

Alien (creature in *Alien* franchise)

The **Alien** (also known as **Xenomorph** or **Internecivus raptus**^{[1][2][3][4]}) is a fictional endoparasitoid extraterrestrial species that is the eponymous antagonist of the *Alien* film series. The species made its debut in the film *Alien* (1979) and reappeared in the sequels *Aliens* (1986), *Alien 3* (1992), and *Alien Resurrection* (1997). It also featured in the crossover films *Alien vs. Predator* (2004) and *Aliens vs. Predator: Requiem* (2007), with the skull of one of the creatures appearing briefly in *Predator 2* (1990). Similar creatures of slightly different designs such as the "Deacon" make a brief appearance in the Ridley Scott film *Prometheus* (2012) along with the "Neomorph" and a variation of the Xenomorph which appear in the sequel *Alien: Covenant* (2017). In addition, the Alien appears in various literature and video game spin-offs from the franchises.

The *Alien* design is credited to Swiss surrealist and artist H. R. Giger, originating in a lithograph titled *Necronom IV* and refined for the series's first film, *Alien*. The practical effects for the Alien's head were designed and constructed by Italian special effects designer Carlo Rambaldi. The species's design and life cycle have been extensively augmented, sometimes inconsistently, throughout each film.

Unlike many other extraterrestrial races in science fiction (such as the Daleks and Cybermen in *Doctor Who*, or the Klingons and Borg in *Star Trek*), the Aliens are not sapient tool-makers: They lack a technological civilization of any kind, and are instead primal, predatory creatures with no higher goals than the propagation and self-preservation of their own species, including the elimination of other lifeforms that may pose a threat to their existence. Like wasps or termites, Aliens are eusocial, with a single fertile queen breeding a caste of warriors, workers, or other specialists strains. The Aliens' biological life cycle involves traumatic implantation of endoparasitoid larvae inside living hosts; these "chestbuster" larvae erupt from the host's body after a short incubation period, rapidly mature from juvenile into adulthood within hours, and seek out more hosts for implantation.

Alien	
Alien race	
<div></div>	
An Alien as seen in <i>Alien</i> (1979)	
Also known as	<div>Xenomorph</div> <div>Internecivus raptus</div> <div>Linguafoeda acheronsis</div>
First appearance	<i>Alien</i> (1979)
Created by	<div>Dan O'Bannon</div> <div>Ronald Shusett</div> <div>Carlo Rambaldi</div> <div>H. R. Giger</div>
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Type	Endoparasitoid lifeform

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Concept and creation

The script for the 1979 film *Alien* was initially drafted by Dan O'Bannon and Ronald Shusett. Dan O'Bannon drafted an opening in which the crew of a mining ship are sent to investigate a mysterious message on an alien planet. He eventually settled on the threat being an alien creature; however, he could not conceive of an interesting way for it to get onto the ship. Inspired after waking from a dream, Shusett said, "I have an idea: the monster screws one of them", planting its egg in his body, and then bursting out of his chest. Both realized the idea had never been done before, and it subsequently became the core of the film.^[5] "This is a movie about alien interspecies rape," O'Bannon said in the documentary *Alien Evolution*. "That's scary because it hits all of our buttons."^[6] O'Bannon felt that the symbolism of "homosexual oral rape" was an effective means of discomforting male viewers.^[7]



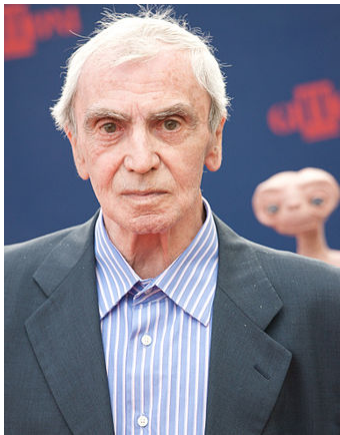
Necronom IV, Giger's 1976 surrealist print that formed the basis for the Alien's design

The title of the film was decided late in the script's development. O'Bannon had quickly dropped the film's original title, *Star Beast*, but could not think of a name to replace it. "I was running through titles, and they all stank", O'Bannon said in an interview, "when suddenly, that word *alien* just came out of the typewriter at me. *Alien*. It's a noun and it's an adjective."^[5] The word *alien* subsequently became the title of the film and, by extension, the name of the creature itself.

Prior to writing the script to *Alien*, O'Bannon had been working in France for Chilean cult director Alejandro Jodorowsky's planned adaptation of Frank Herbert's classic science-fiction novel *Dune*. Also hired for the project was Swiss surrealist artist H. R. Giger. Giger showed O'Bannon his nightmarish, monochromatic artwork, which left O'Bannon deeply disturbed. "I had never seen anything that was quite as horrible and at the same time as beautiful as his work" he remembered later.^[8] The *Dune* film collapsed, but O'Bannon would remember Giger when *Alien* was greenlit, and suggested to director Ridley Scott that he be brought on to design the Alien, saying that if he were to design a monster, it would be truly original.^[5]



Giger's Alien design, inspired by his earlier print *Necronom IV*, for the film *Alien*



Carlo Rambaldi, the creator of the mechanical head-effects for the creature, was most famous for designing the title character of the film *E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial*

After O'Bannon handed him a copy of Giger's book *Necronomicon*, Scott immediately saw the potential for Giger's designs, and chose *Necronom IV*, a print Giger completed in 1976, as the basis for the Alien's design, citing its beauty and strong sexual overtones. That the creature could just as easily have been male or female was also a strong factor in the decision to use it. "It could just as easily fuck you before it killed you," said line producer Ivor Powell, "[which] made it all the more disconcerting."^[6] Fox Studios were initially wary of allowing Giger onto the project, saying that his works would be too disturbing for audiences, but eventually relented. Giger initially offered to completely design the Alien from scratch, but Scott mandated that he base his work on *Necronom IV*, saying that to start over from the beginning would be too time-consuming. Giger signed on to design the adult, egg and chestbuster forms, but ultimately also designed the alien planetoid LV-426 and the Space Jockey alien vessel.^[5]

Giger conceived the Alien as being vaguely human but a human in full armor, protected from all outside forces. He mandated that the creature have no eyes, because he felt that it made them much more frightening if you could not tell they were looking at you.^[6] Giger also gave the Alien's mouth a second inner set of pharyngeal jaws located at the tip of a long, tongue-like proboscis which could extend rapidly for use as a weapon. His design for the creature was heavily influenced by an aesthetic he had created and termed *biomechanical*, a fusion of the organic and the mechanic.^[6] His mock-up of the Alien was created using parts

from an old Rolls Royce car, rib bones and the vertebrae from a snake, molded with plasticine. The Alien's animatronic head, which contained 900 moving parts, was designed and constructed by special effects designer Carlo Rambaldi.^[5] Giger and Rambaldi together would win the 1980 Academy Award for Visual Effects for their design of the Alien.

Scott decided on the man-in-suit approach for creating the creature onscreen. Initially circus performers were tried, then multiple actors together in the same costume, but neither proved scary. Deciding that the creature would be scarier the closer it appeared to a human, Scott decided that a single, very tall, very thin man be used. Scott was inspired by a photograph of Leni Riefenstahl standing next to a 6'4" (1.93 m) Nuba man.^[9] The casting director found 6'10" (2.08 m), rail-thin graphic designer Bolaji Badejo in a local pub. Badejo went to tai chi and mime classes to learn how to slow down his movements.^[5]

Giger's design for the Alien evoked many contradictory sexual images. As critic Ximena Gallardo notes, the creature's combination of sexually evocative physical and behavioral characteristics creates "a nightmare vision of sex and death. It subdues and opens the male body to make it pregnant, and then explodes it in birth. In its adult form, the alien strikes its victims with a rigid phallic tongue that breaks through skin and bone. More than a phallus, however, the retractable tongue has its own set of snapping, metallic teeth that connects it to the castrating vagina dentata."^[7]



H. R. Giger, who designed and worked on the Alien and its accompanying elements

Name

This creature has no specific name; it was called an alien and an organism in the first film. It has also been referred to as a creature,^[3] a serpent,^[10] a beast,^[4] a dragon,^[4] a monster,^[3] a nasty, or simply, a thing.^[11] The term *xenomorph* (lit. "alien form"—from Greek *xeno-*, which translates as either "other" or "strange", and *-morph*, which denotes shape) was first used by the character Lieutenant Gorman in *Aliens*^[3] with reference to generic extraterrestrial life. The term was erroneously assumed by some fans^[12] to refer specifically to this creature, and the word was used by the producers of some merchandise.^[13]

The species' binomial names are given in Latin as either *Internequivus raptus* (meant as "murderous thief") in the *Alien Quadrilogy* DVD or *Lingua foeda acheronsis* (meant as "foul tongue from Acheron")^[NB 1] in some comic books.^[14] The main Alien from *Alien vs. Predator* is listed in the credits as "Grid", after a grid-like wound received during the film from a Predator's razor net.^[10] *Alien: Covenant* actually credits the Alien as Xenomorph, while also listing a different variety of the creature as the Neomorph.^{[15][16]} In *The Weyland-Yutani Report*, the Alien encountered by the Nostromo was specifically referred to as "Xenomorph XX121".^[1]

Characteristics

As the film series has progressed, the creature's design has been modified in many ways, including differing numbers of fingers and limb joints and variations in the design of the Alien's head.

Appearance



Giger's Alien, as portrayed by Bolaji Badejo in Ridley Scott's 1979 film *Alien*

When standing upright, the Aliens are bipedal in form, though depending on their host species, they will either adopt a more hunched stance, or remain quadrupedal when walking or sprinting. Their overall stance and general behavior is a result of the mixture of the DNA of the embryo and the host. They have a skeletal, biomechanical appearance and are usually colored in muted shades of black, gray, blue or bronze. Their body heat matches the ambient temperature of the environment in which they are found, so they do not radiate heat, making them indistinguishable from their surroundings through thermal imaging.^{[3][10]} In most of the films, adult Aliens are capable of running and crawling along ceilings and walls.^{[3][4]} They have great physical strength, having been shown to be capable of breaking through welded steel doors in numbers.^[3]

Aliens have segmented, blade-tipped tails. The sharp tip was initially a small, scorpion-like barb,^[11] but from *Aliens* onwards the blade design increased in size and changed in appearance to more closely resemble a slashing weapon.^{[3][10]} From *Alien: Resurrection* onwards, the tails have a flat ridge of spines at the base of the blade. This was introduced to help them swim convincingly,^[17] and was left intact in the subsequent crossovers. The original shooting script for *Aliens* and the novelization both featured a scene in which Lieutenant Gorman is "stung" by the barb tail and rendered unconscious; in the final cut of the movie, Gorman is knocked out by falling crates. As a weapon, the strength of the tail is very effective, having been shown to be strong enough to impale and lift a Predator with seemingly little effort.

They have elongated, cylindrical skulls, but possess no visible eyes, though in the original *Alien* film, the top of the creature's head was translucent, with empty, human-looking eye sockets within. In the novelization of *Alien*, the character Ash speculates that the Xenomorphs "see" by way of electrical impulse, similar to a shark's lateral line. This method is illustrated in the original *Alien vs Predator* PC game and reused for the "Predalien" 28 years later. The Alien's inner set of jaws are powerful enough to smash through bone and metal.^[10] How the creatures see is uncertain; in *Alien 3*, a spherical lens was used to illustrate the Alien's point of view, so, when the film was projected anamorphically, the image exhibited severe distortion. In the novelization of the movie *Alien*, the creature is held mesmerized by a spinning green light for several minutes.

In *Aliens*, the adult creatures have a more textured head rather than a smooth carapace. In the commentary for *Aliens*, it was speculated that this was part of the maturation of the creatures, as they had been alive far longer than the original Alien, although James Cameron stated that he simply left the carapace off because he liked them better that way.^[3] The smooth design of the carapace would be used again in *Alien 3* and *Alien:*

Resurrection, although made narrower with a longer muzzle and more prominent chin. This design would be kept in *Alien versus Predator*,^[18] and abandoned in *Aliens vs. Predator: Requiem* in favor of the ribbed design.

Throughout their appearances, human-spawned Aliens have been shown to have different numbers of fingers. In *Alien*, the creature has webbed, six-fingered hands. In *Aliens*, the number of fingers is reduced to three (two "paired" and a single, opposable thumb), and they are shown to be much longer and more skeletal. In *Alien: Resurrection*, the number of digits is increased to four, with two long middle fingers and a pair of thumbs. This design is kept in the *Alien vs. Predator* films, though the hands were made bulkier in order to make the Aliens seem more formidable against the Predators.^[19]

Aliens have been alternatively portrayed as both plantigrade and digitigrade organisms, usually relative to their host. Human-spawned Aliens were usually portrayed as having humanoid hind limbs, while in *Alien 3*, the featured Alien sported double-jointed legs due to its quadrupedal host. This characteristic would be continued in *Alien: Resurrection* for the human-spawned Aliens. Tom Woodruff, who had previously played the "dog-alien" in *Alien 3*, described the human-spawned Aliens in *Resurrection* as feeling more like a dog than the previous creature, despite having been born from human hosts.^[20] The human-spawned Alien warriors would revert to a plantigrade posture in *Alien vs. Predator*.

Physiology

Alien blood is an extremely potent acid and is capable of corroding almost any substance on contact with alarming speed. It is dull yellow in color, and appears to be pressurized inside the body so that it spurts out with great force when the creature is wounded. Ron Cobb suggested the idea of the Alien having acid blood as a plausible means to make the creature "unkillable"; if one were to use traditional firearms or explosives to attack it, its blood would eat through the hull of the ship.^[21] The *Alien* novelization suggests that, at least at the "facehugger" stage, the acid is not blood but a fluid maintained under pressure between a double layer of skin.^[22] In the *Aliens vs. Predator: Requiem* documentary: "Science of the Alien", it is hypothesized that the Aliens' acid blood could be some type of "hydrosulphuric acid" compound due to its corrosiveness and the conspicuously toxic effects on living human tissue. The documentary also speculates that Aliens are immune to their own acidic and toxic liquids due to an endobiological build-up, similar to the human stomach's ability to protect itself from its own digestive fluids. The documentary takes this hypothesis one step further and speculates that the Alien organism's protection system against its own toxic hydrosulphuric acid is a bio-organically produced Teflon insulation.^[23] In the original *Alien*, the facehugger is shown to be able to "spit" acid, dissolving the faceplate of Kane's helmet and allowing the creature immediate access inside. This ability is also exhibited by adult Aliens in *Alien 3* and *Alien: Resurrection*; much like a spitting cobra, they use it to blind and immobilize their victims.^{[4][24]}

Aliens can produce a thick, strong resin that they use to build their hives and to cocoon their victims, and they can use the walls of their hives as camouflage.^[25] Aliens also salivate heavily in the form of a sticky, clear slime; while not a toxic substance in and of itself, it is common for the *Alien* films to use it as a suspense-building device, wherein a character will notice the falling saliva before noticing its source lying in wait above

them.^[25]

Intelligence

During various events in *Aliens* on the LV-426 colony Hadley's Hope, in *Alien: Resurrection* on the *USM Auriga*, in the crossover movie *Alien vs Predator*, and in *Alien 3* when they are trying to trap the Alien in the lead works the species displayed observational learning and problem-solving skills,^{[3][24]} and in the former two cases the Aliens learned how to operate machinery at a very basic level. On LV-426, they were able to cut power in a section of the complex to gain access to the humans, and the Alien queen learns to board an elevator by observing Ripley and Newt escaping in the one beside it. The novelization of the film notes that the queen establishing her "nest" at the base's main power plant could have been chosen either for the feral, animal reason of the warmth that it would provide or for the rational reason of selecting a location where any attackers would be unable to destroy her without destroying the entire facility. In the director's commentary for *Aliens*, James Cameron noted that the creatures in *Aliens* had been alive for far longer than the Alien in the original, and had more time to learn about their environment.^[26] On the *USM Auriga* in *Alien: Resurrection*, the Aliens kill one of their own, using its blood to melt through their enclosure and escape (according to the novelization, it was inspired to do so from genetic memories inherited from the original Ripley); in *Alien vs. Predator*, they use a similar strategy to free the queen from her chains. An Alien also uses acid spurting from its severed tail as an improvised weapon by flicking it, indicating they are fully aware of the effects of their acid blood. Finally, in *Alien 3*, the inmates and Ripley try to lure the Alien into the lead works. It becomes increasingly apparent that the Alien realizes it is a trap. At one point, it hesitates to enter the lead works and at other points, it stops all prey just before going into the lead works. All of this indicates it recognized danger and sought to avoid it.

Life cycle

Aliens are eusocial life-forms with a caste system ruled over by a queen.^{[3][10][24]} Their life cycle comprises several distinct stages: they begin their lives as an egg, which hatches a parasitoid larval form known as a facehugger, which then attaches itself to a living host by, as its name suggests, latching onto its face. In the *Alien 3* novelization, Ripley commented that this parasitoid would probably be able to use any host from as small as a cat, to as large as an Asian Elephant.

The facehugger then "impregnates" the host with an embryo, known as a "chestburster",^[NB 2] which, after a period of gestation, erupts violently from the host's chest, resulting in the death of the host.

The chestburster then matures to an adult phase, shedding its skin and replacing its cells with polarized silicon. Due to horizontal gene transfer during the gestation period, the Alien also takes on some of the basic physical attributes of the host from which it was born (something noticed by Ripley in *Alien 3*, when the Xenomorph plaguing the complex, having gestated within a Quadruped; a dog in the theatrical release, & an Oxen in the Director's Cut; whereas all the others she had previously seen had gestated within Humans/Bipeds), allowing the individual alien to adapt to the host's environment (breathe the air, etc.). This is also shown in the two live-action crossover films, *Alien vs. Predator* (2004) and *Aliens vs. Predator*:

Requiem (2007), where an embryo, having gestated within a Predator/Yautja, displayed Predator/Yautja physical traits (arthropod-like mandibles) from eruption-onwards. This process of horizontal gene transfer is also shown to be two-way; in *Alien Resurrection* (film & novelization), Ellen Ripley's clone, Ripley-8, is shown exhibiting numerous Xenomorph characteristics, physical and behavioural; this is touched more upon in the novelization (chapter 4), where it's described that, when a host is infested with an Xenomorph embryo, it doesn't just infest the host like a parasite, but also like a virus, "a major breakthrough in adaptive evolution ... a way to guarantee that any host, any host at all, would provide whatever it was the developing embryo needed, even if/when the host's body was inadequate."

The adult phase of the Alien is known by various different names. The adult Aliens have been referred to as "drones", "warriors", "workers", and sometimes "soldiers", similar to the way ants have been defined. The names of the adult phase have also been used to name different types of adult phases of the Alien in numerous sources, including video games, comic books, novels, and the films, but only in the commentaries by the team who created the films. No official name has been given to the adult stage of the Alien in the films themselves.

Queen

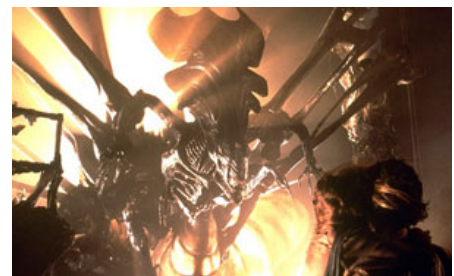
Queen Aliens are significantly larger and stronger than the normal adults, being approximately 4.5 metres (15 ft) tall.^[27] Their body structure differs also, having two pairs of arms, one large and one small. The queen's head is larger than those of other adult Aliens and is protected by a large, flat crest, like a crown, which varies from queen to queen. Unlike other aliens, the queen's external mouth is separately segmented from the rest of her head, allowing her to turn her mouth left and right almost to the point where it is facing perpendicular to the direction of the rest of her head. In the second film, *Aliens*, unlike other adults and queens, the queen had high-heel protrusions from her feet.

Egg-laying Alien queens possess an immense ovipositor attached to their lower torso, similar to a queen termite's. Unlike insect queens, there appears to be no need for an Alien queen's eggs to be fertilized.^{[10][24]} When attached to her ovipositor, the queen is supported by a "biomechanical throne"^[28] that consists of a lattice of struts resembling massive insect legs.

In the original cut of *Alien*, the Alien possessed a complete lifecycle, with the still-living bodies of its victims converted into eggs. However, the scene showing the crew converted into eggs was cut for reasons of pacing, leaving the ultimate origin of the eggs obscure. This allowed *Aliens* director James Cameron to introduce a concept he had initially conceived for a spec script called *Mother*,^[26] a massive mother Alien queen which laid eggs and formed the basis for the Aliens' life cycle. Cameron conceived the queen as a monstrous analogue to Ripley's own maternal role in the film.^[26] In that vein, some critics have compared it to Grendel's mother.



The Alien Monarch



Ripley's first encounter with a queen

[29][30]

The queen was designed by Cameron in collaboration with special effects artist Stan Winston, based upon an initial painting Cameron had done at the start of the project. The Winston Studio created a test foamcore queen before constructing the full hydraulic puppet which was used for most of the scenes involving the large Alien. Two people were inside working the twin sets of arms, and puppeteers off-screen worked its jaws and head. Although at the end of the film, the queen was presented full-body fighting the power-loader, the audience never sees the legs of the queen, save those of the small-scale puppet that appears only briefly. In *Aliens*, Cameron used very selective camera-angles on the queen, using the 'less is more' style of photography. Subsequently, the movie won an Oscar for Visual Effects. An adult queen was to reappear in *Alien Resurrection*. The original mechanical head previously used in *Aliens* was provided by Bob Burns and was an altered design. It was repainted with a blend of green and brown, giving it a shimmering, insect-like quality. This color concept would be abandoned in *Alien vs. Predator* in favour of the original black color scheme.^[19]

In the climax of *Alien vs. Predator*, the queen's basic design was altered to make her more "streamlined" in appearance and her overall size was increased to six meters (20 feet) tall. Other changes include the removal of the "high-heel" protrusions on her legs, including additional spines on her head and making her waist thinner because there was no need for puppeteers inside her chest. The animatronic queen had 47 points of hydraulic motion.^[19]

Alien vs. Predator: Requiem (2007) introduced a younger form of the full-grown queen, albeit with traits inherited from its Predator host. Recalling the facehugger's method of embryo implantation, the Predalien uses its inner mouth to directly deposit multiple chestbuster embryos into pregnant female hosts, also using its mandibles to latch on the faces of said hosts, completely bypassing the need for facehuggers.^[31] This is explained by the Brothers Strause as a means of quickly building an army of Aliens before the young queen evolves into its sedentary, egg-laying state.^[32]

Egg

The eggs laid by the queen are ellipsoidal, leathery objects between one-half and one meter (two and three feet) high with a four-lobed opening at the top. The eggs can remain in a stasis mode for years, possibly indefinitely, until nearby movement is detected. As a potential host approaches, the egg's lobes unfold like flower petals, and the parasitic facehugger extracts itself from the egg and attaches itself to the potential host. Giger initially designed the eggs with a much more obvious vaginal appearance, complete with an "inner and outer vulva".^[33] The producers complained that Catholic countries would ban the film if the allusion was too strong, so Giger doubled the lobes to four so that, in his words, "seen from above, they would form the cross that people in Catholic countries are so fond of looking at".^[33] The interior of the original egg was composed of "Nottingham lace" (caul fat), which is the lining of a cow's stomach. In the first film, the quick shot of the facehugger erupting from the egg was done with sheep's intestine.^[5] Initially, the egg remained totally stationary except for the hydraulic movement of the lobes; however, by *Alien: Resurrection*, the entire egg was made to ripple as it opened. In *Alien*, the Director's Cut, an additional scene shows still living crew members being cocooned into new eggs, either morphing into a new embryo or acting as a food source for the facehugger

inside the egg.

Facehugger

A facehugger is the second stage in the Alien's life cycle. It has eight long, finger-like legs, which allow it to crawl rapidly, and a long tail adapted for making great leaps. These particular appendages give it an appearance somewhat comparable to chelicerate arthropods such as arachnids and horseshoe crabs.



The facehugger seen in *Alien*

The facehugger is a parasitoid; its only purpose is to make contact with the host's mouth for the implantation process by gripping its legs around the victim's head and wrapping its tail around the host's neck. Upon making contact, the facehugger administers a cynose-based paralytic in order to render it unconscious and immobile.^[34]^[1] During a successful attachment, the facehugger will insert a proboscis down the host's throat while simultaneously implanting an embryo. The host is kept alive, and the creature breathes for the host.^[11] Attempts to remove facehuggers generally prove fatal to the host,^[3] as the parasitoid will respond by tightening its tail around the host's neck, and its acidic blood prevents it from being cut away. In addition, its grip on the host's head is strong enough to tear the host's face off if it is forcibly removed.^[11]

Once the Alien embryo is implanted, the facehugger will remain attached until the implant is secure, which can take anywhere from less than a minute to 16 hours. Once this happens, the parasite detaches, crawls away, and dies.^[1] The victim awakens with no awareness of the implantation, believing themselves to have been asleep, and appears to have a normal, healthy bodily function.

According to *AVPR: Science of the Xenomorph*, a behind-the-scenes documentary on *Aliens vs. Predator: Requiem*, it is theorized that facehuggers may implant a viral agent that "commands" the host's cells to grow the chestbuster, as opposed to an implanted embryo.^[35] This is an alternate explanation to horizontal gene transfer as to how the resulting Xenomorph is able to adopt the characteristics of its host.

Giger's original design for the facehugger was a much larger creature with eyes and a spring-loaded tail. Later, in response to comments from the filmmakers, Giger reduced the creature's size substantially.^[36] At first, Giger assumed that the facehugger would wrap around the outside of the astronaut's helmet, but Scott decided that it would have far more impact if the facehugger were revealed once the helmet was removed. Scott and Giger realized that the facehugger should burn through the helmet's faceplate with its acid blood; subsequent redesigns of the space helmet included a far larger faceplate to allow for this.^[37] Dan O'Bannon initially conceived the facehugger as somewhat resembling an octopus, possessing tentacles. However, when he received H. R. Giger's designs, which substituted tentacles with fingerlike digits, he found Giger's design concept to be superior. Since no one was available at the time, O'Bannon decided to design the facehugger prop himself. The technical elements of the musculature and bone were added by Ron Cobb. Giger's initial design for the smaller facehugger had the fingers facing forward, but O'Bannon's redesign shifted the legs to the side. When the foam rubber sculpture of the facehugger was produced, O'Bannon asked that it should remain unpainted, believing the rubber, which resembled human skin, was more plausible.^[38]

In *Aliens*, the facehuggers were redesigned by Stan Winston so that they would be capable of movement. Unlike the creatures in the first film, the creatures would take a much more active role in impregnating their victims. When Ripley throws one off her, the facehugger was now capable of scuttling across the floor and leaping at its prey, wrapping its tail around the victim's throat. The facehugger is also shown to be capable of independently surviving outside of its egg. Due to the film's budget, only two fully working facehuggers were built.

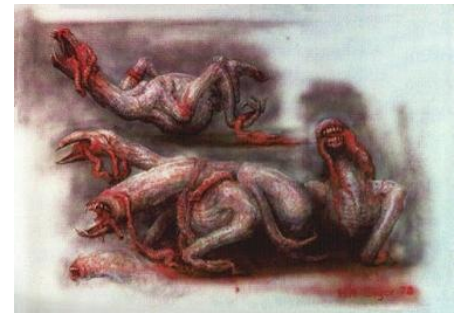
In *Alien 3*, another addition, a "super-facehugger" that would carry the embryo of the queen Alien, was planned, but ultimately dropped.^[39] The super-facehugger is briefly glimpsed in the Assembly cut of *Alien 3*, but not identified as such.^{[39][40]} It made a brief appearance in the canonical *Alien* book called *Alien: Sea of Sorrows*, set a while after the events of *Alien Resurrection*, about the grandson of Ripley Clone 8, Ellen Ripley's clone.

Chestbuster



Alien 1979 Chestbuster

After implantation, facehuggers die and the embryo's host wakes up afterward, showing no considerable outward negative symptoms and a degree of amnesia regarding events at the time of implantation. Symptoms build acutely after detachment of the facehugger, the most common being sore throat, slight nausea, increased congestion, and moderate to extreme hunger.^[11] In later stages where the incubation period is extended in preparation of a queen birth, symptoms will include a shortness of breath, exhaustion, and hemorrhaging (detectable through biological scanners and present in nosebleeds or other seemingly random bleeding incidents), as well as chest pains, caused by lack of chest space due to the chestbuster's presence or even premature attempts to escape the host. The incubating embryo takes on some of the host's DNA or traits, such as bipedalism, quadrupedalism,^[4] possessing the mandibles of a Predator,^[41] and other structural changes. According to Weyland-Yutani medical scientists in *Aliens: Colonial Marines*, the chestbuster will draw nutrients from the host's body in order to develop a placenta as it grows, attaching itself to several major organs in the process. The placenta has cancerous qualities, such that even if the embryo were removed surgically, the placenta would simply cause the affected organs to shut down, resulting in death; the only



H.R Giger's "plucked turkey"
Chestbuster



Aliens 1986 Chestbuster

exceptions to this are from human/xenomorph hybrid hosts like the cloned Ripley 8, who survived an extraction procedure without issue.

Over the course of one to 24 hours—indeterminable in some cases, and sometimes up to a week, in the case of some queens—the embryo develops into a chestburster, at which point, it emerges, violently and fatally ripping open the chest of the host.



Alien³ 1992 Chestburster

There is no on-screen explanation of the reasons for the different incubation times. Fully-grown aliens may avoid harming species acting as hosts for un-emerged chestbusters, though this may only be in the case of a queen embryo.

When a chestburster erupts from the body of a human host, it is less than 30 centimetres (0.98 ft) tall, although the embryo can vary in size from a guinea pig to a large dog depending on the size and species of the host. Its appearance and adaptive characteristics are also determined by the host. Typically, its first instinct upon emerging is to flee and hide until full maturation, as well as find a source of nutrition. However, it soon undergoes a dramatic growth spurt, reaching adult size in a matter of hours; in *Alien*, the chestburster had grown to 2 metres (6.6 ft) in height by the time the *Nostromo* crew located it again.^[NB 3] The chestburster is shown to have molted before reaching maturity.^[11] In *Aliens vs. Predator: Requiem*, Alien warriors are shown who are still growing, showing shedding skin. In the unrated cut, the Predalien is shown wiping off its final molted skin at the film's start.

The chestburster was designed by *Alien* director Ridley Scott and constructed by special effects artist Roger Dicken.^[7] Giger had produced a model of a chestburster that resembled a "degenerate plucked turkey"^[42] and was far too large to fit inside a ribcage. Much to Giger's dismay, his model reduced the production team to fits of laughter on sight. Scott drafted a series of alternative designs for the chestburster based on the philosophy of working "back [from the adult] to the child" and ultimately produced "something phallic".^[6] The chestburster in the original *Alien* was armless, but arms were added in *Aliens* to facilitate the creature crawling its way out of its host's corpse.^[43] This concept would be abandoned in *Alien: Resurrection*, but it would return in *Alien: Covenant*.

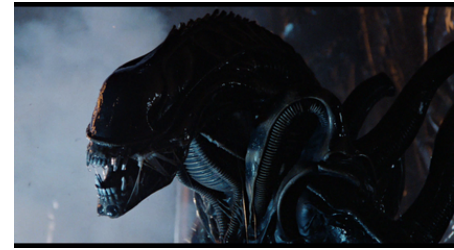
Alternative forms

Aliens take on various forms depending on the characteristics of their hosts. Most of the Aliens seen to date have been human-spawned, but a number of Aliens born from other hosts have also been seen. Some of these are also a different variants or species altogether such the Neomorph and Deacon.

"Dragon"

The "Dog Alien" or "Ox Alien", (also known as "Runner Alien" in the expanded universe stories) and referred

to in-film as "Dragon", was introduced in *Alien*³. The creature itself shares the same basic physical configuration and instincts as the other Aliens shown in the previous films, although there are several differences due to the host it was spawned from (a dog in the theatrical cut, an ox in the DVD assembly cut). The dog Alien in its chestburster form is a miniature version of the adult, unlike the larval human- and Predator-spawned chestbusters. The adult is primarily quadrupedal, has digitigrade hind legs, and lacks the dorsal tubes of the human-spawned variety. The only differences behavior-wise was that this Alien behaved more like a dog or another quadrupedal animal that generally is prone to using its mouth instead of its front legs as its primary weapon to attack and maul its victims with its teeth. This Alien, even when actively provoked, would not attack or kill Ripley, due to the queen growing inside her. This, however, changed towards the movie's climax, at which point the monster, after surviving a torrent of molten lead, burst from the liquid and went into a rampage, pursuing Ripley and presumably attempting to kill her until she destroyed it by showering it with freezing water, causing it to explode from thermal shock.



Aliens 1986 Design

Alien³ 1992 Design

Originally, H. R. Giger was approached on July 28, 1990, by David Fincher and Tim Zinnemann, and was asked to redesign his own creations for *Alien 3*. Giger's new designs included an aquatic face-hugger and a four-legged version of the adult Alien. Giger said in an interview "I had special ideas to make it more interesting. I designed a new creature, which was much more elegant and beastly, compared to my original. It was a four-legged Alien, more like a lethal feline—a panther or something. It had a kind of skin that was built up from other creatures—much like a symbiosis." However, when Tom Woodruff and Alec Gillis of Amalgamated Dynamics told Giger that they had their own design, Giger expressed himself as "very upset" and that the creature he had especially designed was his "baby". Even after the production severed contact, Giger continued to fax suggestions to Fincher and made full-scale drawings and a sculpt of the Alien, all of which were rejected.

David Fincher neglected to inform me that Woodruff and Gillis were also contracted to take care of the redesign of the Alien—I found out much later... I thought I had the job and that Woodruff and Gillis would work from my plans. On their side, they were convinced that it was their job and accepted my 'suggestions' with pleasure. They believed that all my effort was based on a huge love for the matter, because I worked hard even after my contract was over.

Giger would later be angered by the end credits of the released film presenting him as merely the creator of the original creature, and the fact that ADI personnel gave a series of interviews that minimized Giger's contribution. Fox eventually reimbursed Giger, but only after he refused to be interviewed for their behind-

the-scenes documentary of *Alien 3*.

However, Giger would comment that he thought the resulting film was "okay" and that the Alien was "better than in the second film".^[44]

Newborn

In *Alien Resurrection*, due to significant genetic tampering in an attempt to recover DNA from the deceased Ellen Ripley and the Alien queen within her, the resulting cloned Aliens show a number of minor human traits. The cloned queen inherits a perversion of a human womb, and as a result, it ceases to lay eggs and gives birth to a humanoid mutant hybrid. Physically, the human/Alien Newborn is very different from other alien young, being larger, with pale, translucent skin, a skull-shaped face with eyes, a human tongue, and a complete absence of a tail. The Newborn fails to bond with its Alien queen mother, killing it, and imprinting on the Ripley clone instead.

The Newborn creature was originally scripted by Joss Whedon as being an eyeless, ivory-white quadruped with red veins running along the sides of its head. It had an inner jaw, with the addition of a pair of pincers on the sides of its head. These pincers would have been used to immobilize its prey as it drained it of blood through the inner jaw. The creature was originally going to rival the queen in size, but Jean-Pierre Jeunet asked ADI to make the human/Alien hybrid, known as the Newborn, more human than Alien. The Newborn's eyes and nose were added to improve its expressions to make it a character, rather than just a "killing machine", and give it depth as a human-like creature.



The "Newborn", seen here with Ripley in *Alien Resurrection*

Predalien

This variation is the result of a facehugger impregnating a Predator. The "Predalien" was first depicted in a painting by Dave Dorman, and subsequently featured in the *Aliens versus Predator* comics and games. A Predalien chestburster debuted in the final scene of *Alien vs. Predator* (2004), but did not make a full on film appearance as an adult until *Aliens vs. Predator: Requiem* (2007).

The Predalien shares many characteristics with its hosts, such as long hair-like appendages, mandibles, skin color, and similar vocalizations. It is a large, bulky creature, and possesses physical strength greater than that of human-spawned Aliens. Like human-born Aliens, it is also shown to be stronger than its host species, as evidenced by its ability to pin, push, and knock a Predator away with ease.^[45]

Deacon

The dark-blue Deacon is a different species that makes an appearance in *Prometheus*, though it clearly shares traits similar to the Xenomorph, including a similar life-cycle. The Deacon is the result of a Trilobite, which is a

large facehugger-like creature, attacking and impregnating an Engineer. (In reality, Trilobites are a group of extinct marine Arthropods.) After some time, it will burst out of its host, with the notable difference that it is "born" almost fully developed in regards to its limbs and structure. Its fate is unknown, though the tie-in comic book *Prometheus: Fire and Stone*, also set on LV-223, features a mutated mountain with acidic veins which are implied to be the heavily mutated Deacon.^[46]

Neomorph

The pale-white Neomorph is featured in *Alien: Covenant*.^[16] It was created through exposure to spores found growing on the Engineer homeworld. The embryonic Neomorph then gestates inside the host until it bursts out of its host's back, throat, or possibly other areas, using mostly its head, which is sharp and pointed, similar to the Deacon. Like the Xenomorph, the Neomorph has a tail which is strong enough to tear off a human jaw. The Neomorph is a less weaponized version of the Xenomorph and lacks the facial features and biomechanical traits of the latter. The Neomorph is far more feral than the traditional Xenomorph; they are voracious predators, often eating the corpses of their victims. Unlike the Xenomorph, the Neomorph appears to lack a hive structure since they propagate through mutated animal life.^[15]



The Neomorph

See also

- Predator (fictional species)

Notes

- With *acheronsis* instead of *acheronensis*, *acherontea* or *acheruntica*.
- The terms "facehugger" and "chestbuster" date at least as far back as *The Book of Alien* and *HR Giger's Alien*—behind-the-scenes scrapbooks composed the year of the original film's release—and are used frequently by the film's cast and crew in retrospect.
- In *Aliens*, Ripley claims that the creature killed the entire crew in 24 hours, so the growth stage must be under one day

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32. "*Basically the Predalien's kind of a baby queen—there's a phase in between warrior alien and full-blown queen...they do this thing with embryo implantation.. the idea with that was, how does a baby queen quickly form her own little mini-drone army to get the hive built before she evolves into the final state where she can't completely defend herself?*"--Colin Strause, "AvP-R: Preparing for War: Development and Production" featurette, from the *Aliens vs. Predator: Requiem* Region 1 Extreme Unrated Set DVD
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