

"GOJIRA" **1954**

A 70th Anniversary Retrospective

Peter H. Brothers



GOJIRA 1954:

A 70TH ANNIVERSARY RETROSPECTIVE

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*To Bradford,
Many thanks
for your contribution!
- Peter H. Brothers*

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GOJIRA

by Bradford Grant Boyle

Some old timers knew *Godzilla, King of the Monsters!* was the greatest monster movie ever made way back when. Way back when other science fiction fans would scoff and attempt to humiliate you if you liked *Godzilla* and *kaijū* films. I'm talking about a long, long time ago. Back in the Jurassic, two million years ago (that was an inside joke, please do not correct my periodization).

Godzilla, King of the Monsters! - and remember, there is an exclamation point! - is not just a monster movie. It is a monster movie, the best monster movie, but the filmmakers were saying much more than "it's a monster movie." All the details and motives will surely be covered in exquisite detail in this book. But not here. The movie is so damn serious and full of messages that it makes me want to go back to simplicity before I knew the backstory. Back when *Godzilla, King of the Monsters!* was simply the best, a super great monster movie. We are here to discuss a GIANT UNSTOPPABLE MONSTER DESTROYING MANKIND!

Or rather how a giant unstoppable monster changed a boy in Salt Lake City. I loved monster movies from birth. I consider *The Wizard of Oz* my first monster movie. Still a scary movie. However, it was *King Kong* that solidified my monster movies synapses. Not the movie's namesake. Sure, Kong was great. But real monsters don't have a weakness for blondes, unless for dinner. For me, *King Kong* was about the supporting cast: Stegosaurus. Brontosaurus. A plesiosaur. And of course Tyrannosaurus Rex. I remember thinking: "They should have caught a T. Rex and taken it back to New York instead of Kong."

The ability to watch the genre of my choice was limited when I was very young. There was a monster movie late every Friday night on Salt Lake City's *Nightmare Theater*. Some idiot wrote a book about that show. But it was broadcast too late for my age bracket. My movies when I was wee were were limited to daylight hours. Salt Lake City in the Pliocene Era had only three channels. This is 1960s Utah, so let's just say daytime programming was on the conservative side. But I aged. Soon *Nightmare Theater* was possible, both from parental approval and my ability to stay awake. Despite the popular local religion, my Mom kept the fridge stocked with Coca-Cola, which was a great help. On October 30th, 1970, a boy - about to turn ten years old - consults the Salt lake Tribune television section to read: "1 a.m. *Nightmare Theater*. 'GODZILLA,' starring Raymond Burr."

Things changed that night.

It was, after that, as senior *kaijū*ologist Richard Campbell would say: "Godzillamania." But where to score the fix for my newly-acquired addiction? I was limited to what was broadcast on television, or shown at the movie theaters. I was unaware of fandom. Needless to say, there was no internet, or VCRs, or cable TV. *Famous Monsters of Filmland* was unknown in Salt Lake City. Seeking out fellow fans, I found the "Science Fiction Discussion Group" met at the main library, and called them. I asked if they would be discussing Godzilla at an upcoming meeting and got a snotty response. Something about Larry Niven.

Godzilla wasn't aired locally in 1971, but three times in 1972. That year, *The Monster Times* began publication. *The Monster Times* understood Godzilla and *kaijū* love. My walls were laden with *kaijū* movie posters, including the one-sheet from the first film. I developed a network of penpals across America who had the same disease. I started publishing a fanzine, and soon found myself editing and publishing *Japanese Giants*, which became one of the premier *kaijū* fanzines. One of the first serious articles written about Godzilla, *King of the Monsters!* appeared in issue No. 3: "Godzilla, Coincidence or Allegory?" The author? Peter H. Brothers.

Now, five decades later, I am writing a short piece for a Godzilla book written by the same author. Remember: there's an exclamation point at the end of *Godzilla, King of the Monsters!*, and it belongs there!



Promotional overseas "B1-Size" poster (73 x 103 cm - 29 x 40 in)
created by Toho's International Department for overseas export.