

Film Notes

By Ellie Hendricks

Godzilla

1954 | 96mins

Director: Ishirō Honda

Starring: Akira Takarada, Momoko Kuchi, Takashi Shimura

"If nuclear testing continues, then someday, somewhere in the world, another Godzilla may appear." - Dr. Kyohei Yamane (Takashi Shimura), *Godzilla*.

Bath Film Festival is delighted to present this genre-defining classic in the intimate setting of the Museum of East Asian Art, with an introduction by kaiju expert Steven Sloss. 'Kaiju', translated to 'strange beast', is the genre name for Japanese films that feature monsters. An anti-hero and defender of the Earth, there's no doubt that Godzilla is the undisputed king of the kaiju.

Also known as Gojira, this towering, reptilian figure has become one of cinema's most iconic creations. Born from the ashes of post-war Japan, Godzilla's story is deeply intertwined with the country's history. As both a warning and a symbol of resilience, he represents the fear of nuclear destruction and the enduring spirit of the Japanese people.

Directed by Ishirō Honda and released in 1954, *Godzilla* sparked a wave of big-screen monsters, defining the kaiju movement and the tokusatsu genre that shaped Japanese cinema for decades. Alongside his future rival, King Kong, *Godzilla* helped create one of the longest-running film franchises in history - one that continues to capture imaginations around the world.

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When *Godzilla* premiered, Japan was still reeling from the devastating nuclear attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Audiences instantly connected with Honda's revolutionary vision, a monstrous embodiment of grief, anger, and survival unleashed on Tokyo. Godzilla wasn't just a creature, he was a mirror held up to a wounded nation.

So what does *Godzilla* mean today? Modern adaptations have explored new global anxieties, from the climate crisis and corporate greed to political inaction. One theme does remain a constant, the delicate balance between humanity and nature. Throughout the *Godzilla* films, scientists, soldiers, and politicians repeatedly disrupt the natural peace, and it's never long before Godzilla rears his head, causes chaos, and slinks back into the sea.

'The sheer fervency of this film takes it beyond the crash-bang entertainment of most blockbusters, ancient and modern'

- The Guardian

Excellent

Fair

Poor



What did you think of the film? Please mark or tear the number.

Please add any further comments here

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Did You Know?

- The film's music director, Akira Ifukube, created Godzilla's roar by rubbing a coarse resin-coated leather glove up and down the strings of a double bass, and reverberating the recorded sound. Godzilla's footsteps were made by beating a kettle drum with a knotted rope.
- This film would have been the third most expensive Japanese film at the time of its release, behind *Seven Samurai* (1954) and *Samurai I: Musashi Miyamoto* (1954), all three of which were produced by Toho.
- In 2004, the year of its 50th anniversary, *Godzilla* was given a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame.

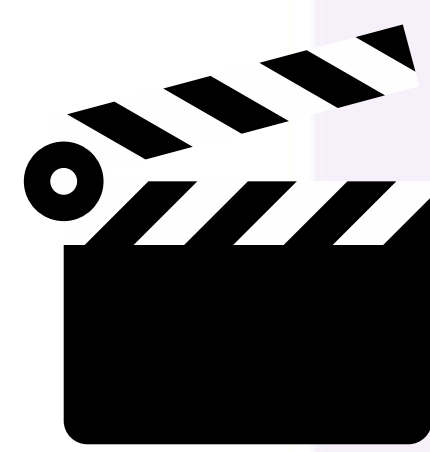
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Godzilla Raids Again (1955)

After discovering Godzilla in a battle with another creature resembling an armoured dinosaur, Dr Yamane helps to try find a solution to defeat it.



The Host (2006)

Inspired by *Godzilla*, when a woman is kidnapped by a creature living in a river, her father and siblings all go searching for her.

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