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The Alien: 20th Century's Science Fiction Thriller

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By RICHARD SPRINGER

["The Alien"] is a white-knuckle, heart-stopper that keeps the audience on the edge of their seats almost from the first frame and certainly until the last. It combines the tense futuristic space travel of "2001" with the monster terror of a movie like "The Thing."

The special effects and set design are spectacular. The "small alien" representations are so creepy and in tune with whatever phantoms exist in the mind's unconscious, that an unintentional nudge from the person in the seat next to you may send you straight up in the air.

The film doesn't pretend to convey any message about space travel or spend much time on character development. The single-minded aim is to scare the heck out of you. It succeeds.

WARNING

Some people like to be frightened and others prefer romantic comedies. This is not a film for the latter. To reveal the plot details would spoil the fun for those who like their shocks untelegraphed, so be warned not to read plot summaries of the film, if you still intend to go.

One novel feature of this adventure film is that the female lead, Sigourney Weaver, is the most rational and take-charge person in the 5-man, 2-woman crew. The men in the crew are impulsive and thoughtless toward a creature that is obviously very dangerous and versatile. In fact, one weakness in the film is that their conduct is at times maddeningly reckless. One warning: this just is not a film for an impressionable or young child.