

MASTER OF DARKNESS

HR Giger in 2012,
photographed by *Bizarre*
in his home in Switzerland



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YOU INTERROGATE

HR GIGER

PART 1

PHOTOS ANNIE BERTRAM, ANNIEBERTRAM.COM

After years of planning, *Bizarre* is thrilled to print an exclusive interview with one of the world's most renowned surrealists, **HR Giger**. And what's even more exciting is that he took the time to answer questions sent in by *Bizarre* readers... →

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hether it be the twisted drawings submitted to *Bizarre's* Readers' Art pages (p38), the stunning biomechanical ink flaunted in our monthly tattoo gallery (p32), or the innovative body mods we regularly showcase that ape the Swiss surrealist's fascination with the intersection between man and metal, *Bizarre* readers have always worn their love for HR Giger on their sleeve (and on their back, and on their head...). And as HR Giger has been a vital part of *Bizarre's* DNA since the day it launched, we're immensely honoured to feature his words and artwork in the magazine.

HR Giger spoke exclusively to *Bizarre* earlier this year from Museum HR Giger in Gruyères, Switzerland.

In 1990, on the day of his 50th birthday, HR Giger was invited to exhibit a major retrospective of his work in Gruyères, in the stunning medieval building Château de Gruyères.

Subsequent visits to the region saw HR Giger falling in love with Gruyères; and when he discovered that Château St German - a fortress structure below Château de Gruyères - had come up for sale, he jumped at the opportunity to purchase the charismatic building and open his own gallery.

HR Giger bought Château St German in September 1997, and on 21 June 1998 it opened its doors to visitors. Today, Museum HR Giger features a permanent collection of HR Giger's artwork from all periods of his career, including designs and artwork for the films *Alien*, *Alien 3*, *Dune*, *Species* and *Pollergeist 2*. So if you're in the market for the trip of a lifetime, get your ass to Switzerland!

Anyway, that's enough from us. Let's see what questions *Bizarre* readers chose to ask the dark master via Facebook, Twitter and email...



If *Alien* had never happened, where do you think you'd be today? Would your career have taken a different direction?

Francis Mayhew, via email



“ Yes, my career certainly would have taken a different direction. *Alien* introduced my work to a much larger, global audience. And, of course, my designs for *Alien* conveyed features which are very distinguishing for my work, such as the biomechanical elements, the lack of eyes, and other things.

During my early days, hardly anybody supported my work. At times, this felt quite disheartening to me. State institutions or cultural organisations, for example, dismissed me as a serious artist. The success of *Alien*, and the subsequent Academy Award for my creations for the movie, began to change such negative perceptions of my work, at least in the eyes of the film's audience.”

becoming a reality. Does that worry or excite you? Are there any dangers in this evolution of the human form that trouble you?
Robert Stewart, via email

“ There are many aspects related to the modern world and modern technology which fascinate me incessantly. On the other hand, I feel quite dejected about how human behaviour and egotism, not least in connection with technological advances, have affected the planet in the modern world. Unfortunately, it seems inconceivable to most people to even consider a more spiritual and measured approach to progress and modernity.”



In the modern world, mechanical implants are becoming more and more common, and we're edging towards a time where your biomechanical visions are



I've heard that you live in an amazing house! Can you describe what the home of HR Giger is like? I may be wrong, but I've heard it contains special corridors that →

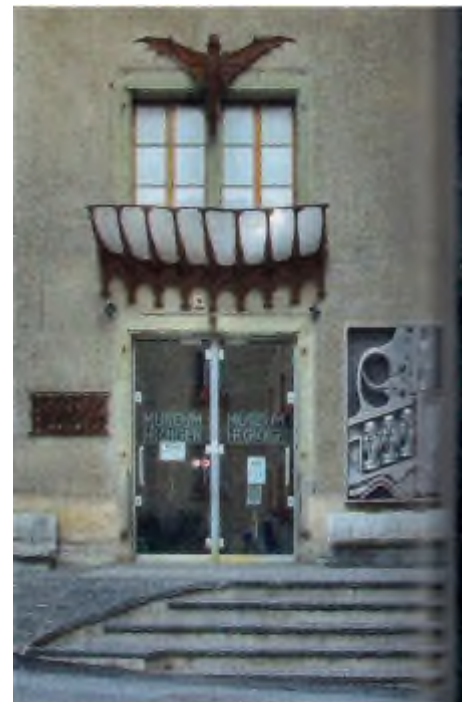


ABOVE HR Giger at home with two of his sculptures

LEFT A photograph taken inside HR Giger's home. "My house is simply a very personal space where both the results of my work and presents from visitors have accumulated over the decades," he says

RIGHT The outside of Museum HR Giger in Gruyères, Switzerland

FACING PAGE National Park I', 1975, 200x140cm, acrylic on paper on wood



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allow you to feel as if you're 'outside', but which are enclosed and allow you to remain inside the comfort of your home. If this is true, was this inspired by your childhood, where you used to make a playroom in the darkest corners of your family home, under a table? Or like your 'black room' installation, which was an environment you could control and have your own way? Sorry this question is so long...

Sharon Hamper, via email

“ My house is simply a very personal space where both the results of my work and presents from visitors have accumulated over the decades. It is probably a bit chaotic at times, but in many ways it resembles nature when left to spread without any human encumbrance and limitation, which is also something that intrigues me.

I moved into one small unit of a four-unit townhouse in the early 1970s. That's where I set up my workshop, in which I would create my airbrush paintings. Later, I was able to acquire two adjacent units, which we subsequently connected to the first one by breaking doorways through the walls. There are no special corridors or a black room, but substantial portions of the house are painted black and contain various pieces of my art.

The backyard features my large Zodiac Fountain and the tracks and machinery of my ghost train, but has otherwise been left as nature saw fit for many years. The tracks of the ghost train run from the backyard into the house and out again. Before it had all become completely overgrown, it was therefore possible to ride the train from the backyard through the house.

My house and backyard are not publicly accessible. They are private places, and we don't invite visitors. I am a very private person, and it is important to me that this is respected. ”

Your influence on the world of tattoos is profound. How does it feel when you see your work inked on another human's skin? In general, do you think your work suits tattoos and body art?

Stephen Thompson, via email

“ Whenever I am at my museum - the Museum HR Giger in Gruyères, Switzerland -

people will inevitably come up to me to show me their Giger tattoos.

I feel very flattered when people make the decision to embellish their skin with my work, for life. It is, of course, nice to see something like that done by a genuinely talented tattooist who is capable of transferring the original art to the skin in a truly adequate manner. ”



If *Alien* hadn't made you internationally famous, do you think you'd have been more readily embraced by the art world?

Do you feel you've been isolated from the art world?

THIS IMAGE 'Front In Entrance Hall', 1973, 230x65cm, Indian ink on paper on wood
 BELOW, LEFT 'Alien Monster II', 1978, 140x140cm, acrylic on paper on wood
 BELOW, RIGHT 'Humanoid', 1968, 52x147x95cm (sitting), polyester, metal, synthetic leather, camera



as you've won an Academy Award and so on? Would you like to be part of the established art world, or are you happy to be more of an outsider?
 Peter Luney, via email

“ That might indeed be true, at least for some circles of the art establishment. On the other hand, Alien has opened so many doors for me which otherwise would have remained closed. There are a few things I would still be very happy to see, however, such as an exhibition of my art in the Kunsthau Zürich, the art museum in my hometown of Zurich, Switzerland.

But, in general, I feel very blessed by the popularity and acceptance my work has achieved all over the world. There have been major changes in the way it is being perceived. Since 2004, for example, my art has been exhibited in Austria, Germany, Finland, France, Switzerland, Spain, Norway, and many other countries. ”



With so many sex organs within your work, and with ventures into sculpture and the crossover between the biomechanical and everyday items (well, furniture at least), will we ever see a line of HR Giger-designed sex toys?

Stuart Davies, via Facebook

“ I am not interested in such things. I leave that to others. ”



What was your involvement in the *Alien* prequel, *Prometheus*? Did you design any new set-pieces or creatures?

Paul Banner, via Facebook

“ It was quite an honour to be approached by Ridley Scott regarding contributions to *Prometheus*. Both my wife Carmen and I regard Ridley as a friend and a true artist, and it thus was also a personal pleasure to meet and cooperate with him again.

At this point in my life, I usually no longer create new designs. I believe I have created a large enough body of work, and I prefer to take it a bit easier these days and simply supervise the further development of my existing work, such as crafting sculptures from elements in my airbrush paintings. But for *Prometheus* I did create a number of new →

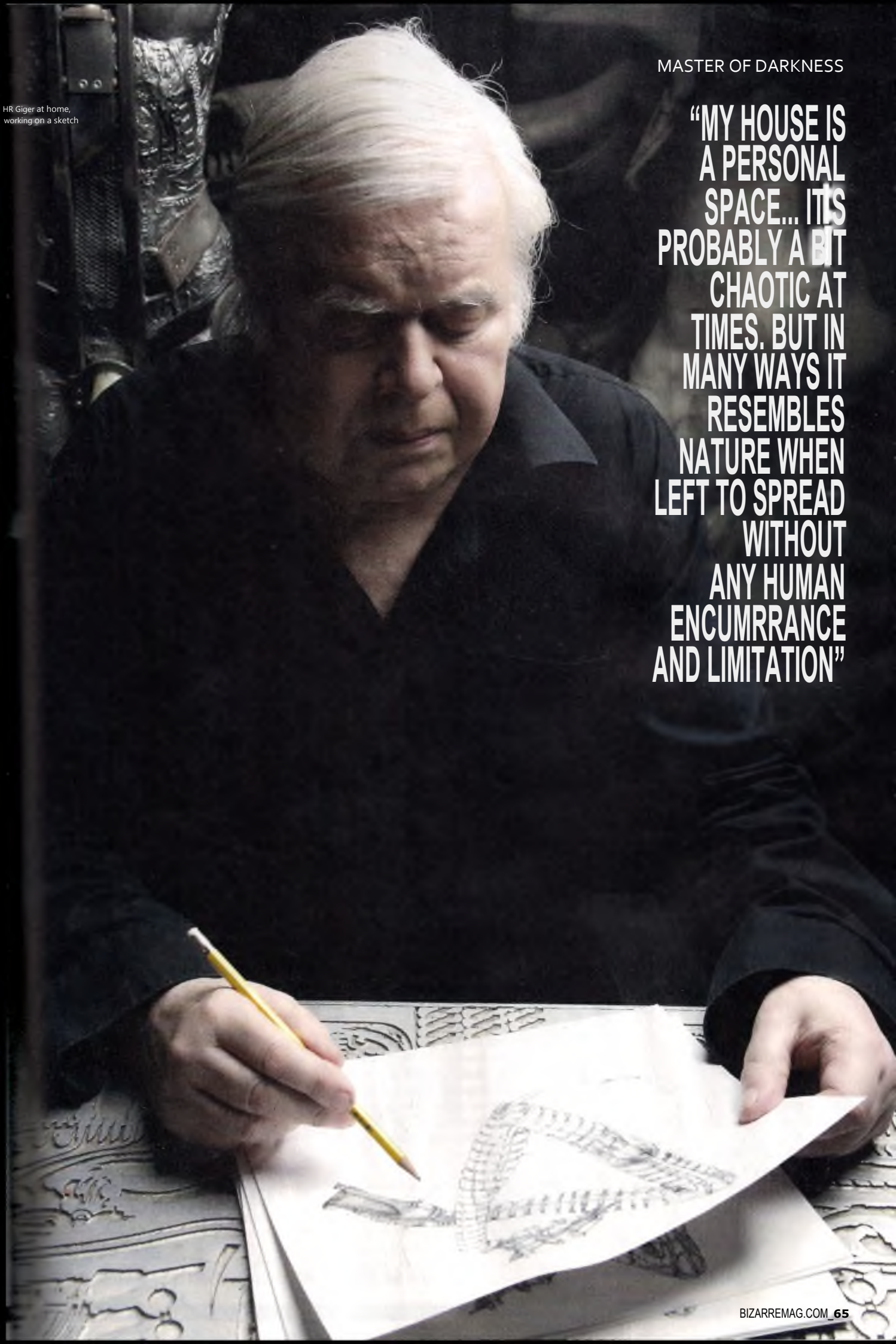


PICTURE: MATTHIAS BELZ

HR Giger at home,
working on a sketch

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sketches, and I also volunteered some input with regard to some of the sets used in the film.

I felt that I was being contacted a bit too late for any major involvement. Many important elements had already been designed. As far as I see it, the final film makes use of what can perhaps best be described as a blend of several of my designs and those of others. ”



You say in the book *HR GigerARh+* that you've been shot at on several occasions - but at the time of writing the book you didn't want to go into details. Can you talk more about this now?

Ben Camus, via email

“ This happened a long time ago, and I think it is best to leave it at what is printed in the book.



You have a complex relationship with guns - you collected them as a young man, had a 30 year abstinence, then returned to gun-ownership after a bad dream. What is your relationship with guns today? Do you still own guns? Does it sadden you that young people are taking up weapons in inner city slums across the world, and that children are shooting other children for stupid reasons?
Tony Black, via email

“ In spite of what those who are perhaps somewhat prejudiced might think of me based on some of my art, I emphatically reject violence and aggression in any shape or form. And this includes any suffering and tragedy brought upon people due to the use of firearms. It saddens me when I see any pain and misery brought upon

a creature in this world by a firearm. I have always been fascinated by the beautiful aesthetics of guns and I do still own a small collection of guns, but it is not something I approach carelessly, nor is it something I proudly display at my home. The recent shooting in a Denver cinema is a drastic reminder of the seriousness and danger of this topic. ”



I read that you stopped using an airbrush as your primary tool in 1993. and have used other methods more heavily in recent years to create your work. What method do you currently favour when creating new artworks?
Pamela Howarth, via email

“ I currently only draw rough sketches, and I do so using a ballpoint pen or pencils. ”

You've collected many strange things in your life - my favourite story was about your collection of trouser-brace fasteners. Do you collect anything strange today? What is the strangest thing you've ever collected - and why did you collect it?
 Adrian White, via email

“ I suppose one could say that my entire house consists of all sorts of collected items and gifts. There are so many things that it is sometimes hard to get from room to room. This includes mainly art and books, but also other curiosities Drought to me my friends and acquaintances from all over the world. There is a shrunken head, for example. And I am fascinated by anything that has to do with bones. A significant part of my own art collection, including some very interesting arc unusual pieces, is displayed on the top floor of my museum in Gruyères, Switzerland. ”

In HR Giger ARh+, you speak of a story your mother used to tell about a scarecrow, and how it spoke to you as a child about the "senselessness of existence". Do you still feel that existence is worthless today?

Or, given the passing years, has life become more important to you? Does life make more sense the older you get?
 Petra Wallace, via email

“ The story you are referring to is a fairy tale which impressed very much in my early youth and has followed me through life. Such dark fairy tales left quite an impression with me at the time. It has occasionally also found its way into my work. I actually do feel quite fulfilled with my life these days. ”

Back when you worked on the original Alien movie, you famously did rounds of interviews that lasted for days - and you hated it! Do you dislike doing interviews? Is this interview process for Bizarre getting on your nerves?
 Kevin Watt, via email

“ No, if the questions are interesting, I don't mind interviews. And I think Bizarre's approach of letting readers direct the content of an interview is particularly intriguing, both for the interviewees and the interviewee. ”

Would you like to see Giger bars all over the world, or are you happy with the two that already exist in Switzerland?
 Maze Minkley, via email

“ There existed an additional Giger bar in Tokyo for some time, and there was a Giger room in New York. The experiences with those establishments were somewhat mixed. In order to open a new Giger bar anywhere on this planet certain basic conditions would therefore have to be fulfilled. A new Giger bar should only be established if it is done appropriately, and it should distinguish itself from the already existing Giger bars. I am very happy with the Giger bars in Switzerland, in Chur and in Gruyères, at my museum. They are a perfect extension to the museum's representation of my work. ”

In the past you have designed a microphone stand and guitar - would you ever consider designing other music equipment, so that a whole band could play using Giger-inspired instruments? Do you have any ideas for how you'd apply your art style to a drum kit?
 Sam Maier, via email →



"I REJECT VIOLENCE AND AGGRESSION IN ANY SHAPE OR FORM"

FACING PAGE 'Alien Monster IV', 1978, 140x140cm, acrylic on paper on wood
LEFT The biomech interior of the Giger Museum Bar at Museum HR Giger in Switzerland
RIGHT 'Baby Wall', 1998, 300x100x15cm, fibreglass
BELOW 'Animatronic Sil Sculpture', 1995, height 102cm, mixed media



PICTURES (RIGHT, AND ABOVE RIGHT): MATTHIAS BELZ

"I DO LIKE WATCHING THE OTHER ALIEN FILMS, ALTHOUGH I HEAR I MIGHT BE AMONG THE ONLY ONES TO DO SO"



ABOVE At home with HR Giger

RIGHT Another sculpture from Museum HR Giger

BELOW 'Biomechanical Mia, Egyptian Style', 1980, 70x70cm, acrylic on sieve print

FAR RIGHT Museum HR Giger features work from all periods of the artist's career, including sculptures and dozens of paintings you'll only have seen in his stunning art books



“ I have never really thought about that, but I guess I wouldn't mind looking at something like this, given the right people and circumstances. I have collaborated with musicians many times, of course, on wide a variety of projects. One should also remember that it was Korn's Jonathan Davis who approached me and had the original idea to create a microphone stand, and not the other way around. I am no longer interested in such things, however. This is now very much a thing of the past for me. ”



You were famously - and rightly! - upset that you didn't have a key role in creature designs for *Aliens* and *Alien 3*.

Do you still burn with disappointment, or has the passage of time healed those wounds? Can you watch *Aliens* and *Alien 3* now, or do they dredge up too many unpleasant memories?
Ryan Fahy, via email

“ Time has certainly healed the wounds a bit, but a part of me will of course always be disappointed that certain parties tried to appropriate my ideas and designs in such art improper manner. I do like watching the other *Alien* films, although I hear I might be among the only ones to do so. ”



This interview would not have happened without the help and hard work of Tom Gabriel Fischer and HR Giger's wife Carmen, to whom *Bizarre* would like to express its deepest gratitude. Thanks also to Matthias Belz for his help in supplying the incredible artwork in this feature. Tune in next month for more but, for now, make sure you check out the website for the Museum HR Giger at Hrgigermuseum.com

TUNE IN TO *BIZARRE* 196 ON SALE 20 NOVEMBER, FOR THE SECOND PART OF OUR WORLD EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH HR GIGER