

Invasion of Astro-Monster (aka Godzilla vs. Monster Zero)

- The film opens with Ifukube's most iconic piece of music: "The Monster Zero March." For most fans, it is the definitive Godzilla theme. The only other piece that gives it any competition is the original theme from *Gojira*. This song is one of many things that contributed to *Monster Zero* becoming such a fan-favorite.
- Ifukube's music also emulates that of American sci-fi, what with its high-pitched stringed instruments.
- Set in the near future ("196X") and features the World Space Agency, which I guess is an international version of NASA.
- The dubbed Nick Adams looks and sounds weird. Now I know how foreigners feel when they watch English-dubbed versions of their films. The lip movements just don't look right, especially since I know what Adams is actually saying. The subtitled dialogue is often quite different.
- Sekizawa once again uses a brother-sister-boyfriend dynamic like he did in *King Kong vs. Godzilla*. It's an easy and identifiable way to create drama, but I also suspect it was a common thing in Japanese culture. "Control my social like men did in olden days."
- The name Planet X may have been taken from the theory tenth/ninth (hence "X") planet in the Solar System. In conspiracy theory circles, Planet X (or Nibiru) is a planet in a weird orbit that's supposedly on a collision course with Earth. (It's not unlike Toho's film *Gorath*). Regardless, I'm sure Sekizawa just used the name because it sounded cool.
- The rocket technology is more advanced than what existed in the 1960s, but not so much that it seems absurd. There's no artificial gravity or whatnot. However, they're able to cover distances much faster than in real life. This is a fantasy world, though, so the creators can do what they want so long as it makes sense in universe.
- There are some great outer space SFX. The model rockets and ships look great. Tremendous care was obviously put into them.
- Kumi Mizuno is in top form as Ms. Namikiawa. She's an icon for a reason.
- I'm also a fan of the old-school sci-fi sets and landscapes. It very much looks like American sci-fi films from the 1950s and the covers of old pulp magazines. Very Star Trek TOS.
- Great foreshadowing for the appearance of Ghidorah by using the lightning. It creates atmosphere and mystery.
- Fuji plants a flag on Planet X. This is interesting because this film predates the lunar landing, where astronauts famously planted an American flag on it. U.S. audiences didn't see the film until 1970, the year after the lunar landing, so the precedent was lost on them, however it was a familiar image. What's interesting is Fuji's flag includes the colors/emblems of America, Japan, and the U.N. A subtle expression of Honda's favorite theme.
- While the previous film featured a disembodied extraterrestrial, here we have the Godzilla franchise's first alien race: the Xiliens (or Xians). They have a memorable design—black and gray jumpsuits, skull caps with antennas, La Forge-style visors—and a well-realized culture. They speak in a monotone and shun emotions. Their thoughts and

actions stem from computer programming. Their society is orderly, efficient, and depersonalized. People either have titles or numbers instead of names. Once that order and programming is disrupted, they're unable to function. Most of this is shown rather than said.

- Their leader, the Controller, is a great villain, exemplifying everything about their race. I personally prefer this name to the Commandant in Japanese. It gives more of a sense of mechanization and computerization, like he's a CPU and his people are components of a computer. Tsuchiya improvised his weird gestures and the little bits of Xilien language we hear.
- Nice foreshadowing when the Controller blocks out Fuji and Glenn (cone of silence?) from hearing the report on their water production facility being damaged. It also creates some suspense. There's also the scene where the Controller laughs maniacally when Fuji and Glenn leave. (Show of emotion?)
- The dubbed version says it's a miracle drug for all diseases and not just cancer, but a medical delegate says in the Japanese version that it could lead to other breakthroughs.
- A housewife delegate?
- The Xiliens run a corporation as a front. This predates *Godzilla vs. Gigan*, although in that film that was the invaders' entire plan as opposed to just part of it. Is the "president" tanning or baking himself like a burger?
- Background checks, Glen? Everyone does that now.
- "Moaned all night"? That's some implications there, Glenn, you dog!
- Friendship Day," huh?
- It makes sense that humans still don't quite trust Godzilla and Rodan. They both just had a face turn.
- The Xiliens motivation for conquering Earth is that they need water. There is precious little of it on Planet X. That's why they have a factory to produce it. Was it always like that? Or did the Xiliens exhaust their water supply?
- The Xiliens are a technological, computerized, mechanical race. This is shown rather than told for the most part.
- They have trap doors. Classic.
- Elevators poke up from ground like gophers.
- The Xilien language sounds garbled and computerized. Intentional? I know the actors improvised it.
- The Xilien Earth commander looks like Agent Smith in his civilian garb. He's also called "president." Interesting.
- Earth is ordered to become a colony of Planet X. Interesting choice of words.
- The Xiliens built soundproof prison bars to avoid their weakness. You'd think there would be more constructs like that.
- The Lady Guard noise is annoying. No wonder it kills them. I heard it was relevant because of rape. How is this noisemaker an educational toy?

- -Ghidorah appears 19 minutes in.
 - -Godzilla is sleeping in Lake Myojin. Rodan is in a mountain in Mashigawa.
- -The Xiliens offer the humans the cure for cancer in the Japanese versions and not a wonder drug that cures all disease. The former makes much more sense. Although there's a line about there being no fatal disease if cancer is cured. Did they forget about bacteria and viruses?
- -A return to the Diet, where debate is had about how to respond to the Xiliens' offer. The discussion here is much more civil than that in the previous film, although there isn't a crisis going on.
- -A representative expresses shame over world conflicts, saying the world should unite in response to the Xiliens' offer. This seems like a very Honda thing to say.
- -Why is Tetsuo's device called the Lady Guard? Is it meant to be carried by women and sounded when they're mugged?
- -Saperstein wanted greater international appeal for this film, which explains a lot of its elements (faster-paced story, heavy sci-fi, Nick Adams, etc.)
- -Fake out: UFO emerges from roiling water instead of Godzilla.
- -There are lines that say Godzilla and Rodan are destructive creatures. Aren't they heroes now? I suppose not everyone has accepted the change in their behaviors.
- -Godzilla appears 38 minutes in. Rodan appears 39 minutes in.
- -Tiny kiss! Glenn and Namikawa share a rare display of affection in a Japanese Godzilla film. There wouldn't be another on-screen kiss again until Godzilla (2014).
- The Controller and his big golden chair. Ha!
- This is the one and only time any of these monsters appear on screen on another planet.
- Godzilla's (in)famous victory dance. This was popular in Japanese pop culture at the time. I've heard it was started by a manga character or popularized by a Japanese comedian. Regardless, it adds levity, even if it is a bit random. It was Nakajima's idea. Tsuburaya loved it but Honda hated it. It's become an iconic image in the fandom.
- While the monsters act quite silly, the audience does pity them when they're left behind on Planet X." Glenn remarks, "They cause trouble sometimes."
- "Colony." That's very specific language. We've talked about this before. It's not language you usually hear in western sci-fi. It makes sense coming from Japan.
- Panic breaks out around the world after the ultimatum is issued. Some want to fight while others want to surrender. This is only seen as part of a montage, but it's a different take on how the world would respond to alien invaders. And realistic. Normally, humanity is presented as uniting in resistance. It seems like a uniquely Japanese way of presenting the situation.
- There's talk of using nukes. Talk about Scylla and Charybdis.
- The humans now want to free Godzilla and Rodan from the Xiliens' control. They trust them now? That's a shift.
- A Japanese man in the Diet says they must pray. Is he a Christian? I know that's a rare religion in Japan.

- The constant countdown for the ultimatum is a great use of suspense. They forego it later, which is a nice move.
- More “mecha.” These would become staples of the franchise.
- There are some ground level shots of Godzilla’s feet crushing houses. These are relatively unique for this era of Godzilla films.
- This is the first Godzilla film to make major use of stock footage. It’s not a lot, though. I saw “New Kirk Motors,” so that was from *Mothra*.
- Ghidorah is in the western hemisphere (the U.S. in dubbed version). Too bad we didn’t get to see that. Cities outside of Japan are rarely seen in these films.
- What does the Controller mean when he says they will “escape into the future”? Is it time travel? Xilien afterlife? Another dimension?
- Godzilla’s eyes move inside the suit. Nice touch.
- Godzilla’s little boxing dance. Ha!
- Rodan uses Godzilla as a battering ram against Ghidorah. They fall into the ocean (again). Ghidorah retreats (again). He does that a lot.
- Glenn and Fuji are to return to Planet X to survey it. In the dubbed version, they’re to be ambassadors. Those are two very different things. Ambassadors makes more sense since they had served in a similar role earlier in the film. Plus, I assume there are still Xiliens on the planet. Their invasion failed and their leader is dead, so sending representatives from Earth to negotiate peace would be a good idea.
- Did Nick Adams think he was Humphrey Bogart in *Casablanca*? He says lines like “won’t mean a hill of beans.”

Commentary by Stuart Galbraith IV (Classic Media DVD)

- Ifukube’s theme here is similar to what he’d do for the *Daimajin* trilogy.
- The P-1 was inspired by NASA’s Gemini series.
- (This is the first of three co-productions between Toho and Henry G. Saperstein. The others were *Frankenstein Conquers the World* and *War of the Gargantuas*).
- Japanese films recorded the dialogue live, unlike Italian films. Sometimes the whirl of the camera can be heard.
- Kumi Mizuno said she didn’t need a translator when working with the Americans; she could tell what they were saying by their expressions. She appeared in as many as 11 films a year. Her genre debut was in *Gorath*. She was Honda’s favorite actress because she could play “westernized females” (more assertive and sexual).
- One of the P-1 models was ten feet tall! The special effects artists violated studio rules and dug a deep hole for the model to rise up.
- Nick Adams also appeared in *The Outer Limits* and *Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea*. He was described by Leonard Maltin as “a poor man’s James Dean.”
- UPA reportedly provided half of the film’s budget (\$800,000-\$900,000 dollars).
- There is a tradition in Japan for younger siblings to seek approval from older siblings for their betrothed. It’s not as commonly practiced anymore.

- The animator for the tractor beam said he modeled it after a neon for a nightclub in Shibuya.
- Tsuchiya modeled the Xilien language after European languages and the “tongue of the kappa.”
- Nick Adams had a tendency to fall for his leading ladies, and he was attracted to Kumi Mizuno. His wife filed for divorce just before production started on this film. He’d been infatuated with her that spring for *Frankenstein* despite his wife and two kids coming. Mizuno says Adams proposed to her, but she turned him down because she was already engaged.
- Tsuchiya suggested the dance to Tsuburaya, but everyone else opposed it.
- This film was the 9th-highest grossing domestic film. *Redbeard* was #1.
- Tsuchiya would teach Adams goofy things to say in Japanese. Basically, it was the equivalent to talking like a hillbilly. Tsuchiya was also the only one who recognized his disturbed state of mind. His performance seems hammy by American standards, but such high-key acting was common practice in Japanese genre films even now. They liked going big.
- Toho had scaled back on its releases, going from 79 in 1960 to 44 in 1965.
- The priest has both Buddhist and Catholic iconography. He’s credited as “Religious Representative.”
- The international title was the one used in Britain. This was released in the U.S. as *Monster Zero*. It took five years to release stateside because of Saperstein’s falling out with the head of AIP over *What’s Up, Tiger Lily?*
- Glenn was dubbed in Japanese by the voice of Lupin the 3rd.
- This would become the template for many G-films that followed, with invaders controlling monsters.
- Honda didn’t like using stock footage because the audience would spot it and not come, he said.
- Galbraith argued that CGI makes city destruction “too real” when these , for the most part, didn’t intend for thousands to be dying.

Barr

- He argues that the influx of invasion films in Japan was influenced by popularity of them at the time and “a Japanese awareness of the consistent ‘invasion’ of the United States into Japan’s autonomy on a variety of fronts, be they political, economic, or military.” In other words, this stemmed from Japan’s resentment toward being pushed away from neutrality by America in relation to things like the Vietnam War, etc.
- Godzilla goes from nuclear symbol to guardian of Japan as a form of wish fulfillment: Japan is pushing back against the outside invaders.
- The invaders lie to the Japanese, which results in aggression, and temporarily take over the country until Godzilla and Rodan, symbols of the country, repel the invaders. He implies it parallels the Occupation and later relations between the countries.

- Saperstein had a falling out with Samuel Z. Arkoff at AIP.
- Mothra and the Shobijin may or may not have been in the script at one point.
- This film was titled *Command from the Dark* in Germany, the title of a sci-fi novel by Hans Dominik, and was passed off as his work.
- Takarada was dubbed by Marvin Miller, the voice of Robbie the Robot.

Galbraith

- He calls the aliens “X-ites.”
- He questions why the “X-ites” would deceive the humans if they were already on Earth and could control the monsters.
- Adams asked if Tsuchiya could get Toshiro Mifune to dub him, and Tsuchiya said he could if Adams got Henry Fonda for him. Adams also learned to say, “You’re overacting!” in Japanese.
- The shie dance was inspired by the manga, “Ahsō Matsō-kun.”

Kalat

- This presents a cynical inverse of Honda’s usual theme: beware of those proclaiming brotherhood, for they may be enemies in disguise. These enemies don’t come out swinging like in most Hollywood films: they feign friendship and goodwill.
- The treaty between Japan and America was renewed with much protest in 1960 (see the Mothra ’61 episode for more).
- Reading these tensions into the film is a bit of stretch given a dual U.S. and Japanese flag is planted and one of the heroes is an American.
- Saperstein liked Sekizawa’s scripts, but thought they’d become formulaic. He particularly didn’t like them opening with expositional press conferences. He injected some American sensibilities into this and the other co-produced films.
- Tetsuo is much like the inventor in *King Kong vs. Godzilla*.
- He says Adams and Mizuno had an affair.
- The film mentions there are enough people on Earth who want to surrender to avoid conflict, which flies in the face of American sensibilities.
- The monsters are symbols for super-weapons, which the Xiliens foolishly believe they can control.
- He suggests the Xiliens had a hand in the events of the previous film.
- Honda called the shie dance “a disgrace.”
- This was the last G-film made by the Tanaka-Honda-Tsuburaya-Sekizawa-Ifukube team.

Honda bio

- The manga was *osumatsu-kun*.
- Scientists successfully cloned frogs and fish in the ‘50s and ‘60s, so Honda may have been commenting on the progress of science with the cloned Xilien women.
- The Xilien dialect includes French, German, Ryunosuke Akutagawa’s *Kappa* languages.

- Newcomer Keiko Sawai played a quiet Japanese woman who was also assertive. Honda told her: “You are a gentle and quiet type, but your character is propping up a weak guy and giving him a kick in the butt, so you must be assertive.”
- Adams and Honda were great friends, and Adams invited Honda and his family to a farewell party for him when he left Japan.

Brothers

- He says the script would make Ed Wood blush. He says it raises too many questions.
- The aversion to sound is repeated in *Attack of the Killer Tomatoes* and *Mars Attacks*.
- He says Sekizawa threw in cliché American gangster movie lines in here.
- Plan Two.
- Mizuno and Adams have great chemistry together and are memorable despite only having three dialogue scenes.
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