

## Astronaut Movie Review: Cowboys and Aliens

### NASA astronaut Leroy Chiao reviews the Hollywood-slobbering-alien-sci-fi blockbuster.

Wed Aug 10, 2011 03:16 PM ET | content provided by [Leroy Chiao Ph.D., ExcaliburAlmaz](#)

The movie "Cowboys and Aliens," which premiered on July 29, drops other-world travelers and their spacecraft into a classic Western.

Our cowboy hero, Jake Lonergan, played by Daniel Craig, wakes up in the desert, having been through what must have been one hell of a fight. The audience recognizes the signs of a probable abduction scenario, but the victim is bewildered by the strange metallic device on his left arm.

What's worse, the metal cuff is attached Lojack-style -- a confusing case of house arrest. As Jake tries to shake some sense into the situation, he struggles to recall what has happened, who he is, and where his boots might be.

#### PHOTOS: Which Exoplanet Did the "Cowboys and Aliens" Aliens Come From?

This hazy moment, curious anachronism, and sharp pain in his gut quickly take a backseat as Jake faces immediate, new challenges. In the middle of cowboy-on-cowboy conflict, the aliens appear.

Wait. *Aliens*?

Where did those things come from, and seriously, what could they possibly want from these cowboys?

All eventually becomes clear, but as Jake and co travel down that dusty path, they meet lots of huge, fast, strong, ferocious, and goopy aliens. (Why do all aliens slobber so profusely?)

Jake's good-guy persona is juxtaposed against the controlling mean-guy Woodrow Dolarhyde, played by Harrison Ford. A big dose of intrigue is brought in by Olivia Wilde's character. She plays Ella Swenson, a beautiful, capable, yet enigmatic cowgirl with haunting green eyes and a secret.

#### ANALYSIS: In Praise of (Yes, You Heard Me) 'Battle: Los Angeles'

If you're not looking for a serious science fiction flick, then "Cowboys and Aliens" works as a fun film with an out-of-the-box premise. As expected, Daniel Craig and Harrison Ford turn in solid performances and Olivia Wilde was perfectly cast as the girl with hidden knowledge.

What is really cool is the alien technology. The jet-powered flying vehicles resemble large robotic flying insects. They are about the size of a light airplane, but move at high speeds with a single jet engine.

The vehicles use their tentacle-like "legs" to form and quickly change the shape of the flying surfaces and shift the center of gravity, allowing amazing agility and maneuverability. The vehicles also use their "legs" to "curl up" in an extreme flare, in order to stop on a dime and do vertical landings and takeoffs.

The alien weaponry is also impressive, packing a retractable pulsed-energy canon and visual tracking system into a small, impervious unit. I'd like to have at least one of each!

My favorite line in the movie is delivered by the ever-practical preacher, played by Clancy Brown: "I've met good men who have done bad things, and bad men who have done good." This of course applies to the cowboys... not the aliens.

**Astro dude recommends: three out of five rockets**

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*Leroy Chiao is a former NASA astronaut and International Space Station commander. Follow him on Twitter*



**DNEWS VIDEO: BATTLE: LA: COULD ALIENS ATTACK?**

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