

## Exclusive: Days Among the “PREDATORS”

Written by Drew Tinnin  
Friday, 26 March 2010 14:03

---



Now that some rousing behind-the-scenes footage (see a new promo clip below) and a well-received trailer (check it out [here](#)) have been unleashed for PREDATORS (coming from 20th Century Fox July 9), it's time to start unveiling our coverage of the reboot, which has already been drumming up a great deal of excitement among fans. Last November and December, I was able to make a pair of visits to the set in my hometown of Austin, TX, where the majority of the film was shot.

For this first look, I wanted to highlight the production design team at producer Robert Rodriguez's Troublemaker Studios, whose contributions are of the type that sometimes get overlooked. Initially, Rodriguez himself is going to give me the grand tour, but he and his family have come down with the flu, so his fellow PREDATORS producer Elizabeth Avellan is gracious enough to take time out to show me around. Avellan has produced every Troublemaker flick to date, and has helped build the studio from the ground up into what is quickly becoming a legitimate contender with the likes of Weta and Skywalker Studios.



We first walk out to one of the film's most important sets: the hunting camp. You see glimpses of this set in a few shots in the trailer, and it looks even more incredible in person. As we enter, the dense jungle opens up to reveal the camp area, which looks to be where the Predators prepare and skin their prey. Carcasses are strung up, and sharp, tuskl-like bones jut out of the ground. Director Nimrod Antal wanted a creek of blood to run throughout, and there's a large metal spike jutting up from the ground, covered in alien markings. It looks like someone or something could wind up being impaled on it, and makeup FX creator Greg Nicotero seems to verify that later in the day.

As we cross this area, it's clear Avellan is still impressed with what she and the PREDATORS

## Exclusive: Days Among the “PREDATORS”

Written by Drew Tinnin  
Friday, 26 March 2010 14:03

---

team have been able to accomplish. “There are 29 cargo containers stacked up to make a wall so we could build the rock faces,” she tells Fango. “Three semi-truck trailers with plants from Florida came in to help create the jungle. Literally every leaf was attached by hand. Nimrod wanted the hunting camp to be in a ravine so that it feels very closed off. You feel channeled in, and that’s always a good technique to build up a little fear.” I later learn that Antal wanted the Hunting Camp to look like it came right out of a Hieronymus Bosch painting, and the set definitely reflects the disturbing and hellish imagery in some of the artist’s work.

That said, the terrain also remains in line with the environment of the first PREDATOR movie. In fact, I can’t help imagining the extraterrestrial hunters crouching at the top of the embankment, watching us as we slowly make our way back out of the camp and head to some of the indoor sets. Truly remarkable work here.

We next move into a massive greenscreen room, where the entirety of Rodriguez’s SIN CITY was shot. I ask Avellan how much practical material has been shot up to this point as opposed to CGI shots, and how the working relationship between Rodriguez and Antal has been going. “We haven’t had one day of greenscreen yet,” she reveals. “Nimrod is really into doing a lot of in-camera stuff. It’s an effects-heavy movie, obviously, and we’re going to enhance things, but I’m really amazed with how much he’s doing practical. It’s a lot of fun to watch him. Robert and Nimrod have different ways of working, but Nimrod is a great filmmaker, and he came in, started working with all of our crew and doing all the pre-viz with our visual effects department. He’s been collaborating closely with the production design team from the start as well.” Rodriguez has been busy shooting the exploitation shocker MACHETE, based on his trailer from GRINDHOUSE, during the PREDATORS shoot, which has allowed Antal to work very closely with everyone at Troublemaker. It’s the first time an outside director has worked this intimately with the studio, in fact.

Moving on, we meet up with Steve Joyner and Caylah Eddleblute, the PREDATORS production design team behind PREDATORS who have been part of every Robert Rodriguez film since FROM DUSK TILL DAWN. The duo have worked on numerous genre films over the years, but PREDATORS in particular has brought unique challenges. “The thing that was interesting about this movie was that it’s an entirely alien planet,” Joyner says. “No human elements, except what the characters bring with them. The bulk of the script takes place in this alien environment.”

Even though this production is attempting to distance itself from the recent combinations of the ALIEN and PREDATOR franchises, the filmmaking team is aware of how much the fans have wanted to see the iconic creatures’ home worlds. “There are a couple of differences here worth mentioning,” Joyner says. “I don’t know how many spoilers we want to give away at this point,

## Exclusive: Days Among the “PREDATORS”

Written by Drew Tinnin  
Friday, 26 March 2010 14:03

---

but this is *not* the Predator home planet. This is a game-range planet. When the characters appear on this world, having been transported there, they don't know where they are. They believe they're on Earth, just in some strange jungle. That was one of the really interesting things about this project.”

Eddleblute chimes in, adding, “They have to realize where they are, and more importantly why they're all there. And of course, we wanted to make every shot as cool as in the original. I've probably watched the original PREDATOR eight times and studied every frame. In every scene, there's someone camouflaged, and every frame is composed perfectly and the characters are spot-on. We want to do everything we can in creating the environments to really bring those characters to life, and create a sense of wonder—whether good or bad—and a sense of discovery, and have that suspended moment with every beat.”

So if it's a hunting planet intended specifically for that purpose, one has to wonder if we can expect to see other alien critters that the Predators have brought in to stalk, in addition to the humans. “It's definitely set up so there's a series of discoveries that they make, and the audience will be carried along with that and everyone knows what to expect. But with this script, the horror just builds, on a lot of levels. Where are we? Why are we here? When are we? What happened to us? So they have all these great discoveries. That was one of the challenging things: not giving away anything at first, and then slowly figuring out that they're not in Kansas anymore. This story [scripted by Alex Litvak and Michael Finch] builds like THE MOST DANGEROUS GAME, which here is a double entendre. The primary game is not who you go into the theater thinking it is, so there are a number of good surprises.”

*Look for more on-set PREDATORS coverage at this site in the near future, and in FANGORIA magazine beginning in issue #294, on sale in May.*

{youtube}ZMW57k4J498{/youtube}

{comments on}