

The Giant Claw Notes

THE FILM

- “Battleship” count: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11,
- How did no one know what this monster looked like? It’s in the trailer!
- The credits are against a close up of the Claw’s talons.
- The opening monologue is as relevant today as back then. The world has gotten smaller.
- Why hasn’t it been on MST3K?
- Corday says pilots are like children who need to be spanked, and the pilot says, “Oh, mother!”
- This narration is so unnecessary. Show, don’t tell, movie!
- The “battleship” count begins!
- Wow, this does start off similar to *Rodan*. The UFO story, especially.
- You have to either not notice how many times “battleship” is mentioned—or do it on purpose.
- “I thought the poop on the weather…” WTF?!
- Computer? Dang! This has to be one of the first films to reference computers.
- The drawback of HD: I see all the wires. They try hard to hide them.
- Four “battleships” in one scene!
- He should’ve called it a giant adding machine. There’s an idea. Very Douglas Adams.
- “Infantile jackass.” What was in that water to make him stop? Vodka? Moonshine? Applejack. The cure for snake bites, thunder, lightning, and disbelieving generals.
- Did the Claw get Pierre? How?
- “La Carcagne ”? French-Canadian legend? If you see this giant bird, you’ll die soon. So… it’s *The Ring* girl?
- Oh snap! The “controversial” sleeping kiss! It was the 1950s. “There are figures and there are figures.” I miss witty scripts.
- Corday’s character is quite capable and professional. Not unlike in *THEM!*
- They went ten minutes with a “battleship,” I think.
- I can’t fault him for quoting Shakespeare.
- Nearly 28 minutes in, and we finally get a look at Crazy Bernie.
- He eats a parachuting pilot. Referenced in KOTM19?
- McAfee? Isn’t he protecting my computer from viruses?
- Ten “battleships” in 30 minutes!
- “This makes me cook and head bottle washer at a birdwatching society.” Huh?!
- Ahhh! Flips to the slide of the close-up! Mugging! The Claw has crazy selfies.
- $2+2=6$
- The Big Bird… the Giant Claw on Sesame Street.
- “I’ve seen some mighty big chickenhawks in my time, but this takes the cake!” “I’ll never call my mother-in-law an ‘old crow’ ever again!”
- You ate Charlie, you monster!

- Machine guns, cannons, and rockets can't hurt him.
- Immune to radar.
- "Any suggestions"? "Electric spitballs!" "No, atomic spitballs!"
- I've seen Star Trek: I know that matter and antimatter destroy each other.
- Antimatter forcefield. That's an insane...ly cool power! Bernie himself isn't made of antimatter, though.
- That "feather" is way too small to be from Crazy Bernie.
- Crazy Bernie is a space monster—because his feathers broke electronic analyzers. Of course. An antimatter galaxy. This begs the question: how'd he get here?
- The general said a chaplain told him there wasn't a one-way phone line to the One whose help they needed. Rev. Mifune would disagree.
- "Cloud 8"? Not "Cloud 9"?
- Molecular osmosis? Energy from everything it destroys? Gotta love the pseudoscience. Even the scientists here on the Island are baffled by Crazy Bernie.
- You know what you haven't tried against Crazy Bernie? A BATTLESHIP!
- "Orgy of destruction." That's a metal album.
- Crazy Bernie caused quarantine before quarantine.
- Crazy Bernie sounds like a sputtering car.
- Caldwell knows how to sue a gun—because she's from Montana. Ha!
- Hold on—Crazy Bernie is female? Crazy Bernice?
- "My baby battleships!"
- Hey, it's Steve McQueen and his friends! They survived the Blob and got caught by the Claw. In fact, the car explodes after she drops it—because. Be it know: teens are stupid.
- "Phony as a 3-dollar bill."
- New mesons? They lived in a lab for one-two-millionth of second.
- So, the Claw's weakness...is technobabble. I've seen Star Trek.
- Not the train set! You monster!
- "Adjust the polarity"? He should've reversed it!
- Sally looked a bit too happy about McAfee needing pants.
- The weapon is on the tail and not the nose to avoid hitting itself and because the bird will chase them. Clever.
- The whole nesting thing is over. Now the Claw is just angry, I guess.
- Does it drop the shield so it can perch on buildings?
- Good grief, the Claw loves mugging the camera.
- The miniatures in this are...okay.
- Like a jPanek ekaiju film, this doesn't have a purely military solution. Science has to help first.
- T2 moment with the Claw's talons.
- Claw dead? The end! Abrupt.

Intro by Kim Newman

- The most Sam Katzman film of them all.
- It has the same airplane sequence as *Earth vs. the Flying Saucers*.
- The actors all thought they were making something with Harryhausen special effects because Katzman worked with him on *Earth* and *It Came from Beneath the Sea*.
- Harryhausen may have been attached at one point or he turned it down.
- He says it's similar to *Rodan*, but it's not called a "Golden Turkey" because it has Godzilla special effects.
- He says no one knows who made the effects. The story is it was done cheap in Mexico. It looks like something from a children's show. The ludicrous puppet is juxtaposed against being horrible as a monster.
- The puppet has primitive special effects in the face to create expression. The nostrils flair even though they shouldn't be able to.
- He argues that the effects in this were more commonly used in the '70s and '80s.
- Corday was also in *Tarantula*, which had a bit role for Clint Eastwood. Later, Eastwood gave her multiple bit roles in his films.

Commentary by Emma Westwood and Cerise Howard

- Exploitation films are the way through which the zeitgeist can be filtered.
- The opening narration speaks to the acceleration of science and Cold War anxiety. It also speaks to "the alien" or "the other," which is the Soviet Union.
- This film shows how globalism was starting to affect the U.S.: martial law is declared. It was a major adjustment.
- Monsters are always a response to something.
- (The incorrectly say Rodan is a bird).
- (Larry Cohen said Godzilla '98 as a ripoff of his film, Q: The Winged Serpent).
- La Cochonia is like a basilisk or a cockatrice.
- The Claw is a mash-up of tropes: folklore, kaiju, alien invasion (coincided with the Space Race, so we could be making contact).
- There was a sense at the time that technology was getting beyond the morals of humanity.
- Pierre is presented as an "alien" with his superstitions and accent. "Clucks" when he says, "La Coconia."
- The Claw print plays into UFOs and crop circles.
- Fred F. Sears, the director, didn't know what the effects would look like and was appalled. He was a journeyman filmmaker who'd made several films for Katzman.
- Katzman followed many trends in the many, many films he produced, including delinquency films.
- This was paired with *The Night the World Exploded*: terror from above and terror from below (earthquake). This was intended to appeal to a teen audience date night crowd and the drive-in. Drive-ins exploded from 150 or so in 1945 to 4,000 in 1959.

- Joe Dante says Jeff Marrow told him he walked out of the theater when the audience laughed at the Claw.
- They reference the same YouTube video I saw that does the “battleship” count!
- It’s very ‘50s in its direction, but it’s also on the cusp of nu wave. It has special effects shots, closed set scenes, and stock footage.
- The narration gives it a documentary feel, which was common at the time. It also smooths over the narrative.
- The science exposition scenes are long.
- Theaters were encouraged to give out turkey feathers to audiences.
- They quoted an essay published in 1965 that outlined the typical formula of sci-fi films at the time—threat seen and disbelieved, threat confirmed, meetings, destruction, more meetings to find weakness—and said that science fiction had gone from plucking the audience out of the mundane and normalizing the extraordinary to spectacle and destruction.
- Joe Dante was a fan of this.
- John Carpenter wrote a column for *Film Comment* called “Guilty Pleasures,” and spoke of how he enjoyed it. He called it the best bad monster movie.
- The lighting switches to “noir” for the teens.
- They suggest this would be good on double bill with *Rodan*.
- The monster attacking the U.N. is highly symbolic. The U.N. was new (a decade old) and seen as a “white knight world police.”
- The monster is revealed all at once and too well-lit.
- (They said Godzilla was an alien from the sea?!)

“Family Endangered!” by Mike White

- Katzman should be discussed along with the likes of Corman.
- He produced over 100 films in various genres that seemed popular or profitable.
- Directed by Fred F. Sears, a blacklisted actor.
- A good mystery undermined by a dime store creature.
- The Claw represents nuclear missiles coming out of the sky. It’s immune to radar, the one thing that could detect missiles.
- These films have creatures threatening the family by keeping a couples apart or threatening the sanctity of the home.

“The Giant Claw: An Introduction by Stephen Bissette”

- It was written and filmed exactly like the previous films with effects by Harryhausen. Katzman liked his formulas.
- Fred F. Sears died later that year—and is remembered most for this film.
- This is the closest a film has come to adapting the American Thunderbird legend.
- Katzman preferred musicals to SF, and after this shifted his focus to those, including *Rock Around the Clock* and a pair of Elvis Presley features.

“Turkey in the Sky!: The Appealing Legacy of The Giant Claw” by Jackson Cooper

- “Katzman’s career follows the undulating topic of social concern, banking quickly on fads, fears, and features that are ripped from today’s headlines and crafted into schlocky, easy-to-digest consumable media.”
- What the big bird represents is unclear, unlike Godzilla.
- Harryhausen had already made a working prototype for the Claw.
- He compares this to the cash-grab rush-job of *Godzilla, King of the Monsters!* (1956). Stock footage from *Earth vs. the Flying Saucers*, *The Day the Earth Stood Still* and others are used.
- It was forgotten for years until late-night TV showings and home media releases rekindled interest.
- “To re-watch *The Giant Claw* is to stare in awe of how vision versus execution can lead to a kind of infamy. An infamy reserved for the likes of Ed Wood and Roger Corman: beloved, eccentric, and oh so creative.”

Creature Features by Schoell

- The Claw looks like a marionette from the Kukla, Fran, and Ollie puppet show.
- “La Kakana” has the “face of a woman and the body of a woman” with wings.
- The film juxtaposes the comical and grotesque.
- It has stock footage from *It Came from Beneath the Sea*.
- The actors don’t seem able to play more than one emotion. He comments how the couple seem unaffected by the pilot’s death.
- One teen girl says she has “salt to shake on its tail,” and after the Claw attacks them, Sally finds the unbroken salt shaker.

Keep Watching the Skies! By Warren

- Calls it the funniest 1950s monster movie.
- Corday says it took nine days to shoot.
- It’s prehistoric and extraterrestrial—and somehow not radioactive. (Although, nanograms of antimatter are generated by radioactive decay...).
- Corday says Katzman bragged to her about how good the special effects from Mexico were. She expected something horrifying. He said he blew most of the budget on the effects.
- The Claw looks like Beaky Buzzard.
- There’s stock footage from *War of the Worlds*.
- Ralph Hammeras, George Teague, and an uncredited Larry Butler are credited with the special effects, but it’s doubtful they went to Mexico. So, those responsible for the Claw remains a mystery.

TOKU TOPIC: ANTIMATTER

- The concept goes back as far as the 1880s and 1880s. William Hicks discussed it “using the once popular vortex theory of gravity, the possibility of matter with negative gravity.” “Karl Pearson proposed the existence of ‘squirts’ and sinks of the flow of aether. The squirts represented normal matter and the sinks represented negative matter. Pearson’s theory required a fourth dimension for the aether to flow from and into.”
- “The term antimatter was coined by Arthur Schuster in two rather whimsical letters to *Nature* in 1898, in which he coined the term. He hypothesized antiatoms, as well as whole antimatter solar systems, and discussed the possibility of matter and antimatter annihilating each other. Schuster’s ideas were not a serious theoretical proposal, merely speculation, and like the previous ideas, differed from the modern concept of antimatter in that it possessed negative gravity.”
- Paul Dirac formulated a quantum theory in 1930 (or 1928?) that was the first to include Einstein’s theory of relativity that positioned that electrons needed the existence of another particle of equal mass but opposite charge. This was called a positron because it was positive. “Dirac was looking at solutions to an equation that described the movement of an electron traveling near the speed of light. “Just as the equation $x^2 = 4$ can have two possible solutions ($x = 2$ or $x = \text{minus } -2$), so Dirac’s equation could have two solutions, one for an electron with positive energy, and one for an electron with negative energy,” according to CERN.”
 - These were confirmed a year later in experiments, where such particles were seen passing through lead pipes. “Positrons were discovered a few years later by American California Institute of Technology physicist Carl Anderson (opens in new tab), who was studying highly energetic cosmic rays that come from space and hit Earth’s atmosphere, producing a shower of other particles. In his detector, Anderson witnessed a trace of something with the same mass as an electron but with a positive charge. An editor at the journal *Physical Review* suggested the name positron for the particle, according to the American Institute of Physics.”
 - Both Dirac and Anderson received the Nobel Prize for Physics for these discoveries.
 - “Antimatter came about as a solution to the fact that the equation describing a free particle in motion (the relativistic relation between energy, momentum and mass) has not only positive energy solutions, but negative ones as well! If this were true, nothing would stop a particle from falling down to infinite negative energy states, emitting an infinite amount of energy in the process--something which does not happen.”
 - The Feynman–Stueckelberg interpretation states that antimatter and antiparticles are regular particles traveling backward in time.[18]
- “Particles with no electric charge, like neutrons, are often their own antimatter partners. But researchers have yet to determine if mysterious tiny particles known as neutrinos, which are also neutral, are their own antiparticles.”
- “New discoveries lead to new language. In coining the term “antimatter,” physicists in fact redefined the meaning of the word “matter.” Until that time, “matter” meant anything with substance; even today school textbooks give this definition: “matter takes up space

and has mass." By adding the concept of antimatter as distinct from matter, physicists narrowed the definition of matter to apply to only certain kinds of particles, including, however, all those found in everyday experience."

- "Democritus, the ancient Greek philosopher and mathematician, envisioned structure in the building blocks of everything and he called the basis for this structure an atom; he wrote, "nothing exists except atoms and empty space: everything else is opinion." At the atomic level, the world can be described in terms of the elements, including hydrogen, oxygen, carbon and the like."
- "Any pair of matching particle and antiparticle can be produced anytime there is sufficient energy available to provide the necessary mass-energy. Similarly, anytime a particle meets its matching antiparticle, the two can annihilate each other, that is, they both disappear, leaving their energy transformed into some other form."
- There's no intrinsic difference between particles and antiparticles. The Laws of Physics apply to them both with only minor differences. But the world is made of matter, so any antimatter produced in labs is quickly destroyed.
- Many theories require the existence of antimatter for the creation of the universe, but it's unknown why antimatter is uncommon now. If it wasn't, though, everything would be converted into electromagnetic radiation. One theory says that more matter than antimatter was created during the Big Bang, and after the mutual destruction was done, there was enough matter left to form stars. Another is that neutrinos are their own antiparticles and were able to convert from antimatter to matter. Frank Close, a particle physicist at the University of Oxford, has theorized that there are domains of antimatter that formed into anti-galaxies and anti-stars—just like in the movie.
- "It also enables us to depict the "motion" of certain particles inside atoms. Indeed, atoms are made of electrons that whiz around the fixed protons and neutrons in their nuclei, which are made of quarks. These particles all interact with each other by means of "force messenger" particles, such as photons, gluons, W's and Z's. Based on the attributes of these particles, we assign them identification numbers, or quantum numbers. And by means of symmetries and conservation laws involving the quantum numbers of the particles, we can describe their interactions. Examples of such numbers are charge and intrinsic angular momentum, or spin."
- "Experimentally, the absence of annihilation radiation from the Virgo cluster shows that little antimatter can be found within ~20 Megaparsecs (Mpc), the typical size of galactic clusters. Even so, a rich program of searches for antimatter in cosmic radiation exists. Among others, results from the High-Energy Antimatter Telescope, a balloon cosmic ray experiment, as well as those from 100 hours worth of data from the Alpha Magnetic Spectrometer aboard NASA's Space Shuttle, support the matter dominance in our Universe. Results from NASA's orbiting Compton Gamma Ray Observatory, however, are uncovering what might be clouds and fountains of antimatter in the Galactic Center."
- "Humans have created antimatter particles using ultra-high-speed collisions at huge particle accelerators such as the Large Hadron Collider, which is located outside Geneva and operated by CERN (the European Organization for Nuclear Research). Several experiments at CERN create antihydrogen, the antimatter twin of the element hydrogen.

The most complex antimatter element produced to date is antihelium, the counterpart to helium.”

- “You’ve heard of particle accelerators, but did you know there were also particle decelerators? CERN houses a machine called the Antiproton Decelerator, a storage ring that can capture and slow antiprotons to study their properties and behavior.”
- Small amounts of antimatter hit Earth in the form of cosmic rays. “These antimatter particles reach our atmosphere at a rate ranging from less than one per square meter to more than 100 per square meter.” Scientists have also observed antimatter production above storms. Weirder still, bananas produce antimatter! They produce one positron every 75 minutes as potassium-40 breaks down. Our bodies also have potassium-40—so we do the same thing!
- “Antimatter at lower energies is used in Positron Emission Tomography (see this PET image of the brain). But antimatter has captured public interest mainly as fuel for the fictional starship Enterprise on Star Trek. In fact, NASA is paying attention to antimatter as a possible fuel for interstellar propulsion. At Penn State University, the Antimatter Space Propulsion group is addressing the challenge of using antimatter annihilation as source of energy for propulsion. See you on Mars?”
- There’s an antimatter bomb in *Angels and Demons*. A gram of antimatter can produce an explosion equal to a nuclear bomb. However, “[i]f all the antimatter ever made by humans were annihilated at once, the energy produced wouldn’t even be enough to boil a cup of tea.” “The problem lies in the efficiency and cost of antimatter production and storage. Making 1 gram of antimatter would require approximately 25 million billion kilowatt-hours of energy and cost over a million billion dollars.”
 - “Antimatter has been considered as a trigger mechanism for nuclear weapons.[87] A major obstacle is the difficulty of producing antimatter in large enough quantities, and there is no evidence that it will ever be feasible.[88] Nonetheless, the U.S. Air Force funded studies of the physics of antimatter in the Cold War, and began considering its possible use in weapons, not just as a trigger, but as the explosive itself.”
- Some theorize that antimatter falls up because gravity’s effect on antimatter is difficult to observe. The current theory says gravity has the same effect.
- “A rough estimate to produce the 10 milligrams of positrons needed for a human Mars mission is about 250 million dollars using technology that is currently under development,” Gerald Smith of Positronic Research LLC, in Santa Fe, New Mexico, said in a 2006 article for NASA. The cost might seem high, but it still costs around \$10,000 per pound to send something into orbit, so a large spaceship plus its human crew would also be expensive to launch.”
- “More recently, NASA researchers have looked at the possibility of using the energy produced by matter-antimatter collisions to send a probe to the nearest star system, Alpha Centauri. The energy in the collisions would allow the vehicle to accelerate to 10% the speed of light and then slow itself enough to explore Alpha Centauri, potentially for decades.”

- Antimatter comets and meteors have been theorized, but they're unlikely to exist in the Solar System.

Antimatter sources

- [What is antimatter? - Scientific American](#)
- [The five greatest mysteries of antimatter | New Scientist](#)
- [Ten things you might not know about antimatter | symmetry magazine](#)
- [What is Antimatter? | Live Science](#)
- <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antimatter>