



# Un-Alien-Able

Did Ridley Scott really make *Prometheus*?

**PROMETHEUS:** Directed by Ridley Scott. Written by Jon Spaihts and Damon Lindelof. Editing, Pietro Scalia. Cinematography, Dariusz Wolski. Music, Marc Streitenfeld. Starring Michael Fassbender, Charlize Theron, Nomi Rapace, Idris Elba, Guy Pearce. 20th Century Fox, 2012. R. 124 minutes ★★☆☆☆

I've been told Tony Scott, the shameless pimp responsible for such box-office bait jobs as *Top Gun* and *Beverly Hills Cop 2*, is the younger brother of Oscar-nominated director Ridley Scott, but I'm not so sure. Where's the proof? I want to see a birth certificate. Because, just having sat through *Prometheus*, I've come to the conclusion that Hollywood has hatched the boldest conspiracy since they sealed Uncle Walt's nuts in a Mason jar of formaldehyde.

There's simply too much circumstantial evidence to ignore the truth another minute: Tony Scott and Ridley Scott are the same exact person.

Actually, what I think really happened is that there actually did used to be a person named Ridley Scott. He was a sharp, technically gifted but not overly thoughtful English filmmaker who offered his considerable skills to Tinseltown and, right out of the gate, directed three very fine films — one of them a masterpiece of its genre. That would be *Alien*. This 1979 release was the sleeper surprise of the year: A sci-fi stunner with a film-noir heart, *Alien* veritably pounced on unsuspecting audiences.

With deft, subtle touches that ingeniously evoke an aura of everyday reality — the chipped, worn look of the spaceship *Nostramo*, the lumpen dialogue of the blue-collar crew, the fleeting glimpses of the horrific monster, the excruciating crescendo into epic nightmare — Ridley Scott's *Alien* might be the finest sci-fi movie ever made.

It made Sigourney Weaver a star. In 33 years, it hasn't aged a day. Watch it again. It's a scream.

I'm pretty sure it was right after Ridley's next film, the 1982 cult-iconic *Blade Runner*, that Tony Scott made his fateful move. Compelled by greed, lusting after fame and driven insane by his brother's critical and popular success, Tony, in all regards the lesser Scott, somehow assumed his sibling's identity — I dare not posit how, though I have my suspicions. What's important is that Ridley, along with whatever dim flame of talent and integrity he possessed, had been spiritually snuffed,

and in his place now stood, and still stands, Tony Scott, a Ridley in name alone.

This Ridley/Tony Scott, totally scot-free of talent, has cobbled together film after film, to the bankable appreciation of the masses and the professional acclaim of the movie business, which doesn't know its ass from a hole in the ground. How else to explain feminist-for-dummies opportunism of *Thelma & Louise*? Or the tinhorn travesty of *Gladiator*? It's simply inconceivable — impossible — that the same director that made *Alien* also made *G.I. Jane* and *Someone to Watch Over Me*.

Which brings us to *Prometheus*. It had so much promise.

Alas — as it was with Jekyll & Hyde, so it is here, as Tony again trumps the Ridley in Scott. Divorced of any context whatsoever, I suppose *Prometheus* is a decent enough Hollywood blockbuster, full of whiz-bang special effects and lots of snappy action. If, however, you care the slightest bit about things like intelligence (both yours and the film's), integrity (the film's and the filmmaker's) or artistry (sic), this fifth installment in the *Alien* saga proves an almost unmitigated failure.

Charlize Theron is good. So is Idris Elba. But they're always good.

But what's up with turning Guy Pearce into a wrinkly old dude? Why not just cast a wrinkly old dude? It worked fine for Peter Jackson. Explain how Michael Fassbender can watch the sleeping Nomi Rapace's dreams on a staticky video screen. *Alien* never stooped to such futuristic B-grade schlock. And how is it that Rapace, wide awake, performs gastrointestinal surgery on herself, lazering through her abdominal wall to remove an alien spawn, and afterwards is capable of running away, much less standing?

But forget the details: The whole thing is ludicrous and sad. *Prometheus* is more than content to go where every man has gone before — it even ransacks *Alien* for its plot — and, in the process, craps all over its own cinematic legacy. Where *Alien* was deep and subtle and brooding, *Prometheus* is flat and obvious and one-dimensional, and completely forgettable; once I'd left the screening, the only thing I could recall about the movie was the price of the ticket.

Cynicism is knowing better and doing it anyway, just because it suits you. Hollywood is cynical.

R.I.P. Ridley Scott. All hail Tony, and send in the clowns. **EW**

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