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From Other Worlds

A Belladonna Prods. presentation. Produced by Linda Moran, Rene Bastian, Diana E. Williams. Directed, written by Barry Strugatz.

With: Cara Buono, Isaach De Bankole, David Lansbury, Robert Peters, Melissa Leo, Joel De La Fuente, Paul Lazar, Peter Bartlett, Laurie Esterman, Robert Downey Sr.

By [ROBERT KOEHLER](#)

A close encounter between a bored Gotham housewife, an Ivory Coast emigre and an alien results in a modest gambit to save the world in Barry Strugatz' amiable and arch comedy, "From Other Worlds." Pic's leaps into the fantastic and rampantly farcical tend to be overextended, but finally don't detract from what is a well-judged, light entertainment. This ideal counter-programmer for indie fests drenched in seriousness will attract some word-of-mouth, translating into good ancillary contact.

Joanna (Cara Buono, in a charming lead perf) can't be sure if her depression is nothing but the blues, or may have something to do with visions of alien abductions straight out of "The X-Files." Amusing meetings with support groups lead to her bonding with Abraham (Isaach De Bankole), who bears the same mysterious branding mark as Joanna .

As her frantic sleuthing activities increase, Joanna's hubby Brian (David Lansbury) starts to wonder if his absentee spouse is having an affair.

Strugatz (scripter of "Married to the Mob" and "She-Devil") teases auds with the possibility that Joanna's imagination is getting the better of her, until he puts his cards on the table with an actual -- if blatantly absurd -- alien encounter with a talkative dude in a cheesy skin-tight bodysuit (Joel De La Fuente).

Business involving a rare Egyptian papyrus gets too ridiculous and is underlined by some misfired perms including one by the usually aces thesp Melissa Leo ("Homicide").

Fortunately, Buono and De Bankole anchor the antics in gentle human comedy which is generated by the notion that lonely strangers can provide surprising comfort and support for each other. B-movie elements are fun, with low-tech visual effects as the cherry on top. Indie mavens will enjoy trying to spot Robert Downey Sr., making a brief appearance.

Camera (color), Mo Flam ; editor, Joel Hirsch; music, Pierre Foldes; music supervisor, Mark Wike; production designer, Charlotte Bourke; set decorator, Amanda Carroll; costume designer, Antonia Xereas; sound, Griffin Richardson; supervising sound editor, Danny Pagan; visual effects supervisors, Christian D. Bruun , Michael Ventresco; visual effects, Quantumfilm, Red Scare; associate producer, Todd Thaler; assistant director, Cecily Kaston; casting, Jonathan Strauss. Reviewed on videocassette, Los Angeles, May 7, 2005. (In Dances With Films.) Running time: 88 MIN.