



LATEST ISSUE



ON SALE NOW!

THE GORE STORE

- » [Subscribe to FANGORIA](#)
- » [Order Back Issues](#)
- » [Other Scary Merchandise](#)

MONSTER INVASION

- » [Fear Film Forecast](#)
- » [Video Chopping List](#)

CONTESTS



Win the STREET TRASH 2-DVD set!



Win the DARK WATERS special-edition DVD!



Win SHOCK-O-RAMA DVD prize packs!

FRIGHTFUL FICTION

GHASTLY REVIEW

GOJIRA (Classic [Media](#))

Reviewed by MICHAEL GINGOLD

Mike sez...



OVERALL RATING:

A deep gap in the shelf of [DVD](#) restoration is finally filled with GOJIRA, the first in a series of Classic Media two-disc sets that has had *kaiju* fans firing at the mouth with anticipation. This first release, a class job from its fine packaging to the showcasing of the featured [film](#) and its extras, does more than finally make the initial monster classic available for home viewing in its original edition—it examines, analyzes and cements the film's place in the history of both Japanese and monster-movie cinema.

To begin with, there's the long-overdue presentation of Ishiro Honda's uncut, undubbed, unaccentuated 1954 feature, which enjoyed only very limited screenings before finally being given high-profile art-house release on the occasion of the movie's 50th anniversary (see our previous review [here](#)). It's common knowledge that the 1956 U.S. release GODZILLA, KING OF THE MONSTERS! not only added copious new footage featuring American star Raymond Burr, but subtracted material directly referencing the H-bomb attacks that inspired the movie's creation. But also largely lost was a key love-triangle subplot that, as Godzilla experts Steve Ryfle and Ed Godziszewski note in their excellent feature commentary, puts a civilian face on the horror story which sets it apart from its U.S.-made brethren, which tended to focus on military or law-enforcement types dealing with the rampagous beasts. Thus, GOJIRA achieves a "new" level of not only sociopolitical commentary, but

SEARCH

LATEST NEWS

- » [ABOMINABLE's Haley Joel set for Fango con](#)
- » [Presenters & performers for CHAINSAW AWARDS](#)
- » [Cast set for Raw Feed's THE BELIEVERS](#)
- » [Showtime serial-killer show DEXTER now on-line](#)
- » [Details on new DON'T ANSWER THE PHONE DVD](#)
- » [Godzilla attacks In2TV broadband network](#)
- » [Fred Dekker double feature and more in Philly](#)
- » [SUPERNATURAL star in fourth \(!\) RESIDENT EVIL](#)

FEATURES

- » [My Week With the DEAD: Part One](#)
- » [DEAD and Unburied](#)
- » [THE LOST Boys \(and Girls\)](#)

REVIEWS

- » [FEAST](#)
- » [PET SEMATARY DVD \(Sep. 18\)](#)
- » [BONE SICKNESS DVD \(Sep. 18\)](#)

SPECIAL EVENTS

- » [SPECIAL EVENTS](#)



"Riveting and terrifying"
-Claudia Puig, USA Today

» **CYBER
PROMETHEUS**

(March 25,
2003)

It is on the eve
of the new
Millennium that
I behold the
consummation
of my efforts...

dramatic depth as well.

What it doesn't achieve, through no fault of the DVD's creators, is the kind of visual restoration that has come to be expected from this kind of release. The print of GOJIRA utilized is complete but occasionally in pretty worn shape; many original elements have long been lost and, from the very start, were not always of the highest quality. That said, the fullscreen transfer highlights the scary-shadowy black-and-white work of cinematographer Masao Tamai and the Toho FX artists (with very easy-to-read yellow subtitles), and the mono audio is as clear as one can ask for.

The commentary by Ryfle and Godziszewski (who covered Godzilla's history in Fango's very first cover story) is outstanding, and will likely contain revelations even for fans who thought they knew everything there was to know about GOJIRA and Godzilla. Starting with the fact that the storyline was inspired as much by the accidental irradiation of a Japanese tuna boat's crew as it was by the better-known Hiroshima-Nagasaki bombings, the duo provide cinematic historical context, production data, technical trivia and exploration of the film's thematic concerns, as well as how they tied in to Japanese history and culture (arranged marriage, the norm in the country at the time, is a key component of the aforementioned romantic subplot). The discussion of the movie's American alteration is begun here—they note that the deletion of a certain scene makes a crucial climactic moment more of a surprise in the U.S. version—and one anecdote feels remarkably timely: While standing on a rooftop discussing how to "destroy Tokyo," the [filmmakers](#) were overheard by a security guard who called the police on them!

You'd think there was nothing left to talk about once the commentary's done, but a pair of featurettes written, produced and narrated by Godziszewski reveal even more fascinating detail. One is devoted to the creation of the Gojira suit by the legendary Eiji Tsuburaya and his FX team, a process of trial and (plenty of) error that ultimately resulted in one of the screen's most indelible creatures. Details both surprising (in an early design, the monster's head and neck were shaped like a mushroom cloud) and, once again, contemporary-seeming ([the outfit](#) was constructed under a veil of secrecy) are supplemented with a wealth of great behind-the-scenes photos.

Even better is a *Story Development* featurette in which Godziszewski's comparison of the original treatment with the final film and recounting of scenes that were deleted or never filmed—fascinating stuff on its own—is made even better via the visual accompaniment of great international poster art, storyboards (GOJIRA was the first Japanese feature to utilize them) and photos/test shots from some of those missing sequences. Among them are a glimpse of the beast with a dead cow in his mouth (unused because it was thought to be too horrific) and a setpiece in which human characters stand in his titanic footprints, much as [Matthew Broderick](#) would decades later in the ill-fated U.S. GODZILLA.

And if that wasn't enough, the second disc contains GODZILLA, KING OF THE MONSTERS!, in a fullscreen transfer where (not surprisingly) the new American footage is clearer and in better shape than the Japanese material. Ryfle and Godziszewski return for another commentary, in which they address the transformation of GOJIRA into something palatable for U.S. viewers with a respect that may surprise some listeners. Far from the appalling dub/cut-and-paste approach that was applied to several subsequent *kaiju* features, KING OF THE MONSTERS!, as they see it, was a respectful attempt at "bridging the gap" in which a good deal of the original footage wasn't dubbed (and in which James Hong spoke for the two Japanese male leads in the material that was).

And if *that* wasn't enough, the track also includes excerpts from audio interviews with Edmond Goldman, who first discovered the film, and Paul Schreiber, discussing how they turned GOJIRA into GODZILLA; comments by author/historian Ted Newsom, who relates how KING OF THE MONSTERS! co-scripter Al C. Ward turned down both credit and a percentage of the grosses; and the participation of Terry Morse Jr., who joins the commentary midway through and reminisces about his father's approach to directing the Burr sequences and adapting Honda's material. Among other things, we learn that no subtitled print of GOJIRA was available, requiring the services of a translator, and Morse Jr. insists that deleting the H-bomb references wasn't a specific concern.

In the final analysis, Ryfle and Godziszewski maintain, it was likely the internationally released KING OF THE MONSTERS!—and not GOJIRA, which might otherwise have gone unseen outside Japan—that led to its eponymous monster's worldwide fame and spurred the creation of the *kaiju* trend that continues to this day. Similarly, this package (which also includes a booklet with Ryfle liner notes consisting mostly of material covered in the commentary, though they're quite well-written) will no doubt make Classic Media's forthcoming Toho titles even more anticipated. Next up, GODZILLA RAIDS AGAIN (a.k.a. GIGANTIS THE FIRE MONSTER) and MOTHRA VS. GODZILLA (a.k.a. GODZILLA VS. THE THING) on November 7. Can't wait!

[| Privacy Policy](#) | [Terms of Use](#) | [Advertise With Us](#) | [Meet the Staff](#) | [Contact Us](#) |

Entire Contents: © Copyright 2006 STARLOG GROUP, Inc. All Rights Reserved. Reprint or Reproduction of Any Material In Part or in Whole is Strictly Forbidden.