

= Species ( film ) =

Species is a 1995 American science fiction horror thriller film directed by Roger Donaldson and written by Dennis Feldman . It stars Natasha Henstridge , Ben Kingsley , Michael Madsen , Alfred Molina , Forest Whitaker and Marg Helgenberger . In the film , a motley crew of scientists and government agents tries to track down an alien seductress played by Natasha Henstridge before she successfully mates with a human male . Due to her ruthlessness , the alien character was cited as an example of negative treatment of female sexuality and aliens by the Hollywood film industry . The design of Sil was also linked to a chupacabra sighting .

The film was conceived by Feldman in 1987 , and was originally pitched as a film treatment in the style of a police procedural , entitled The Message . When The Message failed to attract the studios , Feldman re @-@ wrote it as a spec script , which ultimately led to the making of the film . The extraterrestrial in Species , an alien woman named Sil , was designed by H. R. Giger , also responsible for the beings from the Alien franchise . The effects combined practical models done by Giger collaborator Steve Johnson and XFX , with computer @-@ generated imagery done by Richard Edlund 's Boss Film Studios . Giger felt the film and the character were too similar to Alien , so he pushed for script changes .

Most of the principal photography was done in Los Angeles , California , where the film is set . Several scenes were filmed in Utah and at the Arecibo Observatory in Puerto Rico . The film was poorly received by critics , but nevertheless turned out to be a box office success , grossing US \$ 113 million ( \$ 176 million in 2016 dollars ) . It spawned one theatrical sequel ( Species II ) , as well as two direct @-@ to @-@ video sequels ( Species III and Species : The Awakening ) . Species was adapted into a novel by Yvonne Navarro and two comic book series by Dark Horse Comics , one of which was written by Feldman .

= = Plot summary = =

During the SETI program , Earth 's scientists send out transmissions ( shown to be the Arecibo message ) with information about Earth and its inhabitants , DNA structure , etc . , in hopes of finding life beyond Earth . They then receive transmissions from an alien source on how to create endless fuel effortlessly . Therefore , the scientists assume that this is a friendly alien species . From a second alien transmission , the scientists receive information about an alien DNA along with instructions on how to splice it with human DNA . A government team led by Xavier Fitch ( Ben Kingsley ) goes forward with the genetic experiment attempting to induce a female , under the ( later proved to be mistaken ) assumption that a female would have " more docile and controllable " traits . One of the hundred experimental ova produces a girl named Sil , who looks like a normal human but develops into a 12 @-@ year @-@ old in 3 months .

Sil 's violent outbursts during sleep make the scientists consider her a threat . They try to kill her using cyanide gas but she breaks out of her containment cell and escapes . The government assembles a team composed of anthropologist Dr. Stephen Arden ( Alfred Molina ) , molecular biologist Dr. Laura Baker ( Marg Helgenberger ) , " empath " Dan Smithson ( Forest Whitaker ) and mercenary Preston " Press " Lennox ( Michael Madsen ) to track and destroy Sil . Sil matures rapidly into an adult ( Natasha Henstridge ) in her early twenties and makes her way to Los Angeles . Her body strength , regenerative ability and intelligence make tracking her extremely difficult . The scientists fear she may mate with human males and produce offspring that could eliminate the human race . Sil is intent on producing offspring as soon as possible , and kills several people to prevent them from notifying the authorities or simply to use their clothing .

Sil first tries to mate with a man she meets at a nightclub ( Anthony Guidera ) , but after sensing that he is diabetic , she rejects him . Unsatisfied , he tries to rape her , prompting her to kill him by puncturing his skull with her tongue . She then tries to mate with John Carey ( Whip Hubley ) , a man she meets after a car accident . They swim in Carey 's pool where Sil forces him to open his swimming trunks in order to mate , but he refuses . This act is interrupted by Preston and Laura . She kills Carey , morphing into her alien form , a bipedal mutant with tentacles on her shoulders and

back , and flees naked into a forest without being seen by the team . She pretends to be a rape victim to kidnap a woman ( Marliese K. Schneider ) in order to assume her identity . Sitting in the car near Carey 's home , she hypnotizes Fitch over distance to order the team to search for her in the nightclub . There , she is seen by Dan , prompting a car chase . She fakes her death by crashing the car , which she has previously filled with gasoline containers into a high @-@ voltage transformer , using the kidnapped woman as a stand @-@ in for her own body .

After cutting and dyeing her hair , Sil takes an attraction to Preston , having dreamt of him the previous night . After the team celebrates their apparent victory , she stalks them in their hotel , and they do not recognize her . Arden , who is upset at being single , walks into his room to find Sil waiting there . She has intercourse with Arden , then kills him when he realizes who she is . Dan senses that Sil is in the hotel and he alerts Preston , Laura , and the rest of the team . She morphs again and escapes and they follow her into the sewers where Fitch is subsequently killed . Sil gives birth and Dan finds her offspring in a cavern behind the sewers . The child attacks him and he kills it . Sil , angered , attacks the trio and tries to kill Preston and Dan . Preston uses a grenade launcher on her , blowing her head off and killing her . The trio leaves the area . The last scene shows a rat chewing on one of Sil 's severed tentacles ; it starts to mutate into a vicious beast and attacks another rat .

= = Cast = =

Natasha Henstridge as Sil  
Michelle Williams as Young Sil  
Ben Kingsley as Xavier Fitch  
Michael Madsen as Preston " Press " Lennox  
Alfred Molina as Dr. Stephen Arden  
Forest Whitaker as Dan Smithson  
Marg Helgenberger as Dr. Laura Baker  
Whip Hubley as John Carey  
Anthony Guidera as Robbie

= = Influence and themes = =

Given Sil grows rapidly and kills humans with ease , at a certain point film character Dr. Laura Baker even speculates if she was a biological weapon sent by a species who thought humans were like an intergalactic weed . Feldman declared that he wanted to explore this theme further in the script , as it discussed mankind 's place in the universe and how other civilizations would perceive and relate to humanity , considering that " maybe [ humans are ] not a potential threat , maybe a competitor , maybe a resource . " He also declared that more could be said about Sil 's existentialist doubts , as she does not know her origin or purpose , and only follows her instinct to mate and perpetuate the species .

Writing for the Journal of Popular Film & Television , Susan George authored a paper that dealt with the portrayal of procreation in Species , Gattaca and Mimic . George compares the character of Fitch to " an updated Dr. Frankenstein , " and explores the development of Sil 's maternal aspirations , which convert the character into an " archaic mother " figure similar to the xenomorph creature in the Alien series , both of which are , she claims , portrayed negatively . George further states that a recurring theme in science fiction films is a response to " this kind of powerful female sexuality and ' alien @-@ ness ' " in that " the feminine monster must die as Sil does at the end of Species . " Feldman himself considered that an underlying theme regarded " a female arriving and seeking to find a superior mate . "

A five @-@ year investigation into accounts of the chupacabra , a well known cryptid , revealed that the original sighting report of the creature in Puerto Rico by Madeline Tolentino may have been inspired by the character Sil . This was detailed in paranormal investigator and skeptic Benjamin Radford 's book Tracking the Chupacabra . According to Virginia Fugarino of Memorial University of

Newfoundland writing for the Journal of Folklore Research , Radford found a link between the original eyewitness report and the design of Sil in her alien form , and hypothesized that " [ Species ] , which [ Tolentino ] did see before her sighting , influenced what she believes she saw of the chupacabra . "

= = Production = =

= = Writing and development = =

Dennis Feldman had the idea for Species in 1987 , as he worked on another film about an alien invasion , Real Men . Having read an article by Arthur C. Clarke about the insurmountable odds against an extraterrestrial craft ever locating and visiting Earth , given that stellar distances are great , and faster @-@ than @-@ light travel is unlikely , Feldman started to think that it was " unsophisticated for any alien culture to come here in what [ he ] ' d describe as a big tin can . " Thus in turn he considered that the possibility of extraterrestrial contact was through information . Then he detailed that a message would contain instructions from across the void to build something that would talk to men . Instead of a mechanical device , Feldman imagined wetware . The visitor would adapt to Earth 's environment through DNA belonging to Earth 's organisms . Mankind has sent to space transmissions " giving out directions " such as the Arecibo message , which Feldman considered unwary , as they relay information to potential predators from outer space . He pointed out that " in nature , one species would not want a predator to know where it hides . "

Therefrom emerged a film treatment called The Message . The original script had more of a police procedural approach , with the alien being created by a " bathtub geneticist " who had just had his project aborted by the government , and a biologist who had worked on the project getting along with a police officer to search for the creature . Eventually Feldman came to believe this concept had some credibility issues , and instead changed the protagonists to a government team . After coining the name " Sil , " Feldman initially thought of forming an acronym , but in the end chose only the three @-@ letter name after learning about the codons of the genetic code , which can be represented in groups of three letters . Sil would originally emerge from a DNA sequence manipulating human DNA , and constantly mutate as she used the human junk DNA to access " all the defenses of the entire animal kingdom that [ humans ] evolved through ? including ones that had never developed , plus ones [ Earth 's scientists ] don 't know about that have become extinct . " Among the research Feldman did for the script included going to sessions of UCLA 's Center for the Study of Evolution and the Origin of Life ( CSEOL ) , talking to SETI scientists , and visiting the Salk Institute for Biological Studies to talk with researchers working on the Human Genome Project . The Message was offered to several studios , but was passed up .

In 1993 , Feldman reworked his ideas into a spec script . This was sent to producer Frank Mancuso , Jr . , who had hired Feldman to adapt Sidney Kirkpatrick 's A Cast of Killers . The producer got attracted to the creative possibilities as the film offered " the challenge of walking that fine line between believability and pushing something as far as it can go . " Metro @-@ Goldwyn @-@ Mayer got interested on the project , and while Feldman had some initial disagreements on the budget , after considering other studios he signed with MGM . In turn , the now retitled Species attracted director Roger Donaldson , who was attracted to its blend of science fiction and thriller . The script underwent eight different drafts , written over an eight @-@ month period , before Donaldson was content that flaws in the story 's logic had been corrected . At one point another writer , Larry Gross , tried his hand with the script , but ultimately all the work was done by Feldman . Feldman would remain as a co @-@ producer . While the initial Species script suggested a love triangle between Sil and two government team members , the dissatisfaction of the crew eventually led to changes to the ending , which ended up featuring Sil having a baby that would immediately prove dangerous .

= = Design = =

Sil was designed by Swiss artist H. R. Giger , who also created the creatures in the Alien films . Donaldson thought Giger was the best man for the film after reading his compendium Necronomicon , and eventually he and Mancuso flew to Switzerland to meet the artist . What attracted Giger was the opportunity to design " a monster in another way ? an aesthetic warrior , also sensual and deadly , like the women look in [ his ] paintings . " While Giger opted to stay in Switzerland to take care of his dying mother instead of flying to Los Angeles to accompany production , he built some puppets in his own studio , and later faxed sketches and airbrush paintings as production went through . The practical models were made by Steve Johnson and his company XFX , which had already worked with Giger 's designs in Poltergeist II . Giger had envisioned more stages of Sil 's transformation , but the film only employed the last one , where she is " transparent outside and black inside ? like a glass body but with carbon inside , " with XFX doing the translucent skin based on what they had done for the aliens of The Abyss . Sil 's alien form had both full @-@ body animatronics with replaceable arms , heads and torsos , and a body suit . Richard Edlund 's Boss Film Studios was hired for over 50 shots of computer @-@ generated imagery , which included one of the earliest forms of motion capture effects . Using a two @-@ foot @-@ high ( 60 cm ) electric puppet that had sensors translating its movements to a digital Sil , Boss Films managed to achieve in one day what would have once taken as much as three weeks with practical effects .

Giger was unhappy with some elements he found to bear similarity with other movies , particularly the Alien franchise . At one point he sent a fax to Mancuso finding five similarities : a " chestburster " ( as Sil giving birth echoed the infant Alien breaking out of its host 's chest ) , the creature having a punching tongue ( Giger at first wanted Sil 's tongue to be composed of barbed hooks ) , a cocoon , the use of flame throwers , and having Giger as the creature designer . A great point of contention was the ending , which Giger considered derivative from the climaxes from both Alien 3 and Terminator 2 : Judgment Day . The designer felt that horror films frequently held some final confrontation with fire , which he considered old @-@ fashioned and linked to medieval witch trials . He sent some ideas for the climax to the producers , with them accepting to have Sil 's ultimate death occurring by headshot .

= = = Filming = = =

Filming happened mostly in Los Angeles , including location shooting at Sunset Strip , Silver Lake , Pacific Palisades , the Hollywood Hills and the Biltmore Hotel . Id Club , the nightclub featured in the film , was built within Hollywood 's Pantages Theater , while the hills above Dodger Stadium near Elysian Park were used for the car chase and crash where Sil fakes her death . For the opening scenes in Utah , the Tooele Army Depot dubbed as the outside of the research facility ? the interiors were shot at the Rockwell International Corporation laboratory in California ? and a Victorian @-@ era train station in Brigham City was part of Sil 's escape . Other locations included the Santa Monica Pier and the Arecibo telescope in Puerto Rico . The most complex sets involved the sewer complex and a tar @-@ filled granite cavern where the ending occurs . Donaldson wanted a maze quality for the sewers , which had traces of realism ( such as tree roots breaking through from the ceiling ) and artistic licenses . Production designer John Muto intentionally designed the sewers wider and taller than real ones , as well as with walkways , but nevertheless aiming for a claustrophobic and realistic atmosphere . The underground tunnels were built out of structural steel , metal rod , plaster and concrete to endure the fire effects , and had its design based on the La Brea Tar Pits , with Muto describing them as " just the sort of place in which a creature from another planet might feel at home . "

= = Release and reception = =

Species received a wide theatrical release on July 7 , 1995 . Its opening weekend was \$ 17 @.@ 1 million , MGM 's biggest opening that far and second in the box office ranking behind Apollo 13 . Budgeted at \$ 35 million , the film earned a total of \$ 113 million worldwide ( \$ 176 million adjusted

for inflation ) , including \$ 60 million in the United States . The film was released on DVD on March 26 , 1997 , and on VHS on August 3 , 1999 . The original DVD featured a booklet with trivia , production notes and a making @-@ of featurette . On July 25 , 2006 , the film was released on Blu @-@ ray .

The film received lukewarm reviews . On Rotten Tomatoes , Species holds an approval of 34 % based on 35 reviews . Roger Ebert gave it 2 out of 4 stars , criticizing the film 's plot and overall lack of intelligence . Cristine James from Boxoffice magazine gave the film 2 out of 5 stars , describing it as " ' Alien ' meets ' V ' meets ' Splash ' meets ' Playboy 's Erotic Fantasies : Forbidden Liaisons , ' diluted into a diffuse , misdirected bore . " James Berardinelli gave the film 2 ½ out of 4 stars , stating that " as long as you don 't stop to think about what 's going on , Species is capable of offering its share of cheap thrills , with a laugh or two thrown in as well . " Owen Gleiberman of Entertainment Weekly found the film lacking in imagination and special effects , also commenting that Alfred Molina " sport [ s ] a haircut that 's scarier than the creature . " Variety 's review of the film described it as a " gripping if not overly original account of an extraterrestrial species attempting to overwhelm our own " and that Ben Kingsley and other lead actors " have only two @-@ dimensional roles to engage them " . The review mentions the similarity between H.R. Giger 's design of Sil and his work on Alien .

Scott Weinberg of DVD Talk praised the acting , Feldman 's screenplay and Donaldson 's direction . He concluded by saying that Species makes for " a very good time for the genre fans . " Mick LaSalle , writing for San Francisco Chronicle , was notably less enthusiastic , quipping that if " Species were a little bit worse , it would have a shot at becoming a camp classic . " Los Angeles Times critic Peter Rainer described Species as " a pretty good Boo ! movie " , finding it an entertaining thriller while unoriginal and with ineffective tonal shifts .

= = Related works = =

= = = Adaptations = = =

Yvonne Navarro co @-@ wrote a novelization based on the original screenplay with Dennis Feldman . The book gives several in @-@ depth details about the characters not seen in the film , such as Sil 's ability to visualize odors and determine harmful substances from edible items by the color . Gas appears black , food appears pink , and an unhealthy potential mate appears to give off green fumes . Other character details include Preston 's background in tracking down AWOL soldiers as well as the process of decoding the alien signal . Although no clues are given as to its origin , it is mentioned that the message was somehow routed through several black holes to mask its point of origin .

Dark Horse Comics published a four @-@ issue comic book adapting the film , written by Feldman and penciled by Jon Foster . Dark Horse would also publish a mini @-@ series with an all @-@ new storyline , Species : Human Race , released in 1997 . West End Games released a World of Species sourcebook for its Masterbook role @-@ playing game system .

= = = Sequels = = =

The first sequel to Species , Species II was released theatrically in April 1998 . The film depicts astronauts on a mission to Mars being attacked by the aliens from Species , and the events that ensue upon their return to Earth . There , Dr. Baker has been working on Eve , a more docile clone of Sil . Madsen and Helgenberger reprised their roles , while Henstridge played Eve . Species II was received by critics worse than the first film , garnering a 9 % approval rating at Rotten Tomatoes , and Madsen denounced it as a terrible film . The film 's director , Peter Medak , attributed the failure of the film to not picking up the infected rat ending of the original film . Navarro later authored the novelization for Species II which followed the film 's original screenplay with added scenes .

The second sequel , Species III followed in 2004 . It premiered on Sci @-@ Fi Channel on

November 27 , 2004 with a DVD release on December 7 . The film 's plot starts where Species II ends , revolving around Sunny Mabrey 's character Sara , the daughter of Eve , reared by a doctor played by Robert Knepper . Sara , an alien @-@ human hybrid , seeks other hybrids to mate with . Henstridge cameos at the beginning of the film . Two out of six critics mentioned on Rotten Tomatoes gave it a positive rating , with DVD Talk 's reviewer noting that it is " a more cohesive and sensible flick than [ Species II ] is , but ultimately , it 's just a lot of the same old schtick , " while Film Freak Central called it " amateurish " and " vapid . " A fourth film , Species : The Awakening was filmed in 2007 , following the schedule of Species III of Sci @-@ Fi Channel premiere and subsequent DVD release . None of the actors from the original film returned in this sequel , which instead starred Helena Mattsson as the alien @-@ hybrid seductress .