

ScienceFictionMovies1958TextTVS

By Tim Van Schmidt

It! The Terror From Beyond Space \*\*\*

Cheesy, yes. Outdated, yes. But the dire circumstances these space travelers experience in this movie is still plenty compelling. That is, Mars explorers discover they have an alien creature- which sucks the moisture out of its victims- aboard their ship on the return journey to Earth.

Can anyone say "Alien" here? Yes, this is the very same mix of Sci Fi and monster movie elements as that classic- but many years beforehand. Only here, a dwindling crew of both men and women frantically fights the monster, not just one woman in her underwear.

The sets are imaginative and aptly suggest the cramped quarters of a space ship. The space walk sequence is unusual- a silent, slow and death defying feat. Actor Marshall Thompson's character keeps a cool head throughout the production, whether being accused of murder, or having to face the monster.

Directed by Edward L Cahn...1958...69 min...featuring Marshall Thompson, Shirley Patterson, Kim Spalding, Dabbs Greer, Ray Corrigan.

The Fly \*\*\*

Should we be afraid of significant scientific breakthroughs? That question is asked over and over in this 1958 sci-fi classic.

It all starts as a murder mystery- a brilliant inventor has been killed, his head and arm squashed in a huge industrial press. His wife is a suspect in the incident but it is not clear whether this is a murder or suicide. The real answer here is too hard for the police inspector to believe as the wife tells her story- and he goes for murder.

According to the wife, it all has to do with a matter transference machine her husband created in his basement lab. The trouble is that the transference is not entirely perfect. The impatient inventor, however, cannot wait to work out the bugs, but ramps up his experiments until he himself goes through

the process. However, his self-experiment goes array in an unimaginable way, prompting the tragic solution.

"The Fly" is mostly famous for the ending sequence- a look at what that white-headed fly they search for throughout the movie really looks like- while being devoured by a spider. But beyond that, the pondering about the role of science gets plenty of screen time- from being enamored with its wonders to being frightened out of your wits.

Directed by Kurt Neumann...1958...94 min...featuring Vincent Price, David Hedison, Patricia Owens, Herbert Marshall.

Attack of the Puppet People \*\*\*

Loneliness is at the heart of another 1958 sci-fi classic, "Attack of the Puppet People." Sure, there's some science involved as a doll maker uses an invention to miniaturize real people. He keeps them in suspended animation tubes except when he decides to bring them out to play.

Apparently, the reason for all of this is because the weird old doll maker's only love left him broken hearted. So, it's not about scientific breakthroughs, like in "The Fly," but about collecting favorite people and making sure they don't get away. Of course, that's just what happens anyway as the police close in on the obsessed inventor.

Overall, "Attack of the Puppet People" is a creative production and the use of miniature- and oversized- props help heighten the action. A particularly interesting scene is at the drive-in movie theater. As the two characters talk marriage, director Bert I Gordon's 1957 sci-fi movie, "The Amazing Colossal Man," is playing on the screen. Poignant quotes come through and foreshadow the upcoming adventure. Also, the scene sequence in the theater, putting the puppet people into the mix with a Jekyll and Hyde marionette is certainly surreal.

Directed by Bert I Gordon...1958...79 min...featuring John Agar, John Hoyt, June Kenney.