

**An Official 'Bad-Bug-Movie' Review
ENT 812, Insects in the Cinema
Michigan State University**

Mothra (or Godzilla Vs. The Thing)
Reviewed by Stephen Burr



Who's Who

Mothra vs. Godzilla came out in 1964 and was directed by Ishiro Honda who directed many other monster films such as Destroy all Monster, King Kong Escapes and Space Amoeba. He had quite the flare for the “big monster” if not the “big budget” picture. Akira Takarada, who plays the news reporter Ichiro Sakai, also made quite a living running from monsters, Godzilla in particular. Takarada starred in five movies with the giant lizard including Godzilla vs. the Sea Monster, Godzilla: Final Wars, and plain old Godzilla. Photographer Junko Nakanishi is played by Yuriko Hoshi. Hoshi’s career began in 1959 with the movie the Path Under the Plane Tree, and has since performed in 85 feature films. The latest of her work was in 2007 in a film entitled Free and Easy 18. Most surprising is the film music director Akira Ifukube. I found it strange that a classically trained composer would be in the credits of a Godzilla movie, but this was not the only time his name and Godzilla’s appeared together. He also wrote the score for such films as Godzilla vs. King Ghidorah, Godzilla vs. Mechagodzilla II, and Godzilla vs. Destoroyah. I also found it interesting that Akira Ifukube originally went to University to study Forestry, but instead wound up composing monster hits.

PLOT

Mothra Vs Godzilla opens to a torrential typhoon, smashing against Japan’s coast. Wave after wave slams against buildings, ships and of course the new Happy Enterprises Industrialization project. The achievements of man are tossed about as if they were nothing but a child’s toys. With the coming of dawn, the storm abates and Japan is left to pick up the pieces of nature’s wrath.

Enter two of the show’s heroes, or rather hero and heroine, News reporter Ichiro Sakai and photographer Junko Nakanishi. The pair arrives amongst the wreckage to document the catastrophic typhoon, but find themselves at the beginning of the “Biggest” story of their lives.



The typhoon has not only demolished the coastline but has also struck the nearby Infant Island. The storm dislodges a gigantic egg from the isle and hurls it upon the Japanese beach. Locals salvage the egg and scientists gather to study the find, most prominent of which is Professor Miura. As the Professor scrapes flecks off the egg, for reasons only he knows, the cold hearted business man Kumayama of Happy Enterprises slithers forward. He announces that he has purchased the egg from the local villagers and demands research stops. The egg is his property. He plans to use it as tourist attraction, and cannot risk them injuring his prize. Without knowledge of what is inside, Happy Enterprises constructs a gigantic chamber around the egg for the purpose of incubation.

Now of course Professor Miura, who only hours before had not time for the pair of journalists, invites them back to his hotel room to discuss the foolishness of Kumayama. They set about trying to determine the true power behind the throne, the hand that holds the strings of Happy Enterprises.

In another room, in that very hotel, sits Jiro Torahata, the head of Happy Enterprises. He is meeting with Kumayama to finalize plans for the tourist attraction. In this scene it becomes painfully obvious how the creators of the film viewed business men, self-centered, greedy, thinking only of profit and personal gain. As the two discuss their venture and congratulate themselves on their evil deals, twin mysterious voices are heard. Enter the Shobijin (Japanese for "small beauties"). Twin fairies, servants of Mothra, they beg for the eggs safe return. But the greedy businessmen think only of profit and attempt to capture the Shobijin, and ignore their pleas. As the girls make their escape, Ichiro Sakai enters with his masterful plan of discovering the true head of Happy Enterprises. "Did I hear a fight?," he announces upon entering the room. Jiro Torahata quickly ushers him back into the hall, but his plan was successful, he now knows who they are dealing with. He races off to share his findings with his conspirators.

Nearby in the woods Ichiro Sakai meets with Junko Nakanishi and Professor Miura to reveal what he has learned. They are approached by the Shobijin. Having failed with the businessmen, the twin fairies hope they will have more luck with the scientist and reporters. It is in this conversation that we learn of Infant Island, Nuclear testing had been conducted there, and the egg, prize of Happy Enterprises, belongs to Mothra. The three agree to aid the Shobijin and they see Mothra for the first time.

Our three heroes go to Kumayama and Jiro Torahata and appeal to their sense of justice and decency, but the businessmen are overcome by their greed. The three try again and again, warning against the repercussions if the egg is not returned, even showing the Shobijin to reason with the two men, but this fails. The Happy enterprises executives again only think of profit and offer to buy the twins. Ichiro Sakai, Junko Nakanishi and Professor Miura begin to abandon hope. The Shobijin leave with Mothra, thanking the three, and telling them that though they failed in their efforts to retrieve the egg, the girls will never forget the three's kindness.



Moving forward, Happy Enterprises completes their construction of the incubator and begins the process of hatching the egg. Sakai and Junko are phoned by Professor Miura. They are informed that the egg is radioactive. They go back to the original site of the typhoon to test for radioactivity. The earth begins to move and collapse. Deep from below the earth erupts a mighty tail, up stands Godzilla, and he is pissed!!!

Godzilla begins by destroying the Happy Enterprises industrial complex, smashing and crushing everything in his path. People run for their lives as the mighty beast stumbles through the city.

Government officials jump into action, calling the nearby American fleet to aid in stopping Godzilla. The US sends a barrage of missiles, explosions burst all around the lizard. The fleet fires again and again. The Americans continue firing until all that can be seen is a cloud of smoke. The military pauses to see if the attack has been successful. As the smoke clears from the attack, out steps Godzilla, and he emits his infamous roar. This is an odd portion of the film, not so much because of the actions of the characters, but because just twenty years after American bombs had decimated Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the American military comes to the aid of the Japanese people.

Back at the newspaper Sakai, Junko, and Professor Miura discuss the military's efforts with Sakai's editor. The editor believes the combined efforts of the US and Japan will fail in their attempt to stop the monster. Jiro, another reporter (who is always stuffing his mouth with eggs) suggests that they should go to Mothra and ask her to defeat Godzilla. Sakai and Junko doubt that the Shobijin would agree



because of the atomic testing conducted on Infant Island, as well as the terrible way they were treated by Happy Enterprises executives, who failed to return the egg. Left with no other alternatives, Sakai, Junko, and Professor Miura head to Infant Island to beg for Mothra's help.

Upon landing on the island, they are met with a scene of devastation from the nuclear tests. They are set upon by the local villagers painted red and brought before the chief of the tribe. The chief refuses their request, and curses them "may your land be ruined like ours," he exclaims. Just then the Shobijin are heard singing, silence overcomes the tribe. Sakai, Junko, and Miura move to the Shobijin, followed by the tribe. They again request Mothra's assistance, but are again refused. Junko pleads through tears that the good are being killed alongside the villainous. Mothra ends the argument. She is weak, and even if she defeats Godzilla she would never be able to return home. But she agrees to help the people of Japan.

As attempts to stop Godzilla fail, Kumayama confronts Torahata and claims he has been cheated. He insists Torahata give him his money. Torahata of course refuses and the two struggle. Torahata is thrown to the ground and Kumayama goes for Torahata's safe. Grabbing a gun from a desk drawer Torahata shoots Kumayama in the back of the head. Gathering up the money from the body of his old business partner, Torahata attempts to flee the hotel before Godzilla arrives, but he is too late. Torahata is crushed beneath wood, stone, and the piles of his own money.

Godzilla advances on the egg, but Mothra arrives in time to stop him. An epic battle begins between the giant beasts. Mothra drags Godzilla around by his tail, claws at his head with her talons, beats him with his wings, and showers him with poisonous powder from her wings. Godzilla is all but defeated, but then calls on his atomic breath and kills Mothra with an energy burst. Mothra uses the last of her energy to cover her egg with her body.

The Shobijin then explain to Sakai, Junko, and Miura that the egg can be hatched today. The fairies again sing the song of Mothra, as the military takes one last shot at stopping Godzilla by electrocuting him. The Military fails, but the song of the Shobijin does not. The egg hatches and twin larvae emerge, and immediately set out to battle their mother's killer.

Working in tandem, the caterpillars chase after Godzilla, and spray him with their silk spray. Godzilla shoots his breath at them, but when he attacks one, it hides and its sibling advances. They go back and forth, never letting Godzilla rest. They soon wrap him in their silk and he falls into the ocean, defeated. The people rejoice, and the credits roll.

History and Cultural Significance

Mothra

Mothra is clearly a lepidopteron. The exact form of the antenna is difficult to discern, but they are clearly not knobbed or hooked so I would assume she is a moth as opposed to a butterfly or skipper. The larvae, or caterpillars, have no visible prolegs, but considering the parent I would

assume, that upon closer inspection, they would have five or less pairs of such appendages. Another point to consider in understanding Mothra is a lack of a male specimen, so it is clear that Mothra is parthenogenetic. Whether parthenogenesis, nature's version of "Immaculate Conception," is the sole form of reproduction is unknown, and would require further study.



Mothra is the brain child of Takehiko Fukunaga, and first appeared in the novel The Luminous Fairies and Mothra, which is believed to be the inspiration for her first Movie in 1961, dubbed simply 'Mothra.' Since she first took physical form on the silver screen, she has appeared to her followers 18 more times within the cinematic medium. Mothra is a benevolent being, believed to be divine by her faithful. Unlike Godzilla, she has always stood on the side of right. Many times she has battled Godzilla, often at the cost of her own life, but saving

the day, snatching victory from the jaws of defeat, when her larvae toppled the weakened monster. Mothra, though defeated, always carries on through her offspring, and though killed, rises up like the mythological Phoenix, to defend her people when called.

According to the Über-nerds at Monstrous.com Mothra's physical characteristics have changed through the years. When she first appeared in 1961 she weighed a dainty 15,000 tons, with a wing span of 250 meters, but due to all the battles, and I'm sure stress eating, weighed in at 20,000 tons in 1992. Her wings also shrank reaching only 175 meters. Initial air speed measured in 1961 clocked Mothra at Mach 3, but in 1992, perhaps due the added weight, slowed to Mach 2. Mothra has never mentioned whether her lost step and weight gain is a point of concern, choosing to suffer in silence and not worry her followers.

Mothra protects her people and their island, Infant Island, and in return they are as devoted to her as she is to them. Mothra is accompanied by her fairy priestesses often called Shobijin (Japanese for "small beauties"). They are in constant telepathic contact with Mothra, and speak for her to her people and the outside world. In times of peril they sing the song of Mothra to call her to their aide. This is the song translated into English courtesy of Wikipedia:

Mothra oh Mothra
Hear our call for you to save us
over time, over sea
like a wave you come
our guardian angel
Mothra oh Mothra
the people have forgotten kindness
their spirit falls to ruin
we shall pray for the people as we sing
this song of love

Godzilla

Godzilla originally appeared on film in 1954 in the movie *Gojira* a film by Ishiro Honda. Since the first day Godzilla crushed his way on to the big screen he has appeared in 28 feature films produced by Toho company Ltd, an American remake (which I personally believe does not deserve the title), and a variety of other mediums, including comic books, cartoons, television and video games. Godzilla is no longer just a Japanese icon, but has been taken into the hearts of minds of people across the globe.



Godzilla, which roughly translated is Gorilla-whale, is a beast born from the nuclear age, formed in the smoke and dust of nuclear explosions. Many believe Godzilla is an angry shout by the Japanese people against the attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and against nuclear weapons in general, but I believe they are mistaken. Sometimes a mountain is just a mountain, not a comment on our fears, and Godzilla is the biggest mountain, crushing buildings and tanks for the purposes of entertainment, not social commentary. If it says anything I believe it was put best in the 1977 song “Godzilla” by Blue Oyster Cult which goes “History shows again and again how nature points up the folly of men, Godzilla!” In other words we’re not as smart as we think we are, nor is our rule over this earth as complete as we would like to believe.

Over the course of his long career Godzilla has changed his attitude towards humanity. Initially he was a rumbling beast, bent solely on rampage and destruction, but with time he has become more of an ally for the human race, rather than our destroyer. Where we once battled Godzilla, we later looked to him as our savior, from aliens, robots, dragons, and a myriad collection of monsters who threaten our survival. To thank him for all his efforts MTV saw fit to bestow upon him a lifetime achievement award in 1996, making him the first non-human to ever receive the honor and only the second fictional character, behind Jason Voorhees, from the *Friday the 13th* movie series, to be so awarded. After breaking the barrier for non-humans, Star War’s Chewbacca received the award the following year. Godzilla’s response, in the 2000 remake, was to again become the villain. This was Godzilla’s way of reminding us this is his planet, we are ants underfoot, and that our accolades and cheers go unheard, drowned out by his infamous roar.

Citations

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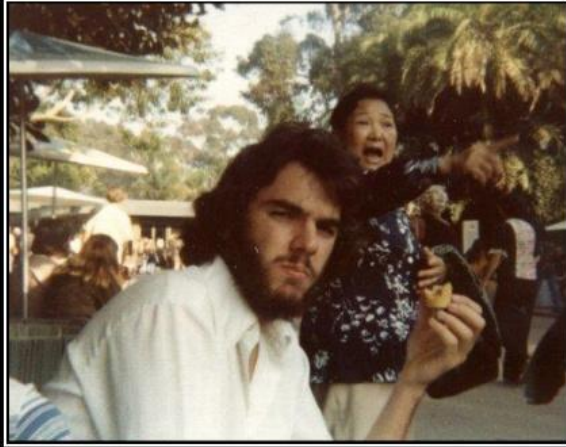
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