

E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial: 40th Anniversary [C1]

Si compiono quarant'anni dall'uscita nei cinema di questa storia di amicizia che segnò una generazione intera. In un momento nel quale l'individualismo e la competitività erano di moda, il classico di fantascienza di Spielberg fu un grande evento globale grazie al suo messaggio ottimista e solidale.



From its [release](#) in 1982, sci-fi movie E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial had a huge impact on the world of cinema. Directed by Steven Spielberg, compared to his previous [blockbusters Jaws](#) (1975), [Close Encounters of the Third Kind](#) (1977) and [Raiders](#) of the Lost Ark (1981), E.T. was a very [down-to-earth](#) film. Set in a California suburb, it was protagonised by children, and unlike other movies of the time, spoke directly to its young audience, treating them with a respect usually reserved for adults.

THE STRANGER

E.T. tells the story of ten-year-old Elliott (played by Henry Thomas) and his [siblings](#), younger sister Gertie (Drew Barrymore) and older brother Michael (Robert MacNaughton) who live with their recently-divorced single mother.

Elliot struggles with the absence of his father and feels very lonely. One day, Elliot hears a noise in the [backyard](#). He goes out to investigate and encounters a bizarre creature. The alien, who he later names E.T., is an intergalactic botanist who is [stranded](#) on Earth when his colleagues are forced to escape in their [spacecraft](#).

DEFENSIVE TIMES

Spielberg said that while the idea for the movie came to him in a flash, the political context at the time was influential. In the 1980s, US president Ronald Reagan reduced government [spending](#) on social and space programs and increased military [expenditure](#) instead. As with previous hit movie [Close Encounters of the Third Kind](#), Spielberg wanted to re-inspire [awe](#) in the universe, and to make alien life seem [approachable](#).

CHANGE OF HEART

Unusually, E.T. was [shot](#) in chronological order to encourage the young cast to give convincing performances. The camera was placed at their height allowing them [to ad-lib](#) many of the most memorable lines. While ambitious in [scope](#) — as reflected in John Williams' inspirational [score](#) — the personal nature of the movie had a profound effect on Spielberg himself. In his mid-thirties at the time, he had decided that having a family would be incompatible with his career, but while making E.T., he [changed his mind](#).

HELLO FUTURE

E.T. the character is a technologically-[savvy](#) vegetarian, who can [heal](#) and bring dying plants back to life. He shares emotional characteristics with adult human beings but also has a [childlike](#) curiosity and an openness to learn, create and communicate. E.T. is old-fashioned in his strictly-defined male gender, with its certain characteristics, such as [dressing up in drag](#) for comedy effect. [Otherwise, though](#), he does seem very modern! The physical creation of E.T. was the work of Italian artist Carlo Rambaldi, who won an Academy Award for best visual effects for his animatronics. Rambaldi, who

also created the creature from the movie Alien, [envisaged](#) something that did not look like someone [in a costume](#).

OUT OF NOWHERE

The second [highest-grossing](#) Spielberg movie after Jurassic Park, E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial continues [to move](#) people of all ages and [backgrounds](#). Though a sequel was never made, the 1982 film has been re-[released](#) a number of times. In an interview given for the film's 40th anniversary, Spielberg [recalled](#) how the idea for E.T. came to him out of nowhere. **Steven Spielberg (American accent):** I was in Tunisia making [Raiders](#) of the Lost Ark and we were setting up a [shot](#), and I was picking up fossils in the desert, which used to be the bottom of the ocean millions of years ago. And I thought [of] the end of Close Encounters, when Richard Dreyfuss goes up into the [mothership](#) and the little alien comes down and does the hand signs to François Truffaut... and [it just hit me](#). I thought, "What if the alien had stayed behind on Earth? What if he did a kind of foreign exchange, Dreyfus goes away and the alien stays?" And then suddenly this whole story hit me like [a ton of bricks](#).

HUMAN ENCOUNTERS

In 1980, Spielberg and screenwriter Melissa Mathison had attempted to write a screenplay based on an unrealised science fiction project called Night Skies. Mathison was initially [reluctant](#) to get involved, says Spielberg, but her screenplay, in which he also collaborated, earned her an Oscar nomination. **Steven Spielberg:** It was really a story about my mom and dad when they got divorced, and how I felt as a kid wanting a friend like that [to fill the void](#) in my life, and all these things came [pouring in](#). Harrison Ford's wife Melissa Mathison was on the set, and I just wanted to get this thing written. And I said, "Hey, Melissa, you want to write this?" [but] she said, "No." And then Harrison talked her into it and then she said 'yes' [eventually](#), and she did a tremendously wonderful screenplay.

A RESCUE MOVIE

Some of the most iconic images in cinema history originated in E.T.. A sequence involving flying bicycles was later adopted as the logo for Spielberg's production company, Amblin Entertainment. While E.T. [defies any one genre](#), says Spielberg, he sees it as a rescue movie.

Steven Spielberg: I like the idea that they're like children. It's easy for kids [to relate](#) to. E.T. came into Elliott's life and after they start to [bond](#) with each other they're inseparable. Both have needs: Elliott has a need that E.T. can [fulfill](#) and E.T. has a need that Elliot can help him with, to get home. And Elliott also needs to 'get home'... Elliot doesn't have a father, his father has divorced his mother and is off in Mexico. And he's a lost child, he's going to fall off the face of the earth if he's not rescued. I always thought E.T. was a movie about a double rescue: E.T. saves Elliot, Elliot saves E.T.

GAME OVER

Not everything associated with E.T. was a success: the E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial video game is often cited as one of the worst of all time. Renowned game designer Howard Scott Warshaw was hired to create the game for the Atari 2600 console, but negotiations over game rights took so long that he was given just five weeks to develop it in time for the 1982 Christmas season. The resultant game had low-quality graphics and a confusing gameplay. It was significantly criticised, and overproduction and [returns](#) nearly [bankrupted](#) the company. A large-scale recession in the video game industry followed as people abandoned consoles in favour of personal computers. Reports from 1983 stated that unsold [cartridges](#) of the game were secretly [buried](#) in a [landfill](#) in Alamogordo, New Mexico, and covered with a [layer](#) of [concrete](#).

Glossary

- **dressing up in drag** = travestirsi
- **buried** = sotterrare
- **layer** = strato
- **siblings** = fratelli
- **to ad-lib** = improvvisare
- **savvy** = abile
- **score** = colonna sonora
- **Otherwise, though** = d'altra parte, invece
- **defies any one genre** = non appartiene a un unico genere
- **bankrupted** = in bancarotta, fallire
- **backyard** = giardino sul retro
- **stranded** = intrappolato
- **scope** = copertura
- **backgrounds** = origini
- **a ton of bricks** = una tonnellata di mattoni
- **reluctant** = riluttante
- **eventually** = infine, finalmente
- **bond** = stringere un rapporto
- **down-to-earth** = con i piedi per terra
- **shot** = filmare
- **childlike** = infantile
- **concrete** = cemento
- **it just hit me** = mi venne l'idea
- **to relate** = identificarsi
- **fulfill** = soddisfare
- **cartridges** = cartucce
- **awe** = fascino
- **highest-grossing** = di maggior incasso
- **mothership** = nave ammiraglia
- **landfill** = discarica
- **Jaws** = lo squalo (lett. mandibole)
- **to fill the void** = riempire il vuoto
- **pouring in** = abbondanza

- **approachable** = accessibile
- **heal** = curare
- **envisaged** = concepire
- **Raiders** = saccheggiatori
- **spacecraft** = astronave
- **spending** = spesa
- **expenditure** = costi
- **changed his mind** = cambiare opinione
- **in a costume** = travestito
- **recalled** = ricordare
- **setting up a shot** = preparare una scena
- **release** = prima
- **blockbusters** = successo commerciale
- **Close Encounters of the Third Kind** = Incontri ravvicinati del terzo tipo
- **returns** = restituzioni
- **to move** = emozionare