

bies/Russians are gone, there will always be one left; and thirdly, any time you look into a reflective surface, you will catch sight of an alien/zombie/Russian standing behind you.

Without wanting to spoil the plot, these are particularly piss-weak aliens, who can be felled by a good swing from a baseball bat.

So what does all this prove? During the movie, Mel Gibson's character poses the question, "Is it possible there are no coincidences?" By the end he's found the answer. There are no coincidences. Everything happens for a purpose. Even his son's asthma was meant to be. And so he goes back to the Church. Personally, I don't think proof of the existence of intelligent life on other planets would strengthen my belief in a Christian god, but I can see why Gibson (a devout Catholic who still attends Latin masses) would have loved that part of the script.

*Signs* manages to capitalise on Americans' fascination with the supernatural, and yet reinforce their faith in both Christianity and baseball. Understandably, it's been a hit.

Now for the big question: is the movie entertaining? Research showed that 66.6667% of Australian Skeptics thought so. Richard Saunders and Ian Bryce shivered at the scary moments and laughed at the jokes – I just wished the aliens would catch and eat Macaulay Culkin's younger brother. We agreed, though, that it wasn't as good as Shyamalan's earlier film *The Sixth Sense*. Basically, *Signs* is a shallow exploration of a mish-mash of spiritual beliefs that sends some conflicting messages, but it's also a bit of harmless fun.

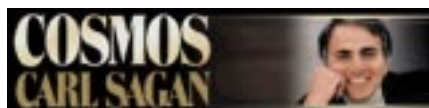
That's Hollywood for you.

#### Quote

*All tribal myths are true, for a certain value of "true".*

*The Last Continent*, Terry Pratchett.

# Cosmos Revisited



***Cosmos: Collector's Edition*, DVD and VHS (NTSC), Cosmos Studios. Available from [www.carlsagan.com](http://www.carlsagan.com) and [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) US\$169.95**

The DVD features:

- Subtitles in French, Italian, German, Spanish, Mandarin, Japanese, and English for the hearing impaired
- Science updates on subtitle track
- New introduction by series co-writer Ann Druyan
- Brief scientific updates by Carl Sagan made 10 years later.

From time to time, and I suspect this will happen a lot more from now on, people ask me why I became a Skeptic and why I have such an interest in science. There are many reasons, some of which I don't even know, but one stands out like, shall I say, "a candle in the dark". When I was 15 years old, *Cosmos* was on TV and watching it was the highlight of my week. Imagine my delight after 22 years in seeing all 13 episodes again from the newly compiled DVD box set. In fact I managed to see the lot in less than 5 days!

To remind you, the episodes are:

- The Shores Of the Cosmos;
- One Voice In the Cosmic Fugue;
- The Harmony Of the Worlds;



Richard Saunders

Heaven and Hell;  
Blues For A Red Planet;  
Travelers' Tales;  
The Backbone of Night;  
Travels In Space and Time;  
The Lives Of the Stars;  
The Edge Of Forever;  
The Persistence Of Memory;  
Encyclopedia Galactica; and  
Who Speaks For Earth?

It's amazing to think that the act of putting these shows on DVD was also a rescue effort, as the originals were in poor condition and some parts even missing! However, the producers raced all over the USA and found a bit of the show here and a bit there, slowly piecing together the whole series.

So much of what Carl Sagan said in 1980 is still valid today, but not all. Where our thinking on certain matters has changed, the science updates on subtitle track keep us up to date. This also serves to point out when Sagan's scientific predictions have come true and where he was

wrong.

*Cosmos* on DVD is one of those 'must haves' and surely no library is complete without it. I recommend it to all, with a special recommendation to the young. I hope it inspires you as it did, and still does, me.