

Major SPOILERS ahead for both 2009's *The Fourth Kind* and 2026's *Disclosure Day*...

Two movies about aliens, alien abductions and who knows what and why, couldn't be more different in plot, tone, **and** whether or not we are talking science fact or fiction or existential horror.

Disclosure Day (2026)

Writers: David Koepp and Steven Spielberg

Directed by: Steven Spielberg

Stars: Emily Blunt, Josh O'Connor and Colin Firth

IMDB Rating: 6.4/10 Stars

Rotten Tomatoes Score: 80%

Runtime: 2 hours, 25 minutes



This movie pissed me off from pretty much the beginning. I felt like we were **dropped** right into the halfway point of where this all starts. I also feel by the time we get to the end that is when the movie actually starts to get interesting and then it just cuts to black, much like the last shot of the series finale of *The Sopranos*.

This movie was basically two hours of bad guys chasing good guys. Bad guys catch good guys, good guys escape, repeat. Over aliens who somehow have almost no agency in their own fucking alien movie. The main characters get caught, escape, solve 10% of the puzzle, repeat again. Spielberg throws the most basic, surface level information about Roswell, Greys, UFOs, abductions, CIA involvement, telepathy and empathy into a blender, but never actually explores any of it. Then we finally get to the alien, it speaks, we're told to **"Listen"**... Hard cut to black, credits roll. Nothing meaningful happened. The movie literally ends where the interesting movie that could have been *Disclosure Day* should have started.

There are also so many smaller ideas floating around *Disclosure Day* that could have been interesting if the movie had enough balls to actually finish a fucking thought. The religious angle is a perfect example. Jane talks to her nun friend about whether extraterrestrial life conflicts with Genesis, and the response is basically that scripture describes humanity as **God's creation 'on Earth'** not necessarily **"God's only creation"**

throughout the entire universe. That part had potential to be actually interesting. There is an entire philosophical, perhaps existential, rabbit hole sitting right there involving religion, creation, extraterrestrial intelligence and what disclosure would do to thousands of years of human theology. The movie looks down the hole *real-quick-like* and walks away.

The same thing happens with the crop circles. Alien technology gets used and suddenly a crop circle starts forming around Daniel. Okay... so are we suggesting crop circles throughout history were side effects of the alien technology? Were aliens making them? Humans using recovered technology? Who the fuck knows? The movie is like, “*moving on now.*” Then we get this whole “*diving*” concept where Noah uses alien technology to enter someone's mind. That's an enormous revelation by itself.

Apparently, the government possesses alien technology capable of directly accessing a human consciousness, and the movie treats it like another gadget somebody found in the alien junk drawer.

Margaret is even stranger.

She can read people's thoughts, manipulate perception and apparently appear to people as deceased loved ones. Daniel understands the alien language. Eventually we learn these abilities connect back to a childhood encounter where both were taken aboard a craft, literally kidnapped by aliens. Margaret remembers really bad CGI-looking animals leading her through what she called “*warm snow*” toward what initially appears to be the classic welcoming *Hansel and Gretel* house before revealing itself as a cold metallic UFO. That's a legit creepy image when you stop and think about what it implies: a nonhuman entity understood a child's psychology well enough to manufacture a projection of a comforting image and lure her somewhere voluntarily.

That raises far more disturbing questions about these supposedly benevolent aliens than the movie seems interested in asking.

Even the alien experimentation footage that is part of the disclosure creates a contradiction worth exploring. Humans apparently captured and experimented on an extraterrestrial, which horrifies Daniel and Jane. Ok, that is fair enough. But I'd argue humans have supposedly been abducted against their will and manipulated by these beings as children. Much of alien-abduction stories revolve around surreal horror. Not a gentle, bedtime story appearing more fantasy than horror. So, what exactly is the moral relationship here? Are both species experimenting on each other? Did one side start this? Are the aliens rescuers, scientists, observers, kidnappers, teachers, or something completely outside those human categorical expectations?

The movie wants the emotional response without doing the intellectual work necessary to justify it.

That is the recurring problem. *Disclosure Day* constantly brushes against a better-quality story and movie. Religion and extraterrestrial life. Consciousness as something technologically accessible. Childhood memories manipulated by nonhuman intelligence. Governments possessing technology capable of entering minds. The morality of humans and aliens experimenting on one another. Every time something interesting appears, I think, “**Okay, NOW we're getting somewhere.**” Nope. Here comes another fucking black SUV-chase-sequence.

That's ultimately what bothered me most. It isn't that *Disclosure* asks all these profound questions about extraterrestrial life and refuses to answer them. **It never develops the alien plot enough for anyone to even ask any fucking meaningful questions.** Who are they? Why are they here? What do they want? Why these people? What arrangements do they have with humanity already? We spend so much time chasing poorly written characters through repetitive action sequences that the actual alien story is basically background noise pretending to be a message about humans displaying more empathy. That message suffers from the same problem. Instead of exploring it, the movie just keeps pointing at empathy and screaming, "LOOK! EMPATHY!" until someone cries. Mainly a really bad attempt at acting like a CNN news anchor that actually cares about anything real.

Hello... CNN... Cares Not Naturally...

And that 63.7 gigabyte file transfer towards the end of the film nearly killed me with absurdity. I guess we are all idiots for knowing how computer architecture works. Dude plugs what looks like a RAM chip from a fucking 1991 Packard Bell into a local TV station computer and transfers 63.7 gigabytes in about five seconds. Sure. Why not? That's roughly 12-plus gigabytes per second, sustained end-to-end throughput, through incompatible hardware and software protocols. Apparently, Channel 6 has a classified PCIe/NVMe data-center array hidden underneath the weather desk. Then he violently yanks the chip out and jams another one in. Fuck safely removing hardware or operating system crashes. Imagine pulling a PCIe USB card out of the motherboard while the computer is still on and Windows, or even Linux, is running, and it doesn't just go to blue screen of death. Spielberg's newsroom apparently has better storage infrastructure than half the world's data centers. This movie doesn't even discuss or bring up computer technology or AI in all of this mess.

Spielberg has not made a film that felt like an epic Spielberg-event since 2005's *War of the Worlds*, and while there are things wrong with that movie, it still felt like it was a big, grand, Spielberg-movie. Everything since 2005 seems just blah. No soul. No creativity. Just blah. The guy can still film a movie that looks like a movie, but tell a cohesive story that makes us look inward? That is nonexistent in the back half of his career. I don't know if I can trust Spielberg with a movie of that caliber again. The juice just isn't there anymore and hasn't been in over 20 years. While he has made some critically acclaimed films since 2005, he has also taken some chances that didn't exactly pan out as successful projects. I am just saying I haven't seen a Spielberg-led film that made me look inward and say, "Whoa, this is the best of Spielberg." No, those days are gone now. Let's just appreciate what we did get and let that be legendary.

The Fourth Kind (2009)

Writers: Olatunde Osunsanmi and Terry Lee Robbins

Directed by: Olatunde Osunsanmi

Stars: Milla Jovovich, Elias Koteas and Will Patton

IMDB Rating: 5.9/10 Stars

Rotten Tomatoes Score: 18%

Runtime: 1 hour, 38 minutes



The Fourth Kind has almost the exact opposite problem as *Disclosure Day*. This movie gives us almost nothing about the aliens, but somehow that nothing gives us more to think about than two-and-a-half hours of Spielberg throwing every UFO cliché he could find into a hunk of crap. We never see the aliens of *The Fourth Kind*. We don't know where they come from. We don't know what they want. We don't know why certain people are selected. We don't even know if we're dealing with one entity, a group of entities, some kind of collective intelligence, or a crew where the thing communicating with humans is in charge of whatever else is running around doing the dirty work.

We do know enough about their behavior to understand that something is seriously wrong with this scenario over another involving aliens and taking people. People are being taken repeatedly, sometimes apparently since childhood. They are returned with their memories altered or suppressed, but whatever happens to them leaves behind extreme and severe psychological trauma. The conscious mind might remember that creepy owl that slightly resembles what we believe a Grey alien looks like sitting outside the bedroom window, but the body remembers something completely different and much more horrific. The moment these people start digging underneath that memory, their anxiety goes from a mild 7 or 8 to 100. They don't remember what happened, but some primitive part of the mind absolutely does. The PTSD of the body does. That owl isn't the memory. It's the wallpaper “it” or “they” put over the hole in the wall.

And that owl is probably the most brilliant thing in the entire movie.

That idea came way before *The Fourth Kind*, but this movie owns that fucking owl the same way *Poltergeist* owns the clown doll and that creepy-ass tree outside Robbie's bedroom. An owl isn't inherently scary. However, “that” owl absolutely is. It becomes scary because eventually we understand there **was never an owl**. Something else was standing there. We have descriptions and fragments suggesting something Grey-like. We never receive objective confirmation of what “it” actually is. Something that the human mind either couldn't process or wasn't permitted to remember. And when the fuzzy picture becomes a little clearer the person panics with a fear response that can only be generated by an extreme reaction to **SHEER TERROR**. Even better, the movie never gives us the replacement image. It doesn't go **OWL** to **GREY**. It goes **OWL** to **NOT AN OWL** to **WHAT THE FUCK WAS ACTUALLY THERE?** Something so terrifying that the single moment when the person realizes what the owl actually is results in a visceral violent physical outburst fueled by existential horror.

That slow to fast transition and restraint work very well here.

We get fragments. A distorted shadow somewhere inside all that digital noise. Maybe an arm or hand. Something moving while the camera completely shifts itself from electromagnetic interference. Witnesses describe tall, thin beings with large heads and enormous black eyes, but the movie never gives us the obligatory CGI alien standing under a perfectly lit fluorescent light so we can pause the Blu-ray and examine its fucking nostrils. The characters see them. We don't. Every time the camera should become an objective witness, something destroys the agency of the possible image.

Normally that would piss me off. Here, it works because the entire horror mechanism revolves around **not being able to see or remember what happened to you**. But seeing and knowing what the idea does to these people is what bothers me more than when these people are actually taken. Experimentation? Fine. Alien-abduction 101. Aliens find humans they consider interesting, grab them, poke around inside them, collect whatever information or samples they want and dump them back into bed before breakfast. But the deeper the movie goes, the less these **“things”** behave like emotionally neutral scientists.

Scott becomes paralyzed. Abbey eventually comes back physically broken enough to require a wheelchair for life. During the final event, Abbey, Campos and Awolowa are all taken, and all three exhibit extreme terror surrounding the experience. That creates a logistical question the movie never answers. Abbey makes sense. She's deliberately trying to contact them. But why take Campos and Awolowa? Perhaps they were simply witnesses who needed to be *“processed.”* Wipe their memories and put everybody back where you found them. Except their reactions don't seem to support something that simple in the alien abduction world. Whatever happened during that missing period appears to have been so extreme and terrible for everybody involved. These aren't confused people waking up wondering where the last two hours went. Their bodies and behavior suggest extreme violent trauma. Physically, mentally, emotionally and perhaps even spiritually, in the moment. Abbey gets the worst of it physically, but none of them behave like someone simply pushed the DELETE button on their short-term memory.

So maybe once you're taken, **you're material**. Just biomass for their purposes, whatever they may be. That is where *The Fourth Kind* wanders into much more interesting existential territory than I think the movie itself fully understands. **Humanity does this shit constantly to everything underneath us**. We capture animals. Sedate them. Tag them. Breed them. Separate parents from offspring. Cut them open. Take samples. Perform experiments. Relocate them. Sometimes kill them. Sometimes dump them back into the environment when we're finished. There can be perfectly rational scientific reasons for doing these things, but try explaining that to the deer who is just trying to be a deer. From the deer's perspective, some incomprehensibly powerful beings appeared, immobilized it, dragged it somewhere, violated its body, punched something through its ear and dumped it unconscious in a field. Now imagine the deer is intelligent enough to understand that something happened but completely incapable of understanding **why**. Congratulations. You're now an alien abductee. Say hi to Abbey Tyler's missing daughter.

That alone would be great conceptual horror. Humanity discovers that we're not actually standing at the top of the biological hierarchy. We're cattle with smartphones. Something higher up the food chain has jurisdiction over us because it possesses the technological ability to enforce that jurisdiction. They, the aliens, have better toys, better guns to execute their will upon us. Sounds like socialism to me except no one anywhere voted this to be the way we live. *The Fourth Kind* makes this considerably darker because I don't think these entities are merely indifferent.

They fucking talk back.

What they say could be hubris or just them being egotistically cruel.

Not conversation exactly, but communication. They apparently understand what humans are saying. They respond to resistance. They respond to demands. Prayer seems to provoke a response that almost sounds like annoyance or anger. When humans invoke God, the entity doesn't behave like DATA from *Star Trek*, observing an irrelevant primitive ritual and continuing with whatever procedure it was performing. It engages with the idea. Eventually we get statements about enforcing its will and the absolutely loaded declaration: "**I am God.**"

Now we're somewhere else entirely. But the movie doesn't seem to want to dig too far into it. If humans were merely cattle, the rancher wouldn't care that the cows were mooing. He certainly wouldn't understand the mooing, respond in Cow and explain that their prayers were useless. This thing does. That means it understands enough about human psychology to know what fear is, what resistance is, what prayer represents and what Abbey means when she demands her daughter back. It understands the emotional context of what is happening and continues doing it anyway. That doesn't necessarily prove **evil**. We don't know enough about these beings to apply human morality to them with any confidence. But I think "**nefarious**" is absolutely on the table, and **cruelty** becomes increasingly difficult to dismiss. We do this a lot with our horror and science fiction tropes. We like to insert human morality in it and the characters that are portrayed. At the end of the day, we can never know the intentionality of something like this without experiencing it for ourselves and getting a sense of that intention.

There is an enormous difference between:

Your suffering is irrelevant to me.

and:

I understand your suffering. I understand what you're asking me to stop doing. I understand you're appealing to a higher authority to save you. There is no higher authority here. I am the authority.

That is what makes "**I am God**" so disturbing.

Maybe the entity literally believes it created humanity. The Sumerian connections certainly allow the movie to flirt with that possibility. Maybe it's lying. Maybe humans historically interpreted these beings as gods because sufficiently advanced technology looked like divine magic. Turn water into wine at its most stripped-down interpretation is just a conversation tool. Whether that tool is mechanical or not is beside the point. If I showed up with a bicycle in front of a human who has never seen anything remotely like technology and engineering, they would have no idea what that is or what its purpose was. All they would know is God, with 1 head, 2 arms and 2 legs, on a funky looking body is cruising around at speeds not seen before. Maybe the voice belongs to something completely different from the creatures physically performing the abductions. We don't even know that the thing speaking is the same species Scott describes.

Scott says "**they.**"

The voice says "**I.**"

That's interesting, isn't it?

There could be multiple beings with one spokesperson. A commander and crew. A collective intelligence speaking through one voice. Some higher entity directing subordinate creatures. Or twenty fucking aliens standing around an operating table while their boss handles customer service. The movie gives us absolutely no way to know. And unlike *Disclosure Day*, I'm strangely okay with that for this movie. Because *The Fourth Kind* gives me enough information to formulate the questions myself.

Who are they?

Why are these particular people selected?

Why have some apparently been taken since childhood?

What exactly are they doing to their bodies?

Why erase the memories afterward?

Why does the body still retain the trauma?

Why take Ashley and apparently never return her?

Why communicate at all?

Why respond to prayer?

Why claim divine authority?

And perhaps most importantly:

Do they actually hate us, or are we simply so far beneath them that the distinction between hatred and indifference becomes meaningless?

That's conceptual horror.

Unfortunately, *The Fourth Kind* wrapped all of this inside one of the most dishonest marketing gimmicks imaginable. The movie doesn't just present itself like found footage. It explicitly tells the audience that what we're watching represents real events. Milla Jovovich introduces herself as Milla Jovovich and tells us we're about to watch a dramatization alongside supposedly authentic archival footage. The "**Real**" Abbey Tyler is interviewed. Police recordings are presented as genuine. Nome's actual history of disappearances gets incorporated into the mythology. The entire presentation is designed to convince us that somewhere underneath the Hollywood reconstruction is a documented real-world case. **There isn't.**

The "**Real**" Abbey Tyler is a London actress named Charlotte Milchard. All the found footage was built for the movie. Everything about the movie was either heavily exaggerated, distorted truths, stories of missing people from other states, occurrences that never happened or never happened in Nome, Alaska, or just plain made the fuck up. And that's where I completely understand why people were pissed. It is why I was pissed.

If *The Fourth Kind* had simply been marketed as a fictional pseudo-documentary, I think its reputation would be considerably better today. Instead, Universal and the filmmakers tried so fucking hard to convince everyone that the rabbit was really coming out of the hat that once people discovered the rabbit was stuffed underneath the table the entire trick became the story. They could have played this movie straight in the same fashion Sidney J. Furie's 1982 cult classic *The ENTITY* went and I think it would have resonated with people more as psychological horror over a documentation of an actual alien-abduction case as told by Hollywood.

This strategy received heavy criticism for potentially misleading people and exploiting the idea of real-life trauma for entertainment purposes. There were a lot of people online as well that felt cheated after discovering that the entire film was a work of fiction. An inside joke from producers to movie fans. The reality is people do "disappear" in and around the area of Nome, Alaska. They have a high rate of alcohol abuse among the locals, statistically. As isolated as this location is, it wouldn't be out of the norm to wander off, nothing but the vastness of wilderness and not return. Exposure in the winter, bears in the summer... Man is not dominant here, even with our technology. It is a dangerous place to live. Make no mistake. Now add hallucinational-alcoholism on top of that and I am sure you will find reports of people seeing Santa's sleigh...

With All That Said...

This movie still has some good total freak out moments in it. The aliens here are completely shrouded in Ancient Alien mystery. They are complete unknowns but command so much raw horror. So extremely terrifying, the ones that have seen them with their own eyes go insane if they saw "them" and remembered that they did. The fear of the subconscious and the unknown traumas that might lurk in one's mind. Combined with the dread "they" evoke to everyone that comes into contact with them. To know your eyes have seen something, but the memory cannot pull the image, and still the mere thought of it shows the body still remembers. It has not forgotten that anxiety, that fear, that horror. Go back and watch how the abductees start to act once they know they have seen "them" and they cannot remember but their anxiety immediately rises.

As documentation of an actual alien-abduction case?

Complete fucking failure.

As a horror movie?

I think it's damn effective.

Because seventeen years later people still remember that fucking owl. They remember the hypnosis sessions. They remember the distorted footage. They remember the screaming. They remember the police officer staring upward at something the camera won't allow us to see. They remember Abbey listening to a recording of something happening to her that she cannot consciously remember experiencing. They all remember that voice and how it sounds.

Most importantly, the movie understands something *Disclosure Day* apparently doesn't.

You don't necessarily have to answer **who, what, where, when and why** to create interesting science fiction or really good existential horror. Sometimes the absence of those answers **is the point**. But you have to provide enough evidence, behavior and internal logic that the audience can recognize there is something underneath the mystery worth thinking about.

Disclosure Day gives us ideas and refuses to develop any of them in a meaningful way. *The Fourth Kind* gives us fragments and lets our imagination run wild developing the rest and that is why that movie works in a strictly horror sense. One movie ends and leaves me asking questions because it forgot to finish the story. The other leaves me asking questions because **whatever is standing behind that fucking owl never wanted me to know the answers in the first place.**

You are being watched. You cannot see anything, but you look in the darkest corners of your room to see BLACK and feel there is something there that wants you to be terrified of its presence upon you. You get the distinct feeling this thing, **this entity**, wants to do bad things to you or at the very least make you do bad things to others or yourself. That, to me—**this cold, almost machine-like uncertainty**, this distinct feeling of a harmful force upon you, that unknown feeling of dread caused by something you cannot quantify but that is in your space that is supposed to be yours and safe—is **terrifying**.

Merely laying eyes upon ‘it’ or ‘them’ evokes a violent reaction of hostile fear that normal people cannot even understand, but can be afraid for, with, and at this person, all at the same time.

Review of:
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