

**Short Review: “The Thing (from Another World)” (1951) by Dr. John L. Flynn**



**The Thing (from Another World)** (1951). RKO/Winchester Pictures, b/w, 86 min.

Director: Christian Nyby (and Howard Hawks). Producer: Howard Hawks.

Screenwriter: Charles Lederer based on the novella “Who Goes There?” by John W.

Campbell. Cast: Kenneth Tobey, Margaret Sheridan, Robert Cornthwaite, Dewey Martin, Bill Self, Douglas Spencer, and James Arness.

The “thing” was not the metamorphosing creature of its source material and big budget remake, but a blood-drinking carrot, played by none other than Sheriff Matt Dillon from “Gunsmoke,” James Arness. It gets worse. Members of an isolated army research station discover a flying saucer embedded in the ice at the Arctic circle, and bring Arness’s frozen body back to their post. When one of the soldiers accidentally unthaws the “thing,” it begins to run amok, killing and maiming and being generally unpleasant. The station’s resident mad doctor (Cornthwaite) urges the others to capture it alive, while leader Tobey believes that “the only good monster is a dead monster.” Ultimately, they trap Arness in the greenhouse and cook him for dinner. Spencer’s final warning to “keep watching the skies” clobbers audiences over the head with their own Cold War paranoia

in a heavy-handed way. The movie was the “Alien” of its day, and launched the whole sub-genre of invasions from space, but it’s hard to take the “vegoïd” monster, played by stalwart Arness, very seriously today.

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