

trial must be compared to the cost of medical care rather than to the cost of doing other kinds of research. Each day a patient spends in a coronary care unit, he says, costs about \$1000. And there

are about 1 million heart attacks each year in the United States. Many of these heart attack victims die before they ever reach the hospital, but Chalmers points out that those who die represent a

significant economic loss to the country.

Critics of the prevention trials contend that the trials would undoubtedly be worthwhile if they indeed showed that particular preventive measures were use-

## Briefing

### UFO's Just Will Not Go Away

Federal science officials are now being visited by what many of them regard as a nightmare—an upwelling public interest in Unidentified Flying Objects (UFO's) and requests that the government "do" something about the possibility that they exist. One course of action now being considered is another scientific review similar to the report completed in 1969 for the Air Force by a panel led by the late Edward U. Condon.

The issue arose in July, when the mounting number of inquiries began coming into the White House about UFO's. The White House press office asked Presidential Science Adviser Frank Press whether he could do something about answering this mail. Press's investigation of the matter showed that inquiries from UFO buffs get quite a run around: the White House answers one way, the other federal agencies have their own stock answers, and the Air Force, which has chief responsibility for the issue, says something else. So Press wrote the Administrator of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) asking if that agency would take the lead in answering incoming mail.

It was Press's by-the-by paragraph that kicked off the fuss, when he suggested that it might be time for another study of the issue. He even suggested that a new study panel include well-known scientists such as astronomer Carl Sagan of Cornell, who is something of a media star, but is said not to believe Earth has been visited by UFO's.

It should be no surprise to anyone familiar with science-government matters that NASA officials are not relishing the thought of launching such an inquiry and have sidestepped the request by assigning an official to the job of looking at the need for a study. NASA seems to fear that the reopening of the question of the genuineness of visitors from outer space will legitimize a subject most establishment scientists consider phony and a waste of time.

What makes NASA's damned-if-they-

do and damned-if-they-don't dilemma interesting, and even important, is that there is indeed a resurgence of public feeling about UFO's, perhaps due to the hit movie *Star Wars*. According to its promoters, *Star Wars* has sold more than 400 million tickets (a fact all the more significant because there are only 200 million people in the entire United States). A new film, *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, has just been released, about a Citizen Joe whose belief in extra-terrestrial visitors is eventually proved right—despite NASA, the Air Force, and everyone else. It is likely to also be a box office hit. Surely it will increase the White House UFO mail.

Indeed, there may be evidence that President Carter once was, or now may be, among the 54 percent of the American public that a recent Gallup Poll found believes in UFO's. While Governor of Georgia, Carter filed a report that he had seen a UFO while standing with a group of men at 7:15 p.m. on an October evening outside the Leary, Georgia, Lions Club. The Naval Academy graduate—apparently not aware that the object was probably the planet Venus—described it as being a big as the moon. He wrote "it came close, moved away—came close then moved away... then disappeared."

Moreover, during his presidential campaign, Carter is said to have promised he would release all government information concerning UFO's—a promise which UFO buffs have not let him forget, because of their fervent belief that for many years the government has been covering up its encounters of the third kind.

Truth is as strange as fiction. The Air Force, officials say, indeed classifies some results of its inquiries made after UFO "sightings"—many of which are made near military bases, and by men trained to observe the skies, and a few of which are investigated by Air Force men going up in planes. Press's office says that these facts, together with the conflicting responses the government hands out to UFO buffs who write in, keep alive this belief in a cover-up. Policies like these, officials say, need review and perhaps changing.

In the present climate, then (and who knows when *Close Encounters* will be shown to the First Family), it may become more difficult to avoid another UFO study. Further, it can be argued that scientists in government incur some obligation to respond to the concerns of the public, which, after all, is paying them. On the other hand, it seems clear that federal science officials hope that if push ever comes to shove on the issue of reopening the government's UFO book, the push does not come from them.

### SIPI Sells (Out?) Environment Magazine

*Environment* magazine, which broke the first stories on mercury pollution, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCB's), and the hazard of steam explosions in nuclear reactors, will close down in its present form at the end of December—a victim of the problems small-circulation journals have in finding a suitable, profitable niche.

The Scientists' Institute for Public Information (SIPI), which owns and publishes *Environment*, has agreed to sell it for \$20,000 to Heldref Publications, a Washington firm that publishes technical journals such as the *Journal of Environmental Health* and *Current*. SIPI will aid Heldref in soliciting outside manuscripts; but there will be no more staff-written articles, which tended to be the news-making ones.

The decision to cut the SIPI-*Environment* umbilical cord has exposed some of the strains within SIPI, an old, New York-based organization that recently has been growing and expanding into new projects such as sponsoring seminars on energy or genetic engineering for members of Congress in Washington (*Science*, 9 April 1976, p. 122). The sale has sparked a number of resignations, on the editorial board and board of directors, by those who say that *Environment*, which is published in St. Louis, Missouri, is more important to SIPI than SIPI's current leaders think.

By selling *Environment* outright, SIPI

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Amor ments l stories, 1969, a

hallucination? Can the report of their sighting be trusted? To answer those and other questions we have to take some looks at actual UFO sightings. Out of the thousands that have been reported in recent years, we will focus on those which UFOlogists consider to be the most typical or most significant sightings. Most, or all, of them remain unexplained.

Scientists studying the UFO phenomenon have attempted to classify the thousands of sightings in an effort to better deal with and understand them. Dr. J. Allen Hynek, scientific director of the Center for UFO Studies, has become famous for his system of classifying nearby UFO sightings, calling them "encounters of the first, second, or third kind."

Each kind of encounter will be discussed in detail. A close encounter of the *first* kind is when someone sees a UFO at close range but has no immediate connection with it. An encounter of the *second* kind is when a UFO leaves some physical evidence behind, or acts upon people or our environment. A close encounter of the *third* kind is when someone sees someone or something that is lifelike in or near the UFO.

Some UFO sightings involve all three kinds of encounters, some just one or another. But the vast majority of sightings have been of the first kind, and there have been relatively few cases of the third kind. UFOlogists contend that there may be many more cases of third-kind encounters but people are, as might be expected, reluctant to report them. Anyone claiming to have seen a humanoid step out of a UFO is admittedly putting his reputation for credibility on the line.

Most of the encounters that UFOlogists take most seriously are those in which more than one witness reports. Cases where only one person tells of seeing a UFO or a humanoid are often investigated, but from a scientific standpoint these sightings cannot be regarded as seriously as when two or more people report the same sighting.

UFO skeptics have argued that most of the sightings have been reported by people with no science training. They ask why it is

that men and women of science never report having seen a UFO. The truth is, many scientifically trained people have reported seeing UFOs. But they prefer to report their sightings in scientific journals rather than to the popular news media such as newspapers and television.

Are those who see UFOs "kooks"? Interestingly enough, studies show that most mental patients are not at all interested in UFOs and few have reported seeing them. Most people who have seen UFOs are of average or higher intelligence and have good reputations in their community for being honest and reliable.

UFOlogists contend that there are many valid cases of UFO sightings in addition to those occasionally reported by people who may be considered to be crackpots, fanatics, or cultists of some kind.

During the summer of 1977, while filming *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, the vice-president of Columbia Pictures, John Veitch, visited the set in Mobile, Alabama. As he watched preparations to shoot the scene with the arrival of the mother ship, he heard noises on the back porch of the house used in the filming.

The movie's director, Steven Spielberg, and a number of the cast and crew were on the porch, pointing up into the sky. Veitch looked up and saw some unidentified object with blinking lights, moving swiftly across the sky. It wasn't an airplane or anything anyone had ever seen before. They never did find out what it was. The incident was not officially reported because producers of the movie thought the public would say it was just a publicity stunt. Veitch and others swear it was not a hoax and that they saw a UFO.

For most people who have seen a UFO, the experience is more awesome than frightening. According to Dr. Hynek, "People describe their sightings as the most awe-inspiring thing they've ever seen. They say it's like looking into another world."

The producer of the *Project U.F.O.* television series, retired Air Force Colonel William Coleman, also sighted a UFO and he

To Steven Spielberg,

Jimmy Carter

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

August 25, 1978

To Steven Spielberg:

The President thought that  
you would enjoy receiving  
the enclosed photograph.

*Gretchen Poston*

Gretchen Poston  
Social Secretary to  
the White House

FROM  
THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON, D. C.

Mr. Steven Spielberg  
9125 Alto Cedro  
Beverly Hills, California 90210

AUG 28 1978

*Sent 8/25/78*

To Steven Spielberg,

Jimmy Carter

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

August 25, 1978

To Steven Spielberg:

The President thought that  
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Mr. Steven Spielberg  
9125 Alto Cedro  
Beverly Hills, California 90210

AUG 28 1978

*Let's Spielberg*

# Close Encounters of the Third Kind (1977)

reviewed by  
Dragan Antulov

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CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND  
A Film Review  
Copyright Dragan Antulov 1998

Steven Spielberg is now considered as one of the Hollywood deities, because of the rare capability to deliver both huge commercial hits, like JURASSIC PARK, and "Oscar"-awarded critical triumphs like SCHINDLER'S LIST. However, in the 1970s Spielberg built his reputation by creating works of art that could slip in both categories. One of them is CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND, extremely popular and influential science-fiction spectacle. Unfortunately, it had a bad luck to be released in the same year as STAR WARS. Although both films have a lot in common (ground-breaking special effects, brilliant score by John Williams) their future was different; one became an unstoppable cult phenomenon, and another almost forgotten and stuck forever in its shadow.

When Spielberg began work on that project, he was already established as a bright new Hollywood star due to his previous commercial hit, JAWS. Together with other young directors of his "New Hollywood" generation, like Kauffman, Carpenter, Hill and Millius, he exploited the great creative freedom of 1970s, when even the mainstream producers dared to experiment. Ironically, it was Spielberg himself whose later commercial success would established new unwritten rules of "blockbuster" philosophy. But in the mid 1970s, many things were different; Spielberg was young and eager to use Hollywood resources for his very personal and artistic movie.

Although very personal, Spielberg's screenplay was partly based on the book "UFO Experience" by Dr. J. Allen Hynek and in many ways inspired by the popular urban mythology of extraterrestrial visitors to Earth that began to grow in the world after WW2. Spielberg was not only inspired by the mythology, but his movie also gave the mythology itself a huge boost, unmatched until the contemporary era of X-FILES and the Roswell anniversary. That was partly because he made the movie very realistic using the authentic UFO-related incidents as the element of the plot. The story begins with one of such incidents - team of international scientists come to the Sonora Desert in Mexico to find the U.S. Navy planes of who went missing decades ago during the famous Flight 19. Such events coincide with the UFO incident witnessed by Roy Neary (Richard Dreyfuss), power company worker from Muncie, Indiana, who later becomes obsessed with his experience. Because of his obsession he loses his job, family and sanity, but his loss is nothing compared to the experience of Jillian Guiler (Melinda Dillon), single mother whose son becomes the victim of alien abduction. In the meantime, the scientists decipher the strange signals from outer space and U.S. government, in co-operation with the French, led by Lacombe (Francois Truffaut) begin with the preparation for ultra-secret project. When the news of the poison gas leak in the middle of Wyoming reach Neary, he finally sees some sense in all his visions and begins the perilous journey toward the centre of endangered area. There he is joined by Jillian who shared the similar visions. Two of them must break through military pickets and reach their destination to find whatever is there.

Spielberg here shows great mastery by using the very same techniques of JAWS to make completely different effects. The slow, gradual yet very disciplined series of dramatic incidents - "close encounters" - is set in order to bring the viewer to the great revelation in the finale. But, instead of the fear and horror we had to endure during the JAWS, we are now overwhelmed by the sense of boyish wonder. Throughout the movie the viewer knows that something big, magnificent and wonderful is about to happen, and great magician Spielberg delivers his promise in the end. The last sequence, with its, even in this age, impressive special effects by the great virtuoso Douglas Trumbull, would leave many mouths open.

One of the great virtues of this film is its optimism. Aliens, who almost always get portrayed as the monsters in science-fiction cinema, are here benevolent and harmless creatures and the first contact between them and humanity is a beginning of something wonderful. It is very ironic, when we consider that the two classic SF movies that visually inspired Spielberg actually told quite different story - Howard Hawks' THING and Byron Haskin's WAR OF THE WORLDS presented extraterrestrials as the threat to the mankind. Spielberg's humane approach and faith in the future also lies in great contrast to the pessimistic mood of its era; the only hint of the contemporary gloom is post-Watergate portrayal of government as conspiratorial towards the public. But, even such government is much more harmless compared to the murderous and chain-smoking Men in Black that became the stereotype thanks to X-FILES and its more cynical and disturbing visions.

There lies the main, and probably the only flaw of this great picture - lack of conflict, and consequently, lack of drama. The movie has few excitements or even action scenes (especially the last that may be an interesting homage to Hitchcock's NORTH BY NORTHWEST) but generally, almost everyone - Neary, Jillian, government, aliens - are the good guys. Despite such shortcomings, the actors were good and manage to bring multidimensionality to their simple roles. Richard Dreyfuss is very convincing as a ordinary, yet nice guy, who sinks into insanity only to rediscover himself in a grand finale. Melinda Dillon was, on the other hand, nominated for "Oscar" as a struggling mother, yet she was overshadowed by Teri Garr as Neary's long-suffering wife Ronnie. Apart from visual wonders of this film, Spielberg's semi-official composer John Williams again excels by his beautiful music, this time using the simple melody both as the element of a plot, and as the basis for his score.

The aliens, who are the main subject of this film, were visually very convincing. Too convincing, one of my acquaintances in the UFO-researching circles said. According to him, the depiction of extraterrestrials as grey-skinned little people with big eyes was so accurate, that it managed to freak out powerful government figures interested in suppressing the truth about UFOs. So, they later approached Spielberg and ordered him to make another movie with alien, this time designed to be anything but the real life. The result was E.T., for many years the biggest commercial hit of all times, yet less inspirational for UFO enthusiasts.

Anyway, whether the viewer believes in existence of extraterrestrials or UFOs, CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND remains the great movie, and one of the rare uplifting experiences in modern cinema.

RATING: 9/10 (++++)

Review written on October 12th 1998

Dragan Antulov a.k.a. Drax

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<a href="#">Sweden</a>	<a href="#">24 February 1977</a>
<a href="#">USA</a>	<a href="#">16 November 1977</a>
<a href="#">Finland</a>	<a href="#">3 March 1978</a>
<a href="#">Finland</a>	<a href="#">13 February 1981</a> (special edition)
<a href="#">Sweden</a>	<a href="#">13 March 1981</a> (special edition)
<a href="#">Finland</a>	<a href="#">7 October 1998</a> (video premiere) (collector's edition)

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# Close Encounters of the Third Kind (1977)

reviewed by  
Brian Koller

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Close Encounters of the Third Kind (1977)

Grade: 73

"Stars Wars" and "Close Encounters of the Third Kind" were both released in 1977, and were enormously successful films, both critically and commercially. This began a new era in Hollywood, in which special effects became much more important as a lure to bring customers to the theater.

The plot has aliens visiting the Earth with a fleet of enormous, glowing spaceships. Scientists learn how to communicate with the aliens through musical and mathematical codes. The U.S. Government, of course, launches a massive conspiracy, inventing a deadly nerve gas leak to force citizens away from the site of the alien visits.

Richard Dreyfuss is well cast as an average man who sees the flying saucers one evening, and soon loses his job, his sanity, and his wife (Teri Garr). Melinda Dillon is a mother of a young boy (played by wide-eyed and mute Cary Guffey) who is abducted by the aliens. Dreyfuss and Dillon are compelled to visit Devil's Peak, not knowing why, where they become part of the alien's landing ceremony.

Steven Spielberg wrote and directed "Close Encounters". As with his later film "E.T.", the aliens are benevolent, and the special effects are used to create a mood of childlike wonder. This mood is ultimately manipulative, however, and the jaded viewer may not be especially impressed with hairless, big-eyed, unisex aliens and glowing spaceships. Ethical considerations, such as the rights of aliens to kidnap whomever they wish for close inspection, are not addressed.

Tellingly, "Close Encounters" won the Academy Award for Best Cinematography, but was not nominated for Best Picture or Screenplay. While it is a very good film, it is not outstanding. The story succeeds as a drama, but there is more form than content.

There are two major versions of "Close Encounters", with perhaps fifteen minutes of differing footage. After the film's release and great success, Spielberg reassembled most of the cast and filmed new scenes including the interior of the alien spaceship. Some other scenes in the original version were cut or replaced. I have not seen this latter version.

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# Close Encounters of the Third Kind (1977)

reviewed by  
Walter Frith

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CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND  
A film review by Walter Frith  
Copyright 1997 Walter Frith

By 1977 director Steven Spielberg had already established himself as a world class filmmaker with 'Jaws' in 1975 and his big screen debut in 1974 entitled 'The Sugarland Express'. While the former was obviously the more popular, many of Spielberg's fans also recall an ingenious television movie he did in 1971 entitled 'Duel' which is a cult favourite among many film fanatics, myself included. Born in Cincinnati, Ohio in 1947, Spielberg achieved greatness in the art of filmmaking before he was thirty years old. Undoubtedly the greatest creative mind working in film in the last twenty five years, Spielberg's films invoke debate everytime someone asks "What is his masterpiece?" Is it 'E.T., The Extra-Terrestrial' (1982)? This was a gentle and loving film about the child in all of us and a moving, simplistic fantasy with religious implications done in a most tolerable fashion. Is it 'Schindler's List' (1993)? This harrowing story about the holocaust and one of the most original looking and important film of the twentieth century was the film that earned Spielberg recognition among his peers with seven Academy Awards including Best Picture and Best Director for Spielberg himself. I suspect that if you ask Spielberg what the crowning achievement in his career is, he will vote for this one and rightfully so.

But what about 'Close Encounters of the Third Kind' (1977)? It too is a subject for debate when considering what exactly is Spielberg's masterpiece. Written as well as directed by Spielberg himself, the film was a creative odyssey which was released the same year as the phenomenal 'Star Wars' and the strength of 'Close Encounters' along with most films that year was diminished quite a bit by George Lucas' vision of other worlds aside from our own. Like Stanley Kubrick's '2001: A Space Odyssey' (1968), 'Close Encounters' was a motion picture well ahead of its time. Also like '2001', 'Close Encounters' failed to secure a Best Picture nomination but Spielberg like Kubrick for '2001', respectively, was nominated as Best Director. The creative culture lessons of the 1950's showed beings from another planet as mostly hostile towards Earth with 'War of the Worlds' (1953) and 'Invasion of the Body Snatchers' (1956). These films acted as metaphors for communism as the cold war reached its peak in the 1950's. Even 'The Day the Earth Stood Still' (1951) has a classic presence in motion picture history as it serves as a message for peace among Earthlings with drastic consequences from other worlds if that cannot be attained.

It has been reported that like 'Star Wars' and the recently released twenty fifth anniversary edition of 'The Godfather' (1972) that 'Close Encounters' will get a release sometime later this year for its twentieth anniversary. It was a huge box office success for its time and will undoubtedly do well again as its closest ally (television's 'The X-Files') will serve as an unintentional promoter because its subject matter is obviously a parallel to 'Close Encounters' but the television series takes it one step further by implying government conspiracies and colonies of aliens living among the people of Earth. 'The X-Files' is definitely about having a close encounter with aliens and while there is no direct connection between it and 'Close Encounters', they are distant cousins whether they want to admit it or not.

Richard Dreyfuss stars in 'Close Encounters' as a working man from Indiana who is confronted on a dark road one evening by an alien space ship which causes his vehicle to disrupt in many different ways and as the film develops Dreyfuss becomes obsessed with meaning of his encounter and becomes involved with a single mother (Melinda Dillon) who has lost her little boy to an alien abduction. Throughout the course of the film there is a constant theme of preparation for an alien visit as two men (Bob Balaban and the late Francois Truffaut) supposedly two scientists with government connections, travel to distant places like Mexico and India to follow up with people who have had an alien encounter of some sort. There is the development of language and communication as hand signals and musical riffs are used to make contact with the extra-terrestrials who would surface in the film's hypnotic climax set at Devil's Tower in Wyoming.

With eight Oscar nominations and one win for the searing cinematography by veteran cameraman Vilmos Zsigmond as well as being voted a special award for Sound Effects Editing, 'Close Encounters of the Third Kind' is definitely one of Spielberg's finest films and is one of the most original movies dealing with the concept of determining what exactly this man's masterpiece is. The debate continues.....

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