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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
5 July 2005
Words: 647

A War of the Worlds or Something More? Local author makes splash in US

From the breathless panic of the golden age of radio to the breathtaking special effects of modern Hollywood, when it comes to UFOs and aliens, history proves they tend to be a source of intense fascination and cautious fear.

Gary Bates, Australian author of the widely popular book *Alien Intrusion: UFOs and the Evolution Connection*, credits the infamous 1938 radio broadcast of War of the Worlds with being the watershed event in the alien invasion of popular culture within the minds of the masses. Even without the myriad of sightings, reported abductions, books, movies, and yes, even before the spectacular achievements of televised manned space flights to the moon, people were all too ready to believe there is something more to the universe than just the Earth and mankind.

"Surveys show that the majority of the population believes in extraterrestrial life, and huge percentages also think aliens really could be visiting the earth," Bates shares. "If such a thing were to be proved, it would completely change mankind's view of our place in the universe. In addition, science fiction is the most popular entertainment genre today, which really fuels these beliefs, making it so popular."

In a comprehensive exploration of the phenomenon, Bates discovers how much of our perception and preconceptions are based on the images and information created through movies and the media. The events of Roswell and the revelation of Area 51 spawned a popular belief in government conspiracies, a theme echoed in films like *Independence Day*, *Men in Black*, and television series like *The X Files*. During the Cold War, movies often alluded to fears of foreign governments using alien technology to gain an edge in the arms race or a need for the American government to capture such technology to keep the balance of power.

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The release of Bates's book earlier this year in the US, saw it climb to be an Amazon.com best-seller, and a flood of media interviews ensued. After only 5 months, the book is already in its third printing. "This just goes to show the depth of interest in 'all things alien', whether it be sci-fi movies or NASA probes, and it shows no sign of abating," Bates says.

Mankind's search for the truth continues as imaginations boldly go where some feel only science and supposition can take us. Are aliens really out there? What are they like – and what do they want from us? Are they warm and fuzzy like *Alf* and *E.T.*, or the deadly enemies featured in *Signs* and *War of the Worlds*? Do they look like us, or some super-evolved Darwinian product? After sorting fact from fiction and researching a vast number of sources, Bates feels the answer is not to be found in the distant universe or theories of advanced armadas of aliens, but in something more profound, even sinister.

Bates has uncovered a religious aspect in popular sci-fi and Ufology. "The desire to believe in 'something else out there' is really satisfying a religious need for most. For example, many think that older and more advanced extraterrestrials are going to come and solve all of humanity's problems. The study of UFOs provides an even greater study of human nature and man's condition," Bates noted. "What most people want to know is, do all these sightings and experiences that people are having really involve aliens? I think it is important to lay a foundation to why this is occurring." He shows how the research of the world's most respected UFOlogists into the experiences of those who report alien encounters independently points in the same startling direction.

"Just a one-line answer will not be satisfying," he concludes, "because lots of people have already made their mind up without really looking at the evidence. The truth most certainly is out there, as I revealed in my book, but it is probably not what most people think."