
By Bill Sear

Steven Spielberg's first film since Jaws is already an enigma - it's making millions of dollars, the soundtrack album is selling wonderfully, and "It's an amazing, intensely bright light shining through shattered windows and screws that saw themselves - all of this before an unseen force drags the boy from his mother's arms. All is an accomplishment of music (by John Williams, who did the Star Wars score) more appropriate to a grade B horror film.

The other main character is the French-speaking head of a French American UFO investigating team (Francois Truffaut). This character is particularly annoying because many of his lines aren't translated.

During their encounters with the UFOS, both Dreyfuss and Dillon receive a vision which eventually leads them to Devil's Tower, Wyoming, in the same place that Truffau's team has calculated that the aliens will land. The U.S. Government decides to monopolize the landing by faking the spill of deadly nerve gas, forcing the evacuation of the landing area. Dillon and Dreyfuss make it to the landing area anyway (evading clouds of sleep gas and enough Marines to take back Vietnam), getting there just in time to witness the arrival of the aliens.

This leads to the forty-minute climax of the film, in which the aliens land, return Ms. Dillon's son, and communicate with the humans before flying off, leaving the audience with the implied promise of a better world through human/ alien cooperation.

Truffaut is a convincingly human, exalted, and scared by his experiences. Teri Garr does a good job as Dreyfuss' confused wife, who refuses to believe in UFOS, and Truffaut does the best he can with a role that requires him to speak a foreign language and often remain for translation.

The much-touted special effects by Douglas Trumbull are more than disappointing, taking on context with the glowing advertisements, they almost constitute fraud. His brilliant new technique turns out to be nothing more than a low-flame caused by shining a bright light at the camera, creating a soft halo of light which obscures features near it. Trumbull merely superimposed light effects techniques...

Close Encounters of the Third Kind developed some marvelous new special effects techniques... the details of which were top secret. Their critics returned from advance screenings and gave it reviews that would have had us believe it was the greatest film of the decade, if not all movie history. Finally came the advertising campaign, with countdowns in the papers ("One More Day Until... Close Encounters of the Third Kind) and the television ads, which portentously proclaimed: "We Are Not Alone.

After all this build-up, the movie is a disappointment. The film is an account of man's first meeting with an alien race. The main characters are an Indiana electric company lineman (Richard Dreyfuss), who sees the UFOs while investigating a blackout apparently caused by the aliens, and a young mother (Melinda Dillon) whose four-year-old son is kidnapped by the aliens. The aliens besiege her house with a variety of extrasensory effects - electric appliances turn themselves on and run amok, intensely bright lights shining through shattered windows, and screws that saw themselves - all of this before an unseen force drags the boy from his mother's arms. All is an accomplishment of music (by John Williams, who did the Star Wars score) more appropriate to a grade B horror film.

Among the critics, Melinda Dillon's performance was the highlight. She is the young mother who sees the UFOs while investigating a blackout apparently caused by the aliens. After all this build-up, the movie is a disappointment. The film is an account of man's first meeting with an alien race. The main characters are an Indiana electric company lineman (Richard Dreyfuss), who sees the UFOs while investigating a blackout apparently caused by the aliens, and a young mother (Melinda Dillon) whose four-year-old son is kidnapped by the aliens. The aliens besiege her house with a variety of extrasensory effects - electric appliances turn themselves on and run amok, intensely bright lights shining through shattered windows, and screws that saw themselves - all of this before an unseen force drags the boy from his mother's arms. All is an accomplishment of music (by John Williams, who did the Star Wars score) more appropriate to a grade B horror film.

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