

Black Heart Enterprises

THE THING

FROM ANOTHER WORLD

The Thing sculpture by Joe Simon; molding and casting by Earthbound Studios; Thing buildup by Steve Riojas; profile layout by Steven Parke

PROFILE

THE THING FROM ANOTHER WORLD

Classic literature has inspired some of the most beloved and most acclaimed science fiction films about extra-terrestrials. While *One Thousand And One Nights* (also known as *The Arabian Nights*), written around 900 A.D., is best known for *Aladdin's Wonderful Lamp*, *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves*, and *The Seven Voyages of Sinbad the Sailor*, a lesser known story from the collection, *The Adventures of Bulukiya*, is perhaps the earliest known fictionalization of extra-terrestrial life. In that story, the main character's quest for immortality leads him across the cosmos to a number of different worlds and their fantastic inhabitants.

Another sci-fi classic, *War of the Worlds* (1953) was based on H.G. Wells' 1898 classic novel of the same name and depicts the invasion of Earth by beings from Mars.

Even William Shakespeare was inspiration for sci-fi cinema. *The Tempest*, written around 1610, was the literary basis for the classic science fiction film, *Forbidden Planet* (1956). The film featured a man who had increased his intellect by mastering the technology of an extinct alien race and, just as in Shakespeare's play, he lived in seclusion with a beautiful daughter who had never seen other men.

As influential as classic literature has been, it was the popularity of pulp science-fiction magazines like *Astounding Stories* and *Weird Tales* and *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* in the 1930s and '40s that set the stage for the science fiction genre finally coming into its own in the 1950s. The so-called "Golden Age of Science Fiction" (from the late 1930s through the 1950s) was an era during which the genre gained wide public attention. And, man's interactions with extra-terrestrials were as popular a subject as any other, particularly in sci-fi cinema.

John W. Campbell, Jr., editor of *Astounding Stories* from late 1937 until his death in 1971, is generally credited with shaping sci-fi's "Golden Age". Under Campbell's editorial leadership, sci-fi developed more realism and psychological depth in character development. Campbell's science fiction novella, *Who Goes There?*, was first published in 1938 in *Astounding Stories*. The story served as the basis for *The Thing From Another World* (1955), starring James Arness as the title character, an alien frozen in the ice of Antarctica and then revived after thousands of years. In 1973, Campbell's story was voted by *The Science Fiction Writers of America* as one of the finest science fiction novellas ever written. And in 2001, the U.S. Library of Congress deemed the film "culturally significant" and selected it for preservation in the National Film Registry.

Harry Bates' classic short story, *Farewell To The Master*, originally published in *Astounding Science Fiction Magazine* in 1940, was the inspiration for the film, *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (1951). The film is still regarded as one of the greatest sci-fi films of all time; it featured a spaceship, a powerful alien robot and it's humanoid "master" landing in a Washington D.C. park.

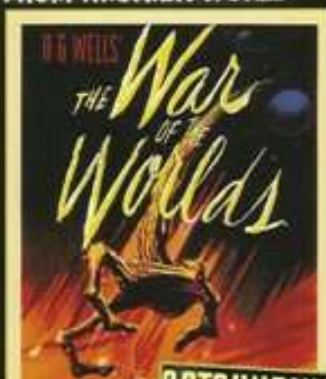
Earth vs. the Flying Saucers (1956) was ostensibly suggested by the 1950 non-fiction book, *Flying Saucers from Outer Space*, by Donald Keyhoe. Keyhoe was a well-established author with numerous appearances in pulp magazines like *Weird Tales* in the 1920s and 30s. The film is most notable for the flying saucer effects created by Ray Harryhausen.

This Island Earth (1955) was based on the 1952 science fiction novel of the same name by Raymond F. Jones. The story was first published as a serial in *Thrilling Wonder Stories* magazine.

And, *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956), another highly-regarded '50s sci-fi classic, was based on Jack Finney's 1955 novel, *The Body Snatchers*. The story was originally serialized in *Colliers Magazine* in 1954 and described a California town being invaded by alien seed pods that drifted to Earth. While humans slept, they were replaced by perfect physical duplicates grown from the plant-like pods.

The 1950s saw a multitude of other science fiction films depicting alien invasions but not based upon classic literature or popular published sci-fi stories. Many of these films were given names suggestive of the weird, the astounding, and the fantastic just like the magazines that published such stories. Movies like *Invaders from Mars* (1953), *It Came from Outer Space* (1953), *Devil Girl From Mars* (1954), *20 Million Miles To Earth* (1957), *Invasion of the Saucer Men* (1957), *The Blob* (1958), *I Married a Monster from Outer Space* (1958), and *The Angry Red Planet* (1959), to name a few, are all films which sought to capitalize on the popularity of the genre and each involved man's first contact with extra-terrestrials. Often these questionably-titled films, when watched, turned out to be much better than anticipated.

In the decades since, there has been no decline in the popularity of this cinematic genre. The weird, the astounding and the fantastic continue to capture the imagination of movie-goers. Sci-fi and aliens in film are here to stay. Watch the skies!



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