It’s 4 am in Los Angeles, and all across the City of Angels millions of people are awakened by an eerie bright light that comes streaming in through their windows. The light beckons like a living thing, inviting its sleep-addled witnesses to look deep into its luminous depths…and when you do, you’re gone. “It’s like the Rapture,” declares one man when he realizes people are disappearing like ghosts. But wherever the people of L.A. are going, it soon becomes all too apparent it isn’t Heaven. And the otherworldly beings which are descending upon the Earth are anything but angels.

Skyline isn’t the first alien invasion movie we’ve ever seen, and it certainly isn’t the best. But it may very well be the most ominous. The extraterrestrials who seemingly come from nowhere and begin harvesting the people of Earth are never defined in any meaningful way, and we never even learn where they’ve come from, let alone what they’re called or why they have chosen humanity for their diabolical purposes. They remain enigmatic, untouchable…totally alien.

The story unfolds from the viewpoint of a young man named Jarrod (Eric Balfour) and his girlfriend, Elaine (Scottie Thompson). Jarrod and Elaine love one another deeply, but their relationship is strained as Skyline gets under way. Out-of-towners who are visiting Jarrod’s friend Terry (Donald Faison) in his California penthouse, the lovers are among the first witnesses to the alien apocalypse, and their vantage point is the skyline from which the movie takes its title. But even as the terrible truth dawns on everyone, they remain inevitably human, and the penthouse becomes the hub of a romantic triangle between Terry, his girlfriend Candice (Brittany Daniels) and his “assistant” Denise (Crystal Reed) even as Jarrod and Elaine struggle to deal with their own issues.

It wouldn’t be entirely unfair to think of Skyline as a hybrid between Cloverfield and Independence Day. Despite the world-shattering plot, the story remains focused through the eyes of our main characters, making viewer identification strong and tightening suspense. The main characters are all impressively well-acted, and the script which tells their story is effectively written and tautly paced. Special effects, though limited, are brilliant, and the battles between the invaders and the brave but outgunned American soldiers are intense and flamboyant. Unique, daring, and sometimes heartbreaking, Skyline is a sci-fi drama that never loses its humanity.