

# Movie: In this case, more is better

By Kathy Amen

Directed and written by James Cameron; Produced by Gale Anne Hurd for Twentieth Century Fox; Starring Sigourney Weaver. Rated R (language).

Little of this movie is a stroke of genius. Nothing so obvious or original as "Alien, Part II"; just the understated addition of one more singular to plural, from many. Think about it.

One who saw the first *Alien* member, in all-too-vivid what the title creature was, we get to observe a full, gory, and well-acted excitement into them as is humanly

more isn't always better, or even as good. But in this is. *Aliens* is one of the best thrillers of this or any year. Director Cameron proves his movie that his *Terminator* fluke. Both effects are paced, with as much well-acted excitement into them as is humanly

might criticize *Aliens* (at 2½ hours) as too long. But

what scenes would they want to do without? I can't think of any, even considering its one or two little logical lapses. Considering what's supposed to be going on, the length is really not too bad.

Weaver's First Mate Ripley is the only repeat character from *Alien* (obviously, since she was the only survivor). She's joined this time, in trying to destroy the beasties who have preyed upon a human colony, by a likeable troop of Marines.

Yes, Marines: Down to the last grunt private, they're the spitting image of these squads you've seen in how many hundreds of war movies set on planet Earth. There's the green lieutenant, the tough but sympathetic sarge, the clown, the capable corporal, etc.

In the early scenes these guys (and gals - a new and welcome twist on the theme) establish their appeal and their vulnerability effortlessly. We like them, but we know most of them probably won't be around at the final credits. Still, what a good show they can put on in the meantime!

Another new face this time belongs to little Newt (Carrie Henn), a young survivor of the aliens'

attacks. Although her main reason for being there is to show us that Ripley can be warm as well as tough, she's a delight in herself. She draws some good laughs in addition to getting into lots of trouble. And, importantly for her role as the traditional, more passive female, she's a great screamer.

*Aliens* is much more entertainment than the ordinary, super-macho, *Rambo*-type action pictures it resembles on the surface. For one thing, it has the advantage, of course, of a completely nasty enemy, one not even remotely human. No guilt here in cheering when the good guys blast away.

More importantly, the story of *Aliens* is a lot better and the characters are more believable as people. Ripley, the strongest, smartest and most capable of the bunch, is still scared to death of the aliens. So it's not just Weaver's excellent performance that makes Ripley easier to identify with than the supermen from those other movies.

*Aliens* is definitely not for the faint-hearted. There is enough tension and suspense generated here for 10 movies. And there's a fair

amount of gore, as well - although it's mostly alien gore. The first *Alien* showed the humans' bloody ends more graphically.

Besides, the setting and the threat of the creatures are so remote from everyday experiences, *Aliens* won't keep you awake nights - except maybe to marvel at its technical expertise and its gutsy, likeable characters.



Alien "face-huggers" menace Ripley (Sigourney Weaver, background) and Newt (Carrie Henn) in Twentieth Century Fox's futuristic thriller *Aliens*. (Courtesy photo by Bob Penn)