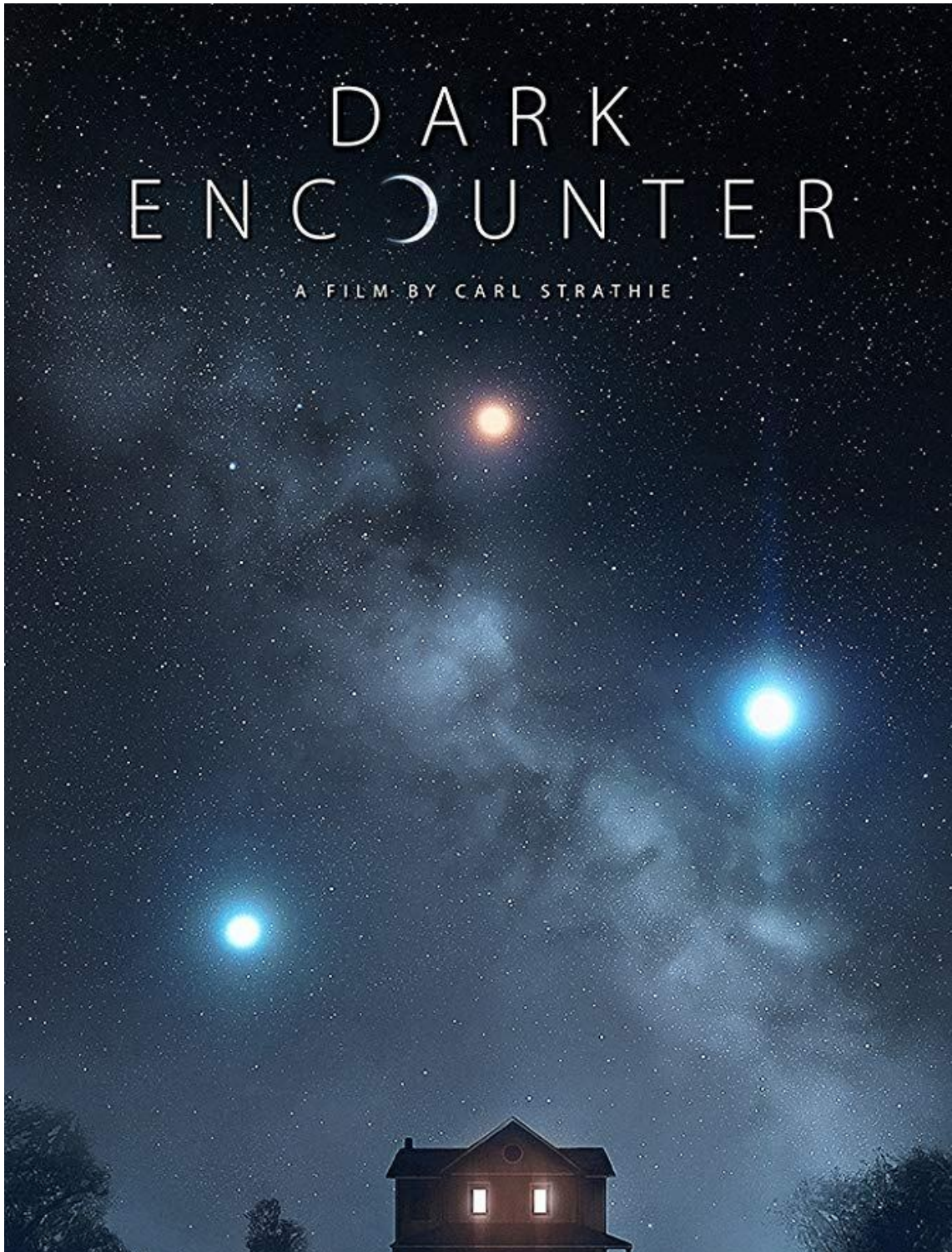


# FrightFest Review: DARK ENCOUNTER - Nightmarish Conjurings

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## FrightFest Review: DARK ENCOUNTER





Alien abduction movies have gone into hiding a little bit recently. Or at least I personally can't recall the last truly good one I watched. I was hoping this year's Frightfest movie **DARK ENCOUNTER** might change things.

This is actually much more than an alien encounter/abduction movie though. It's an expertly crafted scripted about a girl who, out of nowhere, goes missing. One year later, her parents and other family members, who are clearly still having difficulties with her disappearance, gather together for a memorial service. But when someone or something alien-like visits them all, they soon believe that these otherworldly beings must have something to do with it all.

Like many great horror movies new and old, **DARK ENCOUNTER**'s story first centers around family drama. Movies like [Hereditary](#) and the show *The Haunting Of Hill House* have put family matters at the forefront of the script. In **DARK ENCOUNTER** we don't just see the parents struggling with grief but also aunts and uncles and almost a whole close knit town. There's a missing child and no-one is quite sure how to deal with it.

Some of the performances are fantastic. Both [Laura Fraser](#) and [Mel Raido](#) as the parents are both excellent. You desperately feel their pain and the strain it is putting on them. Uncle Kenneth ([Grant Masters](#)) is another interesting character who is doing his best to help everyone as deputy sheriff of the town but in reality is hurt too. His wife, played by the always brilliant [Alice Lowe](#) in a more low key performance, also wants to desperately help everyone.

It's no spoiler to say there are aliens in **DARK ENCOUNTER**. This isn't a big budget movie, so the 'look' of the aliens is kept simple but things still look impressive. They have a more aura and energy-centred look but are still fairly typical of what to expect. Visually the rest of the movie looks great. Set in 1980's Pennsylvania while shot in the U.K. but you really couldn't tell. And the accents from the mainly British cast are the same. The shots in the woodland are the most impressive and with light used effectively they become a perfect backdrop to the alien encounters. In fact light and music are used to great effect in **DARK ENCOUNTER**. The atmospheric, but very sci-fi, score is perfect and the blinding lights that the extraterrestrial beings produce is used excellently.

**DARK ENCOUNTER** is almost a film of two halves. The first half with that family drama style, at times quite *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*-like and then the second half stretches the story a bit more and we discover why the aliens are here. To say anymore would obviously give things away but the story is peeled away perfectly minute by minute. Concluding with a moment when the whole audience realizes what is happening and you feel your heart drop. It's an astonishing few seconds that leads to a somewhat happy conclusion but its nonetheless highly emotional.

Beginning like a heavily Spielberg-influenced episode of *The X-Files*, **DARK ENCOUNTER** soon becomes something very much of its own. The movie looks so much bigger than its low budget would suggest and it has the 'honour' of being the only movie at Frightfest to bring me to tears. It's a special movie that I hope gets seen by a wide audience and will kick start director [Carl Strathie](#)'s career, who will surely go on to much bigger things. Heart-breaking and brilliant, sci-fi doesn't get any better than this.

### [Alain Elliott](#)

Alain is a freelance writer and a serial bigamist of hobbies. Alongside football (or 'soccer' for you American types), all things Nintendo, loud (and occasionally quiet) music, great books on every subject and Christmas, he mostly appreciates all things weird and horrific. From reading the strangest of creepy books to watching the goriest spectacles that TV and film have to offer, and everything in between. He will tell you why there's something to love in all of it.

## About Post Author

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