

Monsters vs. Aliens

A review by Heather Craig

Exactly when did monsters become cuddly? I think it was with *Sesame Street*. One of my earliest memories is of my mother trying to coax the 3-year-old me out from behind the rocking chair because I was afraid of the monster on the TV screen. My mother told me that he was “a nice monster,” and even to my 3-year-old brain, this concept was suspect in the extreme. Still, I trusted Mom and came out from behind the chair. Aliens, however, are still not considered benevolent, and with the possible exception of E.T., the idea of an alien takes us to the Earth invaders of **Independence Day**, or the, dare I say “monsters” of the **Alien** movies. Aliens are the new monsters.

In the animated (and available in 3-D and IMAX) **Monsters vs. Aliens**, 5 friendly monsters set out to defend the world against aliens. Our main character is Susan (voiced by Reese Witherspoon), a young woman whose dreams seem to include nothing more than marrying her fiancé, Derek, and seeing Paris. These goals are snatched from her when a meteorite crashes near the church on her wedding day, and exposure to it causes her to grow to, er, monstrous proportions. She is promptly subdued by the U.S. military and taken to a secret base. There, she meets her new friends, Dr. Cockroach, Ph.D. (voiced by Hugh Laurie) a friendly, mad scientist who experienced a problem during an experiment on causing humans to be as resilient as cockroaches and ended up as something of a cross between the two ; the Missing Link (voiced by Will Arnett), a kindly creature reminiscent of both a gorilla and the Creature from the Black Lagoon ; Insectosaurus, a meek grub grown to monstrous proportions ; and B.O.B. (voiced by Seth Rogan) a sentient gelatinous blob who bears some resemblance to a character from a monster-hit by Pixar, **Monsters Inc.**'s Mike. OK, Mike was green, but when you have a blob with a Cyclops eye, comparisons are going to be inevitable.

Susan, renamed Ginormica, leads the other monsters against a giant alien robot who is attacking San Francisco. Along the way, she literally and metaphorically outgrows narcissistic Derek. All this is overseen by General Warren Monger (voiced by Kiefer Sutherland), and while this contributes little to a plot summary, I just love his name.

If all of this sounds derivative to you, it does to me too. I had flashes to all kinds of movies, including **Attack of the 50-Foot Woman**, **Godzilla**, **King Kong**, **The Day the Earth Stood Still**, **War of the Worlds**, and the aforementioned **Monsters Inc.** This isn't necessarily a bad thing. A few of the film's evocative moments seemed deliberate, almost homages. But that still doesn't make it very original.

Original or not, the movie is quite fun and entertaining. I was never bored and I was never brought out of the movie by a ridiculous plot point. The 3-D is very slick and cool, especially an early moment of a man with a paddle and ping pong ball which pings into the audience. We will be getting a lot more used to 3-D movies in the future, according to the trailers. (Evidently along with being able to charge more to see such movies, they are more difficult to pirate.)

Seeing a monster movie just doesn't have the same connotations that it used to.