



Launch Day

magazine



A L I E N

I S O L A T I O N TM



Fright Night

**IN SPACE, NO ONE CAN HEAR YOU SCREAM —
BUT YOUR LIVING ROOM IS A DIFFERENT STORY.**

Conventional wisdom holds that humanity's deepest, most primal fears are rooted in the unknown. The darkness makes our skin crawl because it might hold anything within its gaping, pitch-black maw. The best monsters paralyze us with terror because they're inscrutable and inhuman, which in turn makes their actions frighteningly unpredictable. The evil we can see will never be as scary as the one lurking just out of sight in the shadows.

That theory certainly applies to Ridley Scott's 1979 film *Alien*, which petrified audiences with fleeting glimpses of its grotesque, lethal

threat. It's every bit as true in *Alien: Isolation*, the first video game built from the ground up to capitalize on the original movie's sense of pervasive dread. As you step into the shoes of Amanda Ripley and attempt to survive aboard the space station Sevastopol, you'll encounter a smart, deadly foe the likes of which you've never seen in a game. Thanks to cutting-edge, reactive AI, the Alien can read his surroundings, learn from your tactics, and come at you even more intelligently the next time around.

Consider this launch guide, then, as your last line of defense against fear, your final chance to learn a little more before you dive into the unknown.

A L I E N

I S O L A T I O N™



TAP TO PLAY TRAILER

AVAILABLE OCTOBER 7, 2014



PS4

PS3



XBOX ONE



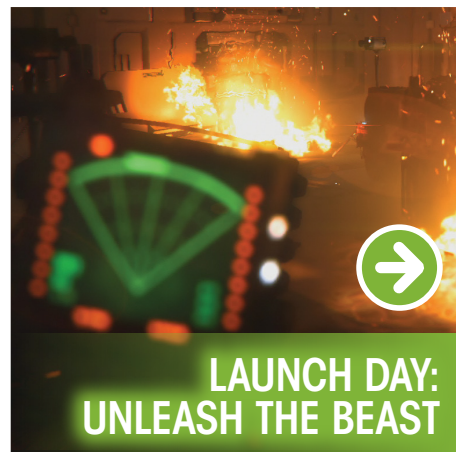
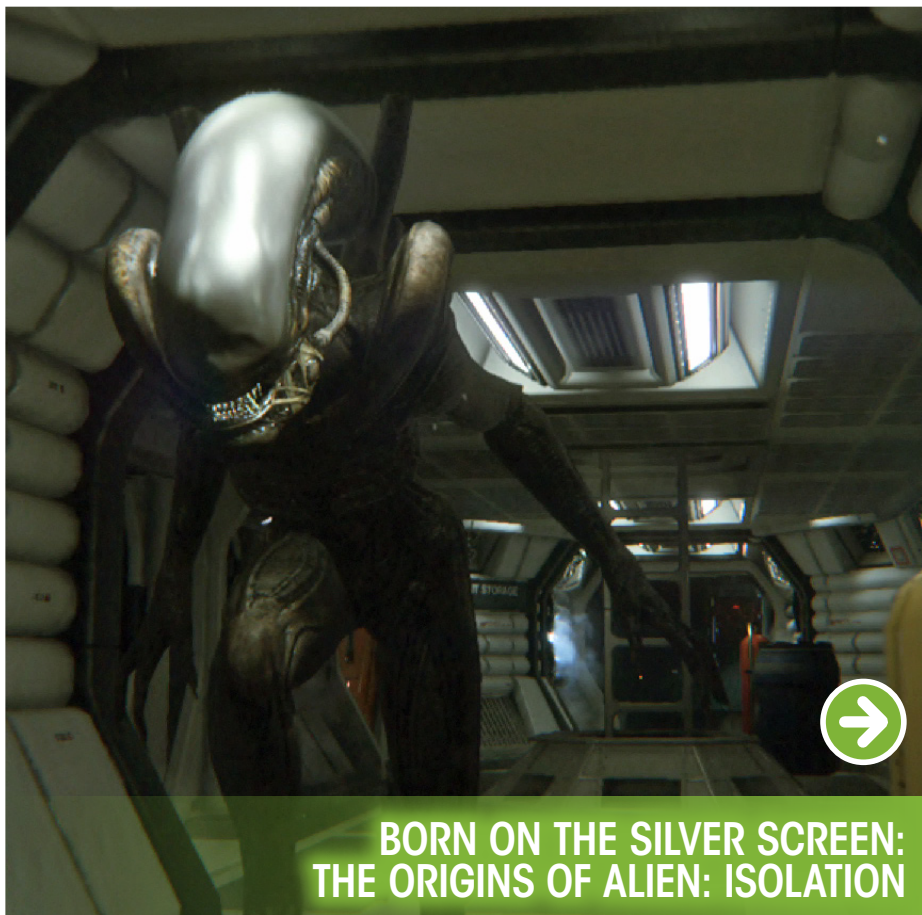
XBOX 360



SEGA®

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INSIDE





A L I E N I S O L A T I O N™

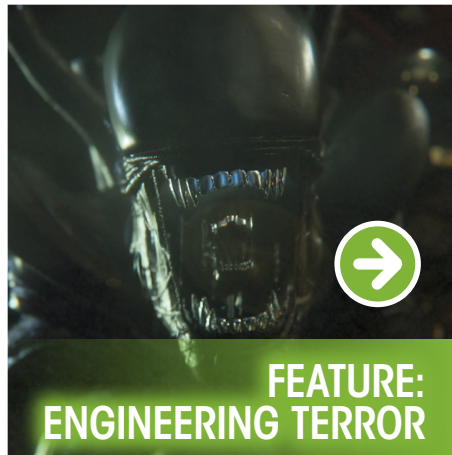
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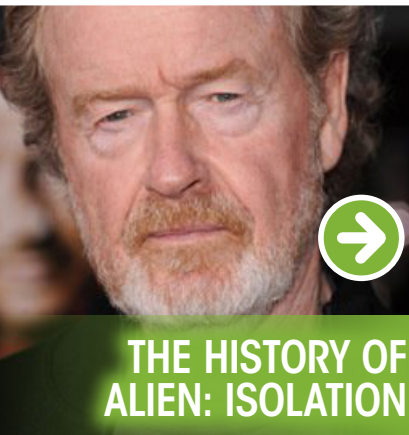
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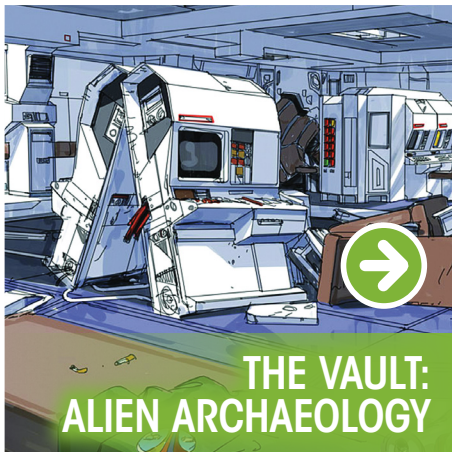
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VIDEO INTERVIEW:
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THE VAULT:
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ABOUT THE
AUTHOR

Born on the Silver Screen



**ISOLATION OWES
ITS EXISTENCE TO
A CLASSIC OF
SCI-FI HORROR
AND THE PASSION
OF THE CREATIVE
ASSEMBLY TEAM**

In late 1977, spurned on by the massive financial success of *Star Wars*, 20th Century Fox greenlit a low-budget science-fiction film with the hopes of cashing in on the genre's newfound popularity. The only script available to them at the time — written under the working title *Star Beast* — was, by all contemporary accounts, in terrible shape. Almost a dozen contentious rewrites had done little to improve its prospects. After several established directors passed on the project, it wound up in the hands of Ridley

Scott, a relatively unknown filmmaker with only a single, largely self-funded feature under his belt.

And yet, from that inauspicious start, a cultural juggernaut was born. The film was, as we all know, eventually renamed *Alien* and proved itself a massive success with both critics and audiences alike, raking in more than 10 times its budget at the box office. The movie's success jumpstarted Scott's career as a top-tier director and spawned a billion-and-a-half dollar film franchise, with six sequels and spinoffs released in the 25 years since — and another on the way.

MOVIE MEMORIES



**TOUCH
FOR VIDEO**

The *Alien: Isolation* team reflects on seeing *Alien* for the first time.



Lasting Impressions

From the start, the folks who would later go on to create *Alien: Isolation* were enamored. Al Hope, creative lead at studio The Creative Assembly, still remembers the first time he saw the original film and its enormous impact on him. "It was like nothing I'd ever seen," Hope says. He remembers being shocked by its vision of the future — one that was shockingly like the present, in harsh contrast to the bright, idealistic worlds of more inspirational science fiction movies like Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey*. "*Alien* was dirty and gritty. You knew there

wasn't some miracle technology that was going to come in and save the day," he says.

Jude Bond, *Isolation's* lead artist, echoes that sentiment. "I believe that Ridley Scott made a conscious effort to take out all of the sci-fi where he possibly could," he explains. "Obviously it's a ship in space, it's the future, but it's very grounded and very believable. The story kind of stands alone without the science fiction to support it. It's about a bunch of people doing their jobs and having a really, really bad day at work. I think that resonates with everyone."

PRESS START

“We heard people were saying, ‘Have you seen the Alien thing? How do I get to see it?’”
— AL HOPE, CREATIVE LEAD



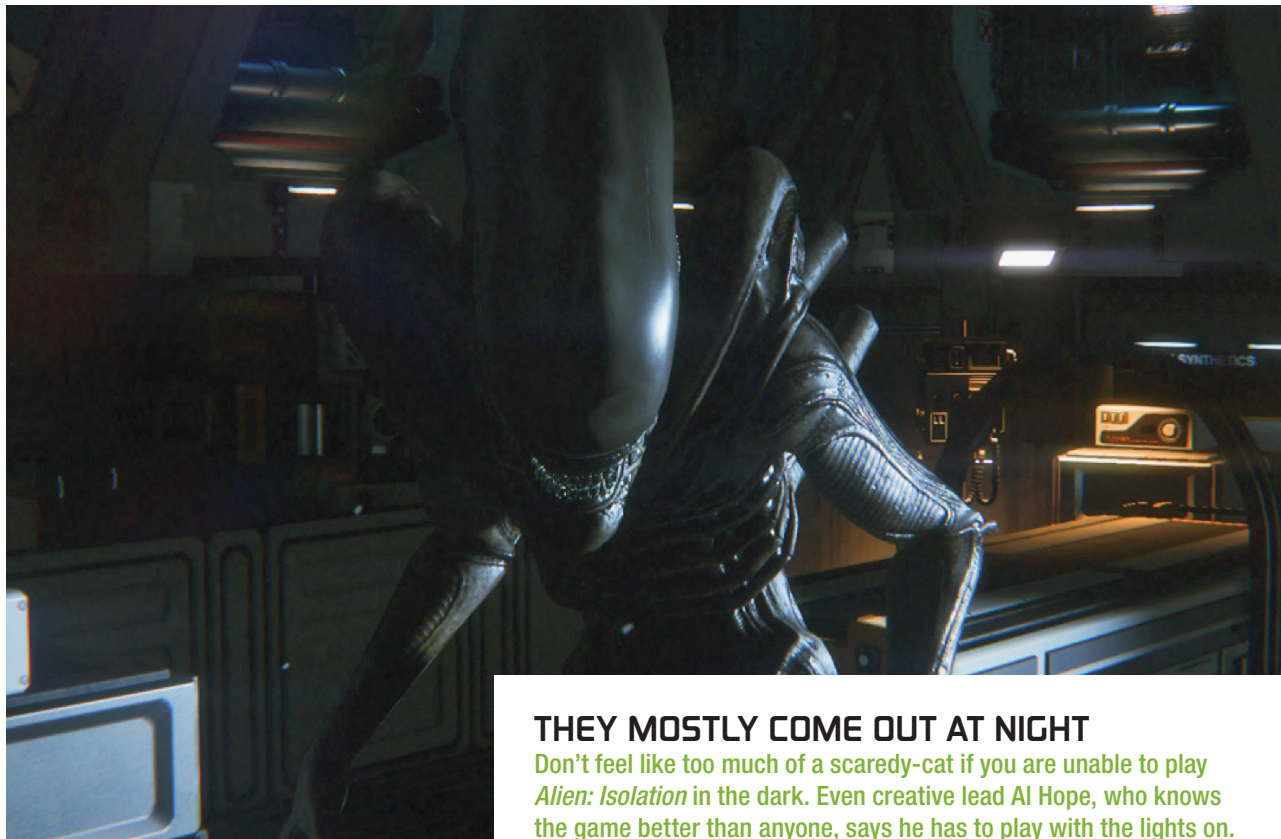
I KNOW THAT GUY!

To generate a diverse set of NPCs to fill out Sevastopol station, the team actually scanned themselves into the game. Don't be surprised if you recognize Al Hope, Gary Napper, Jude Bond, or Dion Lay in the middle of a fight.

Of course, it's impossible to ignore the other major factor in *Alien's* enduring success: its tall, dark, and hideous title character. Designed by Swiss surrealist painter H. R. Giger, the Alien was a true original, a twisted marriage of biology and engineering. “I think it's one of the greatest monsters ever created,” says Dion Lay, one of *Isolation's* writers. “It stands up there with all the classics, like the werewolves and the vampires. In fact, it's one of the few new monsters to have gained iconic status. It's incredibly mysterious, and I think that's really important. There's a lot we don't know about it that we don't understand.”

A Virtual Nightmare

Not surprisingly, it didn't take long for the *Alien* universe to spark the imagination of contemporary video game makers, either. The first tie-in game — a Pac-Man clone for the Atari 2600 — hit in 1982, and the series has inspired a steady stream of arcade, console, and



THEY MOSTLY COME OUT AT NIGHT

Don't feel like too much of a scaredy-cat if you are unable to play *Alien: Isolation* in the dark. Even creative lead Al Hope, who knows the game better than anyone, says he has to play with the lights on.

PC titles ever since. But few if any of those games tapped into the essence of what made the film such a hit. Early attempts were hamstrung by the technological limitations of the day — a lumpy block of pixels has a hard time instilling fear — and later titles found it easier to reduce the Aliens to run-of-the-mill, cannon-fodder enemies in a more action-packed context. There have been many enjoyable *Alien* games, to be sure, but none could come close to matching the scare factor of their source material.

“[*Alien* is] about a bunch of people doing their jobs and having a really, really bad day at work. I think that resonates with everyone.”

— JUDE BOND, LEAD ARTIST

That's something that had always bothered fans, not least among them members of the *Isolation* development team. “So many video games have concentrated on the shooting and combat aspects of the second film, *Aliens*, where there are multiple creatures and you've got all the big marine weaponry,” lead designer Gary Napper says. “That naturally translates to video games, because they can be quite shoot-y and explode-y. But no one, for me, had ever made a game where one Alien had been something to fear. No one had captured that tension and apprehension from the first film, where it could be around any corner and you didn't have what you needed to deal with it.”

Fever Pitch

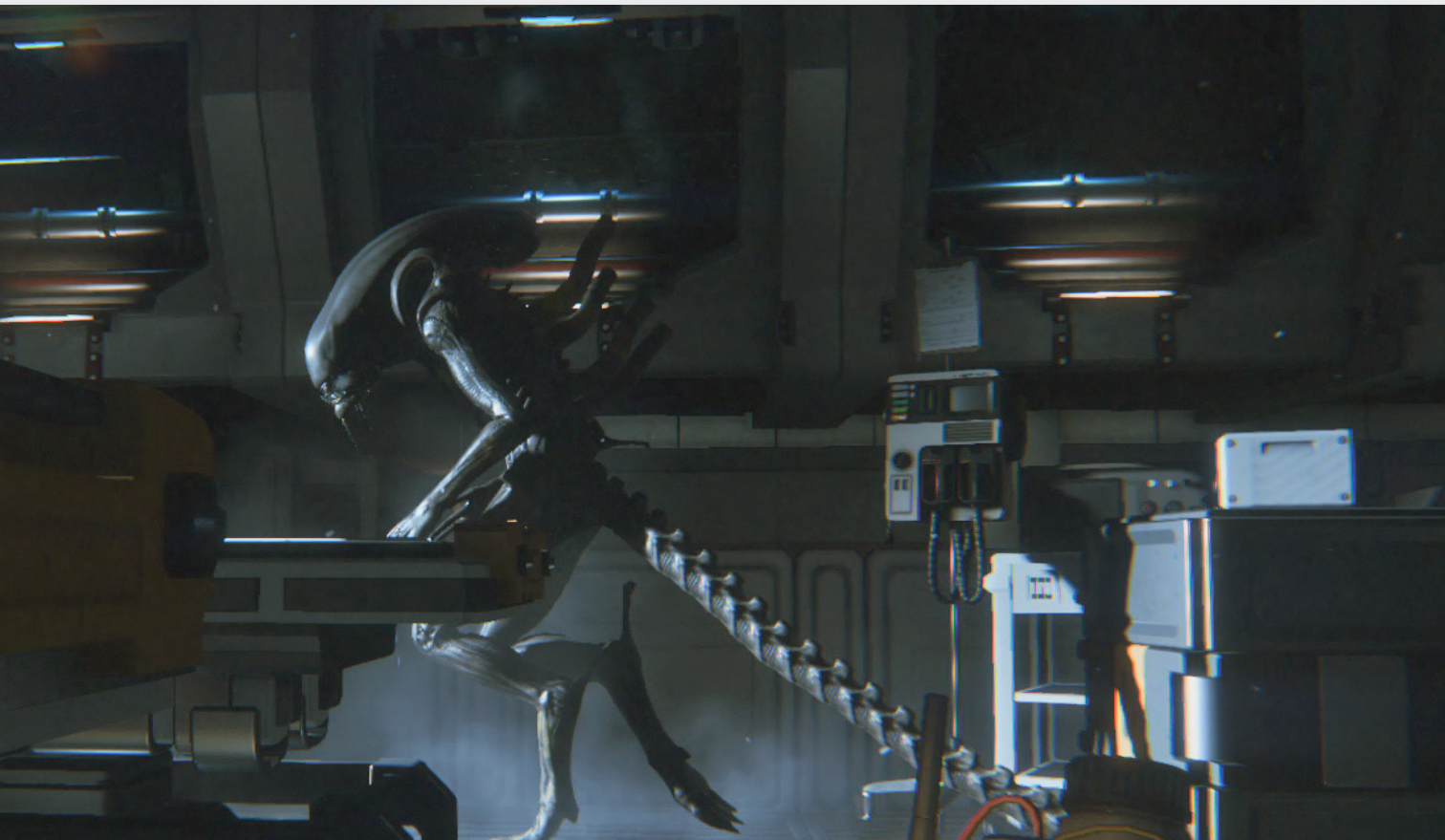
When one team at The Creative Assembly wrapped up work on a project and began to make plans for its next game, Hope brought up a concept that had been gestating in his head for a while.



ICE, ICE, BABY

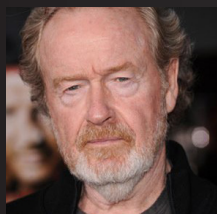
The motion tracker prop from the original film was an ice-cube tray that had been spray-painted black mounted on one side, a quick-and-dirty lo-fi fabrication that's been preserved in *Isolation's* updated design.

PRESS START



A L I E N The I S O L A T I O N Timeline

While you may know the complete lifestyle of the Alien, it also helps to know these important dates.



11.1937

THE DIRECT APPROACH

Future *Alien* director Ridley Scott is born in South Shields, Tyne and Wear, England.



02.1940

MY TWO DADS, PART I

Artist and future *Alien* co-creator H.R. Giger is born in Chur, Graubünden, Switzerland.



11.1946

MY TWO DADS, PART II

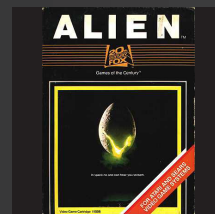
Screenwriter and future *Alien* co-creator Dan O'Bannon is born in St. Louis, Missouri.



05.1979

GOING TO THE MOVIES

Alien — directed by Ridley Scott, written by Dan O'Bannon, and designed by H.R. Giger — is released.



01.1982

BINGE AND PURGE

Alien, a Pac-Man-like game inspired by the 1979 movie, is released on the Atari 2600 gaming console.



A L I E N I S O L A T I O N™



Knowing that Sega had signed a licensing deal with 20th Century Fox to create games based on the *Alien* franchise, he suggested they build a survival horror game set in that universe. His colleagues excitedly embraced the idea.

"We were just about to start another project, and we were like, 'We can't do that. We need to go and have a punt at this,'" Bond recalls. "So a very small group of us, led by AI, took the opportunity to make a prototype. It was

almost in our spare time, if I remember rightly. We took the engine from the previous game, used and abused that, made it do things it was never designed to do, but I guess we were so inspired by wanting to do this that what came out at the end of this phase of work, I think, exceeded everyone's expectations."

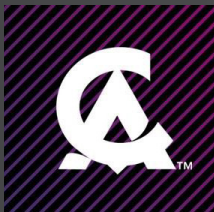
The team needed just four weeks — the briefest blink of an eye, in game development — to bring together that initial prototype, which did a masterful job of showing



07.1986

RIPLEY, BELIEVE IT OR NOT

Aliens is released. The director's cut features the first mention of *Alien: Isolation* hero Amanda Ripley.



01.1987

GETTING CREATIVE

Tim Ansell forms the game studio The Creative Assembly in the West Sussex town of Horsham.



06.2000

THE RETURN

The Creative Assembly releases the turn-based strategy game *Shogun: Total War*.



07.2014

ISOLATED INCIDENT

Alien: Isolation is released. In living rooms everywhere, everyone can hear you scream.



06.2111

A STAR IS BORN

Ellen Ripley's daughter, Amanda Ripley-McClaren, is born. Or she will be, I suppose.

PRESS START



ALIEN NATION



**TOUCH
FOR VIDEO**

Watch an official trailer for
Alien: Isolation.



A L I E N I S O L A T I O N™



off the tense, atmospheric mood that would come to define *Isolation*. Hope still remembers making pitch presentations to Sega and Fox. As the demo came to a close with a jarring glimpse of their Alien in all its terrifying glory and the lights came up, the executives were sitting in stunned silence. “We knew we’d done something right,” Hope grins. In fact, the project quickly went viral within Sega, where it was passed around between enthusiastic employees. “We heard people were saying, ‘Have you seen the Alien thing? How do I get to see it?’” he says.

As you’d expect, the massive buzz surrounding the pitch meant that The Creative Assembly soon got the go-ahead to put *Isolation* into full production. Hope and his team had their next project, but perhaps more importantly, they had a chance to finally make the very game that they, as enormous fans of the franchise, had always wanted to play.



Surprise, Surprise

The film’s iconic chest-bursting scene was shot in just one take, and the actors had almost no idea how it would play out. The looks of surprise you see on their faces are completely genuine.

MEET THE TEAM



AL
HOPE



DION
LAY



GARY
NAPPER



JUDE
BOND

THE FRIGHTENERS

The Creative Assembly might not be a household name among video game fans, but few developers have had as long or varied a history. Now in its 27th year of operation, the studio got its start porting classic titles like *Shadow of the Beast* and *Microcosm* to new platforms. In the early '90s, it entered a partnership with EA Sports and spent the better part of a decade developing different sports games, including the very first edition of *FIFA*, for the PC.

The studio's big break came in 2000 with *Shogun: Total War*, which kicked off a multi-million-selling franchise of historical strategy games that's been going strong ever since. The most recent release, *Total War: Rome II*, quickly became the fastest-selling game in the series when it launched in September 2013.

These days, the studio is a far cry from its humble beginnings. With more than 300 employees, it has grown into one of the largest developers in Europe. Its Horsham, England, offices bear all the hallmarks of success, with stylish black and purple decor, state-of-the-art equipment, and a host of accolades from its more than quarter-century in the industry.

Alien: Isolation marks another important step forward for The Creative Assembly: its first survival horror title, first movie license, and first project on the new generation of consoles — all big steps, to be sure. That *Isolation* has come together with such confidence is a testament to the skill of the dozens of hardworking men and women on the team — not least the four creative leads you'll meet here.

A L I E N I S O L A T I O N™



WRITE IS MIGHT



**TOUCH
FOR VIDEO**

Watch Dion Lay discuss writing a new chapter in the *Alien* saga.

MEET THE TEAM



DATA POINT

PREVIOUS GAMES:

2008

*Viking:
Battle for Asgard*

2005

*Spartan:
Total Warrior*

2000

Rugby

BIGGEST FEAR:

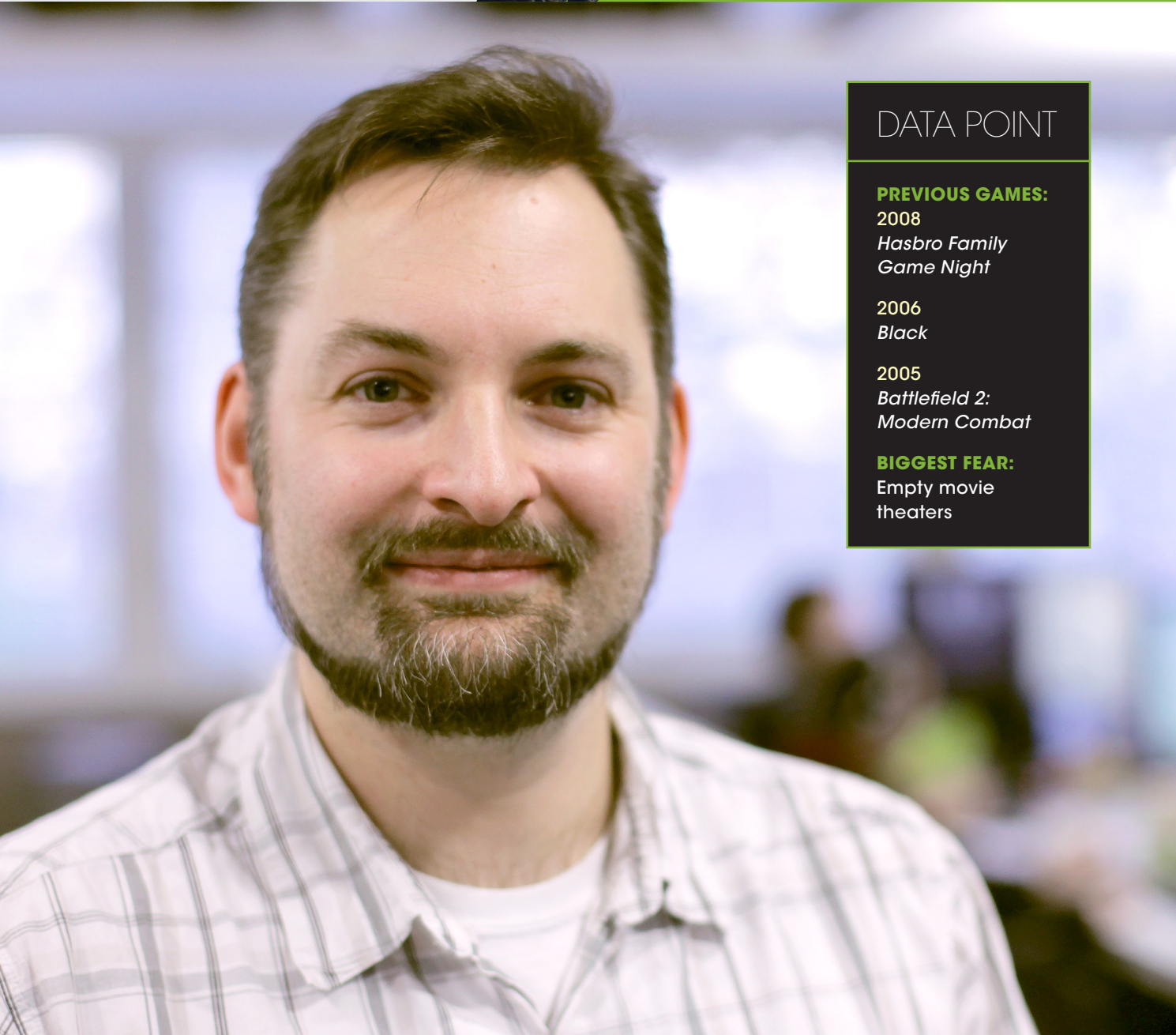
Heights

AL HOPE

CREATIVE LEAD

Hope got an early start in game development. As a teenager, he began building his own games on a ZX Spectrum computer and pitching them to publishers such as Electronic Arts. After graduating with a degree in fine art, he saw an ad in the back of a gaming magazine and applied to work at The Creative

Assembly. He got the gig — only the eighth employee hired — and he's been working at the studio since. As the creative lead on *Alien: Isolation*, he's in charge of the overall vision of the project and making sure all the different pieces come together perfectly, a job he says involves "a lot of talking."



DATA POINT

PREVIOUS GAMES:

2008

*Hasbro Family
Game Night*

2006

Black

2005

*Battlefield 2:
Modern Combat*

BIGGEST FEAR:

Empty movie
theaters

GARY NAPPER

LEAD DESIGNER

Napper joined up with The Creative Assembly shortly after development of *Alien: Isolation* kicked off three years ago, but he's no newcomer to the industry. He's been making games for nearly a decade and a half, having been previously employed at a number of high-profile studios including Maxis, Criterion,

and EA UK. As *Alien: Isolation's* lead designer, he oversees many things that factor into your play experience. He's there to make sure gameplay feels right, the levels flow well, and the mechanics come together with the atmosphere to deliver an experience that's as smooth and fun to play as it is bone-chilling.

MEET THE TEAM



DATA POINT

PREVIOUS GAMES:

2011

Total War: Shogun 2

2010

Napoleon: Total War

2009

Empire: Total War

BIGGEST FEAR:

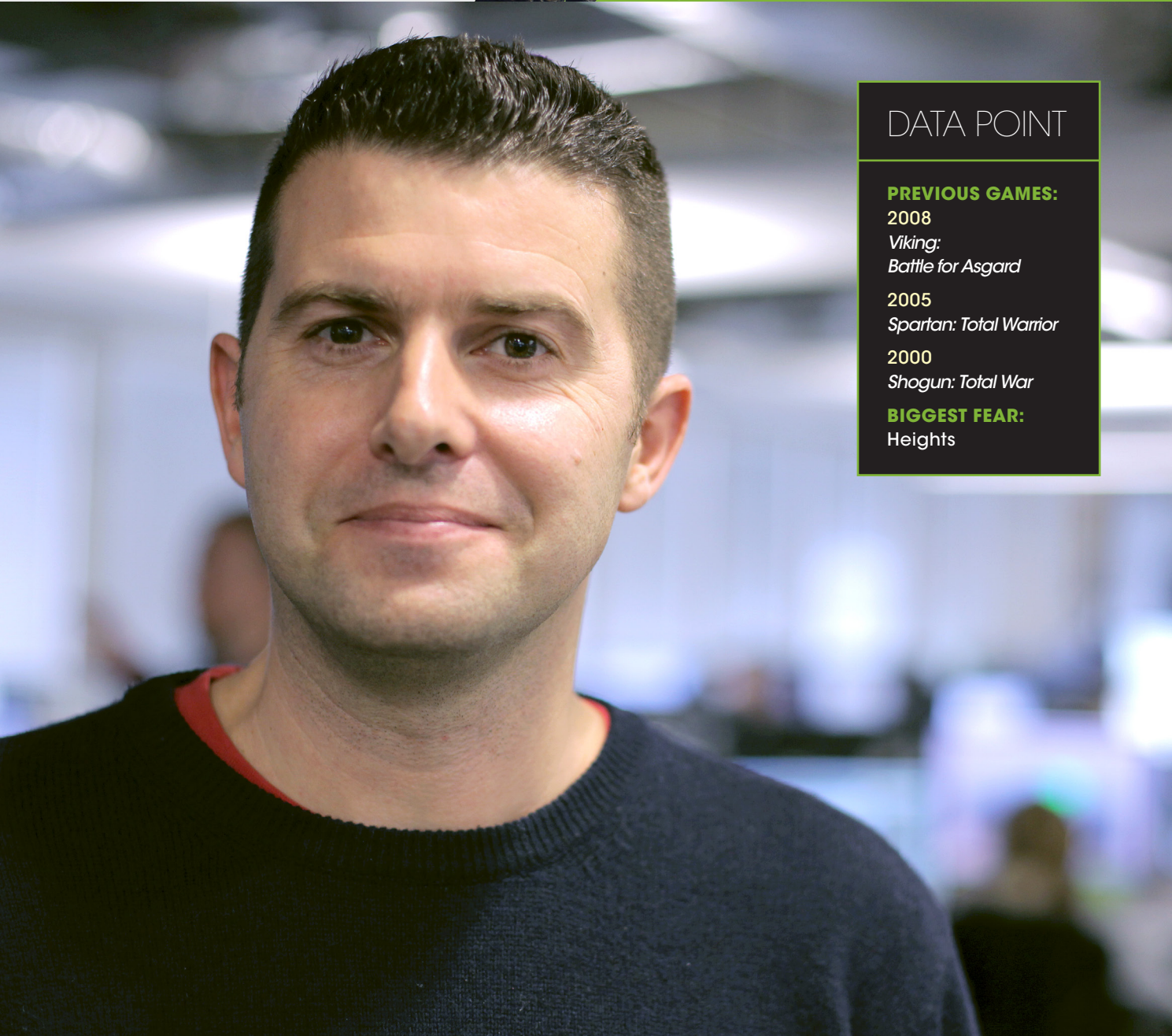
Heights

DION LAY

WRITER

Lay first joined The Creative Assembly as a tester, rooting out bugs and providing feedback on the *Total War* titles. After taking it upon himself to work extra hours writing and submitting dialogue, he moved up into a writing position. As part of the writing team for *Isolation*, he's had a hand in just about

every aspect of the game in which words are involved. He pens dialogue, helps develop the characters, plots out the story beats, and even provides text for the posters and computer terminals you'll come across on Sevastopol. In other words, if you find a typo while playing, you should probably write him an angry letter.



DATA POINT

PREVIOUS GAMES:

2008

Viking:

Battle for Asgard

2005

Spartan: Total Warrior

2000

Shogun: Total War

BIGGEST FEAR:

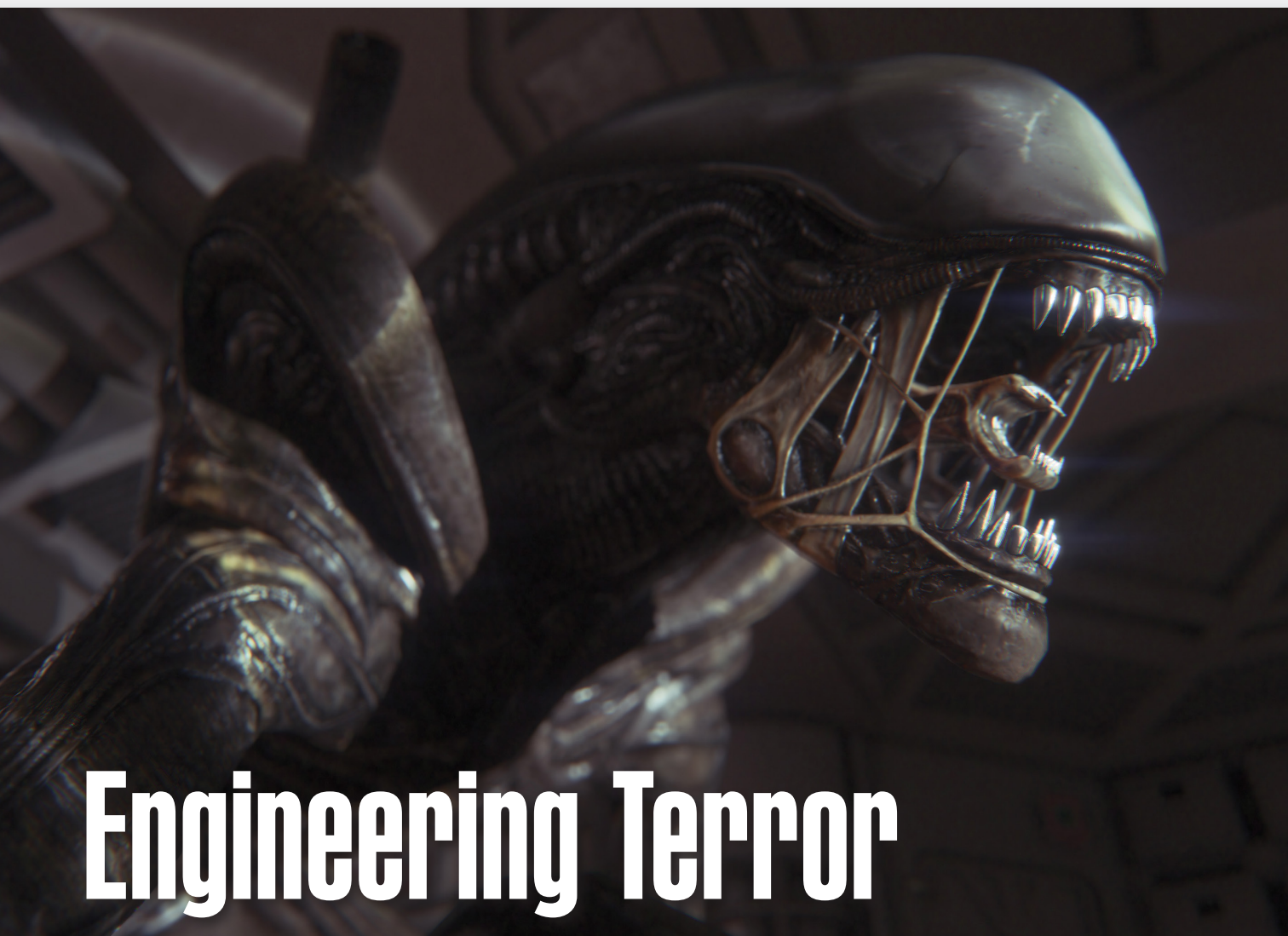
Heights

JUDE BOND

LEAD ARTIST

Bond is another longtime veteran of The Creative Assembly, having got his start there more than 16 years ago. In those days, he modeled arenas and stadiums for the company's sports games. Just as technology has advanced, so has Bond's role within the company. As the lead artist on *Isolation*, he's

in charge of all the visual assets, though he's certainly not drawing and sculpting everything single-handedly. Instead, he oversees a team of talented 2D and 3D artists, making sure their work fits the aesthetic of the world and conveys the creepy, ominous atmosphere the game is shooting for.



Engineering Terror

TO ACCOMPLISH WHAT THEY SET OUT TO DO, THE ISOLATION TEAM HAD TO BUILD A MONSTER, A HEROINE, AND AN UNYIELDING SENSE OF FEAR

As team members at The Creative Assembly geared up to begin full production on *Isolation*, they knew their earliest priority would be understanding exactly what made the original *Alien* tick. "The first phase of the game's development was deconstructing the film, tearing it all apart," creative lead Al Hope says. "One of the things we actually did was time the amount of time the Alien was on the screen. I think it's onscreen for just over three minutes, and the longest shot lasts about 11 seconds. It's hardly onscreen at all."

Even more intriguing was that the people's impressions of the Alien — that it was a cunning, aggressive hunter — weren't borne out by its scenes in the movie, Hope says. Instead, Ridley Scott relied on dialogue to hammer home those traits, presenting the team with a big challenge: Instead of simply recreating the Alien as it appeared on the screen, developers would need to build a creature that fit players' expectations of a lethal, unstoppable threat. That was, as it turned out, no easy task.

The Perfect Organism

"We knew if we were going to make the Alien scary, we needed to make it brutal," lead designer Gary Napper says. But the designers knew that if the Alien repeatedly used the same method to kill players, players would



SKELETON CREW

If you look closely at the Alien's head, you can faintly make out the outline of its skull beneath the skin, including the overgrown eye sockets. Then again, if you're that close, you should probably run for your life.



figure that out and the Alien would become predictable. "As soon as you have more information than the creature, you feel more powerful, and we couldn't let that happen. That led us to the conclusion that the Alien had to be systematic; it couldn't be the same every time."

To solve that problem, the team built a complex artificial intelligence that controls the Alien's behavior. Rather than following a preset path or series of interactions, it instead reacts realistically to the sights, sounds, and smells of the world. If it hears a locker clang shut, the Alien knows to investigate, even if it didn't see you enter that locker. At one point, the Alien was too intelligent, forcing the AI programmers to dumb it down a bit and give players a chance to survive while keeping the game challenging and unpredictable.

That means you can't expect to play *Isolation* like your typical first-person game and survive on reflexes alone. "When we found players who were into games like *Call of Duty* and *Battlefield* and we sat them down to play it, we watched them adapt their play style very quickly," Napper says. "They went from sprinting and running and dying in 10 seconds to creeping carefully and using distractions to deal with the Alien."

A Place in the Universe

In addition to developing a suitably formidable antagonist, the team also needed to tell a story that fit in the *Alien* universe. "We kicked around a lot of different ideas, but we knew we wanted a story that was really closely associated to the first film," Hope says. "It would have to take place after [the movie], because then we could take advantage of all the cool stuff that we loved: the look and feel of the spaces, the creature itself. But we were also



A SHY MONSTER

The Alien from the first movie might have a terrifying presence, but it's onscreen for just 3 minutes, 36 seconds. The good (and bad) news? You'll be seeing a lot more of it in *Isolation*.



DEBATING THE X-WORD

Whether the Aliens are properly called “xenomorphs” is a topic of fierce debate among fans. The team working on *Isolation*, for its part, never once used the word internally, preferring more mysterious terms like “Alien” and “creature.”

really keen to have a story that had an emotional connection to that first film. We really kept coming to the question, ‘The Nostromo, the ship from *Alien*, has disappeared. Who would care about that?’”

Writer Dion Lay says the solution came when the team stumbled onto references to Amanda Ripley, daughter of the film’s heroine, Ellen. “You have a history there, and you have a real emotional connection,” Lay says. “Because *Alien* is so popular, the tricky part is finding something that can give a lot of mystery to people who know the universe, but also you want to bring new people in and give them someone to follow who’s also discovering it, because obviously a lot of characters in our game are discovering the Alien for the first time.”

Amanda filled that niche perfectly, Lay says, giving longtime fans a familiar

face to root for while still paving the way for her own unique journey to the space station Sevastopol, in search of any trace of what happened to her mother.

Finding the Fear

The team’s hard work on Amanda, the Alien, and the story that brings them together would have been for naught, however, without some serious scares to back it up. While it took a lot of careful effort to fine-tune everything into the terrifying experience it is today, the team members discovered early on that they were on the right track.

“One of the earliest things that we did, as part of the technical stuff, was build a testbed where you could walk around and crouch behind things, and that was its whole purpose. It was really simple,” Hope says. “But for some reason, someone had stuck an alien in there. You’d hand the controller over to someone and watch them start to move around, and as soon as they saw the Alien, they would crouch and scamper over to get behind something. It wasn’t moving. It wasn’t animated. It wasn’t anything. It was just this solid object that was this alien. Just from that, you’re thinking, ‘Oh my goodness. Giger’s design just communicates this dread.’”

“As soon as you have more information than the creature, you feel more powerful, and we couldn’t let that happen.”

— GARY NAPPER, LEAD DESIGNER

ALIEN ISOLATION™



DREADED DESIGNS



**TOUCH
FOR VIDEO**

Watch Jude Bond discuss bringing art to life in *Alien: Isolation*.

POWER ON



“There have been occasions where people have just thrown coffee all over themselves. Seeing people being scared by what they’re actually producing is very funny.”

— JUDE BOND, LEAD ARTIST



BULLETPROOF

While a gun might be handy for taking down hostile humans and Working Joe androids, it won’t do much good against the Alien. Facing it head-on is a guaranteed recipe for death, so stick to the shadows.

As the Alien’s AI came to life, developers received more feedback about how to take advantage of its potential to instill fear. “There was another test where you simply had to get from A to B with an Alien in your way, and you had different ways of navigating through the world,” Hope says. “We found out that people were scared when they could see the Alien, because they could see they were in immediate danger. But then the other feedback we got was that they hated it when the Alien disappeared into the vents, because then

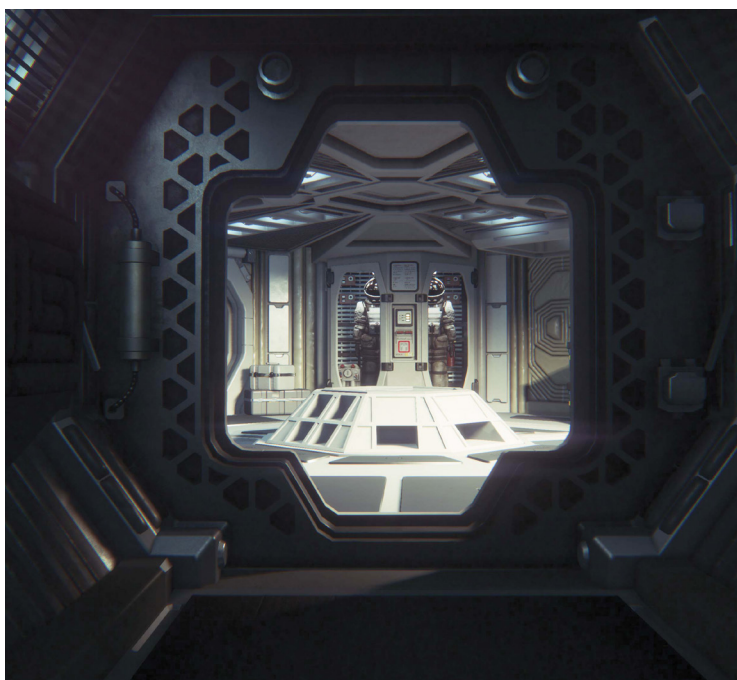


they didn't know where it was or what to do. That was kind of a 'wow' moment. People were equally as scared when they can see it as when they couldn't see it."

In the end, though, Hope says that the best tactic for ensuring players are scared is making sure that all aspects of the game — audio, AI, visuals, and gameplay — work together to create a tense atmosphere. "One of the most memorable instances is when we were doing some tests, and the Alien was behaving exactly as we thought it should, but it just wasn't quite right," he says. "There was something missing. Then, the next day, the audio guy put all the audio in, and we ran it again, with the same guys and everything, and the Alien killed the player, and the entire room almost leapt out of their seats."

Yes, the game still terrifies the people who made it. Everyone seems to have stories about a meeting in which someone screamed or jumped three feet into the air in fear. Even after three years, watching it all go down doesn't seem to have gotten old. "There have been oc-

casions where people have just thrown coffee all over themselves," lead artist Jude Bond says with a laugh. "Seeing people being scared by what they're actually producing is very funny."



ELEMENTAL FIGURES

As Amanda Ripley seeks to unravel the mystery of her mother's fate aboard the space station Sevastapol, she'll encounter other survivors, some less friendly than others. Here's a quick primer on a few of the faces she'll meet, as well as a bit of background on our heroine.



Amanda Ripley

A strong, resourceful and dedicated worker, Ripley has been working for several years as a Weyland-Yutani engineer in the region where her mother disappeared. The discovery of the Nostromo flight recorder has finally given her the possibility of finding closure on something that has haunted her for 15 years.



Samuels

A longtime employee of the Weyland-Yutani corporation, Samuels is a company man through and through. Smart and level-headed, if awkward and sometimes impatient around his colleagues, it was Samuels who reviewed the Nostromo case history and discovered that Amanda Ripley was still searching for her mother.



Nina Taylor

A young legal executive powering her way up the Weyland-Yutani corporate ladder, Taylor is keen to close the book on the Nostromo disappearance to impress the upper echelons of the company. She has organized the retrieval mission and, despite her lack of experience in deep space, is present to oversee the transfer of the flight recorder.



Verlaïne

Verlaïne is the captain of the USSCSS Torrens, an independently owned ship chartered by Weyland-Yutani for the voyage to Sevastopol. Verlaïne's contracts are usually lengthy and lonely courier missions, accompanied only by her Navigational Officer Connor, but she feels that this job has a higher priority than the usual.



10 SECRETS OF ALIEN: ISOLATION

Here's a helpful tip for when you play *Alien: Isolation*: Go slow. Take your time. And look around a lot. Not just because there's an Alien hunting you, one with really good hearing and a hankering for steak tartare, but because you'll also want to see all the fun film nods that the good people at The Creative Assembly have stuck in. While talking to lead designer Gary Napper, sound designer Byron Bullock, animator Simon Ridge, and UI artist Jon McKellan, we learned some secrets about the game you won't learn even if you survive this horror.



01 SCREEN JUNKIES

Given that the game is based on the movie, you'd expect there would be a lot of nods, Easter Eggs, and inside jokes from the film and its sequels. But here's one we weren't expecting. "There are plenty of mini-puzzle games on the station to occupy your time, most of which need to be solved to activate some old technology or provide you with valuable information," Napper says. "But if you're a fan of the original film, you may find the look of these puzzles familiar because the graphics for the mini games were taken from the various terminal screens on the Nostromo. So next time you watch the movie, have a look for some of them in the background."

02 EVERYTHING IS AWESOME

What's funny about the aforementioned puzzles you'll face in *Alien: Isolation* is how they have such lo-fi beginnings. As Napper explains, "When prototyping, I used LEGOs and some string so I could quickly build and test patterns for a circuit-testing



minigame that evolved into the current hacking game you see now. The prototype was about connecting multiple points to lights in order to complete a puzzle. I got people to play it and altered it based on their reactions and ability to understand it quickly."

03 BACK TO THE GRINDER

To make sure *Alien: Isolation* was faithful to the original movie, Fox — the studio that made *Alien* and its sequels — sent hundreds of assets to The Creative Assembly including, oddly, one rather handy piece of technology. "Along with the crew's badges, the buttons on the terminals, and the nodding bird toy," Napper says, "Fox also sent over the coffee grinder, which, we realized looking at it, was the same grinder that was the inspiration for the Mr. Fusion Home Energy Reactor in *Back to the Future*."



04 SIREN SOUND

Included among the original props from the movie that Fox sent to The Creative Assembly were the original audio tape reels, which included one rather distinctive sound effect. "Among the sound effects, we found the eerie siren sound heard in the film's 1979 trailer. With a little bit of dusting off, the original recording was ready to terrify once again and lives on in [the] *Alien: Isolation* announcement trailer," Bullock says.



05 LORENZO'S LLAMAS

While The Creative Assembly had the original siren sound, when it came to the voice of the Alien, the development team decided to start from scratch. To do so, they combined the sounds of alligators, snakes and ... llamas? "That's right, the scariest creature in the universe has llama DNA in its vocal mix," Bullock says. "Not to mention pigs, vultures, frogs, dolphins, monkeys, human beings and even the hiss of a steam iron." In space ... you'll never do laundry again.

06 FOOD COURT

Along with the sound of the Alien, The Creative Assembly team had to create the sounds of the Alien sitting down to have a snack — as when he kills our hero, Amanda. The recipe for the audio is less than appetizing, though. "To create the sound of one of Amanda's death scenes in the game, the audio team pushed a condom-covered microphone into a bucket of slime, which contained a mixture of monkey nuts, butter, hair gel, lubrication, cooked pasta, and melon," Bullock explains.

07 TUNE IN, TURN ON, DIE OUT

Although *Alien* was set in the future — 2122 to be precise — some of the computers look like they're from 1979, which wasn't as easy to recreate in *Alien: Isolation* as you might think. "To recreate the distortion and fuzziness reminiscent of old '70s tech," McKellan says, "we experimented with many different effects before realizing that the best way of producing something convincing was to set up an old VCR and TV, and then waggle their cables back and forth and recording the results."

08 REMOTE CONTROL

The funny thing about using an old VCR and TV to recreate the computers of the future is that it also inspired the Security Access Tuner (SAT) that Amanda uses in the game. "Amanda uses the SAT to tune in to coded frequencies and override systems in order to progress through the station," McKellan says. "And old TVs had to be tuned to pick up the correct channel, which is what inspired how the SAT works in the game."



09 WELCOME ... TO ALIEN PARK

Even with four *Alien* movies, two *Aliens Vs. Predator* flicks, and a workout video, there's actually very little footage of the Alien running around. Since you can't just fly to their home world and ask one of them to pace up and down a hallway for a few minutes, The Creative Assembly team had to look elsewhere. "With such little direct reference material to draw upon," Ridge says, "the A.I. team actually used the velociraptor kitchen scene from *Jurassic Park* as an inspiration for how the Alien hunts its prey."

10 WILD KINGDOM

The folks at The Creative Assembly did more than watch movies to create an accurate Alien. According to Ridge, when the Alien "spots a target, it pulls its arms back behind it and can switch from a stealthy skulk to an attack sprint of 26 feet per second." That means not only that someone watched scenes from the *Alien* movies while holding a stopwatch, but that someone then did the math.





Unleashing the Beast

FOR THE ISOLATION TEAM, LAUNCH DAY IS A CHANCE TO SEE IF THEY'VE SCARED THE PANTS OFF FANS

Developing a game is a long process, one that demands years of hard work and emotional investment toward a goal that can sometimes seem inconceivably distant. For the *Isolation* team, nearing that finish line brings a lot of things to the surface: catharsis, joy, anticipation, and — if all goes according to plan — validation that their vision and tireless effort were worth it.

Launch day, though, also marks the beginning of another journey, one in which the developers get to watch fans interact with their creation, share stories about

their experiences, and pass judgment on whether the game lives up to the hype. With their work complete, team members won't be kicking back on a tropical beach somewhere; they'll be eagerly awaiting your reactions.

"For the longest time, we weren't able to talk about the game," creative lead Al Hope says. "We weren't able to show it to anyone. It was just very internal. We knew how we played the game, and that was all good, but I think the big moment will be finally being able to see other people play. On launch day, it'll be multiple screens of Twitter and YouTube and Twitch, with us



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all trying to sponge up as much of the feedback as possible.

"I think that's one of the really exciting things about making games right now," he adds. "There's this culture of Let's Plays on YouTube and people streaming their play-throughs. I think *Alien: Isolation* is perfect for that, because everyone's going to have a slightly different story and a slightly different sequence of events because of the emergent nature of the encounters. Just being able to watch that is going to be fantastic."

Priority One

Different members of the team share Hope's sentiment and the sense that launch feels like letting in the public on an exciting secret that they've been keeping for more three years. "I've been itching to tell everybody about it for ages," writer Dion Lay says. "I'm really looking forward to playing it myself, but



SECURITY CLEARANCE

20th Century Fox granted the team unprecedented access to archival materials from the film's production, providing it with more than six terabytes of production stills, reference photos, and concept sketches.

at my house, with my TV, because it always feels very different [than playing it at the studio]. I really want to see what my friends think about it, as well, because I know a lot of horror game fans out there."

With a game like this, it's easy to predict what the team considers its biggest metric for success. Above all else, The Creative Assembly has engineered *Isolation* to be a bona fide fear machine, and the developers won't believe they've accomplished that unless they get an earful of terrified shrieks.

"If there's one thing I want people to take away from this, it is immersion, basically," lead artist Jude Bond says. "I think the art, the audio, the script, the AI — when all those things come together and you do genuinely scream, I think we know we've done our job. It's

"I think the art, the audio, the script, the AI — when all those things come together and you do genuinely scream, I think we know we've done our job."

— JUDE BOND, LEAD ARTIST



about everything coming together and making someone believe they're part of the universe we're working on."

Gary Napper, *Isolation's* lead designer, has higher expectations. "I want people to be able to say after they've played it that this is that *Alien* game that they always wanted. As a dev team, it's the thing we've always wanted to play and the thing we've always wanted to make, so if people are happy with that and it has fulfilled that, then we've succeeded."

Looking to the Future

Like most development teams on the eve of a major launch, The Creative Assembly remains laser-focused on putting the finishing touches on *Isolation*

and getting it into the hands of eager gamers everywhere. Still, nearly all the team members agree that the rich universe of *Alien* has plenty more to offer the world of video games. Whether they'll get a chance to build those adventures themselves remains to be seen, but it's clear they already have plenty of thoughts about the directions they'd like to see the franchise head in the future.

"Personally, I'm a massive fan of space games," Napper says. "I would love a game [in the vein of] *Elite* or *Homeworld*, where you've got the Sulaco in combat. I don't really know who or what they'd face up against. I just want to fly the Sulaco!" he gushes.

Although Lay doesn't have any specific genres in mind, he has some thoughts on the story the game could tell. In particular, he'd like to see a game that explores an oft-neglected setting within the film series' lore. "I want to see what happens on Earth during that time period, because that's kind of an unknown," he says.

"We're going to get a lot of new people looking at The Creative Assembly. I think it's going to be interesting to see how we're viewed after this."

— DION LAY, WRITER



FEAR FACTOR

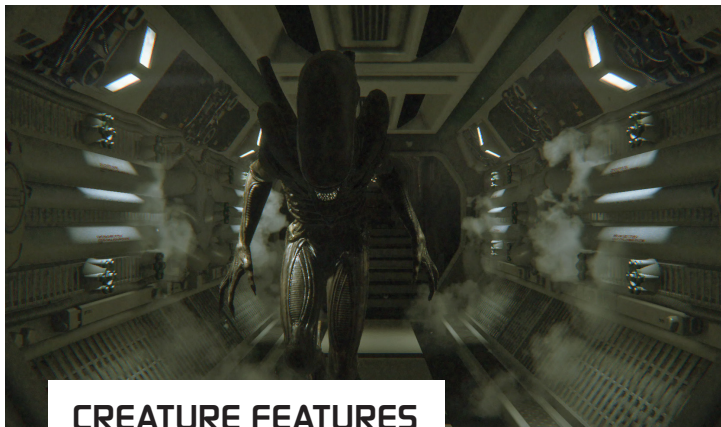


**TOUCH
FOR VIDEO**

Watch an interview with lead
designer Gary Napper.



LAUNCH DAY



CREATURE FEATURES

Isolation's Alien is built on top of a complex animation system that allows each body part to be animated independently, leading to a staggering variety of gaits and behaviors while it is on the hunt.

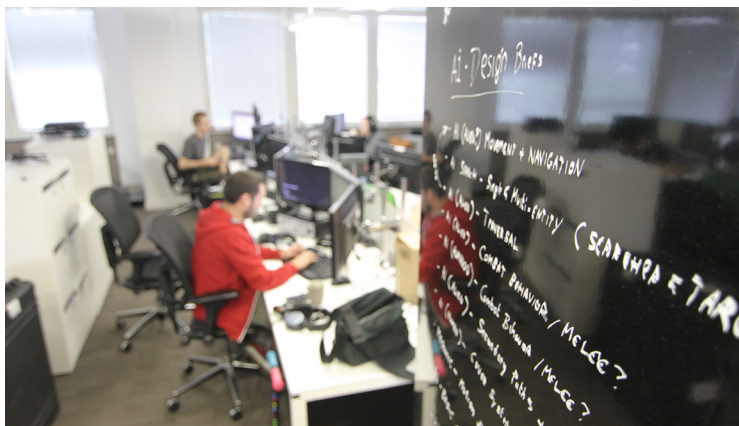


Hope, though, takes a more guarded approach. He says he's "maybe" got an idea or two for future *Alien* video games, but he isn't ready to spill the beans on them just yet. Why's that? "I'd probably want to make it myself," he laughs. And who knows? If *Isolation* proves a hit with fans and critics, he just might get a chance to do just that.

A New Chapter

The launch of *Alien: Isolation* also marks a new era for The Creative Assembly, a studio that's prided itself on continual reinvention during its 26 years. Expanding its horizons into this new genre will significantly raise its profile. "We're going to get new fans," Lay says. "*Total War's* really popular, but I think *Alien* is a big license. We're going to get a lot of new people looking at The Creative Assembly. I think it's going to be interesting to see how we're viewed after this."

Hope, who first imagined *Isolation* and set the game's development in motion, says the studio's future relies on continuing the same attitudes and practices that made it thrive in the first place. Even after nearly two decades there, he vividly recalls those early days, when he was one of the first employees. "We were just a bunch of guys in the tiniest industrial unit with no air

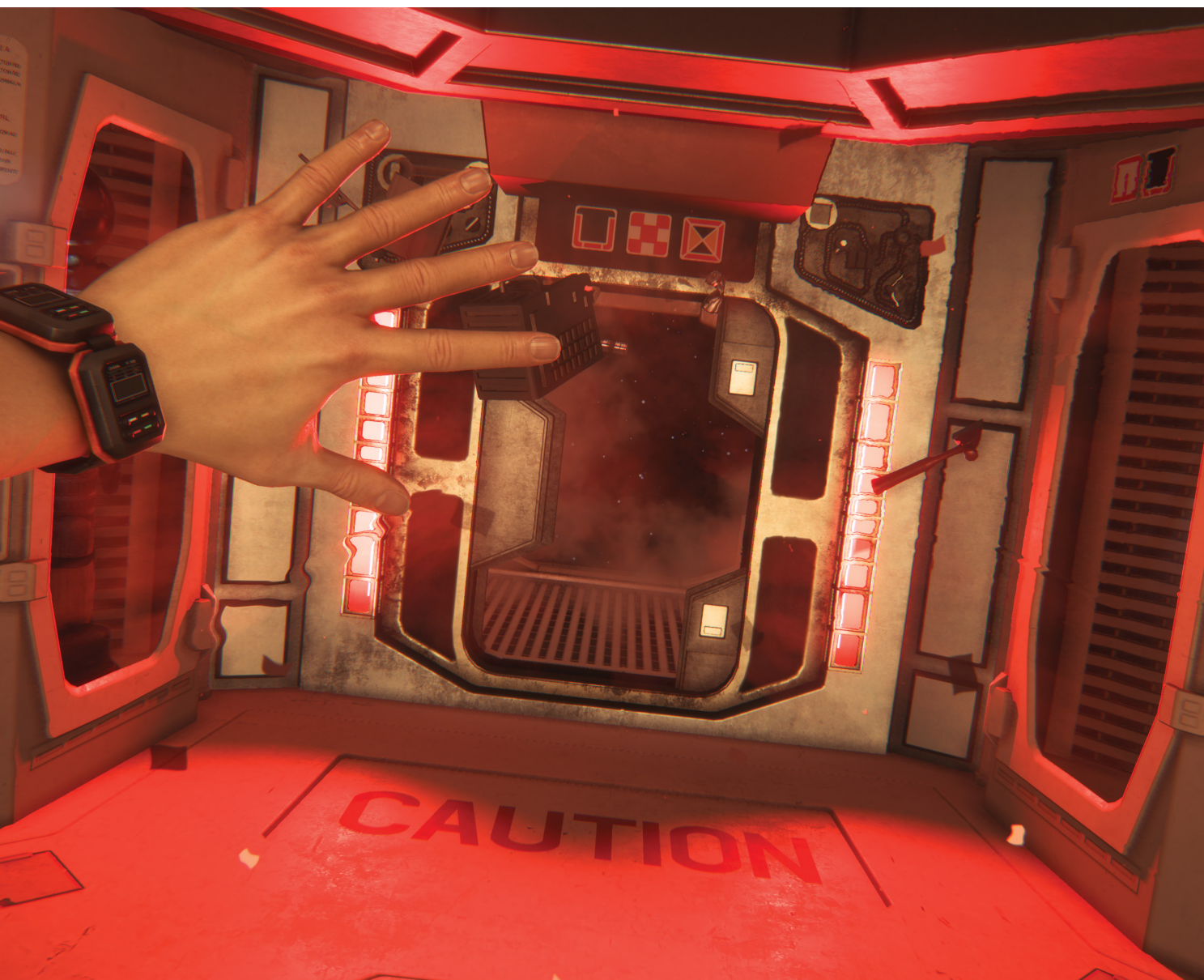


NO YOLK

To celebrate Easter, the team chowed down on an egg-shaped cake — but not the typical, pretty pastel type. Instead, it was modeled after the grotesque black egg in which the facehuggers gestate. Yummy!



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conditioning, sitting in our [underpants] in the summer," he reminisces. "It was so cool to just be able to walk around, and whatever anybody had on their screen was just super cool. It was just the sense that, wow, we're making this ourselves. I think a lot of that spirit has stayed within the studio. Though we've grown enormously, there's still the feeling of that small company."

That may be true, but thanks to his and others' efforts on *Alien: Isolation*, that small-at-heart company might find itself with an even bigger base of diehard fans very soon.



ALIEN ARCHAEOLOGY

LOOKING BACK AT HOW ISOLATION'S AESTHETIC CAME TOGETHER

Concept art helps the development team hone a game's visual style throughout the earliest stages of production. Despite the fact that *Isolation* had a wealth of source material to draw from, the developers still had to sketch out many elements before they could flesh out the world as it stands today.

01. A Tight Fit

Much effort went into balancing the claustrophobic feel of the film while still ensuring the Alien had room to maneuver through the environments.

02. Be Kind, Rewind

To make sure the computer interfaces and UI elements would mesh with the world of *Alien*, the team sought inspiration from unlikely places, including early VCRs.

03. Supporting Small Business

The Seegson Corporation was invented just for *Isolation*, so it needed branding that would feel original but fit alongside established entities such as Weyland-Yutani.

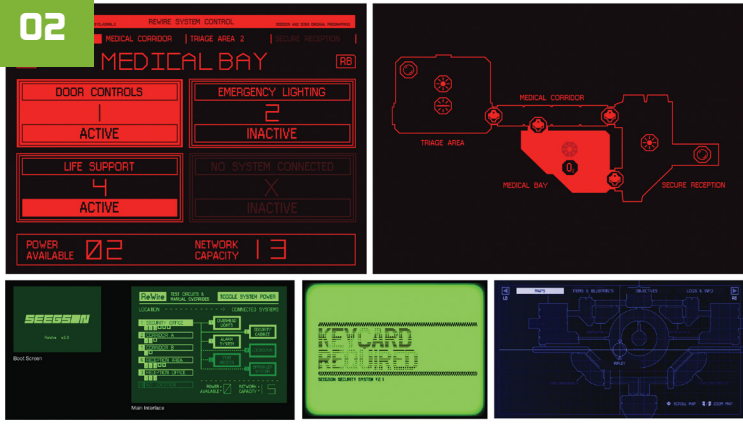
04. Outside the Frame

Artists needed to recreate the look of locations from the film and extend those same design principles to new environmental archetypes that were never before seen.

01



02



03

SEEGSON

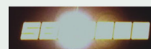
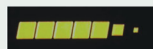
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04



CONCEPT



CONCEPT



CONCEPT



MOVIE



MOVIE

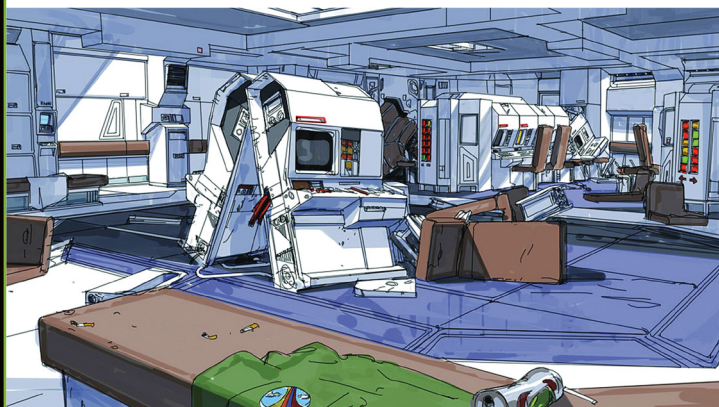
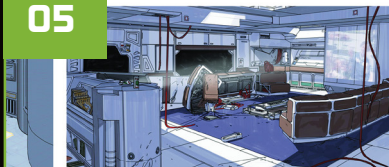


MOVIE



IN-GAME

05



06



05. Get in Line

Some of the early concepts were drawn in the exact same ink-lined, architectural style that the film's concept artist, Ron Cobb, used back in 1979.

06. Home Sweet Home

To ensure that Sevastopol felt like a living place that had been populated by real people, the art team created mementos designed to hint at life back on Earth.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



JOSH HARMON

AUTHOR

Josh Harmon is a writer and game critic who serves as an associate editor for *EGM* and *Walmart GameCenter Magazine*. Born and raised in sunny Orange County, California, he got his start in gaming early on, cutting his teeth on his family's old Atari 2600 and its glorious 8-bit graphics. He quickly developed a love for all things interactive, and by the time he was in his teens, he had subscribed to just about every video game magazine under the sun.

It wasn't until college, however, that Harmon even considered writing about games professionally. While attending UC Santa Cruz,

he started *QuarterDown.com*, a now-defunct site staffed entirely by volunteers, some of whom have gone on to have illustrious careers in game journalism. It didn't last long, but it gained enough acclaim to net him paying gigs at a number of small gaming blogs and eventually, his dream job at *EGM*.

Harmon now lives in Los Angeles with his cat, Oxford, and many leather-bound books. In his spare time, he works on screenplays, goes on long drives through the desert, and overanalyzes brainless movies with unnecessary zeal. You can follow him on Twitter @jorshy.



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