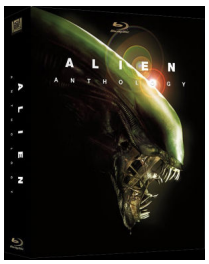
“In space no one can hear you scream…” Well, unless you’re in possession of the new ALIEN ANTHOLOGY Blu-ray box set from Fox Home Entertainment, which should give fans cause to emit sound barrier-breaking shrieks aplenty.

A few years ago I thought Fox had bestowed upon us the ALIEN Holy Grail with its awkwardly titled QUADRILOGY DVD box set. How can you top perfection? The monolithic ALIEN ANTHOLOGY provides an answer.

There is so much packed into this six-disc set, the new bonus materials alone could easily fill the Nostromo's cargo hold. This set couldn’t be any more definitive. The vaults have been thoroughly scoured, collecting stuff from every ALIEN incarnation ever released from VHS to the laserdisc editions; simply stated, there’s nothing missing, this set has everything. Fox has even eliminated those pesky FBI warnings from the beginning of each film and minimized the loading time during Blu-ray navigation; nothing has been overlooked, no egg left unturned.



All four digitally remastered theatrical films are here—Ridley Scott’s original 1979 ALIEN, James Cameron’s muscular 1986 sequel ALIENS, David Fincher’s fascinating 1993 ALIEN^3 and Jean-Pierre Jeunet’s bizarre ALIEN: RESURRECTION—all presented in glorious hi-def.

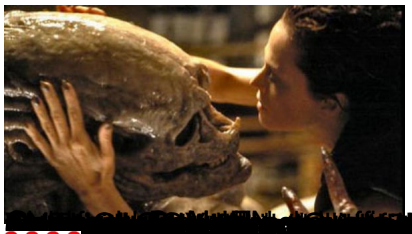
As far as the films themselves, ALIEN still captivates from the second that brooding Jerry Goldsmith score kicks in across the slowly emerging title sequence. The viewer is immediately yanked into one hell of a frightening ride. The skillfully constructed H.R. Giger monster is still intense, especially when shuffling around in the shadows rather than splashing across the screen. The subtle background sounds that constantly pulse through this picture (effectively realized in the stunning new 5.1 sound mix) still get under one’s skin, and are so effectively creepy and uncomfortably atmospheric you feel like a helpless passenger onboard the ship. The picture is stunning and has only gotten better with the Blu-ray treatment. Some films are ageless and never seem to become dated. ALIEN is one of those pictures. It delivers on every

level and constantly proves it’s here to stay. For the ultimate experience always bet on the 1979 theatrical version (included here alongside the director’s cut). As Ian Holm’s android says, “I admire its purity…”

Cameron’s deluxe sequel is also a thing of beauty. The picture has been digitally remastered, painstakingly frame-by-frame by Cameron himself. All the previous versions of the movie were very grainy due to the flaws in the original film stock, but in this edition all that has been surgically removed with a Bishop-like level of skill. The blacks and blues are so rich, the contrast is spectacular, the digital sound is mind-blowing, everything a hi-def-starved audience demands. And like the first film, the theatrical version of ALIENS is still your best bet. The pacing is slick, the suspense is visceral and the film doesn’t get bogged down in all that flabby backstory.

ALIEN^3 has always been a beautiful disaster and, in this writer’s opinion, serves if nothing else as the template for Fincher’s now signature style. You can easily see where Fincher’s visionary direction ends and the meddling producers’ interference begins. Despite the numerous production issues and the stigma attached to the film, ALIEN ^{3} is still the most beautifully shot film in the saga. When the ALIEN QUADRILOGY surfaced, Fox apologized for its tampering with Fincher’s vision. So, like the last box set, Fincher’s commentary is still missing—some wounds are apparently too deep to mend. Included again is Fincher’s original vision and restored work print, which gives the viewer a chance to see ALIEN ^{3} the way it should have been. At least with this version, Fox has remastered the extra footage, whereas the QUADRILOGY version just added the unrefined material. This edition is incredible and worth revisiting with fresh eyes.

ALIEN: RESURRECTION is another clumsy masterpiece in its own right and does get better with multiple viewings. Unfortunately, the film suffers as being the runt of the ALIEN litter, which is a shame, because Jeunet is such a visual and beautiful director, and his talents here are radically underutilized and misunderstood. Still, ALIEN: RESURRECTION has charm and a distinct style. Imagine a Terry Gilliam-helmed version of the first ALIEN and you have ALIEN: RESURRECTION in a nutshell. Sadly, the climactic Skeletor-looking alien hybrid, the poor supporting cast and dodgy acting hamper any hope for perfection. Then again, how can one ignore the Alien Queen giving birth like a human woman? Definitely a thing of perverse beauty.



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