

Ebirah: Horror of the Deep (Godzilla vs. the Sea Monster) Notes

THE FILM

- I had the privilege of seeing this at the Pickwick Theater during G-Fest. It was fun. It was as a tribute to Takarada.
- Major creative team change. New director (Jun Fukuda), new composer (Masaru Sato). However, it does have some familiar actors (Akihiko Hirata, Akira Takarada, Kumi Mizuno) and Sekizawa writing.
- Fukuda didn't like making Godzilla movies. He directed five of them only because he was a good company man. That's sad given that he left an indelible mark on the franchise.
- Kumi Mizuno is nice eye candy in this, but she also gets to play a much different character than Namikawa. Daiyo is fun, pious, and feisty. Without her, I doubt everyone could've escaped.
- It was the first of the "island series" in the Showa era. These were Godzilla films that centered on a South Seas Island as the setting. The next three films continued this.
- Originally intended to be a Kong film. This means there could've been a movie where King Kong meets Mothra. How awesome would that have been? It accounts for Godzilla's odd, seemingly out-of-character behavior in this, such as acting less heroic, attacking Mothra, and being more of an animal than a character.
- The characters distrust and fear him even though they wake him up. He threatens both the heroes and the villains at points.
- Much of the early scenes with Ryota searching for his brother was cut. The news office, for example.
- There's conflict between the rural and the urban, the traditional and the modern, and the spiritual and natural.
- Fukuda knows how to position and move the camera. He's also great with young actors.
- I'd be doomed on this island. Bananas hate me.
- Hirata as another character with an eyepatch—except on the other eye.
- Hideyo Yamamoto as a pre-Dr. Who villain.
- The heroes make clever use of the tools they have on hand to awaken Godzilla. The sword is a lightning rod, and the wire transfers the electricity to him. Godzilla is revived with lightning like Toho's Kong.
- Showa era Godzilla loves throwing rocks at foes. It a favorite tactic.
- Godzilla judo throws Ebirah. I wanted him to say, "I learned this from a monkey!"
- Godzilla notices Daiyo, but it seems to be more out of curiosity than affection. He doesn't pick her up like Kong would.
- He sleeps sitting up. Seems strangely anthropomorphic to me.
- Godzilla dances a bit when he defeats the condor and points a chiding finger.
- Godzilla attacks the villains but also almost kills slaves with a cave-in.
- Godzilla taunts Ebirah after killing him by opening and closing his claws, which he dismembered.

- Godzilla attacks Mothra. Perhaps it took some time for him to embrace his new heroism.
- The characters pity him like the heroes of *Monster Zero* did except they try to warn him to get off the island. Solidifies where the audience's sympathies should lie.
- It opens with a psychic medium performing a ceremony to look through "the land of the dead." It's not a side of Japan we see often in these films. While brief, it gives the impression of a backwater, more superstitious area of Japan.
- This is a teen/young adult movie. It's high on adventure and action and features young, pretty actors and characters. It's also briskly paced. These were Fukuda's specialties.
- As a ballroom dance aficionado, I found myself wondering if I could pull off that dance challenge in the beginning.
- Hilarious meeting between Ryota and his new friends and Yoshimura on the boat. The latter threatens them with what turns out to be a toy gun. He obviously just wanted a place to hide, but these kids complicated things. Then Ryota sets sail while they were sleeping so he can look for his brother. They're stuck because Ryota is the only one who knows how to sail (though you'd think he couldn't man the boat singlehandedly. Please write to us about this, listeners!)
 - The boat is owned by an American named James Conway. Reference?
- The guys figure out quickly that Yoshimura is the bank robber they hear about on the radio, though he never admits to it outright. There are several hints he is the robber, and then the audience learns for sure that he is before the characters do when his briefcase falls and money spills out.
 - Montage of time passing.
 - Ebirah (claw) appears 14 minutes in; full body at 21 minutes.
- The sequence where Ebirah attacks the *Yahlen* is quite effective. There's potent fear and suspense and some excellent SFX.
- How does a sword tell them the natives are cannibals? The dubbed line has "savages," which makes more sense.
- Hirata is back, and he's wearing an eyepatch again. This time it's on the left eye and not the right. You can tell he's having fun playing a Bond-style supervillain.
- A rare post-*Gojira* instance of a kaiju killing humans on screen. Ebirah skewers two escaping slaves, presumably to eat them. I don't imagine they'd satisfy him much. It'd be like a human eating two grains of rice. Plus, I don't think lobsters are carnivorous, but I can accept that Ebirah is.
- High jump...no. Nice fake out.
- The Red Bamboo, who are essentially a terrorist organization, remind me of Cobra from *G.I. Joe*. Secret island base. Secret weapons cache. Over-the-top leaders. Plans for world domination. It's no surprise given that this was originally intended to be an adaptation of the King Kong cartoon series. They mention answering to a "headquarters." That makes me wonder if they're a larger organization with lots of resources like SPECTRE in the James Bond films or if they're being funded by another country, like perhaps the USSR. State-funded terrorism is a hot-button issue nowadays. The jets they use are Chinese, by the way.

- They're as bad a shots as Cobra. All this shooting, it's amazing they don't go bankrupt with all the bullets they have to buy.
- "Devil's Island." Sounds like something from G.I. Joe (or a cartoon). It's real name is Letchi Island.
- Dayo's prayers are silent in Japanese, but the dub adds dialogue.
- I appreciate Criterion subtitled the song lyrics in their releases.
- "You sound like a TV commercial." Ironic given that TV was killing movies
- They have an island with a self-destruct. Comic book-y.
- Is it just me, or is Mothra lazy in this movie? Her people are being captured as slaves by Red Bamboo. Daiyo, the Shobijin, and her people pray/sing to her for help. But it takes the whole movie before she wakes up and intervenes. What? (Although, it is nice to see the adult Mothra again). However, when she does awaken, her call seems to say that she has heard her people.
- There are new actresses playing the Shobijin: a singing duo called Pair Bambi. They're not bad, but I miss the Peanuts.
- Sato's score is good but it isn't as memorable as other scores. In fact, on the "best of" CD I have for Godzilla film scores, this movie is skipped altogether because, as the liner notes said, the score is "unremarkable."
- I don't think "psychic" is the best translation. "Shamaness" is a better one.
- Somehow, the guards don't see the slaves change the recipe.
- The music when they sneak into the base sounds like it was from *Scooby-Doo*. It's almost too comical.
- Beach Boys music when Godzilla and Ebirah fight? Very jazzy.
- Godzilla appears (sleeping) 31 minutes in.
- Red Bamboo doesn't see the moving bush? That's an old gag!
- Yoshimura tells the boys to fight with their brains and not guns. One of them says he sounds like a "stupid politician." Nice to see the Japanese share the American sentiment against politicians.
- I like the bright colors throughout the film.
- Be glad those smoke bombs weren't grenades!
- The heroes keep getting in deeper; they get in over their heads. This makes for great storytelling.
- The Shobijin's flower-pattern dresses look too processed and "civilized." That is, unless they did get those during a visit to Japan. *Ghidorah* showed us that they do.
- Why didn't they think to make phony liquid sooner? It looks like they work with little or no supervision from Red Bamboo.
- Theme: use your brain.
- I like Ebirah's asymmetrical design. One claw is big and can open and close while the other is smaller and good for stabbing.
- Theme: help those in need. Don't ignore them just because you're safe.

- This is quite a suspenseful movie. Kalat even said it was Hitchcockian at times, particularly when the heroes are trying to reach the button to deactivate the self-destruct. The countdown at the end is also effective suspense.
- Giant condor out of nowhere! 64 minutes in.
- Fewer miniatures to save money on production costs.
- That Beach Boys music was removed in the dub. It kinda fits with the dance contest given how Godzilla acts.
- Ahed.” Red Bamboo can’t spell.
- Theme: the islander faith is rewarded.
- The silence between the singing and Mothra’s cry builds suspense. Her response seems to say, “I heard you. Your faith is rewarded.” Her eyes light up.
- The film has a spectacular finale with the island exploding. You can tell a lot of time, effort, and money was invested in that sequence.
- Theme: anti-nuclear sentiment expressed at the end. It also brings back the “stupid politician” joke.
 - Criterion’s subs change it to “professor.” They also say that the bombs should be “used wisely” or “not at all.” That’s different and seemingly non-Japanese.

OTHER SOURCES

Bogue

- Major shift for the series. No miniature cities; beach music; teens, a native girl, and a thief as characters.
- LeMay in G-Fan #87: “Perhaps it’s time *Sea Monster* is finally recognized as one of the ‘better’ Godzilla films.”
- He says the film maintains the series’ anti-nuclear sentiment.
- He calls Ebirah “Red Bamboo’s mascot.”
- “Volleyboulder.”
- Elements of beach movies and spy thrillers. “The Red Bamboo certainly would have been right at home in a Matt Helm movie.”
- He argues that Red Bamboo fed radiation to Ebirah on purpose.

Galbraith

- He calls Fukuda “second-string.”
- “...the story here is so interesting and well-paced, one doesn’t have time to get impatient.”
- He says in the letterboxed Japanese laser disc version, the studio lights can be seen at the top of the screen when the island explodes.
- The tropical setting was done to save money as budgets continued to shrink. Multiple Toho films would repeat this setting all the way up to 1971’s *Space Amoeba*.
- Teisho Arikawa and Teruyoshi Nakano had taken over most of the special effects work as Tsuburaya shifted to TV.

- He compares Ebirah watery “lurking menace” to *Jaws*.
- The script is like 1961’s *Mysterious Island* and a James Bond film (SPECTRE).
- Fukuda used more zoom and hand-held camera shots than Honda.
- Composer Masaru Sato was known for working with Kurosawa at the time.
- Takarada plays against type, but he’s perfect.
- This was the first of two G-films released directly to U.S. TV by AIP.
- He calls the film “an entirely respectable entry in the Godzilla series, and in fact, one of the best.”

Kalat

- Fukuda was 11 years younger than Honda and directed the popular *Young Guy* series, which made bank for Toho. He was at once a natural successor to Honda and “a mixed bag.”
- The year before, he directed the James Bond spoof *100 Shot, 100 Killed* (aka *Ironfinger*), which starred Takarada and was scored by Sato.
- Fukuda: “I generally think of my movies as action dramas.”
- Sato previously scored *Godzilla Raids Again*. He reused some of his music from *100 Shot, 100 Killed*.
- Bond films were popular in Japan. In fact, in 1967, Toho actresses Akiko Wakabayashi and Mie Hama were Bond girls in *You Only Live Twice*.
- He says the button scene is Bond-like.
- Takarada is very Cary Grant-like in this.
- This was originally scripted as a Kong film (Toho still held the rights, which were set to expire). It was switched to Godzilla—as in “copy and replace.” That explains Godzilla’s odd characterization, such as being revived by electricity when he was previously vulnerable to it, and he shows peculiar interest in Daiyo.
- Tsuburaya was given honorary credit.
- He says Continental Pictures released it in a few theaters under the official English title.
- The superior AIP dub has been supplanted by the poor international Hong Kong dub in recent years.
- Fukuda didn’t enjoy directing Godzilla films (he directed 4 more), thinking there shouldn’t have been sequels to the original. He was upset that he had to cut several scenes to fit the prescribed running time. He preferred comedies.

LeMay – Big Book

- *Operation Robinson Crusoe: King Kong vs. Ebirah*. That script was submitted to RKO, who rejected it. They then directed Toho to Rankin-Bass, which led to *The King Kong Show* and *King Kong Escapes*. They’d already built the Ebirah suit and didn’t want to waste it.
- Galbraith: “...you could literally remove the monsters and still have a pretty solid, entertaining picture.”

- Elements of a sequel to *100 Shot, 100 Killed* made it into this. It was called “Big Duel in the South Seas.”
- Godzilla scratching his nose is a fourth wall reference to Yuzo Kayama, the star of the *Young Guy* films.
- Daiyo was originally to be played by Noriko Takahashi, but she got appendicitis. She’d played a native girl on *Ultra Q*.
- Mothra wasn’t added after it was switched to Godzilla film.
- This was the first G-film to have tie-in toys, in this case by Marusan.

LeMay – Lost Films

- Godzilla taunting a defeated Ebirah is Kong-like.
- The scene with the jets was added for Godzilla.
- There’s disagreement over how this came about and whether Mothra was in it originally.
 - Some say Rankin-Bass approached Toho to adapt the *The King Kong Show*.
 - Some say Toho wanted to do spin-off Kong films set in the Godzilla universe.
 - Some sources say Mothra was added because she was popular in a fan poll.

LeMay – Writing

- Rankin-Bass was deadest on the original Godzilar creative team and not the “B-team.”
- Daicondoru (“Giant Condor”) appears in two episodes of *The King Kong Show*.
- Nakano and Fukuda were both surprised to hear that this was originally meant to be a Kong film.

KVR 12

- How Japanese film audiences changed:
 - The movement from city to the suburbs; theater attendance dropped.
 - Demographic changes; younger people showed up more, so films were made for them. Parents bought tickets for children, so more tickets.
 - The contract system ended in 1970 and the film industry had a bit of a collapse.
 - The advent of TV; it’s the most commonly sited change; audiences could see films or similar stories on TV for “free.”
 - The lifecycle of a film series; G-films had been released almost every year for a while; the series had to evolve to keep going.
 - Competition from foreign films (especially American films). Hollywood films were getting huger. The Japanese also love American pop culture.
 - Competition with other Japanese studios; other studios started making their own kaiju films, especially in 1967 when they all did. This divided the audience. Toho wasn’t the only fish in the pond anymore. It’s like how superheroes are now.
 - Lower budgets. This was the result of everything else. It’s a result and a symptom.