



Hostile Aliens, Hollywood and Today's News: 1950s Science Fiction Films and 9/11

Jr. Melvin E. Matthews

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1950s Cold War-era monsters meet 21st-century terrorists: Matthews provides a thoughtful interpretation of sci-fi movies that examines the similarities and differences between the political environment and popular culture of two eras. This well-researched examination and appreciation of science fiction films includes behind-the-scenes tales about their production and many quotes from those who produced and starred in the films. The book will tantalize not only fans of the science fiction genre but also sociologists, film historians, and politicians. The author draws parallels between the Cold War fears of the 1950s and 60s and the constant "terrorism alerts" of the September 11th era, exploring how the politics and the psychological climate of the times influences and is reflected in this vehicle of popular culture. This book is the first of its kind, studying the pop culture genre in the wake of the September 11th tragedy. The alien invaders of the 1950s signified a Russian invasion of America, while other films of the genre such as "Invaders from Mars" depicted aliens utilizing mind control to manipulate humans to commit acts of sabotage, signifying Communist enslavement. If such a film were made now, such invaders could be seen as terrorist masterminds using human slaves to commit terrorist acts. "Them!" the 1954 atomic mutation classic, is the spiritual ancestor of the 2002 film "Eight Legged Freaks." Finally, several 1950s films depicted the end of the world at a time when Americans expected a nuclear war with Russia. Godzilla, the only 1950s-era monster to remain a "movie star" beyond that era, can be fashioned to reflect whatever issues dominate the times: nuclear war in the 1950s, environmental pollution in the 1970s. Conceivably a Godzilla for the age of terrorism is soon to be released. The immediate pre-September 11th era witnessed films presenting galactic threats to mankind's existence ("Independence Day," "Armageddon," "Deep Impact"), while the early 2000s witnessed the popularity of the "Left Behind" Christian films dramatizing the Tribulation period in the Book of Revelation. It seems that whatever the era and whatever the challenges and crises confronting America, many entertainment themes remain the same, reflecting their respective times and the relevant issues.

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