

NOTE: This Ebook and its contents is freely available for personal educational, entertainment, enjoyment, reference and research purposes. You are free to use this eBook in any manner for non-commercial purposes.

Non-Commercial Use means distribution on a “free to use” basis where there is no direct payment by the consumer for access to the relevant content and where no advertising and/or sponsorship opportunities are exploited in connection with the distribution of such content to the consumer.

Any acknowledgment would be greatly appreciated when referencing or distributing material from this eBook.

Dedications

Dedicated in loving memory of my wonderful parents:-

Konstantinos (Dino) Christopoulos who took me to see my very first science fiction film in the early 1960s, The Man With The X-Ray Eyes (1963)

Rosemary Christopoulos who sat with me after school as I watched on TV episodes the first two doctors of the Doctor Who series and insisted on asking me interminable questions about who was who and what was going on! Thanks mum and dad!

The SCI-FI FILM FIESTA eBook series is intended as a salute to the pioneering work of science fiction film makers. May future generations have the privilege of enjoying your work and never stop wondering....What if?

Dedicated also to you, the reader who appreciates these classic gems from the golden age of sci-fi film-making. It is you who help to keep such films alive for future generations to enjoy

Other eBooks in the Sci-Fi Film Fiesta series:

Volume 1: “Here Be Monsters”

Volume 2: “Into Space”

Volume 3: “Other Worlds”

Volume 4: “Journeys Within”

Volume 5: “Alien Contact”

Sci-Fi Film Fiesta

Volume 6:

Alien Invasion

©Chris Christopoulos 2022

Contents

Introduction

Invasion USA (1952)

Invaders from Mars (1953)

The War of the Worlds (1953)

Target Earth (1954)

The Quatermass Xperiment (1955)

This Island, Earth (1955)

Earth vs the Flying Saucers (1956)

It Conquered the World (1956)

Invasion of the Body Snatchers (1956)

Invasion of the Saucer Men (1957)

Kronos (1957)

Not of This Earth (1957)

The Brain from Planet Arous (1957)

I Married a Monster from Outer Space (1958)

Night of the Blood Beast (1958)

Space Master X-7 (1958)

The Blob (1958)

The Trollenberg Terror (1958)

The Atomic Submarine (1959)

Battle in Outer Space (1959)

Invisible Invaders (1959)

Teenagers From Outer Space (1959)

Terror In The Midnight Sun (1959)

Resources

Introduction

I'd like to share with you my own enjoyment of many individual classic films from the 1950s, the golden age of science fiction with this volume of the Sci-Fi Film Fiesta series: Volume 6 – Invasion. Fear and paranoia was often the order of the day during the Cold War period and sci-films tended to reflect and play on these fears as will be commented on in the films featured below.

What if our planet was to be actually subjected to an alien invasion, incursion of infestation? Could it happen? We often assume that advanced intelligent alien life-forms would be motivated by a sense of altruism and benevolence, by curiosity and by the need to know what is unknown as they make contact with other life-forms throughout the universe. Considering the effort and immense distances involved with undertaking interplanetary excursions many people believe that the notion of our planet being subject to an alien invasion is best left in the realm of science fiction.

Then again, take a moment to consider Alexander the Great and his army doing battle with Indian forces so far from Macedonia; The Mongols at the gates of Europe; the Vikings in Russia, England, Ireland, France and elsewhere; the Spanish Conquistadors in central and South America and so and so on throughout history. Such ventures so long ago were almost the equivalent of embarking on an interstellar enterprise considering the time, effort and distances involved. The victims of these invasions may not have imagined in their wildest dreams such a thing happening to disrupt their way of life. Perhaps some speculation would have occurred to them as to why such a destructive event should have befallen them.

If an alien invasion were to occur then why? What would be the motive?

Greed & avarice? Our planet may possess something (resources?) which an alien civilization needs and wants.

Lebensraum? An alien civilization may believe that our planet constitutes a scarce and almost unique habitable territory which it requires for its own natural development. Perhaps its own home world might have been rendered uninhabitable.

Aggression & hatred based on belief in racial / species superiority? An alien species may be unable to abide the existence of and possible contamination from another potential competitor rival species.

Genetic imperative / survival instinct? An alien species could feel impelled to rid the universe of any other species that may pose a threat to its own survival.

Or perhaps will it all come down to complete disinterest or at best, suspicion on the part of the extra-terrestrials who instead of launching an invasion or establishing contact, will instead simply avoid us?

As we continue to announce our own presence to the rest of the universe with our transmissions leaking out some 70 or 80 light years from earth, we have to come to terms with the inevitability of our establishing contact with an extra-terrestrial intelligence. It would be foolish of us to assume to know what their motives would be for being willing to make contact with us and how events would be likely to transpire between our species. It would, however be safe to say that we ought to assume nothing but should expect anything.

Invasion USA (1952)

Entertaining Propaganda.

You'll never be able took away
From the horror of "Invasion USA!"

1952: A Taste Of The Times:

In Washington, D.C., Senator Joseph McCarthy, continued his campaign to expose communists in government and throughout society. "McCarthyism," in the form of a wave of anti-communist paranoia swept the country with devastating effects on many people's lives, reputations and careers.

Meanwhile.....

- The hydrogen bomb was detonated for the first time
- The polio vaccine was developed
- Transistors were first produced commercially by the American company Raytheon
- Reports were made of UFOs flying over Washington, D.C. for six hours

Director: Alfred E. Green

Producer: Albert Zugsmith, Robert Smith

Writers: Robert Smith, Franz Schulz

Music: Albert Glasser

Distributor: Columbia Pictures

Running time: 74 minutes

Budget: \$127,000

Cast

Gerald Mohr: (Vince Potter)

Peggie Castle: (Carla Sanford)

Dan O'Herlihy: (Mr. Ohman)

Robert Bice: (George Sylvester)

Tom Kennedy: (Tim the Bartender)

Wade Crosby: (Illinois Congressman Arthur V. Harroway)

Erik Blythe: (Ed Mulfory)

Phyllis Coates: (Mrs. Mulfory)

Aram Katcher: (Factory Window Washer)

Knox Manning: (Himself)

Edward G. Robinson Jr: (Radio Dispatcher)

Noel Neill: (Second Airline Ticket Agent)

Clarence A. Shoop: (Army Major)

Synopsis

(Spoilers follow below....)

The opening credits to "Invasion USA" feature a picture of the New York skyline containing sky-scrapers standing proud and strong. The film then starts off in a New York City bar where several people are gathered drinking and talking while a news reporter, on a very modern-looking (for 1952) flat panel TV reports on world tensions and the "possibility of all-out war." However, this group of Americans do not want to hear such things and the TV set is switched off.

The group includes:

Vince Potter, a television/radio news reporter who asks those at the bar if they are for or against a "universal draft."

George Sylvester, a tractor manufacturer from San Francisco, who is opposed to the government directing him to make tanks ("Draft factories? That's Communism") and is faced with threats that his plant could be taken over by the government.

Carla Sanford, a beautiful woman who is accompanied by George Sylvester. She states that she worked in a factory during the last war, but had to stop because it was damaging her hands.

Ed Mulfory, a cattle rancher from Boulder Hill, Colorado.

Arthur V. Harroway, an effusive and boisterous Illinois congressman visiting New York who praises Vince for being 'the voice of the people.' The people, according to him, are against Communism, war and high taxes.

The mysterious Mr. Ohman, a "fortune-teller" or forecaster who believes that "America wants new leadership."

Tim, the Bartender who'll do what he's always done come what may: mixing drinks and bar-tending.

A discussion ensues between Mr. Ohman and the others where we learn that they all oppose Communism and enjoy the material wealth they derive from the current system. Not surprisingly they support lower taxes and don't see the point of private industry's support of government. Mr. Ohman does not think their views make any sense. Ohman claims that America wants new leadership, but would prefer someone else to worry about its problems. In other words, "Everyone wants George to do it." Its citizens would prefer a "wizard who could wish communism away."

Suddenly tensions on the world stage explode as an unnamed but obvious 'enemy' conducts air

attacks over Seal Point, Alaska and Nome followed by paratroops landing on Alaskan airfields. The plan of attack involves the capture of civilian airfields as staging areas and A-bombing of military airfields. The United States retaliates attacking the obvious enemy's homeland with B-36 bombing missions. Despite this, the obvious enemy advances into Washington and Oregon while the shipyards in Puget Sound are A-bombed.

With things falling apart and faced with imminent disaster, the group at the bar rush off to do their bit against the obvious enemy. With a peculiar sense of timing, Potter and Sanford fall in love with each other. After all, "War or no war, people have to eat and drink ... and make love." After attempting to enlist to help for the war effort, Potter is denied several times. He resumes his broadcasting role, while Sanford volunteers to help run a blood donation drive. The industrialist, Sylvester attempts to quickly turn his tractor-manufacturing business around to produce tanks but he soon becomes a casualty in the battle for San Francisco. The rancher, Ed Mulforoy returns home and perishes with his family in the destruction of Boulder Dam by a nuclear missile strike. The President tries to rally the morale of his citizens with exaggerated claims of counter-attacks.

With a red-alert being issued that New York is about to be attacked, will the United States of America be consumed by this "enemy" and exist only as part of its wider empire?

And what of this strange man, Mr. Ohman sitting at the end of the bar with his huge brandy glass and his terrible (Ohmans) omens for the future?

Propaganda

The film, "Invasion USA" essentially serves as a splendid piece of cold war propaganda that is delivered in an entertaining manner. It is designed to both persuade and entertain and in fact, the film fulfills the main criteria that constitute a piece of propaganda, namely;

- The promotion of a particular idea.
- Informing its audience with a series of half-truths.
- Deceiving its audience with outright misinformation.
- Influencing the attitude of the audience toward acceptance of a particular position.
- Presenting mainly one side of a situation or argument.
- Partisan in nature.
- Relying on manipulation of emotions rather than fostering critical thinking.
- Demonizing those individuals and groups it is aimed against.

Let's take a look at some of the specific instances from the film that demonstrate the above elements of propaganda.

The enemy in the film is portrayed as being brutal and sub-human. After the take-over of New York, one of the enemy soldiers demands that they celebrate the victory with whisky. As the

soldier advances menacingly towards Carla ("Now you MY woman!"), Vince tries to stop him, but is shot for trying to help her. Fearing the fate that is to befall her, Carla jumps out of a window screaming and plummets to the ground to her death.

The film, "Invasion USA," serves as a warning against complacency on the part of citizens which can lead to the kind of invasion and occupation as depicted in the film. As things stand, the American public is too materialistic and selfish, whereby the college boy "wants a stronger army AND a deferment for himself," "Labor wants new consumer products AND a 30 hour week," the businessman "wants a bigger air-force AND a new Cadillac" and the housewife "wants security AND an electric dishwasher."

Such notions serve to reinforce the importance of having a strong military that must be supported by the public and by industry. However, Industry hasn't done its patriotic duty by supplying sufficient hardware for the military. According to the film, it is these kinds of attitudes that will undermine US preparedness to tackle threats to its security. It may go some way to explaining why in the film so few guards appear to be posted to defend the center of US government in Washington during a time of national emergency. As the invasion progresses, a scorched earth policy is put into effect in order to deny the enemy the resources it will need. This act of desperation is explained as being the result of not being prepared to "provide a strong enough army to protect ourselves."

Ironically, it also encourages the idea that in order to combat the threat posed by Communism, it is necessary that the needs of the State supersede the needs and desires of the individual! Supposedly, freedom and democracy comes with a price. How similar this notion and Ohman's vision for a stronger America seems to be to the 'Enemy's' declaration over the airwaves:

"The People's Government of America will take the wealth from the greedy, the speculators, and the capitalistic bourgeoisie and distribute it among the workers whose labor will never again be exploited for the benefit of the war mongers of Wall Street. The People's Government brings the citizens of New York a new freedom. A freedom based on order. A freedom based on loyalty to the leaders of the Party, your Party..."

Hatred toward the "enemy" for its brutality and sympathy for the poor victims of that brutality are meant to bubble to the surface as the audience witnesses the image of the child's doll floating forlornly in the flood waters from the bombing of the Boulder dam.

The audience's emotions are further stirred by referencing past historical events such as when the President states to the nation that "another day of infamy has arrived." People are being encouraged to direct their memories back to that time when a sneak attack on Pearl Harbour by Japan ushered America's entry into the Second World War. Think about how audiences today might feel when confronted with references to the 9/11 attack and you will begin to see how powerful such emotional manipulation can be.

Similar kinds of propagandist ideas such as the need for constant vigilance would not have been new to audiences who would have had vivid memories of World War Two and constant exhortations to beware of what they say and to whom. After all, "Loose lips, sink ships!"

Despite the fact that American defense spending was rapidly increasing at the time, the film exaggerates the enemy's capabilities while creating the impression that America is idly sitting by and is ripe for another Pearl Harbor "day of infamy" scenario which would still be fresh in the audience's minds. There is also the blatant misinformation concerning the US's technical and military capabilities. Notice how slow the American radar stations seem to be when locating the invader's aircraft. With the state of the US's radar and other technology even at that time, it would have been unlikely that detection would have occurred not until the enemy aircraft were directly over their targets.

The film does its best to simplify quite complex geopolitical factors to a basic 'Us versus Them.' theme. The 'Us' being the freedom-loving United States divinely ordained to take on the role of combating the 'Them,' the Soviets and their Communist expansion. The 'Them' enemy is never clearly identified but it is obvious that it is the Communist Soviet Union from their initial invasion via Alaska and of course, the terrible accents!

Points Of Interest

A substantial proportion of the film is taken up by rather inaccurate stock military and combat footage. The audience is presented with a miss-mash of scenes depicting the destruction of New York using footage from the London Blitz; a jumble of WWII and Korean War stock footage; Communist forces fitted out in American military attire; Soviet pilots flying B-29s and B36s, along with Nazi-German Luftwaffe and Japanese aircraft!. At least there were some brief shots of Soviet MIGS. I guess budget constraints and the belief that the audience would not know what they're looking at might have been a determining factor in all of this? After all, the film was shot in seven days in April of 1952 on a budget of \$127,000.00. Despite all of this, it did make a return of close to \$1.000.000. At least the relentless presentation of the invasion and battle scenes along with the music score do serve to create a rising sense of excitement, panic and hysteria in the audience.

I couldn't help but wonder at the "Enemy's" profligate use of nuclear weapons. It seems to reflect the kind of military tactical thinking that was a product of World War 2 rather than what would be appropriate for modern warfare. These days we are probably more aware of the results of nuclear detonations in terms of radiation, fallout and sheer destruction. In "Invasion USA," nuclear weapons are thrown about like confetti blowing up airfields, dams, battleships, one-horse towns, and cities. One would have to ask if there'd actually be anything left to invade and occupy. However, in more recent times, just after the era of MAD (Mutually Assured Destruction) which was supposed to act as deterrence to nuclear warfare, a change of thinking

occurred. Some people in government and the military started to propose using tactical battlefield nuclear weapons in the event of war erupting between the West / NATO and the Warsaw Pact countries. Suddenly it was believed that nuclear weapons could become a viable battlefield option in a winnable war. Now that would be MAD!

There are some very silly but very funny occurrences in the film which rather than deserve criticism, actually add to the film's entertainment value. For instance, when the "Enemy" sends its troops disguised as American soldiers to infiltrate Washington, DC, one of them who claims to be from a Chicago unit is challenged by an American guard, "Ever see the Cubs play?" He actually replies with, "Cubs? A cub is a young animal, a bear..." A "Yes" or "No" might have given him a 50/50 chance of avoiding a bullet!

What could be better than succinctly summing up the entire invasion with a metaphor that's as American as apple pie, such as when the rancher declares, "This is it, the final game of the World Series...and we're the home team!"

And then there is the exchange between Vince and Carla after the invasion is underway and atom bombs start raining down. Carla declares, "It's a nightmare, this can't be happening!" Vince replies with, "It was a cinch to happen. The last time I met a girl I really liked, they bombed Pearl Harbour." You gotta love it!

Although most of the characters are meant to represent various sections of the community and are largely forgettable, one character who does stand out is Mr. Ohman. His brief performance sets up that menacingly dangerous and eerie atmosphere that is to hang over the heads of the group at the bar and the nation as whole. It seems as if he can really hypnotize his listeners and that he has knowledge of the shape of things to come.

And so dear reader, maybe it is time for us to wake up from our individual and collective trances and realize that "tomorrow springs from today." We must think about what we can do now to avoid future disasters or calamities that may be visited upon our way of life and recognize that threats to our existence can be of our own making and come in many forms, both expected and unexpected. We just need to....."concentrate".....

Invaders from Mars (1953)

Adjust your point of view
and enjoy!

1953: Taste Of The Times

- President Harry S. Truman announces the United States has developed a hydrogen bomb.
- The CIA-sponsored Robertson Panel meets to discuss the UFO phenomenon.
- The United States conducts its only nuclear artillery test.
- The Korean War ends with the signing of an armistice agreement. The north remains totalitarian and communist, while the south remains Western oriented and capitalist.
- The Soviet Union announces it has a hydrogen bomb.
- The CIA helps to overthrow the government of Mohammed Mossadegh in Iran, and retain Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi on the throne.
- The United Nations rejects acceptance of China as a member.
- The Mutual Defense Treaty between the United States and the Republic of Korea is concluded in Washington D.C.
- US. President Dwight D. Eisenhower approves the top secret document of the United States National Security Council that states that the United States' arsenal of nuclear weapons must be maintained and expanded to counter the communist threat.
- U.S. president Dwight D. Eisenhower delivers his Atoms for Peace address to the United Nations General Assembly in New York City.

A wonderful series of sci-fi films were produced in the year 1953, some of which have become classics. These films often continued to serve as metaphors for the American fear of Communist invasion and infiltration, with the recurring theme of the threat of take-over by seemingly benign beings possessing a hidden hostile agenda.

Director: William Cameron Menzies

Producer: Edward L. Alperson Jr.

Writer: John Tucker Battle, Richard Blake

Music: Raoul Kraushaar

Cinematography: John F. Seitz

Editor: Arthur Roberts

Distributor: Twentieth Century Fox Film Corp.

Running time: 77 minutes

Budget: \$290,000 approx.

Cast

Jimmy Hunt (David Maclean)
Helena Carter (Dr. Pat Blake, MD)
Arthur Franz (Dr. Stuart Kelston)
Morris Ankrum (Col. Fielding)
Leif Erickson (George MacLean)
Hillary Brooke (Mary MacLean)
Max Wagner (Sgt. Rinaldi)
Milburn Stone (Capt. Roth)
Janine Perreau as Kathy Wilson
Barbara Billingsley (Secretary)
Bert Freed (Police Chief)
Robert Shayne (Professor Wilson)
Luce Potter (Martian Intelligence)
Clifford Dove (Martian Mutant)

Synopsis

(Spoilers Follow Below.....)

“Invaders from Mars” begins with strident, serious martial music and a backdrop consisting of planets and stars. A narrator asks us to ponder what kinds of life forms inhabit these planets and states that such matters have been the concern of “scientists of all ages.”

The story of “Invaders from Mars” is told from the point of view of a boy, young astronomy buff David MacLean who is awakened at 4.40am by a thunderstorm and is stunned to witness from his bedroom window a large flying saucer descend and disappear into a sand pit not far from his parents’ home.

Just prior to this incident, David’s parents are awakened by his alarm clock going off at 4.00am because David wishes to be up to view a particular nebula. Interestingly enough, David’s mother, Mary says to her husband, “you’ve been dreaming” when he decides to get up and check on his son. Is the viewer being set up for something here?

When David’s scientist father, George goes to check on his son, he tries to reassure him by stating, “you were dreaming” and “this is all your imagination.” This reinforces what George’s wife has just said to him and sets the viewer up with what the nature of the film’s story might be. At any rate, George gives his son the benefit of the doubt and proceeds to investigate David’s claim about seeing a saucer land. After all, we learn that George works at a “plant” that conducts activities which are “secret,” that there are “rumors” and that he “can’t talk about it.”

George goes to investigate David's claim the next morning and mysteriously disappears. While

George is missing, David's mother calls the police. The two policemen who arrive begin to investigate and are soon swallowed up by the sand in the backyard.

When George and the policemen return much later in the morning, he seems to have acquired a red puncture mark on the back of his neck and he is behaving in an oddly cold and uncharacteristically hostile manner. Note the close-up on George's face. We immediately know something is wrong just by his expression, coupled with his savage tone of voice and his abrupt and rude manner. When he strikes his son, it is like a bolt out of the blue and we almost feel it as much as David does.

Notice too, how the return of the two policemen immediately confirms what has happened to George merely by their stance and facial expressions. To highlight what has taken place, George says to wife just before they are about to leave the house, "Your son said he's going to Andy's." Not "David" or "our son!"

David quickly realizes that something is very wrong and eventually goes to the police station for help after he notices that other townsfolk are acting in the same way and after witnessing his young neighbor, Kathy Wilson walking in the sandpit near where the saucer landed and disappearing underground.

David is finally placed under the protection of the city health-department physician, Dr. Pat Blake who he comes to trust as she gradually believes his story. She gains David's trust by telling him, "Doctors are like ministers" and that people can tell them anything. However, as she goes to find out more information she has to lock David in the cell as she has to "obey the rules."

In addition to the help from Dr. Blake, David receives assistance from local astronomer, Dr. Stuart Kelston. It is conjectured that the flying saucer is probably the beginning of an imminent invasion from the planet Mars which is now in close orbital proximity to Earth. At the moment, "Mars is closest to us in its particular orbit." Kelston goes on to state that the Martians make use of "mu-tants" to sustain their way of life in space and that they are taking action now due to a perceived threat from rockets being shot into space from Earth. It turns out that David's father is working at a plant that produces the motor assembly for an atomic powered rocket.

The army is eventually called in to investigate and troops and tanks under the command of Colonel Fielding are sent in. The invading Martians' sabotage plot at an important nearby government rocket research plant is soon uncovered. The secondary "baddies" (the two police officers, General Mayberry and the police chief) who have had controlling devices implanted in their brains, are dispatched with lightning speed. The army organizes its forces and surrounds the saucer landing site.

Meanwhile, Dr. Blake and David wind up underground and are captured by two tall green humanoids and are taken to the Martian and its flying saucer.

Army troops eventually blow open an entrance to the tunnels, and Colonel Fielding's small detachment manage to reach the saucer entrance where they confront the Martian, a green humanoid face encased in a transparent sphere served by the tall, green and mute "mu-tants." The face is apparently "mankind developed up to its ultimate intelligence" and the "mu-tants" are "slaves existing only to do his will."

Under the Martian's mental control, the "mu-tants" have implanted mind-control crystals at the base of the skulls of the kidnapped humans, thereby forcing them to participate in the plot to sabotage an atomic rocket project at a military plant near the town. If the human victims fail and are captured, the mind control devices are designed to implode, causing a fatal cerebral haemorrhage.....

Will the troops, Colonel Fielding, Dr Blake and young David be able to escape the clutches of the Martian invader and his "mu-tants?"

Will the Martian sabotage plan eventually succeed, paving the way for an ultimate invasion of Earth?

Will the army have the necessary clout to defeat the Martian menace of the mind-controlling alien Mastermind?

The Dream World Of David MacLean

Not long after the start of the film, "Invaders From Mars," you might balk at the idea of having a kid as the central character and wonder where the heck you are with one foot seemingly lodged in a more or less familiar on-screen world with the other foot being immersed in a more than usual bizarro-world of movie sci-fi consisting of illogical ("surreal" – sorry!) plots and characters. True, if you approach the film with a purely rational and adult mindset. But be careful where you do step because with this film you are not in control!

In "Invaders From Mars," David's dream is in fact a nightmare or alternate reality reflecting the various pressures being faced by a young boy. It is filled with threatening doppelgangers of significant people he knows in real life. It is a world where, as in a dream, logic takes a back seat and people and events become representations of something else. We get to see and experience things from David's point of view with only his world, his fears and his perceptions forming our frame of reference.

For a young person such as David growing up, the world can be an insecure and threatening place with remote authority figures who cannot always be trusted, but who seem instead to be bent on controlling and circumscribing their lives. How to approach such people and make them take notice of what you say, how you feel and what you think?? A difficult task indeed when the

adults in your world are worried about possible annihilation from atom bombs and foreign conspiracies destroying their way of life! Such fears are all too easily projected onto young people and it is easy to overlook the effect this has on them.

David's dream world reflects a large part of his real world experience. He lives a largely protected and sheltered life and it is his youth and limited experiences which have caused him to construct such a loopy scenario as expressed by the character, Dr. Stuart Kelston whereby the Martians have come to the Earth in Mother ships, that they live underground on Mars and have bred a race of synthetic humans called Mutants as their slaves! In David's world, events are reduced to shades of comic book black and white with no subtle shades of gray. Even the characters of his dream world are identified stereotypically by the colors they wear: His mother dressed in black and Pat dressed in white.

David lacks credibility and power by virtue of his age and nobody is going to take his predicament seriously. His parents have become distant and unfeeling monsters who have become part of an alien conspiracy to conquer the Earth. His parents appear like evil villains straight out of comic books or TV serials with their conspiratorial whispered asides. So, who will listen to him? He is just a kid.

However, this is David's dream and by virtue of this fact he does have some measure of power. After all, in his world adults can be made to look ridiculous such as Colonels and scientists finding themselves looking silly being perched up on a roof, a place that David would be forbidden to go by those very same adults! Take that!

There are adults in this dream world that David can call on for help. Take Dr. Pat Blake, from the city Health Department. (Where on earth did they find all these stunningly beautiful women for these 1950s sci-fi films?) David's subconscious has come up with someone who is tender like a mother who takes him seriously, accepts him and stands by him. She can even lie for him such as when she tells David's parents that he has "every symptom of polio" in order to keep him out of their clutches. (Just like David has probably told his parents a few white lies in order to avoid getting into trouble) For his part, David's young mind has transformed Pat, who he probably has a crush on, into a kind of screen heroine. It is extremely difficult for the viewer to take their eyes off Pat, particularly with the red adornment placed above her left breast which stands out starkly from the white background of her 'uniform.'

It is with no surprise that we discover Pat lying helplessly on a glass operating table, with one shoulder bared and with a pulsing penetrating device slowly moving toward the back of her neck ready to violate this older woman that young David is on some level attracted to and who he must rescue from the clutches of these alien "rivals." Not much different to the heroine tied to the railway tracks with the train looming closer! Kelston can hold and comfort Pat though since he has become an ideal representation of a future and older David. Go back to the shot of David and Kelston side-by-side at the telescope!

David's dream logic gives him the power to act and be the hero for the world and his heroine, such as his inexplicable ability to leap into action, take charge, identify and operate the Infrared tunneling Ray gun, despite the fact no one has seen or used one before! What an action hero!

In David's dream world, there are also other heroes he can draw on for support such as US Troops: Men who represent and personify the American ideal of decency and exist only to protect and serve.

So, by what means are we being invited into this distorted dream-like representation of David's reality?

Clever Camera Angles

"Invaders from Mars" makes effective use of low and high camera angles to emphasize the dramatic and visual impact of key scenes. For instance, in the police station, the long entrance way combined with high and low camera angles emphasize David's smallness in the face of officialdom and authority.

Set Designs & Props

The Hill seems to be a stylized dream image, giving it the quality of an alternate world that one enters at one's own peril. It is a living sinister place where characters are led up a curved path that winds up the hill between leafless black tree trunks and a broad blackened plank fence. At the top of the hill the fence dips out of sight where characters are then fed into the sinking sand of the Pit and downward into the bowels of the hill. The hill set deceives us with an optical illusion despite its flat painted picture-like perspective design. Notice, however, that when a character walks up the path, they seem to diminish in size. The optical illusion makes it seem as if they are shrinking as they walk and reach the top of the hill.

The use of glass paintings helps to create similar illusions such as the view being given down the glass tube above the Martian operating table.

The police station set design consists of strangely elongated features and stark, unadorned walls, making it appear like a dreamlike surrealist painting. It is as strange and unreal as the lab that Kathy's father works in. Once again we have high ceilings and long entrance ways leading directly to an over sized focal point, in this case extremely tall test tubes. Both places are pretty much David's own personal constructs gleaned from movies and comics. So, it is no surprise that we find Kathy's father busy at work in the lab just after his daughter has died! All part of David's youthful lack of life experiences.

Lines and angles on the sets are frequently used to draw our notice to particular people and objects. Take the blackened plank fence on the hill. As foolhardy Sergeant Rinaldi advances up the hill toward the pit, the fence line serves to both frame his body and trace his direction of

movement up the hill and down into the pit itself. Notice how in the spaceship, lines in the form of support pylons set at an angle lead our eyes directly to the soldiers placing explosives on the floor or Pat lying on the floor where she was initially placed.

Clocks: Time and its importance is emphasized in “Invaders from Mars” as it either seems to be running out or as in a dream it has elasticity as it not only advances implacably forward toward ultimate disaster, but also seems to almost stop and move backward. There are images of time-pieces that are focused on in the film, from the clock in David’s bedroom to the lone clock on the police station wall.

Stock Footage & Shot Repetition

Well, if you have only so much to spend and you want lots of big stuff to be happening, what are going to do? In “Invaders from Mars,” we have;

Footage from WW2 training films to show lots of hardware and tanks supposedly taking up position around the Pit.

Repeated sock footage, sequences, camera angles and camera shots. One result of this kind of repetition is that we are supposed to believe that there are numerous “mu-tant” Martian slaves and can-do GI Joe soldiers battling it out in the Martian tunnel.

Special effects

The bubbling, melting walls of the underground tunnels caused by the Martian heat-ray was an effect created by shooting a large tub of boiling oatmeal from above. This breakfast cuisine was colored red using food coloring and lit with red lighting.

Apparently more than 3,000 latex condoms were inflated and stuck on to portions of the tunnel set's walls to create the cooled, bubbled-up effect on these blasted out sections of the tunnel walls. Can you imagine the fits of laughter while completing such a project and being lubricated with a few beers! So who'da thunked it? Condoms are not just great water balloon bombs!

Music

The eerie vocal effect of the chorus seems to be almost in stark contrast to our notions of the 'heavenly chorus' of angels. It feels disturbingly discordant to our ears and adds to the “surreal” quality of David’s dream world. We know instinctively that nothing good is being indicated by it.

Open-Ended Ending

A large explosion together with lightning and a clap of thunder, rips both David and the viewer back to what seems to be reality. David runs from his bed into his parents’ bedroom where they

reassure him he was just having a bad dream. David returns to bed, but with the noise of more wind and loud thunder he climbs out of bed again and goes to his window. And what does he see? The flying saucer of his dream slowly descending into the sandpit!

With the image of David's face dissolving to the "The End" title card, we are left wondering: Is young David still asleep, trapped in some kind of recurring loop of a nightmare? Or perhaps his dream is a premonition of things to come? Or maybe it was all just a dream?

WHAT DO YOU THINK???

The War of the Worlds (1953)

Imaginative
Atmospheric
Innovative
A classic

1953: Taste Of The Times

In world politics;

- Dwight D. Eisenhower becomes the 34th President of the USA.
- Tito is chosen President of Yugoslavia.
- Joseph Stalin suffers a stroke and dies on March 5.
- Nikita Khrushchev is selected First Secretary of the Soviet Communist Party and becomes head of the Soviet Central Committee.

In the area of science & technology;

- James D. Watson and Francis Crick of the University of Cambridge announce their discovery of the structure of the DNA molecule. "Molecular Structure of Nucleic Acids: A Structure for Deoxyribose Nucleic Acid", is published. It describes the double helix structure of DNA.
- Jonas Salk announces his polio vaccine.
- The UNIVAC 1103 is the first commercial computer to use random access memory.
- The first color television sets go on sale for about \$1,175 US.

Director: Byron Haskin
Producer: George Pal
Screenplay: Barré Lyndon
Based on The War of the Worlds by H. G. Wells
Narrator: Sir Cedric Hardwicke
Music: Leith Stevens
Cinematography: George Barnes
Editing: Everett Douglas
Distributor: Paramount Pictures
Running time: 85 minutes
Budget: \$2 million

Cast

Gene Barry: (Dr. Clayton Forrester)
Ann Robinson: (Sylvia Van Buren)
Les Tremayne: (Maj. Gen. Mann)
Robert Cornthwaite: (Dr. Pryor)
Sandro Giglio: (Dr. Bilderbeck)
Lewis Martin: (Pastor Dr. Matthew Collins)
Houseley Stevenson Jr.: (Gen. Mann's aide)
Paul Frees: (Second Radio Reporter / Opening Announcer)
William Phipps: (Wash Perry)
Vernon Rich: (Col. Ralph Heffner)
Henry Brandon: (Cop at Crash Site)
Jack Kruschen: (Salvatore)
Cedric Hardwicke: (Commentary voice)
Charles Gemora: (the Martian)
Gertrude W. Hoffmann: (Elderly Woman News Vendor)

Synopsis

The War of the Worlds begins with a tour of the hostile environment of each world of our solar system, leading to an explanation as to why the Martians would cast a longing eye on our planet hanging temptingly in the black void like a delicious blue and green kind of fruit, ripe for consumption. We learn from the narration that Mars is “in the last stages of exhaustion” and that the Martian civilization is “searching for another world” to migrate to and that we have been “scrutinized and studied” by them for that very reason.

The story is set in early 1950s southern California where we find a Manhattan Project scientist,

Dr. Clayton Forrester happily engaged in a fishing trip with his colleagues at Pine Summit when a large meteorite-like object crash lands near the town of Linda Rosa.

At the impact site, Forrester meets the distinctively stunning Sylvia Van Buren and her uncle, Pastor Matthew Collins. He concludes that the object that crashed appears to be far lighter than can be accounted for by its large size. So, we know that there is something unnaturally peculiar about the object. Not only that anomaly, but it is also radioactive which spells danger! This strange feeling of discrepancy contrasts with the initial picnic-like atmosphere at the impact site where we see kids and dogs running around and pictures being taken. There are those who would consider setting the object up as an attraction and that it would be "a goldmine in our backyard." As the object is too hot to examine closely, Forrester decides to wait in town overnight for it to cool down. Three men are left behind to guard the crash site.

Later that evening, we witness a hatch on top of the object unscrewing excruciatingly slowly and falling away to reveal the emergence of a pulsating, mechanical, cobra-shaped head attached to the end of a long flexible neck. Notice how as this is happening, the three men physically withdraw by leaning further away and stepping back equally slowly. The three guards, however, do decide to approach with a neighborly, "Welcome to California" and bolster their courage with the assumption that waving a white flag is a universal symbol of peace. Far from recognizing this gesture as a sign of peaceful intentions, the cobra-head fixes them in its sights and fires a heat-ray, vaporizing the three guards, thereby ending their short-lived careers as would-be ambassadors for humanity.

The Martian's power and malice extends further with the cutting of the power to Linda Rosa. Strong magnetic effects are noticed with the magnetizing and consequent stopping of people's watches. It seems like the object is creating a strong magnetic field as indicated by the compass pointing away from magnetic north and in the direction of the crash site. Forrester and the sheriff are confronted by the Martian equivalent of a no-trespassing sign when they almost have their eyebrows singed off by the Martian heat-ray when they decide to investigate the weird happenings.

Meanwhile, other meteorite-ships have been landing throughout the world. It is decided that the US military should surround the original landing site. It is not long before three large manta ray-shaped vehicles rise from site and begin to slowly and menacingly advance. As this is happening, Pastor Collins, full of peace and goodwill but short on good sense, approaches the three alien craft, reciting Psalm 23 while holding his Bible aloft. Seeming to take their cue from Revelations, the Martians smite him instantly!

The large salivating Marine force surrounding the landing site unleashes enough destructive fire power to rival the power of the trumpets that blew down the walls of Jericho. It is all to no avail though as each Martian machine is protected by an impenetrable force field. The Martians then retaliate by using their heat rays forcing the puny humans to retreat with their tails between their legs.

In Los Angeles, military leaders meet to brief reporters, devise a counter attack defense plan and prepare for an evacuation of major cities that will be threatened by the Martians.

While all of this was happening, Forrester and Van Buren have managed to escape in a small plane, but later crash land, after avoiding colliding with other Martian war machines. They take refuge in an abandoned farmhouse but are trapped inside when (luck would have it!) one of the alien ships crash-lands, half-burying the farmhouse and rudely interrupting what looks to be a very delicious meal of fried eggs.

Eventually, a Martian electronic eye attached to a long, flexible cable snakes its way into the ruined farmhouse's interior but soon withdraws after its inspection fails to find anything. This incident is followed by a lone Martian whose presence is registered in a study of terror when it places its hand on Van Buren's shoulder. Just watch her eyes and reaction to this! Forrester, Viking-like, wields an ax and spoils that Martian's entire day, as well as severing the thick, long cable of the electronic eye which had since reappeared. He then saves a sample of the Martian blood on Van Buren's scarf as well as the electronic eye's camera housing. Forrester and Van Buren manage to escape as the Martian craft destroys the farmhouse.

Forrester and Van Buren eventually meet up with Forrester's co-workers at Pacific Tech in Los Angeles. The retrieved blood sample and the electronic eye's optics enable the scientists to determine critical facts about the Martians' physiology. Firstly, the Martian creatures would lose an arm-wrestling competition with us as they are comparatively physically weaker than humans. Secondly, they need a course of iron tablets as they have anemic blood.

The only ace up the military's sleeve that seems to be left is to make use of atomic weapons. To this end, a United States Air Force Northrop YB-49 Flying Wing bomber (a real treat to be able to see these old planes in the air even if it's just on film!) unloads an atomic bomb on the three original Martian machines. Even the most destructive weapon ever conceived by humanity's warped and evil genius has no effect, due to the protective impenetrable force fields surrounding the machines. The Martians happily continue along their piece of the path toward global destruction while orders are given for the immediate evacuation of the city.

It is determined that the entire Earth can be conquered in just.....significantly and ironically.... six days.....

With all seeming to be lost!

With humanity finding itself helpless against the Martians!

With Los Angeles under attack and reduced to burning ruins!

What is to be the fate of humanity?

To just wait for the inevitable end?

Find out by watching the epic battle for survival in.....

The War of the Worlds

Points of Interest

(Spoilers follow below.....)

This film version of "The War Of The Worlds" is not a literal presentation or interpretation of the H.G. Wells classic story. It nevertheless does it justice and it was a sensible decision to make it relevant for a 20th century audience. The 2005 remake starring Tom Cruise was also a good move for a 21st. century audience. However, it takes a special something for a film like George Pal's 1953 version to resonate with film viewers and be considered as a classic after almost 70 years. Remember, this film was made long, long before the current age of CGI effects.

The film opens with a prologue in black and white and abruptly switches to Technicolor during the opening title sequence. This clearly takes the viewer into the modern brave new world of "terrible weapons" and the creations of science that menace mankind. This is a new age unlike anything experienced in our past.

The California city of Corona was used to depict the town of Linda Rosa. In addition, Los Angeles' St. Brendan's Catholic Church, was used as the church where a large group of desperate people gather to pray in the film. It is one of the scenes where the tension is palpable as we witness and feel for the surviving populace huddling in the church as buildings crash and burn around them.

Departing from the stereotypical flying saucer shape of UFOs, the Martian craft were designed to be sinister-looking machines shaped something like a cross between a manta ray and a swan hovering above the ground. The total effect is that the machines are both beautiful and terrifying. They move slowly and gracefully as if alive but more significantly, they move in a menacing, implacable and calculating manner.

Each Martian machine is equipped with an articulated metal neck which in turn has a cobra-like head attached to it, containing a single electronic eye that serves as both a periscope and an energy weapon. Notice how the "eye" seems to exude cruelty as it peers down on the puny priest, as if studying a microscopic specimen which it is about to exterminate once it has completed its examination.

The sound effects for the green 'skeleton beam' and heat rays were created by making use of such things as violins and cellos, striking a high tension cable with a hammer and mixing the sound of electric guitars being recorded backwards. The Martian's scream in the farmhouse ruins was created by mixing the sound of a microphone being scraped along dry ice, combining this with a woman's recorded scream and then reverse-playing it.

In the original HG Wells' novel, walking tripods featured as the aliens' preferred mode of transport. For the film, an attempt was made to make the Martian machines appear to float in the air on three invisible legs by making use of downward lights added directly under the moving Martian machines. Due to technical difficulties, this effect only appears on one of the first machines rising from the Martian's landing site. In other scenes, three invisible leg beams create small, sparking flare-ups where they come into contact with the ground.

I previously mentioned the scene when the Martian crept up behind Van Buren and clamped its sucker-like fingers on her shoulder. I referred to this as a study in terror. Notice how she freeze-pauses and then only her amazing eyes react to the alien's touch. This is then followed by her slowly turning her head around and staring in horror at the violating alien digits. It takes a few slow seconds for Van Buren to comprehend what has happened.

Far from being a wooden character, the Van Buren character has an amazingly beautiful and expressive face that easily reflects her emotional states throughout the film. Earlier we see the realization of what has happened slowly dawn on her face when she is in Forrester's arms after the plane crash. In the farmhouse, when the Martian electronic eye on its long neck snakes its way closer to the besieged couple, we are drawn to Van Buren's beautiful terror-stricken eyes, as her eyeballs slowly swivel around, followed by her head in the direction of the sinister serpent-like surveillance device. Later, her terror is palpable as she stares into the Martian lens at the lab. It is as if her face and eyes have become one of the main vehicles in the film with which to convey the story's sense of fear and terror.

Dr. Clayton Forrester may appear to be a wooden character at times, but he seems to be more like an island of calm and good sense in a surrounding sea of surging emotions, panic and hysteria. In a time of prolific smoking, he declines an offer of a cigarette with a "no, I don't smoke." This man is no sheep who moves with the flock. Instead of jumping to wild conclusions about the presence of the strange object, such as its being "an enemy sneak attack," he employs reason and the scientific method to determine its nature and purpose. For instance, Forrester concludes that the facts don't add up about the object and how it came to land considering its size and the impact it made. This suggests to him that it must be both hollow and light. Later on he uses science and observation to determine that the object is responsible for their watches being magnetized and he uses a compass to locate from which direction the magnetic disturbance originates. Forrester also theorizes that the Martian's ray disrupts the atomic structure of matter and they can generate atomic force to power their rays.

In addition to Forrester's use of science and reason, we have the military's method of dealing with threats. The army in the film make extensive use of trying to know one's enemy and his tactics by utilizing observation and intelligence and formulating a plan of attack and defense based on that. As a result of this, the military have been able to determine that the Martians are "working to some kind of plan" and that they employ their craft in "groups of three joined magnetically." Unfortunately, the army has underestimated their enemy and assume that with their "newest weapons" they "can blast them right off the earth."

In contrast to both Forrester and the army, we have Pastor Dr. Matthew Collins and his attempt to deal with the presence of the “beings from another world.” This is best summed up when he tells the general, “Shouldn’t you try to communicate with them first and shoot later if you have to?” For Pastor Collins, it is more important to “try to make them understand that we mean them no harm.” The fatal flaw with this once again lies with an assumption: “If they are more advanced than us, they should be nearer to God.” I think deep down inside he realizes this when he says to his niece, “I like that Dr. Forrester, he’s a good man.” This sounds like a good-bye as all he has is his faith as he is about to “walk through the Shadow of Death” unafraid of the “evil” he is about to meet, armed only with his bible, the symbol of his faith and the word of his God.

What kind of hope and faith is left to the world when even a representative of God and universal peace is obliterated? For the military it is the “latest thing in nuclear fission” but when a device of evil fails to defeat a force of evil, what then? Forrester and his colleagues are told, “Our best hope lies with what you can develop to help us.” Forrester concludes that “we’ve got to beat them if we can’t beat their machines” which for he and his team means the “biological approach.”

As the scientists evacuate, they become separated during the widespread panic of the fleeing populace. Humanity shows its worst face as a rioting mob steals Pacific Tech group’s trucks and destroys their essential equipment. The scene showing the man with the suitcase full of money who tries to buy his way onto a truck during the evacuation of Los Angeles, demonstrates what happens when hope and faith appear to be lost. Desperation and personal survival becomes the order of the day when people are placed under stress and live in fear in a world where “you can’t buy a ride for love or money” anymore. Rob people of their sense of security and well-being and the veneer of civilization could soon crumble.

Forrester knows exactly what one certain person will do in the face of civilization’s impending demise when he declares to the two military policemen on the deserted streets of LA, “She’s kinda lost but I think I know where she’ll be.” He eventually finds Van Buren in a church and as this last edifice of faith crumbles from the alien onslaught, we find both Forrester and Van Buren clinging to each other in the final act of faith and hope; their love for each other. Right at that point there is a crash and everything goes silent. The silence itself is almost as shocking as the previous noise of destruction.

The excruciatingly slow emergence of the alien presence earlier in the film signaled the hostile intent of the Martians. Now at the end of the film, we witness the equally slow emergence of a Martian’s hand and arm as it gradually inches its way out of the crashed craft’s opening. Is the Martian somehow appealing for help as its life gradually ebbs away? Or is this simply a dramatic device to show the effect of the bacteria on the invader?

The ending of “The War of the Worlds” neatly fuses together the scientific and the religious /

faith-based views so far presented in the film in the final outcome. For someone like Forrester, the Martians' demise can be explained by them having "no resistance to bacteria." The alternative view is that they "were all praying for a miracle" and they were saved "by the brilliant things that God in his wisdom had put upon this earth."

The film was nominated for three Academy Awards, winning an Oscar in the Special Effects category and was later selected for inclusion in the National Film Registry of the Library of Congress being deemed culturally, historically, or aesthetically significant.

No doubt there will be other remakes of "The War of the Worlds" in the future, (the 2019 BBC series!) but I am sure they will all in some way pay homage to both George Pal's brilliant screen sci-fi masterpiece and to the brilliance and timelessness of Mr. Wells' original concept and story.

Target Earth (1954)

B-Grade sci-fi meets gangster movie meets pulp fiction

Directed by Sherman A. Rose

Produced by Herman Cohen

Written by Paul W. Fairman, James H. Nicholson, Wyott Ordung, William Raynor

Music by Paul Dunlap

Cinematography: Guy Roe

Editing by Sherman A. Rose

Distributed by Allied Artists Pictures Corporation

Running time: 75 minutes

Budget: \$100,000

Cast

Kathleen Crowley (Nora King)

Richard Denning (Frank Brooks)

Virginia Grey (Vicki Harris)

Richard Reeves (Jim Wilson)

Robert Roark (Davis, the Killer)

Whit Bissell (Tom, Chief research scientist)

Arthur Space (Lt. General Wood)

Steve Pendleton (Colonel)
Mort Marshall (Charles Otis)

A large city in the US is almost completely evacuated as an advanced force of robots, conjectured to be from the planet Venus, invade and attack. Nora King and Frank Brooks are among the few who have been overlooked during the mass evacuation. Together with two others they meet, Vicki Harris and Jim Wilson, they face not only the danger from the Venusian robots, but also new dangers in the form of Davis, a psychopathic killer, as well as potential death from “friendly fire.”

(Spoilers follow below....)

The Story

During the opening credits of the film, “Target Earth,” we find ourselves gradually free-falling through the immensity of space toward the planet Earth. We then zero in on a single city and are finally drawn into a nondescript single room of a rooming house.

Room

The camera focuses on a clock that reads 1.30 and it must be PM since even though the room appears to be in semi-darkness, it is daytime beyond the drawn window blind. The camera then pans to a mirror in which we see the reflection of a woman asleep in her underclothing. We are then given a close-up of a bottle of Dr Andrews sleeping tablets lying opened next to her.

By purely visual means, the audience is invited to mentally join the dots, ask questions and ponder the possible reasons behind this lady’s obvious suicide attempt.

The character, Nora King recovers consciousness and soon discovers that her building has no electricity or water upon which modern civilisation depends for its existence. She is greeted only by an unnerving silence and a view of a streetscape devoid of the human heart and soul that is the lifeblood of any urban setting.

Some people like Nora might wish to die alone, but to live and to be alone-that is something else! How unnerved she must have felt knocking on doors and calling out “Mrs Gordon!” and “Where is everybody?” only to be met by the silent response of total human absence.

Street

As Nora descends to the street, the sense of tension and suspense is heightened by the accompanying percussive music score. Visually, Nora becomes a mere isolated, scurrying diminutive figure scuttling ant-like hither and thither along the deserted city streets with their looming and impassive architecture.

After walking for several blocks, Nora encounters no sign of life anywhere in the city. It is the sign of death that brings the stab of panic and fear to her (and the audience) as Nora stumbles upon a woman's corpse in a doorway. Its lifeless death-stare causes her to suddenly and shockingly back into a stranger who seems to have materialized out of nowhere.

We soon learn that this stranger who so suddenly appeared behind Nora is Frank Brooks who tells her that, after he arrived in the city from Detroit the night before, was robbed, "slugged and dumped in an alley." He had managed to revive only a few minutes earlier.

As Frank and Nora walk to the city centre, they try to figure out what has happened to the city's inhabitants. By a process of elimination, they determine that it was probably not the result of a nuclear bomb or germ warfare. As to their own presence in the city, Frank uses the analogy of a sack of sugar to explain it whereby some of the gains seem to always stick to the sack.

Restaurant

Almost unbelievably considering the circumstances, Frank and Nora hear music coming from inside a restaurant. Inside they find a woman, Vicki Harris, playing the piano as her male companion, Jim Wilson mixes her a drink. Both are rather inebriated and have been "celebrating as though it's New Year's Eve." How differently people react to being placed in similar circumstances!

And the choices they make! For this quartet, the choices boil down to getting out of town or staying and enjoy what's on offer. They decide to keep on the move by supposedly visiting other night spots.

Street

When they attempt to take a car, the owner's dead body almost falls out the open door. This is a stark reminder that even in the face of human catastrophes and calamities, objects, artifacts and places were once owned and used by living people with flesh and blood histories and stories to tell.

Suddenly, the four are interrupted by a man, Charles Otis, who explains that he was "trying to get out town, like yourselves." He had also been checking the cars and discovered that they have all been disabled by having the distributor caps removed.

Otis then declares that the area he just came from appeared to have been heavily looted. His description of what has taken place allows the audience to use their imaginations to picture the scene of destruction: the “mess”, smashed windows and so on.

The audience is again invited to use their imagination when the group witness the giant shadow (“it doesn’t look human!”) of a monstrous figure being cast on the side of a tall building. How the human mind has the capacity to create phantoms and monsters from mere shadows as the brain struggles to make sense of the unknown and unfamiliar!

Hotel Lobby

After they decide to hide in a hotel across the street, Otis finds a newspaper with the headlines:

"Invasion By Mystery Army.
City To Be Evacuated."

The accompanying report states that “hostile forces of an unknown origin” have landed fifty miles north of the city. Terrified, Otis tries to escape but is killed in the street by a disintegrating ray directed at him from the head of a large robot.

Intriguingly, Frank mentions that he has a desk at the “Home Office” which suggests that he is employed by the government. I’m not sure if this is the equivalent of the State Department or like the UK’s Home Office which these days is responsible for immigration, security, and law and order, including the police, UK Border Agency, and the Security Service (MI5). We also have further insight into Frank’s background when he suggests that the robot invasion force is “part of an advance patrol” as per his experience in the “last war.”

Seeking a more secure hiding place, the quartet move from the hotel lobby to a suite (402 – 404) on the fourth floor.

Army command post

The discussion between a general and his colleagues paints a fuller picture as to the nature of the enemy and what has been occurring off-screen so far: They are dealing with an “enemy, the likes of which defies description,” that “the invasion was not launched by a power on this earth” and that “the consensus is that they came from Venus.”

We learn that the invaders have already destroyed an airborne division as well as twenty-four planes from bomber command.

Hotel

Back at the hotel, Nora's observation that the invasion force "must have weapons we have never dreamed of" serves to confirm the scenario presented at the army command post. Frank's suggestion that the enemy may be from Venus, the only planet capable of supporting life, also confirms what was suggested at the command post. (OK astronomy buffs, we know a lot more about conditions on Venus these days! So what? This is a journey into the "what if?" If you don't like it, get off!)

As the film, "Target Earth" is more about character than scientific accuracy; Nora's revelation to Frank about her suicide attempt is significant. She declares that she wouldn't care if they dropped the H-Bomb and that she "never intended to wake up at all." We learn that her husband was killed in a car crash and that she blamed herself for his death with the result that she felt that she didn't have a reason to live. Now, with the current threat to humanity's existence, everything has changed for Nora, except that it seems to be "too late to do anything about it."

What of the other characters that have been thrown into this situation? Vicki and Jim, who have been seeing each other for ten years constantly bicker and squabble. Jim uncharacteristically offers to help Frank find food and Vicki observes that yesterday he wouldn't have given her a seat on a bus. Jim retorts by stating, "Today the busses aren't running anymore." Later on Jim declares to Vicki that "if we ever get out of this dive, we'll do all our fighting from the same corner." It's amazing what a crisis can do to put things into perspective and enable people to work out what really is important in life.

Army command post

The general wouldn't be a military man if didn't order atomic artillery and guided missiles to be readied and that's exactly what he does. Just then he receives news that (as luck would have it) a deactivated robot has been found. This looks like a job for a team of scientists to attempt to discover what has caused the robot to become inoperative.

Laboratory

The chief scientist determines that the robots are driven by electro-magnetic impulses, that they can duplicate human motion, are impervious to bullets and are "incapable of pain, fear or compassion." Qualities expressed by later screen robotic descendants such as Cybermen, Terminators and so on.

Hotel

Back at the hotel, another character has been thrown into the mix in the form of a psychotic killer named Davis, who escaped from custody during the evacuation. He has broken into the suite and holds the group at gunpoint. He states that he "wouldn't stand a chance alone and

without a gun.” He informs Nora that he knows a way out of the city by means of a sewer and intends for her to accompany him. He also intends to use the others as decoys.

Laboratory

Science to the rescue! Hurrah! A means seems to have been discovered to destroy the lethal, beam-generating cathode ray tube located in the robots' heads.

Hotel Lobby

As Davis is about to escape, Vicki bravely chooses to confront him, which results in him choosing to act in the only way he knows how: by shooting and killing her. Jim then attacks Davis and violently chokes him to death, which is an understandable instinctive and emotional reaction rather than a choice. Most of us would do anything to protect, defend and even avenge those who are most precious and dear to us.

Hotel Roof

The heightened tension is maintained by the sudden appearance of a robot smashing through the hotel lobby's window and its mechanical nosferatu-like pursuit of Frank, Nora and Jim up the stairs leading to the hotel's roof. With the elevation of the characters to the highest level of the hotel building as death in mechanized form looms ever closer, comes an elevation of the best of human qualities and heroic choices of the characters with Jim's attempts to divert the robot away from Nora and Frank and his being killed by the robot's beam.

Just as the robot is about to disintegrate Frank and Nora with its beam, Army vehicles arrive on the scene. They are equipped with loudspeakers that emit a high frequency tone that can shatter the robots' cathode ray tubes and render them inoperative. By this means the roof-top robot is disabled and the good planet Earth can now rest a bit easier.....

Points Of Interest

The movie, “Target Earth” was based on the 1953 short story, "Deadly City" by Paul W. Fairman.

“Target Earth” was sneakily filmed on the deserted streets of Los Angeles early one Sunday morning, without the necessary permits. The film's story, however is based in Chicago.

I know there are those critics out there who salivate at the prospect of pointing out the film's low budget, lack of sophisticated special effects and so on. For me the main feature of the film is its basic premise: An assorted group of people finding themselves in an abandoned city, being forced to contend with an alien menace and having to make choices that have significant

personal and collective consequences.

As is well-known, only one robot was constructed and it was used for all scenes in the film. The robot army and alien invasion is conveyed to us as being more like an impending threat instead of an immediate in-your-face-here-come-the-explosions-and-one-damn-thing-after-another presence. With the alien robots being off-screen most of the time, the threat they pose seems to work more on a psychological level which seems to mirror the nature of the fears experienced by many people at that time. Who exactly is the enemy and what kind of threat do they pose to us?

Sure, there's a single robot that looks a bit like a lumbering washing machine with legs. Get over it! The film was made in a time long before the advent of computer generated special effects and technology like the internet, laptops, tablets and smart phones! Try to appreciate the film in the context of what it tried to achieve with its limited budget and that it was the 1950s, a time of fear concerning the Russians and the widespread sightings of UFO's. Add to this the fact that the film's focus is more on character studies than on special effects which might be a priority for many of today's audiences and critics who are used to being fed on a diet of films laden with computer generated effects, puerile non-stop action, video-game oriented presentations, shaky camera shots, threadbare story lines and hollow one-dimensional characters.

What makes this film work quite well is the sense of unease and tension that is maintained throughout most of the first half of the movie followed by the character revelations in the second half. Add to this not only the imminent threat posed to the humans by the alien invaders, but also the potential threat being posed by General Wood and the military. The group in the hotel are unaware that the city could be destroyed by tactical nuclear weapons at any moment-a fact that the audience is quite well aware of.

Descriptions of what takes place off-screen / stage; the various choices that characters make when confronted by circumstances; tension heightened by what the audience knows and the characters don't know.....the very tools of trade used by none other than a certain Mr Shakespeare! I wonder if he would have enjoyed "Target Earth?" Me thinks he would!

The Quatermass Xperiment (1955)
The Creeping Unknown (US title)

An effective combination of action, suspense, horror and alien-possession sci-fi

Directed by Val Guest
Produced by Anthony Hinds
Screenplay by Richard Landau, Val Guest
Based on The Quatermass Experiment by Nigel Kneale
Music by James Bernard
Cinematography: Walter J. Harvey
Edited by James Needs
Production company: Hammer Film Productions
Distributed by Exclusive Films (UK), United Artists (USA)
Running time: 82 minutes
Budget: £42,000

Cast

Brian Donlevy as Prof Bernard Quatermass
Jack Warner as Insp. Lomax
Margia Dean as Mrs. Judith Carroon
Thora Hird as Rosemary 'Rosie' Elizabeth Wrigley
Gordon Jackson as BBC TV producer
David King-Wood as Dr Gordon Briscoe
Harold Lang as Christie
Lionel Jeffries as Blake
Sam Kydd as Police sergeant questioning Rosie
Richard Wordsworth as Victor Carroon

Summary Of findings By The Royal Commission of Inquiry Into The Manned Rocket Mission
Headed By Professor Bernard Quatermass, Also Known As
"The Quatermass Xperiment."

Membership:

L. Lippert (Chair); S Skouras; B Lovell

Introduction:

On 26 August 1955, a manned missile, launched by the team led by Prof Quatermass, landed in the English countryside, one mile south of the village of Bray, Berkshire. Of the three members of the crew aboard the craft, two were found to have mysteriously disappeared. The surviving crew member, Mr Victor Carroon was recovered barely alive and subsequently underwent a horrific physical metamorphosis. The surviving crew member managed to break out of medical confinement and, while being pursued by investigating Scotland Yard inspector Lomax, embarked on a killing spree using humans and animals to feed his transformation, It was later

determined that this was the method which an alien life form was to use in order to invade our planet.

Summary Of Known Events

(Based upon numerous scientific and professional reports, submissions and expert witness testimonies to this Inquiry)

Professor Bernard Quatermass was in charge of the manned rocket mission that crash-landed in a farmer's field in the English countryside.

Quatermass' team (British-American Rocket Group) had lost contact with the spaceship and had no indication as to how far into space it may have traveled. According to Prof Quatermass' testimony, "We lost it for 57 hours."

Initial reports of the rocket's re-entry into the Earth's atmosphere at approximately 9.15 pm on 26 August, 1955 suggested that it might have been a "jet" or that it was "probably a meteor."

The general public were warned to stay away from the area, to return to their homes and not to hamper operations at the crash site.

Upon gaining entry to the rocket, it was found that only one of the three occupants, Victor Carroon, was on board while the other two crew members, Reichenheim and Green seem simply to have had vanished. All that was found were just two empty space suits.

Carroon, the surviving astronaut, soon began to display signs of an inexplicable physical transformation. The only known comment from Carroon was made in an ambulance just prior to his being taken away for treatment when according to Dr Gordon Briscoe, he uttered the words, "Help me..... Help me."

Newspaper headlines such as "Man Masters Space" and "Quatermass Says No To Police Investigation" soon began to appear. The media reportage of the mystery led to involvement by the police, headed by Inspector Lomax of Scotland Yard with the reluctant cooperation of Professor Quatermass.

Inspector Lomax later pointed out that the fingerprints that were taken from Carroon in the ambulance were totally different from those provided by Professor Quatermass. In his testimony, Quatermass indicated that the prints were "not human!"

According to Professor Quatermass, he began to realize that Carroon may have been infected by an alien entity while out in space.

The effects of the transformation on Carroon according to Dr Gordon Briscoe were that his skin

made one feel that you were “shaking hands with ice.” In addition, his skin was taking on a swollen appearance and his bone structure was undergoing dramatic changes.

It soon became apparent that Carroon could no longer be looked after where he was and therefore he was eventually transferred to a hospital in order to be closely monitored and cared for.

Soon after receiving treatment at the hospital, Carroon managed to escape with the help of his wife, Mrs. Judith Carroon and another male who appears to have been a private investigator whose body was found by a nurse. It was found that his skull had been caved in and his body was drained of blood and as stated before this Inquiry, it was “as though the life (had) been drawn right out of him.”

It was later determined that Carroon had come into contact with a cactus plant at the hospital and that this produced a grotesque transformation in his hand: a form of plant and animal biological fusion within Carroon.

The police soon put out an APB for Carroon after he had run off leaving his terror-stricken wife.

All members of this Royal Commission of Inquiry have attended a viewing of the film from the space ship. Although rather grainy in quality and lacking any audio, it is obvious that something had infiltrated and disabled the craft, and then killed two of the crew members, while leaving Carroon alive. There was also a fantastic drop in temperature evident at the time.

The subsequent murder of a pharmacist at a chemists shop and the slaughter of a number of animals at London Zoo, pointed to Carroon as the one being responsible.

From the numerous scientific and professional reports, submissions and expert witness testimonies to the Inquiry, a consensus had begun to emerge as to the probable nature of the alien entity.

1. As the creature mutated, it began to leave a trail like a snail.
2. A fragment of the creature discovered at the zoo indicated that it was self- sufficient and could develop in its own right.
3. The entity was a form of life in space that was “just drifting” when the rocket encountered it.
4. A union between plant and animal life was beginning to take place.
5. In order for the creature to live, it had to have food.

6. The danger was that the creature could self-procreate and multiply, and that within just a 24 hour time period London would have been overwhelmed by a multitude of slithering life-draining alien beings.

The police sergeant who had questioned a bag lady by the name of Rosemary 'Rosie' Elizabeth Wrigley at his local police station, repeated the information she had volunteered to him concerning the creature. She described it as being "shocking," "enormous," "kinda' crawlin,'" and definitely not in her words a "gin goblin!"

All members of this Royal Commission of Inquiry have also attended a viewing of the tapes from the BBC Outside Broadcasting unit that had been set up to give a live broadcast on the restoration work that was then being undertaken at Westminster Abbey. At first, vision of a man's body lying lifeless on the ground could be seen. It was apparent that he had been killed before he fell. Next we witnessed the creature itself atop the work-men's scaffolding. Little remained of Carroon. All that could be seen on the by then 20 foot slithering mass were scales, an eye, and thorns apparently adapted from the cactus plant.

It was eventually decided that the best way to eliminate the creature without the threat of releasing spores across London was to route the entire electricity grid to Westminster Abbey straight to a cable attached to the scaffolding on which the creature was situated.

The measures taken to terminate the threat posed to our planet by the creature proved to be successful. However, contrary to Professor Quatermass' stated goal of wanting to "start again," the Inquiry would like to draw attention to its assessments and conclusions pertaining to The Manned Rocket Mission Headed By Professor Bernard Quatermass, Also Known As The Quatermass Xperiment and its aftermath.

Assessments & Conclusions

Based upon the numerous scientific and professional reports, submissions and expert witness testimonies to the Inquiry, it has been determined that Professor Quatermass did deliberately and recklessly launch the rocket without official sanction, as pointed out to the current Royal Commission of Inquiry by a Ministry of Defence official. By so doing, he endangered the national security of Great Britain, the very existence of the British Empire and the survival of the entire human race.

Quatermass' oft repeated comment that, "they'll (the astronauts) fire the imagination" indicates that his only concern was for the mission and its supposed symbolic value to humanity for which he would presumably derive full credit.

His testimony where he stated the following; “I launched it (the rocket) and I brought it back!” along with “I am the best qualified” (to conduct a scientific investigation) as well as the testimony of other witnesses who reported him as telling them “don’t tell me what I can and can’t do!” and “don’t argue with me, I know what I’m doing!” indicate a preoccupation with his own ego and sense of self-worth as well as his belief in his own personal infallibility.

His lack of empathy and lack of regard for the consequences of his actions is best revealed by his overwhelming need to unlock the mind of the unfortunate Carroon and the fact that he felt he was in his own words, “on the very verge of some great discovery.” This aspect of Quatermass’ character is also evident from Mrs Carroon’s testimony when she related that she once told Quatermass that she thought he had “destroyed him (her husband) like you destroy everything you touch.”

The film from the space craft on its own has convinced this Royal Commission of Inquiry of the essential truth behind Professor Quatermass’ words that we were indeed dealing with “something beyond our understanding.” It is with these words in mind that this Inquiry puts forward the following recommendations;

1. All future manned space flights (government, private and commercial) must adhere to a strict set of guidelines in terms of safety, quality control and conduct of mission procedures.
2. A body must be established to oversee and enforce adherence to such guidelines.
3. A set of protocols must be set that deal with contact with alien life forms and any potential threats to national and global security that may arise from such contacts.
4. That Her Majesty’s Government work with other nations’ governments in order to arrive at a consensus for achieving the above measures and that this be formally presented and agreed to at a special meeting of the United Nations to be called for by the end of the current decade.
5. Finally, based on the evidence put forward to this Inquiry, that Professor Quatermass be held accountable for what appears to be criminally negligent conduct in the matter of the manned rocket mission which he headed by requiring him to stand trial in a court of law should it be found by the Attorney General that legal grounds exist for the prosecution of Professor Quatermass.

Points Of Interest

“The Quatermass Xperiment” was based on the six-part 1953 BBC Television serial “The Quatermass Experiment” written by Nigel Kneale.

In the television serial version’s climax, Quatermass appeals to what remains of the creature’s

humanity and convinces it to commit suicide in order to save the world. In the film version, Quatermass terminates the creature by electrocution.

The Quatermass Xperiment premiered on 26 August 1955 at the London Pavilion on Piccadilly Circus.

The film was shot on location in London, Windsor and Bray and at Hammer's Bray Studios.

The film was marketed by Hammer in the U K by dropping the "E" from "Experiment" in the title to emphasize the adults-only 'X' Certificate (restricting admission to persons over the age of sixteen) given to the film by the British Board of Film Censors.

It was the first Hammer production to attract the attention of a major distributor in the US where United Artists distributed the film under the title, "The Creeping Unknown."

"The Quatermass Xperiment" was the first of these "Hammer Horrors" and spawned two sequels, "Quatermass 2" (1957) and "Quatermass and the Pit" (1967).

With an American audience in mind, Irish American actor Brian Donlevy was picked to play the title role of Quatermass. He specialized in tough guy roles. At about this time his career was in decline and he was reportedly suffering from alcoholism. Donlevy's brusque no-nonsense portrayal of Quatermass is in contrast to Nigel Kneale's original sensitive and thoughtful British scientist character.

The surname of Quatermass was chosen out of a phone book while the Christian name, Bernard, was named in honor of Bernard Lovell, the creator of Jodrell Bank (The Jodrell Bank Observatory, once the Jodrell Bank Experimental Station, then the Nuffield Radio Astronomy Laboratories from 1966 to 1999.)

Richard Wordsworth (stage actor and great-great grandson of the poet William Wordsworth) was cast as Victor Carroon mainly because he had the right kind of features for the part. His role in the film consisted predominantly of mime by which he effectively conveyed the kind of anguish and torment experienced by his character. Note his internal struggle at the docks where we can see that Carroon is obviously aware of what would happen if the young girl made contact with him.

Makeup artist Phil Leakey worked with cinematographer Walter J. Harvey to emphasize the shadows around Wordsworth's face to give him a skeletal appearance. The make-up job was made easier by Wordsworth's natural high cheekbones and hollow temples. It was agreed that the makeup should make the Carroon character appear pitiful rather than repulsive or grotesque.

Director, Val Guest decided to try and make an unbelievable story more believable by creating a

science fact film, something like a BBC factual documentary style of film. Adding to the pace and realism of the story, Guest employed the use of the hand-held camera, as well as rapid-fire overlapping dialogue. Guest used a wide-angle lens for shots of the rocket crash site to create a sense of vastness to the scene.

Les Bowie who provided the special effects for the film, constructed a monster for the climactic scenes at Westminster Abbey using tripe and rubber and photographed it against a model of the Abbey. Sparks and fireworks were used for the shots featuring the electrocution of the creature. An eye was added to the model of the monster and a human scream added to the soundtrack to impart a sense of humanity to the creature in its final moments.

James Bernard's music score for the film employs the use of atonal strings to effectively create a sense of unnerving menace, a technique later used by Bernard Herrmann's score for Hitchcock's film, "Psycho" (1960).

The film's effectiveness centers around the creation of an unsettling atmosphere and what it suggests in terms of horror and terror rather than what would today be explicitly shown. Many of the shock and horror sequences take place off screen while the camera cuts away and use is made of reaction shots.

Although human progress has always been and always will be driven by individuals who possess resources, vision and imagination, we should be wary of the type of person with the kind of obsessive drive as was displayed by Donlevy's Professor Quatermass. The quest for scientific achievement must not be confused with or motivated primarily by the quest for satisfying an individual's ego. Nor must it be undertaken without regard to the potential consequences of that quest to both those involved and to the rest of humanity.

This Island, Earth (1955)

An enthralling visual feast that takes you on one of the best sci-fi adventure rides of your life!

Directed by Joseph M. Newman

Produced by William Alland

Written by Raymond F. Jones, Franklin Coen, Edward G. O'Callaghan

Music by Joseph Gershenson (music supervision), Henry Mancini, Hans J. Salter, Herman Stein

Cinematography: Clifford Stine

Edited by Virgil Vogel

Production company: Universal-International

Distributed by Universal Pictures

Running time: 87 minutes

Box office: \$1.7 million (US)

Cast

Jeff Morrow: Exeter

Faith Domergue: Ruth Adams

Rex Reason: Dr Cal Meacham

Lance Fuller: Braack

Russell Johnson: Steve Carlson

Duglas Spencer: The Monitor of Metaluna

Robert Nichols: Joe Wilson

Karl Ludwig Lindt: Dr Adolph Engelborg

A quest to save a dying planet!!

An evil alien scheme to take over the Earth!!

An interplanetary war!!

(Warning! Spoilers follow.....)

Things In Heaven And Earth

Let us take in a panoramic view of the great seat of human pride and power, the capital city of the United States of America, Washington DC. Here we find a fitting representative of human arrogance and hubris, Dr Cal Meacham as he gives an interview to a handful of reporters, prior to his boarding a Lockheed T-33A jet fighter at Andrews AFB, just outside Washington, DC. He has just attended a conference on atomic energy, and filled to the brim with a sense of his own self-importance, he parcels out tantalizing tidbits of information about the possible "industrial application of atomic energy" and the need to "team up atomic energy with electronics" in order to truly realize the push-button age. No matter if the reporters and the public they "inform" don't understand since according to Meacham, "what counts is how I make it work." Watch now as he boards his plane, that pinnacle of human technological ingenuity and soars off into the wide blue yonder of smug self-assurance.

Fly high and far little fly and gaze down upon the mighty Grand Canyon and the majesty of the

Sierra Nevada range from the lofty domain you think you have made your own. Now underscore that achievement with a triumphant buzz over the Ryberg Electronics Company airfield control tower and follow this up with a steep climb that will bring you ever nearer to the sun!

As your plane flames out and before you crash, do you consider the possibility that you have tried to fly too close to the sun once too often? Then again, as your ears are being assailed by a "high frequency howl" did you ever consider the possibility that control would be taken out your hands by someone or something more powerful than could've been dreamt of in your philosophy? How does it feel to lose control of one's own destiny as you descend enveloped in a bright green beam of power to make what would normally have been an impossible perfect landing? Not only had your "plane died up there," but so had all of your old certainties that provided the foundations for your life and the materials for fashioning a future fantasy foretold by a fool.

And so the master Cal Meacham and his apprentice, Joe Wilson put the incident aside and concentrate on their search for the philosopher's stone.....

Beware Of "Gods" Bearing Gifts

How easy to hook the human natives with the tantalizing temptation of technological trinkets! During one of their experiments, Cal and Joe have managed to burn out one of their large condensers. Joe had ordered two replacement condensers but their regular supplier had sent them several small beads instead. Surprisingly to these primitives, the new beads (ABC model from "Electronic Section, Unit 16.") can hold over 30,000 volts with no leakage before disintegrating. They are also impervious to your puny diamond drill! How odd is it that the supplier hadn't had an order from Cal's company for six weeks despite the fact that Joe swears he had definitely placed such an order!

Even more surprising, our human friend has received an unusual order in the form of instructions and parts (more than 2,000 of them) to build a complex communication device called an Interocitor. Sheer human curiosity especially of the scientific variety should be enough bait to attract attention in order to reel in and land these knowledge hungry fish. Notice that even though neither Meacham nor Joe know anything about the device, they decide to go ahead and begin construction. As Meacham declares, "I want to know what it is and what it does!"

The assembled Interocitor consists of a large cabinet with an inverted triangular-shaped screen on top. They have built a Trojan horse for someone else but all that emerges from it at first is a voice instructing them how to "clear the screen." When they do so, the image of a man called Exeter appears.

Exeter informs Meacham that he has passed an aptitude test. His ability to build the Interocitor demonstrates that he is qualified to "join our team" as part of Exeter's special research project. It

is put to him that he is to board a plane that will land, wait for five minutes, and then take off again with or without him in it.

Like so many who are seduced and fooled by spam emails, unsolicited marketing phone calls and political spin that play on people's vanity, needs and desires, Meacham seems not to be able to see beyond the sales pitch to what is actually before his eyes looking down at him. After all, this fellow "scientist" and "colleague" is merely "seeking scientists of exceptional ability." Right?

How does it feel, Meacham, to be looking up into the eyes of someone or something that views you at best as a gifted primitive who may prove to be of use? If you are not yet convinced then a demonstration of power might reveal how resistance and exposure of the truth would be futile. Even now Exeter orders Cal to set the parts and instruction catalogue on a worktable and disintegrates it by means of three bright red laser-like rays shooting out from the corners of the screen. See now how the Interociter blows up, catches fire, and burns, leaving merely a charred memory of its existence.

"He was right about one thing. I'm going to be on that plane." Oh, it was all too easy! Cal has agreed to board the flight.

Today is the day of the flight and see how the twin-engine Douglas DC-3 Dakota automatically lands in a pea-soup fog worthy of the ending to a Humphrey Bogart film. The plane's cockpit windows are painted over, and there are no side windows. Inside the cockpit stands an Interociter through which Exeter's voice instructs Cal to take up position in the single central seat. As he is doing so, Joe pleads with him, "This whole thing smells to high heaven. Cal, I beg of you, don't go!"

As is often the case in human affairs, the danger is recognized when it is too late. The plane takes off into the unknown leaving Joe enveloped and consumed by a thick fog of foreboding.

False face must hide what the false heart doth know

Cal lands and is met by Dr Ruth Adams whom he remembers from a conference and a midnight swim some five years previously. However, she insists that he is mistaken.

Ruth now drives him to "The Club" where all necessary comforts and facilities are provided. Here she introduces Cal to Dr Steve Carlson and Dr Adolf Engelborg, both famous scientists.

Finally Cal gets to meet Exeter face-to-face and is informed that he represents a group of scientists who are developing technological achievements such as limitless amounts of nuclear energy that will one day "put an end to war."

Ah, to be made to feel special, with a sense of belonging to a privileged community of individuals working as part of a team! Will the enticement of the prospect of collaborating with esteemed colleagues for a noble global humanitarian cause prove to be too irresistible to our friend? We human beings are capable of blatant lying and subterfuge in order to get what we want. Just ask the indigenous peoples of many countries throughout history who have been invaded and lied to by technologically advanced civilizations! Why would we expect anything different from intelligent beings we might encounter?

Lo and behold! Right in the middle of Exeter giving Cal a virtual tour of the facilities, the Interociter indicates an incoming call is being received. Alone, Exeter is told that The Monitor is displeased that he is not moving fast enough. Despite Exeter's protests, The Monitor instructs him to "carry on with Plan A as instructed."

And The Truth Is Plain To See

Exeter and his erstwhile but unnerving and rather uptight assistant, Braack are at this moment hosting a formal dinner for all the members of The Club: In the background you can hear Mozart's "A Little Night Music" playing. Listen now as Cal turns to Exeter and asks him what he thinks of Mozart. Exeter replies with, "I don't know the gent...Ah. My mind must have been wandering. Your composer, of course." Oops! Hear how Cal retorts, "'Our composer? He belongs to the world!" BINGO!

Outside, under the pretext of taking in some fresh air, Cal observes to Ruth and Steve that all of the scientists are involved "in the production of atomic energy" and that there is a lack of representation of any other scientific discipline such as biochemistry.

Now in his laboratory, Cal positions a thick lead plate in front of his Interociter in an attempt to obtain some privacy. He observes that Ruth and Steve "are walking around as if you're scared of your own shadows." Ruth now confesses that she did indeed take a midnight swim with him back in Vermont, but had to be sure that she could trust him. Take away people's sense of privacy and trust by increasing surveillance and monitoring and the way is left open for control and manipulation by those who possess and exercise power. Add to that a good measure of fear as a powerful motivator for compliance and obedience. As is pointed out by Ruth and Steve, Exeter has a "sun lamp" type of device that is called a "Transformer" whose effects are "similar to a lobotomy" whereby areas of the brain governing willpower are targeted rendering the victim compliant.

It looks like Exeter has failed in his attempt to use the Interociter to spy on Cal, Ruth, and Steve (foiled by a cat named Neutron). So, what does he do? He decides to set up a demonstration for Cal of his power by using the Interociter's neutrino ray ("missing link between energy and matter") to cut a hole in the protective lead plate. His implied message is one familiar to all power-wielding authoritarian dictatorships: comply and obey, or else! How subtle!

Bid For Freedom

Abuse of power, threats and intimidation in the end only serve to generate opposition and resistance. See how in a final meeting Steve, Ruth and Cal share what information they possess: sketches of the Interociter and how it might function; sketches of Exeter and Braack highlighting their shared physical characteristics such as indentations in the forehead, and a sketch of a hillside, not far from the compound, which appears to be hollowed out and covered.

As our three plucky intrepid scientists make their escape bid from the house and compound, Exeter and Braack receive a call from The Monitor: emergency Plan B is now in effect involving a full evacuation, and destruction of the house and its occupants with the exception of Cal and Ruth. It appears that Exeter's home planet's ionization layer is failing.

Braack possessing a typical security and military mindset uses the Interociter to fire neutrino beams at the car which Steve, Cal and Ruth are using to escape in. As Steve tries to draw the fire of the Interociter away from Ruth and Cal he is killed, along with Adolf Engelborg, as he attempts to communicate with the two scientists.

Keep running Cal and Ruth until you get to the airstrip where you will find and board a tiny single-engine 1949 Aeronca 11 Chief plane. As you take off what do you see? Yes! An actual flying saucer of the kind you've been hearing many reports about. You'll be seeing plenty of those around Washington DC next year! What is it doing? Hovering and firing a ray which has destroyed the house! So, what they can't possess and control, they destroy. Sound familiar?

Into The Whale's Belly

Wait a minute! What is the saucer doing now? Oh no! It's hovering over your pathetic little plane, and bathing it in a green light. Even though there's still another decade until "Star Trek," it appears that your plane is now being locked on and drawn into the saucer by a tractor beam!

On board the ship Cal and Ruth see its commander, Exeter and his crew who all look like him. And of course, there's Braack being all security chiefy and such. In Cal's eyes they have committed "mass murder" to which Exeter retorts that he could have done nothing else, and that he is neither a "devil or saint." Cal and Ruth are now destined to fly to Exeter's home world, Metaluna which lies "far beyond your solar system." Exeter even attempts to appeal to the humans to "try to have more sympathy" when they come to better understand the plight of his people.

A Space Oddity

Strap yourselves in because you're now passing through a "thermal barrier" and it's getting hot, hot hot! It looks like Cal and Ruth will need to undergo a "conversion" process so they can survive in an atmosphere with a pressure akin to being far submerged under Earth's oceans.

Just when you think it's safe, here come the Zahgons who appear to be bent on spoiling your jaunt through space by attacking you with guided meteors (yes, I said meteors!) Who are these Zahgons I hear you ask? Well, (apart from sounding like characters from a Douglas Adam's novel) they are the interplanetary enemies of Metaluna who they currently are at war with.

After dispatching several Zahgon attack craft, you manage to pass through the "ionization layer" toward the desolate and barren surface of Metaluna. You discover that the remaining Metalunans have had to retreat underground and that they are facing imminent defeat. According to Exeter, it is the "beginning of the end of our world." You can see now the reason behind the urgency of Exeter's project: Metaluna needs vast amounts of uranium to prevent the loss their last shield.

You now know that the Metalunans came to Earth seeking uranium deposits as well as scientists to help them defend their planet in a war against the Zahgons. Will you now take a second to contemplate the possibility that a technologically advanced civilization may wish to establish contact not for any altruistic motive such as warning us about our own planet's destructive path or wishing to share the fruits of their technological development in a spirit of universal love and galactic kumbaya? Instead, they may be governed by an at best "what's in it for us?" mentality or at worst by a need to subjugate and exploit.

And of course, we naturally assume that a technologically advanced civilization elsewhere in the universe would be soooo much more spiritually advanced than we are. No war! Peace & harmony! Meaning of life, the universe and everything discovered! Tea and cucumber sandwiches with God! Of course they couldn't possibly be engaged in flexing their technological muscles with a galactic neighbor over something like real estate, ideology, religion, politics, ethnicity or something equally petty. Nor would they stoop so low as to kick sand in the face of 90 pound weaklings inhabiting a speck of dust orbiting a little yellow sun in a minor system located on the fringe of a single galaxy consisting of millions and billions of stars in just one universe consisting of millions and billions of galaxies happily expanding until eventually all the lights go out.....Surely they wouldn't!

Well, Cal and Ruth, enjoy your ride and take in the sights of the once mighty Metaluna: a Dante's inferno with the charred remains of destroyed universities and ruined cultural centers, and a single building, the centre of Metaluna's government, surrounded by the refuse of war. Why do you not tremble and bow before The Monitor, as he struggles to maintain the ionization layer and issues edicts concerning the scant remnants of his once mighty Metalunan empire needing to travel to Earth for refuge, a "peaceful relocation?" And still you don't bow to your future superiors? Then off to the "thought transference chamber" you go!

The Thought Transference Chamber will be used to suppress your free will so that you cannot defy the will of The Monitor: the worthy aim of all good totalitarian and authoritarian regimes! How kind of Exeter to point out its basic immorality, especially since such a process would interfere with your ability to assist the Metalunans! What's that I hear you say, Ruth? "My mind is my own and nobody is going to change it!"

Defiance!

So you refuse to enter the chamber and even attempt to escape! Like all regimes bent on control there is always a force of mindless monoric mutant-like goons programmed to enforce the will of those in authority. Well, here comes a Mu-tant about to do what he has been bred to do-force you to cooperate.

That's it Cal, fight back and take any opportunity that's afforded to you. Down goes Exeter after being introduced to your fist. Down goes the Mutant after a Zahgon meteor bomb strikes the building bringing down a pile of rubble on top of it.

Wait! Help has come from an unlikely source in the form of Exeter. He is willing to help you both get off Metaluna whose ruler, The Monitor has since been killed. (Has he come to his senses at last or does he fear being alone, the last of his kind who now only has the company of two beings in the whole universe who know and may understand him?)

As Exeter drives you to the ship you soon discover the way is blocked by another Mutant standing guard at the ship. Exeter, your authority has crumbled along with your planet. See how the Mutant ignores your orders to stand aside and instead attacks and injures you. Thank goodness for Cal's quick thinking by striking the Mutant over the head with a fire extinguisher, and helping you aboard the saucer. (Are they displaying the so-called human quality of mercy or merely practicality, knowing that only you can fly the ship?) By the way, has anyone noticed the Mutant climbing aboard just as the hatch is closing?

The Way Home

Never mind the Mutant now. You've got more pressing issues to contend with such as dodging Zahgon guided meteors and watching helplessly as hundreds of guided meteors bombard Metaluna, causing it to ignite and turn into a star, "giving light to those who may need it." Throughout the universe the endless cycle plays itself out where from out of the darkness of destruction shines a new light of hope to light the path for life to find its way.

Ah! The horror is not over because just as you three are about to undergo the "conversion" treatment our mindlessly persistent friend, the Mutant sets his compound eyes on Ruth. Our damsel in distress finds herself having to run from the Mutant while trying to shake the effects of

the conversion treatment. Luckily the differential pressures have put paid to the Mutant's evil intentions as it topples over and disintegrates.

The three of you have managed to sail through space and steer a course back to this island, Earth and are now over the Californian coast. Exeter intends to drop the both of you in your little plane into the air but he has no intention of landing himself. He will lie to them by telling them that "our universe is vast" and that he will explore the galaxy for another Metaluna despite the fact that the ship is almost out of power. It's no use pleading with Exeter to come with you, Cal and Ruth. He'll only tell you that his wounds are fatal.

Both of you cling together in your little plane, glad to be home at last and thanking God that it is "still here." After all, this little island in a vast universe is the only home you have to come back to.

And what of Exeter? In appearance, different yet very similar to us. His character and nature was quite flawed but instantly and uncomfortably recognizable to us. We saw reflected in Exeter and his alien civilization some of the worst characteristics of human beings who inhabit our little "island" in space. As Exeter's ship descends into the sea in a ball of flame, let's hope that this does not serve as an omen for the fate of.....

"This Island, Earth"

Points Of Interest

"This island Earth" is based on the novel of the same name by Raymond F. Jones which was originally published as three novelettes in the magazine Thrilling Wonder Stories: "The Alien Machine" (June 1949), "The Shroud of Secrecy" (December 1949), and "The Greater Conflict" (February 1950)

The special effects were very well done for the time. The films sets are also impressive, along with the art direction and costume design. Consider for instance the depiction of the war-ravaged Metaluna and the battle between the Metalunans and Zahgons all of which holds up well even today.

The technical aspects of the film are quite amazing for the period. We have the notion of the flexible metallic paper of the manual that Cal received together with the "Interociter": a futuristic two-way 3D video communication device that even incorporates a deadly neutrino ray.

All the elements of the film combine to produce something akin to a vividly colourful and visually beautiful live action comic book complete with mutant monsters and interplanetary warfare.

Faith Domergue gives a competent performance as Ruth Adams. She also appeared in the

science fiction films,” It Came from Beneath the Sea” and “The Atomic Man,” both of which feature elsewhere in this book series.

Another familiar face is Russell Johnson (the professor from Gilligan's Island) who plays Steve Carlson. He also appeared in “It Came From Outer Space” (featured in this series) where he had the role of George, one of the two line technicians who were possessed by the alien entity.

The standout character is the Metalunan, Exeter played by Jeff Morrow. Just watch any politician taking on TV and then watch and listen to Exeter with his smooth talking, slick coolness, neatly coiffured hair, conventional suit and tie, false sincerity and mountains of spin! Exeter does however blur the lines between good and evil and there are occasions when we can almost understand his point of view. But isn't that what politicians often try to get us to do, even if it is against our interests?

Earth vs the Flying Saucers (1956) (Invasion of the Flying Saucers)

A tense and fast-paced alien invasion film that gets right down to business and has good special effects

Directed by Fred F. Sears
Produced by Charles H. Schneer, Sam Katzman
Written by (based on Maj. Donald E. Keyhoe's non-fiction book Flying Saucers from Outer Space), Curt Siodmak, George Worthing Yates, Bernard Gordon
Music by Mischa Bakaleinikoff
Cinematography: Fred Jackman Jr.
Flying saucer effects by Ray Harryhausen
Edited by Danny B. Landres
Production Company: Clover Productions
Distributed by Columbia Pictures
Running time: 83 minutes
Box office: \$1,250,000

Cast

Hugh Marlowe as Dr. Russell A. Marvin
Joan Taylor as Carol Marvin
Donald Curtis as Major Huglin, the liaison officer
Morris Ankrum as Brig. Gen. John Hanley
John Zaremba as Prof. Kanter
Thomas Browne Henry as Vice-Admiral Enright
Grandon Rhodes as General Edmunds
Larry J. Blake as a motorcycle policeman
Charles Evans as Dr. Alberts
Paul Frees as Alien (voice)
Harry Lauter as Cutting - Generator Technician

1956: Taste of the Times:

- The yearly Inflation rate in the USA was 1.52% while in the UK it was 4.7%.
- On average, buying a house might set you back \$11,700.00 while you might be earning \$4,450.00 per year.
- A gallon of gas was 22 cents which would run a new car you might've bought for \$2,050.00.
- Along with an increase in living standards there was an increase in college education with 1 in 3 high school graduates going to college.
- On TV you'd probably be watching "As The World Turns" and "The Price is Right" along with the Ed Sullivan show which even featured a certain Elvis Presley who entered the music charts for the first time with his hit, "Heartbreak Hotel." By his third and final appearance on the Sullivan show, Elvis was filmed from only the waist-up. due to complaints about his suggestive hip-swivelling gyrations!
- Oh, and Hallelujah for disposable diapers and teflon non-stick frying pans!

What If?.....

Bodeh: Good evening viewers. This is Charlie Bodeh and welcome to a special report from KHQ-TV. As you may recall, last year there were rumors and reports emanating from California of an attempted infiltration and takeover of Earth by alien beings called Metalunans. The Metalunans supposedly came to Earth seeking uranium deposits as well as scientists to help them defend their planet in a war against another alien race called the Zahgons.

You would also be aware that the primary source of this widely reported and far-fetched sounding incident came to us via two world-renown scientists, Dr Ruth Adams and Dr Cal Meacham who were apparently involved in this tale of what seems to be at first sight..... Science-fiction. Both scientists seem to have since gone to ground and their present whereabouts is unknown.

The most disturbing aspect of the whole incident is the disappearance and presumed murder of several highly acclaimed scientists who were said to have been forced to assist the Metalunans with their research involving atomic energy. Authorities in Washington are looking at a more Earth-bound cause of their likely fate, most likely involving.....certain foreign powers.

Hot on the heels of the "Metalunan Incident," and as some would suggest is possibly related to it, come numerous reports we have received just this year alone of UFO sightings; from the skies of California to the rice paddies of Asia. These reports have come to us from a variety of sources ranging from air force pilots through to farmers and civilians.

The authenticity of the pictures you are seeing on your screens has, however, yet to be determined.

We now cross to Peter Gertres Freedman at Air Intelligence Command for the latest developments.

Freedman: Yes Charlie. As you can see, people have been streaming in to the authorities with stories of strange sightings of objects or UFOs in our skies. Although we can't hear the people being interviewed, the common thread of the stories they have to tell is evident from the shocked and bewildered expressions on their faces, their fearful skyward glances and the circular aerial patterns they make in the air with their hands.

Word has also come to us from the Hemispheric Defense Command that after collecting and examining these reports of UFOs, the military has determined that they are a threat and has issued a directive to "fire on sight on any objects unidentifiable." However, it is reasonable for us to wonder whether our scientific know-how and weapons would be effective in any battle of the Earth vs. the flying saucers? Back to you Charlie.....

[CONFLICT: Assumption of hostile intent. Adoption of aggressive posture.
Failure or inability to open, establish and maintain lines of communication.]

(Spoilers Follow).....

We begin with an aerial (saucer-eye view) shot that gradually closes in on scientist Russell Marvin on his way to a “date with a three-stage rocket” accompanied by his new bride, Dr. Carol Marvin. They are driving to work through the desert to a rocket testing ground - Project Skyhook. Russell Marvin is in charge of Project Skyhook, an American space program that has already launched 10 research satellites into orbit. The intention is to launch “12 tiny man-made satellites” into Earth orbit in order to prepare the way “for our ascent into space.”

Suddenly out of nowhere and almost contemptuously, a flying saucer appears behind them, flies overhead and re-appears in front of the moving car. In defiance of Earth’s gravity and seemingly all the known laws of physics, the saucer accelerates upward and vanishes from sight in the twinkling of an eye.

“It was a saucer – a flying saucer?”

Cautious man of logic and science, Russell Marvin: “We have to have time to think, to evaluate this before we sound off....”

The nervous clutching for cigarettes and the tone of their voices gives away just how rattled they are by the experience....

But wait! Doesn’t science demand proof? Although they don’t realize it at the time, a recorder used by Russell Marvin to dictate research notes has picked up and recorded the sound of the UFO: It’s “one piece of concrete evidence.”

General Hanley, Carol’s father later informs Marvin that many of the satellites “apparently... blew up in outer space” and have crashed. In fact, they are now only in contact with “one bird.” The implication is that the satellites are being shot down as fast as they are sent up. It is not long before the Marvins witness the eleventh satellite falling from the sky after receiving a message that “they just lost contact with number 11.” Dr Marvin joins the dots and suggests that UFOs might be implicated in shooting the rockets down.

As if to reinforce Dr Marvin’s and the audience’s suspicions regarding UFO involvement in the destruction of the rockets, Russell, Carol and General Hanley witness glowing lights in the sky, These lights are explained as being “Foo Fighters” which were strange lights witnessed by WWII

pilots that seemed to hover around and keep pace with their planes. The balls of light are also explained as being “St. Elmo’s Fire”, or plasma that is created by a coronal discharge from a sharp or pointed object such as a ship’s mast in a strong electric field in the atmosphere. As if on cue, the wreckage of rocket No. 11 enters the atmosphere and burns up.

[CONFLICT: Using available evidence to draw conclusions about other’s identity, actions and intentions, which may or may not be valid.

Establishing cause and effect relationships between events which also may or may not be valid]

Despite the loss of 11 rockets, it is decided to proceed with the launch of rocket No. 12.....

Meanwhile at Observation Tower A we learn of a “UFO due west...approaching fast...” and that a “sentry at West Gate has reported seeing a flying saucer” (sceptical)

During the preparations for the launch, a UFO is seen overflying the rocket range before landing in the middle of the project facility. Three figures emerge from the craft but are soon fired upon by soldiers, who manage to kill one of the aliens. The aliens then retaliate with the destructive power of green rays. The aliens return with their fallen crew-mate to their ship which is protected by a force field and they soon set about raining death and destruction down upon the rocket test facility, as well as taking General Hanley captive in their saucer.

[CONFLICT: Policy of immediate recourse to violence and aggression (shoot first and ask questions later) leads to retaliation, violent response and escalation of conflict.]

Aboard the “Interstellar Conveyance,” General Hanley is asked by the aliens “through the translating device,” to “explain why (they) were met with by violence.”

[CONFLICT: Miscommunication & misunderstanding]

The answer to the alien’s questions lies underground where we find the Marvins trapped by the destruction of the aliens’ attack on the facility. As their air begins to run out, Dr Marvin decides to make a recording of the events preceding and including the alien attack. Suddenly the tape-recorder’s batteries start to run low thereby slowing down the tape-recorder’s playback. By rewinding the tape, the Marvins discover that the noise they had previously recorded was a sped up version of the message from the aliens requesting them to meet at Operation Skyhook. It is apparent that a terrible mistake has been made with possible dire consequences to follow.....

Headlines scream out;

SKY HOOK WIPED OUT!

SKY HOOK DISASTER UNEXPLAINED!

[CONFLICT: Lack of Information and misinformation followed by sensationalism, speculation and exaggeration.]

After the Marvins are rescued from their subterranean prison, they head to Washington to lay before the Internal Security Commission all that they have learned. Here they are met with skepticism. After all, all they have is a “strange voice, (and a) set of instructions (that) could’ve come from anywhere.” Caught between, on the one hand a sense of urgency to act and on the other, a bureaucratic need to act only on authority and via a chain of command, Dr. Marvin is forbidden from making contact with the aliens.

Impatient to conduct a meeting with the aliens, Marvin makes contact with them via shortwave on “225.6 megacycles as per instructions” and receives new instructions for a meeting at a beach on the Californian coast.

As Marvin departs to meet the aliens, he is followed by Carol and his liaison watchdog, Major Huglin. All three are then followed by a motorcycle cop.

At the rendezvous point, the three tiny human figures are dwarfed by the enormous size of the landed saucer which serves to highlight just what it is they and humanity might be up against. Marvin approaches the ship and a voice explains that it is safe to enter.

Once aboard the saucer, the humans learn that;

- The aliens have extracted knowledge from General Hanley's brain, and now have him under their control.
- They are the last of their species.
- They are “the survivors of a disintegrated solar system” and need to find a new place to live.
- They “operate in a very different time reference.”
- They destroyed the satellites not knowing that “they were primitive observation posts” and fearing they were weapons launched against them.
- They demand that Earth surrenders and let them control the planet or they will attack with their fleet if their demand is refused.
- They are willing to use their power, as evidenced by their destruction of a destroyer that fired on them, resulting in the deaths of 300 men.
- They wish to meet the world's leaders in 56 days in Washington, D.C., to negotiate a surrender and occupation.
- They wish to adopt this course of action in order to avoid becoming “masters of a wrecked and hungry planet.”

The humans are then released to convey the aliens’ message, all except General Hanley and the motorcycle cop who have been forced to endure the aliens’ “Infinitely Indexed Memory

Bank” device, leaving them in a zombie-like state.

[CONFLICT: Knowledge of others’ intentions and motivations needs to be determined in order to assess the likelihood of engaging in offensive or defensive action as being the only means of maintaining survival, life, liberty and way of life.]

Back in Washington, Dr Marvin comes up with an idea for a weapon “an ultrasonic gun” that uses sound to disable the UFOs causing them to crash.

Despite some progress, it is soon determined that they don’t have the necessary tools or materials to make it work.

An idea for a new weapon is later formulated which involves interrupting the saucers’ magnetic field with an intermittent electric field. During a final test of the new weapon, an alien spy drone is spotted observing proceedings, but is destroyed by the scientists.

The aliens appear to possess intelligence about the new weapon and its location. An alien ship soon arrives just as the scientists evacuate the facility. Marvin takes the opportunity to use the weapon on the saucer. The weapon works successfully with the saucer being driven off. However, one of the aliens has been left behind!

The callous and immoral nature of Earth’s interstellar enemy is highlighted by the killing of one of the scientists who walks with the aid of a walking stick and the almost petty and vindictive dumping of the motorcycle cop and General Hanley’s bodies from the saucer.

[CONFLICT: Acts of barbarism and the committing of atrocities by one or both sides of the conflict is often a terrible consequence.

Each side is often viewed as being sub-human and immoral by the other.

Widely differing and irreconcilable perspectives, frames of reference and world views become evident.]

After the alien who had been left behind is killed by Major Huglin, they open the alien’s suit to reveal a fragile atrophied corpse, “humanoid and ancient,” which quickly disintegrates. It is surmised that the suits act like an outer skin encasing the aliens’ atrophied muscles.

[CONFLICT: Need for intelligence gathering about other side’s capabilities in order to combat them effectively]

Later examination of the alien’s suit reveals a language translating device, which is used to interpret the aliens’ plan of attack. The helmet appears to be made from “solidified electricity” and it can amplify the senses of sight and hearing.

Carol is asked to speak into the translating device and quotes the following phrase from a

speech by Portia in William Shakespeare's play, The Merchant of Venice: "The quality of mercy is not strained. It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven..." - A rebuff to the beings above for not demonstrating real mercy which is in their power to do.

[CONFLICT: The one element that can prevent conflict and all that results from it is the "quality of mercy." Mercy cannot be forced on anyone by the use of violence which only leads to death and destruction raining down on people.]

Trouble is to be expected when "Mercury is in perihelion" with the "Sun in Polaris." In confirmation of this new intelligence, the aliens issue a worldwide broadcast beginning with: "PEOPLE OF EARTH. YOUR ATTENTION!...LOOK TO YOUR SUN FOR A WARNING!" In their broadcast the aliens threaten to affect the sun in order to cause global meteorological devastation in eight days. The aliens demand that all world leaders meet in Washington to discuss surrender terms.

The consensus is that the aliens really intend to destroy Washington. When the predicted solar eruption takes place and with only nine days to prepare, there is the added problem of the ever worsening weather conditions.

STORMS BREAK!
(The Evening Star)

[CONFLICT: Understanding and exploiting the other side's strengths and weaknesses and turning their perceived strengths against them.]

We have seen how the aliens' power depends a lot on their own technology, the magnetic field they can generate. The humans were able to work out that it could be disrupted by an electrical force. For the humans, their strength also lies in the use of technology to live and the ability to use it to communicate. Reliance on technology is also their weakness as its disruption causes civilization to virtually cease functioning and be at the mercy of whatever Nature (or an alien invader) has to throw at us. Imagine how vulnerable we in the 21st Century would be if power, communications, transportation and the internet ceased to work!

What If?.....

Bodeh: "This is Charlie Bodeh from station KHQ-TV, speaking into this portable tape recorder and armed only with my two cameras. As my station is unable to transmit due to the ever

increasing disruption caused by the weather and solar activity. I will endeavor to make a record of events for posterity even though I may lose my life in the process and the fate of humanity may be sealed this very day....

The eight days of climatic convulsions has caused massive delays in evacuating civilians, and there is still 60% of the population remaining in the city. The sound you can hear is sirens indicating that the alien attack has begun.....

“When an armed and threatening power lands in our capital, we don’t meet them with tea and cookies.” Those are the words of a high ranking military official I managed to speak with as the alien attack began.....That same official declared a bit later that the aliens are “contemptuous of our defenses” as they managed to easily brush aside a combined aircraft and artillery assault.....

Three alien saucers have begun to assemble over our nation’s capital. I can see from my vantage point that the scientist, Dr Marvin is firing some kind of new electronic ultrasonic weapon. (Strange high-pitched sound)

Yes, it worked! One of the alien saucers has been brought down! (Sound of loud explosions) As the artillery batteries are opening fire, I can see Dr Marvin moving his weapon to a new location.....

Wait! The alien saucers have now opened fire in the vicinity of the White House and Capitol building! (Sounds of explosions and screaming) Dr Marvin’s team is now making its way to defend the White House. I’m moving closer to better see what’s happening.....

(Out of breath) One of the ray units has just been destroyed by the alien invaders and one of the saucers is landing. (Sound of gun fire) Soldiers are being deployed to combat the invaders.....

At least two alien saucers have been brought down and I can see a third one crashing into the Washington monument. (Sounds of crashing, rumbling and screams) Oh my.....the monument is.....all those people.....Run! Get out of the way!.....

I have now re positioned myself just outside the Supreme Court building where the battle seems to have moved to. It is a scene of utter destruction with people having been killed by and trapped within the wreckage. In a kind of ironic twist, a saucer has lodged itself within the building - our symbol of justice - as if the invader has finally had justice meted out to it for the unjust outrage it has tried to perpetrate on our planet.....

We have just received an emergency broadcast announcing that saucers are converging on the Capitol building! It appears the aliens are launching a final assault as can be heard from the cacophonous baying of the demented dogs of war let loose upon the center of our nation’s power.....

.....A strange quiet has just now descended over Washington. The battle is at an end and the alien invaders have been repelled. As the skies clear over Washington it is hard to believe the announcement now going out that "the present danger is ended." All of us will be thinking the same thing;

"Will they come back again?"

As the days pass in this season, let's hope that the answer will be;

"Not on such a nice day."

For now, let us just be glad and give thanks that;

"Our world is still here and still ours....."

END OF TAPE

Points Of Interest

Black and White vs Colour?

Although there are black and white films you certainly wouldn't mess around with by colorizing them, "Earth vs The Flying Saucers" can be better enjoyed by viewing it in color.

Science

Although many of the scientific ideas in "Earth vs The Flying Saucers" may appear to be questionable, there are some interesting concepts that are worthy of consideration.

Take for instance, the alien's suit which serves as a protective exoskeleton. We have recently seen the development of exoskeleton-type devices with servo-mechanisms and actuators that are providing mobility for paraplegics and those with spinal injuries.

The aliens in the film pointed out that they exist in a different time reference to our own. Given Einstein's theories about space-time and debate about whether or not time can be considered to be absolute or linear, the alien's comment does not seem so ridiculous. Read Edgar Rice Burrough's, "At The Earth's Core" (1914) and consider how time may or may not be perceived by the inhabitants of Pellucidar whose sun remains constantly overhead!

Notice that the aliens use a kind of drone technology to spy on the human scientists' activities. Such technology is pervasive in our modern times and is used by civilian hobbyists, farmers, certain activist groups and more worryingly by the military and spy agencies for surveillance and offensive operations. Drone technology has raised fears about the diminishing right to privacy and the "ethical" conduct of warfare. How long before it also becomes a regular feature of terrorist operations?

Real-Life Project Sky Hook

For information on actual historical Project Skyhook, see article "The Cold War's Classified Skyhook Program: A Participant's Revelations" by B.D. Gildenberg, Volume 28.3, May / June 2004 in *Skeptical Inquirer*,

<https://skepticalinquirer.org/2004/05/the-cold-wars-classified-skyhook-program/>

"Classified high-altitude, long-duration flights of huge Skyhook balloons, which often returned their secret payloads to the surface, began in 1947 and continued for several decades.

This secret Cold War program was the likely progenitor of many key aspects of UFO mythology."

Inspiration

Some of the inspiration for "Earth vs The Flying Saucers" may have come from the rash of flying saucer sightings that took place over Washington over two weekends in July 1952. Commercial pilots radioed in accounts of mysterious lights that changed direction abruptly and traveled at fantastic speeds. These objects were able to effortlessly evade their pursuers, even at supersonic speeds. Was it all merely the result of "temperature inversion" or were we facing the possibility of interplanetary contact or.....war?

Special Effects

Ray Harryhausen worked his visual effects magic by animating the film's flying saucers using stop-motion animation. He also animated the falling masonry from government buildings and monuments when saucers crashed into them.

Harryhausen sought advice from well-known self-proclaimed and suspected paranoid UFO contactee, George Adamski on the way the flying saucers used in the film ought to be depicted.

The actual design of flying saucers closely resembles the descriptions given to Maj. Donald

Keyhoe of UFO sightings in his book, "Flying Saucers from Outer Space," another source of important inspiration for the film. In 1956, Keyhoe started an organization called NICAP (National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena)

Stock footage was used in scenes showing gun batteries and missile launches. The destruction of the warship HMS Barham during World War II was used to depict the sinking of the U. S. Navy destroyer by a flying saucer. Viking rocket and German V-2 rocket launches were used to depict the satellite launches and launch failures.

The voice of the aliens was produced from a recording of Paul Frees reading the lines and then manually manipulating the speed control of a reel-to-reel tape recorder causing it to alternate between a slow bass to a high and rapid voice.

Relevance

A film such as "Earth Vs The Flying Saucers" can have relevance to and resonate with today's audiences who've witnessed the destruction of their nation's landmarks and have seen the mayhem caused by acts of terrorism. This kind of fear has been lurking around for a long time and is not just a product of a mid-20th Century paranoid decade, nor a unique feature of our early 21st Century world. Also in tune with the film's ideas is the fact that even now in the second decade of the 21st. Century, we are often being torn between on the one hand, our long held feeling of distrust of government and suspicions of secrecy and conspiracy and on the other, acclaim for the authorities and the military as being our benign, benevolent protector and savior, particularly during times of crisis.

As in the film, the 21st Century version of the threat to our liberty and values is also seen as being imminent and coming from a hostile "enemy" that wishes to do "us" harm and whose ideology is alien to "us." For many the only perceived solution is recourse to hyper-vigilance and even war.

It's well worthwhile to remember that at the time such films as "Earth vs the Flying Saucers" were being made, the "benevolent" US government was organizing coups in Iran and Guatemala, exposing US soldiers to life-threatening radiation in nuclear tests, giving mental patients LSD to research Chinese brainwashing techniques, and doing all it could to prevent its citizens from being well-informed! Trust us and everything will be alright! Seriously?

Of course the case can be made that this film along with many other sci-fi films of the time is little more than an historical curiosity; a reflection of 1950s Cold War fears and paranoia. After all, in 1952 many people believed that they witnessed craft from another world overfly with impunity the center of US government power. The 1950s was also a time of anxiety over the possibility of impending social disorder and collapse in the aftermath of an atomic holocaust. In the minds of many, war with the Soviet Union which had also acquired The Bomb was a real possibility. All you could do was..."Duck and cover!"

For us in the 21st Century, “Earth vs the Flying Saucers” and the era that created it serves as a reminder of the danger posed by a form of invasion that might not originate solely outside of our borders. The threat may lie closer to home whenever we wind up imagining and creating enemies to defend against.

It Conquered the World (1956)

An entertaining & well-acted classic Corman low budget gem

1956: A Taste of the Times

1956 was a very busy year in the area of science and technology and helped form the basis of our own modern world in the 21st Century.

- The first transatlantic telephone cable goes into operation
- Dr. Albert Sabin develops an oral polio vaccine.
- Ampex Corporation demonstrated its first commercial videotape recorder.
- The first known airborne US hydrogen bomb was tested over Bikini Atoll in the Pacific.
- The Bell X-2 rocket plane set a world aircraft speed record of 3,050 kph.
- IBM's Model 305 computer was capable of storing 20 megabytes of data. WOW!
- IBM lab leader Reynold B. Johnson developed a way to store computer data on a metal disk instead of on tape or drum.
 - The first commercial disk drive, called RAMAC (random access method of accounting and control) used 50 disk platters, each 2-feet in diameter and held (a whopping!) 5 megabytes of data! It was the start of the disk drive industry and many thanks to them.
 - The first all-colour TV station was NBC-TV in Chicago.
 - The neutrino, an atomic particle with no charge, was produced at the Los Alamos laboratory in the US.
 - The cosmic-ray neutron intensity monitor collected the first evidence indicating the existence of the heliosphere, the region of space dominated by the Sun. The edge of the heliosphere is a magnetic bubble-like medium and is located far beyond the orbit of recently demoted Pluto. The region is influenced by the sun's magnetic field.
 - The computer mouse was invented. The point-and-click graphical interface was introduced by an MIT group working on the Whirlwind computer. The mouse was originally referred to as an

"X-Y Position Indicator for a Display System." (Not a very furry or friendly term!)

- Patent applied for "machine vision device," now known as bar code scanner technology.

(Ding!)

- Bell Telephone began to develop the visual telephone.
- The newly developed ion microscope made atoms visible.
- It was first proposed that "free radicals" caused aging, indicating that antioxidants may slow the process.
- Soft contact lenses were invented.
- MD Ross and ML Lewis reached 22.8 km in a balloon while Dr Edward Purdy Ney and colleague, John Winckler, built a pyramid-shaped balloon that set a world altitude record of 27 miles. It carried instrumentation for meteorological and cosmic-ray research.

Produced & Directed by Roger Corman

by Roger Corman

Written by Lou Rusoff, Charles B. Griffith

Music by Ronald Stein

Cinematography: Fred E. West

Edited by Charles Gross

Distributed by American International Pictures

Running time: 71 minutes

Cast

Peter Graves: Dr. Paul Nelson

Lee Van Cleef: Dr. Tom Anderson

Beverly Garland: Claire Anderson

Sally Fraser: Joan Nelson

Russ Bender: General James Pattick

Taggart Casey: Sheriff N.J. Shallert

Karen Kadler: Dr. Ellen Peters

Dick Miller: First Sergeant

Jonathan Haze: Corporal Manuel Ortiz

Paul Harbor : Dr. Floyd Mason

Charles B. Griffith: Dr. Pete Shelton

Thomas E. Jackson: George Haskell

(Spoilers Follow....)

"It Conquered the World" concerns an embittered human scientist who guides an alien creature called Zontar from Venus to the Earth, so that it can bring peace to our troubled world by ridding humankind of its feelings and emotions. The scientist, however, is totally oblivious to the terrible

consequences of his actions.

The alien creature from the planet Venus secretly wants to take control of the Earth by enslaving humanity using mind control devices and as part of its nefarious plan, it makes radio contact with the disillusioned scientist who agrees to help. Our well-meaning but naïve scientist believes this alien intervention will bring peace to the world and save humanity from itself and its inevitable demise.

A “what if?” imaginary synopsis of “It Conquered The World” by the film’s director, writers and cast:

Corman: Well, we begin the film with credits rolling, along with a strident music score by Ronald Stein and a horizontal white line of the type that you see across monitor screens. This seamlessly transitions to a screen in a satellite launch and monitoring control room. Do we now have your attention?

Karen Kadler: My character, Ellen Peters announces that an unidentified object has been spotted. My colleague, Pete Shelton played by Charles B. Griffith declares that all aircraft should have been out of the area twenty minutes ago. Just three minutes from launch, our project manager, Dr Paul Nelson played by Peter Graves observes that a commercial airliner is just off course. He also proudly announces that “man is finally ready to move into space.”

Lee Van Cleef: Meanwhile in Washington, D.C., Secretary Platt played by Marshall Bradford is meeting with my character, Dr Tom Anderson. From my point of view as Anderson, I’m there to plead with Platt to cancel the satellite project. I was not all that surprised when told that the first satellite launched had exploded in orbit. I knew that “it was a warning” which I had already anticipated three years before the launch. I firmly believe that “alien intelligence watches us constantly.” Imagine how I felt when I was told the satellite had already been launched!

Peter Graves: My character, Paul Nelson and his wife Joan are later having dinner at the Andersons’ home, As we finish dinner, I state that the satellite has been in orbit for three months and all is well. Joan gets a bit annoyed with all the shop talk, but Tom’s wife, Claire played by Beverly Garland is more concerned about Tom and his delusions.

Tom draws me over to his radio, tunes in a station and informs me that the sound he is now hearing is the planet Venus. He then asks me to “listen to it....listen to the voice.” What can be heard appears to be nothing but humming and static. What would you think if you were in my place?

As if on cue, the phone rings. The project informs me that the satellite left its orbit and has flown out into space. From my character’s perspective, this simply means that “the scientific

achievement of the 20th Century has disappeared.”

My wife and I quickly leave the Anderson’s and drive to the nearby installation where I’m told by Pete Shelton that “its back”. I confidently state we’ll bring the satellite down for a full examination.

Beverly Garland: Early the next morning my character, Claire Anderson discovers her husband at the radio set in the living room talking to something or someone on board the satellite. My husband informs me that the creature from Venus is on the satellite and will be coming to Earth “to save us.” Picture what I’m thinking and feeling as my husband tells me that it’s what he’s “been predicting for years” and that “it’s good!”

Lou Rusoff: We continued the story with the team bringing the satellite back the next day, but not without a hitch! Instead of the satellite returning to the designated landing area, it crash lands ten miles south of the Anderson home, in the vicinity of a cave and hot springs. The location’s importance becomes apparent later on in the story.

Beverly Garland: Out of the blue Tom tells me, “he’s alive, he survived the crash!” What else could I say at this point but, “Tom, you’re a sick man.” All that my character Claire could think to do was go into town and hope that Tom would be better when she returns.

Corman: OK, so the Venusian creature that we see exiting the satellite looks like a cross between a giant pickle and some kind of deformed crustacean! I didn’t have a million bucks like “Conquest Of Space,” “This Island Earth” or “Forbidden Planet” to make this film you know. Still, if Klaatu from “The Day The Earth Stood Still” could do it, Paul Blaisdell’s alien pickle could also cause electricity all over the world to fail! And it wouldn’t cost us an extra buck!

Anyway, I firmly believe that my alien depiction will seem quite conservative when the time comes for us to make contact with alien species who will no doubt come in an infinite diversity of forms.

Lou Rusoff: The story continues with the Nelson car stopping on the road and the power off at the installation, along with the phones not working. To add to the tense atmosphere, we had Ellen Peters remark on how quiet it is, while her colleague, Floyd Mason played by Paul Harbor reminds her that “it is always quiet in these mountains,” to which comes the retort, “not this quiet.”

Corman: We included other elements in the film to ratchet up the pace, suspense and tension such as;

- 3:03 p.m. being the time when all the clocks stopped.
- Eight people on a list who are destined for mind control devices.
- at-like flying devices that home in on their prey and sting them leaving an electrical device

embedded in their neck, which is what happens to the sheriff, the symbol of town authority. General Pattick, another symbol of protection and authority while walking to headquarters, encounters one of these flying bat-creatures and is also stung by it. Both men are now under the control of the Venusian. (I kinda think our little bat creatures looked pretty neat!)

- Panic erupting among the people in town.
- No communication with the outside world as the wire service has broken down.
- Anderson possessing the only working vehicle and water supply despite the fact that that electricity, combustion engines and regular water supply have been disabled.

Lee Van Cleef: You know, after watching this film, some people have told me that I've got the kind of stare that can flail the skin off people and pierce their souls. Hhmm. Might prove to be useful in future roles? I'm thinking...westerns perhaps? [Goes off into a brief reverie / daydream]

Corman: Ah, Lee...The story.....

Lee Van Cleef: Anyway, after my character Anderson tells Nelson about what's been going on, Nelson doesn't believe him and asks me why I haven't been resisting the alien. I tell him that the Venusian is here on Earth to "rescue mankind from itself," not to conquer the Earth. The way I see it, it is human stupidity that "restrains Man's progress" and I'm firmly convinced that what the Venusian is offering is "ultimate freedom."

After all, how often have we seen instances of people convincing themselves of the truth of something, no matter how delusional, which then can often assume its own sense of logic and becomes a part of their own world view? Any argument or facts to the contrary are dismissed out of hand, even as something as reasonable as Paul's statement; "I'd have to take a look at anything that would change the world and me so completely." Good advice for any generation....

Corman: You guys know me and how I like to keep the action in my films rolling and carry the audience along with it. Well, these days the audience is pretty darn fearful of possible invasions from foreign powers and Communist conspiracy threats and such. This will always be the case. If it's not fear of Communists like we have today, it'll be of something else in the future. Fear and playing on that fear is such a powerful motivating and manipulative force. So, in the film back at the installation we have General Pattick informing the technicians that, "we're in the midst of a Communist uprising" and that "they've sabotaged every power source in the area." He then orders the staff to remain at the installation while the city of Beachwood is evacuated.

Lou Rusoff: The action continues with Nelson's wife, Joan being stung by a bat creature. Then the newspaper editor of The Clarion, (our symbol of the freedom of the press, information and ideas) Haskell is cruelly shot by the Sheriff for refusing his order to get out of town and in order to put an end to his paper's "stack of ideas and notions."

The Sheriff tells Nelson he is going to place him under "protective custody," when he confronts the sheriff over the shooting of Haskell. After a physical struggle with Nelson, the sheriff, under

orders from the Venusian, tells Nelson, "you're to be one of us...Get up, you're free."

Notice the use of euphemisms: "protective custody" in place of "imprisonment" or "detention."; a state of collective servitude and control being equated with being "free" and the current state of affairs where "there are no victims," only "the Released."

I'll bet you anything that even 60 or more years from now you'll see similar elements to what I have just described being played out but in a different context and set of circumstances.

Peter Graves: My character, Nelson arrives to find the installation closed. I find General Pattick there and he informs me that the staff was relocated (another euphemism Lou?) to a nearby air base and that I, along with my wife, should join them. As the general offers me a ride in the jeep, I begin to feel that something is wrong. I feel compelled to act so I hit the general on the back of the neck with my gun, throw him out and take over the jeep.

Lee Van Cleef: Nelson drives up to my house where he confronts me and accuses me of being a murderer. I confess to Nelson about my role and try to convince him about the positive aspects of the alien's ultimate plan for humanity. Before he left, Nelson merely called me a traitor who is not just "betraying part of mankind" but is "betraying all of it." He's an intelligent man. Then why can't he see the benefit to humanity that will result from assisting the Venusian? According to Claire I just "had an undeserved stay of execution" as Nelson had a gun on me! If I knew that I would have stared him to death! Ha! Ha!

Corman: Killer stares? Don't be silly Lee. Flying bat control devices! Now, that's something! Fits in beautifully with the action and drama about to be unleashed as Nelson arrives late to his house after having to use a bike when his jeep stopped running. Not realizing that the lights are on, both outside and inside the house, he is greeted by his wife. Joan is behaving strangely (even for a wife) and is concealing a control device which she throws at her husband. She then calmly takes off for a walk leaving Nelson to go a few rounds with the control device. It rapidly degenerates into a no disqualification match with Nelson impaling and killing the aerial varmint.

Sally Fraser: Ever heard the term, "Better off dead than Red?" Well, that's given new meaning when my character Joan Nelson returns from her walk expecting her husband to be like her: controlled for the rest of their lives. As soon as I tell him that will in fact be the case, he shoots and kills me!

Corman: Now think for a moment about what it must take for a husband or wife to take the life of their spouse in the belief that they are saving them from something far worse than death itself! A scenario almost too horrible for an audience to contemplate....

Beverly Garland: It transpires that my character's husband has been directed by the alien to kill Nelson as he "knows what he is fighting for and must be killed." I feel I must find out as much as I can about the Venusian and try to prevent Tom from carrying out the alien's orders.

I manage to find out that the Venusian is located at Elephant Hot Spring cave because he needs a climate similar to his home planet, Venus. I also discover that Joan has been controlled.

Karen Kadler: What Claire doesn't know is that back at the installation, two of the control devices were used on Pete and Floyd. My character, Ellen wakes up and notices that the power is back up and all the equipment is functioning. While going to make coffee I notice two dead control devices. Suddenly, Floyd gabs my neck with both of his hands and that's the end of me. I tell you it was mighty cold lying on that floor considering how little I was wearing! I guess there was a reason for that.....?

[The guys feign complete innocence and ignorance as to what she is alluding to]

Beverly Garland: Now, we come to a part of film that I'll remember for a long time to come. I really wanted to throw as much feeling, emotion and drama into my role as the script and story would allow.

After my husband refuses to listen to my appeals, he leaves the house to meet Nelson outside. In a rage I contact the alien on the radio and threaten to kill it. I take the rifle that Tom left on top of the radio and leave the house. I then steal Joan's station wagon and take off to confront the Venusian at the cave.

Peter Graves: Meanwhile, my character, Nelson informs Anderson that Joan is dead. I tell him I felt that "she wasn't my wife; she was a product of (Anderson's) work."

Beverly Garland: While you were questioning Anderson, I entered the cave looking for the source of all this misery and mayhem. I manage to find the fiend and confront it with feelings and words of rage and defiance. I mock it by shouting at it, "Hiding in a cave; afraid of light?" I challenge it to "go on try your intellect on me...you think you're going to make a slave of the world...I'll see you in hell first." I empty my magazine clip of resistance by declaring, "I still have the courage of my convictions" and "I hate your guts....I'm going to kill you!"

I then empty the rifle's magazine into the creature but with no effect. At least I meet death standing and defiant instead of living obediently in servitude on my knees.

Peter Graves: Yes, both Nelson and Anderson hear it on the radio back at your house. It seems to trigger something in Anderson who decides that he will help by going to the cave and kill the creature.

Corman: Now, the energy of this film is maintained from the death of Claire in the cave by a quick succession of quite entertaining scenes;

The comical Pvt Ortiz, who while looking for food, hears Claire's screams, enters the cave and fires at the creature. He manages to escape and returns to his unit to report on what has

happened.

BANG!

Nelson discovers Ellen's body at the installation, enters an office and shoots Pete, Floyd and General Pattick who is only wounded.

BANG!

Anderson, meanwhile comes across the Sheriff blocking the road leading to the cave. The Sheriff fires at Anderson, but Anderson circles around on foot and barbecues him with a portable blow torch.

BANG!

The wounded Gen. Pattick heads for the cave in a jeep but is ambushed by Nelson who is now on foot. Nelson manages to shoot and kill the general.

BANG!

While Nelson drives to the cave, the army boys have entered the cave and open fire on the Venusian, but this just makes it grumpier and draws it outside. A bazooka is then employed but this just puts the alien in a really foul mood.

BANG!

A touch of redemption along with payment for past sins is always a good touch to add. And so we have Anderson on the scene ordering a cease fire. He decides to flame grill the Venusian with his blow torch (and death stare) but it attacks and kills him before it too dies.

BANG!

We finally end with Dr. Paul Nelson's closing observation about Dr. Tom Anderson and others like him who.....

Peter Graves: Let me get this one Roger. I think I still remember it:

"Man is a feeling creature, and because of it the greatest in the universe. He learned too late for himself that men have to find their own way, to make their own mistakes. There can't be any gift of perfection from outside ourselves. When men seek such perfection they find only death, fire, loss, disillusionment and the end of everything that's gone forward. Men have always sought an

end to our misery but it can't be given, it has to be achieved. There is hope, but it has to come from inside, from Man himself."

Lee Van Cleef: Hey Roger! You got any westerns in the pipeline?

Corman: I'll let you know, Lee, I'll let you know.....

Points Of Interest

There's no escaping the fact that "It Conquered The World" was a low budget movie with special effects to match that will cause audiences to chuckle. This is more than made up for by the film's energy and its surprisingly above-average cast.

Peter Graves will always be remembered as Mr. Phelps from the TV series, 'Mission: Impossible.' In "It Conquered The World," Robert Graves gives a solid performance as the scientist who maintains his integrity despite his friendship with his friend and fellow scientist turning sour due to the latter's misguided betrayal of the human race.

Van Cleef we know from his work in movies such as 'The Good, The Bad And The Ugly' and 'Death Rides A Horse'. In "It Conquered The World," Van Cleef gives a strong performance as an obsessed, disillusioned and bitter scientist who is intent on selling his soul to an alien devil.

Stunning Beverly Garland gives an excellent performance as a desperate wife struggling in vain to drag her husband away from the precipice he is about to fall from to be swallowed up by an abyss of evil. As Garland confronts her husband and the Venusian, we cannot help but almost yell out to her, "Go Girl!"

In 1966 there was a why-bother remake by Larry Buchanan called "Zontar the Thing from Venus."

Despite its shortcomings, the film works on many levels including interesting characters and the moral choices they make, complex and thoughtful plot, playing on '50s Cold War fears, and so on.

If there was a Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Aliens, Zontar would receive its protection considering how many times he was shot, bazookad and blow-torched! Zontar was seen as creature who was being subjected to extreme violence. This was why the movie was originally given an 'X' rating in England, and nearly banned. The movie's director argued that the alien was not in fact an animal, but was instead an intelligent being. On this basis the ban was removed.

Roger Corman came up with the idea for the design of the creature believing that since Zontar came from a big planet, it would have evolved to cope with heavier gravity than Earth's gravity and would appear to be somewhat squat in stature. Paul Blaisdell who built the creature thought that the camera would make it look bigger. Just how frightening it was can be judged from Beverly Garland's reaction when she first saw the creature: "THAT conquered the world?" together with her kicking 'It' over.....Another case of definite mistreatment, if there ever was one!

Invasion of the Body Snatchers (1956)

A mix of superb sci-fi adventure and imaginative, intense and suspenseful thriller!

1956: A Taste of the Times:

In the area of great sporting events & achievements:

- The Olympic Games are held in Melbourne, Australia. The Netherlands and Spain refused to compete in support of Hungary following Russia's invasion. 45 athletes from Hungary defected during the games. Egypt, Lebanon and Iraq boycotted the games as a protest over British and French involvement in the Suez Canal crisis. China also boycotted the Games in protest at the inclusion of athletes from Taiwan.
- Australian swimmer, Murray Rose became an Olympic champion winning the first of his three gold medals at the Melbourne Games in the 4 x 200m freestyle relay.
- Light heavyweight boxer Rocky Marciano announced his retirement with a record of 43 knockouts and having won every fight in his professional career.
- At age 21, Floyd Patterson became the youngest boxer to win the heavyweight crown when he knocked out Archie Moore.

Directed by Don Siegel

Produced by Walter Wanger
Screenplay by Daniel Mainwaring
Based on The Body Snatchers by Jack Finney
Music by Carmen Dragon
Cinematography: Ellsworth Fredericks
Edited by Robert S. Eisen
Production company: Walter Wanger Pictures, Inc.
Distributed by Allied Artists Pictures Corporation
Running time: 80 minutes
Box office: \$3,000,000

Cast

Kevin McCarthy as Miles Bennell
Dana Wynter as Becky Driscoll
Larry Gates as Dan Kauffman
King Donovan as Jack Belicec
Carolyn Jones as Theodora "Teddy" Belicec
Virginia Christine as Wilma Lentz
Jean Willes as Sally Withers
Whit Bissell (uncredited) as Dr Hills
Richard Deacon as ER doctor

The film you are about to be acquainted with is called "Invasion of the Body Snatchers" which was adapted from the screenplay from Jack Finney's 1954 science fiction novel, The Body Snatchers.

(Spoilers Follow.....)

Picture a small fictional Californian town by the name of Santa Mira. Like many other towns, Santa Mira moves at its own leisurely pace and folks travel well-worn paths through life governed by the predictable surety of routine... That is... until one day when the neat folds of Santa Mira's routine were torn asunder by an extra-terrestrial invasion that began with spores from space that grew into large seed pods, which were capable of reproducing duplicate replacement copies of the good folks of Santa Mira. Each pod, as it reached full development, could assimilate the physical characteristics, memories, and personalities of any sleeping person placed in close proximity.

What emerged from this duplication process were mere husks from which all human emotion had been snatched away from the sleeping citizens of a sleepy little town in a slumbering nation.

Join us as we follow a local doctor, Dr Miles Bennell who attempts to uncover this invasion and hopefully stop it from spreading....

The introduction to "Invasion of the Body Snatchers" with its forceful and strident music heavy with brass instruments and drum roll suggests the approach of something ominous. The direction from which the danger is approaching is suggested by the sky-ward direction of the camera shot and the clouds rolling rapidly across the view.

A disheveled and seemingly delusional Dr Miles Bennell has been arrested on a California highway and taken to the local hospital's psychiatric ward. There he pleads with a psychiatrist, Dr Hill and the attending physician, Dr Bassett, "You must listen! You must understand me! I'm not insane!" He then relates to them a story that "started last Thursday"

Flashback.....

"Something evil had taken possession of the town."

Miles had been called home to Santa Mira from a medical convention by his nurse, Sally Withers who told him that several patients had called in insisting that their relatives and friends were not who they seemed to be.

While driving to the office, Miles and Sally almost ran over young Jimmy Grimaldi who was fleeing from his mother. According to Mrs. Grimaldi, "it's nothing, he just don't wanna go to school." Rather an understatement considering the level of Jimmy's panic! Added to this, the Grimaldis had unexpectedly and uncharacteristically shut down their vegetable stand, apparently because it was too much work.

The mystery deepened when Miles learned that many of the patients no longer needed his services even though he was told by Sally that previously "they couldn't wait to see you!"

A fabulous vision of fifties femininity in the form of former girlfriend, Becky Driscoll wafts into the office. Becky informs Miles that her cousin, Wilma "has a...delusion" and believes that her uncle, Ira "is an impostor." Miles assures her that he'll visit Wilma later.

Later on, a terrified Jimmy Grimaldi is dragged kicking and screaming to Miles's office by his grandmother. He cries out "don't let her get me!" and declares that his mother is not really his mother. For Miles, the suspicions grow as more dots are joined.

"There's something missing."

Miles and Becky pay a visit to Ira and Wilma. Wilma's highly expressive face tells the story and

adds force to her belief that as far as she is concerned “that special look is missing” from Ira and that “there’s no emotion...just the pretense of it.” Miles explains away her concerns by suggesting that “the trouble is inside of you.” He also suggests that Wilma agrees to see a psychiatrist friend of his.

"Epidemic of mass hysteria?"

Later that night on their way to dinner, Becky and Miles encounter the town psychiatrist, Dan Kauffman who mentions that he had seen many unusual cases of people claiming that their loved ones had somehow changed. He puts it down to it being a “strange neurosis” stemming from people “worrying about what’s going on in the world.”

The next scene reveals an empty restaurant, where Miles and Becky learn that it has “been this way for two weeks.” Suddenly Miles is called to the house of Jack and Teddy Belicec where they discover a seemingly lifeless and featureless parody of a human being on the pool table. Their jangled nerves (and ours) are given a further jarring when the cuckoo clock’s sudden clashing cacophony erupts into the tense breath-holding stillness of the scene.

The inert body has “all the features” of a man “but no detail.” Added to this mystery is its lack of finger prints. In answer to Jack’s wife’s question, “whose face...tell me that?” it slowly becomes obvious that the body is taking on Jack’s features. We know the answer to the question posed, “How much does it weigh?” when it is discovered that it bleeds from a hand as did Jack when he cut his own on a piece of glass. As Miles tends to Jack’s cut, he almost ironically comments, “I’m afraid you may live.”

For the audience, Miles’s words to Jack now begin to take on new meaning when he takes Becky home to her father’s house. Her father seems normal but notice as he emerges from his basement, stating that he was working in his workshop, the sinister sounding music suggesting something far less innocuous.

Now switch scenes to Jack’s place to hear his wife hysterically scream out to her husband, “It’s you! It’s you!” Suddenly she sees the body’s eyes snap open causing her to shriek out in a manner akin to Dr Frankenstein from a classic horror movie, “It’s alive! It’s alive!”

While Jack and his wife are at Miles’ place, Miles suddenly “had the feeling that Becky was in danger.” He quickly decides to rush over to the Driscoll place where he felt that “something was wrong in this house.” He then breaks into the basement and discovers another humanoid creature transforming itself into Becky. He soon discovers Becky asleep upstairs and carries her away from the house and danger.

“Reality becomes unreality”

Miles and Jack enlist the help of Dan Kauffman but both the bodies at the Belicecs' and

Driscolls' are missing. Dan suggests that "what you saw was the body of a murdered man" in Jack's poolroom and that the lack of finger prints could be explained by the fact that the dead man "took them off with acid." In addition, according to Dan, the cause of death had been too small for Miles to notice in his initial examination. He also explains that Miles thought he saw Becky's double because he had been so unnerved by the presence of the body at the Belicecs'. The conclusion: "The mind is a strange and wonderful thing!"

When Police Chief Grivett arrives at the Drisscoll house after being called by an indignant and outraged Mr Drisscoll, he informs the shame-faced gathering in the basement that a burning body matching the description of the mystery body at the Belicecs' was found burning outside of town.

Everything seems to be back to normal until our hearts start to pump furiously when Miles hears a sound in the basement which turns out to be.....the gasman! Miles' comment, "I guess I'm a little jittery" sums up the lingering pervasive fear that is generated by an event such as the one they experienced-real or not! Can even the gasman be trusted?

The next day things seem to be going well, perhaps too well. At "Le Grifon" antique shop, Wilma tells Miles that she feels better about Ira and doesn't need to see Dan. Next, Miles sees Jimmy sitting happily next to his mother in his office waiting room! Sally makes the pertinent comment, "he certainly made a quick recovery." If something seems too good to be true, it usually is....

"Something or someone wants this duplication to take place"

Later that night, at a barbecue with Becky and the Belicecs, Miles stumbles upon seed pods in his greenhouse. The pods open and disgorge unformed humanoids that begin to take on the form of those at the barbecue.

It is the pitchfork held by Jack that guides the camera and us to each of the bodies in turn. Miles hurriedly tries to call the FBI in Los Angeles, Sacramento and Washington D.C. but is not surprisingly told by the operator that "all circuits and dead or busy." We don't need three guesses as to why that is so!

Miles surmises that the pods may be the result of "atomic radiation" or they are some kind of "weird alien organism." At any rate, Miles destroys the creatures, but understandably struggles and hesitates when it comes to destroying the body that resembles Becky.

Miles and Becky and the Belicecs decide to split up and get help from outside of town. While Miles and Becky stop at a petrol station, Miles tries to reach the FBI again. As he does so, the gas station attendant places two pods in the boot of his car. Fortunately Miles was aware of what happened and he incinerates the pods further down the road.

The full horror of the alien invasion becomes apparent when at Sally's house Miles witnesses

through a window that not only has Sally been transformed, but that she calmly acquiesces to having a seed pod placed in the crib of her newborn baby!

Suddenly Miles is discovered by a police officer and the chase is on as Miles and Becky are pursued by the police and numerous pod people.

In a marvelous piece of film noir, we have the couple being pursued through the dark shadows of streets made slick by a recent shower of rain. The suspense is heightened as Miles and Becky hide out in Miles's office. As they take cover behind a storage cupboard door, a guard or police officer peers through a grill set in the door. All the while their faces are lit from above by the light from the room outside coming in from the grill. Adding to the suspense and sense of danger, the scene is played out to the accompaniment of an ominous drum roll.

"It's a malignant disease spreading through the whole country."

Miles and Becky understand that the pods' ability to function effectively depends upon people being blissfully asleep and therefore....unaware. Realizing that they can't close their eyes all night, Becky and Miles take amphetamines to stay awake. Meanwhile, Miles ponders on how it is possible that we can "let humanity drain away," and how we can "harden our hearts" and grow callous."

The next morning could almost be "just like any Saturday morning." Except on this day Miles and Becky witness through a window an almost (I will not use the word surreal!) bizarre scene from a slow-motion movie or dream as people from all around move as one toward a large traffic island where they gather.

Miles sees people that he has known all his life and knows by name now obviously transformed accepting pods to distribute to their relatives in nearby cities such as, "Newtown – third truck!" While this is going on, the suspense is ramped up by the incessant ringing of the telephone.

Suddenly Jack, Dan and Chief Grivett enter the office and it soon becomes apparent that they have all been transformed. Jack and Dan inform Miles and Becky they can't let them go telling them, "you're dangerous to us." They go on to explain that "out of the sky came a solution," that the transformation was painless and that soon everyone will be reborn into a better way of life "where everyone is the same." In this new form of existence, "there's no need for love...only the instinct to live." Any attempt to contradict or argue with this proposition is curtailed with the comment, "you're forgetting something Miles; You have no choice." Becky retorts with a burst of emotion, "I want to love and be loved" and seals this with a passionate kiss with Miles.

Jack and Dan have brought pods into Miles's waiting room. While locked in the office with Becky, Miles fills three syringes with a sedative. He then creates a diversion that brings Dan and Jack into the office allowing Miles to overpower and drug them with Becky's help.

Becky and Miles leave the office and pretend to have been transformed by appearing emotionless, Becky, however, betrays her emotions when she witnesses a truck almost hit a dog and cries out in concern.

To the accompaniment of the harsh blaring of the town's siren, the chase is on again as the pod people pursue Becky and Miles into the hills surrounding Santa Mira. They try to evade capture by hiding out in an abandoned mine. Suddenly and unexpectedly, the sound of beautiful singing is heard. Becky declares, "I've never heard anything so beautiful."

Miles leaves Becky to investigate and try to find help. In a bizarre and unexpected twist, Miles soon discovers that the music is coming from radio station KLCAA's "platter parade" and is emanating from a truck radio and that the truck is being loaded with pods!

Miles returns to the mine and calls for Becky. We know she has fallen asleep and our fears are confirmed by her tone of voice when she replies, "I'm here, Miles." Miles tries to carry her to safety but when he kisses her it is obvious from the look of horror etched on his face that she had been transformed. Pod-Becky tells him to "stop acting like a fool....and accept us." As Miles begins to run away, Pod-Becky screams out, "He's in here! He's in here! Get him!"

"You fools. You're in danger!"

Miles' narration informs us that his only hope is to get away from Santa Mira, "to warn others of what was happening." With pod people in pursuit, Miles makes for the highway where he becomes just a solitary voice pleading with motorists to stop. However, the tide of cars moves inexorably on in the same direction heading for the same fate as intimated by a truck full of pods making its way towards Los Angeles. Like a mad-man Miles is left to wander the highway, ranting and raving, "They're already here! You're next!"

And so the flashback ends and we return to the point from which our story started. Dr Hill and Dr Basset conclude that Miles is insane and must undergo treatment. Suddenly an ambulance stretcher is brought in containing a truck driver who has been involved in an accident. As fate would have it, his truck was carrying a load of unusual pods, and had also been on the road from Santa Mira. It appears that Miles is telling the truth and Dr. Hill immediately arranges to call the police, every law enforcement agency and the FBI.

Points Of Interest

In 1994 "Invasion of the Body Snatchers" was selected for preservation in the United States National Film Registry by the Library of Congress for being "culturally, historically, or aesthetically significant."

One difference between the original novel by Jack Finney and the film's screenplay is that the novel ends with the alien invader eventually leaving Earth in the face of strong resistance from the humans. In addition, the "pod people" have a limited life span of no more than five years.

It was originally intended to have "Invasion of the Body Snatchers" shot over a 24-day period on a budget of US\$454,864. It was later proposed to reduce this to 20 days of shooting on a budget of \$350,000. However, the film did eventually go three days over schedule.

Sierra Madre, Chatsworth, Glendale, the area around Los Feliz, Bronson and Beachwood Canyons, were locations used to make up the town of "Santa Mira" for the film. Much of the film was also shot in the Allied Artists studio on the east side of Hollywood.

It was also originally intended for the film to be called "The Body Snatchers," but it too closely resembled the title of the 1945 Val Lewton film, *The Body Snatcher*. "They Come from Another World" was selected followed by "Better Off Dead," "Sleep No More," "Evil in the Night" and "World in Danger." Finally, the studio settled on "Invasion of the Body Snatchers" in late 1955.

The film was originally meant to end with Miles frantically screaming as truckloads of pods pass him by but the studio insisted on a less pessimistic conclusion by adding a prologue and epilogue to the movie suggesting a more optimistic outcome to the story. And so we begin with a ranting and raving Miles Bennell in custody in a hospital emergency ward. He then via flashback tells his story. In the closing at a highway accident, Miles' warning is confirmed by the presence of pods. Finally, the Federal Bureau of Investigation is notified, suggesting that there is a chance to save the Earth.

The film made more than \$1 million in the first month, and in 1956 made more than \$2.5 million in the U.S.

Director Don Siegel started off at Warner Bros. doing special effects on such films as "Casablanca" (1942) and "Edge of Darkness" (1943). His first feature as director was the Sidney Greenstreet classic, "The Verdict" in 1946 and then in 1954 he directed Walter Wanger's classic prison drama, "Riot In Cell Block 11."

Don Post and Milt Rice's special make-up effects and props produce the required menacing and threatening effect without overdoing things with too much detail.

"Invasion of the Body Snatchers" is one of those films that should not be tampered with by having it colorized. The black and white photography, specific use of shadow and editing all combine to add to the menacing mood, claustrophobic atmosphere and frantic pace of the film.

Added to this is Kevin McCarthy's skill at conveying his character's mental, emotional and physical struggles to uncover the mystery and take the audience along with him.

The film has many facets leading viewers to see it as presenting different or conflicting messages and ideas. For some people, it can be seen as being a commentary on the dangers facing America for being blind to the danger posed by McCarthyism and its associated anti-communist paranoia involving fear of communist infiltration of America of the time.

For others, "Invasion of the Body Snatchers" can also be seen as highlighting the trend towards conformity and the loss of personal autonomy and freedom, then seen as being part and parcel of life under a Soviet or communist system.

Even in our own times in the early part of the 21st Century, the film has resonance for us as we grapple with forces that seek to dehumanize and rob the individual of his / her identity. We worry about people's ability these days to feel pain, sorrow and empathy for their fellow human beings.

In our modern world, what is it that defines our individual personal identity? Just who is each of us really? Is it determined by how we look or act? Is it indicated by what we say or think? Or is it truly reflected in our capacity to love, to feel compassion and express emotion?

Now more than ever we need to heed Miles Bennell's warning;

"THEY'RE HERE, ALREADY! YOU'RE NEXT!"

Each of us needs to be aware that there is a fine line between having one's identity and individuality influenced by other people, institutions and social, historical and political forces and having one's identity and individuality subsumed, crushed and replaced by such forces with something that suits their interests. While we slumber, it can be all too easy for us to sleepwalk and be led into ways of looking, saying, thinking, believing, acting and relating by political parties, systems, ideologies and entities; media; religious / sectarian groups; military; corporations; gangs; family, tribal and peer groups and so on.

And so, how do we reclaim any sense of our true personal identity and individuality, if there is such a thing? Possibly part of the answer may lie in our understanding that,

"Only when we have to fight to stay human do we realize how precious it is to us, how dear."

Invasion of the Saucer Men (1957)

A sci-fi film with a mixture of comedy and horror that does not take itself too seriously.

1957: A Taste Of The Times:

Science & Technology

- Ultrasound scanning pioneered in Scotland.
- The first nuclear reactor plant opens for production of electricity in Pennsylvania US.
- The Soviet Union tests the H Bomb.
- Great Britain tests its first hydrogen bomb on the Christmas Island.
- A 37-kiloton nuclear fission bomb, code-named Priscilla, is exploded in the Nevada desert at Frenchman Flat.
- The US has been manufacturing 10 nuclear bombs a day.
- South Africa born gastroenterologist, Basil Hirschowitz, introduces the first prototype “fiberscope.” In 1954 he had already begun work using glass fibers to transmit light. Fiber has since been widely used in telecommunications and surgery.
- Borazan, a substance harder than diamonds is developed
- One of the dreams of science fiction writers and film makers is realized with the start of “The Space Age” when the Soviet Union launches Sputnik (traveler), the first man-made space satellite. The satellite orbits the earth every 96 minutes at a maximum height of 584 miles. The event is timed to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Bolshevik revolution.
- The Soviet Union launches Sputnik Two into orbit, with a dog on board named Laika, the first animal in space

- A process for concentrating visible light as opposed to microwaves of a maser is developed by Columbia University doctoral student, Gordon Gould. He is the first to coin the term, "laser."
- America's first attempt at putting a satellite into orbit fails as Vanguard TV3 only rises a few feet before crashing back down on to the launch pad and exploding.
- The US begins its "Corona" project, a secret attempt to put a reconnaissance satellite into orbit.
- Fritz Wankel brings out his rotary engine.
- AT&T introduces its Touchtone phones.
- Seymour Cray co-founds Control Data Corp. where he builds the first computer to use radio transistors instead of vacuum tubes.
- Oral polio vaccine is developed and tested in Congo, Africa.
- Thalidomide is officially introduced to the market. It is later linked to severe birth defects.

Directed by Edward L. Cahn

Produced by Robert J. Gurney Jr., James H. Nicholson

Written by Robert J. Gurney Jr., Al Martin

Based on the short story, "The Cosmic Frame" by Paul W. Fairman

Music by Ronald Stein

Cinematography: Frederick E. West

Edited by Charles Gross, Ronald Sinclair

Production company: Malibu Productions

Distributed by American International Pictures

Running time: 69 minutes

Cast

Steve Terrell as Johnny Carter

Gloria Castillo as Joan Hayden

Frank Gorshin as Joe Gruen

Raymond Hatton as Larkin

Lyn Osborn as Art

Russ Bender as Doctor

Douglas Henderson as Lt. Wilkins

Sam Buffington as Colonel

Jason Johnson as Detective

Don Shelton as Mr. Hayden

Scott Peters as 1st Soldier

Jan Englund as Waitress

Kelly Thordsen as Sgt. Bruce

Robert Einer as Soda Jerk

Patti Lawler as Irene

Calvin Booth as Paul

Ed Nelson & James Bridges as Boys

Roy Darmour as Sgt. Gordon

Audrey Conti & Joan Dupuis as Girls

Buddy Mason as Policeman

Angelo Rossitto, Floyd Dixon, Dean Neville & Edward Peter Gibbons as Saucer Men

"Invasion of the Saucer Men" opens with the title and credits appearing with a book entitled, "A true story of a flying saucer." The music is very light-hearted sounding and the book contains cartoon-like sketches and illustrations which set the comical mood or tone of the film.

(Spoilers follow.....)

The narrator, Artie begins to tell us his story ("I gotta' play it square with ya'") as he turns each page of the book. It's night time right after a rain storm ("spooky, eh?") in front of the Larkin farm house.

A car drives by on the way to Lover's Point situated on the Larkin property. Old farmer Larkin runs out brandishing a shotgun and grumbles, "I'll get the law after them,"

The local town is called Hicksburg ("scouts' honour!") where there's "nothing much for the young people to do." A perfect recipe for young people to find things to entertain themselves with, not always approved of by adults of course!

In the diner we see two young adult drifters, Joe Gruen and our narrator Artie Burns, who it is sarcastically observed are "looking forward to a nice game of chess before retiring." After Joe's unsuccessful attempt to pick up the waitress, he borrows the car to try his luck elsewhere while Artie decides to walk back to their boarding house. After all, he "wouldn't want to hold back the wheels of progress, or is it the progress of a big wheel?"

As Joe is driving he suddenly sees a flash of light followed by the landing of a spaceship in a nearby clearing. Joe drives to the clearing, exits the car and approaches the craft.

Back in town at the Soda Shop, a group of teenagers witness the same flash of light. Lt. Wilkins, USAF who has been recruiting for the air force seems to be impressed when one of the teenagers states, "I tell ya', I saw a flying saucer!"

Joan Hayden and her boyfriend, Johnny have a date, but her father doesn't approve of Johnny. Like many teenagers when told not to do something or faced with prohibitions which they see as being unreasonable, Joan lies about who she is seeing.

"Another load of those consarn kids on my property!"

Seeing that "most of the gang's at Lovers Point," Joan and Johnny both head off to Lover's Point

via old man Larkin's house for a night's worth of necking before their planned elopement.

A boozy bull named Old Walt, surprises a couple in their car at the Point. The girl screams and her boyfriend throws the bull a can of beer after exclaiming, "You nearly stunted my growth!" (seriously?!)

Meanwhile Joe, having witnessed something at the UFO site, has made it back to the boarding house room. He wakes Artie to tell him that they've "hit the jackpot" and that "this is different: this is big!" He tells Artie that they are going to cash in on their find by having an "exhibition of the only authentic flying saucer." Far from being impressed, Artie thinks Joe is either drunk or nuts and promptly goes back to sleep.

Lt. Wilkins waits for Col. Ambrose to get dressed before they are to take a group of military personnel to the reported landing site. Ambrose grumbles about the fact that it seems as if "all these saucers wait till night time to make an appearance." He knows that Wilkins was once a publicist but his main concern is to prevent a "nation-wide panic." Wilkins is told not inform anyone. Nothing like a dose of adult world secrecy to fan the flames of misinformed speculation. The Colonel then orders Wilkins to get some of his men and have them load their weapons.

As Johnny and Joan drive off to get married, they are almost hit by a military jeep carrying the Air Force personnel due to the fact that the teenagers have been driving with the car's lights off. Suddenly a flash of lightning and the slippery driving conditions cause the car to hit a small creature that has abruptly darted out in front of their car.

Johnny and Joan get out of the car to investigate. At first Joan thinks that they have hit "a little boy." A flash of lightning reveals the sight of a small alien body with an over sized cranium. Joan exclaims in horror, "It's disgusting" and demands, "get me away from here."

The creature's severed hand then creeps over to the front tire of Johnny's car. With its retractable needle claws, it punctures the front tire. Having no spare tire, Johnny and Joan are forced to walk to Larkin's house and call the police.

When the Air Force arrives at the UFO landing site clearing, the Colonel calls division headquarters to summon engineers: "SOP calls for engineers, not guesses." Lt. Wilkins has been speculating that the saucer's presence may help to explain the blue lights that jet pilots have been spotting. He wonders "how many airline crack-ups it's caused?"

Meanwhile back at the Larkin house, Joan and Johnny let themselves in and use the telephone to call Police Headquarters. The Desk Sergeant does not believe their story, putting it down to "Saturday night, that's official!" It wouldn't be the first or last time that young people are not listened to, dismissed or disbelieved out of hand by adults in authority.

A flash of lightning together with a sudden power outage adds to the spooky atmosphere. As

Joan goes off to find some candles, she spots something outside staring at her and runs to Johnny in fright. At that moment the lights come back on to reveal Larkin standing at the front doorway wielding his shotgun.

“Consarn hoodlums”

Larkin does not listen to the teenagers’ explanations of why they are in his house. He smells the odor of alcohol and accuses them of drinking. He thinks they are up to no good and warns them that if he sees any of those “smoochin’ kids” they’ll “get their backsides loaded with rock salt!” Larkin then calls the operator and tells her to get the police out to his place.

Later on Joe stops off at the Larkin house while Larkin is out checking on his livestock. He calls Artie at “Watkins 01536” to tell him that he has “proof” about the alien, but Artie does not believe it. Joe tells Artie to clear everything out of the fridge as he’s about to bring home something “perishable” which they’ve got to keep “on ice.” It almost sounds like Hicksburg is about to have its own little civilian version of Roswell!

But 10 years after Roswell, these aliens have other ideas.....

As Joe once again attempts to retrieve the alien’s body, he is jumped by some aliens who were watching and lying in wait for him in the woods. The aliens then repeatedly inject an already half-sozzled Joe with their alcohol venom before carrying his body away.

As Johnny and Joan approach Johnny’s car, they hear a strange pounding sound. They soon discover the source of the sound: an alien doing a spot of what looks like panel beating on the car. Of course it is assumed that the aliens are stupid and primitive and are furious at the car and hold it responsible for killing their comrade. Oh Johnny, it’s the aliens who are interstellar travelers, not humans! Who’s dumb? Kids!

“Go ahead corporal, fire a few rounds.”

Back at the UFO landing site, the USAF personnel do their military thing: surround the craft, inform its occupants that they are in fact surrounded (“We have you surrounded!”) by yelling at them with a bullhorn and then indignantly but futilely firing off a few rounds at the craft when they dare to have the effrontery not to respond to their hails.

Now remember kids, if you come across something you don’t understand and yelling at it or throwing things at it doesn’t produce the required results, then there’s nothing else for it but to.....

.....Cut it with open with an acetylene torch!

"Did you ever hear such a cock 'n bull story?"

Meanwhile, the police have loaded Joe's body into an ambulance. The Detective takes Johnny's statement and he describes the alien as being "all green, except his head." The detective assumes that Joan and Johnny are drunk and so he gives Johnny a field sobriety test: "I want you to blow up this balloon."

The detective and the doctor are disgusted by what seems to them a very callous response to the killing of a person. Added to this is the strong odor of alcohol as well as Johnny's puzzling determination to leave: "For a guy who has committed a serious crime, you're awfully anxious to get to the police station."

At police headquarters the detective, after having finished typing up the report, hands it to Johnny to read and sign. Johnny realizes that instead of being a report, it really amounts to being a confession to murder. Joan then pipes up and plays the 'her father, the city attorney' card. The detective, however has already called her father.

When Mr. Hayden, the city attorney arrives he tells his daughter that he'll try to get her out of trouble, but that "young punk" and "rough neck" Johnny is on his own.

"The man you killed is a nobody"

Joan's father is about to give his daughter another of life's really 'valuable' moral lessons. When they go down to the morgue to identify the body and see that it is Joe Gruen, Johnny exclaims, "I didn't run over this man!" Hayden then tells Johnny and Joan, "Now get this, both of you. We're lucky in one respect. The man you killed is a nobody. There will be only one person interested in the charges brought against you. That's his room-mate."

Back at the UFO site, engineers are trying to cut the craft open with acetylene torches. Suddenly, the metal skin of the craft ignites and the craft explodes.

At Police Headquarters Johnny works out that the aliens have been planning to frame him for Joe's murder. He and Joan conclude that they need more evidence so they exit the room they are in via an open window and purloin the police detective's car.

Johnny and Joan drive back to Johnny's car and as they search the surrounding woods, unknown to them they are being observed by the aliens. As they walk back to the police car, the severed alien hand enters the car through an open back window and plops down onto the back seat.

As Johnny and Joan drive off, Joan is feeling a bit chilly, so she reaches back to close the back window. As she does so, the alien hand inches its way up the back seat towards her. Joan suddenly catches sight of the menacing needle-brandishing digits of the hand, screams, jumps out of the car with Johnny and closes the door thereby trapping the freakish phalangeal fiend. The teenagers now have their evidence and all they need now is a credible witness.....Artie.

Artie's belief or lack thereof in the teens' story is best summed up by his observation: "Killed by little green men? That is the craziest story I've ever heard," They then plead with him to call the police to verify their story. The police sergeant informs Artie that his roommate Joe was killed and they are looking for the boy and girl who it is believed had killed him and that they have indeed managed to escape custody.

In the meantime, a stoush has erupted between Larkin's inebriated bull and a bad-tempered alien spoiling for a fight. The bull manages to give a good account of himself by gouging one of the alien's bulbous eye balls. However, the bull loses the pub brawl when the alien hypodermically harpoons him with its needle-like claws sending the beast into a kind of alcohol-laden coma.

Armed with a camera and a gun, Artie, Johnny and Joan depart in Joan's cantankerous old heap of a car which she has christened.....Elvis! It gets worse with jokes about girls needing an extra mirror and the old car still being able to pant and shimmy! I kid you not. As if we need any kind of comedic relief from tension at any point in this film! Anything that makes 21st Century audiences cringe has to be good though.

When the three arrive back at the police car, we find the aliens engaging in a bit of breaking and entering in order to get their dead compatriot's animated body part. After the aliens clear off, Johnny, Joan, and Artie notice the hand on the floor board of the car. Artie manages to take a picture with his flashbulb camera, just as the hand evaporates in a cloud of smoke. No-one in town will believe the teenagers, but they will have to pay attention to a witness like Artie.

As the trio begin to drive back to town, Joan's car battery starts to go through its death throes. The aliens advance towards their car and it isn't long before they conclude that "bullets don't hurt them" but instead "It's the light that hurts them."

The car battery has finally shuffled off its electro-magnetic coil and as a consequence, the aliens advance menacingly yet again. As Artie runs for it, he is attacked and injected. Armed with only the camera, Johnny and Joan use its flashbulb to keep the aliens at bay while they make their escape.

Calling from Larkin's farm. Johnny tells the police that they are ready to surrender. However, he is told that he is no longer wanted for murder because Joe died of heart failure due to his blood's dangerously high alcohol content and that Joan's father has taken care of all the legal

matters. With no help forthcoming from the police, where else can they turn? The “gang” at Lover’s Point, that’s where.

Eventually Johnny and Joan, together with a few carloads of their friends, drive off to a clearing to which the aliens are conveying Artie’s body. The teens plan to surround the clearing and when a signal is given, to turn on their car lights. When they arrive, the plan is put into action and the aliens sizzle and evaporate until they all disappear. Artie wakes up and is obviously very drunk. Johnny concludes that the aliens inject their victims with alcohol but if the victim is already drunk then the result is death.

After grumpy old Larkin arrives on the scene, blasting rock salt into the air and telling the kids to get off his property, Artie finishes his narrative, (of course as he’s being helped by two lovely young ladies!):

“So that’s my story. Johnny and Joan helped me remember a little of it. But I wrote it you understand. A true story? Well that’s the nice thing about all this book writing business. You pay before you read.”

An alien hand then closes the book followed by a scream.....

Points of Interest

“Invasion of the Saucer Men” taps in to the UFO hysteria phenomenon and Cold War paranoia at the time which led many to fear threats from un-American alien forces of destruction. A nice healthy environment in which to grow up! Not!

Despite the film seeming to be pitched at a young audience, it becomes apparent that in its own way it sets about delivering a punch to society’s nose when it comes to how young people are often viewed and treated. Also up for examination is the kind of negative modeling that adults can sometimes give young people.

In the case of Joe and Artie, we have a couple of adult figures who can’t see anything beyond the next big scheme, the next opportunity to make a quick buck, not realizing that they are just a couple of losers with big dreams and no talent with which to achieve those dreams. For them, “this town’s a cinch for a quick buck.” Look and learn young people....

“(They) think we’re drunk or crazy just ‘coz we’re young.”

That 20th Century invention of the “teenager” or “adolescent” has often proved to be a curse for many young people so labeled over the last few decades. Such labels often tend to have

negative connotations in the minds of adults: Drug-taking, binge drinking, gangs, anti-social activities and so the negative assumptions about young people pile up.

“After all, we’re just crazy kids.”

It shouldn’t be a surprise when people decide to act in the very way they are perceived or expected to behave. While many young people do display anti-social behaviors, the overwhelming majority of adolescents are well-adjusted and decent young people who respond well to respect given to them by adults; who thrive on praise and being paid due attention to; who need to take risks in order to grow; who need to be given responsibility; who love to have fun in life and learn best when they are having fun. After all, the health of any society is determined by how it values and treats both its elderly and its youth.

The whole affair surrounding the death of Joe, brings up three interesting points concerning the effect that the adult world can have on the ethical and moral development of the young as well as on young people’s view of their role and place in society;

1. The ease with which a young person’s testimony can be ignored, disregarded and disbelieved, based on prejudice and preconceived notions concerning their trustworthiness.
2. How labels can be so easily applied to people as a way of demonizing them and avoiding any kind of fair, considered and deeper appraisal of their thoughts, actions and motives.
3. Young people learn quickly from adults, even to the extent of picking up a distorted ethical and moral framework. For instance, how easily recourse can be made to the use of parental influence to clear up any real or perceived negative actions on the part of their offspring. Although it is right and proper to have the support of one’s family in times of strife as in Joan’s case, at some point in other normal instances, young people need to take responsibility for their actions and the consequences of their actions. Joan’s father ought to have extended his assistance to Johnny as a matter of fairness and justice in the circumstances. He failed to provide a sound ethical and moral lesson to his own daughter.

In addition, when Joan’s father refers to Joe as just being a nobody, it raises the argument that if he were a somebody, that would make all the difference! What value does a human life have? How does the act of killing someone whether or not accidentally vary in accordance with the victim’s perceived status and whether or not one can sweep it under the carpet or get away with it? Hope you’re listening kids and taking it all in!

Frank Gorshen who plays Joe Gruen is easily recognized from his role as The Ridler in the Batman TV series and his standout role in the 1969 Star Trek episode "Let That Be Your Last Battlefield," in which he played a character with a half black and half white face....or was it a half white and half black face? Does it really matter? That was the whole point!

Speaking of stand-outs, we cannot forget The Saucer Men characters in the film who were a creation of make-up and effects genius, Paul Blaisdell. Their huge bulbous eyes and giant vein-covered bald heads helped to define our cultural understanding of what constitutes alien life, namely our notions of what "little, green men" look like. Who does the alien Morbo in the animated series "Futurama" remind you of? Or indeed the creatures in the film, "Mars Attacks!?"

Paul Blaisdell's flying saucer was also used in the opening scene of The Outer Limits episode, "Controlled Experiment." (1964)

Even the film's plot has been a major influence on successive sci-fi films like, "The Blob."

"Our job is to prevent a possible nation-wide panic by keeping the information from the public."

Of relevance today is the way the film briefly deals with the idea of governments hiding information from the public. Witness how Colonel Ambrose bulldozes evidence of aliens right into the ground to hide information from the public who have the right to know that they are under threat by those very beings. The colonel even declares to Lt. Wilkins, "makes you proud....being part of a show like this." Lt. Wilkins then suggests that "there might be other units covering up other things" and as far as the "good job" they have done, they can get some sleep and "read about a jet crash in tomorrow's papers."

Makes you proud, indeed and.....makes you think.....

Kronos (1957)

Kronos: Destroyer of the Universe!

A low budget 1950s sci-fi film with an enduring quality. This movie reflects the cold war tensions at the time, as well as the increasing UFO phenomenon

1957: A Taste Of The times:

International Affairs

- Eisenhower Doctrine: Proposal by US President Eisenhower to offer military assistance to

Middle Eastern countries to resist Communist aggression

- Suez Canal reopens.
- France sends troops to Algeria to crush the rebel movement.
- Treaty of Rome is signed establishing the European Economic Community and the European Atomic Energy Community. The goal is to have people, goods, services and money moving unchecked throughout the Union and to create a common market for all products, especially coal and steel.
- NATO warns the Soviet Union that any attack will be met with all available means, including nuclear weapons.
- The Distant Early Warning Line, a system of radar stations designed to detect Soviet bombers approaching North America, goes into operation.
- The United States and Canada agree to create the North American Air Defense Command.
- The International Atomic Energy Agency is established.
- B-52 bombers begin full-time flying alert in case of attack by USSR.
- Communist leaders meet in Moscow. Mao Zedong predicts that between a third and a half of the world's population might be killed in a nuclear war and that most of the survivors would be living in the socialist block while "imperialism would be razed to the ground."
- Policy of "Pre-delegation authority" is established when Pres. Eisenhower gives authority to senior military commanders to retaliate with nuclear weapons if the president cannot be reached or is unable to respond to a nuclear attack against the US.

Directed by Kurt Neumann

Produced by Irving Block, Louis DeWitt, Kurt Neumann, Jack Rabin

Screenplay by Lawrence L. Goldman

Story by Irving Block

Music by Paul Sawtell, Bert Shefter

Cinematography: Karl Struss

Edited by Jodie Copelan

Production company: Regal Films

Distributed by 20th Century Fox

Running time: 78 minutes

Budget: \$160,000 (approx.)

Cast

Jeff Morrow as Dr. Leslie Gaskell

Barbara Lawrence as Vera Hunter

John Emery as Dr. Hubbell Eliot

George O'Hanlon as Dr. Arnold Culver

Morris Ankrum as Dr. Albert Stern

Kenneth Alton as McCrary - The Pickup Driver
John Parrish as Gen. Perry
Jose Gonzales-Gonzales as Manuel Ramirez
Richard Harrison as Pilot
Marjorie Stapp as Nurse
Robert Shayne as Air Force General
Don Eitner as Weather Operator
Gordon Mills as Sergeant
John Halloran as Lab Central Security Guard

As a young boy in the early 1960s, I remember watching two black and white science fiction films which made such an impact on me that I still vividly recall them after all these years. One was called "Kronos: and the other was "The Monolith Monsters," both made in 1957. I do in particular remember how these films nearly 60 years ago scared the heck out of me. Lets take a look at KRONOS in this chapter.

"Kronos" (aka "Kronos, Destroyer of the Universe") is a 1957 independently made science fiction film from Regal Films and distributed by 20th Century Fox. It was produced by Irving Block, Louis DeWitt, Kurt Neumann, and Jack Rabin and was directed by Kurt Neumann. The film stars Jeff Morrow and Barbara Lawrence.

"Kronos" is about a small group of scientists who are investigating what at first appears to be an asteroid that eventually enters the Earth's atmosphere and crashes into the ocean. Soon after a giant machine, christened "Kronos" emerges out of the ocean.

What is Kronos?
Where has it come from?
Who made it?
For what purpose?
What is it doing on Earth?
Will it pose a threat to humanity?

(Spoilers follow below.....)

To the accompaniment of a powerful, rousing and rhythmic music score, the title and credits appear in white font over a black background. We next see a saucer-shaped spacecraft traversing a star-spangled sky. The huge, blinking saucer suddenly stops and hovers and then ejects a small glowing object which heads towards the Earth.

A solitary pick-up truck traces a lonely path along a man-made scar on the face of a desert landscape. The driver, a man called McCrary smokes and whistles to a tune playing on the radio, unaware that all the paths that he has traveled on throughout his life have led him to this

final destination.

Suddenly McCrary's radio experiences interference and the truck's engine quits like a living beast having forsaken the will to live. McCrary gets out of the truck to check the engine. While he does so, the small sphere of luminous intelligence discharges light and electrical energy towards the hapless human and possesses him.

McCrary, who is now under the control of some alien intelligence, gets back in his truck and drives to Lab Central, a government installation. A single guard is all that stands between McCrary and his entry into "restricted territory." McCrary tells the guard he is lost. As the guard is being distracted while consulting a map, McCrary knocks him out with a wrench.

McCrary gains entry into the main building and locates the office of Dr. Hubbell Eliot, the installation's director. Dr. Eliot challenges the intruder asking him, "Who are you? What are you doing here? You have no business here. How did you get past the guard?" The only answer he receives comes to him in the form of the light and its associated intelligence transferring itself from the possessed McCrary to Dr. Eliot. McCrary then falls to the floor, dead. His body is soon carried away by the injured guard and a maintenance man who have arrived at Eliot's office to check on the director. They are both surprised at the director's reaction which seems to be out of character!

"I don't think I know her well enough to call her by name"

Dr. Arnold Culver enters the computer lab and retrieves an orbital calculation that his prized computer, "SUSIE" completed. Arnie thanks the computer, ("Atta girl, Susie, I knew you'd come through") and goes to see Dr. Leslie Gaskell. Culver really needs to get out more!

"That thing is changing its course!"

Gaskell shows Arnie what is believed to be asteroid "M47" on a viewing screen which is linked to the observatory telescope. Culver explains the data on the orbit thus far as being nothing more than an orbital perturbation. Gaskell decides to have photo exposures taken, and then developed. Gaskell's girlfriend and lab employee, Vera Hunter works in the dark room. Gaskell and Culver later enter the dark room to view photo plates of M47. As he reviews the plates, Gaskell declares, "Looks like a good 15 degree shift to me."

Synchro Unifying Sinometric Integrating Equitensor

As Eliot walks to the computing department, SUSIE malfunctions. Culver suggests that Gaskell and Vera go on their movie date while he stays behind to repair the computer. Gaskell and Vera only get as far as the parking lot, before Gaskell worries over leaving loose ends at work and returns to the lab with a very disappointed Vera in tow.

Back at the lab, Vera develops more photographic plates. and SUSIE is functioning as well as ever. Gaskell and Culver then meet with Dr. Eliot in his office when it becomes obvious that the object's "swing out of orbit" is definitely "not normal!"

The following information is provided to Dr Eliot concerning the celestial intruder;

- Diameter: 4.9 miles
- Mass: 6000 megatons
- Speed: 1750 miles per second
- Destination: Earth!
- Estimated time of impact: 16 hours

Dr. Gaskell suggests that the military can deal with the threat to the earth by using weaponry to "intercept and destroy it before it strikes."

"Asteroid Heading for Earth!"

The military sets about preparing nuclear armed rockets for launch. The rockets are soon launched and strike the object while at that precise moment Dr. Eliot reacts as if his head has been struck with pain and he collapses to the floor.

At first it seems as if the rockets have succeeded in destroying the asteroid, but the object soon reappears. Despite possessing sufficient explosive force to destroy all of New York, the object has not been "destroyed at all" and in fact, the missile strike "had no effect at all!"

The following is a televised report on the object's entry into the Earth's atmosphere after the missile attack as received by viewers. Audio and visual reception is poor due to massive interference caused by the object's approach:

Televised News Bulletin Broadcast from Station KGTK

"...causing it to veer.....will land somewhere on the North American continent.....not to give way to unfounded rumors....."

(Shaking of studio causing shuddering camera movement. Increasing volume of rumbling and roaring sound of object as it passes overhead)

".....that sound you hear is from the approaching asteroid....."

"Due to technical difficulties, we are unable to continue with our news bulletin. We do apologize for this break in transmission and we will resume normal programming once the problem is rectified"

“DANGER AVERTED!”

The asteroid / saucer crashes into the Pacific Ocean just off the coast of Mexico. In contrast to the prevailing mood, Gaskell paces backward and forward exuding fumes of frustration fueled by the flagrant foolishness of those who can’t “see any further than their noses.” To him it is obvious that the object changed path “like a wounded animal striking out at its tormentor.” He ponders the question: “What if it (the object’s controller) is an intelligent being from somewhere out there?” If it is, then its capabilities can be gauged by the probability that “it came through a billion miles of space” to get here.

Since the object’s manoeuvres suggest some form of intelligence, Gaskell is all for immediately putting together an expedition to investigate it.

Gaskell and Culver fly to Mexico and then make use of a helicopter to search for the object. After running low on fuel, they return to their base which is merely a beach shack. In the meantime, Vera shows that she won’t take no for an answer by contriving to get herself to Mexico by means of a plan she worked out to personally get some “missing” chemicals to Gaskell.

“This is the calm and...a storm is going to break out at any minute”

We next see alternating and contrasting scenes which serve to heighten the tension;

Hospital room

Cut to Dr. Albert Stern and his nurse tending to their patient, Dr. Eliot in a hospital bed. Eliot regains consciousness and Dr. Stern records his rambling utterances. Dr. Stern then hooks Dr. Eliot up to an EEG machine.

Beach

Gaskell feels a sense of dread and thinks that this is the calm before a storm. He also postulates that “there is more out there than we can ever hope to understand.” However, there is enough right in front of him: A lovely Vera resplendent in her swim suit! Chase her, not some asteroid, Les!

Hospital room

Eliot suddenly wakes with a shimmering light flashing on his face while simultaneously out in the ocean, the object is beginning to stir. Stern sedates Eliot but with no effect. It’s time for

the....."ELECTRO-SHOCK TREATMENT!"

Beach

Vera: "Dr Gaskell, will you marry me?"

Les: "Can you cook?"

More to the point: Can Vera respect a top scientist who....."pulled the scientific boner of all time!" (I kid you not! Kinda destroys the tension a bit!)

It gets worse when Vera suddenly notices something bulging and rising out of the water! "Les, look at the size of that thing!" (Wipe that smug grin off your face, Les)

Hospital room

Dr. Eliot seems to be improving and Dr. Stern orders daily electroshock treatments. Eliot is more lucid and appears to be himself. He tries to convince Dr. Stern that he must help him." "I don't know how much time I have....you've got to help me."

I, KRONOS,

Destroyer of worlds,
Stands before you –
Implacable,
Invincible,
Impregnable,
Indomitable.

The next morning, reveals the overwhelming and brooding presence of a colossal machine on the beach. It consists of a pair of black cubes connected by a silver cylinder. The top cube has a sphere and two mobile antennae while at the bottom there are "legs" that consist of a series of cylinders.

Herald Gazette

"Fantastic Monster Discovered!"

Dr. Stern meanwhile has been going over the tapes of his sessions with Dr. Eliot. Here is a small excerpt;

"I know I'm doing something terribly wrong.....someone who should not be allowed to live.....He would live on to command the stars....."

Stern dictates his observations and conclusions and mentions Eliot's strong belief that he is possessed by some being that feeds off electrical and atomic energy. Here is an excerpt;

"Marked paranoid syndrome.....Alpha waves violent during his lucid moments....Incubus dominates his actions.....Subsist on pure electrical energy."

According to Eliot, the being's civilization is facing a shortage of resources and is scouring the Universe for fresh sources of energy.

I, KRONOS,

Devourer of planets,
In your world's last hour
Reveal to you my power.
Marvel at my superiority,
As you ponder acts of futility!

Gaskell, Culver and Vera take a helicopter out with which they use to circle the machine. They land on the top of the gigantic silent sentinel.

After alighting from the chopper, Gaskell takes some pictures while Culver takes radiation readings. Suddenly, all three humans are held fast in a kind of magnetic scanning beam. The object then activates and opens up to reveal mind-boggling incomprehensible alien machinery inside. In the face of such awesome technological power, the three humans climb aboard the helicopter and depart.

Meanwhile under shock therapy treatment, Eliot provides more detail concerning the alien invader's intentions. The object is apparently an energy accumulator which has landed on Earth and will, "suck the Earth dry of all electronic and atomic energy resources."

Suddenly Eliot enters Stern's office and demands the notes he has been making. In a menacing voice Eliot warns him, "Now you're the only one who knows. And you will never tell." In the struggle that ensues between them, Stern is electrocuted by Eliot with Stern's own equipment.

During a news report, a recording made by Gaskell in Mexico is played in which he describes the object as being one-hundred feet high and made of gleaming metal. As for what the object can be called, Dr. Gaskell continues; "I can only think of the giant, Kronos" --a 'monster' from Greek Mythology.

The news presenter then makes the suggestion that Kronos is "perhaps another gift from

another world to ours.”

Dr. Eliot leaves the hospital in Phoenix and returns to Lab Central. By means of a file containing notes on Nuclear and Thermonuclear sources, he is able to communicate to Kronos the locations of sources of nuclear energy such as power stations and atom-bomb arsenals. He communicates the first target to Kronos: “Navarre Electro!” Kronos then activates and proceeds towards its target with relentless purpose by means of its pounding, pulverizing piston-like cylinder-legs.

Gaskell, Culver, and Vera monitor Kronos from their helicopter. They watch helplessly as the merciless machine approaches a power station, absorbs its energy and then effortlessly destroys the facility.

But wait! All is not lost surely! For the Mexican Air Force is here to save the day with four P-51 Mustang planes, led by none other than the redoubtable Captain Torres! Vaya con Dios, Captain Torres! Oh wait.....Kronos seems to have easily destroyed the might of the Mexican Air Force! Who would have guess it? As Kronos proceeds on its merry way attacking power plants and draining their energy, it grows larger with every absorption of energy.

DAILY GLOBE

"Lab Central Chief Advises H-Bomb for Kronos!"

After Gaskell, Culver and Vera return to Lab Central, they take the elevator down to the Isolation Chamber which is shielded against cosmic rays. In the chamber, Gaskell questions Eliot about the newspaper headline, "Lab Central Chief Advises H-Bomb for Kronos!" Gaskell states that he opposes this course of action involving a multiple thermo-nuclear attack. He points out to Eliot that Kronos will “absorb that energy” and become a more powerful “walking storehouse of energy.” In fact, according to Gaskell, “it’s very construction is proof of intelligence.”

Later, mistakenly thinking that she is addressing Gaskell. Vera says out loud, "Les, there is something you should know, the Phoenix hospital just phoned." She suddenly realizes her mistake when she sees that it is Eliot and not Les who turns around in his chair. Vera tries to escape but Eliot catches her, struggles with her and then tries to electrocute her in the same manner he did Dr. Stern at the hospital. Luckily Gaskell heard Vera’s cries for help (“Be careful, he’s a maniac, Les!”) and manages to stop Eliot. In doing so, Gaskell pushes him into an electrical panel causing the electricity to surge through his body.

The electric shock seems to have caused Eliot to return to his normal self. Eliot proceeds to outline the alien invaders’ plan and Vera makes a recording of it:

"Here on Earth we have learned only one half of the nuclear secret. We can transform matter into energy. Up there, they have the other half. They transmute energy into matter. They have learned how to create the basic elements of matter, electrically and atomically.....What has

happened to them may well happen here if we continue to consume resources at the present rate."

Gaskell calls the Pentagon to stop the B-47 bomber carrying the H-Bomb. The Air Force General orders the B-47 "BX-89" to return to base. As the aircraft turns to leave, the pilot radios in the following message, "We are being pulled toward the objective."

The plane cannot return to base as its controls have been taken over by Kronos. Kronos intends for the plane to head towards it, impact it and then detonate. Just before this happens, Kronos transforms into a solid black cube. The H-Bomb detonates, and

The Daily Herald
FAILURE!

(Excerpt) ".....but Kronos merely absorbed the bomb's nuclear blast, growing to an immense size. The alien machine now appears to be utterly unstoppable, able to harvest all of our power and energy at will."

When Dr. Eliot returns to the Isolation Chamber he suddenly becomes ill and falls to the floor. A light flashes on his face and the alien intelligence that had possessed him earlier flows like a liquid from his body out to the walls of the chamber, discharging electric flashes as it does so.

Culver, Gaskell and Vera meet and listen to Eliot's earlier recorded conversations with Dr. Stern: "...we have only learned one half of the nuclear secret.....anthropic conversion.....reverse the process somehow...."

Gaskell has a brain storm and proposes that Kronos can be destroyed with its own energy. He theorizes that the two antennae on top of the machine are positive and negative poles. His idea is to "set up a field of force" between the two poles using "a concentrated field of omega particles," which will cause a change of polarity. As a result, "Kronos would become his own executioner."

Post Dispatch
Giant on rampage!
Headed for H-bomb Stockpile!

Daily Globe
No Possible Defense
Mass Evacuation planned

TV News Broadcast

"Police and National Guard have been powerless to stop the wild rush from the doomed city....."

Kronos is now making its way relentlessly toward Los Angeles and the nuclear stockpile at Port Hueneme. Culver, Gaskell and Vera meet with General Perry who has arranged to fly the required radioactive nuclear materials out from the Boston Institute of Technology.

Later on, the pilot of the jet (45574) carrying the nuclear materials spots Kronos. He is to deploy his nuclear cargo at a precise location. On the first attempt at deployment, the wind changes and the first strike is aborted.

"That wind better hold steady....just better hold steady!"

A second attempt is successfully made ("OK Iron Mike, here I come!") and the reversal process begins causing Kronos to glow and then melt. Gaskell observes, "The chain reaction will keep on until the last stored electron of mass has been neutralized. Kronos is literally eating himself up alive. You are witnessing his death throes."

After a massive explosion Vera asks, "Les, do you think they'll send any more down?" Gaskell replies, "If they do well be ready for them." The final image is of the smoldering remains of Kronos.

Points of interest

"Kronos" was filmed in a little more than two weeks in California.

The film contains a great mixture of stock footage shots including the usual rocket launches of WWII era German V2s, through to Strategic Air Command's swept wing atomic jet bomber, the B-47 StratoJet and the first (experimental) supersonic fighter, the XF-100 Super Saber.

The idea of an alien machine absorbing energy was also the subject of the 1966 Star Trek episode, "The Doomsday Machine" in which a giant alien machine destroys planets and uses them to fuel itself.

At one point in the film, Gaskell, Culver and Vera take a helicopter out and land on the top of Kronos to investigate the machine. This scene is somewhat similar to the 2012 film "Battleship," in a scene where a ship arrives at a certain location where the crew discover a massive floating alien structure. Alex and two crew members, Raikes and Beast, are sent to approach the structure in an armed Zodiac. When they do reach it, Alex walks on top of the alien ship's hull to investigate it. Both scenes show the reaction of humans when confronted with overpowering

alien technology.

George O'Hanlon, who plays Dr. Arnold Culver in the film, was also the voice of George Jetson in the popular 1960s cartoon series, The Jetsons.

Jeff Morrow who played Dr. Leslie Gaskell also had the role of Exeter in "This Island Earth" (1955) and was in "The Giant Claw" (1957).

Morris Ankrum who played Dr. Albert Stern we know well from 50's sci-fi movies, often taking on the roles of no-nonsense generals. We have seen him appear in;

Red Planet Mars (1952), as Secretary of Defense Sparks
Invaders from Mars (1953), as Col. Fielding
Earth vs. Flying Saucers (1956), as Brig. General John Hanley
Beginning of the End (1957), as General John Hanson
The Giant Claw (1957), as Lt. General Edward Considine

Kronos writer, producer and special effects maestro, Irving Block also worked on the sci-fi films, "Rocketship X-M", and "The Atomic Submarine." He also had a role as production designer in the classic sci-fi masterpiece, "Forbidden Planet" (1956).

At one point in the film, Gaskell states, "I never looked at the night sky without an awareness that there's more out there than we can ever hope to understand. Things we might sense, if we weren't too stupid to admit their existence." No truer word was ever spoken. Since the making of Kronos we've been made aware of the existence of such phenomena as, Quasars; Cosmic microwave background radiation; Dark Matter; Dark Energy; exoplanets; black holes and more recently, gravity waves.

One cannot help but wonder how advanced beings would not have understood that there is far more energy in just a single star than in all the power plants on Earth. Wouldn't it have therefore been in their power to just harvest the energy from stars, instead of harassing civilizations on other worlds? The swine!

KRONOS FACT FILE

In Greek mythology, Kronos or Cronus, was the leader and youngest of the first generation of Titans, the divine descendants of Uranus (the sky) and Gaia, (the earth). He eventually overthrew his father and ruled during a Golden Age, until he was overthrown by his own son, Zeus and imprisoned in Tartarus.

Cronos was usually depicted with a sickle, which is used to harvest crops and also the weapon used to defeat his father, Ouranos (Uranus), the ruler of the universe.

The theme of "Kronos" is by now a very well-worn one: Humans fighting to save the planet from a powerful alien invader. For the era in which the film was made however, a different (ecological?) slant is given to the theme whereby the aliens have come to earth because their own planet has become depleted of energy. As one character states, "What has happened to them may well happen here, if we continue using our resources at the present rate." Perhaps we may eventually become the aliens from an energy-depleted world armed with our own version of KRONOS with which to ravage other worlds!

I, Kronos

Destroyer of the Universe,
My soul purpose in thought and deed:
To live on whenever there is need
To satisfy the gnawing greed
For ever more on which to feed.

I, Kronos

Am coming.

I, Kronos

Am here!

Not of This Earth (1957)

A fast-paced, entertaining low-budget sci-fi movie with a somewhat dark atmosphere

1957: A Taste of the Times:

World Firsts

- Walter "Fred" Morrison applies for a patent for a "flying toy" which we now know as the "Frisbee." It is first produced by The Wham-O Company and is called the "Pluto Platter."
- Three B-52's take off from Castle Air Force Base in California on the first nonstop, round-the-world flight by jet planes, which lasts 45 hours and 19 minutes.
- The Hamilton Watch Company is the first to introduce an electric watch.
- The Ryan X-13 Vertijet becomes the first jet to take-off and land vertically. Take that Harrier!
- The first experimental sodium nuclear reactor operates.
- The first British hydrogen bomb was detonated on Christmas Island in South Pacific.
- "The Seawolf," the first submarine powered by liquid metal cooled reactor, is completed.
- "Grayback," the first submarine designed to fire guided missiles, is launched.
- Marine Maj. John Glenn sets a transcontinental speed record when he flies a jet from California to New York in 3 hours, 23 minutes and 8 seconds.
- Althea Gibson becomes the first black tennis player to win a Wimbledon singles title.
- The U.S. surgeon general, Leroy E. Burney reports that there is a direct link between smoking and lung cancer. Whodda thunked it!
- Santa Susana in Los Angeles County begins receiving the nation's first commercial electricity from a small, civilian-owned, nuclear reactor. After It is shut down in 1964, scientists will later report that the plant might be responsible hundreds of cancer cases.
- The United States conducts its first underground nuclear test, code-named "Rainier," in the Nevada desert.
- USSR launches the first intercontinental multistage ballistic missile.
- The first balloon flight to exceed 100,000 feet takes off from Crosby, Minnesota.
- Market researcher, James Vicary claims that he has invented a new way to get people to buy things, whether they want them or not via a process called "subliminal advertising." He will later admit that his results were fabricated. In 1898 a book The New Psychology by E.W. Scripture was published which laid out most of the principles of subliminal response.
- USSR launches the first intercontinental multistage ballistic missile while later the United States successfully test-fires the Atlas intercontinental ballistic missile for the first time.

Directed by Roger Corman

Produced by Roger Corman

Written by Charles B. Griffith, Mark Hanna

Music by Ronald Stein

Cinematography: John J. Mescall

Edited by Charles Gross
Distributed by Allied Artists
Running time: 67 minutes (or 71 minutes)
Budget: \$100,000
Box office: \$1 million

Cast

Paul Birch as Paul Johnson
Beverly Garland as Nadine Storey
Morgan Jones as Harry Sherbourne
William Roerick as Dr. F.W. Rochelle
Jonathan Haze as Jeremy Perrin
Dick Miller as Joe Piper
Anna Lee Carroll as Davanna Woman
Pat Flynn as Simmons

(Spoilers follow below....)

A human form ensconced in a chair radiates inhuman intent through cruel and cold milky white soulless orbs devoid of emotion. A device next to him triggers the opening of a cabinet in the wall that reveals the figure of one of his own kind who reports that,

“Time narrows, there is death upon Davana.... It is assumed that we shall perish.”

The seemingly human seated figure is not a human at all but is instead a shell occupied by an alien agent who goes by the name of Mr. Johnson. This being who is not of this earth has been sent to infiltrate our planet via a high-tech matter transporter from the distant planet, Davana. The inhabitants of his home planet have developed an incurable blood disease as a result of a nuclear war. Johnson's mission to Earth is to test the blood of humans for its usefulness in saving his species from extinction. His every thought and action is dictated by the implacable imperatives of survival.

Shut your eyes fast before they are suddenly assailed by abstract visions of inverted skulls and abrupt fleeting glimpses of dripping blood and bleached bones. For now, you are now being prepared to,

“...adventure into the
dimension of the impossible.
To enter this realm,
you must set your mind free

from earthly fetters that bind it.
If you find the events that follow to be unbelievable,
it is only because your imagination is chained.
All you need do is to believe
so that you may cross
the brink of time and space....
into the land you sometimes visit
in your dreams!"

Not even the hopeful and carefree concerns of youth is spared from the life-force sapping alien influence. One evening a young couple in a sports car are necking. The teenage girl soon leaves and the boy drives off. As the girl is walking home, she is suddenly accosted by a dark figure carrying a briefcase. He removes his sunglasses revealing something that causes the girl to scream and collapse. The mysterious figure takes out a rubber tube and needle and attaches it to her neck. He then proceeds to drain her blood into the glass vials in his case. See now more closely the face of Johnson, our new modern-day Dracula with the white pitiless washed out emptiness of his inhuman eyes.

Later on, a Cadillac pulls up outside a hospital, but the driver has pulled up on the wrong side of the road, next to a fire hydrant and in front of a no-parking sign. The driver clearly is in command of the tangible and physical manifestations of our civilization but he does not understand the rules, conventions and principles that underlie and help to govern it.

Paul Johnson enters the hospital and is greeted by Nurse Nadine Storey. He has come for a transfusion of blood. When he is informed that his blood will need to be tested, he responds by saying, "No test...I came for a transfusion of blood." Dr. F.W. Rochelle soon comes out of his office and invites Mr. Johnson in where he explains to Johnson that no doctor on earth would do a transfusion without first knowing the blood type of a patient. Johnson informs him, "I must have blood. I am dying. I have Type "O." Johnson uses a scalpel to cut his wrist but to Rochelle's amazement there is no sign of bleeding. Johnson explains to the doctor that it will bleed later.

Johnson uses the power of telepathy to communicate with and control the mind and will of Rochelle. Johnson agrees to the blood test, while Rochelle will not be permitted to divulge any information about Johnson. Johnson then asks Nadine to work for him and she agrees only if the doctor approves, which he does. As part of fulfilling Johnson's command to "see to it that I don't expire," Rochelle is to give him a daily infusion of 500 cc of type "O" blood every night.

The criminal mind, the social outcast, the powerless individual stuck in a morass of limited prospects, lack of direction and under achievement often provides a willing fertile ground for those possessing "loftier" ambitions of ill-intent toward the world. Enter Jeremy, Johnson's chauffeur and butler and former small time criminal. Jeremy Perrin greets Johnson at the latter's residence and is instructed to prepare a room for the nurse.

Johnson enters the kitchen and removes several vials of blood and places them in the refrigerator. After doing so, he goes down into the basement. Jeremy, contrary to his instructions, enters the kitchen and tries to open one of the containers. Suddenly, he is caught in the act of snooping and is telepathically frozen by Johnson who tells Jeremy, "if you do so again, I shall eliminate you."

Jeremy later greets Nurse Nadine upon her arrival at Johnson's residence. She quickly rebuffs his rather clumsy and inept pass at her and makes her way to the living room and apologizes to Johnson for her late arrival.

Johnson escorts Nadine to her room upstairs and when he leaves the room he locks her door from the outside. Nadine tells Johnson if her door is to be locked, she'd rather be the one to do so. Johnson informs her that in the place he comes from, "no person would dare sleep in insecure quarters."

Back in the living room, Johnson uses his communication device to contact his home planet of Davana. The closet door that conceals the matter transporter slides open. The alien courier telepathically informs Johnson about the dire conditions on his home world. Due to the war and the radioactivity that has resulted, the aliens require huge quantities of blood. Johnson's mission on Earth will consist of six phases:

Phase 1: Study humans

Phase 2: Increase the quantity of blood

Phase 3: Obtain a live human specimen to be teleported to Davana for research

Phase 4: Blood transfusions & Johnson's own life or death

Phase 5: If Johnson lives: conquest, subjugation and pasturing of the Earth's population

Phase 6: If Johnson dies.....Obliteration of planet Earth!!!!!!

"Death Is Not a Remarkable Thing"

The next day we discover more about Johnson that highlights the fact that he is indeed not of this Earth. For one thing, he does not eat solid food. Instead, he adds a pill to water, which turns the liquid a dark colour which he then drinks.

Later that day in a rather comedic scene, a vacuum cleaner salesman by the name of Joe Piper calls at the residence and is met by Johnson. By now we are familiar with Johnson's stilted, sterile and overly precise use of grammar and vocabulary. Contrast this with Joe's free-flowing vernacular-ridden and rather unusual "crazy man" counter-intuitive sales pitch:

"I ain't gonna force ya' to purchase."

"Hey, Lemmie finish will ya'!"

"Gimme a chance will ya'?"

"Look buddy, just gimme five minutes of ya' time in ya' cellar.

Instead of turning Joe down with a well-chosen expletive and a door slammed perilously close to his face, Johnson invites him in and escorts him down to the cellar. It won't be dirt that will be sucked up down in the bowels of the house. Rather, it will be Joe's own blood that will be extracted by Johnson after he removes his sunglasses and exposes Joe to the murderous menace emanating from the wicked whites of his eyes. An incoherent scream takes the place of Joe's well-practiced spiel. All trace of Joe then disappears into the furnace. Sale completed: Paid for in full.... Paid for in blood! Take that, you pesky door-to-door sales people!

As Jeremy drives Johnson to the library, they encounter three drunks. It is time for Phase 2: Increase the quantity of blood. Johnson tells Jeremy to invite the three men to dinner that night. I wonder what's on the menu?

Meanwhile, as Nadine is enjoying some down time by the pool, she notices smoke rising from the chimney which is unusual considering the nice weather. Impelled by the kind of curiosity that can be lethal to domesticated felines, she enters the cellar to investigate. In the cellar she notices a large number of flasks. She puts her cap down, picks up an empty flask, removes the stopper and sniffs. Her reaction indicates how bad the odor is. As Nadine approaches the furnace, she hears the sound of a car horn. She then places the empty flask on a small table and exits the cellar. But what has she left behind?

"Time is indeed the only element, doctor"

Nadine's boyfriend, motorcycle patrol officer, Harry Sherbourne and Dr. Rochelle arrive. Dr. Rochelle enters the living room with Johnson where he informs him, "Your blood is different from any I ever studied in my entire career." He has a low count of red corpuscles and his blood will likely turn to dust and he will die. Dr. Rochelle surmises that it might be a plague and that time is critical.

"A creep and a two-bit crook.
I don't like the feel of this place."

Later on, Johnson is in the cellar stoking up the flames of the furnace when he notices Nadine's bathing cap. Soon after the three drunks wind up in the cellar with Johnson drinking when Johnson suddenly removes his sunglasses and gives new meaning to the term "dead drunk!"

Johnson then places a number vials of blood into a trunk and tells Jeremy to move it to the living room where Johnson proceeds to communicate with Davana. The trunk containing its precious contents is then teleported. Next – Phase 3: Obtain a live human specimen to be teleported to Davana for research.

More clues emerge about Johnson as Nadine relates to Harry that her time spent as a nurse at his residence has revealed him to be “cold, odd and brilliant” and that he seems to be “unaware of the simplest things.”

“I can just see the vampire headlines”

Excerpts from.....

The Daily Observer

VAMPIRE KILLINGS

Conundrum Continues

..... Each have involved the presence of neck punctures.....

.....so far 13 people have been killed in precisely the same manner.....

Police sources have reported that something had been used to burn the brains of the victims.....and take their blood.....claimed that some kind of device that burns out the eyes and brains of his victims, and then he drains them of their blood..... all we can think of is,

Who'll be next?

Meanwhile at police headquarters, Sgt George Walton and Harry have been discussing the above incidents. As one of them comments, “all I can think of is who'll be next?” we fade to an image of Nadine giving Johnson his evening transfusion during which he asks her if she has any relatives. She replies with, “just an aunt in Detroit who raised me.” No guesses needed as to the answer to the question, “Who'll be next?”

Time now for phase 3! Johnson selects at random an Asian man and telepathically instructs him to follow him home. Once at home, the alien courier has some bad news to report. Back on Davana there is “destruction within the Council of the Northern Orbit” and that “rule is dissolving.” If that isn't bad enough, it turns out that “independent action increases on a 73% degree tangent!!!!” Oh my God! It's anarchy!! Johnson reports that it will take three days before he'll know if the treatments are working. He then handballs the Asian man over to be teleported to Davana.

Meanwhile, more clues are mounting concerning Johnson. Nadine has noticed the dark water among the contents of Johnson's untouched breakfast. She decides to take the liquid to a lab and have it analyzed. Jeremy also reports that the three alcoholics were seen to arrive but were never seen leaving. Similarly, that Johnson “takes the china man into his room and neither of them come out.”

Nadine later brings the sample to Dr. Rochelle. His new nurse brings in a bottle of canine blood that has been infected with canine rabies. She labels it and puts it in the refrigerator. Of course this not done for nothing. It is significant for the purpose of setting the audience up and for the

foreshadowing of events.

Johnson has a meeting on the street later on with a woman who is also from Davana. She explains telepathically that she came to Earth via the “dimension warp” due to the chaos back home: “I had to escape them all.” It turns out that the alien courier has been killed and that the human specimen was crushed as it is “impossible to transmit a human or sub-human anatomy through the beam.”

The alien female informs Johnson that she needs blood as she will expire without it. Johnson then takes the woman to Dr. Rochelle's lab at the hospital. During the transfusion, Johnson accidentally gives her blood from the container marked with, “Caution: Canine Rabies.” She complains about feeling strange and comments that “there is activity within me.” She then walks to her hotel room, but soon returns to the hospital and collapses outside. As he returns to the hospital, Dr. Rochelle spots the woman and together with a nurse gets her to his office. When he removes her sunglasses, she opens her eyes to reveal the same kind of deadly white orbs as Johnson's.

It is later determined by Dr Rochelle that the alien female “is something other than human” and that she has “lived in an area that is constantly charged with radioactive material” – an area of all-out nuclear warfare!

“I must have a second live specimen.”

We next see Johnson as he goes to pick up his car. When the attendant leads him to where it is, Johnson telepathically directs him to enter the car. Suddenly a car horn sounds for the attendant and the telepathic link is broken. The attendant wisely decides he doesn't need to be there and quickly tries to scarper but Johnson is hot on his heels and manages to kill him.

In the meantime, Nadine decides to ignore Harry's advice to leave Johnson's residence. Instead, with Jeremy in tow, she sets about conducting a bit of investigative work herself by searching the house. They eventually discover the communication device and the transporter in the wall closet. Jeremy then does a Hamlet when he discovers a skull in the furnace.

Unbeknownst to our two sleuths, Johnson arrives home. The phone rings and Nadine answers. It is Dr. Rochelle on the other end with information about the Davana woman. Of course, Johnson has been listening in on the conversation. He tells her to remain in her room, then hangs up the other phone and proceeds to dispose of the hapless Jeremy.

As Johnson looms over Nadine with murderous intent, she lets loose with a Fay Wray scream. As Johnson is sensitive to loud noises, she is able to escape him and exit the house. Johnson pursues her in his car and telepathically informs her that he is going to destroy Dr. Rochelle.

And what of Dr. Rochelle? There he is busily examining a blood sample when a head crushing

creature brought to life by Johnson suddenly enters through an open window. It abruptly plops down and envelopes Rochelle's entire head. There he lies collapsed on the bench, his head concealed within a monstrous membrane about to be immersed in a spreading sea of his own blood.

Meanwhile, Johnson heads for Nadine by honing in on her mind signal. After Nadine calls Harry and tells him that Johnson is after her, he and Simmons try to locate Johnson and Nadine on their motorcycles.

Johnson finally gains control of Nadine and instructs her to return to the house where she is to transport herself to Davana. Johnson is also able to dispose of Simmons. When Harry pursues Johnson's car, he uses his motorcycle siren, the noise of which causes Johnson to lose control of his car and roll it. It also resulted in breaking Johnson's control of Nadine's mind.

"A foreign thing who came here to destroy us"
"I can't feel sorry for him; he had no emotions as we know them."

We now end with both Harry and Nadine standing before a headstone, on which an inscription reads;

"Here lies a man
who was not
of this earth."

But wait!! Notice a solitary figure of a man approaching, dressed much like Johnson and wearing sunglasses. He also seems to be carrying the same distinctive case as Johnson had containing transfusion equipment. How do you feel as you watch that man in the background walking up behind Harry and Nadine and then heading right towards the camera? The implication of this imagery being of course.....

Points of interest

It is unfortunate that the copies of the film that I have seen have been of a very ordinary quality. Most appear to be far too dark and are hard to watch. I hope a remastered or superior quality copy exists or will be produced for fans of the genre to enjoy more fully.

"Not of This Earth" was released in the U.S. on the bottom half of a double bill with Roger Corman's "Attack of the Crab Monsters." The film was targeted largely at the drive-in market and teen audiences.

I've seen it mentioned that Paul Birch apparently left the picture before principal photography was completed. Lyle Latell is supposed to have completed his scenes.

The “umbrella” head-crushing creature brought to us by none other than special effects wizard, Paul Blaisdell may be unintentionally funny, but it does pre-date the face-hugging creature from the later sci-fi film, “Alien.”

There have been three remakes of “Not of This Earth.” The first was made in 1988 by Jim Wynorski and starred Traci Lords. The second was made in 1995 starring Michael York and the third in 1998 with female actor, Athena Massey in the alien role.

The film does seem to raise some interesting ideas, particularly at the end. For instance, does a creature not deserve our sympathy just because it is unable show sympathy itself? If it doesn't, what does that say about us? Should we only have sympathy or empathy for beings that can reciprocate?

The Brain from Planet Arous (1957)

A rather ludicrous but strangely ridiculously entertaining sci-fi film

Directed by Nathan H. Juran

Produced by Jacques R. Marquette

Written by Ray Buffum

Music by Walter Greene

Cinematography Jacques R. Marquette

Distributed by Howco International

Running time: 70 min.

Budget: \$58,000 approx.

Cast

John Agar: Steve March

Joyce Meadows: Sally Fallon

Robert Fuller: Dan Murphy

Thomas Browne Henry: John Fallon

Ken Terrell: Colonel in Conference Room

Henry Travis: Colonel Frogley
E. Leslie Thomas: General Brown
Tim Graham: Sheriff Wiley Pane
Bill Giorgio: Russian

A powerful alien disembodied brain from the planet Arous, by the name of Gor invades and takes control of the body of scientist, Steve March. Gor uses March as part of his nefarious plan to control the world by threatening to destroy any nation that challenges his total domination.

How can this new threat to Humanity be thwarted?

(Spoiler Alert!)

What If?.....

It's late 1957, and we now find ourselves in a wood-paneled study or home office. Sitting somewhat incongruously in an ox-blood red chesterfield-style arm chair is a bald and rather heavy-set man in his sixties. He is wearing reading glasses perched on the end of his nose. He is also rather incongruously wearing a Hawaiian shirt and a pair of shorts and sandals. With a snifter of brandy cradled in his left hand and the finest of Cuban cigars delicately poised between thumb, index and middle fingers of his right hand, one would expect this gentleman to be sporting a crimson smoking jacket, a silk cravat and a pair of slippers.

Sitting opposite this odd-looking fellow, one can make out through the almost dream-like haze of smoke a rather harried-looking younger man fidgeting nervously in a wing-backed leather armchair.

Sound of a clock chiming

Professor Karl Von Linden puffs on his cigar and regards the room in which he and the other fellow are ensconced with a somewhat smug and self-satisfied expression on his face, as if he were surveying the fruits of a lifetime of glorious academic endeavor.

As Von Linden shifts his gaze from the framed certificates on his wall proclaiming his expertise in all matters cerebral and psychological, he begins to address his.... "patient."

Von Linden: Zo young man, another one of your dreams? Tell me please, vot vas it zis time?

March: Well, Professor, it is the same dream, except this time it wasn't in disjointed bits and pieces. This time it had a beginning, a middle and an ending.

Von Linden: Zo, a complete narrative! Interesting.... go on, my boy.

March: I bet Freud would have plenty to say about this one...

Von Linden: Bah! Freud smoid! I'm not interested with vot Herr Freud would have to say. I'm interested in vot you have to say. Proceed.

March: Well, once again it starts off in the evening with a light slowly descending from the sky and exploding into a mountain in the middle of the desert. At that point I'm in my lab with my colleague, Dan when I notice something odd happening with the Geiger counter. I can't figure it out so I try to draw Dan's attention to this but he's absorbed in one of those pulp science fiction novels.

After a moment of silence, the Geiger counter goes nuts. Well, that finally gets Dan's attention. I'm then able to determine that the source of the radioactivity is thirty miles away at Mystery Mountain.

My fiancé, Sally soon turns up and harangues me about not stopping to have lunch. After detecting yet another burst of radioactivity, Dan and I decide to go over to Mystery Mountain, but not before Sally twists our arms to have lunch first.

Von Linden: Interesting you mention on zis occasion the popular science fiction magazine. Vy not 'Playboy' magazine like vot I have got in zee third drawer of mine desk here? (Von Linden pulls the drawer open to reveal a substantial stash of Playboys). Purely for research purposes, you understand.

Could it be zat you have doubts about the validity of your vork and research? Are you concerned that it could be viewed by some as being little more than zee science fiction? Add to zis the fact that your colleague, Dan was ignoring you at that point! Could it be zat you fear having your vork ignored or not taken seriously?

As for your fiancé, Sally. Zis young lady could represent zee emotions und responsibilities of normal life you fear are being ignored by you due to your commitment to your vork. Some guilt on your part perhaps?

We shall consider zees matters later. Please go on. Very fascinating it is! Such detail. Most unusual!

March: Well, we go on to have lunch at Sally's father's place. Sally's father, John Fallon soon arrives home. I tell him about Dan and I intending to go to Mystery Mountain, but he warns me that at this time of year temperatures can reach 120 degrees in the desert.

I then tell John about evidence of "a hot blast of gamma...coming from Mystery Mountain," and

that it is reason "enough for any scientist to go out into the desert." Dan doesn't seem anxious to go, but he agrees to.

Dan and I soon set off for Mystery Mountain in the jeep when suddenly a rock fall blocks our path. I figure that the rock debris is evidence of recent activity. We then proceed to walk the rest of the way.

We finally make our way to a cave and it seems to me that it had been blasted out recently. I don't notice any footprints, however. We then decide to enter the cave to check for the presence of any radioactivity. Suddenly the counter goes berserk as it registers a high level of radioactivity, and then just as suddenly it goes silent.

Dan and I draw our guns and announce our presence to whoever might be in the cave. That's when our eye balls are hammered by a blinding bright light. This is then followed by a ghostly apparition of a huge floating brain with glowing eyes filled with menace! The very same one I told you about during our last couple of sessions.

Von Linden: Ya! Ya! I know. Please go on, my boy. Vot happened next?

March: I empty my gun into the apparition and then my point of view shifts from my body and I continue to observe outside of my now unconscious form lying on the cave floor. I suddenly see Dan firing a couple of rounds from his rifle but he is hit by what seems to be an intense burst of radiation. I somehow know that Dan is dead. Hardly having time to register this awful fact, I watch in horror as the brain shrinks in size and enters my own body.

Von Linden: (making smoke rings) Vell, Shteve, it seems zat you may have quite a bit of internal conflict whirling around in your head. (whirls his index finger around centre of smoke rings) Take zee cave for instance. Could the presence of such an underground place in your dream be a sign zat you are focusing on vot is going on inside you? All zis worry of yours about vot you are doing, vy you are doing it und whether or not you should be doing it. Through your dream, you are trying to understand vy you do vot you do, und vot lies behind the vay you are feeling.

Also zere is fear, my boy! Zat great and terrible motivating force zat pervades the entire history of human civilization. In your dream zere is the death of your friend und colleague, Dan – the one you depend on und the one who occasionally pulls on the reins of caution whenever you decide to gallop off in pursuit of scientific truth!

Vee now come to another kind of fear: one zat is at this moment eating away at zee very fabric of our own society und one zat will surely rear its head in other guises in zee future. Today vee fear zee Reds under our beds und zee mushroom clouds of death. Und tomorrow? Vot vill vee fear?

Think about zat disembodied brain taking over your body. You are afraid of losing control over your thoughts und actions und that some other force from somewhere out zere vill come und invade your being, your world, your vay of life for its own nefarious purposes. How much are our perceptions nothing more zan zee product of the time und place in vich vee live. Much of it like zat "brain" in your dream – an apparition, an illusion.

March: You think so, Professor Von Linden? After the cave incident I sense that I'm somewhere back in my body but not in control of my thoughts and actions. It's like I'm somehow pushed deep into the background of my being and can only look on helplessly. It is really the alien entity that returns to the house and embraces my Sally. It tells her that nothing was found at the Mystery Mountain site and that Dan went to Las Vegas. I suddenly sense overpowering pain and aggression pervading my mind and body.

Sally knows something is wrong when the entity kisses her aggressively and tears her blouse. Suddenly, good old George the dog comes to her rescue and attacks the alien me. The intruder fends George off, gets in the car and drives away.

I later find myself back in my lab where the brain exits my body. The brain tells me, "I am Gor. I need your body as a dwelling place while I'm here on your Earth." It tells me that I was chosen as a vessel because of my special knowledge of nuclear energy and my access to government resources.

Von Linden: Mein Gott! Zis is fascinating! Interesting it is zat you mention dreaming of your dog intervening in a violent act of possession. I think that your canine friend, George represents you (stabbing cigar at Steve) with your basic instincts of friendship, loyalty, und protection.

Protection against vot, you ask? Ah! Apart from fear, vot else seems to be behind much of human conduct? In your dream you have zee possession und control of your mind und body by the alien brain. Using your body, the alien brain attempts to "possess" (making inverted comma sign with his fingers) your young fraulein, Sally.

Our relationships, our front gardens, Nature, zee material world, situations, events, other people, vorkplaces, media, religion, politics, etc, etc., Our ambition whether stated or unstated is to possess und control! We seek to impose our own straight lines, symmetry and sense of proportion und order where none ought to exist. And those lines start out und lead back to us! We're all of us potential tyrants und fascists in our own little individual vays.

Vot do we have to counterbalance this? Vy, my boy – our own versions of your George: friendship, loyalty, und willingness to protect!

Anyway, vot of this.....Gor und the rest of your dream?

March: Before I get on to that part, in my dream I do have the sense that Sally suspects that

something is definitely wrong with me. She eventually convinces her father to go with her to Mystery Mountain.

I see them entering the cave system where Dan and I had been. Sally notices a flash of light and screams. She and her father walk further into the cave and they come across Dan's body. John walks over to the body and notices burn marks on it.

Suddenly, another brain from the planet Arous appears. This one is called Vol and it communicates with Sally and her father telepathically. Vol informs them that he has come to Earth to capture or kill the criminal, Gor. He then promises to meet with them at their home at 8:00 p.m. the next evening.

Von Linden: Ya, I zee from our previous meeting's transcripts zat zee "alien you" contacts zee Atomic Energy Facility at Indian Springs. As zee Gor, you manage to invite yourself to zee next scheduled test as an observer.

March: That's right. The new part to the dream is that Gor is planning a test of his power and has promised me great power and wealth.

Von Linden: Goot! It also says here that zee Vol alien brain enlists zee help of Sally und her father to save zee Earth. Also, in order to get close to Gor while he inhabits your body, it is agreed to make use of zee pooch, George as a host for Vol. By zee vay, did any one ask zee pooch? Ha! Ha!

March: Professor, I find this next part hard to talk about and have deliberately refrained from recalling and mentioning it to you till now.

Von Linden: Bah! Denial, repression of uncomfortable memories und such tings are very common, my boy. Go on. Vat do you remember from your dream zat is zo terrible to mention till now?

March: As I (the Gor I) drive to John's house, I spot an aeroplane in the sky. By some unearthly power within me I destroy the plane and kill all on board. What is worse is that I laugh in response to my criminal act!

Later in the car with Sally and George / Vol, I find myself promising Sally the world and let her know that I have a new power that, "will make me the most feared man on Earth."

A radio broadcast suddenly informs us about the plane crash and so we drive out to the scene. The evidence of burns on one of the bodies and the radiation damage on a piece of the plane's wreckage is testament enough of the "new power" I was telling Sally about.

Von Linden: Ach du lieber! Do not knock yourself about, Shteve. It is zee dream und in zis stage

of zee dream, your subconscious is revealing to you your inner knowledge of zee destructive nature of power, control und ambition, its consequences und its inherent veakness. You are aware of the potential within you to commit acts of evil but you can distinguish "right" from zee "wrong." Some may call zis framework "conscience" or "morality." Whatever you may vish to call it, it is vot makes us human beings und what can defeat zee "Gors" that continually lurk within und shadow us though our lives.

March: This new part to the dream almost suggests a way of fighting back and overcoming whatever this alien entity Gor represents. Vol tells John and Sally that Gor can only be destroyed when he assumes his true form: "In Earth's atmosphere, we must return to our true state once every twenty-four hours in order to assimilate enough oxygen for life." As long as it occupies my body, Gor is invulnerable. Vol goes on to inform them that a heavy blow on a region of the brain known as the "Fissure of Rolando" can kill him.

Von Linden: Ya, Ya, Zee "Fissure of Rolando" named after Luigi Rolando. It is a groove or deep fissure if you vill that separates zee brain's frontal und parietal lobes and.....

(As Von Linden goes on and on about the Fissure of Rolando, Steve's eyes begin to glaze over which is eventually noticed by Von Linden)

Sorry, Shteve. Please go on.

March: Sheriff Wiley Pane stops by to see me at the lab. He wants to ask me some questions about Dan Murphy. He tells me that Dan is dead but I persist with the Dan-having-gone-to-Las Vegas story. Well, that Gor within me now feels it has nothing to lose by confessing to the murder of Dan and the destruction of the plane. The "Gor" me then tells the sheriff, "and now I'm going to kill you." Just as the Sheriff goes for his gun, he is zapped by a flash of light. No guesses needed to know where that came from. Under Gor's influence, I hide the sheriff's body in a corner of the lab.

Von Linden: Ah! Zee killing of zee sheriff reflects your inner moral turmoil. You fear zat your goot, moral und ethical part of you is somehow being subverted by your capacity to do evil or cause harm to zose around you. Your mind is vorking through zis dilemma, no?

March: Another piece to the jigsaw puzzle of my dream involves a military committee meeting at the Pentagon. After careful examination of the wreckage, it is concluded that the Earth has been invaded. A colonel by the name of Frogley who is chairing the committee, reports that Dan and the passengers of the destroyed plane were killed by intense radiation. The committee then plans to meet again at Indian Springs.

Von Linden: Zis reference to zee military shows your preparedness to fight or combat zis evil "Gor" force or impulses within you. Zee true nature of zeez forces will reveal themselves by bubbling to zee surface, if you vill, at zis place called Indian Springs!

March: The battle you're talking about didn't eventuate when George stays with me one evening. Vol isn't able to confront Gor, as he doesn't leave my body. Gor's confidence increases as he ponders the upcoming meeting at Indian Springs. He even promises Sally as much fame and fortune as she could wish for when they move to Washington, D.C.

The dream now shifts to Indian Springs for the Friday nuclear test. Gor, through me, explains that he has an explanation for the deaths of Dan and the destruction of the plane. The "Gor" me walks over to the window and tells the others present to watch the closed circuit television. Using his power, Gor then destroys all the targets that have been set up for the planned nuclear test. Through me he informs the group, "What you've just seen me do to that one small area, I can do to a city, a nation, or a continent."

Colonel Frogley suddenly leaves the room and quickly returns with a gun and fires several bullets into my body without any effect. The colonel is killed by the flash of light unleashed by Gor. The force of evil is now in a position to dictate terms as Gor orders that representatives of the superpower nations are to return to attend a meeting to "discuss" such terms. Any nation that does not comply will have their capital city destroyed.

The meeting does take place later on. The superpower representatives witness more death and destruction as the "Gor" me destroys another aeroplane. He then lays out his ultimate plan:

"I want all of your uranium, plutonium, all your atomic resources. I want your factories, railroad shipping, all your industrial facilities. Your workers will labor around the clock day and night, following my blueprints to build a most powerful invasion force ever gathered in the universe."

When the Russian representative protests that "Russia would never agree to it!" Gor simply retorts that "there's a simple answer to that: There'll be no Russia." He then goes on to inform them that "your United Nations building will be turned over to me. I will teach your engineers to build a fleet of interplanetary rockets, to be armed and manned by your joint military forces. All under my command."

When General Brown asks Gor what he would do with all this power, the "Gor" me tells him that "I will return to my planet Arous, and through its vast intellect, I will become master of the universe. After I'm gone, your Earth will be free to live out its miserable span of existence as one of my satellites and that's how it's going to be."

Von Linden: As has been seen time und time again: zee insatiable nature of zee need to acquire power und control und zee vay in vich power can corrupt absolutely. Zis is a law zat applies to zee smallest organization right through to zee entire galaxy und beyond! You subconscious (or perhaps your heart, if you like) knows zees tings. It also knows zat something must be done. In a conflict, even an internal one zere must be a victor.

March: Perhaps that's what my dream has been trying to show me when Sally enters my lab. She draws a diagram on a piece of paper depicting a human brain labeled with Gor's vulnerable "Fissure of Rolando" spot.

As Sally leaves the paper on a table before she leaves the lab, the "Gor" me arrives. Sally conceals herself next to where the Sheriff's body is lying while my body collapses onto a chair and Gor exits my body.

While Gor boasts about what he has done, the real me sees Sally's diagram. Just then Sally spots the Sheriff's burned body and screams. While Gor's attention is directed towards her, I manage to grab a nearby ax and wield it to good effect, managing to eventually strike Gor's vulnerable "Fissure of Rolando" region, thereby killing him.

The dream ends with Sally telling me all about Vol and how he is using George as a host. I don't really believe her story and laughingly tell her, "You and your imagination."

So what do you think, professor? Have you learned enough useful information from my dream to help me out?

Von Linden: Oh, yes Shteve. I believe I have learned enough to decide on a course of action. I think zee mind und zee brain are zee last true frontiers of knowledge to be explored und understood. Consider how powerful und mysterious zee "imagination" can be. Through zee imagination anything is possible. Take zis for example, my boy...

(Suddenly a suffocating silence envelopes the room, broken only by the steady ticking and slow swinging motion of the tall grandfather clock's pendulum. As Steve's attention is drawn towards Von Linden's face, panic grips his entire being as he realizes that he has no recollection of what he had been doing or what had been taking place in his life prior to being in the professor's room.

Sound of a clock chiming

As Steve looks at the professor's face, he wonders if his imagination is indeed playing tricks on him. He thinks he hears these familiar words being spoken to him "...it tolls for thee" my boy' Next, it is as if a vapor is emanating from Von Linden's ears, nostrils and mouth. Suddenly an incoherent wail erupts from the depths of Steve's soul as he witnesses the vapor beginning to coalesce into the form of a brain.... a brain that is slowly advancing toward him!)

Points of Interest

The scientist Steve March in "The Brain from Planet Arous" is played by actor John Agar who we have seen a quite a few classic sci-fi movies such as "The Mole People," "Tarantula" and "Attack of the Puppet People."

John Agar is required to give two performances or portrayals in the film. One being the rather ordinary mild-mannered human scientist and the other being a maniacal power-hungry alien version of himself. His portrayal of the latter comes across as being rather more comical than evil or menacing.

The other significant character in the film is the disembodied alien brain. Unfortunately, the effect is rather disappointing and unconvincing.

Unlike many of the sci-fi films of the period, "The Brain from the Planet Arous" depicts alien forms of life as being more than just evil invaders. After all, it is the alien Vol who in cooperation with Sally tries to prevent Gor from carrying out his plan. As with human beings, our alien friends may have just as many sides to their characters and personalities.

I Married a Monster from Outer Space (1958)

A commendable sci-fi film with impressive camerawork, mature dialogue, effective special effects, and good acting - but one that deserves a much better title!

1958: A Taste Of The Times

Science, Technology & Innovation:

- Sputnik 1 & 2 fall to Earth from orbit and disintegrate during re-entry.
- The Soviet Union launches Sputnik 3.
- The first successful American satellite, Explorer 1, is launched into orbit.
- Explorer 1 was launched on a Jupiter C rocket and was used to measure the radiation in Earth's orbit. The satellite successfully orbited Earth over 58,000 times before it re-entered the atmosphere in 1970.
- The United States launches the Vanguard 1 satellite and Explorer 3.
- The U.S. Congress formally creates the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA).
- The United States launches SCORE, the world's first communications satellite.
- The principles of the optical laser are set out in a paper by Arthur L. Schawlow and Charles H. Townes of Bell Laboratories published in Physical Review Letters.
- The Bell XV-3 Tiltrotor makes the first true mid-air transition from vertical helicopter-type

flight to fully level fixed-wing flight.

- Jack Kilby an engineer at Texas Instruments invents the first integrated circuit.
- The creation of the integrated circuit has led to much of the computer and electronics technology we see around us today. Jack Kilby came up with an idea to miniaturize all the parts of an entire transistor circuit and connect them all together, creating a smaller and easy to produce unit called an integrated circuit. He was the first to create a working model and file a patent for the technology.

I Married a Monster from Outer Space is set in the fictional town of Norrisville, California where Bill Farrell is having his bachelor party on the eve of his marriage to Marge Bradley. After leaving the bachelor party, he is abducted by an alien that takes on his form. The alien "Bill" marries Marge the next day. It doesn't take long, however, for Marge to feel that there is something different about Bill. After a year of marriage, Marge realizes that Bill has become a completely different man!

How does Marge deal with this revelation?
What else is discovered about this impostor?
Who else has been affected?
What is the purpose of this strange alien invasion?

Directed by Gene Fowler Jr.
Produced by Gene Fowler Jr.
Written by Louis Vittes
Music by Daniele Amfitheatrof, Hugo Friedhofer, Leith Stevens, Franz Waxman, Victor Young
Cinematography: Haskell Boggs
Edited by George Tomasini
Production company: Paramount Pictures
Running time: 78 minutes
Budget: \$125,000

Cast

Tom Tryon: Bill Farrell
Gloria Talbott: Marge Bradley Farrell
Peter Baldwin: Officer Hank Swanson
Robert Ivers: Harry Phillips
Chuck Wassil: Ted Hanks
Valerie Allen: Francine - Hooker

Ty Hardin: Mac Brody (as Ty Hungerford)
Ken Lynch: Dr. Wayne
John Eldredge: Police Capt. H.B. Collins
Alan Dexter : Sam Benson
James Anderson: Weldon
Jean Carson: Helen Rhodes
Jack Orrison: Officer Schultz
Steve London: Charles Mason
Maxie Rosenbloom: Max Grady (Bartender)

What It Means To Be A Man

Despite the corny-sounding title, *I Married a Monster from Outer Space*, the film has a lot more depth to it than its title might suggest. For one thing, it speaks volumes on what it means to be a "MAN" in the modern world.

At the time the film was made, there was a lot more certainty surrounding gender roles and expectations. It would have been expected that males would wind up being the bread-winner and head of the family while women would be expected to be largely subservient home-makers and mothers.

As far as conventional male and female relationships is concerned, *I Married a Monster from Outer Space* calls into question the then contemporary concept of maleness. It even continues to do so more than sixty years later when right now in the early 21st Century many males often find themselves grappling with trying to figure out what their role in society is supposed to be. This can be quite a daunting task particularly at a time of re-evaluation of gender roles; the push toward gender equality; the increasing feminisation of society and perceived social & political correctness in matters concerning expressions and manifestations of maleness.

(Spoilers follow below.....)

From the film's opening title and credits, we are presented with a view of the Earth over a star-field background. We gradually zoom in on the Earth, before fading to a pleasant and tranquil scene of a park in the small town of Norrisville.

The impression we have is of something external coming IN to our world from elsewhere, encompassing the whole planet right down to your typical pleasant small-town America. This

idea of something external to and influencing the individual is an important one when discussing what it means to be a man, for much of what is learned, whether good or bad, about being a male is derived at a very early age from outside modeling and other external influences which over time become internalized.

“Those guys aren’t even giving us a hard look!”

At a restaurant, we see Bill Ferrell at his bachelor party celebrating his last night as a single free man. His friends who include Sam Benson and Mac Brody don’t appear to be too thrilled about the idea of marriage and one of them in reference to Bill declares, “it’s a shame it had to happen to him.” Instead of viewing matrimony as being akin to a death-sentence, Bill seems quite happy at the prospect of his own wedding the next day and leaves early in order to drop in to see his bride-to-be, Marge.

As Bill drives off to see Marge, he spots a body in the middle of the road and stops, believing he has hit someone. He then gets out of the car only to discover that there is nothing there. He mumbles to himself, “I didn’t think I had that much to drink” when suddenly a mysterious glowing arm reaches out and touches his shoulder. Bill turns around and is confronted by the sight of a strange glowing humanoid alien. Bill then collapses to the ground and is enveloped in a dark, billowing cloud. When the cloud recedes, there is no trace of Bill to be seen.

The enthusiastic, positive and yet-to-be jaded young man we have briefly been introduced to has now been taken over and taken away by something possibly menacingly and dangerously alien.....

Who or what will stand in his place?

Next morning in the wedding chapel. Marge’s mother, Mrs. Bradley enters the room humming the Wedding March which annoys her already agitated daughter. Marge is fretting over the fact that Bill has not arrived for the wedding. Bill eventually does arrive apparently unscathed from his “last free night” and apologizes for being late.

After the wedding ceremony, the couple leave the Wee Kirk Wedding Chapel.

As Bill drives with his bride asleep on his shoulder next to him, they narrowly miss hitting another car on the road. The driver of the other car angrily yells out, “why don’t you turn your light on, you dummy?” These days that would all too often be a trigger for a bout of single-brained celled, testosterone and adrenalin-fuelled road rage! Bill admits that he “forgot” to turn on his headlights and aggressively snaps at Marge when she asks him about it. The signs of something being wrong are already beginning to emerge early in the relationship but are too easily ignored. There’s probably an expectation that a man would likely react in such ways from time to time and it would be better if the woman would just bite her tongue and keep her mouth

shut.

When the newlyweds arrive at their honeymoon hotel, Bill forgets to open the door of the car for his new wife. Marge reacts by telling Bill, "I know you've been absent-minded lately, but you can't have a honeymoon without a bride." An onlooker may well wonder at his lack of consideration and regard for his new wife. Sadly, these days of warped political correctness, he would be accused of being a sexist chauvinist pig for even daring to open a door for a lady! Strange days indeed!

Later at dinner, Marge natters away while Bill sits there silently staring at the reflection in a window of another couple actually being a couple. Suddenly Marge tells him, "I'm running out of small talk" to which he replies, "why do we have to talk?" A disturbing development to find that a husband and wife have run out of meaningful things to say to one another so early in a relationship. These days we have a solution to that – the mobile phone and Netflix! Strange days indeed!

As a harbinger of things to come, a storm begins to brew outside as the newly-weds prepare for bed. On the balcony outside the bedroom, Marge asks Bill to tell her he loves her. His response is somewhat unemotional as he awkwardly holds her. Marge, probably feeling bewildered and confused, tells her husband, "I've never been on a honeymoon before." Bill simply replies, "Neither have I."

As Marge goes inside, Bill stays outside to watch the storm. Suddenly a flash of lightning reveals his true form. Bill is definitely not the man Marge knew him to be before their marriage. How often has this turned out to be the case for so many in real life!

It is one year later and Marge writes a letter to her mother in which she conveys her bewilderment and despondency that her husband Bill is cold and not acting toward her the way he did before they were married. However, she decides not to send the letter.

In the next scene, we find Sam and Ted Hanks in a bar discussing how they have not seen Bill Farrell for so long. Suddenly, Bill is spotted walking past the bar and one of the men observes cynically, "there goes a ruined man." How hard it must be for some men to realize that life and times change and that eventually for most people there's more to life outside the jaded contents of a shot glass.

An inebriated Sam tells his pal, "I'm worried about Caroline." Ted asks him, "Who's Caroline?" to which Sam replies, "Your wife." Yes Siree Sam, what makes a man are the kind of priorities he sets for himself, his life and those closest to him!

As Sam leaves the bar he tells the bartender, Max Grady that he is a home-wrecker. No Sam, Max isn't the one making choices for his male customers! Sam starts to stagger home, but

begins to succumb to his excessive intake of alcohol and pops into an alley to chunder (non-aussies = to vomit, "puke" or "throw up"). Suddenly, he hears a strange noise and turns to investigate its source, only to fall backwards in horror before being enveloped in the same kind of black billowing cloud that swallowed Bill. The cloud soon disappears and, you guessed it, so does Sam.

"That doesn't look like me at all."

Later Marge meets with Dr. Wayne for a medical exam to discover why she hasn't been able to get pregnant. She is worried that she and Bill have been married a year now but still have no children. The doctor assures her that nothing's wrong with her and that "there is no reason why you and Bill can't have a half dozen kids." He also admits that it took five years for he and his wife to have their first child. As Marge begins to leave, Dr. Wayne asks, "Why don't you have Bill come in and see me."

For some couples these days, having children is not essential to having a meaningful marriage or partnership. I suspect that in the 1950s, parenthood would have been an expected essential fulfilling component for any marriage. It would have been more than likely that the woman would have been blamed for the failure to produce children even though the male (heaven forbid!) might have been shooting blanks!

As a way of compensating and filling the void in the relationship, Marge has stopped off at a pet store to buy a dog as a surprise present which she places in a covered cage.

When Marge gets home with the dog, the surprise is spoiled somewhat by the unexpected presence of Bill. She pulls the cover off the cage and the dog, "Junior" growls and snaps at Bill. Bill says to Marge, "maybe dogs don't like me." This comment strikes Marge as being odd and she reminds him he's had dogs all his life.

In a strikingly cruel scene, Bill goes into the basement later that evening. The dog has been placed there and reacts just as aggressively as before toward Bill. Bill considers pummeling the dog to death but instead reaches out with his hand to kill the dog. In response to the poor dog's death-throes, Marge runs down into the basement. Bill tells Marge the puppy is dead and callously lies to her when he states almost dispassionately that the dog "must have strangled himself" because "his collar was too tight."

"I never know how you are going to react to anything anymore."

In the lounge room scene after the dog incident, the use of body language and tone of voice sums up the prevailing mood and tension surrounding the relationship between Marge and Bill. In fact, it is something we can all relate to and identify with. Bill and Marge begin to discuss the outcome of her visit to the doctor and about her desire to have children. Bill obviously isn't keen to pursue this topic and they both wind up sitting on opposite ends of the sofa, with Bill engaged

in an act of avoidance by pretending to be reading the newspaper. Marge is at a loss as to how to continue the conversation and it seems to her that it is as if Bill has a twin. She asks him if he will go to the doctor and he replies rather unconvincingly, "sure I will." His true feelings of pent-up frustration are revealed by his act of crushing the cigarette lighter with his hand.

The above scene reminds us of the fact that it is women who are often the ones who feel more comfortable communicating their feelings and concerns, while men have been encouraged to be far more reticent about doing so. When faced with problems, it is felt that a man should simply "man-up" and suppress his feelings. While not advocating that men should turn into touchy-feely, Kumbaya-singing, snaggy craft beer and latte-sipping, avocado-munching, skinny-pants wearing, man-bunned manicured bearded-faced little facsimiles, it should be acknowledged that societal expectations of men as described above can lead to unhealthy mental states, aberrant behaviors and destructive relationships. A relationship cannot function effectively without true affection, communication and empathy between spouses / partners.

Alien Sam shows up at the house but Bill is not yet aware of his having been taken over. He soon learns the truth from Sam and Bill asks him, "Did you make any mistakes at first?" Bill tells him that at least humans, despite the bad design of their bodies and short life span, "do know how to enjoy themselves" and that despite not being able to drink alcohol they've, "improved the methane reservoirs in these bodies." Well, they've just ruined it for us males! No alcohol and interfering with our capacity for expelling copious quantities of methane gas from our bodies! Doesn't leave us much!

Later that night, Bill sneaks out of the house and Marge still awake hears him leave. Feeling fretful and suspicious, she follows him out of the house dressed in only her nightgown and slippers.

Marge proceeds to follow Bill down the street until her attention is drawn by the sound of a screeching cat. Marge then continues past the terrible sight of a murdered cat, following Bill across park land and into the woods. Suddenly, she sees Bill standing motionless and is horrified to see a black vapor being emitted from his body which then resolves itself into a glowing alien. The alien being then enters a nearby concealed spaceship.

Marge runs up to Bill to get him to leave with her, but his unresponsive vessel of a body being devoid of any human life-force falls over onto the ground.

At her wits end, Marge runs back to town and drawn by some noise, enters the only place still open at two in the morning, the bar. She tells Max Grady the Bartender she just saw a monster. Sitting at the bar is Weldon who leers at her thinking she is drunk. He says to her, "could be you came to the right place, sister." After Marge leaves in frustration, he comments to Max, "Funny thing. She didn't look like a lush." As if on cue, Francine, the local hooker sashays over and talks to Weldon, who shows no interest at all.

"I bet my pension on your sanity..... (but) that doesn't mean I believe everything you told me.....Marge, you gotta trust me"

Marge manages to get two police officers to take her to Chief Collins who as he listens to her story appears to be sympathetic and considers her to be sane. However, he is sceptical about aliens invading the Earth and convinces Marge to go home and be assured that everything is fine. After Marge leaves Collins, he walks over to the window where a flash of lightning reveals his true inner self. It is that inner self that knows no social, economic or professional barrier. It can be present even within those we are taught to respect and look to for our protection and trust.

At home, Marge slowly enters the living room and is surprised by Bill who is there, in the dark. He turns the lamp on and in an unsettling moment, knowing full well where she's been, simply asks her if she's alright. Bill then accompanies Marge upstairs to bed. Notice that there is no real substantial menacing threat being posed to Marge. There is only the suggestion of an atmosphere of menace that is being conveyed. If anything, it seems as if the alien entity within Bill's body, while experiencing unfamiliar human emotions, is growing accustomed to his life as a human married to someone like Marge.

On the day of Sam and Helen's wedding, during the rehearsal, Marge draws Helen aside and says to her, "Helen, I've got to talk to you alone" and tries to convince her to postpone the wedding. She asks if she's noticed Sam acting strange lately. But this only serves to upset Helen and she refuses the suggestion. As Helen leaves, a suspicious Bill enters and firmly ushers Marge away.

"I think I'm beginning to understand"

Back at home, we find Marge pacing around the living room looking for a lighter. Bill enters and offers Marge a drink but instead, seeking to provoke him, she asks him why he isn't drinking. Bill, however says to her, "that wedding today, it meant something to me." Bill acts like a man undergoing some kind of emotional epiphany but one that he will not be able to realize in real life. Marge avoids any kind of advance or physical contact with Bill and goes upstairs to bed, leaving behind an almost palpable sensation of sexual tension and frustration.

As Bill struggles to deal with the new emotions generated within him as a result of Marge's rejection, he catches sight of a man wearing a dark shirt and a white tie loitering outside. He looks like some kind of a pimp or gangster or at least is dressed in attire that he thinks will impress. Oh yes, it's our sleaze-bucket, Weldon from the bar!

Bill closes his eyes while his face reveals his alien form. He is communicating telepathically with the two alien-possessed cops.

The cops quickly arrive on the scene and begin to put our loitering friend in the cruiser. He informs them as to what he's doing there and that he had previously tried to pick up Marge in the bar when she ran in asking for help. He also tells them that he was aware that she was unhappily married and had assumed she was a tramp seeing that she entered the bar alone, wearing only a nightgown. Hardly an unusual assumption since men often form conclusions about females based solely on superficialities like attire. By the same token, some women may form conclusions about what men are like, are after or want in a woman and conduct themselves accordingly.

It turns out that our friend has been hanging around in the hope that Marge might require some of his much needed "consolation." When the cops suddenly ask him if he's got a permit for the gun he's carrying, he pulls out his gat and shoves it into the cop's side. He's quickly worked out that these cops should not have been able to know he had a gun, and is beginning to believe in the veracity of Marge's claims in the bar the other night.

Weldon's gun proves to be useless against the aliens and they overpower him by knocking him out. After deciding that he's of no use to them, they callously shoot him dead on the spot.

Marge is awakened by the sound of gunfire. Bill then goes upstairs to assure her it was only a car backfiring. It is obvious what is going through Bill's mind and his emotional state in the presence of Marge, but he senses her feelings of repugnance and bitterly retreats to the guest room, stating before he leaves, "it's a nice idea....making guests comfortable." Notice that no real physical force is used on Marge despite Bill having such immense power at his disposal. However, what is just as frightening is the power he is able to exercise that is inherent in their relationship which makes his wife feel powerless and isolated.

The next scene shifts to the bar where we find Bill sitting at a table with Sam and Harry. Francine is also there and is quick off the mark as she slinks on up to the table and asks if anyone knows what time it is. The men take no notice of her though and are obviously not interested in her type of a woman.

Speaking of women, the alien men begin a discussion about the gender in question. One of them says that he finds human women to be disgusting, while Sam says that he likes them. Bill's attitude is that no matter what they think of them, they have to live with them (how true!). Sam tells Harry that eventually their alien scientists will discover a way to "mutate human female chromosomes" so they will be able to have children with them. A bit like "Devil Girl from Mars" in reverse but with the added dimension of one gender trying to figure out its relationship with the opposite gender:

- Sexual gratification & objectification as represented by Francine?
- Mating & reproduction as suggested by the alien's purpose for being on Earth?
- Something more important and meaningful which Bill is beginning to gain a sense of from his being with Marge?

A crushing blow is given to Max the bartender's ego and pride when he fails to pound Bill into pulp for ordering drinks and uncharacteristically not drinking any. Francine, full of admiration for Bill and his 'manly' mates, leaves the bar soon after the alien men do.

The next scene involves Francine outside of the bar in the street and is quite a freaky one. Once outside, Francine notices a man standing across the street wearing a hoodie-like outfit with the hood pulled up over his head. He has his back turned to her and is engaged in looking in a shop window. Francine of course decides to move in for the "kill" after a somewhat ironic moment when she stops to adjust her stockings outside a shop bearing a sign that reads: "Church Supplies."

Jaws-like, Francine heads toward the mysterious figure and tries to engage in a conversation but he pays her no attention. In anger, Francine yells at him to look at her when she's talking to him. She is about to find out that with some men you don't really know what you're about to get and what they might be concealing. When the figure turns to her, she sees what is under the hood, causing her to scream and run away. The hooded figure casually pulls out a weapon and disintegrates Francine. In confirmation of what the figure is, we see its features clearly as it turns toward us, and then turns back to viewing the contents of the shop window: dolls and toy animals! A complete contrast to its wanton destruction of a human life.

"It was the oxygen that killed him."

We now move to a picnic in the park scene. Helen and Sam are out on the lake in a row boat when suddenly Sam falls overboard. Ted observes, "Oh, he can swim like a fish." But when it is noted that he is in trouble, Ted dives in to rescue Sam.

Back on shore, Doctor Wayne administers oxygen to Sam, but instead of reviving him, it causes his death. The doctor is at a loss to explain why, but Marge thinks she knows. Note the distance between Bill and Marge at the back of the group.

While Helen spends the night with the Farrells, Marge decides to go to see Capt. Collins, but he merely suggests that she is experiencing delusions. She then tries to call Washington, but the operator informs her that all the lines are busy. Marge next tries to send a telegram to the FBI via the Western Union office, but as she walks out of the office she notices the man behind the desk tearing her message up and discarding it.

Marge finally attempts to drive out of town but she is prevented from going any further by a road block ostensibly set up due to the road having been washed out. This is an obvious lie seeing there hasn't been any rain for a long while.

"How about some light?"

"You don't need any."

With all avenues of communication and escape cut off, Marge is back at home sitting on the couch in the dark. She is probably feeling the same way as any woman would in such a dire situation, not being able to be believed or get their plight communicated to and understood by the rest of the world.

Marge finally confronts the alien impostor Bill and tells him point-blank, "I know you're not Bill. You're something that crept into Bill's body. Something that can't even breathe the same air we do." She also asks him, "Does frightening women make you proud?" Bill replies by saying, "we understand pride but we can't afford it."

Bill then informs Marge that he comes from a planet in the Andromeda system. Their sun became unstable and their women died as their sun's rays became more intense, so they built a fleet of space ships to escape extinction. Their intention was to come to the earth to breed with our planet's females and that back on his home planet the sexes came together "for breeding purposes only."

"I'm learning what love is."

Such a rationale or imperative for union between the sexes is insufficient as far as this planet is concerned, which Bill is beginning to realize as he gradually succumbs to human emotions that are part and parcel of the real Bill's existence.

Bill goes on to explain that eventually his people and the Earth-women will have children, which prompts Marge to ask, "What kind of children?" Bill replies, "Our kind."

This scene leaves Marge and us with the thought of what could be passed on to the next generation: an anathema to all that is good and positive in life for humanity. Such a generational spreading of inhuman thought and existence has to be stopped.....but how?

Marge goes to Dr. Wayne to appeal for his help and reveals the truth to him. Fortunately, he believes Marge and informs her, "I know where to get our men – human men!" After Ted announces that his wife has delivered twins, Dr. Wayne decides to recruit such "men" who are waiting in the maternity ward.

Soon enough, a posse of men armed with guns arrive on the road to the field where the alien spaceship is situated. One man has also brought along his hunting dogs – a pair of ninja German shepherds!

While back at his home, Bill calls Chief Collins to inquire about his wife and then goes to confront Marge in the bedroom, the posse advances toward the ship. Their presence is soon detected however by means of a scanning device.

Meanwhile, after effortlessly breaking down the door, Bill advances on Marge, grabs her and shakes her, demanding to know who she spoke to. Sensing the approaching danger to the ship, Bill then tells Marge, "So your friends are attacking our ship?"

The ship itself opens and a couple of glowing aliens emerge. Dr. Wayne and Mason open fire at the aliens, but straight after their bullets enter the alien bodies, the wounds instantly seal up. The posse is soon on the back foot and begin to retreat with some alacrity.

It is now time to release the ninja hounds! One of the dogs performs a stealthy belly crawl and then launches itself at one of the advancing aliens, managing to pull its breathing tube off. The creature bleeds profusely from the wound, and falls to the ground. The second ninja pooch attacks another one of the aliens, also killing it. One of dogs however, has been disintegrated during the course of the battle.

All trace of the aliens is gone with the rapid dissolving of their bodies and the destruction of their weapons via a small explosion.

The posse warily enter the ship where they find a line of human men hanging from wires above small machines with glowing lights. These are "real" humans, whereas the ones who have been replacing them seem to have been mere copies or facsimiles created by the aliens to serve as vessels for their alien forms. As Dr. Wayne theorizes: "Electrical impulses from the real human bodies must give the monsters form and shape, even memories."

Dr. Wayne sets about disconnecting the humans from the machines, resulting in more and more of the aliens being stopped in their tracks and dissolving into goo. It appears that if power is cut off to the "broadcasting circuits" on the machines that are hooked up to the real humans, then the facsimiles will die, thereby killing the alien invaders. This development seems to have a rather made-up-as-you-go tacked-on feel to it!

"Earth mission has failed. They're alerted and dangerous. Suggest continuing on to another galaxy. Total personnel lost."

With the failure of the mission at hand, alien Capt. Collins' final report just before his demise is a command to, "Destroy scout ship."

"Bill" has managed to arrive on the scene after the destruction of his alien comrades. When Marge approaches him he tells her, "your people have won. That makes you happy, doesn't it?" "Bill" meets the same fate as the other aliens after he has pointed out to Marge that he had "just begun to learn" about such important things as "love," "happiness," and human emotions.

The real human Bill calls out to Marge and they embrace. The ship then explodes, while we finally close with a scene of the Earth in space and a fleet of flying saucers traveling away from

it.

Before he died, the alien Bill had come to learn what it is to be a MAN and Marge has managed to get back the MAN she knew and loved.

HEY MAN!

Hey man!

How'd ya' get to be the way you are?
By means of mean genes that scar and mar?
By watching what dad did or didn't do?
Or by copying fools without a clue?

Hey man!

You struggle finding your place these days,
So you search around for means and ways
To get yourself some power and control
So in your self you feel strong and whole.

Hey man!

Don't ya' know that times have changed?
Roles have been shuffled and rearranged,
It's a time of minding "P's" and "Q's"
Of tip-toeing round eggshells with P.C. shoes!

Hey man!

A shame it had to happen to a man like you:
Once a lover, now jaded through and through,
Once kind and considerate, now uncaring,
Once with open heart and mind, now silently brooding.

Hey man!

You aren't the man she fell in love with at first;
You're almost a stranger, a ruined man with a thirst
For making selfish choices and filling your life's void
With anger, blame and violence but of love devoid.

Hey man!

It's no use sitting on opposite sides of a sofa
Silently pretending to read a newspaper
In your shared room of suburban avoidance,
Furnished with a cocktail of menace and poison.

Hey man!

She's more than just a prisoner of your mood
To be whittled into shape like a piece of wood,
An object with shape but without expression,
A thing with form cut off from affection.

Hey man!

It's time you began to learn and understand:
She'll always stand with you to help you withstand
The alien creature that invaded your soul
And help you find the once loving man it stole.

Hey Man!

It's up to YOU!

Points of Interest

I Married a Monster from Outer Space was intended to be the 'A' film in a double feature with The Blob (1958). It was then shifted to the bottom of the playbill due to audience preference for a full-color feature film over the more modest black and white offering.

This thoughtful well-made science fiction movie has a somewhat glaringly misleading title when one takes into account its quality story which serves as an allegory about love, relationships and redemption within the context of a Cold War-style alien invasion plot line.

The alien creatures are not your usual evil stereotypical and one-dimensional characters. As the film progresses, we tend to view them with both empathy and revulsion. They seem to be here with evil intent but are also desperate enough to do what it takes to survive. At the end of the film, you can't help but feel sorry for the impostor Bill as he is beginning to experience emotions that he never had.

The special effects were quite good for the time: effects artist John P. Fulton managed to create very creepy glowing aliens and effective ray gun effects. Fulton's career extended back to the era of silent cinema.

Tom Tryon as Bill Farrell gave a good performance when attempting to convey the emotional and mental state and development of his character while maintaining an unemotional almost dead-pan facial mask. Co-star Gloria Talbott as Marge Farrell effectively conveyed the full range of emotions being experienced by her character as she had to deal with the realization of what was happening to her husband and their marriage.

Night of the Blood Beast (1958)

A sci-fi film gem that may produce in you "a hypometabolistic state. A type of suspended animation, brought on by the contraction of the mezzentary blood vessels in the pressure change," all as a result of simply watching it.

1958: A Taste Of The Times

Mishaps & Disasters

- The Tybee Bomb, a 7,600 pound (3,500 kg) Mark 15 hydrogen bomb, is lost in the waters off Savannah, Georgia!!! Oops!
- A U.S. B-47 bomber accidentally drops an atom bomb (minus a fissile warhead) on Mars Bluff, South Carolina. destroying a house and injuring several people.
- Eight Manchester United footballers are among the 21 (23?) people killed in the Munich air disaster in West Germany, on the return flight from a European Cup game in Yugoslavia. The flight was carrying 44 people when it crashed soon after take-off. It was determined that a build-up of slush on the runway was the major contributing factor in the crash as it stopped the plane from gaining enough speed for a proper take-off. It took Manchester United nearly 10 years to rebuild the team when in 1968 they won the European Cup.
- An earthquake in Southeast Alaska causes a landslide that produces a mega tsunami with waves reaching 525 metres (1,722 ft) on the rim of Lituya Bay.

Directed by Bernard L. Kowalski
Produced by: Gene Corman: Roger Corman
Screenplay by Martin Varno
Story by Martin Varno Gene Corman (credited on-screen)
Music by Alexander Laszlo
Cinematography: John Mathew Nickolaus, Jr.
Edited by Jodie Copelan
Distributed by American International Pictures
Running time: 62 minutes
Budget: \$68,000

Cast

Michael Emmet: Maj. John Corcoran
Angela Greene: Dr. Julie Benson
John Baer: Steve Dunlap
Ed Nelson: Dave Randall
Tyler McVey: Dr. Alex Wyman
Georgianna Carter: Donna Bixby
Ross Sturlin: The Creature

What If.....????

US Air Force Captain Eugene K. Matthews sits at his desk in a small office at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base. He is just a minor cog within a much larger machine that has been ceaselessly grinding away for decades. The giant machine is called the Human & Extra-terrestrial Anomalous Dialogue project. Project HEAD was initiated specifically at the request of General Neil Thomas, chief of the Air Force Materiel Command at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base.

The order to initiate Project HEAD came via Roger Cowpepper, Special Assistant to the President, under the title of "NCS/MJ-12 Special Studies Project" dated April 1, 1954.

Many captains and other military intelligence personnel before Captain Eugene K. Matthews have been set the task of industriously beavering away at sifting through thousands of reports of human and extra-terrestrial contact, interaction, collusion and communication. Since the 1950s such reports have been collected, analyzed and filed.

Project HEAD has been secretly and quietly humming away in the background while more publicized projects such as GRUDGE & BLUEBOOK have come and gone.

Project HEAD has two goals:

1. To scientifically analyze the related data.
2. To determine if the reported phenomena are a threat to national security.

Any data deemed to be of sufficient interest is to be immediately referred to the U.S. Air Force, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the National Security Council. Such reports will then be digitized, stored away and acted upon if possible.

And so, as part of this never-ending “house-cleaning” project, we have Captain Eugene K. Matthews sitting at his desk with yet another manila folder containing a report of yet another historical incident of human and extra-terrestrial contact and communication. Rarely had he come across such a historically ancient case crying out to be buried under mounds of time-accumulated dust. In fact, the manila folder and its contents looked as if they had been stored away only yesterday.

Under the icy circle of the white cool-glow LED light illumination of Matthews’ desk lamp, the manila folder, T-471947 is opened to reveal a 1958 Incident code-named: “Night of the Blood Beast.” This particular document, Matthews learns, was located in Record Group 197, entry 1952.

After carefully studying the contents of the document, Matthews is to stamp it with one of the following letter codes:

H: Hoax & Deliberate Deception – Disposal

E: Explanation Satisfactory - Documentation turned over to the office of the Air Force Historian

A: Anomaly unexplained– Retain & classify “Top Secret” pending referral to and further investigation by U.S. Air Force, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the National Security Council.

D: Danger & threat posed to national security. Immediate referral to President & Joint Chiefs of Staff for assessment & appropriate course of action to be undertaken.

(Spoilers follow below.....)

No. T-471947

Record Group 197

Entry 1952

Incident Code Name:

“Night of the Blood Beast.”

Date: August 6, 1958

Summary

- US astronaut returns from space dead.
- Dead astronaut reportedly revived.
- Head scientist at base killed in unusual circumstances.
- Base cut off from the outside world by an alien entity.
- Alien embryos discovered inside the resurrected astronaut's body.
- Body of dead astronaut allegedly used as a breeding vessel for alien life-forms.
- Survival threatened of personnel trapped at the base along with the rest of humanity.

Captain Matthews has read enough of these reports to know how easy it is to get caught up by dry facts and statistics. What is important is to try to get to know the people involved, who they were, the role they played in the events and what might have motivated them to act in the ways they did.

The first person to draw his attention is;

Major John Corcoran

- Major John Corcoran was the sole pilot in a rocket capsule in orbit around the Earth, marking the United States' first manned space launch. (A TOP-SECRET mission never publicly revealed)
- Shortly after take-off, the ship was apparently struck by an object, forcing Major Corcoran to abort the mission and land.
- Unable to cope with the rapid descent back into the atmosphere, the Major's ship crash-landed in the woods ten miles northeast of the space agency tracking base, killing him.
- It was estimated that Major Corcoran had been dead for three hours, but his body was still warm, with no sign of rigor mortis, skin discoloration, or dilation of his pupils.
- It was decided to move him back to the lab for a more extensive medical exam.
- After an examination of the Major's body, it was determined that, "by all medical standards" he was dead. He had no indication of a heartbeat or respiration and yet his tissues refused to dissipate.
- A strange crescent-shaped wound was found on the Major's right forearm.
- Another examination of the body revealed that the Major had a blood pressure of 120/80, but with no heartbeat, it was declared to be impossible.
- After looking at his blood in a microscope, unusual and unidentifiable cells were discovered that seemed to be resistant to destruction from human white blood cells.
- After the death of Dr. Alex Wyman, it was noticed that the Major's body was missing from the examination table.
- The Major was soon discovered alive and was suspected by his colleagues of being

somehow involved in the death of Dr. Alex Wyman.

- After the discovery of another crescent-shaped wound, this time on his neck, the Major was reported to have declared that "in some way, I think Dr. Wyman is influencing me. I think he may be a part of me now" and that the alien creature "didn't come here to destroy."

- A re-examination of Major Corcoran's blood showed the abnormal cells had gone.

- The use of a fluoroscope revealed the presence of small creatures within the major's body.

- The Major appeared to have been unafraid of the alien infestation of his body and even insisted that he lead the others to the creature, as long as it was in the open and during daylight.

- Major Corcoran was able to sense where the Creature's lair was situated and he led the group to a ravine and a cave.

- After moving off from the others, the Major was overhead telling the alien creature, "I brought them to you. They don't understand. I'm not sure I do. How can I help you to communicate with us?"

- It became apparent to the major that the Creature had come here to conquer the Earth and that the only way to stop the invasion was for him to sacrifice his own life.

- After pleading with his colleagues to kill him, Major Corcoran freely chose to take his own life by means of a knife.

Captain Matthews reflects on the kind of man Major Corcoran must have been. So typical of the test pilot fly-boys back in the day who seemed to be able to throw caution to the wind and fly by the seat of their pants. So different to the computer game console, joy-stick, simulation drone flying nerds these days who have to sign things in triplicate before being allowed to take a dump and then only if they double check their own bowel movement procedures.

Yep, if only Matthews could feel he had just a whiff of the good ole "right stuff" instead of being a military desk-bound paper-shuffling functionary.

The next one to feature in the report before him is;

Dr. Alex Wyman

- Lead scientist

- The sole victim of the "Creature."

- The "Creature" reportedly needed to assimilate his brain in order to communicate with the other humans.

- Dr. Wyman initially entered the crashed capsule to examine Major Corcoran's body prior to conveying the body to his lab at the radar monitoring station, where he and Dr Benson conducted further medical tests on the Major.

- It was Wyman who observed that Corcoran's body exhibited no signs of rigormortis.

- After tests being conducted on Major Corcoran's blood revealed that after seven hours his

blood was still alive, Doctor Wyman insisted that this be reported immediately, but with the radio being out there was a need to find a working telephone. Even this option, however, was to have been denied them.

- Without any means of contacting the outside world and with an apparently hostile creature lurking outside the lab, the base personnel decided to stay together in one room for the night with each taking a watch.

- While the others were asleep, Dr. Wyman appears to have been attacked by a creature. He was found strung up with half his head missing and with blood dripping on the floor below his body.

Captain Matthews put the report back down on the desk and thought how this senior scientist reminded him a lot of some of the crusty old military types he served under. By means of their experience, accumulated knowledge and force of personality they somehow are able to get others to respect (and often fear) their authority. They seem to be able to issue orders effortlessly and have them carried out just as effortlessly. For those who serve or work under them, such men come to be seen as being almost like a father-figure. The danger with such people is where their single-minded pursuit of a particular goal might lead those who follow them.

With a strong sense of regret about the gruesome way in which Dr Wyman had his life ended, Captain Matthews turns his attention to the next person;

Dave Randall

- Dave Randall and Donna Bisby were the first to arrive on the crash scene and proceeded to extinguish the flames on Major Corcoran's capsule.

- Randall checked the Major for a pulse, but could find none.

- Randall reported to his colleagues that the rocket and controls section were in one piece, but that the pilot did not survive.

- At the crash site, Randall noticed that the opening in the capsule was much larger than it was initially.

- Various attempts were made by Randall to report to headquarters and to contact the Air Force on the radio, but some unknown interference kept blocking his attempts.

- Randall next checked the antenna and power equipment when the electrical power for the installation suddenly went out.

- Randall reported to the others that something had approached him and according to him, "Something hit me. It was big, like a bear. It came from out of the darkness and was heading for the lab. I know I put a couple of shots in it before I went down."

- It was Randall who first noticed that everyone's watches had stopped, leading to the

conclusion that they were in a magnetic force field.

- It was also Randall along with Steve Dunlap who discovered Wyman's body strung up.
- After the Creature was fired upon without any effect and was finally driven away by fire, Major Corcoran tried to convince the others that the creature should be left alone. However, Randall together with Dunlap wanted to see it killed and planned to use fire and track it down the next morning.
- At the site of the crash, Randall and Dunlap suspected that the Creature was inside the capsule. While leaving Donna Bisby some distance away, they discharged a flare inside the capsule. The Creature suddenly appeared and proceeded to drag Miss Bisby away. Randall and Dunlap fired at the creature which then released Miss Bisby allowing it to escape.
- Randall speculated that the two sources of magnetic disturbance came from both Major Corcoran and the Creature, and that it was the only thing keeping the Major alive.
- Although it was agreed that they would give the creature a chance to explain its actions, and not condemn it simply because it was different, Randall and Dunlap required more than Major Corcoran's assurances. They therefore made up some Molotov cocktail bombs to use should the Major's plan fail and he was unable to exercise free will, as he claimed to be able to do.

Captain Matthews had come across plenty of characters like Randall before. If they join up, sometimes the military sorts them out and if not, kicks them out. There's usually something a bit reckless or gung-ho about them. Sure, they can be quite brave and decisive but such men of action can also have a tendency to act more on emotion, are quick to judge and can be somewhat vindictive when crossed or thwarted. Still, this Randall seemed to have been pretty observant and paid attention to detail.

Matthews then moves on to the other station personnel consisting of;

Steve Dunlap

Matthews reads that he was a technician and spent most of the time joined at the hip with Randall whenever action was needed to be taken against the Creature or any running around was required.

Dr. Julie Benson

- Physician.
- Engaged to Major Corcoran before he went up into space.
- Dr Benson witnessed the initial examination of Corcoran's body at the crash site.
- Matthews wonders to himself, 'Imagine having to do that when it involves someone so close to you!'
- Later examination of the Major's body revealed to Dr Benson an abnormality in his blood consisting of a third type of blood cell.

- Concerning the third blood structure, Dr Benson explained to her colleagues, "That big one, that's completely foreign to any blood structure. If that bacteroid is contagious then we've all been exposed."

- Dr Benson later gave Corcoran an injection of sodium amytal (amobarbital) to sedate him and was given the task of guarding him, armed with a flare gun.

Donna Bisby

- Photographer.
- Donna Bisby was one of the first on the scene of the crash.
- Miss Bisby took pictures of the crash scene.
- She reported that she noticed something strange about the mud in the immediate vicinity of the wreckage.
- The creature later grabbed Donna Bisby when she went to the crash site with Randall and Dunlap but was released unhurt when both men shot at the creature.

As Matthews manages to tear himself away from the image of Donna Bisby, he next focuses his attention on the Creature whose reported presence and activities involving the rocket's crash landing, the "infection" and possible takeover of Major Corcoran and the death of Dr Wyman, have led to the existence of this report;

The Creature

- The creature was identified as being the extra-terrestrial entity that initially approached the base lab.
- While the personnel slept, Dr. Wyman was attacked and killed by the Creature.
- After consideration was given to the destruction of the alien embryos inside Major Corcoran, the Creature forcibly entered the lab and was fired upon without effect. Only a fire started from a thrown lantern caused it to retreat.
- Later at the cave site, the creature using Dr. Wyman's voice, claimed that Wyman's death was a necessary sacrifice and it insisted that it was not an evil monster. It went on to explain that it wished to help give humanity a better way of life and that it had been waiting up in space to get to the Earth's surface. It also went on to claim that Corcoran was carrying within his body a new generation of its species that would soon be born.
- It was determined that the Creature's mission was to conquer the Earth.
- Major Corcoran believed that the only way to prevent this invasion was for him to sacrifice his own life which he did by means of a knife.
- When the other base personnel attacked the Creature with Molotov cocktail bombs, it was reported that its last words were a warning to humanity. It was reported to have warned that, "You are not ready, but we will still save you. In your quest for self-destruction you will send up more satellites, and we will be there waiting to come again."

Matthews closed the report and placed it on top of the desk in front of him. He then slumped back in his swivel chair and placed his hands behind his head and thought carefully about the folder's contents.

On the face of it, the whole episode sounded rather absurd. But the "absurd" had become Matthews' stock in trade for a number of years now. Here we have a creature that resembles an agglomeration of several lumps of faeces topped off with an enormous parrot's head! What was that Vulcan saying in the Star Trek series? "Infinite diversity in infinite combinations?" Well, he'd seen enough examples of that from the thousands of reports that came his way to understand how that saying was really in fact a truism! It's only our own arrogance that stops us from understanding the truth of this.

It then occurs to Matthews that the entire episode could be seen by a suspicious mind as being a cover-up for a murder. However, the people involved checked out in terms of their individual testimonies and their respective reputations, credentials and background.

There's also the matter of the substantial amount of photographic, documentary and physical evidence surrounding the incident.

With the Creature's warning echoing in his mind: "we will be there waiting to come again" Captain Eugene K. Matthews leant forward in his chair, drew the folder closer to him and stamped it with the letter.....

(D)

Before the report's referral to the President and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Matthews makes a copy of it which he will add to an ever-growing pile of copies of other reports that have come into his hands over the years.....

One Year Later

Former Captain Eugene K. Matthews sits in solitary confinement in his small prison cell at Quantico having been court-marshaled, tried and convicted by a secret military tribunal for having illegally disclosed classified government information.

While the global power elites' dogs of war were straining at their leashes, Matthews released the copies of the reports of Project HEAD to WikiLeaks which were then published in the mainstream (so-called "Fake News") news media such as The Washington Post and The New York Times. The leaked information then went pandemic on social media.

Matthews hoped that publicizing matters that would impact and even endanger the lives of

everyone on the planet; matters that everyone had a right to know about; matters that should not and could not be kept secret, would force humanity to band together. Hopefully, we would realize that we are not alone in the universe and that there are greater threats to our survival than can be dreamt of in the empty paranoid minds of political leaders.

Or would such knowledge cause a global upheaval, an undermining of trust in our institutions and an overturning of our scientific certainties and religious beliefs? Would chaos reign supreme?

Only time will tell, but at least we all now know that,

THEY have been coming here for many years and THEY will certainly come again!

Points of Interest

With a budget of about \$68,000 and shot in seven days, "Night of the Blood Beast" was produced by filmmaker Roger Corman and his brother Gene. It was also one of the first films directed by Bernard L. Kowalski and was written by first-time screenwriter Martin Varno, who was then only 21 years of age.

Also known as "The Creature from Galaxy 27" & "The Monster from Galaxy 27," "Night of the Blood Beast" was released as part of a double-feature with Roger Corman's, "She Gods of Shark Reef" (1958).

The alien-creature costume used in the film would later be used in, "Teenage Cave Man" (1958) with Ross Sturlin once again portraying the monster.

The story was somewhat influenced by the then contemporary Space Race and the Howard Hawks film, "The Thing from Another World" (1951). It seems that this film together with "IT, The Terror From Beyond Space" (1958) prefigured the premise of the later "Alien" (1979) film.

There are the usual quota of scientific technobabble and scientifically implausible explanations such as when the character, Major Corcoran is described as having no heartbeat and no respiration, but he does have blood pressure. However, there is no way to determine blood pressure without a heartbeat!

Assessment

Despite its faults, it is a reasonably well-made tense, claustrophobic and moody film. It also moves along at quite a brisk and steady pace and the acting is fairly competent and sincere.

"Night of the Blood Beast" explores the theme of difference and how our perceptions of someone or something can be determined by something as superficial as appearance. For

instance, how the human characters in the film consider the creature as being the embodiment of evil because it is different. Major Corcoran attempts to defend the creature thus raising the point that because someone or something is perceived to be ugly or different does not necessarily make that person or thing evil. But nothing in life is completely clear cut or black and white and the question remains as to the true nature of the creature who claims it wishes to save us from ourselves by invading the Earth.

Space Master X-7 (1958)

A low budget drive-in feature with a nice mix of sci-fi and detective drama

Directed by Edward Bernds
Produced by Bernard Glasser
Written by George Worthing Yates, Daniel Mainwaring
Music by Josef Zimanich, Harry Bluestone
Cinematography: Brydon Baker
Edited by John F. Link Sr.
Production company: Regal Films
Distributed by Twentieth Century-Fox Film Corporation
Running time: 71 min.

Cast

Bill Williams : John Hand
Lyn Thomas: Laura Greeling
Robert Ellis: Pvt. Joe Rattigan
Paul Frees: Dr. Charles T. Pommer / Train-Station Announcer
Rhoda Williams: Stewardess Archer
Joan Barry: Jean Meyers - brunet
Carol Varga: Elaine Frohman
Thomas Browne Henry: Prof. West
Thomas Wilde: Collins
Fred Sherman: Mr. Morse - Hotel Manager
Gregg Martell: Jim Dale - plane engineer
Jess Kirkpatrick: Pilot Vaccarino
Court Shepard: Hendry - Battalion Fire Chief

Moe Howard : Retlinger - Cab Driver
Al Baffert: Plane passenger

A space probe returns to Earth bringing with it a mysterious fungus!

A fungus accidentally tinged with human blood and transformed into an ever-growing pile of
...."Blood Rust!"

An entire world threatened by an ever-spreading alien infection!

Can the dynamic duo of John Hand and Joe Rattigan locate the one woman who holds the key
to stopping the rust from spreading and engulfing the entire world?

(Spoilers follow below....)

A serious-looking narrator seated at a desk earnestly informs us that he is about to tell us a
"true" story of a space mission: an unmanned space probe (XN-712) that returns to Earth
containing samples of an alien life-form.

CAN THIS POSSIBLY BE TRUE????

Biologist, Charles Pommer takes the samples back to his home lab for closer examination. He
observes that the rusty red spores reproduce quickly and dubs them "blood rust."

ARE THESE SPORES ALIVE????

While scientist Charles Pommer studies the samples, he is interrupted by Laura Greeling with
whom he had had a previous "dalliance." She wants custody of their young son. They wind up
having an argument about their son, who is at a boarding school. (Look again, it was 1958!)

Greeling to Pommer: "Why are you doing this? Why can't you be more human?"

TENSION GROWS AND BUBBLES TO THE SURFACE!!!

It isn't long before Pommer has managed to grow several large blobs in jars.

SPEAKING OF SOMETHING GROWING!!!!

The alien lifeforms have become growing, pulsating masses of tissue, which engulf and kill
Pommer.

Close to death, Pommer calls the research center. John Hand and Private Rattigen then drive out to the lab to investigate.

They find the lab covered in oozing fungal blobs and Pommer dead. Rattigen and Hand manage to get his tape on which he has been recording his findings, then they burn the house down.

THINGS ARE BEGINNING TO HEAT UP!!!

After Pommer's house is burned to the ground to prevent the spread of the deadly organism, Hand and Rattigen discover from listening to the tape that a woman who had visited the house was exposed to the alien samples. She is now spreading the "blood rust," which forms and grows on everything she touches. Greeling bribes a cab driver to forget that he had her as a fare. She then sets about traveling by train to Los Angeles.

GAL MAKES A FAST GETAWAY!!!

Hand locates the cab driver who reluctantly tells the authorities all he knows about the female passenger he picked up. A search to locate the woman is undertaken but Greeling is actively trying to flee from the authorities, believing that she is being accused of murdering Pommer. She is also unaware that she is spreading the alien organisms everywhere she goes.

THE HUNT IS ON!

Greeling manages to evade the police by hiding out. Meanwhile, the train baggage car was overrun with blood rust. The infestation was dealt with by the authorities making use of flame throwers.

TIME TO TURN UP THE HEAT!

After changing her appearance in a hotel room, Greeling boards a flight to Honolulu. Rattigen follows her on board and proceeds to investigate three female passengers matching the description in the APB.

Pvt. Joe Rattigan: [to the stewardess] "Are there any other brunettes on this flight wearing tweed coats?"

Laura finally confesses. Meanwhile, the plane's cargo hold fills with blood rust threatening the entire plane. They turn back, but must belly land as the fungus has damaged the landing gear.

SUFFERING STOWAWAYS!!

CAN THE SPREADING ALIEN FUNGUS BE STOPPED

AND THE PLANET (SPORED) SPARED,
OR WILL OUR SPECIES LOSE OUT IN A STRUGGLE FOR SURVIVAL?

In the end, everyone disembarks safely and heads for decontamination. We don't know what has become of the fungus but we assume that the world is safe from this unexpected alien incursion.

Points of Interest

Spacemaster X-7 has a very disquieting premise of a mindless alien organism that spreads via the touch of a contaminated person. Anyone so contaminated could appear at any time and at any place to threaten anyone in close proximity.

Paul Frees, known as a voice for numerous cartoon characters, appears in the film as the ill-fated scientist. Many people will also recognize Moe Howard of Three Stooges fame, this time playing his first dramatic role as the cab driver who gave Greeling a ride.

Writer, George Worthing Yates was involved in some classic 50s sci-fi films such as Them! (1954), Conquest of Space (1955) and Earth vs. the Flying Saucers (1956). each of which are featured in this ebook series.

Dan Mainwaring who was involved with Invasion of the Body Snatchers (1956) collaborated on the screenplay.

Spacemaster X-7 ran as the B half of a double feature with 20th Century Fox's bigger budget color sci-fi / horror film, The Fly, (featured elsewhere in this series.)

The film's title is quite deceptive in that it starts out in typical 50s sci-fi fashion with rockets, space and alien life forms. However, it soon shifts into a semi-documentary detective drama style of genre.

Of special relevance today is the idea of the danger posed to our survival by contagion. The concern over the SARS virus in early 2003 and the fear of Ebola and the recent Covid-19 Pandemic makes the film's plot quite poignant even for today's audiences.

The film's almost abrupt happy ending was quite a curious one with the plane landing and all the passengers being bused away presumably for decontamination. There was no clue given as to what happened to all the fungus that had been infesting the plane, nor what happened to all the

people at the hotel, not to mention the train passengers!

Check out the classic sci-fi film, *The Andromeda Strain* (1971) and the more recent film, *Life* (2017) which both deal with similar themes and scenarios to *Spacemaster X-7*.

LIFE

Entombed in rocky fragments in the depths of space,
Encased in balls of ice through the void that race
Toward destinies of creation and doomsday,
Life will always find a way.

Silent spores suspended in cosmic dust,
Fated to reanimate into Blood Rust,
Now just a primates' probe stowaway,
Life will always find a way.

Impelled by no ill-intent, malice or hate,
Just a need to survive suffices to motivate,
The taking of hosts to harbor an émigré,
Life will always find a way.

Someday the cosmic dream scheme will give solace,
When a clever ape stands proud on an alien surface,
Its presence proclaimed with microbes; again that day,
Life will have found a way.

The Blob (1958)

Although not a masterpiece, this film is a cultural gem

Practically nothing is known about an incident that occurred in a small rural town in Pennsylvania in July 1957. It involved a mysterious extra-terrestrial blob-like entity that crashed to Earth inside a meteorite. Not only that, but the alien entity turned out to be both aggressive and destructive as it set about devouring and dissolving the citizens of this small rural

community.

Almost nothing is also known about the then teenage pair, Steve Andrews and his girlfriend, Jane Martin who witnessed the crash of the meteorite and who set about investigating it. As the teenage pair witnessed the alien creature's destructive power, they faced the problem of being confronted by a wall of adult skepticism and anger. Meanwhile, the blob continued to engulf more and more people, while growing bigger and bigger.....

Directed by Irvin Yeaworth

Produced by Jack H. Harris

Written by Kay Linaker, Theodore Simonson

Story by Irving H. Millgate

Music by Ralph Carmichael, Burt Bacharach

Cinematography Thomas E. Spalding

Edited by Alfred Hillmann

Production company: Fairview Productions, Tonylyn Productions, Valley Forge Films

Distributed by Paramount Pictures

Running time: 86 minutes

Budget: \$110,000

Box office: \$4 million

Cast

Steve McQueen as Steve Andrews

Aneta Corsaut as Jane Martin

Earl Rowe as Lieutenant Dave

Olin Howland as Old Man

Stephen Chase as Dr. Hallen

John Benson as Sergeant Jim Bert

George Karas as Officer Ritchie

Lee Payton as Kate

Elbert Smith as Mr. Martin

Hugh Graham as Mr. Andrews

Keith Almoney as Danny Martin

(Spoilers follow below....)

Sixty years later, 17-year-old Steve Andrews III wiles away his time playing a game on his iPhone. As he blows up aliens and stuff on his screen, he sings a little ditty that his grandfather taught him when he was a young boy:

"Beware of the Blob
It creeps and leaps
And glides and slides
across the floor
Right through the door
and all around the wall
A splotch, a blotch
Be careful of the Blob
Beware of the Blob
It creeps and leaps
And glides and slides
across the floor
Right through the door
and all around the wall
A splotch, a blotch
Be careful of the Blob
Beware of the Blob
It creeps and leaps
And glides and slides
across the floor
Right through the door
and all around the wall
A splotch, a blotch
Be careful of the Blob"

Steve doesn't notice his grandfather shuffle into the living room and attempt a controlled but rather noisy descent onto the surface of the recliner opposite him.

Grandpa Steve: So Boy, you still remember that song I taught ya'?

Steve: Mmm?

Grandpa Steve: That song you was just singin'. Ya' still remember it, Boy?

Steve: Yeah, I suppose. Whadeva.

Grandpa Steve: Ever wondered what it meant?

Steve: Dunno. Just some kids' song. What about it?

Grandpa Steve: Kids' song! Well, put away that kiddie thing ya' fiddlin' with and I'll tell ya' what it refers to. Something that only a few of us know who are still alive to remember what happened

back in 1957 in my hometown in Pennsylvania. Something we were forced by the United States government to swear to keep secret or face severe personal consequences. That's what they told us and what was writ on the forms they forced us to sign – consequences!

Steve: Then, why are you telling me Grandpa, and why now?

Grandpa Steve: Well, I couldn't tell ya' fool Pa on account he never believed half of what I said most times and never listened to the other half anyways. Besides, I still felt scared at what might've happened if I had told him. Anywho, at 77 years old, I can see as plain as the zit on your chin that the days in front of me are a lot less than the days stretched out behind me. I ain't got no time to worry about bullies stompin' over me and the truth, the truth that perhaps you young people of today can spread with ya' interwebs and cell phone gee-gaws and whatcha-ma-call-its.

Steve: (after examining his chin area and with the last of the aliens on his phone vanquished) So tell me then Grandpa, what did happen back then that you so badly want me to know about?

Grandpa Steve: (leaning back in the recliner and with eyes fixed at a point elsewhere in time and space) Well, I was a teenager just your age back in '57 in my hometown of Downingtown, Pennsylvania. Many people back then had served in the Second World War and after that the Korean War. Now we had peace and money and jobs. All we had to worry about was Commies, Ruskies and the possibility of atomic war, which I suppose was enough to worry about. Well, we teenagers could afford cars – real cars made out of steel that had fins! We could now go places. We loved to race hot-rods, listen and dance to rock-n-roll music (real music!) and watch scary movies at the local cinema or drive-in. And man, the girls back then! You know, Boy, women in those days actually looked like women should look. Our president was good ol' Ike. After him came Kennedy. Now they was real presidents. Not like this buffoon we got now.....

Steve: OK grandpa. Back to the story....

Grandpa Steve: Well, one night I was out at lovers' lane with Jane, your departed grandma who was then my sweetheart, my girlfriend. She hated being called 'Janey girl!' God rest her soul. She was so beautiful. Suddenly, we spotted a meteorite crash just over the next hill, so I decided to go look for it.

We drove out to try to find where the meteor landed when we came across an old man lying on the road. It seems that he had also heard the meteor crash near his house. He must have located it and prodded and poked it out of curiosity.

It turned out that some kind of a creature – a, a, a.... blob – had managed to attach itself to his hand. Unable to dislodge it, the old fella must have panicked and run onto the road. Anyways, we took him to see Doc Hallen.

Steve: A “blob?”

Grandpa Steve: I’m getting’ to that. Luckily, we reached the clinic just as Doc Hallen was about to leave. You should have seen the size of the blister on the old man’s fingers. After the Doc anesthetized the old timer, he sent us back to the impact site to gather more information.

I’m afraid I got a bit side-tracked on the way and being a foolish head-strong young buck, I just couldn’t resist the challenge of a full reverse drag race with some of the local boys. One of them boys says to me, “We can beat this kiddie car of yours going backwards.” Ha! They was no match for my ol’ 1953 Plymouth Cranbrook blue convertible! No siree!

Anyways, the gang joined us as we went back to the impact site before going to the movies. We soon enough realized that we were “getting close to the front line.” We located what was to us a “little pebble” – “a real piece of sky” that had “been out there hot-roddin’ around the universe” and had started out “probably big as the moon.”

Suddenly the howling of a dog drew us to a house situated close by. It looked isolated and abandoned: a real “cozy spot. No neighbors, no cars, no roads, no lights (and) no movies.” We figured the place and the dog belonged to the old man so before going to join the others at the “spook show,” Jane and I decided to take the dog with us back to the Doc’s clinic.

When we returned, I went to see if the doc’s car was in the garage. I was soon shocked out of my wits to witness through the clinic window Doc Hallen being killed and consumed by some kind of a creature. It was “just like the thing on the old man’s hand, only it was bigger. Then it was on his whole head, and then in just a second he disappeared....He was all gone. He was all gone. You know, he just disappeared!” In fact, the creature had consumed both the old man we found and Hallen’s nurse.

There was nothing left to do but to go to the police station and report what had just happened. I felt that the police would know what to do.

At the station I was still in a state of shock and had trouble getting Lieutenant Dave to believe my story about Doc Hallen having been killed. I remember gibbering something about a creature being responsible and it being “kind of like a mass that keeps getting bigger and bigger” and that it could have been a monster of some kind. After thinking what I had to say might have been part of a gag, Dave knew he had to check it out seeing that a murder had been reported.

When we returned to the clinic with Lieutenant Dave and Sergeant Bert we found no sign of any blob-like creature or any of its victims. Still, there was the question of how it was that in the room I saw the doc being killed, “the window was locked from the inside and so was the door.”

That Sergeant Bert was sure hostile towards us throughout the entire investigation.

Steve: How so?

Grandpa Steve: Well, boy, you know yourself how people get ideas in their heads about other people just because of some bad experience they may have had or based on the way they were raised. They look for what's bad in the other person just as a way to confirm their own preconceived notions and prejudices. A few teenagers or a couple of gangs commit some crimes and suddenly all teenagers are labeled as being juvenile delinquents. Suddenly the youth of today are all wild and out of control when in fact most are just healthy and well-adjusted youngsters who may occasionally rebel, test boundaries and look for some excitement. Boy, how I used to shake my head at your Pa and his shenanigans when he was growing up and how he shakes his head at you and your shenanigans. We just tend to forget, is all!

Steve: [Sounding somewhat guilty] Me? I don't get up to anything, do I?..... What about this Sergeant Bert fella?

Grandpa Steve: Well, according to some who knew him, it seemed that he acted like we were still fighting the war and also because some kid smacked into his wife on the turnpike....in his mind it almost seemed to "make it a crime to be 17 years old!"

Anyway, back to the investigation. After a chat with a certain Mrs. Porter, my story was dismissed as being nothing more than a teenage prank and both Jane and I were later sent home with our tails between our legs accompanied by our parents.

Steve: Let me guess. Back in the day, your parents grounded you for the next ten years?

Grandpa Steve: Very funny. No, boy. We did what I know you've done on at least a couple of occasions when your dad ordered you to stay home - we snuck out behind their backs in the dead of night!

Steve: You rebel, grandpa! Ah, you knew I did that?

Grandpa Steve: Yep! Don't fret, your Pa won't hear about it from me. We then decided to rustle up a few of our friends who were at the Colonial Theater which was showing a midnight screening of Daughter of Horror. The intention was to get them to help us warn the townsfolk about the Blob creature and the danger it posed.

I had much to thank your grandma for because of the faith she had in me. She knew in her heart that I was "not the kind of person who can turn (his) back on something (he) know(s) is true."

The question for us was "how do you get people to protect themselves from something they don't believe in?" The only possible answer was to "keep trying and hoping you can find...some sort of proof that'll convince them."

And that's what we set out to do.

At first it was a difficult job just trying to convince the rest of the gang. I told them there "was something inside of that rock we found, something that could wipe out this whole town." Then one of the guys recalled something strange in one of the bars in town: "there was nobody there. TV was playin' away. The cash register was there with the money still in it. Nobody around. No bartender, nobody."

After we left the others, I noticed that my dad's grocery store was unlocked which was definitely unusual. It was after all a Friday when I knew that "the store closes at 10:00, and then old Mr. Weinermeyer sweeps up...and then he collects all the push carts.... He works around for a couple of hours before he locks up. I was sure he'd never be this late." Jane and I then decided to enter the store to investigate. Unable to locate the janitor, we quickly found ourselves confronted and cornered by The Blob.

Steve: What did you and grandma do to save yourselves?

Grandpa Steve: There was nothing for it but for your grandma and me to seek refuge in the big walk-in freezer. It was a choice between freezing to death or being consumed by the Blob. It wasn't long before we noticed the creature oozing in under the door. Just when it seemed that we could do nothing to prevent it from getting at us, the Blob retreated allowing us to escape our frigid sanctuary

Once outside the store, we came across our friends. I asked them where they had been all this time and told them that the creature was in the store. I then got one of the gang, Tony Gressette to use the phone booth to call the police. That's what we did back in them days – no cell phones back then! I told Tony, "I'm supposed to be home asleep, if they think I'm running around loose, they'll never believe us." I then asked him to "ask for Dave, and ... give it to him straight. Tell him to get out to (the) store quick! (and) tell him to bring every piece of hardware he can find in the police station!"

Steve: So, did the cavalry come charging to the rescue?

Grandpa Steve: Hell no! The police (namely, Bert) thought that every kid in town was in on a prank. "All right, we tried to do it the right way," so we decided it was high time to "wake this town up ourselves."

Jane and I got our friends together to set off the town's fire and air-raid alarms. Boy, you shouldha' heard the racket! The townspeople and police sure did! The whole town streamed in and gathered around us demanding to know what the heck was going on. I got up in front of everybody and announced to them: "Now listen to me, everybody! This town is in danger. Several people have been killed already. Now we had to make this noise so you'd listen to us, so we could warn you."

Steve: Did they listen? Did they believe you?

Grandpa Steve: At first the townspeople were angry and confused and refused to believe me, especially Bert. Dave, however could see it in my eyes that I was telling the truth. He said to the assembled crowd, "Listen, this is an emergency, and it can affect every one of us. That's all I can tell you right now. But we're trying to get things under control. In order to do that, we have to clear this area immediately. So please go home and stay there. We'll keep in touch with you through your radio station."

What did finally convince everyone was the number of panicked people pouring out of the Colonial Theater hell bent on escaping the Blob which had entered during the screening of Daughter of Horror and had already consumed some of the audience.

As people were fleeing in all directions and gunshots were going off, Jane, Danny, her little brother, and I found ourselves in the diner, along with the manager and a waitress. Can you imagine it? Jane's little brother confronting the Blob with just a cap gun! By now, the Blob had fed and had grown to an enormous size. It now engulfed the diner we were in, trapping us.

In the meantime, Dave arranged for the telephone company to establish a connection with the diner, so he could have a line of communication from his police radio to the diner's telephone. Over that line Dave said to us, "We can drop a power line on it. Do you understand? There should be enough juice in that line to burn the thing to a crisp." He then ordered us to get into the cellar before they brought down the live power line onto The Blob.

The police made the attempt to kill the Blob by dropping the power line onto it, but it failed and only succeeded in setting the diner ablaze.

With the unaffected Blob squeezing through every orifice in the diner and with the diner itself alight, we tried to defend ourselves as best we could. When the diner's manager used a CO2 fire extinguisher to put out the fire, it was noticed that the advancing Blob began to recoil. I then recalled the time when the Blob retreated from the refrigerator back in the store. I yelled out to Jane, "CO2! Hey, that's it! It's cold! That's why it didn't come in the ice box after us. It can't stand cold."

I yelled out some more hoping to be picked up on the open phone line, so that Dave would know about the Blob's vulnerability to cold. It must have worked as I found out soon after that Jane's father, Mr. Martin together with a bunch of our friends got their hands on about 20 fire extinguishers from the local high school which were used to drive The Blob away from the diner and then freeze it.

Steve: (Looking up from his iPhone which he again has in his hand quickly checking a text message.) So, what happened with the Blob?

Grandpa Steve: With the power still out, we couldn't do much in the way of refrigeration. We thought we had it under control, but we couldn't rest easy until it was frozen solid. Using a bomb would've only spread it all over the country and with the sun soon to rise overhead, the only option would be to request from the Air Force a heavy-lift cargo aircraft to transport the Blob to the Arctic. Once there it would be parachuted to the ice and snow below to keep it frozen.

So now you know the whole story, boy! That's how your old grandpa helped to save the world. Apart from me and anyone else involved who is still alive, you are the only other person who knows. And I hope through you a lot more will know and ask questions, particularly why our government has tried to keep it secret from the public! We'll talk more about that later.....

Grandpa Steve Andrews hears his grandson grunt in acknowledgment and watches him focus on the phone's screen as his thumbs peck out a text message.

Steve Andrews Jnr: Hey son. Wots up?
Steve Andrews III: GP crzy ol storys bout ol daz
Steve Andrew Jnr: jst humr im maks im (: home soon.

Grandpa Steve settles further back into his recliner and catches part of a news report about the effects of global warming on the TV in the next room. There's no-one in the room to watch it. He then silently chuckles to himself as he recalls his response sixty years ago at the people's relief that the Blob had at last been stopped:

"Yeah, as long as the Arctic stays cold!"

Points Of Interest

Title

It has been reported that The Blob was to have been originally titled The Molten Meteor and even The Glob. It was changed when it was discovered that cartoonist Walt Kelly had already used the latter title, which sounds something like a lump of phlegm that's been coughed up.

In changing the title from "The Glob" to "The Blob," producer Jack H. Harris hoped that comedians would pick up on it, resulting in free advertising on national television.

Setting

The Blob was filmed in and around Valley Forge, Pennsylvania. Principal photography took place at Valley Forge Studios. Several scenes were filmed in the towns of Chester Springs, Downingtown, Phoenixville, and Royersford, including the basement of a local restaurant named

Chef's.

Effects

For the diner scene, a photograph of the building was placed on a gyroscopically operated table onto which cameras were mounted. The table was shaken, causing the Blob to roll off. Playing the film negative in reverse made The Blob appear to be oozing over the building.

The Blob was made from a mixture of red dye and silicone, with increasing amounts of the red vegetable dye added as it "absorbed" more and more victims.

The Blob itself has never dried out and has been kept in the original five-gallon pail in which it was shipped to the production company in 1958 from Union Carbide.

Title Song

The film's light-hearted title song, "Beware of The Blob," was written by Burt Bacharach and Mack David and became a nationwide hit in the U.S., peaking at number 33 on the Billboard chart on 9 November, 1958.

The song was recorded by phantom studio group the Five Blobs consisting of Bacharach, some hired musicians and Nee, who tracked his voice five times.

It was intended that the title song have a non-threatening theme that would not scare the wits out of audiences during the opening credits.

Film Release

The Blob was released theatrically in 1958 on a double bill with I Married a Monster from Outer Space. It was originally intended to appear on the bottom half the double bill but it soon became evident that ticket buyers were coming for this film rather than the top-billed picture. The Blob then became the main feature with more money spent on its promotion.

Actors

Steve McQueen was offered \$2,500 or 10% of the profits. He settled on the \$2,500 because the film wasn't expected to make much. It ended up grossing over \$4 million!!

Steve McQueen was playing a teenage high-school student, but he was in reality 27 years old.

Steve McQueen had the poster of this film on his bedroom wall at the time of his death.

It was reported that Aneta Corsaut was interviewed and hired only two days before shooting started.

Trivia

The movie being shown in the Colonial Theater was an actual movie originally released as *Dementia* (1955).

The "trichloroacetic acid" thrown onto the Blob by the nurse is a weak acid used in chemical peels and is also used to treat genital warts - assuming that the Blob has genitals!

The movie poster just outside the theater advertising "The Vampire and The Robot" is actually the one for *Forbidden Planet*, with different titles pasted over the original text.

The Trollenberg Terror [aka The Crawling Eye] (1958)

An underrated atmospheric sci-fi film that combines competent acting with tight direction but with mediocre special effects.

Directed by Quentin Lawrence
Produced by Robert S. Baker, Monty Berman
Written by Jimmy Sangster
Story by Peter Key
Based on 1956 TV series
Music by Stanley Black
Cinematography: Monty Berman
Edited by Henry Richardson
Production company: Tempean Films
Distributed by Eros Films Ltd. (UK)
Distributors Corporation of America (US)
Running time: 84 minutes

Cast

Forrest Tucker as Alan Brooks
Laurence Payne as Philip Truscott
Jennifer Jayne as Sarah Pilgrim
Janet Munro as Anne Pilgrim
Warren Mitchell as Professor Crevett
Frederick Schiller as Klein
Andrew Faulds as Brett
Stuart Saunders as Dewhurst
Colin Douglas as Hans
Derek Sydney as Wilde
Richard Golding as first villager
George Herbert as second villager
Anne Sharp as German woman
Leslie Heritage as Carl
Jeremy Longhurst as first student climber
Anthony Parker as second student climber
Theodore Wilhelm as Fritz
Garard Green as Pilot
Caroline Claser as Little girl

The Independent Star
Your Weekly View into The Unknown....

In this week's issue.....

- The disappearance of Professor Quatermass – Dead or In Custody?
- What happened to the United States Air Force's 7,600-pound (3,400 kg) Mark 15 nuclear bomb? Was it simply "lost" in the waters off Tybee Island near Savannah, Georgia in the United States?
- What is Project A119 and has the US Air Force detonated a nuclear bomb on the moon? If so, then why?

Feature Article

A remote Swiss mountain resort under threat!
Alien invaders!
Telepathic communication!
Mysterious extra-terrestrial inhabitants of a radioactive cloud!

Be amazed by Philip Truscott's strange account of the events in which he personally took part,

in his article,

“The Trollenberg Terror.”

Read on to find out more about the horror of the Trollenberg Terror.....

(Spoilers follow below.....)

The Trollenberg Terror

By Special Correspondent, Philip Truscott

Some of our readers will no doubt be familiar with an incident that received press coverage concerning a series of unexplained deaths that occurred three years ago in the Andes mountains.

The deaths in the Andes were reported to have been associated with an unexplained radioactive mist and an odd cloud formation believed by locals to be inhabited.

Of course, at the time this explanation for the deaths was roundly ridiculed and dismissed, while more rational-sounding explanations were sought after to make sense of what happened.

This special report concerns my own recent personal experiences on the Swiss mountain ‘Trollenberg,’ where a series of deaths occurred which I and others firmly believe are related to similar incidents that happened three years earlier in the Andes mountains.

Tragedy

The picturesque Swiss Alps forms the backdrop to the events described below.

Picture in your mind a small village nestled between steep majestic snow-capped mountain peaks. Your view then shifts to the rugged face of Trollenberg Mountain where can be seen a single small cloud clinging to the side of the mountain.

You then zoom in to see a couple of student climbers clinging ant-like to a mountain ledge overlooking the valley below. They are listening to a third fellow climber above them complaining about a sudden onset of bitter cold and a fog that has cut visibility.

You listen as the third climber calls out to his comrades that someone is approaching but that he can't discern who it be might due to the fog. Suddenly, your heart leaps violently as he screams and plummets past his comrades on the ledge below.

Quickly, his two fellow climbers secure their friend's rope and begin to haul him back up. The horrific sight of his blood-stained lifeless body strikes one of the would-be rescuers speechless and renders him powerless to move.

His fellow climber next to him strains against the weight of the rope which gradually becomes worn against the jagged rock face. With the snapping of the rope, the body falls down the face of the cliff into a seeming abyss of eternity.

In reply to his friend's admonishment, the climber who had been paralysed with horror can only exclaim incredulously, "Didn't you see? His head... it was torn off!"

Mysterious Mountain

In the valley below, a speeding train is swallowed whole by the blackness of a tunnel only to eventually emerge into daylight at the tunnel's far end – a symbolic indicator of the "train" of events that will be the subject of this article.

On board the train are two beautiful young women, Sarah and Anne Pilgrim who form a London mind-reading act and are both on their way to Geneva. Seated opposite them reading his newspaper is a rugged-faced American by the name of Alan Brooks, a UN trouble-shooter.

According to Mr Brooks, Anne was awoken from her nap by Sarah who pointed out to her sister the mountain-view outside the train cabin window. As she looked out toward Mount Trollenberg, Anne seemed to fall into a kind of reverie or trance. Whatever she saw or thought she saw affected her greatly before she unexpectedly collapsed into the arms of Alan Brooks.

Mr Brooks went on to report that after the train's conductor announced the next stop as being Trollenberg, Anne declared out of the blue that they must get off at that stop. Even more surprisingly, Anne seemed to possess detailed knowledge of the town even though she had never been there before.

How to explain Anne's knowledge of the town?
Why did she feel compelled to stop at Trollenberg?

In the station lobby, Herr Klein, the proprietor of the Hotel Europa and the Mayor of Trollenberg, introduced himself to Alan Brooks and the Pilgrim Sisters. He was able to accommodate them without a reservation at the Europa which surprisingly was not fully booked during the peak season! Here was someone who obviously knew more than he was willing to let on.

Both Mr Brooks and Sarah Pilgrim recalled that on the drive from the train station to the hotel, Anne started to behave in a peculiar manner: First, by describing the recent death of the climber on Mt. Trollenberg, together with other details she couldn't possibly have known about. Second,

her explanation of how local mountain folk believe that the mountain is cursed.

It was soon revealed that the recent tragic death of the young climber was not the first death to have occurred on the mountain. In fact, it appears that anyone who chose to venture there would end up disappearing without a trace.

This part of our dark tale ends with the cursed brooding presence of the mountain looming over a picturesque landscape containing garden, chalet and the mist-shrouded Alps. Why then would such a scene seemingly applied from the palette of a god be so unsettling to young Anne Pilgrim?

It was while I was enjoying a glass of wine and smoking a cigarette at the bar of the hotel that I first became acquainted with Mr Brooks and the Pilgrim Sisters. Upon seeing Anne and Sarah, I had the distinct feeling that I had seen them somewhere before. But where?

The rest of this report will contain descriptions of events which I personally witnessed and events which were related to me by the other participants in this strange affair. My thanks go to those who agreed to participate in the staged photographic reconstruction of events shown here in this special report despite the bad memories it must have given rise to for some of them.

Strange Insight

Sarah Pilgrim later informed me that after she and her sister retired to their room, Anne began to act strangely when she gazed upon the scene outside their window. It was as if she were transfixed by a vision of something beyond the here and now but one of which she was somehow a part of.

Sarah could not understand how her sister could be able to describe details about things of which she had no prior knowledge such as a hiking shack and the cable car.

Anne could not fathom why the mountain seemed to be so familiar to her, why she was so attracted to it and the nature or source of the dread and terror surrounding it that she was feeling. Had she simply read about it in a travel brochure, or as Anne herself was starting to suspect, had she recalled it from a dream?

From the start, Anne struck me as having a somewhat ethereal quality about her, as if she were not really a part of the hum-drum matter-of-fact grind of day-to-day life. There was some quality, some vulnerability or even some special insight which set her apart from most people. Every society has such people – those who are forced to tread a lonely path through time and space possessing unwanted knowledge, displaying unusual abilities and observing all that transpires around them. Their fate is that they are either revered or they are crucified.

Being a reporter and a rather nosy / curious sort of chap, I decided to pay Mr. Brooks a visit in

his room. While engaging in some small talk with Brooks as he was unpacking, I tried to fish for information. Either I was not very subtle, or Brooks was naturally a very cagey and cautious fellow. He was not very impressed with my attempts at interrogation and was not very forthcoming with information. Suddenly, I caught sight of a revolver in one of Brooks' bags. Well, that certainly piqued my interest!

At that moment it suddenly occurred to me where I had seen Sarah and Anne before. I recalled that they were performers with a mind-reading act in London.

After I left Brooks, I decided to make a phone call to my paper to put in a request to have our mysterious Mr. Brooks checked out.

Theories Abound

Later on, at a gathering at the bar, geologist Dewhurst and his mountain guide, Brett were making preparations to climb the Trollenberg mountain and discover the reason behind the deaths that had occurred on the mountain. Some of the theories that were offered up ranged from a peculiar mineral formation whereby chemical changes in the mountain rocks had loosened or cracked them, making climbing the mountain much more dangerous, through to the villagers' opinion that something evil must be the cause.

Nasty business. Very nasty

In the case of the young climber's tragic death the previous week, I became convinced that the rope had become tangled around his neck, thereby decapitating him. One of the fellows at the gathering by the name of Hans, however, pointed out that the rope had been tied around the young climber's waist! A good point I had to admit to myself.

The scene now shifts to the cosmic ray observatory whose massive structure is more akin to a fortress or bunker with its huge concrete walls, heavily reinforced steel doors and enormous observatory window steel shutter. In addition, TV monitors provide a wide-ranging exterior view from a console inside. Apart from its scientific function of detecting cosmic rays, it is also meant to be impervious to Nature's onslaughts in the form of avalanches. A testament to humanity's arrogance perhaps?

Professor Crevett greeted Brooks at the observatory's entrance and they soon after began to consider the death of the student mountain climber, along with other similar incidents in which no bodies had ever been found. Such mysterious disappearances had occurred all in the same area of The Trollenberg.

A radioactive freak of nature?

Brooks informed me that at the time he considered such occurrences as being just the

inevitable result of inexperienced climbers underestimating the dangers of the treacherous peak. The professor apparently pointed out that Mt. Trollenberg had a single small cloud on its south face, which should not have been there. Brooks remained unconvinced and told the professor that "where there are mountains, there are always clouds."

Brooks went on to say that the professor informed him that this little cloud never moved, and that it was radioactive. To prove his point, the professor used the observatory's cosmic ray detector to scan the mountain. There was no mistaking it: each scan registered high radiation levels as the scanner passed the cloud!

Brooks and the professor recalled the similar incident that occurred three years earlier in the Andes. Even though Crevett was in favour of alerting the authorities, Brooks was all too conscious of how the incident in the Andes had damaged his credibility. If there was no evidence to support his claims, his reputation and career would be in jeopardy.

According to Brooks, he declared to the professor, "...I'm not going to stick my neck out again like I did in the Andes.....they practically accused me of dreaming the whole thing up. If I was to take a hand here, I'd have to have a list of documented facts, and they'd have to be pretty conclusive."

Relief

The two climbers, Dewhurst and Brett had arrived safe and sound at a wooden cabin. After stowing away their gear, Brett used the cabin's telephone to inform the others at the hotel of their safe arrival.

Later in the evening as Dewhurst slept, it appears that Brett had opened the cabin door and looked out at a scene in which visibility would have had significantly declined. The reason: a small cloud at that time would have descended the mountain and have brought with it both a thick fog along with an intense chill.

Telepathy

Meanwhile, in the lobby of the Hotel Europa, the Pilgrim Sisters gave a mind-reading demonstration at which Anne correctly identified a couple of objects that were hidden from her sight.

While describing the scene inside a small snow globe, Anne began to give details of a small cabin in the scene. Suddenly, it became apparent that through her trance-like state she was no longer describing the cabin in the snow globe but was instead describing the cabin on the slopes of The Trollenberg where Brett and Dewhurst had camped for the night. She described Brett coming up the slope and Dewhurst asleep in his bunk.

The spine-chilling account Anne gave was unnerving and Sarah was plainly disconcerted by her sister's unexpected demeanor. Suddenly, Anne collapsed while Brooks made for the phone to call the cabin. Dewhurst answered and assured Brooks that all was OK and that Brett had probably gone outside for a bit of air.

Prof. Crevett and I spent some time watching over Anne. Crevett later insisted that Sarah take Anne away from the area first thing in the morning. He was also able to confirm that Anne was indeed truly telepathic.

Coincidence?

Crevett's assistant, Wilde contacted the professor to inform him that the strange radioactive cloud had begun to descend the face of The Trollenberg toward the cabin and that its radioactivity was beginning to increase.

With the cloud moving into the vicinity of the cabin, Brooks made contact with Dewhurst who confirmed that Brett had not yet returned. He also mentioned that visibility was restricted due to the heavy fog outside and that it had become extremely cold.

Apparently, Dewhurst heard something outside the cabin and went to check. As Brooks listened on his end of the line, he was shocked to hear screams of horror before the phone line went dead.

Before those present could recover from the shock, the nerve-jangling ring of the lobby phone heralded news from Wilde that the cloud had just then begun to move away from the cabin. Coincidence?

Grisly Discovery

Myself, Mayor Klein, Brooks and several villagers assembled before dawn in the hotel lobby in preparation for a rescue expedition. A search plane was organized but it wasn't expected to arrive until later that morning.

Professor Crevett was able to explain to Sarah that Anne was mentally receptive to the mental images that Sarah transmitted to her during their act, somewhat like a radio receiver. However, her mind in the vicinity of The Trollenberg had been overwhelmed by the mental images projected by a much more powerful mind.

The rescue party finally made their way to the cabin. Strangely we found that the door was bolted from the inside. After breaking the door in, we entered to find the cabin's interior frozen with ice crystals festooning the bunk blankets. Even more shockingly, we discovered the body of Dewhurst under the bottom bunk – minus his head!

As preparations were made to carry Dewhurst's body back on a litter, I discovered the broken phone lines which crumbled when Brooks touched them having been crystallized by intense cold.

Meanwhile, it transpired that two members of the search party had made contact with the search plane via a portable radio. After an exchange of map coordinates they proceeded to search for Brett.

According to Sarah, when she returned to the hotel room she found Anne missing along with her coat. Sarah then rushed out to catch Anne who had left the room of her own accord and was now in the cable car. Sarah then quickly went to contact the professor at the observatory by phone to alert him that Anne was on her way there.

In the meantime, the pilot of the search plane radioed the search party that he had spotted Brett, waving below. He reported Brett's position before departing.

From what we could gather, the two searchers made their way to Brett's location but could find only his pack. It's what they found in the pack that's incredible - Dewhurst's severed head! They would hardly have had time to get over their shock at this sight when Brett appears to have suddenly appeared killing both men with a sharp weapon, probably a climbing pick.

By now Anne had reached the observatory and was said to be sitting quietly in the lab as the professor and Wilde were conducting measurements. It seems that Anne had gradually slipped away unnoticed and as she attempted to open the entrance door our returning search party intercepted her and prevented her from leaving.

Revelations

Upon our return to the Hotel Europa and after Anne went back to her bed, Brooks and Professor Crevett went on to consider the strange radioactive cloud. It was at this point that I decided to reveal to them that I was indeed a journalist who was investigating the mysterious deaths and disappearances.

I also informed them that I had some knowledge about similar incidents in the Andes three years previously and that Brooks and the professor had linked such events to the presence of alien creatures.

My sneaking suspicions concerning Brooks were then somewhat confirmed when he disclosed that his UN role involved him being part of a special task-force charged with the task of investigating possible alien invasions.

The atmosphere of surprise and shock was suddenly added to with the appearance of Brett who

stormed in out of the blue. He appeared to be terribly drained of energy and his movements were quite uncoordinated as could be gauged from his faulting attempts at pouring himself a drink.

As we observed Brett, Anne had come down from her room, and as soon as Brett caught sight of her, he transformed into some kind of homicidal maniac. Before Brett could stab Anne with a knife, Brooks intervened and struck him sending him careering backward. Brett's head struck a bronze statue of a wolf, resulting in him sustaining a deep gash on his head.

To our astonishment Brett's head wound wasn't displaying any evidence of bleeding at all! After Brett was carried into the wine cellar and his head wound was stitched up, we left him locked up and sedated and then went on to consider informing the UN of the whole situation.

Later on, it appears that Brett had awoken from his forced slumber. For some reason Mayor Klein had gone down to the cellar and Brett somehow got hold of him, killed him and released himself from the improvised cell by using the mayor's keys.

According to Sarah, she was woken up by the sound of commotion going on. When she went to investigate, she spotted Brett who was in possession of a large cleaver making his way toward the stairway to the bedrooms on the upper floor. As Sarah quickly tried to alert Brooks, Brett entered the Pilgrim sisters' bedroom. Anne then awakened to find Brett standing over her bed with the cleaver raised to strike. As she screamed, a single shot rang out killing her would-be attacker. The bullet came from the gun that Brooks was holding from where he stood in the doorway.

An examination of Brett's body by Brooks and the professor revealed an unusual feature on his skin. Upon closer inspection using the illumination an oil lamp, the flesh of Brett's arm appeared to vaporize, leaving only the skeletal remains exposed. It was at this point that I rushed into the room bearing news that the observatory had information that the radioactive cloud had begun to descend the mountain and was making its way directly toward the village.

The only safe place for everyone seemed to be the heavily fortified structure of the observatory. As the cloud began to move relentlessly down the mountainside towards the hotel, our group and many of the villagers headed off to the cable car.

As the impromptu evacuation proceeded, from the cable car platform the refugees witnessed the shocking spectacle of the cloud pouring down from The Trollenberg into their village below. When the cable car arrived at the platform and as the helpless onlookers rushed to board the car, one of the women realized that her daughter was nowhere to be seen. It turned out that her daughter had accidentally dropped the ball she had been playing with in the hotel lobby and had gone back to retrieve it.

Brooks heroically seized the initiative and ordered me to leave him behind if he couldn't return before the cloud headed toward them. He then made his way back down toward the village and

the hotel in search of the missing girl.

According to Brooks, when he arrived at the hotel lobby, he noticed that the doors had been broken inward from where he was confronted by an horrific sight – a monstrosity massive globular creature with long lithe tapering tentacles and possessing a single huge eye.

More shocking still was that this bulbous behemoth had seized the young absconder with one of its tentacles. After having the life almost squeezed out of him, Brooks managed to extricate himself, sever the tentacle holding the girl and escape with her unscathed.

The return to the cable car and their ascent to the observatory was fraught with danger. The mist reached the cable car platform below and ice began to form on the cable car pulley. With the freezing of the motor, the cable car began to lurch violently. Fortunately, the cable car arrived safely at the observatory platform allowing Brooks to get the rest of the passengers out.

When the steel door of the observatory opened, Brooks and I were taken to the main laboratory while the villagers gathered near the entrance. We then found out from Crevett that the cloud had split up into four and then five separate clouds, all converging on the observatory.

Hans, who was spotted on the video monitor, suddenly turned up at the observatory. Once inside, he explained that he had encountered the cloud on the road and had turned back. It was noticed that he began to exhibit strange behavior as if he were disoriented and confused, as well as complaining about it being too hot.

After we left him and returned to the lab, Anne noticed that Hans was peering around the corner and looking at her in a crazed manner. Not surprisingly, Anne retreated into the professor's office at the rear of the lab.

Meanwhile, a sudden drop in temperature on the platform outside was noted. This set Brooks to thinking about the need for cold by both the alien creatures and those humans under their control. Added to that was the fact that Brett had complained of the heat in the hotel before his attempt to kill Anne, as well Hans' complaint about the heat when he turned up at the observatory.

We soon found Hans in the office in the process of strangling Anne. I managed to jump onto his back and get him off Anne. Brooks quickly entered and after struggling with Hans he was able to stab him with a letter opener causing him to collapse.

Last Stand

As the alien creatures neared the observatory, a plan was put into action involving the making of Molotov cocktails to combat them. In the lab Brooks ordered an airstrike of firebombs to be dropped on the observatory, in the hope that its reinforced concrete roof and walls would

withstand such an assault.

The professor alerted Brooks to the video monitor as the aliens made their way slowly up the rocky slope toward the observatory. Brooks then grabbed one of the Molotov cocktails before venturing outside and lobbed it at one of the creatures. I then followed Brooks' example but was unfortunately snatched upwards by one of the alien's tentacles.

As I hung there above the ground dangling from the unearthly living gallows, Brooks bravely launched a Molotov up toward the roof of the observatory. I then fell unceremoniously to the ground as the creature holding me retreated with a spine-chilling shriek and its body set ablaze. Brooks and I were then able to make it back inside from where we sealed the door.

As Sarah took care of her unconscious sister in the office, one of the tentacled creatures caused the wall behind them to crack from the intense cold. Suddenly a large chunk of concrete wall fell inward revealing the creature outside. As its probing tentacles waved through the opening, searching and grasping for Sarah and Anne, Brooks burst into the room in a valiant attempt to rescue them from the alien's clutches. As Brooks struggled to extricate himself from one of its tentacles, I moved Sarah and Anne to the main lab.

I then got hold of another Molotov cocktail, returned to the scene of Brooks' struggle with the creature and hurled the crude incendiary device at the latter thereby allowing Brooks to free himself from its grasp.

After hastening back into the lab and closing the door, we learned of the approach of the fighter plane. Brooks proceeded to instruct the pilot to bomb the cloud covering the observatory.

The fighter pilot with the call-sign, "Jolly Rodger" made his first pass and began dropping his fire bombs. The roof and surrounding buildings were struck. By the second pass the creatures were engulfed in flame, their immense bodies reduced to blackened and smoking husks.

When it was all over, the steel window shutter opened to reveal a world filled with sunlight along with the charred remnants of evidence which would at last validate Brooks' and the professor's theory. As for the young lady at the centre of this event? Well, let's just say Anne will be safe in my company!

Disaster for a town averted!

Earth free from alien invasion!

The Trollenberg stands proud and majestic,

And free of clouds for the first time in three years!

Let's hope it stays that way....

....But let's be realistic as well. We now know for certain we are not alone in the universe. It is equally certain that other species are fully aware of our existence and the planet of which we

are custodians. For all we know they may have their own version of terra nullius which they may use to justify their eventual settlement and occupation of our planet resulting in the possible extermination of the human race.

After all, we may simply be living in a universe where survival at all costs is the guiding principle that motivates all species. The presence or absence of any particular species may be of no consequence to an uncaring universe. Despite our hubris and homo sapien-centric view of existence, we perhaps just do not matter in the face of an immense, impersonal and ever-expanding universe.

The fact that aliens came to Earth and established themselves in the rarefied atmosphere of a mountain; the fact that Brooks and the rest of us battled against such overwhelming odds to stay alive or that humanity persists with its efforts to push further and further out into space – all this may be part of a process in which life struggles to find a way. It therefore MATTERS to the living to stay alive and to do what it takes to stay alive.

Points of Interest

A certification from the British Board of Film Censors cleared The Trolenberg Terror for audiences of 16 years or older.

The original title of the 1958 independently made British black-and-white science fiction film is The Trolenberg Terror, while its American title was like many other films dumbed down to The Crawling Eye. In fact, for its release in the US, the film was cut down to 75 minutes from the full running length of 84 minutes, because the American distributors wanted to get to the monsters faster - Impatient bastards!

This film was first shown on a twin bill with The Strange Case of Planet X (The Cosmic Monsters.)

The Trolenberg Terror is based on a 1956 British ITV "Saturday Serial" television progra,m. In the original production, the alien creatures were called "Ixodes" while the film's central character, Alan Brooks was not included in its cast-list.

Gender Roles

The supporting cast in the form of Janet Munro who plays young Anne Pilgrim, the vulnerable psychic damsel-in-distress and Jennifer Jayne who plays Sarah Pilgrim, the dutiful and beautiful older sister, somewhat typify the portrayal of women in films of that era.

In our modern era there's a preference or even obsessive desire to incorporate so-called strong and (that bloody word) "empowered" female characters in sci-fi and other genre films. Nevertheless, in the Trolenberg Terror, we do have two independent young women supporting

themselves with their psychic act and Anne's role is indeed pivotal to the whole film.

Sure, they seem to be in need of rescuing and protection by male characters, but their portrayal merely reflects the attitudes and gender stereotypes of that era. At least it is preferable to the politically correct gender check-box method of inclusion evident in films of today. You can almost guarantee or predict that female characters in many sci-fi action films will have;

√One or more female characters in complete control and behaving exactly like men.

√One or more female characters slaughtering any number of men in hand-to-hand combat.

√The unedifying sight of a couple of hefty and/or sinewy and sweaty female characters all muddled up and going at each other with fists, feet and weapons.

√At least a couple of female (rarely male for some reason) characters snogging each other.

It's as if (just as it was 60+ years ago) female character roles are dreamed up largely by male minds with their target audiences in mind – young males just waiting to be titillated! All this offered up under the phony guise of gender inclusion and equality. For every action there's an opposite and equally stupid re-action. As long as the cash comes rolling in!

The end result of this “modern” approach supposedly reflecting society's perceived enlightened values is that we have a bunch of completely uninteresting and unbelievable female characters lacking both class and style who simply take on the same role as that formerly occupied by males. Not exactly the best of role-models either! Females deserve better than that in any era.

The Atomic Submarine (1959)

A low-budget sci-fi thriller with overbearing narration, grainy stock footage, ordinary effects and cheap sets, but also containing some quite interesting concepts and plenty of action.

1959: A Taste of the Times

Popular Culture

1.Popular Films

- Ben-Hur (winner of 11 Oscars)
- Some Like It Hot
- Anatomy of a Murder
- North by Northwest
- Sleeping Beauty
- The Rat Pack appears, including Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin, Sammy Davis Jr., Peter Lawford, and Joey Bishop. (The original Ocean's 11!)

Science fiction Films

The golden era of sci fi films was winding down. Sci-fi films tended to rehash well-trodden paths of space travel and played on fears concerning new technologies. Many of the science fiction films of that final year of the 1950s consisted of low-budget B offerings including;

- Hideous Sun Demon
- Monster On Campus
- The Robot vs. the Mummy
- The Cosmic Man
- First Man Into Space
- Invisible Invaders
- The Mysterians
- The H-Man
- Plan 9 From Outer Space
- Destination Space
- Teenagers From Outer Space
- Giant Gila Monster
- The Killer Shrews
- The Return of the Fly
- The Alligator People
- The 4D Man
- The Angry Red Planet
- Attack of the Giant Leeches
- Wasp Woman
- The Atomic Submarine
- The Monster of Piedras Blancas
- The Giant Behemoth
- Journey to the Centre of the Earth

2. Popular TV Programs

"There is a fifth dimension beyond that which is known to man. It is a dimension as vast as space and as timeless as infinity. It is the middle ground between light and shadow, between

science and superstition, and it lies between the pit of man's fears and the summit of his knowledge. This is the dimension of imagination. It is an area which we call "The Twilight Zone." (Rod Serling, narrator of the TV series, The Twilight Zone)

Bonanza premieres on NBC, the first weekly television series broadcast entirely in colour

3. Popular Singers

- Elvis Presley
- Doris Day
- Frank Sinatra
- Connie Francis
- Jim Reeves
- Cliff Richard
- Ella Fitzgerald

"The Day the Music Died," - The plane transporting musicians Buddy Holly, Richie Valens, and the Big Bopper goes down in an Iowa snowstorm, killing all four on board.

Singer Billie Holliday dies of liver failure at age 44.

4. Popular Songs

The US Grammy Music Awards Started

- Number One Hits Of 1959 include;
- The Platters - Smoke Gets in Your Eyes
- Frankie Avalon - Venus
- Wilbert Harrison - Kansas City
- Paul Anka - Lonely Boy
- Elvis Presley - A Big Hunk o' Love
- The Browns - The Three Bells
- Bobby Darin - Mack the Knife
- Guy Mitchell - Heartaches by the Number
- Frankie Avalon - Why
- Neil Sedaka had his first international hit with "Oh! Carol", addressed to his high school girlfriend Carol Klein, who would later be known as singer and songwriter, Carole King.

Directed by Spencer Gordon Bennet

Produced by Alex Gordon

Screenplay by Orville H. Hampton

Story by Irving Block; Jack Rabin
Music by Alexander Laszlo
Cinematography: Gilbert Warrenton
Edited by William Austin
Production company: Gorham Productions, Inc.
Distributed by Allied Artists Pictures Corporation (US); Warner-Pathé (original, UK)
Running time: 72 minutes
Budget: \$135,000 (approx.)

Cast

Arthur Franz: Lt. Cmdr. Richard 'Reef' Holloway
Dick Foran: Cmdr. Dan Wendover
Brett Halsey: Dr. Carl Neilson Jr.
Tom Conway: Sir Ian Hunt
Paul Dubov: Lt. David Milburn
Bob Steele: CPO 'Grif' Griffin
Victor Varconi: Dr. Clifford Kent
Joi Lansing: Julie
Selmer Jackson: Adm. Terhune
Jack Mulhall : Justin Murdock
Jean Moorhead: Helen Milburn
Richard Tyler: Carney
Kenneth Becker: Frogman Powell
Sid Melton: Yeoman Chester Tuttle
Frank Watkins: Watkins

It's 1968 – 10 years into the future!
Ships and submarines crossing the North Pole have mysteriously vanished!
The nuclear sub, Tiger Shark is sent out to investigate.
What they discover is not so much out of this world as.....
Deep within its waters!

(Spoilers follow below....)

As the movie, Atomic Submarine opens with title and credits shown over a submarine traveling under the Arctic ice, a narrator informs us that “it cost Commander Robert Peary twenty years of unrelenting hard-ship and misery to reach the North Pole, finally, in 1909” and that “it would have astounded Peary to learn that, by the late 1950's and early 60's, the vast, frozen top-of-the-world he pioneered had become a vital highway for world travel and commerce. Not just in the skies but also deep under the ice, in the frigid, five-million-square-mile depths of the

Arctic Ocean” where “great passenger and cargo-carrying atomic submarines glided by the dozens, back and forth across the Pole, until a series of mysterious undersea disasters threatened to close the Arctic route forever.”

A sense of panic and urgency is generated with the realization that an essential conduit for world travel and commerce has been threatened by a series of mysterious undersea disasters. This could mean the complete and indefinite closure of the Arctic route.

The narrator goes on to inform us that, “the decisive moment came May 3, at 1315 hours, when the undersea atomic liner, Sturgeon, largest of them all, reached 87 degrees, 10 minutes north latitude - only a few miles from the North Pole itself!”

Suddenly we see in the depths a distant faint ball of glowing light approaching and growing larger and larger while the Sturgeon’s sonar impulses increase in pitch. The light eventually resolves itself into an oval-shaped disk while the Sturgeon’s sonar seems to frantically scream in terror in response only to be drowned out by the humming sound emanating from the looming saucer.

The Sturgeon attempts to beat a hasty retreat by reversing its screws but is soon being overtaken by the saucer-shaped intruder who appears as a great mass of glowing energy. Suddenly a bolt of energy shoots forth from the saucer and strikes the hull of the Sturgeon.

The entire sub glows with radiant incandescent light before beginning to melt away and collapse bit by bit. The red-hot carcass of the sub then rises to the surface, towards the ice-layer where it emerges in its final grinding, cracking and writhing death-throes.

Finally, a thunderous roar accompanied by a fireball and mushroom cloud signals the outpouring of the mortally wounded sub’s life-blood as its atomic reactor blows up.

After the destruction of the Sturgeon near the North Pole and the loss of several other ships in the Arctic, the polar route is closed, and an emergency meeting is convened at The Pentagon.

At the Pentagon’s Bureau of Arctic Defense War Room. Admiral Terhune introduces the commander of the atomic submarine Tiger Shark, Cmdr. Dan Wendover to the Secretary of Defense, Justin Murdock, Dr. Clifford Kent who was involved in the design and development of the sub and Sir Ian Hunt, winner of the Nobel Prize for Oceanography.

Admiral Terhune outlines the reports that have been received: "Destruction of four surface vessels, Largest, 10,000 tons. Radioactivity in Arctic waters, flow ice and bergs. Peculiar television images preceding each distress call. Seven polar atom subs vanished without a trace."

The Tiger Shark is currently undergoing modifications in the Bremerton Navy Yard, one of which

is an escape hatch in the keel for the Lungfish—an advanced exploratory diving bell.

Admiral Terhune informs Cmdr. Wendover that "the mission of the Tiger Shark is to hunt down and identify the cause of these Arctic disasters. If humanly possible you will remove it."

The role of women in this film is a pretty minor one in which they are reduced to being either a model of matrimonial forbearance or a piece of eye-candy and object of sexual desire. And so, we have a scene in which an inebriated Lt. David Milburn drivels on about something or other to slinky, sexy and seductive platinum blonde, Julie while his wife, Helen Milburn tries to pry him away before he can warn Julie what a wolf Lt. Cmdr. Richard Reef Holloway can be.

After Dave and his wife leave, Reef and the blonde snuggle up on the armchair only to be interrupted by a knock at the door followed by a note shoved under the door. The note informs Reef of his orders and that his leave has been canceled. Blondie will have to wait – after all, in future world of 1968 it's a man's navy!

BREMERTON NAVY YARD

DOCKS 1-6

No Admittance Except to Authorized

U.S. Navy Personnel

At the Bremerton Navy Yard, Reef and Milburn meet while boarding the ship. Reef is introduced to Kent and Sir Ian. Reef is informed that he will be sharing quarters with a Dr. Neilson. Reef is soon disappointed to learn that it isn't Dr Neilson himself but instead, his son, Dr. Carl Neilson Jr. He states with disgust and loathing, "I should have suspected when I heard that 'Doctor.' I thought it was your father." Dr. Neilson's father was supposed to make the trip but had a heart attack. Carl informs Reef that he and his father "developed the Lungfish together. Except for him, I'm the only one qualified to dive in it." There was no time for anyone else to be trained for the job. The hatred that Reef feels for Carl is palpable.

The narrator informs us, "The Tiger Shark left her dock at Bremerton at 0335 hours the morning of May 11, on what was to prove the strangest, most fearful voyage ever made by a submarine, atomic or otherwise."

Cmdr. Wendover makes the following entry in his log

MAY 11 - 0335 HOURS.

DEPARTED BREMERTON DOCK, FULL CREW -

SPECIAL PASSENGERS KENT, HUNT, NEILSEN.

WILL BRIEF CREW IN TWO HOURS AFTER CLEARING SOUND...

The narrator goes on to explain that "the men would remain un-briefed for two hours, until the Tiger Shark cleared Puget Sound and was headed for the open sea." Once outside Puget

Sound, Wendover will brief the crew.

In the crew dining area, CPO Griff Griffin enters, and almost trips over a huge pile of equipment on the floor. This sets the scene for the usual gruff barking interactions that are often depicted as passing for communication between people in the military.

The gear belongs to underwater demolition “frogmen,” Seamen First Class Powell and Carney. An irate gruff Griff Griffin grumbles and rumbles at the two men, “this whole deal is making less and less sense to me! What’re frogmen doing aboard the Tiger Shark?”

The narrator informs us that, “shortly before dawn, the Tiger Shark, running submerged at better than thirty knots, had left the Sound behind and was headed for the open sea.”

Meanwhile in the war room, Wendover shows the now opened sealed orders to Reef, then briefs the crew;

“Now hear this: All men of the Tiger Shark. This is the Captain speaking. I know you're wondering about all the mystery - Our mission is so dangerous it had to be kept completely secret. It's our job to find out what caused the disasters under the Arctic ice. Once we cross the Arctic Circle, any command you hear will be the real thing, remember that! That's about it. Now you know as much as I do - as much as anybody does - I assured Washington this was the best crew of the best sub in the fleet. I know you won't make a liar out of me!”

Log Entry:

May 20, 0900 Hours.

Crossed Arctic Circle.

Nearing danger area.

All Watches Doubled...

By May 20 the Tiger Shark has crossed the Arctic Circle. In the break room, Reef explains to Milburn that Dr. Neilson Sr. was “one of the finest men, and officers, alive. A real hero” who taught engineering and design at the academy. He had “fought like a demon to develop atom subs.” His son, Carl, however dropped out of school and had begun “making noises like a pacifist. A real egghead, do-gooder, and crackpot! 'Ban the atom tests! Junk the nuclear subs! Spend the military budget for peace!’” After some newspapers had referred to Carl as ‘the honest, sincere son of a war-mongering father’ the then Capt. Neilson resigned from the Navy, a broken man.

When Reef later meets up with Carl, he somewhat gleefully declares that he learned via a radiogram that his father is better and can replace his son on the mission.

A heated argument then ensues between Carl and Reef over pacifist ideals vs the need to militarily defend society’s ideals and values. Carl asserts that “anybody who doesn't happen to

think like a little gold-braided puppet is, ipso facto, a coward!" and that 'wearing a uniform doesn't bestow an automatic monopoly on courage." For him, war is "a Paleozoic pastime that should have disappeared with the thunder-lizards" and that it constitutes "the worst cowardice of all - being spiritually yellow!" What is important to Carl is "peace - the dignity of man - the destiny of the human spirit!" and that anyone who claims that they can win those ideals or qualities by fighting wars is little more than "an idiot!"

Carl then informs Reef that he is in fact definitely staying and will go on to complete the mission.

Suddenly a loud banging noise draws Reef away to the con to deal with an emergency in which electrical interference in the water is disturbing the instruments.

Absolute pandemonium has erupted with the Sonar screaming hysterically and the view screen having some kind of acid trip complete with flashing lights, streaks and wavy patterns of light and lightning bolts. All the while ears are being assaulted by thunderous crashing sounds and insistent alarm bells.

Wendover orders the sub to submerge at maximum angle and depth. The sub seems to be buffeted by an underwater electrical barrage. The Tiger Shark gradually sinks deeper and deeper into the depths until at last all is calm, and the sub settles at the bottom.

Sir Ian has meanwhile formulated a theory. On a chart of the Arctic he has plotted every disturbance and disaster. A pattern seems to have emerged in which, "each incident occurred almost precisely 1,000 statute miles from the Pole. A line drawn through the points of occurrence makes almost a complete circle around the North Pole." It is apparent to Sir Ian that some sort of intelligence is responsible. However, Sir Ian does not mean to imply, necessarily, a 'human' intelligence." The kind of intelligence he is proposing is "perhaps not 'on earth' at all. Perhaps it comes from beyond the earth!"

He also predicts the next point of contact after theorizing that there "may be a significant gap, or break, in the ring" and proposes the Tiger Shark be there and waiting. The next danger point will likely be "the Queen Victoria Sea!"

"Swiftly, implacably, the Tiger Shark moves across the top of the world towards her rendezvous with the as yet unknown entity. When they arrive at the spot they predicted they are confronted with sections of ice calving off from the main body of ice. A strange glow of energy has appeared beneath the iceberg which begins to creak and groan from internal pressures. Great masses of ice from the exploding berg are heading straight for the sub.

The Tiger Shark performs an emergency dive procedure but is struck by an ice berg which rushes at the sub like an express train. The wounded and stricken Tiger Shark has sustained damage and is forced to come to a full stop. With a "moderate leak in overhead plates, damage

to main drive shaft housing” and “forced to stop reactor engines,” the Tiger Shark is now “dead in the water!”

On the screen can be seen a great glowing oval-shaped saucer. It is as we soon learn about three-hundred feet in diameter and on top is a great, blazing turret of light. It is estimated as moving north at a speed of 22 knots. As the crew of the sub watch, the saucer begins to recede from them until it is only a point of light.

Carney and Powell are soon sent outside to do a damage assessment.

Sir Ian meanwhile sketches a likeness of the craft and describes it as “a pure oval shape, with this cyclops-like eye, or turret, on top. I'd estimate its diameter at 300 feet. No discernible orifices...” He then muses “about our 'one-eyed adversary' and the legend of Homer” in which “Cyclops were the Sons of Heaven, who forged the thunder-bolts thrown by Zeus.”

In a briefcase, Kent locates a picture of a UFO in a manila folder. The UFO resembles the craft they found under the ocean. The picture was taken by an amateur astronomer, over New Mexico. Sir Ian speculates that there haven't been reports of landings of UFOs because “it's possible that whoever - or whatever – inhabits the craft is not a land creature, but a form of marine life.”

With Griff's report that all internal repairs have been completed, and the exterior damage being only minor, the Tiger Shark can now get underway.

The Tiger Shark spends a month traveling to the Pole and back, but “never a glimpse of their enemy, but there were reports...new disasters, new ships and lives lost. Invariably, the Tiger Shark made for the scene, only to arrive after Cyclops had left.”

The pursuit seems fruitless until on July 3, Sir Ian and Kent meet with Wendover and consider the matter of “why does Cyclops invariably return to the Pole between attacks - never two in succession. Always away...and back....away....and back...” They speculate that the repeated trips to the Pole might be a means of magnetic power recharging in which “our saucer-friend has to return to the Pole, regularly to....recharge his batteries.”

The new plan now is to “place ourselves between Cyclops and the Pole” in order to “block his way to the Pole and attack” and “polish him off with an atomic fish!”

On July 13, at 16.00 hours the crew of the Tiger Shark encounter their prey, after the reported sinking of a freighter by the Cyclops gave them a clue where to intercept it. The Tiger Shark lies silently and motionless in wait on the bottom, until suddenly at 06.00 hours the radiation meter warns them of the Cyclops' approach.

The plan involves the arming and launch of two atomic torpedoes. As the saucer moves ever

nearer and grows from a tiny speck of light to its distinctive shape, the tension mounts ever higher within the sub. At a range of seven miles both torpedoes are launched.

By means of an energy discharge, the Cyclops manages to avoid or deflect the first torpedo. The second torpedo embeds itself in a cloud of radiant, luminescent jelly-like substance surrounding the saucer's hull.

With few options seemingly open to him, Wendover barks orders into the intercom: "This is the Captain: Blow bow tanks. Reactor Room, stand by: Soon as we're off the bottom, I want all ahead, flank speed, pronto!" His intention is to ram Cyclops because "if the Tiger Shark can't destroy him, no power on Earth can!"

Like a predatory fish the Tiger Shark rises from the bottom and heads directly for its quarry. The sub seems hell bent on impaling and skewering Cyclops and manages to plow into the protective coating, slam against the saucer itself, and bury its bow deep within the Cyclops. A tremendous rending and tearing sound is followed by a complete and eerie silence as the glow emanating from the harpooned 'alien creature's' eye gradually diminishes.

Locked together in a slowly rotating dance of death, the Tiger Shark and the Cyclops silently sink to the bottom

Even exerting full reverse will not free the sub from its fatal embrace and prevent them from sinking to the bottom. Faced with being pulled lower and lower by the sub's engines, the order is given for the propellers to be stopped. The two craft still continue sinking, but more slowly now.

LOG ENTRY:

July 15, 10:00 Hours.

Now lying on bottom.

Locked to Cyclops.

200 Fathoms.

Assuming that the Cyclops has some kind of an atmosphere, Reef proposes they enter the craft and use torches to cut the Tiger Shark loose. It's eventually decided that Dr. Neilson, Reef, Milburn and the two frogmen are to use the Lungfish and head for the Cyclops eye.

Dr. Neilson soon successfully attaches the Lungfish to the Cyclops' eye and they open the hatch. The men gain access to the craft's interior via an aperture or iris.

Breathable air pressure is available, so the men dispense with their tanks. They soon spot the bow of the Tiger Shark and notice that the bow of the submarine extends some way into the chamber. Strangely enough, there is not a drop of water nor a break in the surrounding wall. It appears that the saw teeth of the bow ram are caught in the break. They'll have to cut the teeth so the Tiger Shark can pull away. Powell is sent back so that Dr. Neilson can report to

Wendover. Carney meanwhile uses an acetylene torch to cut away the teeth.

Despite the inertial navigation system having been knocked out, Grif notices that it indicates they are moving! Kent also notices that the radiation level from the saucer is rising. Finally, the system indicates that they are moving due north at six knots.

As Reef works, a weird oscillating sound that varies wildly in pitch permeates the area. Reef asks Dave if he hears anything, but he doesn't.

Reef continues working with the torch on the ram of the Tiger Shark, when Dave suddenly taps him on the shoulder and declares, "Hey - you know somethin'? It's getting lighter in here!" He then goes on to observe, "and if I didn't know better, I'd swear we were moving!" This is confirmed by Carl who states, "I get an impression of movement, Captain. Is that possible?" and by Wendover who says, "we have the same reaction, up here."

With the radiation level rising as they near the Pole, and with the Cyclops appearing to be returning to life, the ram drops free making it possible for the Tiger Shark to pull free.

Suddenly, a strange voice calls out telepathically to Reef warning him to "make no resistance." Reef draws his gun but is told it is useless. Powell pulls his gun but loses his nerve and turns to bolt away. He is then caught and enveloped in a force field and is shriveled by radiation until he becomes reduced to a jelly-like smoldering state. Carney decides to make a run for the exit, but the aperture begins to close on him crushing him to death.

The scene shifts to a cavernous interior where a long catwalk extends out into space and reaches out toward a great sphere situated in the very center of the saucer. A strange glow that grows brighter and brighter emanates from inside this sphere. It is the alien creature's lair and Reef and Milburn approach.

A voice tells Reef to "remove your weapons, Commander and come here - alone!" Reef cautiously approaches a spherical chamber and peers into the opening. Inside an incredulous Reef is confronted by the sight of the source of the voice: an horrendous-looking creature with long, black, writhing spines, pulsating tubular body and a monstrous eyeball.

As they finally meet "face-to-face", Reef asks the creature why he is the only one that can hear its voice. The creature explains that their "individual brain frequencies are now attuned" and they can both "exchange wave-thoughts."

The creature then goes on to explain the purpose behind its presence on earth. Its "mission is to study various solar systems, and planets -select the most suitable for colonization" and that it had "visited hundreds of other worlds, and of all of them... Earth seems most suitable."

Dave meanwhile has approached the lair and sees the creature. He levels his gun at the

creature and opens fire. In response, a radiation beam strikes Dave causing him to melt and shrivel to nothingness.

A shocked and shaken Reef asks why he hasn't been killed and is told by the creature, "I have selected you, to return with me - along with several other specimens, for study. We will examine you and the others, discover desirable features to incorporate in our 'earth-colonizers.'"

Reef also learns from the creature that its species builds using living tissue and that the saucer itself "is a living thing. When damaged.... it immediately 'heals' itself."

To stop the creature beginning the return journey, Reef attacks the alien by firing a Very pistol into its single eye, temporarily blinding it. He then bolts for the exit and to the accompaniment of wails of anguished pain from the creature, he avoids being struck by heat rays and crushed to death by the closing apertures. The iris leading to the Lungfish is held open by Dr. Neilson and as soon as Reef hurls himself inside, Dr. Neilson secures the Lungfish and returns to the Tiger Shark.

The creature repairs its eye and the Lungfish is brought aboard the Tiger Shark. Reef reports, "We didn't kill it, Skipper. And if it ever gets...back where it came from...the Earth is doomed, and everything and everybody on it!"

The powerful engines of the Tiger Shark succeed in pulling the sub out of the hull of the saucer. The Cyclops then proceeds to head for the Pole at a speed of 50 knots.

Kent proposes a course of action they can take – "one last, desperate chance - a one-in-a-thousand shot..." This would involve him adapting "one of the torpedo guidance systems to the ICBM - so it would 'home' on the saucer when he rises from the Pole" where "Cyclops will have to linger....to recharge his power banks."

The plan is agreed to. But what a plan: "Adapt a complicated guidance system to a huge ballistic rocket - convert it to a water-to-air intercept missile? It was foolish, it was insane, it was fantastic - but it was their only hope – and the earth's only hope!"

A hole in the ice is eventually found, the ICBM is prepared for firing and the wait begins. Suddenly the Cyclops emerges from the ice amid a tremendous rending and tearing din. The saucer rises from the water, hovers just above the ice and begins rising slowly into the air and takes off. The rocket is fired from the Tiger Shark. It quickly leaps into the air and heads towards its objective. The missile scores a direct hit resulting in a thunderous explosion and a huge nuclear fireball. This is then followed by a mushroom cloud and at the end we are left with nothing but empty sky.

With their mission accomplished and the Tiger Shark returning to the Bremerton Navy Yard, a reconciled Reef and Dr. Neilson walk out into the night air. Neilson looks up at the night sky and

wonders which star their alien visitor came from. Reef optimistically speculates, "when this ship doesn't return, they'll decide not to come here after all." And Carl Neilson seems to have come to the realization that his pacifist ideals were of no use in such a situation as the one they were confronted with.

Points of Interest

The atomic-powered submarine, the Nautilus made its debut five years before the making of Atomic Submarine. On 3 August 1958, the Nautilus was the first submarine to complete a submerged transit of the North Pole. The atomic submarine was at the time considered to be the cutting edge of technology.

The actors in Atomic Submarine manage to deliver fairly competent performances. There's also the rather forced but interesting and tense clash of ideological standpoints between Reef and Carl.

Another point of interest is that Atomic Submarine appears to be the first sci-fi movie to employ the notion of a living spaceship.

While watching Atomic Submarine one can't help thinking of the underwater 1960s series, Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea. In that series we have an advanced nuclear sub capable of firing missiles or torpedoes and equipped with 2-man submersibles and later, the Flying Sub. In fact, some episodes of the series are very similar to the plot of Atomic Submarine!

There's no escaping the fact that while being a sci-fi action adventure film, it is also a piece of Cold-War era propaganda in which the prevailing world view of the Power Elite is presented: Namely, that there are many monstrous enemies out there who are intent on doing us harm. We therefore should replace any pacifist notions with strength of purpose and fortitude and invest in "beautiful" military technology to combat and defeat them. Wow, sounds all too familiar even in the 21st Century! In fact, it inspired me to write this little poem.....

Death Dance

An appeal made to the heart and mind
Beginning with a simple proposition:
To fear a fearsome foe behind
A status-quo faced with disruption.

Our enemies are monsters or, so we're told,
Hell bent on destroying our way of life.
We must not let their evil plans unfold,
For they are the source of all our strife!

With the threat seemingly at hand
A call to action is proclaimed;
Faith placed in shiny weapons planned
For a way of life to be reclaimed.

The scene is set for conflict and discord,
A testing time of ego-fueled tension,
A butting of heads and a clash of sword,
A battle fought over points of contention.

A clash of ideals, world views and values
Erupt in a rigged and fake debate
In which we know who'll win and who'll lose:
Spoils to those best able to manipulate.

For minds entangled in red rose razor wire,
Might is the only right solution,
Time to let loose a flurry of fury and fire,
Anything less thus deemed a delusion.

Force is met with force until stalemate is achieved,
Both sides locked in a deadly embrace,
Still, the right of might is by both believed:
Till the final death-dance of the human race.....

Battle in Outer Space
(宇宙大戦争 Uchū Daisensō) (1959)

We shall fight them in space! We shall fight them on the moon! We shall fight them on the earth!

We shall never surrender!

1959: A Taste of the Times

Technology

- Xerox launches the first commercial copier
- Volvo invents the modern seat-belt making it an "open patent," allowing other manufacturers to use the same design.
- The Integrated Circuit or microchip (forerunner of the microprocessor), invented by Jack Kilby in '58 is released.
- Programming language COBOL, is introduced.
-

The Jet Age

- The first US transcontinental jet service opens (Los Angeles to New York) with Boeing 707 aircraft.
- The Boeing 707 Jet Airliner cuts 8 hrs from transatlantic flight time.
- First transpacific service (Sydney-San Francisco) flown by jet - QANTAS Boeing 707.
- Pan American Airways (Pan-Am) begins offering regular jet-powered commercial flights around the world.

Space

- Lunar Probe Russia Luna 1 (USSR - Lunik 1) passes the Moon.
- Luna 2 becomes the first man-made object to crash (land) onto the Moon.
- Luna 3 sends back first photos of the far side of the Moon.
- The USSR launches the "Mekhta" craft towards the Moon which misses, and inadvertently becomes the first man-made satellite to go into orbit around the Sun.
- US Launches first weather station in Space.
- NASA introduces America's first astronauts to the world including John H. Glenn Jr, and Alan Shepard Jr.

Directed by Ishirō Honda

Produced by omoyuki Tanaka

Screenplay by Shinichi Sekizawa

Story by Jotaro Okami

Music by Akira Ifukube

Cinematography Hajime Koizumi

Edited by Ichiji Taira

Production company: Toho

Running time: 93 minutes

Cast

Ryô Ikebe: Maj. Ichiro Katsumiya

Kyôko Anzai: Etsuko Shiraishi

Minoru Takada: The Commander

Koreya Senda: Professor Adachi

Len Stanford: Dr. Roger Richardson

Harold Conway: Dr. Immerman

Elise Richter: Sylvia

Hisaya Itô: Kogure

Yoshio Tsuchiya: Iwomura

Nadao Kirino: Gravity Man

Kôzô Nomura: Rocket Commander

Fuyuki Murakami: Inspector Iriake

Ikio Sawamura: Lantern Man

Takuzô Kumagai: Alien

Katsumi Tezuka: Alien

HERE COME THE PLANET SMASHERS!

The Moon is Captured! The Earth is Next!

SPACE DECLARES WAR ON EARTH - OUTLAW PLANET CAPTURES THE MOON!

Space Wages War on Earth!

SEE! Space-shaking last battle of earth rockets vs. flying war saucers!

SEE! Space saboteurs juggle earth's bridges...ships...trains...like toys!

SEE! Earth's minds controlled by rays from outer space!

SEE...

The Biggest Battle Ever Put On Film!

(Spoilers follow below....)

What if?.....

Nippon Television (JOAX-TV) Channel 4 News Bulletin

Horiuchi Tokiyo: We interrupt this program to report on a disturbing event that has just occurred

in space involving Satellite SK-1. It appears that there has been a Mysterian – yes, Mysterian! - sneak attack in which the space station has been destroyed.

We have vision of the attack taken by a nearby satellite which we'll show you while we cross over to Shimamura Seiho reporting from Space Control. What do we know so far?

Shimamura Seiho: Thank you Horiuchi Tokiyo. It has been eight years since the Mysterian invasion and in those eight years, our space travel capabilities and weapons technology has expanded greatly. This has been due largely to our study of captured Mysterian technology left behind by the aliens.

Unfortunately, this was of little help to the manned space station, Satellite SK-1 which was just attacked by three UFOs and sadly destroyed. This happened despite the fact that the space station was armed with a ray gun cannon which apparently was not strong enough to destroy the alien assailants. It appears that the alien fighters are armed with single laser guns that discharge a thin white bolt of energy.

What you see now is vision of the end result of the...

Battle in Outer Space.....

[Shot of chunks of debris from the destroyed space station forlornly floating by.]

NEWS HEADLINES

LEVITATING BRIDGE LEADS TO
TRAIN WRECK IN RAVINE!
(Japan)

LINER LIFTED LIKE TOY!
(Panama Canal)

VISCIOUS FLOOD INUNDATES VENICE!

Yomiuri Shinbun
UN MEETING DETERMINES CAUSE OF FREAK GLOBAL DISASTERS!

A UN international conference was held at the Space Research Centre in Tokyo, Japan.

The meeting was opened by Major Ichiro Katsumiya, Professor Adachi and Dr. Richardson and the subject of the strange series of worldwide disasters was discussed.

It was found that the survivors of the disasters suffered from extreme frostbite. Dr. Richardson theorized that some unknown force reduced the temperatures of the objects in order to lower the Earth's gravitational pull, thereby making the objects, regardless of their size and weight, easier to lift.

As explained to those present at the meeting, "the cause of gravity is the motion of atoms, and when the atoms of an object have no movement, its gravity is correspondingly diminished. At the temperature known as absolute zero, the atomic movement of an object is reduced to a state of rest and it becomes weightless. Owing to the centrifugal force of the revolving Earth itself, the object thus affected would rise up into the air."

Major Katsumiya concluded that only a force beyond the earth could achieve such a feat of anti-gravity. Since hostile aliens might be behind the disasters, it was suggested that the Earth prepare militarily to defend itself against further potential attacks

Security Incident Report

(Note: some information redacted)

This report is to be completed as soon as possible following the detection of a security incident. All items below must be completed and be based on information that is currently available.

REPORTED BY:

DATE OF REPORT:

TITLE / ROLE:

INCIDENT NO.:

SIGNATURE:

SECURITY INCIDENT INFORMATION

INCIDENT TYPE:

Security breach & attempted sabotage

DATE OF INCIDENT:

1965

SPECIFIC AREA OF LOCATION

Space Research Centre Conference, Tokyo.
New Armaments Testing Laboratory & Courtyard.

INCIDENT DESCRIPTION:

(Provide a brief description)

1. Space Research Center Conference

- Iranian delegate Dr. Ahmed observed behaving as if suffering from a severe headache
- Ahmed seen leaving the meeting.
- Dr. Ahmed observed by scientist and astronaut, Etsuko Shiraishi in courtyard being enveloped in a red light descending from the sky.
- Ms. Shiraishi informed fellow astronaut, Iwomura of incident.
- Ahmed was nowhere to be seen at that point.

2. Heat Ray Test Firing Demonstration

- Dr. Ahmed observed by security guards moving in a strange manner and heading toward the ray gun laboratory.
- Ahmed attempted to sabotage the heat ray experiments but was prevented before he could complete this task.
- Inspector Drake arrived at the central control room seeking Dr. Ahmed.
- Security alarms sound.
- Ms Etsuko Shiraishi taken hostage by Ahmed.
- Ahmed informed witnesses present that quote, "eventually you'll be our slaves! The whole Earth will become a colonial satellite for our glorious planet, Natal!"
- Ahmed retreated to the courtyard.
- Ahmed observed making contact with alien UFO before being struck by a red beam of light causing him to be vaporized.
- A faint pink-coloured residue or smear was located on the ground where Ahmed had been.
- A small device was retrieved from the site of Dr. Ahmed's disappearance.

IMPACT / POTENTIAL IMPACT OF INCIDENT:

FOLLOW-UP ACTION:

(Outline Steps Taken So Far)

- Tests conducted on the smear indicated that it was the remains of Dr. Ahmed. The small device appears to have been implanted in Ahmed's brain to control him.
- It has been determined that the inhabitants of Natal have constructed a forward base on the Moon.
- A reconnaissance mission to the moon will be organized to investigate unusual signals emanating from there.
- Complete overhaul of security procedures and security personnel recruitment recommended!!!!

This information is private and restricted to those authorized for access. Unauthorized disclosure of this information will result in prosecution under the terms of the Official Secrets Act 1965.

(Excerpt from a 'Google Search' result sometime in 2018)

History of Energy Weapons Development
(website)

MK 1 Heat Ray Gun

.....developed in 1965 by scientists at the Space Research Centre's gun testing laboratory in Tokyo, Japan.

A series of targets made from Belirium 19, then the world's hardest metal was used to test the weapon's capabilities.

According to one of the weapon's developers, the gun was able to "produce a narrow-band energy radiation on the order of 600 megahertz. At maximum output, it can fire continuously for 20,000 hours on a single charge of plutonium."

The gun was developed in response to the Mysterian assault on our planet in 1965 and played a major part in the.....

Tōkyō Daigaku Shinbun
UN RESPONDS TO ALIEN AGGRESSION!!!

The United Nations has sanctioned the launching of two newly constructed rocket ships in response to the series of strange disasters that have recently occurred both in outer space and around the world.

It has been conjectured that the destruction of the Space Station, Satellite SK-1 and the series of global disasters was the result of alien aggression. This belief has apparently been supported by an unconfirmed incident that occurred at the recent Space Research Center conference in Tokyo involving an Iranian delegate, Dr. Ahmed and his unusual behavior.

There are no details forthcoming concerning the incident involving Dr. Ahmed other than the involvement of the aliens who we have come to know from past events in our country as "Mysterians" as well as a planet called, "Natal."

It has been decided that two ships designated, "SPIP-1" and "SPIP-2" will be sent on a reconnaissance mission to investigate strange radio signals coming from the moon in the region known as the Sea of Rains.

World renown Japanese Professor Atachi will command one ship and American scientist Dr Roger Richardson will command the second ship. Nine astronauts from all over the world will crew each ship.

It is believed that the ultimate plan will be to destroy any alien base of operations and to foil any invasion attempt on Earth.

DREAMING A LITTLE DREAM

One night, astronaut Iwomura dreams a dream about a certain Maj. Ichiro Katsumiya and his girlfriend, Etsuko Shiraishi spending a last night before the rocket launch. In his dream he overhears them talking about the coming mission and the dangers involved. Poor Etsuko looks upset!

Iwomura then sees himself drive up in his open-topped roadster. He then hears himself suggest to the couple that they accompany him to town and have a lively time, but they decline his offer.

Iwomura next sees himself driving off until suddenly a bright and colorful beam showers him in light while an overwhelming surge of pain afflicts his head.

Iwomura then somehow finds himself pulled over at the side of the road, followed by the sound of a thunderous and commanding voice in his head informing him that he is under “their control.”

When Iwomura awakens, he is in his car which is parked in the city, not knowing how he got there and oblivious to what had just occurred!

TV Asahi (JOEX-TV) Channel 5 Outdoor TV Broadcast (Excerpt)

.....What you see now are all the assembled astronauts dressed in matching white jumpsuits waving to the cheering and adoring crowds. The two ships are almost ready for take-off. First of all, the two crews will need to enter their ships which are stationed on the gantry pads. After performing pre-flight checks, the two ships will launch.....

[After more commentary the moment of launch has arrived and the cameras capture both ships taking off at the same time, roaring up into the sky with flaming exhausts of fire and fury.]

Commander's Log Entry:

The following is a detailed and full account of our alien moon incursion reconnaissance mission:

Having entered space, we proceeded to set a course for the moon. I issued orders to turn off the main engines with a view to using our momentum to carry us the rest of the way. We have estimated that it will take us 52 hours to travel the 376,000 kilometers to the moon.

Outside of the Earth's orbit, we began to pick up strange radar contacts. Our investigation led us to the debris field from the destroyed Space Station SK-1. No words can adequately convey the sense of shock and grief at seeing torn, twisted and warped chunks of metal hull floating along almost serenely in the void of space. We offered up our prayers when we noticed the presence of a dead astronaut's body joining this solemn procession.

We are all now more determined than ever to continue with and complete our mission to put a stop to these alien purveyors of death and destruction.

Commander's Log Entry:

42 hours into our mission we picked up a strange signal from the Moon coming from "100

kilometres north of the Sea of Rains," the spot from which that radiation was detected. This would be where the alien base exists, and it was our job to locate and destroy it by any means possible.

Suddenly a coordinated attack was launched against us, consisting of missiles fired from the moon's surface and alien fighters deployed to engage us. Our ships are equipped with a single Heat Ray Gun in the nosecone which we used to good effect to rain down death upon these alien hell hounds.

Mind Control

Iwomura feels as if he is part of some dream in which he has no control over his thoughts and actions. All he can do is witness himself carry out some imperative being transmitted into his mind from somewhere in the form of a disembodied voice. The voice tells Iwomura to turn off the power supply to the Heat Ray Gun. Iwomura no longer has any will of his own as he soon finds himself in engineering turning off the power.

Commander's Log Entry:

During the battle it was noticed that Iwomura was missing from his post as navigator of SPIP-1. He was soon located in engineering interfering with the power to the heat ray gun. After a brief struggle with one of the crew, Iwomura was knocked out and dragged back to the control room where he informed us of what happened. It was decided then to securely restrain Iwomura.

Words Of Warning!

With the immediate danger seemingly over, this message is conveyed to the two ships;

"We warned you, do not approach the moon! If you do you will surely die!"

Will this be enough to make the human crew reconsider their mission and turn back?
Or have they come too far to do that?

Commander's Log Entry:

It seems that we have no choice now but to prepare to land on the moon. There is some

disquiet about our method of descent placing us in danger of attack as we land, but I feel that it will be worth the risk. We must position ourselves to prevent further attacks by the enemy. We have decided to keep Iwomura restrained on the ship so that he cannot have any further opportunity to interfere with our mission.

Commander's Log Entry:

We managed to land successfully on the moon's surface and deploy our armed articulated lunar rover vehicles.

We proceeded in the direction of the alien base whose location we determined from space by the detection of electronic emissions. The further we ventured, the rockier the terrain became forcing us to switch to hover mode to avoid damaging the vehicles' treads.

I Hear Voices in My Head.....

See Iwomura break through the surface of an inner inky void back to the light of consciousness – but a consciousness shackled by a mysterious force! What's this? Restraints? The master of his mental shackles orders him to free himself and sabotage the ships. See him struggle to extricate himself by untying the knots with his teeth. Once free and urged on by the incessant commands of the voice in his head, Iwomura has become the alien's instrument of destruction. Is the fate of the two ships now sealed?

Commander's Log Entry:

It was not long, however, before our activities began to attract the attention of the alien aggressors. Eight of the crew including myself, the other commander, Etsuko and Katsumiya disembarked and proceeded on foot. The other 7 men stayed with the vehicles.

After traversing the rocky moonscape for a while, we eventually located a tunnel through the side of a crater. Once through the tunnel, we came out high up on the crater's edge where we found our target – the alien base! Our next step was to work out a way of destroying it.

Etsuko was ordered to return to the rover vehicles to tell the crew to bring up a Heat Ray Gun. It turned out that as she made her way back through the tunnel, she was surrounded by a group of diminutive aliens, quite unlike the Mysterians we have previously encountered!

Katsumiya went back to look for Etsuko. Having discovered her predicament, Katsumiya opened fire on the aliens with his laser rifle.

Meanwhile, our presence up in the tunnel entrance on the crater wall was detected by the aliens

in the moon base. Suddenly, a reverberating voice filled our minds with an ultimatum giving us "ten seconds of Earth time to surrender" or be killed. Fortunately, Etsuko and Katsumiya turned up with the Heat Ray Gun.

We were now free to open fire on the alien base with the Heat Ray Gun. Our gun, however, had very little effect and we were faced with the possibility of having the tunnel collapsing and trapping us inside.

Just in the nick of time, the rover vehicles appeared and discharged their weapons at the base allowing us to retreat through the tunnel. Despite a number of the brave crew being killed, we did manage to destroy the base by means of the combined rays of the rover vehicles.

As we made our way back to the lunar rovers, it became apparent that a number of alien craft had left the base just before it was destroyed. It was obvious that the alien fighters meant to exact revenge on us by continuously launching attacks on us.

We raced back to the ships in our rovers running the gauntlet of a maelstrom energy weapon blasts. One of our rovers was hit and rendered immobile while we gave a good account of ourselves by dispatching a couple of the alien fighters.

While the three remaining alien fighters disengaged, we made it back to the site of our spaceships in the other rover. To our utter shock and we saw that SPIP-1 had been reduced to a pile of mutilated metal debris. To our relief though, the SPIP-2 was still intact.

Freedom & Redemption

See how Iwomura has come to his senses and is no longer subject to the alien's power of mental manipulation. Let us tune into his newly liberated thoughts:

"As my friends and colleagues enter SPIP-2, I will cover them by firing my gun at the alien fighters from my position out here. I feel guilt and regret for having destroyed the other ship even though I was under alien mind control. I feel it is my duty and a point of honor to sacrifice my life to atone for what I was responsible for."

Witness now the brave Iwomura single-handedly shoot down two of the alien attack craft, until finally and inevitably Fate in the form of a bolt of energy finds Iwomura and strikes him down.

Let us now bow our heads and reflect a moment on Iwomura's noble act of self-sacrifice which has allowed his shipmates to escape certain death on this silent, sterile satellite we call the

Moon.

Radio Japan Broadcast

We all know that the rocket ship SPIP-2, managed to return safely to Earth bringing us the bad news that while the crew successfully destroyed the alien base on the moon, it is only a matter of time before the aliens send reinforcements and launch an all-out attack on the Earth.

The entire world is now united in preparing for a final conflict against the hostile alien aggressors of Natal!

Global industrial capacity has been brought to bear on the alien problem and a new generation of armed scouting craft have been constructed to venture into space to try and counter the threat posed by the aliens. These craft are undergoing trials and will be armed with a single powerful heat ray gun.

Nippon Television (JOAX-TV) Channel 4 Broadcast

Hamacho Tae: Ladies and gentlemen, we now interrupt normal programming to bring you an urgent bulletin. We knew the day would come when the Mysterians would try once again to threaten our planet.

We have just received word that a large force of alien craft has been detected in space headed for Earth. The force consists of about a dozen fighters that appear to be escorting a single large mother-ship.

What you are seeing now is a live feed from multiple surveillance mini satellites situated about 5,000 kilometers above the planet's surface. Units of our new fighter scout craft have been sent out to engage the enemy.

On screen, a wild dog fight is in progress. Half a dozen of the alien fighters remain with the Mother-ship while the other half of the fighters form to repel the attacking human craft.

[During the course of the fierce battle, two of the alien fighters are destroyed while four of the human craft are also lost. Vision now shifts to the Mother-ship and her fighter escorts breaking through the defensive line and heading for Earth. The Mother-ship can be seen launching three space torpedoes while some of the human fighters move in to intercept.]

Hamacho Tae: It appears that the Mother-ship and her escorts have already entered the Earth's atmosphere and are positioned not far from our studios over the downtown Tokyo. We cross

now to Yoshifumi Masahide who is at the scene. What is the situation where you are?

Masahide Yoshifumi: "What you can see now is some kind of wide blue beam being emitted from the underside of the alien ship. The bottom...."

[Sounds of screams, cracking, ripping and grinding. Suddenly the reporter loses his footing and all we can see is shaky intermittent footage of Tokyo's buildings crumbling and being lifted into the air like so much cardboard or Papiermache. Both vehicles and people are caught and lifted upwards as.....JOAX-TV Channel 4 abruptly ceases transmission.....]

Yomiuri Shinbun

ALIENS DEFEATED!!!!

(Excerpt)

.....after a furious battle all the Mysterian ships except the Mother-ship and one alien fighter was destroyed.

The last two enemy ships proceeded to 30 degrees north of the Space Center at a height of seven miles. The Space Center was heavily defended by a battery of energy beam emitters which opened up on the approaching enemy ships.

One alien fighter was disabled causing it to descend and explode in a fiery maelstrom. This was soon followed by the Mother-ship which was blasted into oblivion after sustaining several hits from our weapons.

The invasion attempt has indeed failed – for now, but there are concerns that.....

Points of Interest

"Battle in Outer Space" was released in Japan on 26 December 1959. An English-dubbed version was released in the United States in 1960 by Columbia Pictures as part of a double feature with "12 to the Moon." "Battle in Outer Space" is the second in a trilogy of movies directed by the legendary Ishiro Honda. The other films are The "Mysterians" (1957) and "Gorath" (1962).

The action in the movie moves at a brisk rollicking pace and combined with (for the time) very good special effects serves to make "Battle in Outer Space" quite a convincing and entertaining sci-fi extravaganza.

There are also deeper aspects to the film in which the themes of self-sacrifice and achieving unity or common purpose in the face of a common threat are presented.

Made almost two decades before “Star Wars,” “Battle in Outer Space” was certainly an outstanding accomplishment by Toho studios. Of particular note is the almost 3-dimensional effect of the space battles in which we have a real sense of space craft maneuvering.

There are some cringe-worthy moments in “Battle in Outer Space” such as when one of the crew members during take-off places his hands on either side of his face and stretches the skin to illustrate the effects of g-force. There are also the miniature models of the buildings in Tokyo being destroyed and sucked up that don’t look very detailed or realistic. And of course, there’s the nutty techno-babble and pseudo-science that would make a flat-earth proponent sound credible!

Oh my gosh, one could not fail to notice the Ewok-like munchkin aliens on the moon shuffling around, waving their arms and acting like cute squeaky toys! They didn’t look capable of attacking one female astronaut let alone an entire planet!

Please don’t get me started on the Keystone cops chase involving the inept security guards on the tail of the Iranian delegate Dr. Ahmed. All we needed was the theme tune to the Benny Hill Show.

Despite some of its shortcomings, “Battle in Outer Space” contains an entertaining and well-paced story delivered by a cast who give sincere performances. The effective cinematography, along with a rousing music score and mostly impressive special effects serve to make this film quite enjoyable and will place a smile on your face. Something sorely needed in this current hyper-critical and sneeringly cynical age.

THE OTHERS

Why do the others attack us?
Why do they hate us so much?
Perhaps they wish to repay us
For a certain slight we made;
Or maybe they are not themselves.

Why do we fear the others?
The reasons are many it seems

That rain down on us like confetti
Forcing us to shelter from the stars.

What do we know of the others?
That what ails us is all their fault;
They don't value the values we value,
But seek to destroy our way of life!

What do the others want from us?
To take from us all that we have,
And leave us strangers in a strange land -
Slaves squeezed by an oppressor's hand.

What do we do about the others?
Build walls to keep them out!
Build weapons to strike them down!
Get them before they get us!

What else will we learn of the others?
That they are evil and must be wiped out;
That they come from a planet called Earth,
Are called "Hu-man" and are of no worth.

Invisible Invaders (1959)

A cheaply made but somewhat entertaining sci-fi film

Before The Last Man on Earth (1964)

A bit after Creature with the Atom Brain (1955)

Way before Night of the Living Dead (1968)

There was.....

Invisible Invaders!

1959: A Taste of the Times

Strange, But True.....

- Pilot William Rankin, after having ejected from his jet at 45,000 feet spent 40 minutes being tossed around inside of a thunderstorm.
- 25 South African students set their own world record by climbing into a telephone booth.
- Robert Heft junior high student received a 'B' for his history project: The design for the current US flag! His grade was later changed to an 'A' after his design was adopted by the United States Congress in 1959.
- Soviet engineers create, "Object 269" - a tank designed to survive a nuclear explosion.

Directed by Edward L. Cahn

Produced by Robert E. Kent

Written by Samuel Newman

Music by Paul Dunlap

Cinematography: Maury Gertsman

Edited by Grant Whytock

Production company: Premium Pictures

Distributed by United Artists

Running time: 67 min.

Cast

John Agar: Maj. Bruce Jay

Jean Byron: Phyllis Penner

Philip Tonge: Dr. Adam Penner

Robert Hutton: Dr. John Lamont

John Carradine: Dr. Karol Noymann

Hal Torey: The Farmer

Paul Langton: Lt. Gen. Stone

Eden Hartford: WAAF Secretary

What's this?

Aliens.....

On the moon for twenty thousand years!

Undetectable due to their invisibility!

Determined to annihilate humanity unless all the nations of earth surrender immediately!

Taking over and occupying the bodies of the recently deceased!

BUT.....

Who can stop them?

Can they be stopped?

(Spoilers follow below.....)

The usual stentorian narrator's voice opens this film and begins to outline the race for the atomic bomb, and the efforts to build bigger and more powerful devices, sometimes resulting in accidents and even death.

A newspaper headline announces that Dr Karol Noymann, an atomic scientist has been killed in an atomic lab explosion. The area around the lab is so contaminated by radiation that even a full investigation has not begun.

Noymann's colleague, Dr. Adam Penner is disturbed by the accident. He wants to prevent the military application of atomic energy and decides to resign from his position and call for the peaceful pursuit and application of such technology.

At Dr Noymann's funeral, a strange presence can be seen moving about, briefly becoming visible before once again disappearing. Later in the evening the strange creature visits Noymann's grave and disturbs it. The only clue as to the creature's presence are the dual furrows plowed into and along the soil by the dragging of its invisible feet. Something wicked this way shuffles!

An invisible alien has now taken over Dr Noymann's dead body!

At around midnight there is a knock at the Dr Penner's door. The alien, in Noymann's dead body warns Penner that Earth has 24 hours to surrender or an alien force will invade and take over the planet by inhabiting the dead. He goes on to explain that the aliens have invisibility technology and that 20,000 years ago they invaded the Moon, destroying all life on it.

So far the aliens have had little interest in humanity, but with their ever growing technology they have become a threat – a threat that the aliens' plan to put a stop to.

By way of demonstration of the aliens' ability to make things invisible, Alien-Noymann places in Penner's hand an invisible piece of metal in order to illustrate the veracity of his warning.

How can one fight off an invading enemy who is invisible?

Before leaving, Alien-Noymann instructs Penner to inform the world of what he has been told and shown.

Penner's daughter, Phillis and Dr John Lamont arrive back at the house where they encounter a clearly disturbed Penner. Dr Penner tells them about his experience and asks John to convey a message to the government in Washington, DC.

The government (in its usual swamp-mired way) ignores the warning and the (fake nnnneeeewwwsssss!) media set about flailing away at Dr. Penner's reputation and character with headlines suggesting that he is a mentally unstable crank. This all sounds strangely familiar!

"Dear Lord, I pray that I am insane, that all that happened is only in my mind. I pray that tomorrow the sun will shine again on living things, not on a world where only the dead walk the Earth."

Dr. Penner takes his daughter and Dr. Lamont to Dr. Noymann's grave site, to try and gather more evidence. Imagine their shock when they suddenly witness a pair of furrows moving inexorably toward the grave until they halt and Noymann's voice can be heard warning them that the Earth will get one last warning.....he really, really means it this time, so just you watch out!

Faced with the human propensity to respond in a "Ya boo sucks to you" manner and realizing that they probably should have gone for a zero-tolerance and one-strike-and-you're-out policy, the aliens force a plane to crash and then re-animate the pilot's corpse. Aviator alien zombie then sets about interrupting a radio broadcast of a hockey match by applying an illegal choke hold on the announcer before issuing an ultimatum for the Earth to surrender.

Quick to cotton on to the fact that the public generally only pay attention to matters relating to sport, the same thing happens this time with a car crash victim who broadcasts the ultimatum at a football game. Either the announcement or the game's state of play causes the spectators to take to their heels.

Upon learning of the threat to the world, governments of the planet resolve to resist the invasion. Of course, we would never entertain the prospect of governments using the crisis to seek advantage over their rivals and enemies. Never! As a result of this completely 'believable' display of global unity, the aliens continue with their dead body squatting activity and set about blowing up dams, destroying buildings and generally creating worldwide panic and mayhem.

Desperate for a solution to the global crisis, the US government announces that a group of leading scientists are to be taken to hidden locations to work on developing a successful defense against the alien threat.

Enter Maj. Bruce Jay who arrives on the scene to whisk Dr. Penner, Phyllis and Dr. Lamont

away to a secret bunker. On the way, they are confronted by a scared shot-gun brandishing farmer who is intent on taking their vehicle. Maj. Jay showing that his time spent killing Koreans hadn't been wasted, kills the farmer by shooting him....dead!

"I fought all the way through Korea, probably killed a lot of men... but I never saw their faces. Dropping a bomb from a plane isn't quite so personal."

As the major and the civilian scientists head off to the bunker, the dead farmer's body is taken over by an alien. Alien farmer soon dusts himself off and follows the jeep that will lead him to the location of the secret research facility. I think he is now minus his gun. After all, we couldn't possibly have zombie-brained individuals wandering about possessing and using firearms - right?!

At the bunker, the group make contact with the government in Washington and learn that things are going rather pear-shaped. Suddenly, one of the radiation alarms triggers, and it is soon discovered that an alien ship has landed nearby and that many of the dead are being re-animated in preparation for an attack on the base.

The group in the secret bunker is tasked with stopping the alien invasion. It is soon determined that the aliens are radioactive, and a decision is made to capture an alien to conduct tests on.

Dr Penner believes the invaders use a ray to mask themselves and that the application of acrylic paint to the corpse would render them visible and unable to escape.

While Dr Lamont's bowels start turning to water, Jay goes all He-Man action-hero and heads outside to test a new paint spray device. He attempts to spray an alien with acrylic to seal it in but fails to capture it.

The idea was sound, but the method of delivery needs a bit of tweaking so that the paint can be applied faster. Armed with the modified device, the major and Dr Lamont head out to try their luck. This time they fill a pit with the acrylic liquid and manage to lure a thick-headed alien into it where it is covered with the paint and rendered immobile.

The captured alien is taken to the bunker where it is placed inside a pressure chamber in order to drive the alien creature out of the human body. The scientists manage to break the acrylic encasing the body by means of high pressure and a ghostly luminescent humanoid apparition emerges from the body.

With the alien confined in the chamber, they perform some experiments to see if they can affect it, but nothing seems to work.

Frustration and pressure combine to turn Dr. Lamont into a tea pot. He proceeds to run amok and engage in a 'push me, shove you' tussle with the major. In the process, electronic equipment is damaged and a loud alarm is set off. But, whaaaaat's this? The captive alien

suddenly reacts violently to the cacophony of noise.

Penner, being no idiot, realizes that the alien creatures have an Achilles heel: vulnerability to sound.

A (what else?) sound gun is soon constructed and is tested on the alien. At first there appears to be no effect but as the frequency is increased, the creature becomes visible, leaves the corpse and dies.

The team tries to inform the government in Washington but either there's another government shutdown or the nearby alien ship is jamming their broadcast signal.

There's only one thing for it - destroy the alien ship to get the message through!

A radio detection finder is rigged up onto the back of a truck and our intrepid group use it to locate the ship using the jamming signal as a marker.

Several aliens are killed along the way but the major is injured in the process. Despite his injuries, he finds the alien ship and shoots it with the sound gun. The ship explodes and the jamming signal is finally switched off.

With the information now broadcast to the entire world, the alien invasion is defeated. And who do we have to thank for having saved the world? Why, Dr. Penner, Dr. Lamont, Phyllis Penner and Maj. Jay who are now at this moment being lauded by none other than the United Nations. Now the countries of the world can go back to bickering, fighting and arguing among themselves free from alien interference – Hoorah!

Points of Interest

Production of Invisible Invaders was made as part of a package deal with The Four Skulls of Jonathan Drake and was the fourth science fiction film made by Premium Pictures. Both films were directed by Edward L. Cahn.

The film was obviously quite quickly and cheaply made as can be seen from the cheap sets, the use of an "invisible" alien creature, the re-use of special effects artist Paul Blaisdell's monster costume from 1958's It! The Terror from Beyond Space and the quite extensive use of stock footage of collapsing buildings, fires and earthquakes.

Budget constraints resulted in cast members performing their own stunts with little preparation or training. This apparently almost led to a close call with John Agar nearly overturning a jeep carrying himself and Hutton during a scene in which he had to brake and swerve sharply. The jeep tilted onto two wheels and almost toppled over with the actors inside.

The notion of an unseen or invisible alien entity could in other circumstances make for a truly sinister and effective plot device as is the case in the film, Bird Box (2018) in which we don't see or know much about the alien presence on Earth. In Invisible Invaders however, the decision to make the aliens invisible was more just a part of a cost-saving measure.

The role of Adam Penner was Philip Tonge's final role. He died on January 28 1959 before Invisible Invaders went into release on May 15.

Teenagers From Outer Space (1959)

A rather bad low budget 1950s sci-fi B movie with numerous flaws but performed by very earnest unknown actors. Some viewers no doubt will find this film to be good fun.

Directed by Tom Graeff
Produced by Tom Graeff
Screenplay by Tom Graeff
Music by Tom Graeff
Cinematography Tom Graeff
Edited by Tom Graeff
Production company: Tom Graeff Productions
Distributed by Warner Bros.
Running time: 85 minutes
Budget: \$20,000

Cast

David Love: Derek
Dawn Bender: Morgan
Bryan Grant : Thor
Harvey B. Dunn: Gramps Morgan
Tom Graeff: Joe Rogers
King Moody: Spacecraft Captain
Helen Sage: Nurse Morse
Frederick Welch: Dr. C.R. Brandt, MD
Carl Dickinson: Gas Station Attendant
Sonia Torgeson: Alice Woodward
Billy Bridges: Driver Picking Up Thor

James Conklin: Prof. Simpson
Gene Sterling: The Alien Leader
Ralph Lowe: Moreal (Spaceship Crewman)
Bill DeLand: Saul (Spaceship Crewman)

An alien invasion plot!
Earth to become an alien food-breeding pasture!
Ray-gun wielding aliens in flying saucers!
Beware - The Gargons!!
Alien mutiny and treason!
An interplanetary romance!

And Tom Graeff did ALL this?

(Spoilers follow below.....)

A couple of astronomers in a hilltop observatory briefly spot a strange object in the sky - and that is the last we will see of them in this film.

The object in question is an alien spacecraft seemingly drilling through the atmosphere before burrowing into the ground and burying itself up to its saucer-shaped main section.

A little black dog called Sparky attempts to make first contact and is rewarded by being incinerated by a disintegration-gun wielded by an alien with the god-like name of Thor. Why? Because he can, and because the dog is there!

"Go below and bring up the young gargon specimen. Now the decision depends on its reactions"

The aliens' mission on Earth is to assess the planet's suitability as a grazing ground for their Gargon herds that consist of air-breathing lobster-like creatures which are the aliens' primary food source.

A chemical analysis (by means of an instrument strangely enough labeled in English, "Multi-channel Mixer!") of the local air and soil determines that the planet meets the minimum requirements for Gargon survival. A Gargon hatchling is then used to confirm their findings.

Talk about convergent evolution! The hatchling looks like nothing more than a lobster destined to be served up at a restaurant. The aliens themselves look just like humans but talk and sound as if they are characters in some spaghetti historical epic movie with English-dubbed voices.

Derek: Wait, Captain. I have found evidence of intelligent beings on this planet!

Thor: Of what concern are foreign beings?

An alien crew member with the strangely ordinary earth-like name of Derek (why not 'Colin?') discovers an inscription on Sparky's dog tag among the poor pooch's skeletal remains. Derek infers from this that only intelligent beings would provide an animal with an identification tag. Therefore, the presence of intelligent life would automatically make the Earth unsuitable for the introduction of Gargons, as the native inhabitants might damage the herds or that the fast-growing creatures will eventually overrun and destroy any other organism they come into contact with. Correct me if I'm wrong, but I think that may be the general idea!

"We are the supreme race. We have the supreme weapons"

Derek is in fact a member of an alien underground movement that celebrates the more humane epochs of their planet's history. His crew mates, on the other hand, view such notions with disdain seeing that they consider themselves to be a part of a superior "supreme" race and view "foreign beings" with contempt no matter how intelligent they may be. Such notions as "families" and "friendships" are forbidden on their world. We vigorously shake our collective fists at you, damn alien Nazis!

"When we return to our planet, the high court may well sentence you to torture and death for your treason."

Realizing that his crew mates are looking at him askance as if he were some kind of tree-hugging, kale-nibbling, tofu-eating, left-leaning, liberal do-gooder, he quickly pulls a gun on his comrades to show that he means business. However, dopey Derek is soon overpowered and disarmed in a move that even Maxwell Smart wouldn't have fallen for.

Their 'canary-in-the-cage' Gargon begins to take a turn for the worse in Earth's atmosphere. While his crew mates are scratching their heads over this, Derek heads for the hills, flies the coop, hightails it outta' there, goes on the lam, scarpers and makes himself scarce, before he can be marched off to the isolation chamber.

A short time later, the Gargon begins to revive. When the Captain reports Derek's actions via a tele-radio conversation with the alien leader, it is revealed that Derek is in fact the leader's son and heir to his home world's throne. Derek, however, is unaware of this.

After ordering the gargon to be secured with SNM "expandable leg-bands," the captain and two of his remaining three crewman return to their base while Thor is sent to hunt down Derek, and if need be to kill him in order to protect their mission to Earth.

Derek decides to try and track down the dead dog's owner using the home address he found on the dog's tag and apologize for what happened to their dog.

A gas station attendant directs Derek to the address contained on the dog tag, and in no time at all he finds himself standing face-to-face with Betty Morgan and her annoying fringe. She lives with her grandfather and they have a spare bedroom at their place which is for rent. Oh no, it's Klaatu and "The day the Earth Stood Still" all over again!

Bear in mind that neither the grandfather nor his granddaughter have ever seen Derek in town before, and the fact that he is standing before them attired in a strange-looking jump suit decorated with masking tape. They somehow assume that this weird stranger has come to rent their spare bedroom, and then proceed to invite him in to show him around. This kind of stretches small town hospitality a bit too far.

Derek is now a boarder and it seems that young Betty is pretty much taken with him. But wait! Doesn't she have a boyfriend by the name of Joe Rogers, local newspaper reporter, played by none other than Tom "everywhere" Graeff? Might such a scenario engender potential conflict and supply a handy sub-plot? No such luck. Joe's paper is getting him to investigate reports of a flying saucer and he'll be too pre-occupied dealing with that.

When Joe informs Betty that he cannot make their swim date, Betty and Derek spend the day roaming around the local area together. Nothing there to make a boyfriend be worried about!

In the meantime, the mighty Thor has obtained a lift into town and has reached the gas station where Derek was given directions to Betty's place. Thor in his usual foul mood, forces the attendant to tell him where Derek went. He then zaps both the car driver and the station attendant with his ray gun, reducing them to skeletons.

Derek turns out to be a quick study as Betty teaches him to drive a car before they proceed to her friend, Alice's house.

Derek! Hey, I like that. Come on in! The water's fine!"

Betty introduces Derek to man-eater Alice who emerges from the water in the pool like a human female version of Jaws. Alice then offers Derek a pair of her father's swimming trunks to wear. I mean, would you want to don a pair of someone's old man's over-sized trunks or underwear? Really? Shudder!

Derek suddenly drops the dog-tag into the pool. Betty reads the tag and recognizes it as being her dog's tag. Leaving Alice to her predatory circling of the pool, Derek takes Betty to the place where the spaceship landed and shows her Sparky's sad skeletal remains. At first, Betty does not believe him, so he proceeds to describe Thor's weapon and points out that it can also vaporize humans. Betty vows to help Derek stop his crew-mate.

We next see clueless kindly Grandpa in his front yard watering his plants when all of a sudden Thor pulls up outside his house in a car. He too has quickly learned how to “pilot” a vehicle. Of course, Grandpa happily informs a totally weird-looking and insolent foul-tempered stranger as to the whereabouts of his own granddaughter and the equally weird-looking stranger he has just rented a room to.

What follows is a kind of loop consisting of Derek and Betty heading off someplace, Thor being hot on their heels and just missing them and somebody being turned into a skeleton.

Thor next high-tails it over to Alice’s house and makes his way to the side of the pool. “Dum, dum, dum ,dum dum, dum...Alice senses the presence of male prey and slices her way through the water. Thor isn’t here to dangle his line in the water and hook a tasty morsel. He simply demands to know where Derek and Betty have gone. Alice, having let one too many get away, becomes irate with Thor’s manner and threatens to call the police. The result? Extreme instant emaciation! Dem bones! Dem bones! Back at grandpa’s place, Betty changes back into her dress and writes a note to her grandpa who is blissfully sleeping on the sofa coz that’s what grandpas are supposed to do. She and Derek then take off together.

“I’m not going to keep a job where this sort of thing goes on”

Next to be vaporized and skeletized is the Head of the local college’s science department. Thor believes that Derek might have sought the professor out to alert the authorities to his presence.

The loop is mercifully broken in a shootout between Thor and the police, which leaves him wounded. Somehow, however, he manages to slip away.

"Oh look, there's Grandpa, trying to cross the street!"

For some reason, useless Joe the reporter pops up on the scene, gives Betty the bad news about Alice, has worked out that Thor has forced Grandpa to drive him there and then proceeds to help Grandpa cross the road as he has inexplicably wound up on the opposite side of the road! Thanks for nothing Joe. You can go now and chase up skeletons that are popping up all over town, phone in the story or take off to the old mine, while your girlfriend further develops feelings for Derek or Colin or whatever his name is. We just don’t care, Joe.

Suddenly a trail of blood on the sidewalk is discovered that leads to the black car and SURPRIZE! Thor pops his head up from the back seat! He managed to enter the car without anyone, including armed City Hall police officers seeing him. Perfectly believable!

Covered by the wounded Thor’s gun, Betty and Derek are forced to drive up to Dr. Brandt’s house to have the bullet removed from Thor’s arm. Dr Brandt reminds me a bit of Alfred, Bruce Wayne’s butler.

Thor shows Derek just how a real superior being has shrapnel removed from his body – without anesthetic! After the doctor leaves the room to get some bandages and antiseptic, Thor begins to lose consciousness allowing Derek and Betty to escape from the room and together with the Doctor make their way to City Hall Police Station.

Meanwhile, the nurse arrives at the doctor's surgery and stumbles across the unconscious Thor laying on the floor. As she tends to his wounds the phone rings. Dr. Brandt has called her to warn her about the very person she is tending to. Oh No, this can't be good!

Just as we thought, Thor kidnaps Nurse Morse and forces her to drive him to the abandoned mine – you know the one.

Joe or Colin or whatever, accompanied by a policeman named Mac or Colin or whatever, have arrived at the spot near the mine where old Sparky's bones are being bleached by the sun in order to "check out that old cave." Oh No, this can't be good!

In the meantime, the Gargon creature's growth thus far will provide the aliens upon their return to Earth with an idea as to the likely developmental rate of its species on this planet. By the time Joe or Colin or whatever and his cop buddy have arrived at the old mine, the creature has become very large – far too large for its shackles!

Cop enters cave. Screaming heard. First Gargon victim.

Next, a bit of a car chase ensues between Joe or Colin or whatever and Thor with his captive nurse. Shots are fired. Thor is shot in the chest and the nurse gets knocked out by Thor. The nurse soon regains consciousness and is propelled out of the car. The feisty old girl takes a tumble and a roll just before the car plunges off the road and plummets down an embankment. She recovers well from her stunt.

Romantic interlude & Joe has lucked out!

Could be day, could be night. Search for ray gun. Cuddles on the ground. Expressions of deep affection. Oh my gosh, Derek really is an alien and wants to make Earth his home. Kissy, kissy and so on.....

As luck or any predictable and cliched story would have it, the ray gun is found lying under a rock, right at Derek's feet!

Rocks it turns out are not just useful for hiding ray guns, they can also be used for clobbering Gargons which Derek manages to do when they are confronted with one of the creatures and Derek's disintegration ray gun jams.

While Derek tinkers with the ray gun back in town, a search party is attacked by the Gargon. I thought my dodgy eye-sight had further deteriorated when I mistook the black shadowy image of the Gargon as being a giant dark floater in my eye!

Soon the military and officialdom spring into action with planes and troops supposedly flitting hither and thither and the populace cowering in their shelters – or so we are told.

Joe striving for some measure of relevance, drags old Grandpa off to catch up with Derek and Betty who are at this very moment at “the edge of town” about to confront the giant lobs....Gargon! Perhaps Joe figures that Grandpa possesses secret powers?

Derek decides to climb a teleph.... power pole in order to use the teleph.... power lines as a source of power for his disintegrator. Before he can safely cut the teleph.... power lines, Betty phones the city electrical generating plant operator to convince him to shut off the power. This will allow Derek to connect the disintegrator to the teleph....power lines.

When the power is restored, there's a bout of power boosting, the speeding up of generators and the joining in of more circuits which threatens to blow up the lines. When we remove our hands from our eyes and emerge from beneath the covers, we let out a sigh of relief to see that sufficient power has been supplied to the disintegrator. Die Gargon, die!

A clearly conflicted Derek rushes off to confront the invading saucers followed by Joe, Betty and Grandpa. As Joe and his two companions pull up outside the house, Derek emerges out front clad in his old uniform. At ray-gun point, Derek forces Joe to take him to where Thor is being held prisoner. Before he departs with Joe, Derek looks Betty in the eyes and tells her to trust him. And I guess, so should we. He couldn't possibly be turning evil, could he?

In keeping with the highly inventively named “City Hall Police Station,” we learn that Thor has not been transferred to the “City Jail” and is still at the “City Hospital.” Joe worked this out merely by gazing out the window! Perhaps it is he who has special super powers!

Yes, he must have for two policemen emerge from the hospital bearing Thor. Derek relieves them of their guns and forces Thor into the car with him. Derek intends to take Thor with him back to where he belongs.

“Prepare for attack by an unknown enemy.”

Betty and Grandpa have returned to the location of the abandoned mine followed by Joe (why is he still in the film?), Derek, and Thor.

Derek and Thor head over toward the saucer which has just landed. The Captain followed by the Supreme Leader who sports a facial toupe, emerge from the saucer.

The Supreme Leader informs Derek that they will return immediately once the Gargons have been unloaded from the ships. Time is of the essence as the leader's absence might spark another revolution. The aliens might want to consult with the likes of Vladimir Putin or Xi Jinping as to how to control the populace and maintain absolute power!

As the rest of the alien fleet need to be guided in by means of a radio beacon from the Leader's ship, Derek requests that he be the one to guide the ships in for landing.... Wait a minute! We can see where this is going!

While Derek is in the saucer twiddling knobs and doing other strange things, Joe (why is he still in the film?), Betty, and Grandpa take shelter in the cave as the saucers come in for a crash landing thanks to Derek's subterfuge. It seems that crashing saucers tends to produce active volcanoes on Earth judging from the footage.

"I shall make the earth my home, and I shall never, never leave it"

And so, it seems that Derek has sacrificed himself for the people of Earth and that he did indeed keep his promise to Betty that he would never leave.

As Derek's head appears superimposed over a sunset, a pitiful trio consisting of Betty (I need a new look - perhaps a new hairdo?), Joe (Yes! I'm back with a chance!) and Grandpa (where am I & how did I get here? I'm tired. I think I'll go home now) shuffle somewhat forlornly away from the cave and back to the car.

Points of Interest

Teenagers from Outer Space was also known as The Gargon Terror in the UK and was originally titled The Ray Gun Terror.

Teenagers from Outer Space was distributed theatrically by Warner Brothers on a double feature with Gigantis the Fire Monster, the English-dubbed version of the 1955 Japanese giant monster film Godzilla Raids Again.

Teenagers from Outer Space was filmed on location in and around Hollywood, California with most of the shooting conducted in the vicinity of Sunset Boulevard and Highland Avenue. The filming was performed in such a manner so as to effectively convey the impression of a small town.

Tom Graeff: Jack of All Trades

The film was largely the work of a single person, Tom Graeff, who played the role of reporter, Joe Rogers and who wrote, directed, edited, and produced the film in addition to providing cinematography, special effects, and music coordination.

There was an obvious disparity between Graeff's epic ambition, and the end result due to the inadequate resources that made it impossible to realize that ambition.

Graeff's film failed to perform at the box office, and in the fall of 1959 he suffered a breakdown where he reportedly proclaimed himself as the second coming of Christ. Graeff disappeared from Hollywood until 1964 and in 1970 he committed suicide.

One could well imagine Tom Graeff being a young indie film maker these days getting his hands on an iPhone and gathering together a few of his mates to put together a low budget sci-fi film. I wonder how he would go?

At least he had a go, unlike most of us who wouldn't be bothered to get up off our asses / arses to try and realize a dream and are more content to lounge about spewing invective on others on social media.

Cost-Cutting Corners

Producers Bryan and Ursula Pearson who played respectively "Thor" and "Hilda" and Gene Sterling who played "The Leader" provided the film's meager \$14,000 budget.

Director Tom Graeff secured for free the location used for Betty Morgan's house by posing as a UCLA student. The owner of the house even let the crew use her electricity to power their equipment.

The aliens' costumes consisted of flight suits decorated with masking tape, dress shoes covered by socks, and surplus Air Force flight helmets.

The props included a single-bolted-joint skeleton that was re-used for every vaporized dead body seen on screen, a multi-channel sound mixer that was clearly labeled "Multichannel Mixer MCM-2" as a piece of alien equipment, and a cheap "Atomic Disintegrator" toy as the aliens' disintegrator ray gun.

Story & Premise

The rather elaborate plot allows the story to move along at quite a cracking pace despite the running time of the film.

The film's premise is rather atypical of 1950's sci-fi films in that the aliens don't wish to simply conquer and devastate the Earth in order to re-populate it. Instead, the aliens need the planet to ensure their own survival by using it as a location to breed the creatures they use as food.

Instead of wasting too much time and energy searching for plots and conspiracies, a film like Teenagers From Outer Space shows us that we can definitely count on certain principles that seem to govern human behavior and perhaps even the universe itself:

- 1) The furthering of vested interests.
- 2) Self-preservation and survival.
- 3) Exercise and display of incompetence in achieving the previous two.

Terror In The Midnight Sun (1959)

Space Invasion of Lapland
(Rymdinvasion i Lappland)
Invasion of the Animal People

For some, a Viking good time!
For others, a bloody waste of time!
So bad, it's good some might say
While yet others might suggest
It should never see the light of day.

Directed by Virgil W. Vogel
Produced by Bertil Jernberg, Gustaf Unger
Written by Arthur C. Pierce (screenplay and story)
Music by Harry Arnold, Allan Johansson
Cinematography Hilding Bladh
Edited by Shirley Citron, Tom Rolf;
Running time: 73 minutes (Sweden); 55 minute (US); 80 minutes (TV)

Cast

Barbara Wilson as Diane Wilson
Sten Gester as Erik Engström
Robert Burton as Dr. Frederick Wilson
Bengt Blomgren as Col. Robert Bottiger
Åke Grönberg as Dr. Henrik
Gösta Prüzeliuss as Dr. Walter Ullman
Doreen Denning as Anna, Dr. Ullmans secretary
Ittla Frodi as girl in the sports car
Brita Borg as the singer

Lars Åhrén as the monster
John Carradine as narrator (US version)

Space Invasion of Lapland is a 1959 Swedish-American black-and-white science fiction-monster film that was heavily re-edited by American producer Jerry Warren and had newly filmed American sequences added. I admit that until recently I was unaware of the existence of this film. Sadly, after viewing it I feel that I have not missed much.

(Spoilers follow below....)

Meteor Landed in Lapland!

Thus, proclaims the headlines as news spreads of a meteor having streaked across the sky before ploughing into the side of a hill.

At the Royal Academy of Science, Dr. Frederick Wilson meets with Dr. Walter Ullman and Dr. Henrik who give him the go-ahead to proceed to the location of the reported meteor crash site with Henrik and Erik Engstrom, a geologist.

Enter philandering Erik preceded by his fat ego. After attending the meeting, he joins Wilson and Henrik aboard a plane en-route to the meteor site.

Later, after landing near the crash site in a small military plane, we see Diane Wilson (Wilson's niece) wowing everyone with her Olympic ice-skating prowess. Of course, Erik's attention is immediately drawn to Diane while being unaware that Wilson is her uncle.

It turns out that Diane is quite interested in Erik the Ego despite being warned about the trail of broken hearts he has left strewn across Europe. It seems she likes dangerous bad boy types.

I found out that at this point there was for the time a racy nude shower scene, but in the version I watched it seems to have been omitted. (Damn!!) That would at least have been the one redeeming feature of this film! I must have watched a TV version in which the scene was skipped in the interests of "family viewing." It definitely doesn't have Carradine's narration at the start that featured in the US butchered version.

Playing Hard to Get

Next we are "treated" to a lengthy giggly chasey-chasey scene between Erik and Diane involving a ski-lift, and a pursuit along the ski slopes. After faking a fall, Diane tricks Erik by taking his skis, knocking him down and skiing away. Erik has no option but to walk all the way back to the ski lodge. Has Erik met his match?

Romance in The Air

Later at dinner, after having shaken off some of his tiredness and humiliation, a stiff and sore Erik dances with Diane while the singer performs “The Midnight Sun” in Swedish. Diane certainly scrubs up well in evening wear!

Suddenly a man bustles in and gives Dr Wilson and Henrick some information which causes them to get up to leave. Erik moves to join them, but Diane is forbidden to come along by her uncle probably on the basis that he wishes to protect his niece and that she is a woman!

Don't take “no” for an answer

So, guess who is riding along with the men in the military vehicle? Yep, you guessed it – a defiant Diane!

Arriving at the crash site, they get out of the vehicle and Diane is told once again that she is not to accompany them and is to wait there. So, guess who is hiking along snow-covered ground with the men? Yep, you guessed right again!

The party eventually come across an area strewn with the grisly remains of animals that seem to have been torn apart.

What could have done this?

Diane (who really needs to be wearing something a whole lot warmer) decides to walk off for a short distance only to discover a huge footprint. She then calls the attention of the others to it and after examining the print, Erik declares that it must have been made by something twenty feet tall.

Later, while looking over photos of the crater and finding nothing new, Dr. Wilson suggests that the crash looks more like a landing.....but is interrupted. Well, it doesn't take a genius to work out what he was about to say. They are all to fly out to the site at 6.00 am – all except Diane, of course!

The next morning guess who is discovered stowing away in the plane? It wouldn't take a genius to work that one out either. The others think Diane is being childish and that none of them know what they are likely to encounter, but, hey - there's just no stopping the woman!

Enter - Big Hairy Bastard

At the crater site, they descend a rope ladder to examine the object. Diane being a mere female is told to stay put. They obviously didn't take the hint from the other times they tried to forbid her

from taking part in manly business.

Dr. Wilson concludes that the spacecraft is of extra-terrestrial origin and they agree not to tell Diane until they know more. They probably think that being a woman Diane will probably go all to pieces with shock or that her head will explode or something.

Meanwhile back at the plane, a guard begins unloading his rifle at something. The point of view shot suggests that he is firing upward at something BIG and MEAN and mighty UNCLEAN.

Hearing the shots and fearing an avalanche, the men hurry back to the landing site only to find the guard dead and the plane torn to pieces. Giant footprints are discovered leading away from the plane. It is now obvious that the crashed object is likely a spacecraft and that it brought whatever caused the carnage to this area. With no means to radio for help, Dr. Wilson suggests that Diane and Erik ski to the nearby village from where they can send a message and then return by morning.

After an interminable amount of skiing and having to walk their skis up the mountainside, Erik says they are almost at their destination. Diane takes the lead but hits a tree, injuring her knee.

Meanwhile, Henrick informs Dr. Wilson that he will retrieve the equipment from the crater. After his descent, Henrick detects the presence of radioactivity with his Geiger counter. He then begins to examine the alien craft. but is observed by the alien inside. Having caught sight of the alien's shadowy presence, Henrick tries to escape but is struck by some kind of energy weapon.

While this is going on, Diane and Erik make it to a rescue cabin in which lamps are soon lit, fires are glowing, a silhouette strip tease is performed by Diane as she changes out of wet clothes and an injured knee is tended to.

Leaving Diane in the cabin, Erik takes off for the nearest village to make contact with the others and summon help. In no time at all he is drawn back to the cabin by Diane's screams.

The creature looking as if it is in desperate need of a good periodontist, has turned up and is now on top of the mountain above the cabin. Before Erik and Diane can escape, the creature starts an avalanche which damages the cabin. Erik is rendered unconscious after being struck by falling boards and debris while Diane with a miraculously recovered knee, makes it to the woods.

Lost and Found

We next see Erik back at the village and lying in a bunk bed. When he wakes up he is informed that he was rescued but that Diane is still missing and that Henrick was found dead in the crater. Efforts to search for the missing Diane will be put in place and hopefully the Laplander Lads will locate her.

Things haven't been faring so well for poor Diane as she valiantly staggers and stumbles her way through a blizzard, eventually tripping over a fallen log. There she rests unable to go any further. It is a wonder that hypothermia hasn't set in as later on she awakens and screams at the sight of the looming presence of the giant grossly deformed Chewbacca-like creature.

Next we have a scene featuring those crazy funster Laplander cats gathered together gnawing on reindeer parts and performing some kind of entertaining pantomime. Suddenly one of their buddies turns up and they all skedaddle out of there with reindeer in tow!

Soon after, the creature shuffles into the abandoned Laplanders' camp, bearing Diane. After it puts her down, it returns to the space ship clearly under the control of an alien who has been watching proceedings on its viewing screen.

After Diane stands up to look around, three alien beings who look as if they have just stepped out of another sci-fi fantasy film appear and surround her. It seems that they communicate telepathically instead of verbally. How do we know? Their movements, demeanor and sound effects suggest it. As the aliens approach Diane, she as all good women of the era were supposed and expected to do, screams and faints.

Don't Mess With The Saami!

At the Laplanders' village, the party animal Lapland funster gang agree to show the newcomers where their camp was, and where they saw Diane and the creature. Suddenly a scream is heard alerting everyone to the approach of the rampaging creature. Chunks of cabin and whole tents are flung about causing Laplanders to head for the hills (literally!). A sizable chunk of cabin strikes the plane causing it to burst into flames.

As the mayhem subsides with the departure of the Big Hairy Bastard, a search party is organized to find Damsel in Distress Diane.

The creature meanwhile finds Diane lying unconscious. After she awakens there's more screaming, futile attempts to flee and more passing out. While a torch-bearing search party approaches ever closer, Erik arrives and spots the creature with an armful load of unconscious Diane.

Soon there is a face-off between the irate band of Laplanders and the Big Hairy Bastard. Now, if I were an alien having just arrived on this planet and I was confronted by a bunch of incensed beings clad in multi party-colored clothing, wearing head gear festooned with huge pom-poms, brandishing lit torches, gesticulating wildly and seemingly insane with rage, I know what I'd do. Get back in my ship and go back where I came from!

Well, the advice is eventually heeded but not before our Laplander friends launch their torches

at the creature. In the meantime, Diane has been placed on the ground and has rolled away to a safe distance. The creature soon catches on fire and topples over a cliff. The alien, having witnessed this, launches the spaceship and departs our planet.

Dr. Wilson wonders if we will fare better when we land on another planet. (Don't count on it) The final shot is of Erik and Diane walking off together into the sunset. (I mean, who does that, really?)

The only 'point of interest' I can offer is the mental image of Ingmar Bergman turning over in his grave!

I hope you enjoyed this volume of "Sci-Fi Film Fiesta."
Keep an eye out for Volume 7: The End Is Nigh!

Useful Resources

Atkinson, Barry., Atomic Age Cinema The Offbeat, the Classic and the Obscure, Midnight Marquee Press, Inc.; 2013

Bliss, Michael., Invasions USA The Essential Science Fiction Films of the 1950s, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2014.

Fischer, Dennis., Science Fiction Film Directors, 1895-1998, McFarland, 2011

Geraghty, Lincoln., American Science Fiction Film and Television, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2009

Gulyas, Aaron John., Extraterrestrials and the American Zeitgeist: Alien Contact Tales Since the 1950s, McFarland & Company; Illustrated edition, 2013

Hendershot, Cyndy., Paranoia, The Bomb, And 1950s Science Fiction Films, University of Wisconsin Press, 1999

Koca, Gary., Good and Bad Sci-Fi/Horror Movies of the 1950s: And the Stars Who Were in Those Films, CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2017

Lucanio, Patrick., Them or Us: Archetypal Interpretations of Fifties Alien Invasion Films 1987 by Indiana University Press (Bloomington/Indianapolis)

Moore, Theresa M., & Carlyle, Patrick C., Science Fiction Films of The 20th Century 1950-1954, Antellus, 2019

Moore, Theresa M., Science Fiction Films of The 20th Century 1955-1956, Antellus, 2019

Moore, Theresa M., Science Fiction Films of The 20th Century 1958 Anrellus, 2019

Seed, David., Science Fiction: A Very Short Introduction., Oxford University Press, 2011

Warren, Bill., Keep Watching the Skies! American Science Fiction Films of the Fifties:
McFarland; 21st Century Edition, 2016

Useful Links To On-Line Resources

Invasion USA (1952)

at Wikipedia

at IMDb

at 1000misspenthours.com

Invaders from Mars (1953)

at Wikipedia

at IMDb

at 1000misspenthour.com

The War of the Worlds (1953)

at Wikipedia

at IMDb

at The War of the Worlds WIKI

Target Earth (1954)

at Wikipedia

at IMDb

The Quatermass Xperiment (1955)

at Wikipedia

at IMDb

at Horror Film Wiki

This Island, Earth (1955)

at Wikipedia

at IMDb

at scifist.net

Earth vs the Flying Saucers (1956)

at Wikipedia

at IMDb

at popmatters.com

at scifist.net

It Conquered the World (1956)

at Wikipedia

at IMDb

at scifist.net

at 1000misspenthours.com

Invasion of the Body Snatchers (1956)

at Wikipedia

at IMDb

at tvtropes.org

Invasion of the Saucer Men (1957)

at Wikipedia

at IMDB

at 1000misspenthours.com

Kronos (1957)

at Wikipedia

at IMDb

at 1000misspenthours.com

Not of This Earth (1957)

at Wikipedia

at IMDb

The Brain from Planet Arous (1957)

at IMDb

at 1000misspenthours.com

I Married a Monster from Outer Space (1958)

at Wikipedia

at IMDb

at Million Monkey Theater

Night of the Blood Beast (1958)

at Wikipedia

at IMDb

at 1000misspenthours.com

Space Master X-7 (1958)

at IMDb

The Blob (1958)

at IMDb

at tvtropes.org

The Trollenberg Terror (1958)

at Wikipedia

at IMDb

at our culture mag

The Atomic Submarine (1959)

at Wikipedia

at IMDb

at 1000misspenthours.com

Battle in Outer Space (1959)

at Wikipedia

at IMDb

at manapop.com

Invisible Invaders (1959)

at Wikipedia

at IMDb

Teenagers From Outer Space (1959)

at Wikipedia

at IMDb

at 1000misspenthours.com

Terror In The Midnight Sun (1959)

at Wikipedia

at IMDb

DVD / Streaming:

- A Century of Science Fiction, 1996 Directed by Ted Newsom., American Documentary, narrated by Christopher Lee (available free on Tubitv and showing on other streaming services)
-
- Hollywood in the Atomic Age: Monsters! Martians! Mad Scientists! Marshall Publishing & Promotions, Inc. 2021 (Stream on Tubi tv for free)