



## TOHO KAIJU MARATHON II

OFFICIAL PRESS KIT



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## Press Kit Formatting Note

All names in this press kit are rendered in the Western style. That is, with the given name first and family name second. This is opposed to the Eastern style, favored by the actors themselves, which renders the names in the reverse order.



## Toho Kaiju Eiga

The genre of the giant monster movie has existed for nearly as long as moving pictures have been recorded onto celluloid. From 1925's silent *The Lost World*, which featured a stop-motion brontosaurus rampaging through London, the idea of creating a special-effects reality of fantastic creatures inflicting massive carnage on an unheard of scale has captivated audiences worldwide. Though often berated for being mindless B-movies with sketchy dialogue and unrealistic premise, filmmakers often found the genre to be a prime ground for relating real-world messages through other-worldly imagery.

This was especially true with Japanese filmmakers. Where their American and British counterparts tended to focus on giant monsters simply for giant monsters sake, the Japanese storytellers embedded topical meaning into their films. *King Kong* (1933) is little more than a story of a giant ape that runs into conflict with the modern world and its tender feelings towards the female lead. It's ultimate deep meaning, that "beauty killed the beast." Ishiro Honda's *Gojira* (1954), on the other hand, imbues Godzilla with all the attributes of a walking atom bomb, a stark reminder of the terrible effects of World War II. This gives Godzilla a far more dangerous aura than Kong and Honda's film becomes that much more human as a result. Godzilla as an analogue to atomic warfare is much more tangible for viewers to relate to than the moral of "beauty killed the beast."

The success of *Gojira* was not ignored and Toho studios shifted its production efforts into producing many more similar films. It would be another eight years before Godzilla films became a franchise and Toho experimented with a great number of monsters in all shapes and variations in the meanwhile. Many stand-alone monster films were produced during this time, each set on testing out a new monster in the hopes of exploring its popularity and feasibility for sequels. *Varan* (1958) was one such experiment and, since that film failed to generate the interest and popularity of the other monsters, *Varan* was not invited back for repeat appearances. The genre of *Kaiju Eiga* – literally, "monster movie" – was born. With the largest of the lot, like *Gojira*, *Rodan* (1956), *Mothra* (1961), and their ilk, came the *Daikaiju Eiga*, the "giant monster movie." With this newfound *raison d'être*, Toho became an absolute powerhouse during the sixties and seventies, churning out film after film at a breakneck pace, with scores of new titles coming out each year.

*(continued)*



Most remarkably this massive quantity of films was primarily monopolized by a select few filmmakers, each individual working on several different productions each year. That makes it no surprise that the three films in this marathon were all directed by Ishiro Honda, produced by Tomoyuki Tanaka, and with special effects by Eiji Tsuburaya. Cast-wise, Koreya Senda, Yoshio Tsuchiya, Kenji Sahara, and Akihiko Hirata, to name only a handful of the bigger names, have roles in two films each, as does Haruo Nakajima performing the *kaiju* “suitmation” as he did as Godzilla. Many other lesser billed actors also appear in more than one film throughout this marathon. Needless to say, much of the cast and crew were no strangers to this type of movie.

Toho did not remain alone in this venture. Daiei studios began producing their own series of *Daikaiju Eiga* in the form of Gamera, the jet-powered flying turtle. Daiei never had the budget and – daresay – talent of Toho and their films reflected this. Gamera’s monsters and effects were generally inferior to Toho’s and the writing weaker. This goes to show how lucky Toho had been with its *kaiju* dream team of Honda, Tanaka, and Tsuburaya.

Toho remained this movie-making powerhouse until the energy crisis in the 1970s forced the company to slow production down to nearly a halt, as all Japanese cinema suffered. Revitalized in the mid-1980s, Toho quickly returned to Godzilla production, leaving behind the quest for stand-alone monster flicks. Today the *Kaiju Eiga* no longer have the widespread appeal to dominate an entire film company’s production efforts and the monopoly has been lifted, allowing companies other than Toho and Daiei to produce their own distinct monsters, each with different meaning and appearance, to continue the legacy of fascinating audiences just as that small brontosaurus puppet did eighty-nine years ago.



**Godzilla, the best known *Kaiju***



## Toho Kaiju Marathon II



The insignia for the second Toho Kaiju Marathon is simply a revision of the previous event's from July 2008 and features Toho's own emblem roundel front and center. The two Katakana letters spell out the studio's name (*to-ho*) while the marathon's descriptive name is indicated below. Under that are the three films that make up the Toho Kaiju movie day: *Battle in Outer Space* (1959), *Mothra* (1961), and *The H-Man* (1958).

The Toho shield is mounted upon a *torii*, the symbolic gateway to Shinto shrines. This very Japanese icon often features in the *kaiju* films that come out of the country. Traditionally constructed of wood and painted red, *torii* serve as an entranceway and transition point, passing between the sanctity of the shrine and the vulgarity of the outside world. Nonetheless, this important distinction rarely prevents the *daikaiju* from destroying them during the course of their rampage.



## Films in this Marathon

The lineup for this particular marathon is as follows:

- 1) *Battle in Outer Space* (1959)
- 2) *Mothra* (1961)
- 3) *The H-Man* (1958)

The three films all come from Toho's experimental era of the late fifties and early sixties, trying out new concepts, new monsters, and new species. What is unique is that, while they are all *Kaiju Eiga*, they represent different aspects of the genera.

*Battle in Outer Space* and *The H-Man* are much more steadfast science fiction than *Mothra*, focusing on threats from outer space and advanced technologies. *Mothra* is the quintessential monster film, much in the vein of *Godzilla* and *Varan*. Finally, *The H-Man* is also, at heart, a horror film about human beings losing their individuality and transforming into grotesque new lifeforms while at the same time serving as a warning against nuclear development – a common theme in Ishiro Honda's catalog of films.

What follows is a closer look at each of these movies.



Mothra takes to the skies



## Battle in Outer Space



### Uchū Daisensō (*Great Space Battle*) / Battle in Outer Space

Directed by Ishiro Honda, 1959. 90 minutes.

Starring: Ryo Ikebe (Dr. Ichiro Katsumiya), Kyoko Anzai (Etsuko Shiraishi), Yoshio Tsuchiya (Yuichi Iwamura), Minoru Takada (Commander, SDF), Hisaya Ito (Kogure), Koreya Senda (Dr. Kenjiro Adachi), Leonard Stanford (Dr. Roger Richardson), Harold S. Conway (Dr. Immelmann), George Wyman (Dr. Ahmed), Elise Richter (Silva), Nadao Kirino (Okada), Fuyuki Murakami (Inspector Ariake).

Japanese premier: December 26, 1959.

American premier: July 8, 1960.



**SYNOPSIS:**

A semi-sequel to 1957's *The Mysterians*, Dr. Adachi and Etsuko Shiraishi once again face an alien invasion of the Earth. This time around it's by the Natarl who come armed with destructive weapons and mind-control abilities. The fight for the Earth expands into outer space, including a showdown on the surface of the Moon.

**KAIJU:**

**The Natarl.**

Diminutive, bumbling, helmeted aliens from the planet Natal, the Natarl come to the Earth and begin their destructive goals of conquest, which mostly consist of freezing things, manipulating gravity, and controlling the minds of humans.



The Natarl





## Mothra



### Mosura / Mothra (Mothra)

Directed by Ishiro Honda, 1961. 100 minutes.

Starring: Frankie Sakai (Zenichiro Fukuda), Kyoko Kagawa (Michi Hanamura), Hiroshi Koizumi (Dr. Shin'ichi Chujo), Ken Uehara (Dr. Harada), Jerry Itou (Clark Nelson), Yumi & Emi Itou (The Shobijin), Takashi Shimura (Sadakatsu Amano), Masatmisu Tayama (Shinji Tyuujou), Audie Wyatt (Dr. Raaff), Akihiko Hirata (Director General), Kenji Sahara (Pilot), Harou Nakajima (Larva Head), Katsumi Tezuka (Larva Body).

Japanese premier: July 30, 1961.

American premier: May 10, 1962.



## SYNOPSIS:

A year before becoming synonymous with the *Godzilla* franchise, Mothra debuted in her only stand-alone film until the *Rebirth of Mothra* trilogy in the 1990s. An investigation of nuclear tests conducted on Infant Island reveals the presence of hitherto unknown natives and their unborn god. A greedy capitalist kidnaps Mothra's guardians, the Shobijin, causing the giant egg to hatch, releasing the flying *kaiju* to their rescue.

## KAIJU:

### **Mothra.**

Mothra perhaps needs no introduction. She is an enormous butterfly whose massive wings can cause wind damage when flapped. Hatching from an egg, the larval Mothra is capable of spitting silk to build her cocoon or to ensnarl her enemies.



Mothra



## The H-Man



### **Bijo to Ekitainingen (*Beauty & Liquid Men*) / The H-Man**

Directed by Ishiro Honda, 1958. 87 minutes.

Starring: Kenji Sahara (Masada), Yumi Shirakawa (Chikako Arai), Akihiko Hirata (Tominaga), Eitarou Ozawa (Miyashita), Korenari Senda (Dr. Maki), Makoto Satou (Uchida), Hisaya Itou (Misaki), Machiko Kitagawa (Hanae), Yoshio Tsuchiya (Taguchi), Tadao Nakamaru (Seki), Kamayuki Tsubono (Ogawa), Naomi Shiraishi (Mineko), Kou Masaki (Kishi), Yoshihumi Tajima (Sakata), Tetsu Nakamura (Kin).

Japanese premier: June 24, 1958.

American premier: May 28, 1959.



## SYNOPSIS:

Exploring a derelict vessel in the aftermath of a nuclear explosion reveals a distressing mutation caused by a specific radiation known as Ash of Death: humans reduced to a liquid form. Soon, these H-Men find their way ashore, leading police and scientists to investigate a string of mysterious deaths that eventually trace their way to the liquefied humans, roaming the streets and killing anyone in their path.

## KAIJU:

### **The H-Man.**

There is no singular creature named the H-Man. Rather H-Man refers to the creatures that normal humans transform into after being exposed to Ash of Death radiation. This reduces the victim's physical form to a blue liquid, able to spread the radiation via direct contact with another person.



The H-Man



## Toho Kaiju Marathons



### Toho Kaiju Marathon

Saturday, July 19, 2008

*The Mysterians* (1957)  
*Varan the Unbelievable* (1959)  
*Matango: Attack of the Mushroom People* (1963)



### Toho Kaiju Marathon II

Saturday, July 19, 2014

*Battle in Outer Space* (1959)  
*Mothra* (1961)  
*The H-Man* (1958)



## Press Release

The official press release for the Toho Kaiju Marathon II:

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Monday, July 14, 2014.

Life's too short to take it too seriously. That's why we have Japan to thank for their abundant supply of campy and ridiculous monster flicks. For this marathon we plan to watch three of Toho's sillier releases while basking in the free-for-all attitude of summer. This isn't a marathon for thinking too hard and taking seriously. This is a marathon for kicking back and realizing that the world doesn't have to be so stressful.

Like the majority of Toho's *Kaiju* films of this era, all three of these are directed by Ishiro Honda, are produced by Tomoyuki Tanaka, and feature special effects by Eiji Tsuburaya, all of Godzilla fame. As a bonus, the late Akihiko Hirata (*Gojira's* Dr. Serizawa) is in two of the movies!

*Battle in Outer Space*. 1959. 90 minutes.

*Mothra*. 1961. 100 minutes.

*The H-Man*. 1958. 87 minutes.

Total running time: 277 minutes / 4.6 hours

All movies are in Japanese with English subtitles

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The Toho Kaiju Marathon II is to be held at Josh's House.

Marathon date: Saturday, July 19, 2014 at 3:00 PM.

### Particulars:

- Marathon guest list is *open registry*.
- Marathon format is *fixed schedule*.
- Marathon type is *multiple series*.
- Marathon length is *4.6 hours total*.