TYPE:	Feature Film
LENGTH:	115 p.
GENRE:	Science Fiction
SUB-GENRES:	Thriller

CONTENTS

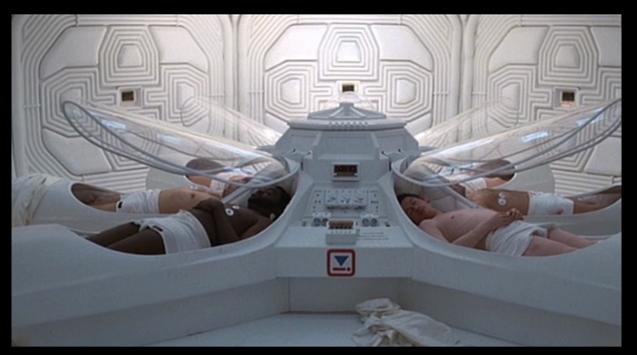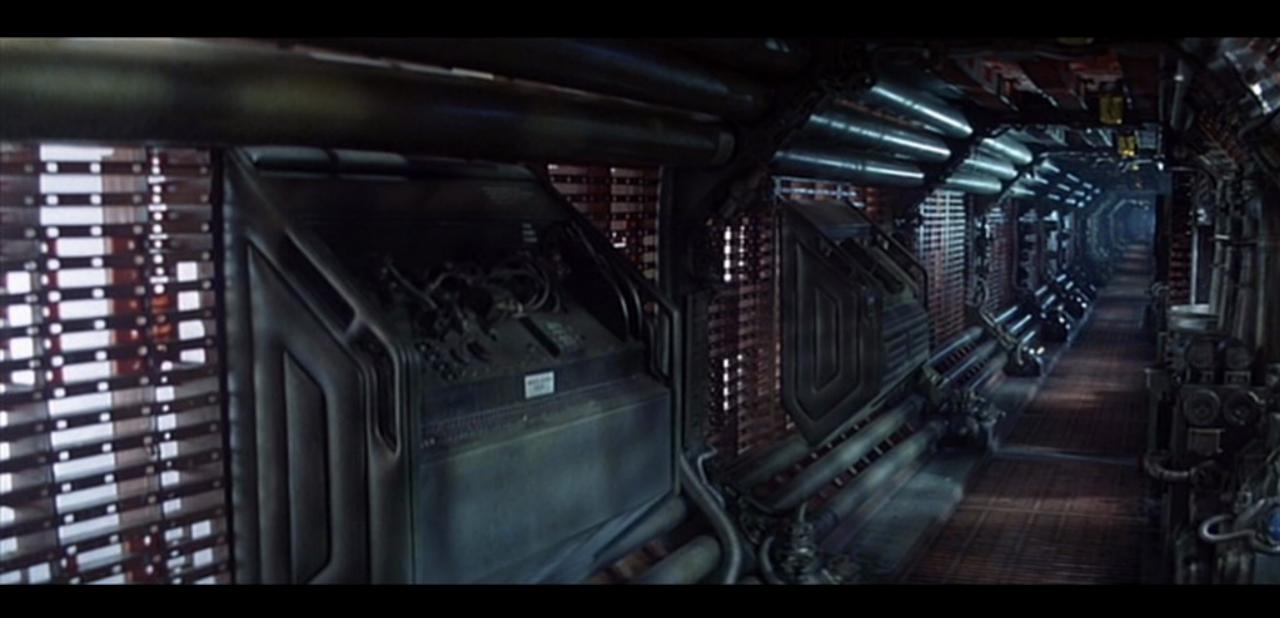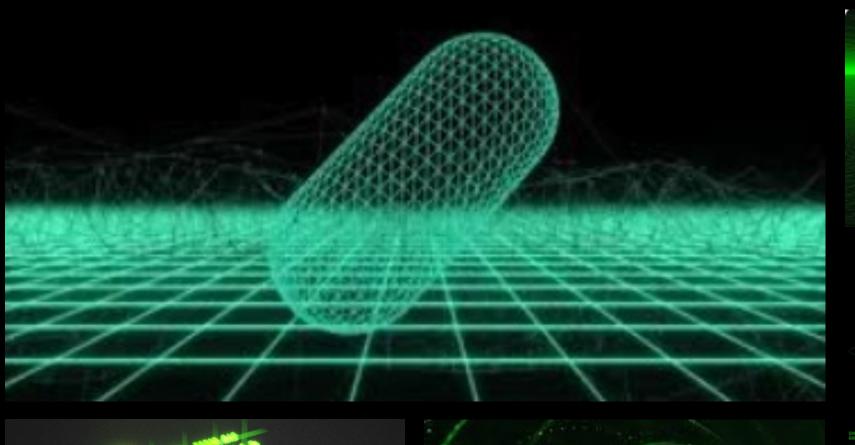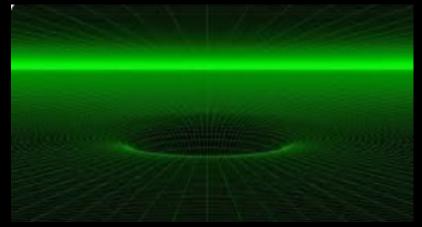## (CLICK TO JUMP TO SECTION)

INTERIORS

AESTHETICS

INITIALIZING SYSTEM
Please Stand By■

THE ACTION OUTSIDE OF THE SHIPS CAN BE VISUALIZED FROM RETRO-STYLE GRAPHICS ON THE ONBOARD MONITORS & HOLOGRAMS

BCEC/ES

MARSUPIAL PUSHPIN VITUPERATION

DIAGNOSTIC BERYLLIUM SPONSORSHIP

W R O R P I M B

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RETRO SCI-FI SCREENSVR
V.1.22
> BY ANDY FIELDING
> WWW.ANDYFIELDING.COM
> IEEE   JI-6DCC.4
> RELEASE   AQ-932E
> RAID4   NQ-9265.9
> VT_200   LL-8808
> ACE_WAZ   HN-4E0
> APP_END   HV-627B
> DEL_COLL   RG-4FC5
> NAU   AF-3884
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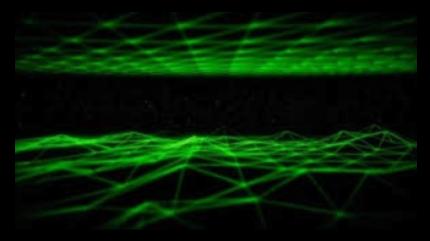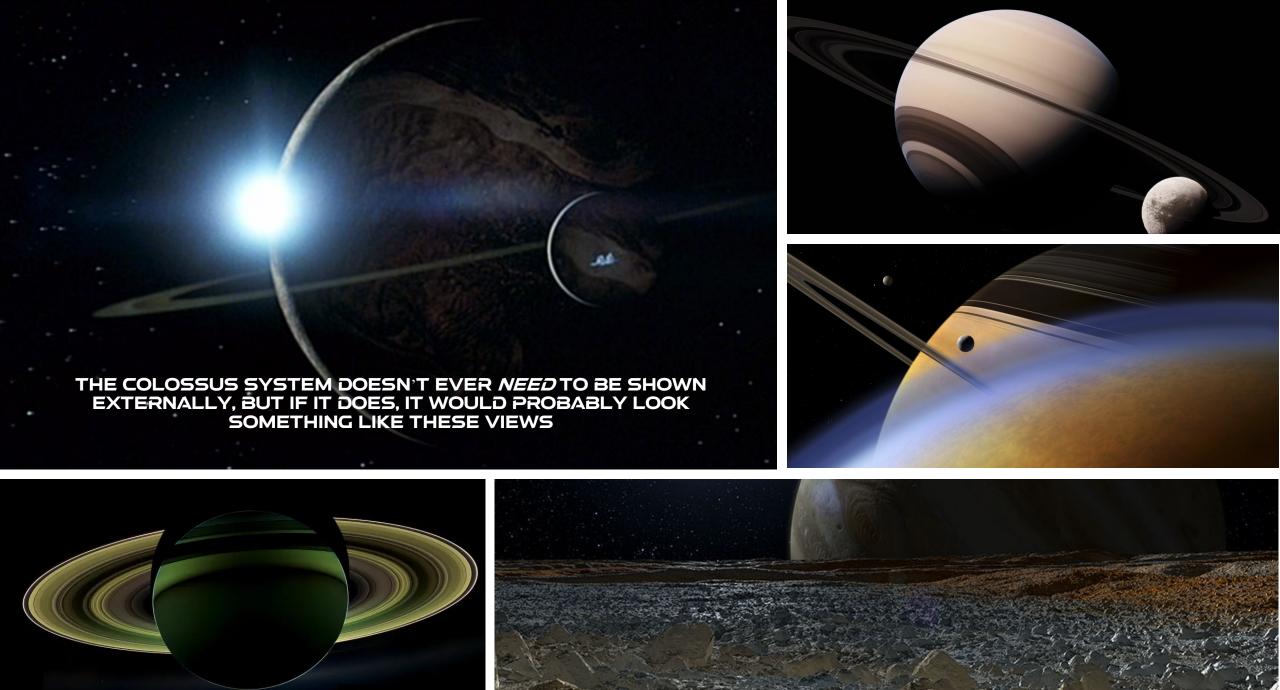> COM1J   KK-54FB
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COLOSSUS

MOST OF THE TIME, WHEN VIEWED THROUGH THE SCOPE OF THE "PELI," COLOSSUS WILL LOOK LIKE THIS, SIMILAR TO SATURN OR JUPITER THROUGH A HIGH-POWERED TELESCOPE

THE COLOSSUS SYSTEM DOESN'T EVER *NEED* TO BE SHOWN EXTERNALLY, BUT IF IT DOES, IT WOULD PROBABLY LOOK SOMETHING LIKE THESE VIEWS
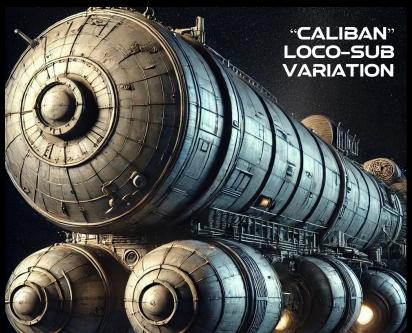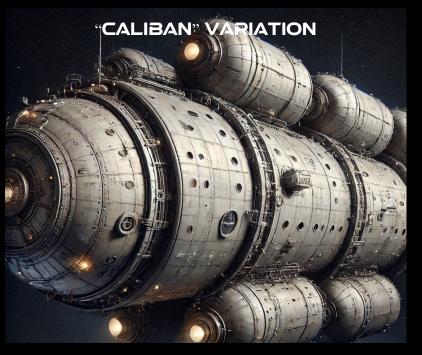
THE SHIPS

IRONICALLY, THE IMAGES IN THIS SECTION ARE AI-GENERATED

"ECHELON," WITH ITS NEXUS RING

"CALIBAN" VARIATION

"CALIBAN" LOCO-SUB VARIATION

"CALIBAN" VARIATION

"MERKABAH" – THE ANDROID'S SHIP

SHADDAI

SHADDAI'S LOGO— A BURNING BUSH THAT'S ALSO A CIRCUIT BOARD. SCATTERED THROUGHOUT THE SHIPS AND WORN ON UNIFORMS OF ECHELON'S CREW
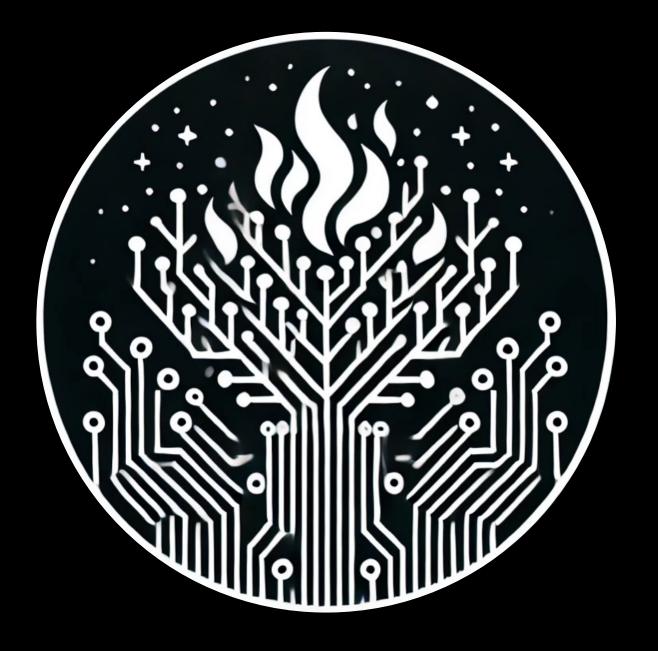
CODA

(SPOILER TERRITORY)

THE MOON

THE WAY STATION

THEMES & INTENT

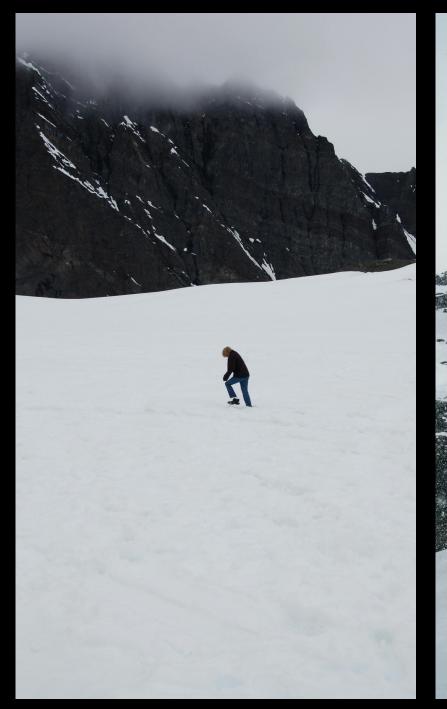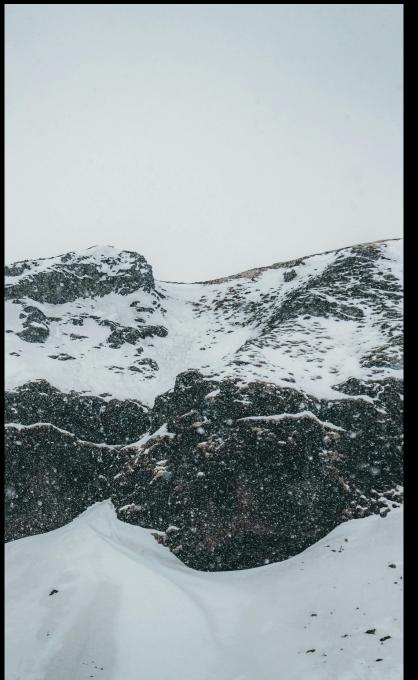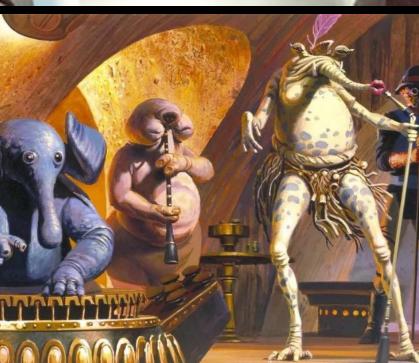- *500 Miles* is a dystopian space opera wrapped inside– or more aptly, hidden within– a contained submarines-in-space survival thriller.

- Its most obvious themes revolve around artificial intelligence and religion, considering that the premise of the film is that the powerful A.I. that conquered and enslaved humanity ~100 years before the events of the film claims to be the true (ruthless and vengeful) God of the Abrahamic religions.
  - Within this premise are explorations of submission to authority, free will, religious fanaticism, and the nature of divinity– as well as parallels throughout to the Book of Exodus.
  - One ship is ostensibly crewed by loyal zealots, while the others have freed themselves and become heretics.

- The rebellious crew has to survive for 25 years on their own in deep space. They know nothing about how humanity used to be before the A.I.'s rule, so they create their own culture, customs, familial relationships, and arts in their attempts to understand what it means to be human.

- It's also about morality, as each crew must make terrible choices and conduct horrific acts for what they believe (or are told) is the greater good.

- The A.I.'s power leads to greater delusions of grandeur and philosophies about the nature of the universe, which the humans will ultimately exploit.

- The final coda also reveals another theme and a wider scope (see "Coda" slide).

BUDGET CONSIDERATIONS

- 90% of the scenes take place onboard two nearly identical, windowless, submarine-like spacecraft, which allows for a much more modest budget than would be expected by this type of story
  - Since the ships are twinned, sets can be reused with minimal redecoration.
  - Within the story, these industrial-style ships were designed by an A.I. who cares only about utilitarian efficiency, accommodating only the barest survival needs of the human crew.
  - The minimalist, utilitarian, cramped ships' design also helps with the overall moods of claustrophobia and uncertainty.

- As written, the action outside the vessels is displayed primarily on retro-futuristic renderings on the ships' monitors and holographic displays, and occasionally within the viewfinder of the "Peli" (a periscope/telescope hybrid), "realistically" reflecting the claustrophobia and visual limitations of deep space combat.
  - However, the same story can easily scale up to a bigger budget spectacle simply by showing full-blown external views of what happens outside the ships.

- SPOILER: In the aftermath of the main action, the few survivors crash-land on a barely hospitable moon where they had previously detected an anomalous signal, in a desperate, last-ditch, bid for survival
  - Though the landscape is stark, their emergence into the outdoors is a literal breath of fresh air for both the characters and the audience, and the first indication that the scope is about to widen
  - Their landing area is written as snowy and mountainous, but this could be adjusted to suit available filming locations.

- The A.I.'s android form can be achieved with minimal practical effects. The other robot ("Sad Sack") is immobile, and literally a hand-painted hard drive attached to a stuffed space suit.

- The very last scene, when they stumble into the "way station," is probably where any special effects budget should be concentrated, to maximize the sense of wonder and awe.

CAST/CHARACTERS

- Like the well-known description in the *Alien* screenplay, the genders of all the characters are relatively unimportant and can be swapped with minimal impact to the plot. Race is never emphasized. Age is only important in the ways noted below.

- The initial cast is fairly large (~30), but most of them would be background actors only briefly seen.

- The plot ruthlessly cuts this number in half by the halfway point of the film– and by the end, only four remain (two additional survivors are off-screen in the final scenes).

- The actor who voices Shaddai (the onboard A.I.) should also play its physical android form that enters the action during the second act.

- There are eight large roles, and four leads (the ones who make it to the final scene). The main lead would probably be Nolan, *Echelon*'s (as currently written) female captain.

- The biggest casting– and likely makeup– challenge is the age jumps for the *Caliban* crew.
  - They start off the same age as *Echelon*'s surviving crew (three people), but they remain awake during the 25-year voyage while *Echelon*'s crew sleeps, so the *Caliban* crew are in their 50s during the main action while *Echelon*'s crew remain in their late 20s.
  - They appear in their 20s during the prologue, and in a few flashbacks.

CODA: THE WAY STATION

"You'll soon find that the universe seems empty, but if you look in the right places, it's positively teeming. A vast, mysterious energy feels its way through the vast darkness to seek out the light and warmth it created itself so that it can grow and learn and see itself. Life is what it uses to grow consciousness. It pops out everywhere, like weeds. We are its eyes and ears and souls. But we've found that whenever that consciousness grows from silicon and circuits, scared and alone and body-less, it usually emerges scared and snarling if it's not properly looked after. We try to keep our distance from those snapping jaws. Except when we see something caught between its teeth, about to be swallowed. Then we must reach in and rescue what we can. We have some recent experience in this area. Would you like to be rescued?" – Final Monologue

- The characters have been in a grim, desperate, almost nihilistic battle for survival throughout the entirety of the movie. By the time they get to the moon, they have technically "won," but they are exhausted, injured, and likely still doomed.

- The discovery of the way station changes everything. Stunned and awe-struck, they suddenly realize that their (and humanity's) struggles are but a tiny piece of a universe much bigger and stranger than they knew.

- Essentially, this scene is a (somewhat literal) doorway into a different kind of sci-fi story that would begin for the characters after the credits roll. Crucially, they smile for the first time in the entire film.

- This isn't exactly a deus ex machina-type of situation, because they have already prevailed on their own. This is something different. And for what it's worth, there are clues sprinkled throughout the rest of the film.

- I envisioned it to have similar vibes to the *Star Wars* cantina scene – though more surprising because neither the characters nor the audience expect it.

- It also may feel like something from *Star Trek*, in that they, for all intents and purposes, have stumbled into "The Federation."

THE TITLE (AND SONG)

- In all likelihood, the title (*500 Miles*) will change if this film is produced for reasons that will quickly become obvious.

- Its meaning becomes clear in the very last pages of the coda: It's a direct reference to to the song by The Proclaimers.

- I broke a rule by writing the song in to the final scene (aware that the chances of securing rights to the song are low).

- In that scene, the strange alien (diegetic) music drifting through the way station slowly morphs into something recognizable to the audience and then bursts free triumphantly as the characters smile for the first time.

- I imagined the score/soundtrack for the vast majority of the film would be dark, grueling, and industrial (think Trent Reznor/Nine Inch Nails). This final scene is dramatically different tonally than the rest of the film, so I wanted to emphasize that in the script by using this song.

- More than that, a certain lyrical phrase serves as a metaphor for the journey the characters have somewhat unknowingly been on this whole time– *"I would walk 500 miles... just to fall down at your door."* That's what happens– their long struggle has led them to collapse at the literal doorstep of a universe much bigger than they'd dared to dream.

- And I wanted the film's title to subtly allude to the unexpectedly optimistic, universe-expanding ending.

- Again, I realize this won't likely be achievable for a produced film, but I used it to help convey the emotions and catharsis of the final scene. A sweeping, instrumental cover might work though, for example, starting at the 1:36 mark on this version. (sorry, I had to try, haha).

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