

OSCAR NOMINATIONS

Richard Dreyfuss in "Close Encounters"



There is nothing this year to compare with "Close Encounters of the Third Kind," a \$22 million extravaganza about aliens from outer space.

It has been nominated for eight Academy Awards, including best director, best music and best special effects. And its star, Richard Dreyfuss — who made his name in that other blockbuster, "Jaws" — is now the darling of Hollywood.

Critics in the United States have dubbed "Close Encounters" as the ultimate cosmic thriller, with special effects even more awe-inspiring than "Star Wars," its predecessor in the current science fiction film boom.

In the first two months of its release an estimated 26 million people in the United States — 10 percent of the population — queued to see it.

Now Australian filmgoers will get their chance to see it. It will be screened in Sydney and Melbourne from March 16 and Brisbane, Adelaide and Perth from April 27.

Richard Dreyfuss plays the hero, Roy Neary, a middle-American power worker caught up in a startling chain of events which convinces him he has had an

which convinces him he has had an encounter with alien life forms.

But even his wife (Teri Garr) thinks he has gone mad when he talks about searing lights from nowhere, a road sign

gyrating, the contents of his truck flying through the air and the needles on his dashboard going haywire.

Neary and several other UFO sighters including an international scientist (French director Francois Truffaut) try to arrange a rendezvous with the aliens.

Dreyfuss — who has just received a Golden Globe Award for his performance in Neil Simon's latest masterpiece, a romantic comedy called "The Goodbye Girl" and has been nominated for an Oscar for the same picture — has not had an easy time adjusting to success.

The 27-year-old star tries to explain the changes and the demands on himself and on those around him. "With success, you become a commodity and you don't have to prove anything to anyone anymore," he said. "You don't have to be good. All you have to do is be there. Then they need your approval, your name — where millions of dollars are concerned. And they'll cut their own throats, lie, say anything for your

throats, lie, say anything for your approval."

Dreyfuss's acting ability has never

Richard Dreyfuss stars as Roy Neary, caught in a startling chain of events.



The "ultimate" in science fiction thrillers, it has taken the US by storm and premieres here this month

FOR UFO SPECTACULAR

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and ROSEMARY LORD



been questioned — especially by himself. "I was so ambitious I didn't even **know** I was ambitious." He laughs at his own gall. "I took it for granted I was going to be a star. I don't mean that in an arrogant way. I believed it so thoroughly, so positively, I never questioned it."

But he admits to being vulnerable. "If you tell me I'm a bad actor I'll get messed up for a moment," he said. "But if you tell me I'm unattractive or overweight

tell me I'm unattractive or overweight (he's a compulsive eater) I'll really get depressed."

Dreyfuss has a reputation for often being difficult, unco-operative and just plain crazy with members of the Press and studio bosses. From the first he has stood out among his associates because of his attitude. "I just didn't try to be anyone except myself," he said.

Born in Brooklyn, New York, he started acting when he was 11 and his first film was "American Graffiti" — the movie that launched so many careers.

It was "Jaws" that finally brought Dreyfuss into the big time. Hollywood whiz-kid Steven Spielberg, 29, directed both movies. He says of "Close Encounters:"

"Basically I feel optimistic about the kinds of beings that might exist in outer

space, so I didn't want people in the movie who were around the base of the operations consumed.

"Also, I wanted to show what life might be like, that it was basically humanoid. Unlike '2001' where the outer space intelligence was energy, I wanted mine to be physical, something we could

time to be physical, something we could relate to."

"Close Encounters" is, according to the film's technical adviser, UFO expert Dr J. Allen Hynek, authentic.

"Some may view it as science fiction," he concedes, "but writer/director Steven Spielberg did his homework. Everything in the movie is based on actual reports. Sunburns and shaking vibrations, precognition, tampering with gravity, all have been reported."

Hynek, a jaunty scientist with a beard, inspired the title by dividing UFO experiences into three groupings: A Close Encounter of the First Kind is sighting at close range; Second Kind, physical evidence, such as scorched earth; Third Kind, when the UFO's occupants are seen and, in some cases, contact made.

An astronomer and astrophysicist he

Moment of truth. In a blinding flash of light a UFO lands on a mountain top in a scene from "Close Encounters."

admits he was at first sceptical about the UFO phenomenon, believing sightings

to be nothing more than swamp gas.

But when he discovered that an average of 100 reports came in each day from all over the world, he began to study descriptions from those who experienced UFOs.

This one is typical: "It was shortly after dark and 10 or 12 men all watched it. It seemed to move toward us, then partially away, then return, then depart. It was bluish . . . then reddish . . . luminous, not solid."

That was the testimony of a fellow named Jimmy Carter when he was governor of the US State of Georgia. He is now the US President.

This sort of disclosure has added interest to the current phenomenon and made "Close Encounters" a financial bonanza for Columbia. In one record-shattering week the film grossed \$17 million and in two months \$70 million.

Richard Dreyfuss says his growing personal fortune is creating an embarrassment for his friends, most of whom he has retained from his school days.

"It creates awkwardness, because it's silly for anyone to pay for anything

when I'm around," he said. "I've got more money than I know what to do with. But my friends say it's a question of honour, of dignity — which I don't share. Because when I was poor I had no qualms about borrowing money."

He lives with his soft-voiced girlfriend, Lucinda Valles, a petite and beautiful actress, rather shy and gentle — a complete contrast to the extrovert Dreyfuss. But one suspects that he, too, has a gentle, romantic side.

"I don't ever see myself as a married man with a large family," he said. "But I am going through the whole relationship thing now. I'm trying to live with the girl I'm in love with. I don't in my heart believe," his voice is almost a whisper, "that it is totally possible to be happy with one person without a lot of lying."

And what does he want for the future? "I want serenity and happiness in my life," Dreyfuss said thoughtfully. "I want to be Emperor," he grinned, then shrugged his shoulders, a little embarrassed. "I don't want nothin' now. I mean I'm getting what I want. I'm doing my life."