

NEW YORK (Variety) - Steven Spielberg, the director of "ET" and "Close Encounters of the Third Kind," is heading off to outer space again with "Taken," a 20-hour miniseries focusing on alien abductions.

Spielberg will serve as executive producer of the DreamWorks TV project, which will screen on cable's Sci-Fi Channel in the third quarter of 2000. It will be based on reports of UFO landings in New Mexico dating back to 1947. "Steven has always had an interest in this subject," said Barry Diller, chairman and CEO of Sci-Fi's USA Networks parent. He told Daily Variety that Spielberg's treatment starts from the premise "that there are abductions, that they're real and not made up. This will be a big story with multiple characters, protagonists and antagonists, and it'll span lots of decades."

In a statement, Spielberg called himself a fan of the Sci-Fi Channel, and said "no other place" is better suited for a miniseries of the "magnitude" of "Taken." "Taken," which will cost upward of \$40 million, will begin production this summer. The director and cast are still to be named. The Sci-Fi Channel plans to run it for two hours a night over 10 consecutive nights.

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