

## Document Citation

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# Come to the catacomb hideout

Newspaper editors battle *Alien vs. Predator*. By Cheryl Eddy and Johnny Ray Huston

Sometimes the anticipation of something — New Year's Eve, encountering your used-to-be-a-hottie prom date at a class reunion, an epic battle between multifranchised movie monsters — can be more thrilling than the thing itself. While some might argue it didn't quite achieve full maniac-on-maniac potential, last year's *Freddy vs. Jason* delivered enough R-rated carnage candy and flailing teenagers to keep fans (and '80s nostalgia hounds) satiated. Bad prerelease buzz has tainted *Alien vs. Predator*, the much-longed-for (and technically, already achieved, if you count video games and comic books) match-up between two of science fiction's most formidable baddies. Writer-director Paul W.S. "not that *Magnolia* guy" Anderson (*Mortal Kombat*, *Event Horizon*, *Soldier*, and most recently, *Resident Evil*) knows a thing or two about sci-fi movies and, clearly, video-game adaptations. But can he be trusted not to bungle the movie geeks have been panting to see since 1990, the year an Alien skull made a cameo in *Predator 2*?

**Cheryl Eddy:** Overall, I had a good time with *Alien vs. Predator*, despite a few things. First, it's PG-13, so the gore is fairly muted (lots of killing done in semidarkness — boo!). Second, it favors action over horror — at no moment was I afraid, or in suspense,

or even surprised by anything happening on-screen. It's much more of a *Predator* movie than an *Alien* movie in that sense.

**Johnny Ray Huston:** Yes, the director definitely favors the warring he-man antics of the *Predator* series over the gender dysphoria of the *Alien* flicks. As the heroine, Lex, Sanaa Lathan brings the franchises together; she's a bored fusion of Sigourney Weaver and Danny Glover — though her dreadlocked romantic counterpart here is a far cry from Taye Diggs in *Brown Sugar*.

The lead Predator brings the heat to a *Thing*-like setting before going through a *Terminator*-style sympathetic transformation. He and Lathan have a beauty-and-the-beast relationship — though in this case beast gives beauty a beauty mark. What did you think of the film's bizarre story?

**CE:** The basic plotline of *Alien vs. Predator* (drop group o' victims in isolated location, add marauding menace, bring to boil) isn't anything new. But the film does have some awesomely ridiculous exposition, most of it provided by Raoul Bova's character, Sebastian — the kind of genius archaeologist who can speed-read the hieroglyphics covering a mysterious pyramid buried 2,000 feet below Antarctica.

"This is starting to make sense!" Sebastian declares, after a series of perplexing events that, I'm sorry,

make *no* sense: solid walls rumble and shift, a "sacrificial chamber" is opened for business, a face-hugger soars through the air in graceful bullet-time, and a Predator solemnly tattoos itself with Alien blood. Naturally, the audience howls appreciatively. Sebastian's explanation, complete with accompanying flashback to, like,

Naturally, once Lex realizes what's going on — Predators are fighting Aliens, a.k.a. "the ultimate prey," for sport; it's kind of an every-hundred-years hunt club — she allies herself with the Predators, because "the enemy of my enemy is my friend!" Great battle cry, eh?

**JRH:** Lathan is a world



**Face off:** The icons attached to two lucrative film franchises go toe-to-talon in *Alien vs. Predator*.

Aztec times, will no doubt delight anyone who's become convinced — via too much late-night History Channel viewing and New Age conspiracy-theory literature — that extraterrestrials taught early humans how to build the pyramids. (Which they so totally did, of course.)

away from doing Lorraine Hansberry on Broadway. In fact, as Lex, she's almost a half mile beneath the surface of the South Pole — the logical resting place of all Aztec-Egyptian-Cambodian relics, apparently. The sheer daffiness of the movie's final stretch blots out the tedium of its

first half, when you can't wait for the monsters to kill actors so they don't have to speak any more terrible lines. Once Lex and her Predator beau start sledding toward the Earth's surface at near-supersonic speed, the movie truly hits its stride. The shot of them in silhouette jogging away from a flame-ball backdrop is just icing on an ice cake.

My favorite part of *Alien vs. Predator* might be a sentence about the creature creators and designers in the press kit: "They also gave the Alien Queen, who made her 'debut' in *Aliens*, a slimmer look, keeping her enormous head while reducing her waist." And you thought Brittany Murphy had it bad.

**CE:** It sucks the Aliens get so hated on in the movie — even "You're one ugly motherfucker!" uttered in both previous *Predator* movies, is directed at an Alien here. (Sadly, nobody has the forethought to say, "If it bleeds, we can kill it.") And since the movie's PG-13, the line comes out "You're one ugly motherf—" and then there's an explosion that muffles the rest. (Again — boo!) Ironically, of course, the Alien was originally, gorgeously designed by H.R. Giger, whereas the Predator could blend in comfortably at a GWAR concert. ♦

'*Alien vs. Predator*' is playing at Bay Area theaters. See *Movie Clock*, in *Film listings*, for show times.

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