

50th Anniversary Release!
The Complete, Uncut Original! 40 Minutes of Unseen Footage!

GODZILLA

Rialto Pictures Presents
the Landmark Monster Movie in Its Original Japanese Version,
Never Before Released in the U.S.

Uncut, uncensored, and undubbed, the original “Monster of Mass Destruction” returns to the big screen like you’ve never seen him before, fully restored with 40 minutes of unseen footage and completely revised subtitles. See where it all began, with this influential classic that has spawned scores of sequels and imitations, but has never been bettered, opening May 7 in N.Y. and San Francisco, May 14 in L.A. and Washington, D.C., followed by other cities.

On a sunny day and calm waters, a Japanese steamer sinks in flames when the sea erupts; a salvage vessel sent to the rescue disappears the same way; exhausted, incoherent survivors babble of a monster. Could it be...? **GODZILLA** was the biggest budgeted film in Japanese history at that time, costing nearly twice as much as the same studio’s *The Seven Samurai*. An enormous hit, it spawned 50 years of sequels, countless rip-offs, and a new genre: the *kaiju eiga*, or Japanese monster movie. Sold to an American distributor two years later, it was re-cut, re-arranged and atrociously dubbed, with added scenes (shot in Hollywood) of a pre-*Perry Mason* Raymond Burr observing the action from the sidelines. The re-titled *Godzilla: King of the Monsters!* became America’s idea of a classic Japanese movie — and of cheesy movie-making.

But the original Japanese **GODZILLA** is one of the great films by a sci-fi master, Ishiro Honda (Akira Kurosawa’s close friend and occasional second unit director). The U.S. cut ran 20 minutes shorter, with another 20 snipped to make room for Burr, so that nearly a third (about 40 minutes) was shorn. The unrelentingly grim American version excised all of the film’s comic relief (including some astonishing, *Strangelove*-like black humor) and censored its strong anti-H-Bomb message, turning it into a run-of-the-mill, monster-on-the-loose picture.

In Japan, the original, un-bastardized **GODZILLA** is regarded as one of the great classics of the cinema. In 1984, the prestigious film journal *Kinema Junpo* rated it among the top 20 Japanese films of all time. In 1989, a survey of 370 Japanese movie critics, *Nihon Eiga Besuto 150 (Best 150 Japanese Films)*, ranked *Godzilla* the 27th greatest Japanese feature ever made.

The *real* (human) star of the movie is Takashi Shimura (best known for his Kurosawa roles, including the leader of *The Seven Samurai* and the doomed man of *Ikiru*), as a revered paleontologist who insists that Godzilla must be studied, not destroyed (he’s in the minority). This first Godzilla is truly terrifying — a 30-story Jurassic behemoth intent on destroying an exquisitely detailed miniature Tokyo — a tour de force by special effects genius Eiji Tsubaraya. Tsubaraya’s use of “suitmation” — the often-belittled “actor in monster suit” method — was due to time and budget restraints, but, in concert with noirish cinematography, his low-tech approach is still as thrilling as ever. This print also features new subtitles by Bruce Goldstein and Michie Yamakawa.

A RIALTO PICTURES RELEASE Rialtopictures.com **Running time: 98 minutes.**

Haruo Nakajima, the original “man in the suit,” composer Akira Ifukube, leading man Akira Takarada, and Godzilla authority Steve Ryfle are available for telephone interviews.

GODZILLA® ゴジラ®

CAST

Dr. Kyohei Yamane Takashi Shimura
Emiko Yamane Momoko Kochi
Ogata Akira Takarada
Dr. Serizawa Akihiko Hirata
Reporter Hagiwara Sachio Sakai
Dr. Tanabe Fuyuki Murakami
CEO of Nankai Shipping Co Toranosuke Ogawa
Masaji Ren Yamamoto
Chairman of the Diet Ken Hayashi
Odo Island mayor Inada Keiji Sakakida
Senator Ooyama Seijiro Onda
Senator Ozawa (woman Diet member) Kin Sugai
Defense Chief Takeo Oikawa
Shinkichi Toshiaki Suzuki
Shinkichi's mother Tsuruki Mano
Old fisherman Kokuten Kodo
Dr. Tanabe's assistant Tadashi Okabe

PRODUCTION CREDITS

Directed by Ishiro Honda
Produced by Tomoyuki Tanaka
Special Effects Director Eiji Tsuburaya
Screenplay Takeo Murata, Ishiro Honda
Original Story Shigeru Kayama
Music Akira Ifukube
Director of Photography Masao Tamai
Supervising Art Director Takeo Kita
Art Director Satoshi Chuko
SFX Art Director Akira Watanabe
Film Editor Yasunobu Taira
Sound Recording Hisashi Shimonaga
Sound and Musical Effects Ichiro Mitsunawa
Production Manager Teruo Maki

Translation & Subtitles (2004) Bruce Goldstein & Michie Yamakawa
Subtitle spotting Tarik Benbrahim, LVT New York

A Toho Motion Picture Company Production, originally released in Japan on November 3, 1954

1954 black & white aspect ratio: 1.33:1 running time: 98 minutes

A Rialto Pictures release
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All of the following press notes are adapted from the book *Japan's Favorite Mon-Star: The Unauthorized Biography of "The Big G,"* by Steve Ryfle © 1998 ECW Press. Used with permission. *Godzilla* authority Steve Ryfle is available for interviews.

GODZILLA® - PRODUCTION NOTES

Thud.

Deafening footfalls echo in the blackness. An ear-crushing wail. Then a title card rises, three *katakana* characters proclaiming the arrival of Japan's doomsday beast: GOJIRA.

Given *Godzilla's* prevailing repute as a campy icon and comic superhero, the original Japanese version of his first film is a revelation even today, when viewed at a distance of 50 years [see pages 6-9 for comparisons between the Japanese and the bastardized American version]. And although hundreds of people contributed to the film's success, from low-echelon gofers to the special-effects crew, the sure guiding hand of director **Ishiro Honda** is most evident throughout the picture, conducting something akin to an orchestra of drama and horror storytelling, stark visual style, and ominous sound and music, all of which meshes together and plays out like a grand nightmare.

Outside Japan, *Godzilla* remains an underrated and somewhat misunderstood film, usually lumped alongside Western giant monster movies like that evoked America's fears of a Soviet nuclear attack, and could only be killed by new and more powerful American nuclear weapons. There is a tendency to interpret *Godzilla* as the flipside of this motif, with *Godzilla* standing in for America. Film pundits have concluded that the monster symbolizes Japanese postwar shame, guilt, anger, and other repressed emotions stemming from the atomic bombings.

While there is some truth in such interpretations, it may be impossible for non-Japanese to fully fathom what the filmmakers were trying to say. Not only did Japan have the uniquely horrifying experience of suffering a nuclear attack, but *Godzilla* seems to tap into mythology and cultural history not shared by the West. Still, something bigger is at work on a subconscious level in *Godzilla*. The monster was clearly created in the image of the Bomb, but the metaphor is universal. *Godzilla's* hell-born wrath represents more than one specific anxiety in the modern age — it is the embodiment of the destruction, disaster, anarchy, and death that man unleashes when he foolishly unlocks the forbidden secrets of nature, probes the frightening reaches of technology and science, and, worst of all, allows his greed and thirst for power to erupt in war.

Godzilla was praised by some members of the Japanese intelligentsia, including novelist Yukio Mishima. Joseph Anderson and Donald Richie, in their landmark book *The Japanese Film*, relate that *Godzilla* was lauded by some Japanese critics for "intellectual content usually lacking in foreign pictures of the same genre." However, the reviews that stuck in Ishiro Honda's mind were those that called the film a crass attempt to capitalize on Japan's nuclear nightmares. Over time, however, *Godzilla* has come to be regarded as a classic of the Japanese cinema. In 1984, the prestigious film journal *Kinema Junpo* rated it among the top 20 Japanese films of all time. In 1989, a published survey of 370 Japanese movie critics, *Nihon Eiga Besuto 150 (Best 150 Japanese Films)*, ranked *Godzilla* the 27th greatest Japanese feature ever made.

GODZILLA -- STOMP BY STOMP

The story of *Godzilla* weaves two common themes. The first is a combination war drama and monster-movie scenario, with Japan as the victim of a hostile and incomprehensible enemy that strikes without warning and gradually reveals its physical form and the full fury of its destructive powers. The movie opens with a series of strange shipping disasters haunting Tokyo Bay, with freighters and fishing boats mysteriously wiped out, evoking the real-life terror of the recent *Lucky Dragon* mishap [see page 9]. The authorities are powerless to respond, mystified as to whether the culprit is a military enemy or some strange phenomenon.

At first, the only people who truly understand the magnitude of the approaching doom are a superstitious Odo Island elder [played by **Kokuten Kodo**, who played a similar role in the same year's *The Seven Samurai*, as the elder who hires the ragtag band of samurai to protect his village from marauders], who first utters the name "Godzilla" while watching his people reel in empty fish nets (another reference to the *Lucky Dragon*) and the rational presence of Dr. Yamane [**Takashi Shimura**, who earlier the same year had played the leader of *The Seven Samurai*], who urges saving the creature to learn how it could have survived irradiation by the Bomb. Heroic march music plays as the navy litters the bay with depth-bombs, but Japan pays the ultimate price for attacking Godzilla when it comes ashore twice and wipes out Tokyo. In the end, the mysterious Dr. Serizawa (**Akihiko Hirata**) unveils his Oxygen Destroyer and Godzilla is liquified at the bottom of Tokyo Bay. But is the monster really evil? Only Yamane realizes its larger implications. If nuclear testing continues unabated, will Nature unleash more Godzillas?

The second, more personal story line is a love triangle in which the professor's daughter, Emiko (**Momoko Kochi**) wants to cut off her arranged marriage to Serizawa and instead wed the sea-going salvage expert Ogata, but the monster's appearance intrudes at every turn. The focus of this three-way relationship is Serizawa, a man living in darkness in a European-style house and mysteriously clad in a lab smock and eye patch. Ogata clearly respects Serizawa and regrets inflicting any pain upon him -- at one point, he refers to the scars on Serizawa's face which were inflicted during World War II - - while Serizawa is so preoccupied with his research that at first he doesn't seem to notice that Emiko is leaving him.

Honda skillfully creates an eerie, bleak atmosphere throughout the film, accentuated by the grainy, documentary-like photography of **Masao Tamai**. The story takes place during late summer, and the blazing sun is palpable as the actors often sweat profusely, but several scenes are actually chilling. As the Odo villagers perform their ceremonial ritual, donning eerie *tengu* (devil) masks and dancing to strange *Kagura* music, the old fisherman tells the reporter Hagiwara (**Sachio Sakai**) about the Godzilla legend. Suddenly, a typhoon strikes and a series of booms shake the village. This is Godzilla's first appearance, and the fact that he is never seen (except for a glimpse of his leg) lends the monster an air of the supernatural. Dr. Yamane later makes an awesome discovery: a perfectly preserved trilobite imbedded in a gigantic footprint on the beach. The entire area is discovered to be tainted with radiation.

After Godzilla's terror raid, the camera pans across the smoldering remains of Tokyo, then switches to a hospital where people lie dead and dying. The suffering overwhelms

Emiko and compels her to reveal Serizawa's secret. Finally, the scene in which Ogata and Serizawa deploy the Oxygen Destroyer in Tokyo Bay is artfully creepy, with the two divers floating in the depths like some weird death ballet and Godzilla watching them from a distance, as if accepting his fate. Godzilla's death is gut-wrenching: the Oxygen Destroyer bubbles the sea violently and the monster writhes in pain, bellowing his death-cry before sinking and dissolving into a skeleton.

Arguably the most memorable scene in *Godzilla* derives its power from something the camera doesn't show. In his dungeon-like laboratory filled with scientific gizmos, Serizawa drops a small metallic pellet into a large fish tank. Accompanied by **Akira Ifukube's** discordant musical sound effects, Serizawa holds Emiko close and she suddenly screams in terror. Serizawa exacts a vow of secrecy from the girl, and she is so disturbed by what she has seen that she is unable to terminate their engagement, the purpose of her visit in the first place.

The star of the show is Godzilla, of course, and the highlight is his maiden mission of mayhem. Tokyo is divided into 23 wards, and Godzilla tramples many of them during his first two nights on the town back in 1954, in an orgy of **Eiji Tsuburaya's** special effects.

The scene in which Godzilla peers over the ridgeline on Odo Island and roars mightily is a classic in monster-movie history -- perfectly executed via an old-school in-the-camera matte shot combining footage of actors running down the slope and a Godzilla puppet peering over a miniature mountain. When the monster departs, Dr. Yamane and the others look down from the hill and see a trail of gigantic footprints leading from the beach into the surf, another brilliant matte fusing footage of the ocean with a painting of the sand. By only hinting at Godzilla's immense size, Tsuburaya saves the knockout punch for Godzilla's arrival in the city.

The monster's rampage is divided into two parts, the first a showcase for the masterful composite photography work. In the film's most stunning visual sequence, Godzilla lands on eastern Tokyo Bay and makes his approach onto dry land, towering above the Tokyo streets as scores of tiny people flee in the foreground. This is the first time that the original Godzilla suit is shown in all its glory. Silhouetted against the black night sky, Godzilla is like a giant spirit, with a mammalian face and beady, dead eyes peering out from under his thick, scarred brow, surveying his targets methodically and unemotionally. The illusion of Godzilla's size is enhanced by Tsuburaya's low-angle camera placement, rapid back-and-forth edits between the SFX and live-action footage, and the use of very fast cuts so as not to betray the miniatures and the monster effects. At the Shinagawa rail station (a major transportation hub), the monster walks right into the path of a speeding train whose passengers and crew are unaware of the death-drama unfolding outside.

In a series of quick cuts, the monster's feet are seen approaching the tracks from the conductor's point of view as the train passes underneath a bridge. Godzilla collides with a train, jackknifing the cars and sending bodies flying. As the passengers jump out the windows, Godzilla then picks up a train car in his mouth and flings it in the air.

Godzilla retreats to the sea, but Japan instinctively knows the monster will soon return and a massive evacuation of Tokyo is orchestrated. To prevent the monster from re-entering the city, the authorities erect high-tension electrical wires. At night, Godzilla seems to sense he is being dared. Godzilla's white-hot atomic breath is first revealed,

melting the barrier to molten metal. (The towers were constructed of white wax.) From there, Godzilla embarks on a destructive tantrum spanning 13 minutes of screen time, leveling many landmarks and giving viewers a Tokyo sightseeing tour. Godzilla stomps through Minato-Ku, Shimbashi, and other wards en route to Ginza, Tokyo's upscale shopping district, where he torches the Matsuzakaya Department Store, one of the city's oldest and priciest retail establishments. The monster then tears down the famous clock atop the nearby K. Hattori and Co.

Heading northeast, Godzilla crosses the Sukiya Bridge, trashes an elevated commuter train, and with his tail knocks in the side of the famous Nichigeki Theater in Yurakucho. The monster then crosses into the Akasaka district, where major government buildings are located, and smashes a wing of the Diet Building [the Japanese Parliament, where a comic debate over the monster had earlier taken place]. Reporters broadcasting live from a TV tower attract Godzilla's attention with their flash bulbs and the monster chomps down on the tower, sending the newsmen hurtling to the ground. Godzilla smashes the Kachidoki Bridge at the mouth of the Sumida River before fighter planes finally chase him back to the ocean.

Even before the monster comes ashore, the gloomy stage is set by the searchlights eerily fanning across the bay. As Godzilla marches through the streets, a few hangers-on pay the price for their curiosity as they are crushed under his huge feet in a wonderful matte shot. Tanks confront Godzilla at an intersection, but Godzilla is merely annoyed by their pesky gunfire and swiftly does away with them with a blast of his death-breath. With Tsuburaya's high-speed photography heightening the illusion of a slow-moving giant, Godzilla plows through buildings with ease, stopping only to peer over the rooftops and occasionally incinerate a police car or other target.

As the rampage builds to a crescendo, fire engulfs all of Tokyo. An oil refinery is decimated, flames curl out of windows and lick the sides of buildings, and long shots of the miniature city reveal gigantic sheets of fire and smoke rising into the sky in slow motion. The fires rage all the way to the shoreline, illustrated by a nice matte shot of flames rising behind the crowds of people gathered there. The scope of Godzilla's disaster has never been equaled on film, in terms of both the damage toll and the atmosphere of pathos and death that accompanies it.

GODZILLA – U.S. vs. JAPANESE VERSIONS

Few Americans have ever seen Honda's original, unadulterated *Godzilla*. Until now, fans in the West have been unable to see what drastic alterations this elusive Japanese classic of the horror cinema underwent en route to becoming its own bastard American cousin, with additional scenes shot in Hollywood by an obscure director named Terry Morse and featuring American actor Raymond Burr (mostly seen observing the action from the sidelines). For the record, here are the major differences between *Godzilla* and the Americanized *Godzilla: King of the Monsters!*:

The U.S. version clocks in at about 80 minutes – 18 shorter than the Japanese original. Subtract about 20 minutes of new American footage with Raymond Burr (playing a character called Steve Martin!), and only about 60 minutes of Honda's film is left intact.

The inevitable result of such tampering was the weakening of the film's dramatic and thematic underpinnings, and the elimination of some necessary character development.

While the drama of *Godzilla* proceeds chronologically, *Godzilla: King of the Monsters!* unspools in flashbacks. The American film opens with Burr sloughing through the rubble, with scenes of a smoldering city and a disaster hospital filled with trampled Tokyoites. These images are taken from the aftermath of Godzilla's final rampage in Honda's movie. While this approach strengthens the documentary-like style of the original film and heightens the feeling of dread, it also steals some of Godzilla's ultimate thunder. By revealing the extent of the monster's damage toll at the outset, the film leaves little wonder as to what lies ahead.

The most severe damage was inflicted upon the role of Serizawa. The first of his deleted scenes occurs when Dr. Yamane and his research party set sail for Odo Island. Standing silently among the throng of well-wishers on the pier is Serizawa, wearing dark shades and an expression-less stare. It's immediately clear he will play a pivotal role in the drama. Serizawa is not only concerned about the ominous disasters besetting Japan, but his heart is also breaking because his betrothed Emiko has fallen for Ogata. Also deleted is a later scene, in which Hagiwara, the newspaper reporter (cut almost entirely from the American version), tries to question Serizawa about rumors emanating from a source in Germany who says the scientist is working on a device that could save Japan from Godzilla. Serizawa flatly denies this and sends the reporter away, but it's obvious the scientist is hiding something. Critics in the West have tended to read too much into this scene, some going so far as to speculate that the scientist may have collaborated with the Nazis on weapons research. Still, in Honda's film Serizawa *is* a dark figure with suspicious motivations. But in Morse's picture he's just a weirdo scientist and supposedly an old college buddy of Steve Martin's.

A few deletions in the American version undermine the drama of the Ogata-Emiko-Serizawa triangle and ultimately lessen the emotional impact of Serizawa's sacrificial suicide at the climax. The first is the early scene where Ogata receives a phone call, informing him that one of his firm's vessels has sunk. Emiko is there, too. In this scene, cut entirely from the American print, Ogata is seen toweling himself off after a shower. Although hardly erotic, it provides some insight into their intimacy, compared to the more formal, arranged relationship between Emiko and Serizawa. Later, Ogata grows impatient to make the courtship public and warns Emiko they will inevitably be caught if they continue to sneak around. This scene is included in the U.S. version, but the dialogue remains untranslated.

There is yet another character whose back story is gelded: Godzilla himself! In a scene in the Japanese version where an old man watches as the Odo Island villagers pull their empty fishing nets onto the beach. The shipping disasters, the dearth of fish in the waters – all these maladies must be a sign of the evil Godzilla, the old man says, and the younger islanders scoff at his old-fashioned beliefs. The scene is not only funny, and it helps establish the Godzilla mythos, the sense that this monster is a force of nature that has struck before, and will again. Later, after a hurricane hits the island, the reporters and the island natives are taken to Tokyo to testify before government officials. In the American version, their testimonials are cut very short, but in the Japanese version there is talk of missing cows and other livestock, evidence that a great animal may be responsible for the damage. One islander says the hurricane was no ordinary storm, but caused by “a force from above.”

GODZILLA & THE BOMB

Messing with the message? Movie critic Danny Peary, in his book *Cult Movies 2*, accuses the American distributors of *Godzilla: King of the Monsters!* of making “deletions that arouse suspicions regarding the covering up of references to damage done by the A-Bomb.” Peary is not alone in his theory – for years, many film fans and pundits have accused those behind *Godzilla: King of the Monsters* of having a hidden Cold-War agenda, and deliberately excising anti-nuclear messages from Honda’s version.

There are several major scenes in which Godzilla’s ties to the H-Bomb are discussed that were either altered or excised or the American version:

- The first occurs upon Dr. Yamane’s return from Odo Island, when he addresses a meeting of the Diet (Japanese parliament) about the discovery of Godzilla. When Yamane reveals his theory that Godzilla was spawned by H-Bomb tests, a pompous senator declares that this bit of information should be kept secret, to avoid an international crisis. A female senator challenges him, saying the truth must be made public, and a heated argument on the senate floor ensues. This scene is one of the original version’s best moments: not only is it a realistic enactment of the kind of political posturing that occurs in the face of a major crisis (and, incidentally, Honda’s way of acknowledging the growing influence of women in Japanese politics), but it also hints at the enduring rage and disgust over the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings brimming just beneath the surface of the Japanese psyche. In the American version, this scene is reduced to a few seconds of squabbling among the politicians, with no translation, leaving the viewer to believe only that the government is panicking amid the crisis.
- The second and perhaps most profound Bomb reference in the film occurs when commuters aboard a train are chatting about the day’s Godzilla headlines. One woman bemoans the news, saying she doesn’t want to face another tragedy: “Not after I survived Nagasaki.” A man chimes in -- “We have to evacuate again?” -- an apparent reference to the firebombing of Tokyo during the war. This scene, which makes it clear that Honda intended Godzilla as a stand-in for a nuclear holocaust, was entirely deleted from the U.S. version. So was another, in which a mother clutches her little daughter amid the flaming nightmare of Godzilla’s Tokyo attack. The inference is clear: the Bomb and the war left thousands of Japanese families fatherless; now, Godzilla has come to claim the lives of the survivors.
- The military consults Dr. Yamane, asking his advice on how to destroy Godzilla. But Godzilla, he insists, should not be killed, but scientifically studied. In Morse’s film, this scene occurs earlier in the picture, and it is completely rewritten. While Steve Martin and other reporters observe, Yamane consults with the military officials, telling them they should question the natives of Odo Island. The dialogue is supposedly translated by Martin’s attaché, but the meaning is changed entirely.
- A direct comparison of the Bomb and Godzilla, omitted entirely from the American print, occurs in a tense scene at the Yamane house in the moments

right before Godzilla's final rampage. Yamane is upset by the military's foolish insistence on killing the monster. The strident Ogata objects: "We can't just do nothing. [Godzilla is] a menace to all Japanese, like the H-bomb."

- The ending was significantly altered in the American version. Although Godzilla is dead, Honda's version ends on a definitely pessimistic note as Dr. Yamane wonders aloud whether continued nuclear testing might bring about another Godzilla. Morse cut this somber speech out, ending on a more upbeat note as Martin says the world can now "wake up and live again." This is perhaps the most ill-advised change of all, for it reduces the film to a typical American atomic-monster movie – a genre wherein nuclear-spawned bugaboos were inevitably defeated with new and more powerful weapons.

[One overall difference between the two versions is the complete lack of humor in the American version, an unrelentingly grim movie. In the Japanese version, comedy relief is provided by the goofball reporter; the vituperous woman Diet member; the TV commentator providing a stomp-by-stomp account of Godzilla's rampage; and, the film's darkest humor, the three wisecracking commuters. – Editor.]

GODZILLA -- BACKGROUND

According to legend, Godzilla was born aboard an airplane.

It was spring 1954. **Tomoyuki Tanaka**, a producer with the Toho Motion Picture Co., was flying home to Tokyo from Jakarta, where plans for a Japanese-Indonesian co-production had just fallen apart, and now Tanaka was under pressure to come up with a replacement for it -- fast. Nervous and sweating, he spent the entire flight brainstorming.

Suddenly, he had a stroke of genius.

Taking a cue from the successful American science fiction film *The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms* (1953), Tanaka decided to make Japan's first giant celluloid monster, a creature that would not only be re-animated by nuclear weapons but serve as a metaphor for the Bomb itself, evoking the horror of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki holocausts still vivid in Japan's consciousness." The theme of the film, from the beginning, was the terror of the Bomb," Tanaka recalled decades later. "Mankind had created the Bomb, and now nature was going to take revenge on mankind."

Nine years earlier, at the end of World War II, Japan had suffered a defeat unlike any other nation in history. In August 1945, America's twin atomic bombs had killed nearly 300,000 civilians, and an estimated 100,000 more lives had been lost the previous March when B-29 planes firebombed Tokyo for three consecutive days. Cities across Japan were leveled, leaving millions dead, wounded, or homeless. Factories were either destroyed or rendered useless, crippling Japanese industry and bankrupting the economy. The country's massive empire in the Pacific region was lost, and six million repatriated soldiers and civilians returned to a Japan whose mighty spirit was crushed. Then came the seven-year-long Occupation (1945-1952), in which a nation that had remained unconquered for thousands of years suffered the shame of being governed by

foreign soldiers and forced to adopt a Western-style constitution that reduced the Emperor to a mere symbolic figure and threatened other long-held traditions and beliefs. The late 1940s and early 1950s were a time of political, economic, and cultural uncertainty in Japan.

During the war, the Japanese film industry thrived, due in large part to the use of the movie studios to disseminate nationalist propaganda. Following the defeat of Japan's militarist regime, the Allied powers likewise censored the movies and other media, forbidding discussions of the war, the Bomb and America's role in the tragedy. After the Occupation, a handful of Bomb-themed films began to appear, notably Kaneto Shindo's *Children of the Atom Bomb* and Hideo Sekigawa's *Hiroshima* (both 1952). But in the 50-plus years since the Occupation and the lifting of censorship, surprisingly few movies have addressed Japan's status as the only nation to be attacked with nuclear weapons. Film scholars cite prevailing feelings of shame, repression, and guilt but are unable to fully explain the Japanese cinema's ambivalence toward the Bomb.

In the '50s and '60s, several Japanese movies made references to the atomic bombs and to radiation sickness, but only two major films tackled the Bomb as subject matter. The most critically lauded of the two was Kurosawa's *I Live in Fear* (1955), starring Toshiro Mifune as a man nearly frightened to death by the specter of another nuclear attack on Japan. But the most commercially successful was Tanaka's barely disguised allegory of the Bomb, manifested in a gigantic monster.

By 1954, Japan was peaceful and relatively prosperous again, but fears of renewed annihilation were brimming below the surface, fueled by new nuclear threats. Cold War tensions were increasing and Japan was now caught between the two superpowers' nuclear-testing programs: the Soviet Union's on one side, and the Pacific Proving Ground established by the U.S. at the Marshall Islands on the other. The Korean War was escalating, raising fears that a Hydrogen bomb might be dropped on neighboring North Korea or China, with "black rain" falling over the region. Around the same time that Tanaka was forced to quickly invent a major new film, a historic, horrifying event was unfolding in the Pacific.

Early in the morning on March 1, the U.S. detonated a 15-megaton H-bomb -- 750 times more powerful than the bombs that destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki -- near the Bikini Atoll, 2,500 miles southwest of Honolulu. The "routine" explosion proved far more powerful than expected, vaporizing a large portion of Bikini and sending a plume of highly radioactive debris floating eastward over a 7,000-square-mile area of the Pacific Ocean. Into this nuclear nightmare zone errantly wandered a 140-ton wooden Japanese trawler, the *Dai-go Fukuryu Maru* (*SS Lucky Dragon #5*), which was on a tuna-fishing trip about 100 miles east of Bikini. The boat's 23 crewmen were showered with a sticky, white radioactive ash; within a few hours several men became sick with headaches, nausea, and eye irritation, and a few days later some of their faces turned strangely dark. The ship's captain, not understanding what was happening to his men, abandoned the fishing trip and returned to the boat's home port in Shizuoka Prefecture. Six months later, Aikichi Kuboyama, the chief radio operator, died of leukemia in a Tokyo hospital. His last words, according to newspaper reports, were, "Please make sure that I am the last victim of the nuclear bomb." Five other crew members later died from cancers and other diseases that were believed to be bomb-related.

At first the U.S. government denied it was responsible for the “death ash” that had poisoned the ship; the Americans later admitted the ash was fallout from a hydrogen bomb but accused the *Lucky Dragon* of entering the restricted testing area on a spy mission. The U.S. government sent the dead fisherman’s widow a check for 2.5 million yen as a “token of sympathy” in an attempt to put the matter to rest. Only years later would America admit that Operation Bravo was the most powerful nuclear bomb ever detonated and that it caused the single worst fallout incident in the H-bomb atmospheric-testing program.

Throughout 1954 and ‘55, the *Lucky Dragon* tragedy released Japan’s pent-up anxieties about the Bomb -- an unprecedented public outcry followed it, including a boycott of tuna and other radiation-contaminated fish, a national ban-the-bomb signature campaign (by August 1955, 32 million signatures were collected), the formation of the Council Against A- and H-bombs, and the rise of the Japanese peace movement of the 1950s.

It also gave birth to the King of the Monsters.

THE MAKING OF *GODZILLA*

Before there was a screenplay, a story line, or even a concrete idea of what his monster would look like, Tanaka decided on a working title: *The Giant Monster from 20,000 Miles Beneath the Sea*. His first task was to present his idea to **Iwao Mori**, a powerful executive producer who had overseen much of Toho’s moviemaking operations since the studio’s formation back in 1937. Tanaka used newspaper clippings about the *Lucky Dragon* incident to show Mori that the time was right for a gigantic monster, stirred from an eons-long sleep by rampant atomic testing, to come ashore and trample Tokyo.

Tanaka’s idea was outlandish -- no Japanese movie studio had ever attempted anything like it. The moviegoing public was accustomed to war films, family melodramas, and samurai sagas. RKO’s *King Kong* (1933), re-released internationally with great success in 1952, was the only comparable film that Japanese audiences had seen. But Mori was interested in this odd proposal. A decade earlier, he had orchestrated Toho’s successful string of special-effects-laden war movies. Now he was looking for a new way to parlay the talents of Toho’s chief special-effects man, **Eiji Tsuburaya**, into big box-office yen.

Tsuburaya was heavily influenced by *King Kong* and quickly latched onto Tanaka’s wild idea. He and his craftsmen were well experienced in filming re-creations of military battles and other illusions rooted in reality, but now Tanaka was asking them to create a larger-than-life, fictional creature, something no Japanese filmmaker had ever done.

In mid-April 1954, with Tsuburaya on board, Mori approved both the production and Tanaka’s choice for its director, Ishiro Honda, who had worked twice with Tsuburaya on war dramas featuring heavy use of special effects. Mori also shortened the working title, *Giant Monster from 20,000 Miles Beneath the Sea*, to simply *Project G*, and ordered that the production be given top-secret status.

Just as the American *It Came from Outer Space* and *Beast from 20,000 Fathoms* were based on stories by acclaimed genre author Ray Bradbury, Tanaka sought to give

Project G credibility and commercial appeal by hiring sci-fi/horror novelist **Shigeru Kayama** to write an original story. Although his works have faded into obscurity today, Kayama (1906-1975) was then riding a crest of popularity. One of the most prominent mystery writers in post-war Japan, his stories sometimes involved mutant reptiles and fish and other monsters.

Around the same time, two key decisions were made. First, the monster was named “**Gojira**” (later Anglicized as “**Godzilla**” by Toho’s foreign-sales department). Second, the monster was given a shape. Contrary to popular belief, it appears Tanaka did *not* decide from the outset that the monster would be of the prehistoric-reptile variety. In fact, it is possible that he originally imagined a gigantic gorilla-whale, as its name suggested (an amalgam of *Gorilla-kujira*, the latter the Japanese word for “whale”). Evidence suggests that, at least until the early stages of Kayama’s story-writing, ideas about the monster’s physical form were still being discussed. At one point, Tsuburaya suggested a story he had written years before, inspired by his love of *King Kong*, about a gigantic octopus running amok and attacking Japanese fishing boats in the Indian Ocean. Screenwriter **Takeo Murata** has also recounted how he and Tsuburaya devised a scenario in which a gigantic, whale-like creature came ashore in Tokyo and caused havoc. Ultimately, Tanaka elected to make Godzilla a dinosaur-like creature posing a major threat to Japan. Tanaka felt a giant reptile “was more suited to the time period.”

While he was writing, Kayama received input from several Toho officials. But perhaps the most key contributions to the development of Godzilla’s story came from the aforementioned Murata, who co-wrote the screenplay with director Ishiro Honda. Although Kayama established the framework of the story including the four pivotal roles (Dr. Yamane, Emiko, Ogata, Dr. Serizawa), it was Murata who fleshed out the dramatic structure and refined the characters. Dr. Yamane, for example, was originally written as a wildly eccentric character reminiscent of the works of Edo-gawa Rampo (a popular Japanese horror novelist whose name was a Japanization of “Edgar Allan Poe”).

Murata and Honda introduced the Ogata-Emiko-Serizawa love triangle, which gave deeper meaning to the characters’ actions and lent a profundity to Serizawa’s suicide. They nixed Kayama’s idea of revealing Godzilla’s appearance during the hurricane on Odo Island, opting instead to create suspense and dread by gradually making the monster visible.

More than anything, it was Godzilla that underwent the greatest change between Kayama’s initial story and the Murata-Honda script. Kayama had imagined Godzilla as more of a wild beast than a monster—a predator with quick reflexes that came on land primarily to feed on live animals, and that showed a gorilla-like interest in females. Kayama also placed far less emphasis on the destruction of cities that would become the hallmark of this film and many of its sequels. But then, there was no way Kayama could have known what sort of epic-scale illusions Eiji Tsuburaya was developing.

On July 5, 1954, Toho Studios officially announced that production had begun on *Godzilla*. Shooting of the film began about a month later, in early August, by three photography teams: special-effects photography (Godzilla scenes), headed by Tsuburaya, principal photography (dramatic scenes), headed by director Ishiro Honda, and composite photography.

Film critics have for years wondered why Tsuburaya did not use stop-motion animation to create Godzilla. A few writers are so biased against the man-in-suit method that they even suggest Tsuburaya was ignorant of the techniques Willis O'Brien utilized in *King Kong*, which is pure nonsense — as proof, one stop-motion effect was included in the film, an animated model of Godzilla's tail smashing the Nichigeki Theater building.

Stop-motion was more expensive and time-consuming than *Godzilla's* tight budget and production schedule would permit. Thus, Tsuburaya went in another direction that would eventually define his place in movie history. "Suitmation," as it is now called, is not nearly as technically sophisticated as O'Brien's animation or the Dynamation process pioneered by Ray Harryhausen, but it proved a more effective method to portray the kind of destruction Godzilla would become famous for.

Godzilla's shape materialized when sculptor **Teizo Toshimitsu** and art director **Akira Watanabe** began design work under Tsuburaya's supervision. A decade earlier, Watanabe was special-effects art director and Toshimitsu one of his assistants on *The War at Sea from Hawaii to Malaya*. The initial Godzilla designs by cartoonist Kazuyoshi Abe were discarded because they looked vaguely humanoid. Instead, Toshimitsu and Watanabe referred to dinosaur books, plus an issue of *Life* magazine that featured an illustrated article on dinosaurs, and decided to base the creature on two upright-walking reptiles, the tyrannosaurus rex and the iguanodon. They also borrowed a distinctive feature of the quadrupedal stegosaurus: three rows of erect dorsal fins lining the spine, from neck to tail, with no function other than to give the creature a unique look (it was decided, after the fact, that the fins would glow when Godzilla emits his radioactive breath). In taking artistic license with evolutionary history, the designers were clearly more interested in creating something fantastic rather than realistic or logical, a spirit that marked the beginning of the *kaiju eiga*, or Japanese monster movie.

Toshimitsu first sculpted a clay model upon which the Godzilla suit would be based, standing about 10 centimeters tall, with a large head, small hands and feet, and skin covered with scales. This design was rejected by Tsuburaya, so Toshimitsu next came up with a "warted Godzilla" whose body was covered with smooth, round bumps to give it an amphibious look. This was also rejected, but Tsuburaya, Honda, and Tanaka finally approved Toshimitsu's third design, which had a small head, stubby arms, and a body covered with rough-hewn pleats, similar to alligator skin, representing the monster's physical scarring by an H-bomb blast.

Next, sculptor Toshimitsu and a team of costume builders went to work. Tsuburaya had decided Godzilla would stand about 165 feet tall, just high enough to peek above the tallest buildings in Tokyo at that time. The costume itself was to be about 6-1/2 feet tall, or 1/25 Godzilla's actual height. Using thin bamboo sticks and wire, the costumers built a frame for the interior of the costume; over that, they put metal mesh and some cushioning to bolster its structure, and finally they applied coats of latex. It was a crude operation: the men melted large chunks of raw latex and stirred it by hand, then covered the costume frame with it. Several coats of molten rubber were applied, then indentations were carved into the surface and strips of latex glued on to create Godzilla's scaly hide. But the stuff was heavy, and barely flexible when it dried, which made for big problems in the early going.

That first Godzilla suit weighed over 220 pounds, and some sources say it was even heavier. The men chosen to don the cumbersome costume and portray Godzilla

onscreen were **Haruo Nakajima**, an athletic young actor and stuntman, and **Katsumi Tezuka**, still in his teens. Both were adept at martial arts and other sports, and were chosen for their strength and endurance. In the coming years, Nakajima would be immortalized as Toho's principal Godzilla suitmation actor.

One reason for Eiji Tsuburaya's willingness to gamble on the new technique of suitmation must certainly have been his ample experience in the other half of Godzilla's special effects equation: the building, photographing, and destroying of miniatures.

Although it has gone mostly unappreciated outside of Japan, Tsuburaya's replication of the Tokyo cityscape rivals -- and even surpasses -- the scope and detail of the miniaturization of New York in *King Kong*. Tsuburaya and his crew scouted the locations Godzilla was going to trample, and viewed the city from the monster's vantage point by climbing atop the Akasaka TV towers and the rooftops of various buildings. Using photographs of the city, hundreds of blueprints for the miniature buildings were created. All told, it took more than a month to construct the scaled-down version of the Ginza.

The majority of the miniatures were built at 1:25 scale, the same as the Godzilla costume, although there were a few exceptions. The Diet Building [seat of the Japanese parliament] had to be scaled down to 1:33 size to make it appear smaller than Godzilla, because in reality the building is slightly more than 65 meters high (15 meters taller than the monster). Buildings seen in close-up were built larger, while those on the horizon were made smaller to create a forced perspective. The framework for the buildings was made of thin wooden boards reinforced with a mixture of plaster and white chalk. Buildings set ablaze by Godzilla's radioactive breath had explosives installed inside them, and some were also sprayed with gasoline to make them burn easier. Those Godzilla was to destroy were made with small cracks so they would crumble easily. Still, it took considerable force to smash the buildings, and Godzilla actor Haruo Nakajima was under pressure to make them crumble correctly for the cameras on the first take, as there was neither time nor money to rebuild the miniatures.

Tsuburaya's monster suit and miniatures were the core of his special-effects trickery, but he also utilized other techniques. Two small puppets were used — a hand puppet equipped with a mist spraying nozzle in its mouth for close-ups of Godzilla spewing his atomic breath, and a mechanical puppet able to “bite” and move its arms, used when Godzilla chomps on the TV tower and peeks over the Odo Island mountain; a waist-deep outdoor pool was constructed for filming the ship disasters, the Odo Island typhoon, and scenes of Godzilla wading ashore; there were extensive pyrotechnical effects, from kerosene-soaked rags set afire around the perimeter of the miniature Tokyo set to create the illusion of a city engulfed in flames, to the wire-rigged charges that simulate the impact of gunfire hitting.

Wires were used to manipulate the fighter planes attacking Godzilla; primitive optical animation techniques in which hundreds of cells had to be hand-drawn, one frame at a time, created the illusion of Godzilla's fins crackling with light and the eerily brilliant, long-shot views of the monster spitting his radioactive halitosis; and traditional matte paintings were skillfully used -- some of the daytime shots of the electrical towers along the waterfront were actually painted on sheets of glass placed in front of the camera, and the faraway view of Odo Island was really a painting. By modern standards, and even in its day, virtually all Godzilla's special effects were low-tech, which makes the movie's lasting visual impact all the more amazing.

In all, the *Godzilla* special-effects crew spent 71 days shooting the picture: 32 days on indoor sets at Toho, 25 days on open sets, two days on rented stages outside the studio, three days on location in the Tokyo area, and nine days on location outside Tokyo.

Honda's principal photography team spent 51 days shooting and, like the SFX crew, most of its work was done on the Toho lot. But much time was also spent on location on the Shima Peninsula in Mie Prefecture, to create the fictional locale of Odo Island. Honda's crew established their base at the small town of Toba and did much of their shooting at a nearby mountain, where Godzilla first rears his head over the hillside.

Another important scene filmed in Mie is the *Kagura* folk dance, which the Odo islanders perform to invoke benevolent spirits. The dance was performed by local villagers and filmed outside a Shinto shrine in Toba. Traditional *Kagura* music using flutes, drums, and gongs was later written by Akira Ifukube and added to the scene.

Toho negotiated with the Japan Self Defense Force to film actual military drills. When Godzilla comes ashore at Shinagawa and the military opens fire with machine guns, there are shots of actual soldiers filmed at target practice on a military base outside Tokyo. The convoy of trucks and tanks deployed against Godzilla is an actual military platoon that was being transferred from a base at Utsonomiya to another in Chiba; Honda's crew filmed the caravan as it was departing the base, then jumped in their cars, rushed ahead, and filmed it again further along the route. The huge girls' choir that sings "Oh Peace, Oh Light Return" at the film's pivotal moment was actually the entire student body of an all-girl high school in Tokyo. More than 2,000 girls mouthed the words in their school auditorium.

The illusion of Godzilla's size and irrefutable power was reinforced by the thundering sounds of **Akira Ifukube**, who wrote one of the most memorable musical scores in sci-fi movie history and who supervised the creation of Godzilla's immortal roar. Despite his background in classical music and as a composer of serious dramatic films, Ifukube never shied away from Tanaka's oddball monster movie, not even when his contemporaries said it was beneath him and urged him not to do it. After just a few introductory meetings with Tanaka, Tsuburaya, and Honda, Ifukube enthusiastically accepted the assignment. Ifukube later said. "I couldn't sit still when I heard that the main character was a reptile that would be rampaging through the city."

Ifukube also took an interest in the monster's roar. The roars of lions, tigers, condors, and other animals were recorded and played back at various speeds, but none of these proved satisfactory. Eventually, someone hit upon the idea of using a contrabass (double bass), one of the lowest-pitched string musical instruments in existence. The roar was created by loosening the strings and rubbing them with a leather glove. The sound was recorded and then played back at reduced speed, resulting in Godzilla's melancholy, ear-splitting cry. This technique became Toho's standard method for creating monster roars for years to come.

Conflicting stories exist as to how the ominous sound of Godzilla's footsteps was created. Ifukube, in an interview with *Cult Movies*, said the footsteps were created with a primitive amplifier that emitted a loud clap when struck, designed by a Toho sound engineer. But several Japanese texts reveal the footsteps were actually the "BOOM!" of

a recorded explosion with the “OOM!” clipped off at the end and processed through an electronic reverb unit, producing a sound resembling a gigantic bass drum -- or a monster’s foot crashing down on the Tokyo pavement. The optical recording equipment had only four audio tracks, and of those, one was used for the principal dialogue, one for background chatter, ambient noise, and the sounds of tanks and planes and one for Godzilla’s roar and footsteps.

Unbelievable as it sounds today, the musical score and the foley (mechanical) sound effects of Godzilla’s final, wanton rampage through Tokyo were recorded live, at the same time. At the recording session, Ifukube conducted the NHK Philharmonic orchestra while a foley artist watched Godzilla’s attack projected on a movie screen, using pieces of tin, concrete debris, wood, and other materials to simulate the sounds of the monster walking through buildings.

To build an air of mystery around the movie, reporters were banned from the set, and all information on the special effects and other behind-the-scenes details was barred from the media (including the fact that Godzilla was a man in a costume, officially a secret well into the 60s). The monster’s image, however, was well publicized: cutout pictures and posters of the monster were displayed in theaters and stores, huge advertising balloons were flown over major Japanese cities, and a Godzilla doll was mounted on the back of a truck driven through Tokyo.

On October 25, a *Godzilla* festival was held on the Toho lot, attendees including the great actor Toshiro Mifune! The Godzilla costume was stuffed and mounted on a makeshift Shinto shrine and prayers were given, followed by a cast and crew screening.

The official total estimated production budget for *Godzilla* was 62,893,455 Yen, the equivalent of about \$900,000 in 1954 U.S. funds. More than one-third of the budget went to special effects, while location costs, the large number of extras used, and other factors shot the budget skyward. Advertising and print costs further pushed it up to about 100 million yen -- as much as 30 times the cost of the average Japanese movie. *Godzilla* was the most expensive Japanese movie to date; the previous holder of that distinction was *The Seven Samurai*, which took more than one year to shoot and had higher-priced talent, yet still cost much less (about \$500,000).

Toho’s gamble paid off in both cases. *The Seven Samurai* was the best-attended film of 1954 and has gone down in history as one of the greatest films ever made. On November 3, *Godzilla* broke the opening-day ticket-sales record in Tokyo (previously held by *Seven Samurai* and *Musashi Miyamoto*, both released in 1954). In all, 9.6 million people went to see *Godzilla* during its theatrical run and its box office earnings were about 152 million Yen (\$2.25 million), netting Toho a nice return on its investment.

[*Godzilla* was so popular world-wide that Toho has produced 26 sequels (not including the big budget 1998 Hollywood remake) – beginning with 1955’s *Godzilla Raids Again* (mysteriously re-titled *Gigantis: the Fire Monster* in the U.S.). The character has also spawned a merchandizing empire; a statue near Toho’s Tokyo headquarters pays tribute to the company’s most valuable property. Earlier this year, Toho announced that *Final Wars*, its 50th anniversary Godzilla release, will be the monster’s final rampage. – *Editor*]

ISHIRO HONDA (Director)

Perhaps no one deserves more credit for Godzilla's longevity than the man whose epic cinematic style and sensitivity to the human condition are the enduring signatures of Toho's *kaiju eiga*. Ishiro Honda will always be remembered as a director of monster movies, having helmed 25 special-effects pictures, including eight of the first 15 Godzillas. But he was also a visionary who transcended the limitations of the genre.

Born in 1911, Honda's interest in movies began as a youth, when he was fascinated with the *benshi*, silent-film narrators. After high school, Honda studied film at Japan University's art department. During his college years, he entered the apprenticeship program at PCL Studios. In August 1933, even before completing his studies, Honda was already an accomplished cameraman, and, as PCL was absorbed into Toho, he ascended the ranks to become an assistant director. But Japan's conquest of Asia interrupted Honda's career. He was drafted into the army in 1936, and over the next eight years served three tours as a foot soldier in China and Manchuria. In between his military duties he would return to Toho, working mostly as an assistant director under Kajiro Yamamoto, who directed many of Toho's epic war films. In 1937, Honda first met budding director Akira Kurosawa, another Yamamoto protégé, with whom he forged a lifetime friendship and creative alliance

In 1945, while stationed along the Yangtze River in central China, Honda was captured and held as a prisoner of war for about half a year; it was during his incarceration that he learned of the atomic bombings and Japan's surrender. After the war, Honda returned to Japan and to moviemaking. In 1949, he was chief assistant director to Kurosawa on his film noir masterpiece *Stray Dog*. In 1949 and 1950 he directed two documentaries, *The Story of a Collaborative Union* and *The Legend of Ise-Shima*; this led to his return to Toho and his first feature film as a director, *The Blue Pearl* (1951).

Over the next two years, Honda directed five features, including *The Man Who Came to Port* (1952), starring Toshiro Mifune and Takashi Shimura as Japanese whalers. This was the first time Honda collaborated directly with Tsuburaya, who used rear-screen projection to make the Japanese actors appear as if they were at the South Pole. Honda's big break came with *Eagle of the Pacific* (1953), a war drama with an all-star Japanese cast that became a box-office hit and which included some of Tsuburaya's most impressive war effects work. Honda then made *Farewell, Rabaul* (1954), a love story set amid the Pacific War. His next assignment would forever change the world of science fiction cinema: *Godzilla*.

Honda approached *Godzilla* more like a war drama than a monster or sci-fi movie. Above all, the idea that Godzilla represented the Bomb was foremost in his mind: After the war, Honda had visited devastated Hiroshima and was haunted by its images, and he wanted the monster to convey the same horrific, destructive power.

Among the 44 feature films he directed, Honda considered *Godzilla* his best work. Honda hoped, perhaps naively, that his monster movie could help bring an end to nuclear testing, but *Godzilla* generated more monster mania than nuclear phobia and its success shaped the rest of his career. After *Godzilla*, he was increasingly called upon to work on Toho's growing *kaiju* cinema; by the mid-1960s, he was almost exclusively a monster-movie director.

In an interview shortly before his death, Honda explained his absences from the Godzilla series in 1966-67 and 1970-74 this way: "There were scheduling problems, and also, Toho decided that they did not want people to feel that monster films had to be directed by me.... Frankly, I was having a hard time humanizing Godzilla the way Toho wanted anyway." Even so, Honda repeatedly delivered sci-fi spectacles of epic scale, with startling visuals; he was loved and respected by crew members, and his smooth, relaxed demeanor on the set enabled him to get more engaging performances from his casts than any other Japanese genre-movie director.

Honda's last *kaiju eiga* was the strange and uneven *Terror of MechaGodzilla* (1975), but his film career was far from over; re-uniting with Akira Kurosawa, his friend of nearly 50 years, Honda contributed to the screenplays and directed scenes for five films, on which he was billed as associate director: *Kagemusha: The Shadow Warrior* (1980), *Ran* (1985), *Akira Kurosawa's Dreams* (1990; directed "The Tunnel" segment), *Rhapsody in August* (1991; directed the Buddhist ceremony), and *Madadayo* (1992). Honda died in Tokyo in February, 1993, at age 81.

EIJI TSUBURAYA (Special Effects)

Blessed with a talent for "creating something from nothing," as he liked to say, Eiji Tsuburaya dedicated 50 years of his life to inventing wonderful illusions for film and television, ranging from epic war battles to gigantic monsters and superheroes, yet utilizing resources and techniques that were paltry and crude compared to today's computer-driven standards. If not always realistic, they were never less than fantastic, and that was the magic of the father of *tokusatsu*, the art of Japanese special effects.

Tsuburaya was born in 1901. Fascinated by airplanes, he longed to become a pilot and at age 14 enrolled at the Japan Aviation Academy, but the school soon closed and he studied electrical engineering instead. At 18, he entered the film industry and for the next 18 years worked stints at various studios, eventually becoming a cameraman and learning early special-effects techniques.

Tsuburaya landed his first job with a major studio in 1925 at Shochiku, where he worked with director Teinosuke Kinugasa on his silent expressionistic masterpiece *A Page of Madness* (1925). In 1927, Tsuburaya earned his first credit as a cinematographer and around this time also began working with miniatures.

Tsuburaya was heavily influenced by *King Kong* when he first saw it in the mid-1930s. "At that time, Japanese trick photography was very backward," he commented in 1963. "[But] by 1937 I began to accomplish some of the things I wanted to do."

Tsuburaya's career accelerated in 1935 when he was hired by Jo Studios in Kyoto, where he was encouraged to develop his talents for film trickery. In *Princess of the Moon*, a fantasy based on a Japanese folk story, Tsuburaya photographed a miniature model of Kyoto, superimposing a crowd of people and a cow-drawn carriage in the foreground, and he devised an effect to simulate angels descending from the sky. This film, apparently long lost, solidified Tsuburaya's interest in special effects as a new art form. For Japan's first international co-production, the Japanese-German *The New*

Land (1937), Tsuburaya developed a process for the still-tricky art of rear-screen projection photography that surpassed similar techniques being used in Europe.

Tsuburaya joined PCL in 1937, and two years later, after the company became Toho, he was appointed head of its new special photographic techniques department. His staff of model-makers and craftsmen grew as special effects became integral to Toho's popular war films in the early 1940s. From 1939 to the end of World War II, Tsuburaya spearheaded the first boom in Japanese special effects, working on nearly 40 films, most notably a trio of war blockbusters directed by Kajiro Yamamoto. Devoted Tsuburaya fans should seek out *The War at Sea from Hawaii to Malaya*. The film, which follows a naval cadet from boot camp to the Pearl Harbor attack, has gone down in Japanese film history as an amazing piece of wartime propaganda. Its re-creation of Pearl Harbor was so convincing that, after the war, the Occupation authorities mistook some scenes for actual newsreel footage.

After the war, Tsuburaya left Toho amid the studio's feuding with labor unions (some sources say he was forced to quit the film business when the General Headquarters of the Occupation purged everyone who had made war movies), and worked with acclaimed directors Kinugasa, Kon Ichikawa, and Mikio Naruse before establishing his own special effects company in 1948. Although he produced the effects for Daiei's *Invisible Man Appears* (1949), Japan's first modern sci-fi film, movie work was scarce and Tsuburaya dabbled in other endeavors including mass-marketing the "Auto-Snap," a camera controlled by a foot pedal.

Tsuburaya returned to Toho in 1950. When production began on *Godzilla* in 1954, he was already in his fifties, but he was about to launch Japan's second special-effects boom, the most productive and creative period of his life.

From *Godzilla* until his death, Tsuburaya worked on 56 feature films, mostly science fiction or war movies. The Honda-Tsuburaya works, in particular, were among the biggest moneymakers of Toho's golden age. In 1963, he started Tsuburaya Productions, which soon pioneered the production of SFX programs for Japanese television.

In 1969, doctors advised him to reduce his workload, but he took on more projects than ever, dividing his time between Tsuburaya Productions and special effects for two films, *Latitude Zero* (his last picture with Ishiro Honda) and Seiji Maruyama's *Battle of the Japan Sea*, his final film. In addition, Tsuburaya was hired by Mitsubishi to oversee a special exhibit at Expo '70, the World's Fair in Osaka. He died in Tokyo in 1970.

TAKASHI SHIMURA (Dr. Yamane)

In a single year, legendary Japanese actor Takashi Shimura (1905-1982) starred in perhaps the two most famous Japanese films ever made: Kurosawa's *Seven Samurai* (as their leader) and Ishiro Honda's *Godzilla*. Over a nearly 40-year period, Shimura was one of the mainstays of Akira Kurosawa's stock company, appearing for him 22 times; in the late 40s and early 50s, he was featured as prominently as co-star Toshiro Mifune in such Kurosawa masterworks as *Stray Dog* (1949) and *Drunken Angel* (1949) and in a rare solo starring role as the doomed man in *Ikiru* (1952). He made his final film appearance in Kurosawa's *Kagemusha* (1980).

RIALTO PICTURES

Rialto Pictures, a company specializing in the re-release of classic films, was founded in 1997 by Bruce Goldstein. A year later, Adrienne Halpern joined him as partner. In 2002, Eric DiBernardo joined the company as National Sales Director.

Rialto's releases have included Renoir's *Grand Illusion*, Carol Reed's *The Third Man*, Fellini's *Nights of Cabiria*, Jules Dassin's *Rififi*, De Sica's *Umberto D.*, Godard's *Contempt*, *Band of Outsiders* and *A Woman is a Woman*, Melville's *Bob Le Flambeur*, Julien Duvivier's *Pépé le Moko*, Buñuel's *Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie* and *Diary of a Chambermaid*, John Schlesinger's *Billy Liar*, Clouzot's *Quai des Orfèvres*, Mike Nichols' *The Graduate*, Mel Brooks' *The Producers*, and many others.

In 2003, Rialto had tremendous success with *Le Cercle Rouge*, a late *noir* masterwork by Jean-Pierre Melville, being released for the very first time in its complete, uncut version, and Jacques Becker's French gangster classic *Touchez pas au Grisbi*. Other 2003 releases included Bresson's *Au Hasard Balthazar* and Georges Franju's *Eyes without a Face*. The company's very first first-run film, *Murderous Maids*, the chilling true story of two homicidal sisters in 1930s provincial France, was released on DVD in September 2003.

The company is currently having one of the biggest hits in its history with the re-release of Gillo Pontecorvo's groundbreaking and influential *The Battle of Algiers*, which has been receiving universal critical acclaim around the country.

In 1999, Rialto received a special "Heritage Award" from the National Society of Film Critics. In 2000, Rialto received a special award from the New York Film Critics for its re-release of *Rififi*, presented to Goldstein and Halpern by Jeanne Moreau. The Rialto partners have each received the French Order of Chevalier of Arts and Letters.

Godzilla is the company's first Japanese film.

Pressbook editor: Bruce Goldstein

rialtopictures.com