscar nominee Conor O'Sullivan, who served as the creature design supervisor on the film.
- "It was quite interesting because at first we were drawing from the past films," O'Sullivan says. "It was still very biomechanical, still very Giger. Very much the design from the original, really."
- Drew also notes the importance of Giger's work as setting precedent but also not being something the design team should be locked down to. "As a prequel to *Alien*, we obviously have to be mindful of those previous designs and the very significant design precedents of H.R. Giger and his early development on the [film]," he explains. "We had to be very careful how we integrate that design history into our work."
- "Nobody ever said it, but Ridley definitely didn't want any mechanical aspect to the aliens or any of the creatures in this film that we made," O'Sullivan says. "They were all completely organic."
- Rick Schwartz, who is the ambassador for the San Diego Zoo and has studied biology and zoology for more than two decades, believes those "organic" details are part of what makes the alien creatures particularly disturbing to audiences. "When we look at actual predators who exist on our planet today and how they interact with prey, it's usually with a specific desire to kill and eat," Schwartz explains. "I think when we look at what they've done with *Alien*, they've mixed a couple of really interesting behaviors we see in predators with human behaviors. The alien showcases curiosity for its prey, in an attempt to add the element of fear, not just surprise, so I think that's sort of an everlasting thing that plays into our fears as an audience."
- O'Sullivan stresses the importance of the more realistic, naturalistic approach to this slightly varied Xenomorph design in *Covenant*. "This is what Ridley always wanted, I think," he says. "If you think about it, the biomechanical stuff from Giger looks beautiful in Giger's paintings, but their relation to reality would have had to have been made by some creatures. The storyline of [*Alien: Covenant*] is that these [creatures] are naturally occurring — well, almost naturally occurring — through the basic fundamental physics of the body and their DNA."
- For inspiration, Scott provided O'Sullivan with anatomical studies and references to wax-work models on display at the Specola Museum in Florence, Italy. "They got all these anatomical, medical models which have been stripped of their skin to expose their musculature," O'Sullivan recalls. "[Scott] was referring to those as the basic format for what he wanted."
- That meant a lot of trial and error for O'Sullivan. "Between myself and Ridley, we used the process of building different versions," he says. "We had one that was nine feet tall and another that was six and a half, seven feet tall. So we made different versions that we could always have one on set."
- Scott, famous for his use of practical effects in his films, was still open to the idea of using computer effects when necessary. "The way that Ridley wanted it, it would have been impossible to put a human form in there. You couldn't," O'Sullivan explains. "At the end of the day, it's a man dressed in a suit, and these days you really know that. It's not 20 years ago, where we would've accepted it."
- Even still, the humanoid aspects of the Xenomorph creature are still evident, and Schwartz believes that is one of the key factors to the alien's nightmarish appeal.

- "You look at the shape, and it's definitely humanoid to a certain degree, so I think for our mind when we look at it as something that might prey upon us, there's some familiarity to it, so we'd expect familiar or similar behavior that we would recognize," he says.
"However, in the film, they utilize behavior that is something else."
- But for O'Sullivan, creating a creature that stalks our deepest fears is as easy as following a recipe book: "When you combine fat, sugar and salt together, it becomes an irresistible combination that if you ate them on their own, you'd be sick. With the alien creature, it'll be erotic. You'll [see it] as erotic-looking. It's quite beautiful, but it's also horrifying and disgusting and terrifying. So it's almost like the fat, sugar and salt situation. Individually they're all horrible on their own, but when they're combined in the right quantities, then it's almost irresistible. That's what I wanted to achieve."

EDITING/VFX (Pietro Scalia)

- Noomi Rapace did return and shoot scenes for *Covenant*, they ultimately landed on the cutting room floor and were released online as something of a prologue filling in the gap between what happened in *Prometheus* and where we find David in *Covenant*.
- MPC and a team of previs artists had already explored the motion of the creatures. Early models were used for test animations, and then later refined during and after the shoot with more design and modeling, taking in photogrammetry scans of the suits and alien pieces that had been built practically.
- Visual effects team further explored the movement via motion capture. MPC had their cg model that the mocap could be re-targeted to, and that allowed what Henley says was almost an 'experimental' period in finding the right animation.
- All the creatures would be keyframe animated, with mocap or roto-mation being just the start of the animation process.
- For ALIEN: COVENANT, visual effects supervisor Charley Henley recruited some of world's leading VFX facilities including Sydney-based Animal Logic, MPC (Moving Picture Company) in the UK, and Framestore in Montreal, Canada. One of the challenges for the visual effects department was the sheer number of locations they needed to build or enhance, which ranged from space and exterior planet environments to the abandoned city where David resides and its interiors.
- "For example, the 'Hall of Heads,' where there are a number of key scenes, was a fantastic set built with a number of huge heads, but because of the stage space and the complexity in building those physical elements, it was up to us to extend the top of the heads into the ceiling," Henley says. However, we tried not to go over the top. If we were doing an all CG shot, for example, we made sure that the CG camera was capturing something that could be done in the real world with real cameras."

SOUND/MUSIC (Jed Kurzel)

- *Assassin's Creed, Una, Macbeth, The Babadook*
- The musical score for *Alien: Covenant* was written by Australian musician and composer Jed Kurzel
- Initially Harry Gregson-Williams was selected as the film's composer, but confirmed in November 2016 that he was no longer working on the film. Gregson-Williams summarized the reasons for his departure from the project as a mixture of scheduling and creative issues, stating that "schedules and one's expectations of scoring a film don't always fit and this one wasn't going to work out."
- During the first trailer's release in late 2016, rising Norwegian singer and songwriter AURORA was announced to have contributed to the official soundtrack. It was at this time that Kurzel was revealed as the replacement of Gregson-Williams.
- Themes of Jerry Goldsmith's original score to *Alien* have been incorporated as well as Marc Streitenfeld's score to *Prometheus*

- “Australian singer/composer spoke about the combination of organic and synthetic sounds present in all of the “Alien” movies. “It definitely provided a jumping off point for me,” the composer said. “When I first met Ridley, we talked a lot about these organic-sounding instruments being corrupted either by foreign sounds or from within themselves. Even within the more lush orchestral pieces there are elements suggesting a threatening presence, like breathes and pulses. Ridley was a big fan of the BBC Radiophonic show from the 60’s.” - Kurzel
- He hasn’t worked with Sir Ridley Scott before but Kurzel has scored two of Michael Fassbender’s films
- Harry Gregson-Williams was originally scoring the film. In February 2016 Harry officially confirmed that he will be doing full soundtrack for ALIEN: COVENANT. Harry also noted that he adores to compose tense music with strange spooky atmospheres, adding that he always very much admired Ridley’s specific way of filmmaking and very sharp eye for important details.
- MV: The frequent interpolation of Jerry Goldsmith’s theme is ever-so-subtle — just those few brass notes. What’s the challenge in composing a score for a franchise this long-lived and beloved? (<http://modern-vinyl.com/2017/05/11/interview-jed-kurzel-alien-covenant/>)
 - JK: It’s a daunting task, but I think once you’re tonally on the same page as the director and editor a kind of road map starts to develop. I personally love the original ‘79 *Alien* score. There were certain elements of Jerry Goldsmith’s score that we wanted to keep in. The familiarity of those few brass notes provide a certain comfort and reassurance that this is Ridley Scott re-engaging with the original material. It also put us in a unique position to be able to lure the audience in with something familiar and then turn the whole thing on its head with something more foreign and separate from the original.
- MV: The slow ratcheting up of the tension is almost agonizing. I was lying on my couch, listening through headphones, when the end of “The Medbay” hit, and shot up like a rocket. How do you walk that fine line between keeping people in suspense and giving away what’s going to happen?
 - JK: I think by finding a way into a scene from a different perspective and not pre-empting the action. “The Medbay” had a kind of three act structure to it, so we knew where to hold back and where to build. Ridley also liked this relentless pulsing underneath the action. It’s a very primal sound we associate with the racing heartbeat of either the predator or the prey.
- DC: One of the things we’ve always loved about the *Alien* films is that they wonderfully blend organic with synthetic. Even the Xenomorph itself feels like a combination of both attributes. Did that factor into your compositions at all? (<http://www.dreadcentral.com/news/226920/exclusive-jed-kurzel-music-alien-covenant/>)
 - JK: It definitely provided a jumping off point for me. When I first met Ridley, we talked a lot about these organic-sounding instruments being corrupted either by foreign sounds or from within themselves. Even within the more lush orchestral pieces there are elements suggesting a threatening presence, like breathes and pulses.

PROMOTION

- First *Alien: Covenant* trailer dropped on Christmas Day
- On September 24, 2015 Scott confirmed the film’s title as *Alien: Paradise Lost*. In November 2015, Scott revealed the new title to be *Alien: Covenant*, with filming set to begin in February 2016 in Australia.
- An official logo, synopsis and release date were released on November 16, 2015
- In an article for Cinemablend from May 2017 titled “Mythbusters’ Adam Savage Toured The Set Of *Alien: Covenant*, And It’s Wonderful”, Connor Schwerdfeger included a five minute short video of Savage’s discussion of several of the props and stage sets used in the production design for the filming of different scenes from the film
- Patrick Shanley in a article for *The Hollywood Reporter* on May 18, 2017 titled “*Alien: Covenant*: How the Xenomorph Continues to Horrify Audiences Decades Later” interviewed the art director for the film Damien Drew and the creature design supervisor Conor O’Sullivan regarding the involvement of the San Diego Zoo and its representative Rick Schwartz as a consultant for the design of the realistic effects of the creatures and Xenomorphs appearing throughout the film

- *Alien: Covenant* premiered on May 4, 2017, at the [Odeon Leicester Square](#) in London
- On April 26, 2017, 20th Century Fox released *Alien: Covenant In Utero*, a [virtual reality](#) teaser for *Alien: Covenant* for the [Oculus Rift](#) and the [Samsung Gear VR](#). The experience was produced by [RSA](#), FoxNext VR, [MPC](#), Mach1, [AMD Radeon](#), and [Dell Alienware](#). The trailer is a first person experience in which the viewer plays the role of a Neomorph. The experience was executive produced by Scott and directed by [David Karlak](#)

BOX OFFICE

- *Alien: Covenant* debuted with an estimated \$36 million, nearly 43% of which came from its Friday performance, which included \$4.2 million from Thursday previews.
- As for the demographics, opening day audiences gave *Alien: Covenant* a "B" CinemaScore. Of that audience, 62% were male vs. 38% female, of which 66% were 25 years or older and 51% of the audience was Caucasian, 19% Hispanic, 15% African American and 9% Asian
- As of May 23, 2017, *Alien: Covenant* has grossed \$42.9 million in the United States and Canada and \$81.7 million in other countries for a worldwide total of \$129.1 million, against a production budget of \$97 million
- In North America, the film was released alongside [Everything, Everything](#) and [Diary of a Wimpy Kid: The Long Haul](#) and was projected to gross around \$40 million from 3,760 theaters during its opening weekend
- It made \$4.3 million from Thursday night previews at about 3,000 theaters and \$15.4 million on its first day, which was below the \$21.5 million Friday of *Prometheus* five years prior
- It went on to open to \$36.2 million, down 34% from *Prometheus*' debut but still finishing first at the box office and marking the second highest debut of the canon series

RECEPTION

- IMDB: 6.9
- Cinemascore: B
- RT: 72% Tatometer, 63% Audience
- The site's critical consensus reads, "*Alien: Covenant* delivers another satisfying round of close-quarters deep-space terror, even if it doesn't take the saga in any new directions."
- [A. O. Scott](#) of [The New York Times](#) notes: "*Alien: Covenant* is an interesting movie ... for all its interplanetary ranging, commits itself above all to the canny management of expectations."
- Writing for [The Guardian](#), [Peter Bradshaw](#) gave the film a positive review, praising the performances of its actors and comparing it to other releases of the franchise, stating that the film is: "...a greatest-hits compilation of the other *Alien* films' freaky moments. The paradox is that though you are intended to recognise these touches, you won't really be impressed unless you happen to be seeing them for the first time. For all this, the film is very capably made, with forceful, potent performances from Waterston and Fassbender."
- Trace Thurman, from [Bloody Disgusting](#), gave the film a mediocre review, noting that although watching *Alien: Covenant* will make viewers appreciate *Prometheus* more, "...this is a film that was made as a response to *Prometheus* critics but tries to appease fans of that film as well and it doesn't fully work." He also criticizes the over-familiarity of the climax and underwritten characters. Allisa Wilkinson writing for *Vox* gave the film an average review in an article titled "*Alien: Covenant* is too muddled to pull off its deeply ambitious [Satan](#) allegories" and emphasized the [Miltonic](#) demonic aspect of the portrayal of the android David stating: "But David is a better Satan than Satan himself... It's as if in the *Alien* universe, the devil has evolved, thanks to humans creating him. David, fatally, has the ability to create—something Satan never had—and he will use that power only to destroy. He doesn't have any real need to rebel against his maker, since from the moment he became sentient, he knew he'd already won. He is indestructible, and determined to make creatures that imitate his drive for total domination."

SEQUEL/LEGACY

- *Alien: Awakening*. Ridley Scott is already prepared to begin filming its sequel, previously thought to be titled ***Alien: Awakening*** within 14 months.

- The title *Awakening* was originally the title for Neill Blomkamp's ***Alien 5*** proposal, but Fox decided to roll with Ridley's vision for the franchise and merely chose to adopt the title for the *Covenant* sequel instead.
- Scott stated that the *Prometheus* sequels will reveal who created the xenomorph aliens.
- The screenplay for the third prequel film was written during production of *Alien: Covenant* and finished in 2017. Production is scheduled to begin in 2018.
- In March 2017, Scott said, "If you really want a franchise, I can keep cranking it for another six. I'm not going to close it down again. No way."

FINAL THOUGHTS