

Blu-Ray Review: Original 'The Day the Earth Stood Still' Stands Test of Time

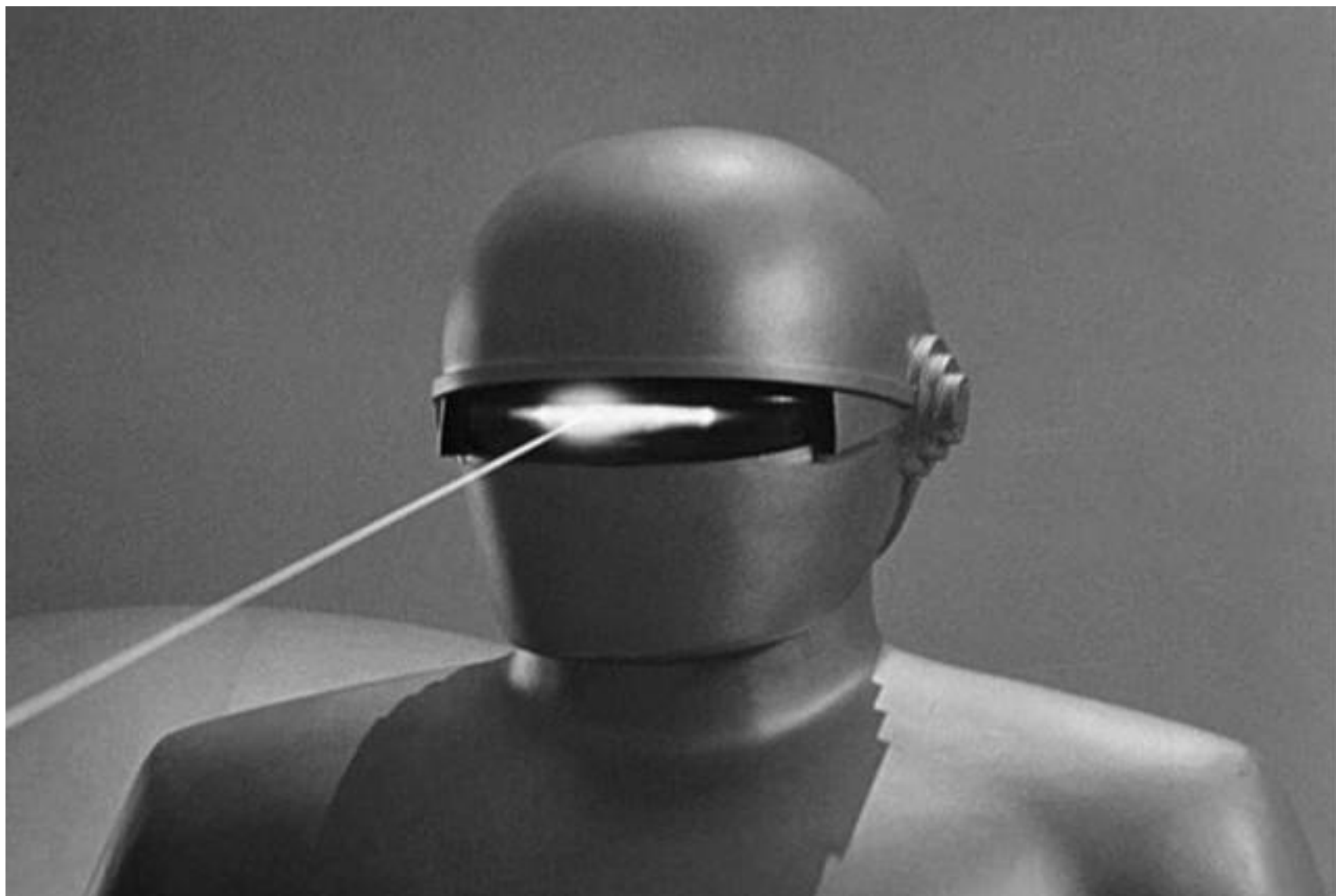
Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on December 9, 2008 - 8:29am

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CHICAGO – Fifty-seven years after the original cautionary tale became a sci-fi classic, director Scott Derrickson and stars Keanu Reeves and Jennifer Connelly are returning to the big screen with a remake of “The Day the Earth Stood Still”.

Never a studio to let a cross-marketing possibility pass it by, Fox has released the original classic on Blu-Ray in a special edition packed with informative and interesting special features. The jury may still be out on the critical and commercial success of the remake, but this special edition proves that the original still has dramatic power and an important place in film history.

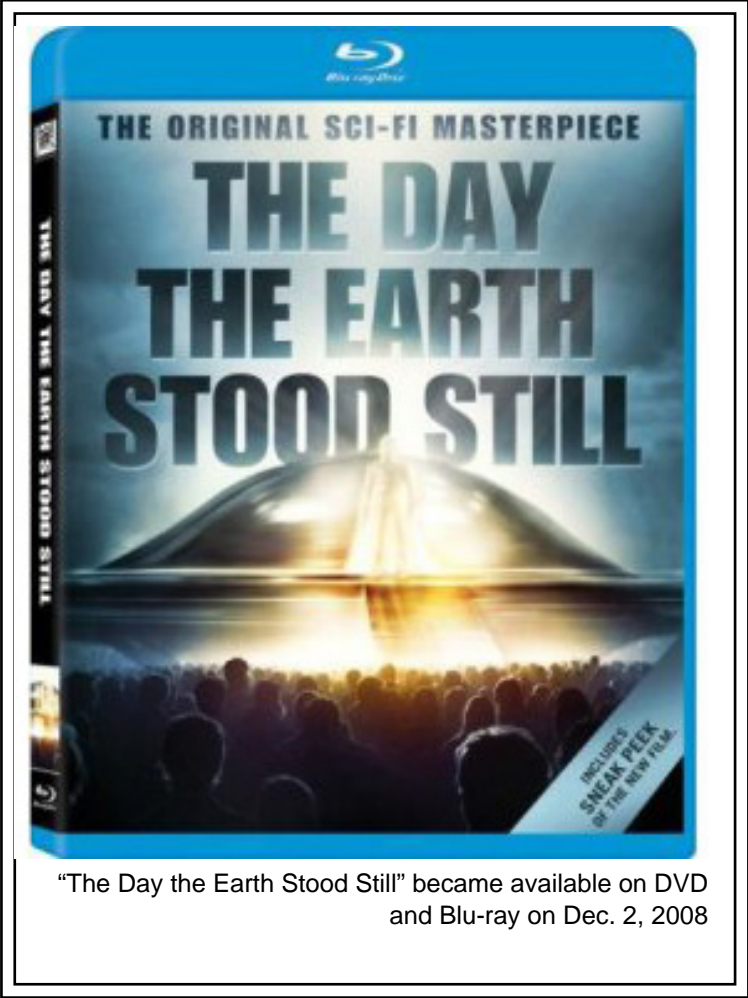
To fully appreciate the significance of “The Day the Earth Stood Still”, one must place it in the context of when it was released. The tension of the nuclear world of the late '40s and early '50s led to a society of fear and paranoia. As made clear in the excellent special feature, “The Making of The Day the Earth Stood Still,” producer Julian Blaustein wanted to make a science fiction film about the turmoil of the human race in those days and he accomplished that by focusing on the human reaction to an alien invasion instead of the attack itself. It's how people respond to adversity - with violence or without - that dictates the end result of conflict.



“The Day the Earth Stood Still” became available on DVD and Blu-ray on Dec. 2, 2008.

“The Day the Earth Stood Still” opens with the arrival of a flying saucer on the lawn in the nation's capital. From the beginning, the documentary approach employed by Blaustein and director Robert Wise make “The Day the Earth Stood Still” feel different from the average sci-fi classic. What looks like a man named Klaatu (Michael Rennie) emerges from the silver machine and a fearful soldier shoots him the arm. It turns out the man wasn't alone, as he's followed by an eight-foot robot named Gort, who destroys all the weapons and tanks surrounding the spaceship.

Klaatu informs the President’s secretary that he has a message that must be delivered to all of the world leaders at the same time. While the poor guy tries to get everyone seated at the same table, Klaatu assumes the name “Mr. Carpenter” and enters society to learn more about the people he’s been sent to save. He meets a widow named Helen Benson (Patricia Neal) and a her son Bobby (Billy Gray), both of whom will play a role in the message Klaatu has been sent to deliver.

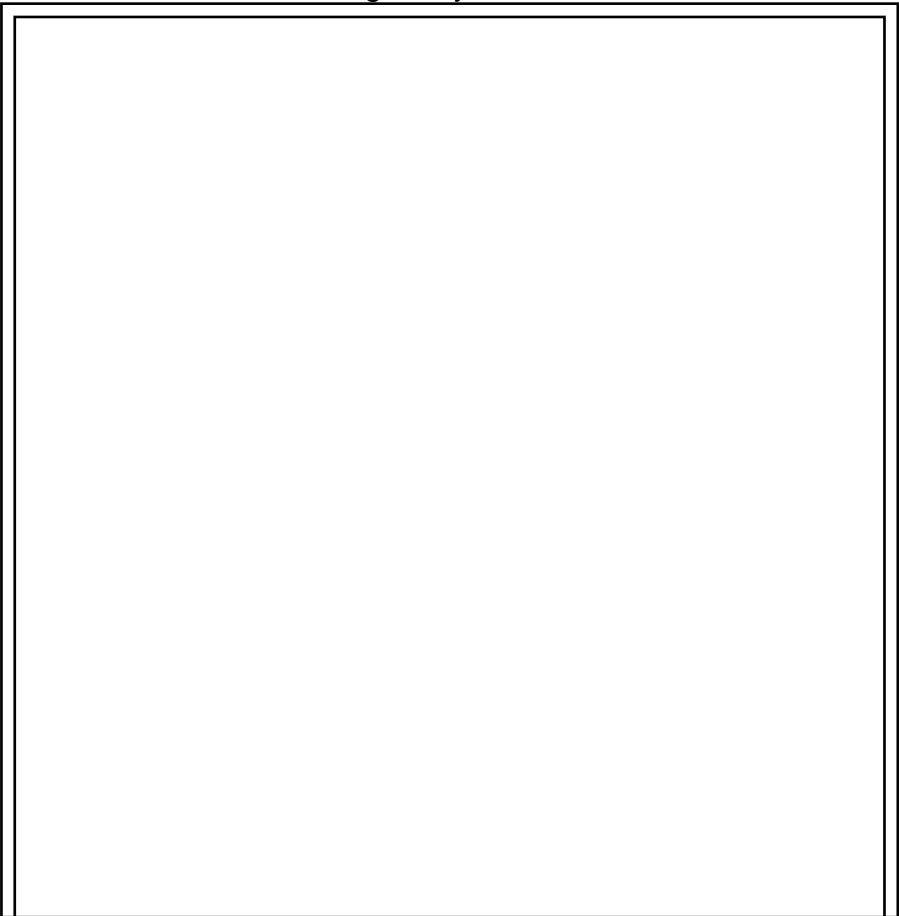


With all the subtlety of a spaceship landing in a field, “The Day the Earth Stood Still” may be a little too obvious and melodramatic in its thematic importance but the film is a fascinating one when viewed as a chapter in cinematic and social history. The world was at a turning point in 1951, on the verge of the Cold War and the Red Scare and increasingly interested in the discussion of war vs. peace. The film reflects all of those fears. It’s also incredibly easy to see the influence of “The Day the Earth Stood Still” on the next six decades of science fiction. It almost makes you wonder why it took so long to remake.

“The Day the Earth Stood Still” has been excellently remastered in full frame 1.33:1, the ratio that it was originally shot in. Sometimes classic films are overly polished, making them look a little too plastic, but “The Day the Earth Stood Still” looks its age but not dirty. The audio mix - a 5.1 DTS-HD Master Audio track - is not remarkable but also never distracting. There’s a mono English track that is arguably more appropriate to the film as it’s how most audiences probably heard it in 1951.

The entire history of “The Day the Earth Stood Still” from conception through to modern historian’s reaction to the film are included in an incredible series of special features, one of the most extensive of the year for a classic movie.

Blu-Ray exclusives on “The Day the Earth Stood Still” include “Interactive Theremin: Create Your Own Score” and “Gort Command! Interactive Game”. They are both minor distractions that even fans of the movie and the theremin won’t spend much time exploring. The meat of the Blu-Ray release are the all-new featurettes - “The Mysterious, Melodious Theremin: Main Title Live Performance by Peter Pringle”, “The Making of The Day the Earth Stood Still”, “Decoding ‘Klaatu Barada Nikto’”, “Science Fiction as Metaphor”, “A Brief History of Flying Saucers”, “The Astounding Harry Bates”, and “Edmund North: The Man Who Mad the Earth Stood Still”.





The Day the Earth Stood Still is available on DVD/Blu-ray December 2, 2008.

The featurettes alone provide a great historical context for "The Day the Earth Stood Still" but fans will also learn a lot from two commentary tracks - the formerly-available-and-imported track by director Robert Wise and Nicholas Meyer (Director, "Star Trek: Wrath of Khan") and a new track by film and music historians John Morgan, Steven Smith, William Stromberg, and Nick Redman.

The special features are rounded out by an isolated score track, "Race to Oblivion" Documentary Short, "Farewell to the Master: A Reading by Jamieson K. Price of the Original Harry Bates Short Story", "Fox Movietonews (1951)", Trailers, Interactive pressbook, and Still Galleries.

There is a long history of studios releasing originals on the home market just as the remake is about to hit theaters but they are often merely cash grabs, blatant tricks to get people interested in a new film to pay for another one first, but this one is more complete than average. Fox's special edition of the 1951 version of "The Day the Earth Stood Still" would stand up with or without a Keanu Reeves remake on the horizon.

'The Day the Earth Stood Still' is released by Twentieth Century Fox Entertainment and stars Michael Rennie, Patricia Neal, Hugh Marlowe, Sam Jaffe, Frances Bavier, Billy Gray, and Lock Martin. It was written by Edmund J. North and directed by Robert Wise. It was released on December 2nd, 2008.

[Check out the 15-Image Slideshow for the remake of 'The Day the Earth Stood Still'.](#) [16]

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