



Karen Allen and Jeff Bridges star in "Starman," director John Carpenter's film about a friendly alien who accepts the Voyager II Space Probe's invitation to visit earth. The film, rated PG, is at neighborhood theaters.

## Carpenter's 'Starman' brings out the best in us

"Starman" has been dismissed somewhat offhandedly as "E.T." for adults. That is a mistaken interpretation of director John Carpenter's very well-made and entertaining film.

When the Starman (Jeff Bridges) approaches earth, having learned earth languages from the U.N. Secretary-General's welcome broadcast to extra-terrestrials from the Voyager II Space Probe, he is promptly shot down by the accurate but xenophobic rocketry of the U.S. Air Force and a shadowy government bureau for extra-terrestrial contact.

THE ALIEN'S craft crashes near the isolated Wisconsin home of recently widowed Jenny Hayden (Karen Allen) and the alien clones himself to look like her dead husband. This provides quite a shock to the widow Hayden.

The alien has three days to rendezvous with his mother ship at Meteor Crater in Arizona. Much against her will, Jenny drives him to Arizona. They are pursued by the hordes of officialdom, led by government agent George Fox — actor Richard Jaeckel at his bureaucratic best.

THE REAL charm of "Starman" is not the plot line but the way in which the story is told and the sprightly and whimsical ways in which Jenny and the alien interact during their 2,000-mile odyssey.

Jenny's initial shock and fear turn to love and concern as this alien being who resembles her dead husband learns to interact with humans and as he expresses the best of human attributes: love and concern for one's fellow creatures.

Jenny Hayden and the alien Starman are warm, caring individuals whose relationship blossoms under stress.

The realistic understatement of their difficult journey and Jenny's shock in coming to grips with such an unusual situation project more natural human characters than we usually see on



Karen Allen is kidnapped by the alien, Jeff Bridges (left), and forced to drive him to Arizona's Meteor Crater. Along their 2,000-mile odyssey, however, they fall in love in "Starman."



the movies  
**Dan Greenberg**

screen, particularly in science fiction.

UNLIKE "DUNE" and "2010," "Starman" wisely confines most of its visual displays to lighting shifts. It is not at all remarkable that contemporary audiences recognize a pulsating bluish-white light as indicative of something supernatural.

Such a visual technique is particularly effective when the actors project a realistic sense of character. In "Starman" Jeff Bridges does it with a vaguely middle-European accent and a halting delivery, as if he were in shock.

This is quite appropriate under the circumstances, with his having crash-landed and assumed a new body.

"STARMAN" also features some intelligent and nicely understated discussion of the human role in the vastness of the universe. One government agent is more interested in learning about extra-terrestrials than in capturing them.

He effectively conveys his enthusiasm for investigating the universe's potential, as opposed to the others' mania to control.

"Starman," "Dune" and "2010," among the leading current sci-fi films, are motivated by the messianic message of the season. All three present the Christian message of peace on earth through the good offices of a super being.

In "Dune" and "Starman" the messiah is preordained in a supernatural situation but born of woman. Particularly in "Starman" the parallels to Christ's story are very close. In both cases, orthodox Christianity may be offended but, in "Starman," there is a redeeming feature.

THE WARMTH, humor and realism of "Starman" provide pleasant entertainment and a positive message about the best characteristics of humanity and other creatures as well. "Starman" should brighten your holiday season. Best wishes for a healthy, peaceful New Year!

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