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Independence Day

A Curmudgeon's Guide to America's Most Overhyped Movie

"As I watched the alien invaders in *Independence Day* zap the White House and pretty much everything else on the face of the earth, I tried my best to suspend disbelief, and succeeded in the wrong way. In a summer of aggressively dumb big movies, I do believe this one is the dumbest.... Despite anything you may have heard or read in the past few days, this movie is an overlong, insultingly clumsy compendium of B-movie clichés, with accordingly cheesy special effects."

-- *Wall Street Journal*, July 5, 1996

The earth is nearly destroyed in this big budget remake of *War of the Worlds*. "Area 51" is the setting for about a third of the movie, but it in no way resembles the real thing. This page provides a synopsis and critical reviews.

Related Topics: [War on the E.T. Highway](#) | [Area 51](#)

Local Documents

- **7/4/96:** [Invasion Of The Pod People!](#) Am I The Only One Left Who Sees The "Independence Day" Conspiracy?," by Glenn Campbell. *Groom Lake Desert Rat*.
 - **7/4/96:** "[40 Things I Learned From ID4 That I Never Knew Before](#)," by Dean Kanipe.
-

Articles

- **7/17/96:** Post, CERT(sm) Advisory CA-96.13, "[ID4 virus, Alien/OS Vulnerability](#)."
 - **7/10/96:** Article, *The Toronto Star*, "[Independence Day no hit with believer in extraterrestrials](#)."
 - **7/9/96:** [CSETI press release](#) criticizing the portrayal of extraterrestrials in the film *Independence Day*.
 - **7/4/96:** Article, [Invasion Of The Pod People!](#) Am I The Only One Left Who Sees The "Independence Day" Conspiracy?," by Glenn Campbell. *Groom Lake Desert Rat*.
 - **6/30/96:** *New York Times*, "[Computers Now, Apocalypse Coming Right Up](#)," by Bruce Newman.
 - **4/19/96:** Newspaper article, *Las Vegas Review Journal*, "[Hollywood invades the E.T. Highway](#): State officials, movie stars and directors help dedicate a stretch of road with an alien-themed title", by Shaun McKinnon. *Report on E.T. Highway Unveiling*.
 - **4/14/96:** USENET post, "[Independence Day](#)" [Exploits UFO Community](#).
 - **3/30/96:** "[Doubletalk on the E.T. Highway](#)." As the Research Center prepares for war on the "E.T. Highway," a Fox publicity manager responds to requests about their movie and its involvement with the state. From [DR#35](#).
 - **3/29/96:** [Announcement of ID4 Web Site](#).
 - [Independence Day Website](#)
 - [ID4's Highway dedication announcement](#).
 - [Email solicitation for linking](#).
 - **3/22/96:** Email, [excerpt from Fox Memo](#) regarding military participation in making of ID4.
 - **3/22/96:** News Article, *Las Vegas Review Journal*, "[Miller, 'aliens' To Converge](#): Stars of a new alien film will be on hand when the governor dedicates the Extraterrestrial Highway." *Report on upcoming unveiling of Alien Highway signs in Rachel*.
 - **3/20/96:** AP Wire, "[Nevada's New "Extraterrestrial Highway" Gets Hollywood-Style Launch With 20th Century Fox's "Independence Day"](#)"; Gov. Miller, Film's Stars To Attend Unveiling And Dedication Ceremony."
-

Reviews

- **7/8/96:** *Newsweek*, "[Earth, You Have a Problem': Kabooooom!](#)." Aliens invade the Land of the Free. By David Ansen.

...Which brings us to "Independence Day." Unless you were sharing a cabin with the Unabomber, you already know what it's about (space aliens invade the planet, Earth fights back). So does it live up to the hype? Well, if I were a 10-year-old boy, I'd probably think it was the coolest movie going. Actually, I saw this movie when I was 10, for it turns out to be a reincarnation of a cheeseball '50s B science-fiction flick, albeit a B movie that cost \$70 million and comes with a PG-13 rating, which means its ideal audience needs Mom's and Dad's consent. (Give it.)...

- **7/5/96:** *Wall Street Journal*, "[ETs Bomb U.S.; Travolta Turns Sweet](#)," by Joe Morgenstern.

As I watched the alien invaders in "**Independence Day**" zap the White House and pretty much everything else on the face of the earth, I tried my best to suspend disbelief, and succeeded in the wrong way. In a

summer of aggressively dumb big movies, I do believe this one is the dumbest....

- **7/3/96:** *Time*, "[Critic's Choice](#)," by Brandon Judell.

"Independence Day" is more than a film. It is an event, one hatched by the savvy 20th Century Fox publicity department and a media in need of such hoopla. So well have these two forces accomplished their tasks, that there was an actual buzz of excitement among the usually very jaded movie-goers attending an advance unspooling of this epic-wannabe. Then, when the opening credits first appeared, there was great applause and even cheers....

- **7/3/96:** *Raleigh News & Observer*, "[After special effects, 'Independence Day' falls flat](#)," by Bill Dupre.

No, we are not alone - there's this horrible, horrible thing out there called "Independence Day." Meanwhile, the search for intelligent life continues....

- **7/2/96:** *New York Times*, "['Independence Day': Space Aliens and Chance to Save Planet](#)," by Janet Maslin.

For months we've been told that "Independence Day," the latter-day "War of the Worlds" in which extraterrestrials set their sights on 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, would be the mother of all this year's summer action movies....

- **7/1/96:** *Washington Post*, "['Independence Day': Fireworks but No Sparklers](#)," by Rita Kempley.

"Independence Day," the eagerly anticipated alien juggernaut, is fueled not by cosmic imagination, but by plain, old-fashioned ballyhoo. An overgrown hybrid of disaster epic, can-do combat adventure and '50s sci-fi movie, this craft has visited our world many times before. And while she's a beaut, the sticker on her titanium bumper reads: "Been There, Done That, Beam Me Up, Scotty."....

- **7/1/96:** *Reuters*, "[Independence Day](#)," by Todd McCarthy.

HOLLYWOOD (Variety) - ``Independence Day" is the biggest B movie ever made, the mother of all doomsday dramas. A spectacularly scaled mix of '50s-style alien invader science fiction, '70s disaster epics and all-season gung-ho military actioners, this airborne leviathan features a bunch of agreeably cardboard characters saving the human race from mass extermination in a way that proves as unavoidably entertaining as it is hopelessly cornball....

ID4 Synopsis

1. **Plot:** Uncredited remake of *War of the Worlds*.

Note: This summary is a "spoiler," since it tells you how the movie comes out and might ruin the suspense. We publish it here because Fox has left the arena of pure entertainment and entered state politics, subjecting it to the normal rules of news reporting.

From original script...

FADE IN. After being detected by radiotelescopes on July 2, a huge alien ship approaches Earth and is at first thought to be benign. It splits into multiple ships which hover above Earth's major cities. Naive UFO buffs gather on rooftops with signs welcoming the aliens, but a cable TV technician sees danger in the signals emanating from the otherwise silent ships. He manages to alert the President, for whom his ex-wife happens to be press secretary. Based on this new information, the President immediately orders evacuation of all the cities. Just then, the ships unleash the *WALL OF DESTRUCTION* - the main character in the film. After many futile attempts to stop it, the *WALL*

decimates most of the world's metropolises. Billions killed. The President and a few other survivors take refuge at Area 51. In a final all-or-nothing battle, the cable guy joins forces with a fighter jock to fly a captured alien scout craft back to its orbiting mothership. The President, piloting a fighter jet, provides air support. A computer virus, designed by the cable guy, is delivered to the mothership. Mothership destroyed. Earth saved. Heroines fall into arms of heroes, as pieces of the mothership rain down in "Fourth of July" fireworks. *FADE OUT. ROLL CREDITS.*

2. **Setting:** Worldwide, but many scenes at Washington D.C. and Area 51.
3. **Time Period:** Present day, culminating on the 4th of July, hence the name.
4. **Cities Destroyed:** *From original script*
 1. New York
 2. Atlanta
 3. Washington
 4. Chicago
 5. Los Angeles
 6. Philadelphia
 7. Edwards Air Force Base
 8. NORAD
 9. London
 10. Delhi
 11. Toyko
 12. Bonn (or Berlin)
 13. ... and many, many more.
5. **The Script:** Written in four weeks by Dean Devlin and Roland Emmerich
6. **Studio:** Twentieth Century Fox.
7. **Selling points:** Area 51, special effects, major cities being destroyed.
8. **Weak points:** script, characters, plot, lack of big-name stars
9. **Director:** Roland Emmerich
10. **Producers**
 - Dean Devlin
 - Roland Emmerich
 - Ute Emmerich
 - William Fay
11. **Actors**
 - Adam Baldwin
 - Margaret Colin
 - Harry Connick Jr. F-18 Fighter Pilot
 - James Duval
 - Harvey Fierstein
 - Vivica Fox
 - Jeff Goldblum David Levinson
 - Judd Hirsch
 - Robert Loggia
 - Mary McDonnell
 - Matthew Perry
 - Bill Pullman President Thomas Whitmore

- Randy Quaid
- Will Smith Steve Hill
- Brent Spiner Scientist

12. Filming Locations

- Los Angeles
- Washington
- Wendover, Utah

13. **ET HWY/ID4 Hotline:** (310) 369-4217

14. WWW

- [ID4](#)
 - **3/29/96:** [Announcement of ID4 Web Site.](#)
- [Internet Movie Database](#)
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General Links

- ["Independence Day" Blows You Away](#) - Review of the movie "Independence Day"; some photos from film - Supportive - By Colin Campbell - Published: 9/21/96 - Source: ["What Up? -- The Colin Campbell Review"](#) (Web Site) <2/20/97 #1>
- [Message from an ID4 Supporter](#)+ - "I DONT THINK U COULD FIND NORMAL PEOPLE WHO DIDNT LIKE THE MOVIE" (1 para) - Message - Supportive <8/7/97 #2>

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Reader Comments

Regarding "Independence Day" - Latest First

Air Force jet? Where do people get this idea?

Even if I had not payed attention to people calling Will Smith's character, "Marine", that he wore a Marine uniform, and that he was stationed at MCAS El Toro, the fact that he was flying an F/A-18 Hornet was quite a large CLUE that he in fact was a Marine...not Air Force. The attacks were coordinated by the USAF. Besides the flight scenes themselves, what was laughable was that El Toro hosted a T-38, and F-16s, which ARE AF aircraft. The movie is fiction, just for entertainment. Enjoy it for that aspect.

-- muskrat (muskrat@acadiacom.net) 5/3/98 (#44)

Gimme a break...

I liked the movie. Sure it was unbelievable. I don't go to the movies for believable, I go to be entertained. The furor this movie has produced is what is really unbelievable. That you people would dedicate a website to denouncing this piece of entertaining fluff is remarkable, and probably says something about how starved for entertainment we all are.

-- Steve Winkler 3/8/98 (#43)

ID4 GOOD MOVIE BUT SOMEWHAT INACCURATE!@!!!!!!@#\$\$%^&**(;&\$@

ID4 was a good movie!!!but we all know that Hollywood can be extremely inaccurate sometimes!!!!so how many of you out there know that a f-18 fighter plane is not an air force jet, but a U.S. NAVY JET??? I think that we all know that hollywood can do anything it wants to (just like the

damn police)so you all get a life and quit complaining about things you know that are wrong!!!!

-- coolernerdly 9/18/97 (#42)

My Movie

Independence Day was a horrible movie. I regret ever agreeing to be in it. How could anyone believe we would be attacked by aliens? A movie about some old guy cloning dinosaurs would be fantastic. That might actually happen.

-- Jeff Goldblum (JGoldblum@ian.com) 8/2/97 (#41)

- This comment was posted from aol.com.

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PO Box 81166, Las Vegas, NV 89180 Glenn Campbell, Webmaster & Moderator

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