

## Coming-of-age sci-fi features shades of E.T.

Written by Film Review by Kam Williams

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### Earth to Echo

Most people know "E.T." revolves around several kids who befriend an alien stranded on Earth and eager to return home before ill-intentioned adults can do him any harm. That coming-of-age classic landed four Academy Awards back in 1983, and was even voted the best sci-fi of all time in a recent survey by Rotten Tomatoes.

But if you're too young to remember Steven Spielberg's heartwarming adventure, or if it's been so long since you saw it that the storyline's a little fuzzy, here I got an homage for you. Much about "Earth to Echo" just screams remake, starting with the picture's vaguely-familiar promotional poster which similarly features a human hand reaching out to touch an extra-terrestrial.

Still, this delightful variation on the theme endeavors to refresh the original by incorporating current cultural staples, ranging from texting shorthand to social media. So, when the protagonists here communicate with each other, they often rely on inscrutable slang apt to befuddle fuddy-duddies unfamiliar with the lexicon employed by today's average adolescent.

At this found-footage flick's point of departure, we find narrator Tuck (Astro) lamenting the impending separation from his BFFs Alex (Teo Halm) and Munch (Reese Hartwig) when their Nevada neighborhood is razed in a week to make way for a turnpike. The plot thickens after all their cell phones inexplicably "barf" simultaneously, and they decide to discern the source of the mysterious malfunction.

Equipped with a camcorder and state-of-the-art spyglasses, the youngsters ride their bikes into the desert in the middle of the night accompanied by a cute rebel (Ella Wahlestedt) with her own reason for running away from home. GPS sends the sleuths to a site in the desert where, lo and behold, they find Echo, a cuddly visitor from another galaxy with pressing issues akin to the aforementioned "E.T."

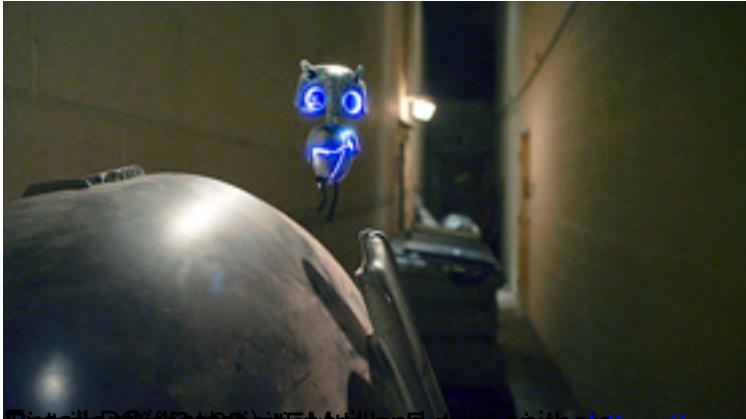
The kids, of course, kick it into high gear on his behalf, keeping just a step ahead of the untrustworthy authorities. Their noble efforts inexorably lead to a satisfying resolution every bit as syrupy as Spielberg's.

An unapologetic retread bordering on plagiarism that nevertheless provides the perfect, popcorn summer escape for the tyke and 'tweener demographics.

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