

## *Monster Island (2019, The Asylum) Notes*

### THE MOVIE

- What was the point of the “20,000 years ago” flashback that lasted five seconds?
- This set looks like someone’s basement with a black tarp.
- This movie has more subtitles for locations than *Shin Godzilla!*
- I’d bet money the joystick was stolen from someone’s gaming PC.
- Oh, so Not-Gerard Butler is on the news in the next room.
- “You didn’t put a gun to my head.” “Don’t give me any ideas!” Okay, that was kinda funny.
- But this script is full of cliches.
- A French sea captain. I thought this was a mockbuster for KOTM19, not *Godzilla* (1998).
  - There’s a scientist who studied kaiju.
  - Kaiju are said to explain natural phenomenon and myths.
  - It was broadcast on SYFY the day after KOTM19 (June 1).
  - Old scientist says the kaiju can’t be stopped.
  - Talk of monsters being destructive or guardians.
  - Shoots eggs with baby Rodans?
  - What did the “sonic weapon” do aside from be pointless? Oxygen Destroyer?
  - The characters scramble to revive a kaiju to fight the world-ending kaiju.
  - The dragons have heads that look like Skullcrawlers.
- “We’re groundbreakers, not lawbreakers!”
- “Geomythology”? That sounds made up.
- Exposition exposition exposition...
- Hold on...is that a bridge or a hotel room?
- “Manganese”? It’s “magnesium”!
- *The Abyss* is a true story, huh?
- 13 minutes in, and I don’t care about anything.
- This is somewhat better than most Asylum movies—which is to its detriment. It’s competent but boring.
- “The Cheetos Incident”? I can’t find anything about Cheetos and a space shuttle. There is debate over whether a Cheeto could take out the ISS on impact, though. (<https://futurism.com/speeding-cheeto-destroy-space-station>)
- 19 minutes in, and they drop the word “kaiju.” They’d never mentioned it before!
- Wait...that was a whale!
- The tentacle made a wave that big?
- Lava for blood. This kaiju has more in common with Rodan than *Godzilla*.
- How big is this sub?
- The Russian sub is way too spacious.
- Eric Roberts filmed his scenes in a hotel room in a weekend, didn’t he?
- I can’t understand the French captain half the time.
- 40 minutes in, and I’m still waiting for an island of monsters.
- They have a helicopter now? They have a helicopter now.

- That helicopter cab looks like it's indoors.
- “Tengu” translates as “the destroyer.” WRONG! It's “Heavenly Dog” or “Heavenly Sentinel.” Buddhism considered them to be harbingers of war in the past. (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tengu>). Might be related to Garuda.
  - <https://mythology.net/japanese/japanese-creatures/tengu/>
  - So, this “Tengu” is Starro? That's about as far from a dog or bird as you can get.
  - Starro gives birth to dragons? Are these Gyaos?
  - Flying Star-Tengu-puss.
- “Ky-yu”? Shut up!
- There's a wooden door on the ship's bridge.
- “You can bet your ‘bitches’” or “britches”?
- Well, it's been nice knowing you for five minutes, lady soldier.
- And then a main character is just as unceremoniously killed. Is that this movie Brian Cranston moment?
- Is the other monster's name “the Living Mountain” or “Kaiju Killer” (sorry, I mean, “Kiyu Killer”).
- It takes 70 out of 90 minutes to get to “Monster Island.”
- Wait...the dragon vomits lava...which is supposed to be blood?
- This movie spits in the face of physics. A starfish with wings that flies like it's three feet tall?
- Huh?! That's the climax?! The starfish-octopus envelops the Living Mountain, shoot it with an arrow dipped in lava blood in the eye, which unleashes energy—turning the kaiju into a spikey stone egg and vaporizing the Tengu...I think.
- “The whole world is Monster Island.” BS!
- Even by Asylum standards this is dumb. It lacks bad movie charm by being halfway-competent, but it's nowhere close to good. It's painfully mediocre.
- “Legal services by Scott Meehan.”
- Avery Guerra and Matt Frank are mentioned in “Special Thanks” and Robert Scott Field and “Voice Performance Islas Ogasawara Radio” are given “Very Special Thanks”?!
  - Avery was their publicist and “special advisor” and Matt Frank designed the Tengu.

*Damon/Raymund notes:*

- 1. D: That desk pun was brilliant: " ... that doesn't involve a desk. Do you know what that is?" "A wooden platform with four legs"
- 2. R: French captain of the hired boat, as costumed, is giving off Jacques Cousteau vibes ... possible violation of Use of Image?
- 3. D: Riley's acting is soooo horrendous ... except for his "scared" acting, which is seriously on-point. The actor himself is from a stage background, so I'm not sure what happened here (fear of the camera; multiple takes)
- 4. R: "General" Horne? Shouldn't Mr. Roberts be portraying an Admiral? Gary, get the Joint Chiefs of Staff on the line and figure out why on God's green earth a Navy man is

going by the rank of "general". Maybe it's due to Eric Roberts' general delivery of all his lines (haH!)

- 5. D and R: Ford's insistence with the "Admiral" that he should be part of the conflict because of all HIS company has done for the military smacks of the worst kind of Privilege imaginable -- Privilege of the Rich
- 6. D: Seeking out the "kaiju expert" (an off-the-grid recluse) echoes the part of the Hero's Journey where the protagonist seeks advice from a "magician/scholar/mentor/wizard/etc"
- 7. D and R: The kaiju expert's peculiar pronunciation of the word "kaiju" as KAI YU ... WTF? Is there any legal recourse when one abuses and savages another nation/culture's phraseology?
- 7a. R: She calls the starfish kaiju a Tengu ... which in Japanese folklore is a yokai or kami, that presents as a fusion of human, monkey, and avian ... known as a lethal trickster. Possible lawsuit from the Yokai community for Racial Misrepresentation
- 8. D: The baby kaiju from (sigh) the Tengu ... flying pterodactyl-things that spew molten rock? Seriously!?! And then Momma Tengu grows pterodactyl-like wings out of its top!?! What? Why? Where was the biological motivation for THAT?
- 8a. R: The vocalizations of the baby Tengu were a little too similar to the Shriekers/ Assblasters from the Tremors series ... I'm sure I can work up a good lawsuit for Unfair Use of Sonic Vibrations ... it'll probably be making new law, but by crackers I'm willing to go the extra mile!
- 9. D: Missed opportunity for one of the characters to say: "Here's blood in your eye!" when shooting the unimaginatively named "Walking Mountain". Good pastiche of the 1890s phrase of the Old West, "Here's mud in your eye", a self-congratulatory salute with liquor as the winning horse in a race kicks mud in the slower horses' faces.
- 10. R: The climax of this "movie" begins and ends far too quickly ... no suspense with the monster fight, no give-n-take of blows, no unusual powers on display ... more like a hug-fight you'd see down at the local gymnasium on Wednesday amateur fight night.
- 11. R: The title is also misleading ... "Monster Island" ... as the island itself had no extant monster before the awakening and "defeat" of the Tengu (and subsequent release of its spawn), as well as the resultant awakening of the Walking Mountain by sheer happenstance. Breach of Contract (with the audience) for fooling them into thinking this flick would be island-base and filled with critters and kaiju of all shapes and sizes!
- \*\*This last one is Pamela's observation, and necessitates that you're familiar with the Amanda Tapping show, "Sanctuary", which was her project post-Stargate SG1\*\*
  - Footnote. P: The Tengu is remarkably similar to a beastie on "Sanctuary" called (colloquially) Big Bertha ... also known as Kali the Destroyer ...She was a kaiju-sized marine arachnid-type, vastly old and intelligent; powers included resonating with the crust/mantle of the Earth to produce devastating earthquakes, tsunami, and forcing shifts in the tectonic plates. (Damon's addendum: the Tengu is a pale imitation at best, and a ripoff at worst -- Raymund's two-cents: Imitation may well be the sincerest form of flattery, but in legal circles that's called PLAGARISM! Gary, get my legal pad!)

- *Other sources:*
  - Written and directed by Mark Atkins.
  - Starring: Eric Roberts...and a bunch of unknowns named Chris Fisher, Adrian Bouchet, Meghan Oberholzer, Natalie Robbie, and Donna Cormack.
  - Monster Island aired twice in its television premiere on June 1, 2019. Exactly twelve days later, it was released on DVD on June 13. Three months later, Monster Island was available on SVOD on September 13.”
  - “Phil Wheat of *Nerdy* said of the film: ‘I’m not going to lie, this is yet another low-budget CGI-filled film from The Asylum and if you don’t like that sort of thing you’re not going to like this. But... but, if you’re like me and live for these cheesy, gloriously over-the-top, B-movies then there’s a LOT to recommend about Monster Island.’”
  - This isn’t the only “Monster Island” film:
    - *Monster Island* (2004) with Carmen Electra  
([https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0382856/?ref=fn\\_al\\_tt\\_1](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0382856/?ref=fn_al_tt_1))
    - *Mystery on Monster Island* (1981)  
([https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0082769/?ref=fn\\_al\\_tt\\_3](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0082769/?ref=fn_al_tt_3))
    - *Monster Island* (2017) (animated)  
([https://www.imdb.com/title/tt6269658/?ref=fn\\_al\\_tt\\_4](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt6269658/?ref=fn_al_tt_4))
    - *Clayboys on Monster Island* (1996, short)  
([https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0441153/?ref=fn\\_al\\_tt\\_16](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0441153/?ref=fn_al_tt_16))
    - *Monster Egg Island* (video game, 2014)  
([https://www.imdb.com/title/tt5589972/?ref=fn\\_al\\_tt\\_18](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt5589972/?ref=fn_al_tt_18))
    - *Monster Island* short films: [2012](#), [2014](#), [2016](#).
    - Various TV episodes: *Animal Planet Presents, Rambo, Cyborg 009* (2002), *The New Shmoo, Bounty Hamster, Ultraman Dyna* (“Battle! Monster Island”), *Spectreman* (“Infiltrate Monster Island!!”), *The Ultraman* (“The Mysterious Monster Island”), etc.
    - *Monster Island* (2021): Chinese; aka *Behemoth Island* in China
  - Outside of film...
    - *Monster Island: A Zombie Novel* by David Wellington
    - Monster Island in *Dragon Ball Z*
    - Monster Islands is a location in Roblox
    - Monster Isle (aka Monster Island and Kaibutsu Jima) is a location in Marvel Comics; first appeared in *Fantastic Four* #1 in Aug. 1961.

#### Sources

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- <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt10238788/>
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- [https://marvel.fandom.com/wiki/Monster\\_Isle](https://marvel.fandom.com/wiki/Monster_Isle)
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*The Asylum (studio)*

### The Asylum's Kaiju Movies

NOTE: This excludes their dinosaur movies, sci-fi movies, fantasy movies, and creature features with dubious "kaiju."

<b>Title</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Mockbuster of...</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<i>King of the Lost World</i>	2005	<i>King Kong</i> (2005)	-
<i>Monster</i>	2008	<i>Cloverfield</i>	-
<i>Mega Shark Versus Giant Octopus</i>	2009	N/A	-
<i>Mega Shark Versus Crocosaurus</i>	2010	N/A	Followed by <i>Mega Shark Versus Crocosaurus</i> in 2010, <i>Mega Shark Versus Mecha Shark</i> in 2014 and <i>Mega Shark vs. Kolossus</i> in 2015.
<i>Mega Piranha</i>	2010	N/A	-
<i>Moby Dick</i>	2010	N/A	-
<i>2-Headed Shark Attack</i>			Followed by <i>3-Headed Shark Attack</i> in 2015, <i>5-Headed Shark Attack</i> in 2017 and <i>6-Headed Shark Attack</i> in 2018

<i>Atlantic Rim</i>	2013	<i>Pacific Rim</i>	Also known as <i>Attack from Beneath</i> ; featured on MST3K
<i>Jack the Giant Killer</i>	2013	<i>Jack the Giant Slayer</i>	-
<i>Bermuda Tentacles</i>	2014	N/A	-
<i>Megalodon</i>	2018	<i>The Meg</i>	-
<i>Atlantic Rim: Resurrection</i>	2018	<i>Pacific Rim: Uprising</i>	-
<i>Monster Island</i>	2019	<i>Godzilla: King of the Monsters</i>	-
<i>Monster Hunters</i>	2020	<i>Monster Hunter</i>	-
<i>Ape Vs. Monster</i>	2021	<i>Godzilla vs. Kong</i>	-
<i>Megalodon Rising</i>	2021	N/A	Sequel to <i>Megalodon</i> .
<i>Attack on Titan*</i>	2022	N/A	Stole title from the manga/anime; actually about fighting aliens on Saturn's moon

- American indie film studio. They make low-budget direct-to-video (or TV) movies. Notorious for “mockbusters.” Best known for the *Sharknado* movies and SyFy’s *Z Nation* (which seems to be a knockoff of *The Walking Dead*). Their titles are distributed by Echo Bridge Home Entertainment, GT Media, and as of 2015, Cinedigm. They have a streaming service on PlutoTV.
  - They had at least one theatrical film: *Top Gunner: Danger Zone*. It played in six theaters.
- Founded in 1997 by director David Michael Latt and former Village Roadshow executives David Rimawi and Sherri Strain.
- OUR STORY: “**The Asylum** is one of the world's leading brand-oriented motion picture and television studios. With a focus on high-concept, market-driven entertainment, like the SHARKNADO franchise and the popular BLACK SUMMER and Z NATION TV series, The Asylum finances, produces and releases 25 films per year through its direct pipeline to the nation's top platforms and its network of international partners. Since its founding in 1997, The Asylum has released more than 500 films and has built a library of over 300 original productions, including top-rated programs for Netflix, Tubi, SYFY, Lifetime, Ion Television, Animal Planet, as well as Hallmark Channel, Sony Television, BET, and Universal TV. The Asylum’s apocalyptic thriller BLACK SUMMER was the #1 scripted series on its Netflix release. And its critically acclaimed action-horror series, Z NATION, is one of SYFY’s longest-running and highest-rated. Now THE ASYLUM MOVIE CHANNEL – a Free Ad-supported Streaming TV entertainment network, with over two million hours watched per month, is one of the top-rated OTT entertainment networks.”

- In 2005, they made a low-budget adaptation of *The War of the Worlds* to capitalize on the Steven Spielberg version, and Blockbuster ordered 100,000 copies (far larger than usual) thinking it was the Spielberg version. This made the studio rethink its business model.
  - Wikipedia: “Latt prefers the term ‘tie-ins’ to ‘mockbusters,’ stating that The Asylum’s productions, even those that capitalize on major releases, contain original stories. Latt states that the company plans its productions around the word of mouth of the financial prospects of upcoming films. The Asylum’s films are usually released on video shortly before the theatrical release of a major studio film with similar themes or storylines.”
  - Latt said, “I’m not trying to dupe anybody. I’m just trying to get my films watched. Other people do tie-ins all the time, they’re just better at being subtle about it. Another studio might make a giant robot movie that ties into the *Transformers* release and call it *Robot Wars*. We’ll call ours *Transmorphers*.”
  - Wikipedia: In 2009, Asylum producer David Rimawi stated in an interview that most Asylum films “break even after about three months.”
  - Their usual budget is “well under a million dollars.”
  - Latt: "We don't have spies at the studios. We have a general sense of what the film is and we make our movie completely original, just based on that concept." (Wikipedia)
- LAWSUITS:
  - 2008: 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox threatened legal action over *The Day the Earth Stopped*, a mockbuster of their remake of *The Day the Earth Stood Still*.
  - 2012: Universal filed a lawsuit over *American Battleship*, claiming it infringed on their film, *Battleship*. The Asylum changed the title of their movie to *American Warships*.
  - Wikipedia: “In 2013, Warner Bros., New Line Cinema, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer and *The Hobbit* producer Saul Zaentz commenced legal action against The Asylum for their film *Age of the Hobbits* (later called *Lord of the Elves*), claiming that they were "free-riding" on the worldwide promotional campaign for Peter Jackson's forthcoming films. The Asylum claimed its film is legally sound because its hobbits are not based on the J. R. R. Tolkien creations. The lawsuit resulted in a temporary restraining order preventing The Asylum from releasing the film on its scheduled release date.”
    - “In 2012, Warner Bros. Pictures, New Line Cinema, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, WingNut Films, and The Saul Zaentz Company (SZC) sued The Asylum for trademark infringement, false designation of origin, trademark dilution, false advertising, and unfair competition.”
    - They argued that Hobbits weren’t public domain like fairytale characters and were exclusively licensed by the Tolkien estate to WB.
    - Their “evidence included a survey showing that 48 percent of 400 surveyed respondents associated the term ‘Hobbit’ with SZC, d/b/a ‘Tolkien Enterprises’ and Tolkien properties. A separate survey conducted by Nielsen National Research Group showed that approximately 16 to 24

percent of survey respondents were confused about the source of *Age of the Hobbits*.”

- The Asylum’s defense: the word "Hobbit" was in fair use of scientific terminology because scientists borrowed the word from the novel to describe “a human species in Indonesia” and that they issued “warnings stating that this was not the Tolkien creature.” They also argued the plot was different enough: ‘In an ancient age, the small, peace-loving Hobbits are enslaved by the Java Men, a race of flesh-eating dragon-riders. The young Hobbit Goben must join forces with their neighbor giants, the humans, to free his people and vanquish their enemies.’”
- The court rejected these defenses: “(i) that it was permitted to use “Hobbits” in the title of its film pursuant to the free speech test of the Second Circuit’s decision in *Rogers v. Grimaldi*, (ii) that its use of the mark constituted nominative fair use to indicate plaintiffs' movies and (iii) that the ‘Hobbits’ mark was a generic name.” The court placed a temporary restraining order on The Asylum, preventing them from using the title *Age of the Hobbits*. “The Ninth Circuit court of appeals affirmed in 2013.” The film was released under the name *Clash of the Empires*.
- Wikipedia: “In 2021, several of The Asylum's executive producers, David Rimawi, David Michael Latt, Paul Bales and Steve Graham were placed on the Writers Guild of America West's ‘Strike/Unfair List’ for lack of payment on *Z Nation* residuals.”

### *Mockbusters*

- Also called “knockbusters” and “drafting opportunities.”
- Wikipedia: It “is a film created to exploit the publicity of another major motion picture with a similar title or subject. Mockbusters are often made with a low budget and quick production to maximize profits. ‘Mockbuster’ is a portmanteau of the words ‘mock’ and ‘blockbuster.’”
- Criteria - Wikipedia: “Unlike films produced to capitalize on the popularity of a recent release by adopting similar genre or storytelling elements, mockbusters are generally produced concurrently with upcoming films and released direct-to-video at the same time the film they are inspired by is released. A mockbuster may be similar enough in title and/or packaging that consumers confuse it with the actual film it mimics, but their producers maintain that they are simply offering additional products for consumers who want to watch more films in the same subgenres.”
- Mockbusters predate The Asylum by a long shot. They go as far back as 1959 with *The Monster of Piedras Blancas*, “a clear derivative of *Creature from the Black Lagoon*, complete with a creature suit by the same designer, Jack Kevan.”
  - *Attack of the 50-Foot Woman* (1958) led to *Village of the Giants* (1965) and *The Land That Time Forgot* (1974) spawned *Legends of Dinosaurs & Monster Birds* (1977).



- The modern mockbuster, due to its low budget derivation of an A-picture, fits the B-movie model.
  - “The 1979 film *Angels Revenge* bore many superficial similarities to the popular TV series *Charlie's Angels*; its promotional materials even resembled *Charlie's Angels'* graphic style.” (Wikipedia)
  - “In reverse, Glen A. Larson was accused of producing mockbusters at the height of his career, with his television series plagiarizing popular films of the time (*Battlestar Galactica*, for example, capitalized on the popularity of *Star Wars*, while *Alias Smith and Jones* was a take on *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*).
- This is also seen in other countries and subcultures:
  - Wikipedia: “In blaxploitation filmmaking, it was a common practice to title blaxploitation films after previously successful films starring predominantly white casts, and produce similarly titled films starring predominantly African American casts, as observed in the films *Black Shampoo* (1976, titled after *Shampoo*), *Black Lolita* (1975, titled after *Lolita*), *The Black Godfather* (1974, titled after *The Godfather*) and *Dr. Black, Mr. Hyde* (1976, titled after *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*).
  - Wikipedia: “GoodTimes Entertainment was notorious for distributing animated "mockbuster" counterparts to popular Disney films in the 1990s (such as those made by Golden Films); because Disney was creating its films based on public domain folk tales and historical stories, GoodTimes' actions were completely legal and survived Disney's legal challenge against it.”
  - Wikipedia: “Similarly, Vídeo Brinquedo is a Brazilian CGI animation studio that in 2004 began to produce low-budget direct-to-video films that are for the most part knockoffs of movies from Pixar, Disney, and DreamWorks.”
  - “Dingo Pictures was a German animation company founded in 1992” that “created traditionally-animated films based on fairy tales and concepts similar to those used by Disney, Pixar and DreamWorks. These cartoons are characterized by low-budget animation, small voice casts, and character designs that are very similar to equivalent characters in more high-profile films.” They filed for bankruptcy in 2012 In 2021, independent label Vier Sterne Deluxe Records began making radioplays based on the studio’s work. (Wikipedia)
  - Similarly, there are unofficial sequels/remakes in foreign countries. In Italy, Lucio Fulci made *Zombi 2* in connection to *Dawn of the Dead*. In the Philippines, there were unauthorized Batman movies like *James Batman* that capitalized on the 1966 TV show. Turkey is most infamous for this with movies like *The Man Who Saved the World*, which stole footage from *Star Wars* and *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. (Now known as “Turkish Star Wars”).
- Some mockbusters have little or nothing in common with the original film and simply copy the marketing materials or use a similar title (i.e. *Tangled Up* and *Tappy Feet*).
- Legality:
  - “Mockbusters based on popular animated films are known as a ‘drafting opportunity.’ For example, *Kiara the Brave* (a mockbuster of Pixar's *Brave*) and

*Puss in Boots: A Furry Tale* (a mockbuster of *Puss in Boots*) use soundalike titling to ‘draft off’ the marketing success (‘slipstream’) of popular films. ‘Can you trademark an actual noun? The idea of a battleship?’ asks *Boxoffice* magazine editor Amy Nicholson. ... ..mockbusters have become a source of bad publicity. Customers who had accidentally bought...*Puss in Boots: A Furry Tale* but did not know that it was a mockbuster gave the original movie bad reviews.” (Wikipedia)

- “In December 2013, The Walt Disney Company filed in California federal court to get an injunction against the continued distribution of the Canadian film *The Legend of Sarila*, retitled *Frozen Land*. In their suit, Disney alleges: ‘To enhance the commercial success of *Sarila*, the defendant redesigned the artwork, packaging, logo, and other promotional materials for its newly (and intentionally misleadingly) retitled film to mimic those used by Disney for *Frozen* and related merchandise.’ The suit was filed against distributor Phase 4 Films.”
- “Intent to deceive”: Major studios have claimed that mockbuster producers intend to fool customers that they’re getting the major films, which has been the grounds for their lawsuits.
  - “Warner Bros....sued The Asylum over their release of *Age of the Hobbits*. The judge ruled in favor of Warner Bros., writing that ‘There is substantial likelihood that consumers will be confused by *Age Of Hobbits* and mistakenly purchase the film intending to purchase *The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey*.’”
  - “The Asylum defend this practice, stating their intention is not to dupe customers. The Asylum cites reports from both Blockbuster LLC and Hollywood Video that show that less than 1% of customers who rent one of their films ask for a refund. That the low return rate of their films has been used to argue that consumers are renting The Asylum's films deliberately. ‘There's a segment of people who watch them because they know they're bad and they're funny, and they're fun to make fun of with their friends,’ says Kyle Ryan, the managing editor of *The A.V. Club*, a sister publication of *The Onion*.”