

# 'Close Encounters' remake 'better than the first'

From **ROBERT EBERT**

**LOS ANGELES, Sunday.** — A brilliant new movie with an ungainly title is being screened in America: 'The Special Edition of Close Encounters of The Third Kind'.

I call it "new", even though perhaps two-thirds of its footage has been previously seen, because the changes Steven Spielberg has made in his original 1978 film are basic and extensive: what I saw at a private preview in Los Angeles was essentially a new movie-going experience.

Spielberg's changes fall into four categories:

He's provided more motivation for the strange behaviour of the Richard Dreyfuss character — who is compelled by "psychic implanting" to visit the Nevada mountain where the spaceship plans to land,

He's added additional manifestations of UFO intervention in earthly affairs — including an ocean-going freighter de-

posited in the middle of the Gobi Desert,

There's a sensational ending,

and he's added more special effects throughout the film.

Spielberg's decision to revise the original version of 'Close Encounters' is all but unprecedented.

Some directors have remade their earlier films (Hitchcock did British and American versions of 'The Man Who Knew Too Much') and countless directors, of course, have given us sequels.

Spielberg's 'Special Edition' is sort of a 'Close Encounters, Part 1½'. It is also a very, very good film.

It is, in fact, a better film than the first — so much better that it might create a minor scandal in film circles, inspiring the uncharitable question, "Why didn't Spielberg make it this good the first time?"

He has done three things. He has thrown away scenes that didn't

work, put in scenes he shot three years ago but did not use, and shot some entirely new scenes.

The most-spectacular of these is the new ending, which shows us what Dreyfuss sees when he enters the spacecraft.

He sees a sort of extra-terrestrial cathedral, a limitless interior space filled with columns of light, countless sources of brilliance, and the machinery of an unimaginable alien technology.

The new special effects were designed by underground artist R. Cobb, I understand: no credit is given.

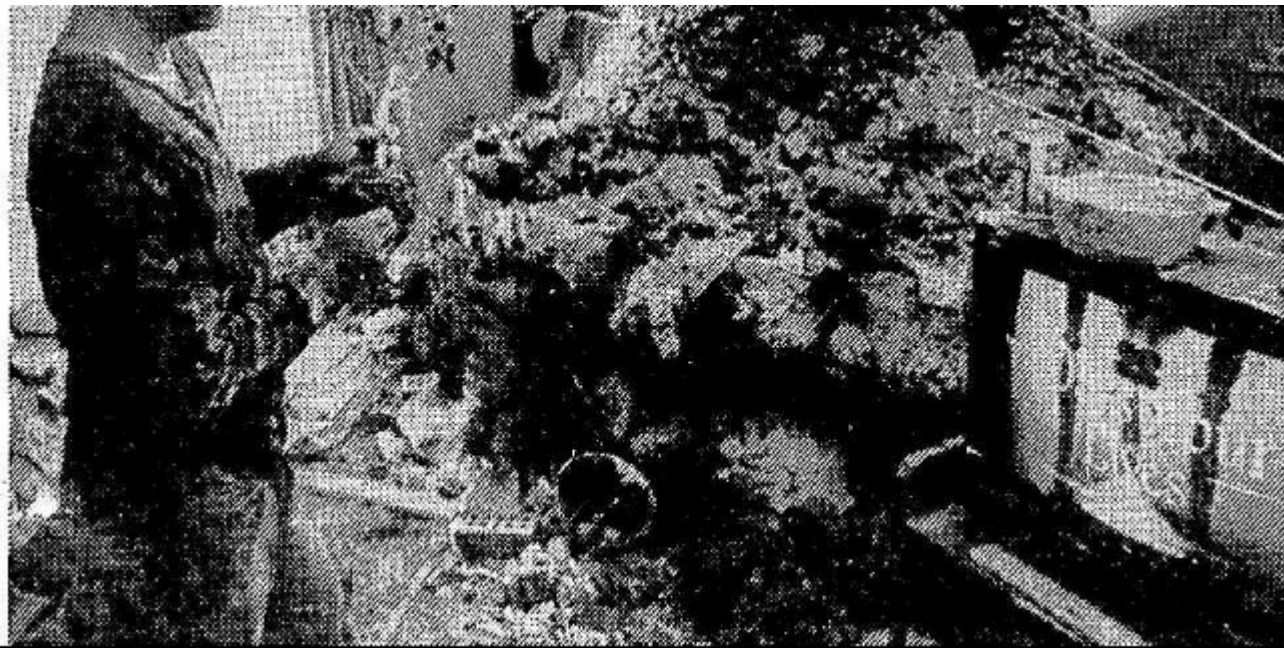
This new conclusion gives the movie the kind of overwhelming final emotional impact it needed.

'Close Encounters', which was already a wonderful film, now transcends itself: it's one of the great movie-going experiences.

If you've seen it before, I'm afraid that now you'll have to see it again.

**The Chicago Sun-Times through  
AAP.**





A scene from 'Close Encounters of the Third Kind', with Richard Dreyfuss building a replica of the mountain-in-his-mind in his living room.