

Mothra vs. Godzilla Notes

THE FILM

- Considered by fandom to be the best of the Godzilla sequels, and it's easy to see why. Features original creative team at the top of their game. Toho intended to continue the "crossover" success of *King Kong vs. Godzilla* by using one of their own kaiju: Mothra. Logical pairing. Expands audience to include women since Mothra was popular with them.
- Rest in peace, Takarada-san and Koizumi-san!
- The detail on the huge egg is incredible! It actually has texture.
- This is my favorite incarnation of the Shobijin in my favorite outfits. I'd buy a figure of them.
- "Mothra gave you power of attorney." No, she did that with Raymond.
- *Batman* '89 moment: throwing tickets to the theme park at a crowd.
- The villains talk on the phone: bad booze and hookers time.
- This talk of the power of the press and giving unscrupulous people publicity hasn't changed.
- Godzilla appears about 33 minutes in. This suit is amazing. I understand why it'd popular.
- Some have complained that Godzilla's rampage is "drunken." Some might even say it's played for laughs. I see it as evidence of what Honda said about kaiju being "too big" and "too strong" for our world.
- I have a feeling modern audiences would've said this had a bad case of "sequel-it is."
- Skeleturtle!
- The Twins sing the Mothra Song without music. Or at least, it's subtle.
- We just have lightning generators lying around. Of course. We have some of those to help keep the kaiju in line on the Island.
- There are a few shots where the monsters move a bit too quickly.
- Godzilla's head is on fire!
- There are people who hate Mothra and this movie because Godzilla is defeated by a pair of worms. It's dumb. The tactics they use make sense. I especially like the one that was a sneaky ninja and weren't in the cave to spray Godzilla.
- Saving the teacher and schoolkids feels a bit tacked on, but at least Yuriko is involved in the rescue.
- This continues the tradition of having monsters fall into water. It's like how the MCU has stuff fall out of the sky.
- Sekizawa's new script similar to both *Mothra* and *King Kong vs. Godzilla*. Mild satire of corporate greed.
 - Cynicism with corporate greed in economically booming Japan. "Happy Enterprises" is an ironic name.
 - Rising power of corporate wealth and power during the Japanese Economic Miracle.
 - Villains Torahata and Kumayama have more in common with Nelson from *Mothra* than Tako from *King Kong vs. Godzilla*: despicable and irredeemable,

greedy and murderous, exploitative whereas Tako is comical, cartoonish; Kumayama even has Hitler-esque mustache.

- Returns to theme of exploitation, except this time it is Mothra's egg and not the Shobijin (however the villains do try to buy them).
- Injects more fantasy elements (mostly thanks to Mothra); expands ShowaVerse.
- Moderate gravitas; no slapstick.
- Reinforces style of previous film; no expansion or experimentation; does what it does well; might be why it is well-loved by fans: it's a relatively "safe" movie.
- Injects mild humor during kaiju scenes (Godzilla slips into building, gets his tail stuck in tower, Mothra larva bites his tail and he flails) to provide comic relief. One character is eating an egg when a "monster egg" is mentioned. Yuriko snickers at Takrada taking his jacket off in decon.
- Kalat: Honda added dialogue to Sekizawa's script about the "brotherhood of man" as it was an important idea to him; it elevates the script and provides an impetus for why Mothra would listen to their pleas. "All are equal before the gods." "Even bad people have a right to live."
- Anti-nuclear theme returns with the presentation of the suffering of the islanders; as opposed to using a symbol like Godzilla, these people are directly victimized; could be very true to life as tests are conducted in the Pacific assuming they won't hurt anyone; shows how forgotten the islanders are and that they have good reason to hate the outside world.
- Themes of prejudice and forgiveness and reconciliation on both sides.
- Shobijin are fully-developed characters in this film as opposed to *Mothra*, where they were more like a McGuffin; one of the biggest improvements from that film.
- Remarkable variety of SFX techniques, not just miniatures and suitmation; also uses miniatures sets for Shobijin, rotoscoping, etc. Tsuburaya must've enjoyed emulating his hero O'Brian; there's clearly much love here.
- Continuity:
 - Godzilla and Mothra are known.
 - Return to Infant Island, which now looks more barren compared to *Mothra*; perhaps the ravages of radiation have continued or previous explorers intruded on the oasis.
 - Godzilla washes ashore after disappearing into ocean in previous film.
- Presentation of Kaiju
 1. Godzilla
 - a. Force of nature
 - b. Monster run amok
 - c. Hostile
 - d. Passes judgment on Torahata like a wrathful god by killing him after he murders Kurayama; might've been more appropriate if Mothra did it, but that's not in her nature. "Even bad people have a right to live." Does this fit with the villains' deaths? Their own hubris killed them?
 2. Mothra
 - a. Benign; can be petitioned for help and convinced to act
 - b. Godlike
 - c. Not as single-minded as in *Mothra*

- d. Self-sacrificial
3. How is the kaiju (Godzilla) problem solved?
 - a. Self-Defense Forces: fail to stop Godzilla
 - b. Humans petition Mothra for help; she agrees
 - c. Mothra and ultimately her larva succeed in stopping Godzilla; ironic that the larva, the weaker of the monsters, succeed in defeating Godzilla by using clever tactics
- What are the humans doing?
 1. Heroes: reporters and scientists who want to save Mothra and halt Godzilla's rampage
 2. Villains: greedy corporate types who want to exploit Mothra's egg (similar to *Mothra*)
 3. Humans in middle of action; their plotline affects kaiju plotline
 4. Interesting how it is Junko, a woman, who pushes the Shobijin and islanders to help them, to convince them that there are good and innocent people in the outside world; atypical of many of these films.

1964 Olympics

- Momentous event for Japan and Asia
 1. First Olympics in Asia
 2. First Olympics televised internally
 3. Dispersed Japan's malaise of national spirit
 4. End of post-surrender era for Japan
 5. Yoshinori Sakai
 - a. 400 meter runner and torch bearer
 - b. Lit torch as symbol of Japan
 - c. Japan "rejoins" the world
 6. 60,000 foreign visitors to Japan
 - a. Pamphlet: "What foreigners are like"
 - b. Learned things like, "May I help you?" and urban society
 7. Japan's performance at games
 - a. First time for Judo; Japan takes gold
 - b. Women's volleyball final Japan vs. USSR—Japan wins
 8. Challenges of hosting the games
 - a. Not enough public space
 - b. Overcrowded
 - c. Few facilities (sports venues, roads, etc.)
 - d. 100 workers died in construction for games; 2,000 injured

Typhoon Vera

- Category 5 hurricane that struck Japan twice in September 1959.
 - Killed 4,000 people, making it number 10 on the top ten deadliest typhoons in the Pacific.
 - \$600 million in damages (equivalent to US\$4.93 billion in 2016)
 - Localized outbreaks of dysentery, tetanus, and gangrene in aftermath due to inundation.

- Lt. Gen. Robert Whitney Burns ordered all available U.S. servicemen stationed in Japan to take part in typhoon relief efforts; USS Kearsarge was dispatched to Nagoya to assist in relief efforts; opportunity to showcase alliance between the countries.
- Major setback to postwar Japan's economy; Japanese pearl industry lost \$15 million for the course of 2-3 years, driving costs up 20%.
- Prompted the 1961 passage of the Disaster Countermeasures Basic Act, the "cornerstone of legislation on disaster risk reduction in Japan." The act established the Central Disaster Prevention Council, which coordinates disaster risk reduction. The legislation also mandated an annual disaster prevention plan to be submitted to the Japanese parliament yearly. Established September 1 as a National Disaster Prevention Day.
- Possibly inspired the typhoon at the beginning of the film. A spectacular sequence followed by the pumping of water.

Commentary by Godziszewski and Ryfle

- Their personal favorite; the peak of the creative team's techniques.
- Saperstein's favorite, too.
- Sekizawa's background in animation and comics helped him visualize stories.
- Sekizawa wrote for Toei animation—like *Gulliver's Travels in Space*—because Toho wouldn't make animated films.
- There was a second scientist in a previous draft. It was also Godzilla's body, not the egg, that washes up. This was rejected because it'd be waste dump and strain credibility. Originally, the Shobijin would've offered themselves as hostages, but Honda changed that to the plea. Godzilla would've attacked Rolisica, and that country would've used the Frontier missiles.
- Tajima, who plays Kumayama, was a character actor who played bit parts for Honda.
- Takarada was making 7 movies a year on average at this point. This was his first film with Honda since *Half-Human*. Takarada maintains his character's dignity so his speech works later.
- Yuriko Hoshi provides mild comic relief.
- All the props in the "big" set were built eight times larger.
- Hideyo and Sukikio were the Peanuts' real names. They retired in 1975.
- Sekizawa chose the name "Shobijin" because he was tired of writing, "The tiny twin beauties from Infant Island." He also created the name Infant Island because it sounded good.
- The name "Elias" for the twins did make it in promo materials for the film in foreign market.
- Torahata and Kumiyama weren't seen by the creators as villains but as symbols of greed and its hubris.
- It's more serious and tonally balanced compared to *King Kong vs. Godzilla* with its commentary on greed and commercialism.
- This was shot with an optical printer, one of only two in the world.
- This was the first G-film released stateside without major edits. The dub was also excellent. AIP commissioned Titra to work on this one.

- The mayor doesn't respond to a crisis. Possible commentary?
- Godziszewski jokes the radioactive object they find is "something stinky."
- Godzilla shaking the dirt off was claimed by both Sekizawa and Nakajima.
- The G-suit's mouth was damaged and never repaired, hence why its often hanging open. Its expression is malevolent. Less serpentine. Smaller hands and feet, less bony.
- Godzilla doesn't willfully destroy anything. Force of nature.
- The castle was built too well over a week. Nakajima couldn't knock it over. Just a corner. It was rebuilt and weakened. The retake was filmed in close-up.
- The entire Frontier missile scene was never shown to Japanese audiences. Perhaps because of concerns over American military might being used on Japanese soil? A rare success by the military.
- The American title, "Godzilla vs. the Thing," was a publicity gimmick by AIP. They wanted to play up mystery. The poster had Godzilla fighting a giant question mark. Some wondered if it was a reference to the 1951 sci-fi film.
- Honda was disappointed that he couldn't have a big set for Infant Island like in *Mothra*. He wished he'd been "more stubborn" about getting more budget.
- The characters having suits and dresses on under their hazmat suits is odd, but it shows how they're out of place.
- "Sacred Spring" is the only time he composed a song for the Peanuts. It ends on an F-major chord like a Beatles song.
- The *Mothra* prop in the cave was reused from her movie. It's the one from the city attack.
- The tanks in this were literally toys from Ihara.
- By editing the shot of Kumayama's death but not the sound track, it makes *Morhra*'s theme start right after a closeup of Godzilla. There's a few seconds of silence in the Japanese cut.
- Calls *Mothra* hovering over the incapacitated Godzilla Tsuburaya's greatest achievement. Filmed at high speed and projected at a slower speed. Akin to stopmotion.
- The cameraman objected to the close-ups of the puppet when Godzilla attacks the tower because it didn't match the suit. Tsuburaya said capturing the action for story was more important. The cameraman had the same thing happen later.
- Godzilla rising over the mountain didn't have music by Ifukube, but Honda added a stock track. Ifukube didn't know until the premiere.
- The KKvG suit was used in the water scene and when webbed-up Godzilla fell in the water.
- The larvas' eyes were red at birth and blue later. They're red in later films. Changes depending on mood?
- The larvas' webbing is liquid Styrofoam. It's sticky, foul-smelling, and burned skin on contact (according to Norman England).

Kalat

- This yet another crossover film, but this time with two Toho kaiju.
- This is a merger of the dark tone of the early kaiju films and the emerging new comedic sensibilities.
- *Mothra*, a monster-god, sacrifices herself to save others, employing more religious symbolism than in her first film. She is morally and spiritually superior.

- The Japanese asking for help is profoundly humbling, even humiliating.
- Sekizawa's monster and sensibilities "win."
- When societies experience rapid economic growth, there is an increase in camp sensibilities. Hence the direction of Godzilla films going forward.
- Perhaps Frankie Sakai was to play Takarada's character?
- AIP encouraged theaters to post signs at wrecked or under-construction buildings that said, "Godzilla fought the Thing here!"

Honda biography by Ryfle and Godziszewski

- "The critical power of Godzilla was proportionately diminished" in the postwar period, says Yoshikuni Igarashi.
- The spirit of G54, the bright fantasy of *Mothra*, and the monster battles of KKvG.
- Honda knew that TV was overtaking movies, so he wanted to make something family-friendly that didn't pander to children. "Kids are more mature than we think."
- Sahara wanted to be the "best villain in the history of Godzilla films" after Honda told him to be a "villain with impact. He researched the role by hanging out with pushy real-estate agents, posing as a customer.
- Honda worried Sahara getting a bloody nose would ruin his cool guy image.
- The film was released just before the Golden Week holidays (April 20), a prime time for releasing a film.

Galbraith

- He says the matte work is uneven, but minor. He likes this Godzilla suit best. He says it isn't "ghastly playful" and has more personality than the current (Heisei?) suit.
- He says it is political for saying the government shouldn't turn its back on crooked businessmen, criticizes America for shirt-sighted nuclear tests, and the characters for asking for help when they turn their backs on their brothers, so to speak.
- August Ragone and Guy Tucker called it "the pinnacle achievement of the Godzilla series and Toho's SF/monster cycle."
- It was retitled "Godzilla vs. Mothra" for a while on home video.

LeMay – Big Book 1

- Disney was the only other studio in the world at the time with an optical printer.
- The Peanuts appeared in *Double Trouble* with Mie Hama and had a variety show between this and *Mothra*.
- Nakano claims the scene with the Frontier Missiles was made at the request of AIP.
- Nakajima helped design the G-suit and was finally publicly acknowledged as the man in the suit.
- Sold 3.5 million tickets (less than half of KKvG).

LeMay – Writing

- Borrows elements from *Continuation: King Kong vs. Godzilla* (see MIFV episode 5).
- Godzilla attacks Rolisica and goes to Japan, where the adult Mothra drags him into the ocean with webbing. There are no larva.

- The infant banned from entering Japan and other countries in *Continuation* becomes Happy Enterprises hoarding Mothra's egg.
- The characters offered themselves as hostages to get Mothra to go to Japan as opposed to her looking for her egg.
- Godzilla chases the characters on a beach in the climax and battles the twin larvae there.
- Junko finds one of Godzilla's teeth and becomes immune to electricity.
- Kodansha's novelization suggests Mothra evolved on Infant Island due to years of abnormal climate change.
- Storyboards had a more violent fight. Godzilla headbutts Mothra. Mothra bites Godzilla's shoulder. Mothra stands on hind legs to make a windstorm.

Apocalypse Then by Bogue

- It was ranked 6th overall (8.49/10, 1996) and then 2nd (8.5/10, 2014) in a *G-Fan* readers poll.
- Miura mentions that "they" tested nukes on Infant Island. This comes closer to mentioning the U.S.
- The humorous decon scene would never be in a kaiju film before this.
- Junko mentions that she "somehow...feels responsible" for the tests on Infant Island. Sakai mentions that anti-nuclear demonstrations don't make news anymore. The islanders group Japan with America for the tests (the alliance?) Neither have made restitution. Mothra doesn't seek vengeance against either.
- The dubbed version implicates all of mankind and says those who think of nuclear war should see the island.
- Ironically, the dubbed version implies it's okay for Godzilla to kill the guilty when the film implicitly implicates America!

Japan's Green Monsters

- Mothra's environmentalism opposes capitalism.
- The villains shift from a foreign capitalist to Japanese businessmen in bed with local politicians.
- Kumayama putting a price on the egg represents humanity's attempt to subjugate the supernatural and the natural. Only after overconsumption does humanity regret how it treats nature.
- Godzilla attacks Nagoya, an industrial center, and Nagoya Castle, which had been freshly rebuilt after the war.
- The anti-radiation drink is nature counteracting technology and militarism.
- Mothra's people reproof with words—Godzilla uses violence. The authors argue that by depicting the villains' deaths—a rare time named characters die on screen—the filmmakers are attacking unchecked capitalism.

Brothers

- The larva defeating Godzilla show nature's way of maintaining balance. Mankind's machines are nowhere connected to his defeat.
- Mothra is what is best in humanity while Godzilla represents what is worst.

- Argues there's a bit of Kimura's influence in this with how the characters create their own problems.
- The egg is a sacred object, but it is exploited for profit.
- Miura (mind), Sakai (body), and Junko (soul).
- The chief's makeup suggests golden tears.
- The natives must help their fellow humans because they have the ability to do so. To refuse would be inhumane
- Theme: do one's best despite the odds because there is no hope without effort.
- He says Tanaka asked for the Frontier missiles to be removed.
- Arikawa said that Godzilla was seen from the humans' perspective in the first film, so here the weakness of humanity is seen from Godzilla's perspective.
- Mike Copner says that "Mahara Mothra" makes the audience feel like "a privileged witness to a monumental event and a mystical secret seldom revealed," when the larvae are born.
- Ifukube composed over an hour of music for this film.
- Honda lessens the blow of Mothra's death Nakamura inadvertently riding a jeep.