

Short Review: “The Day the Earth Stood Still” (1951) by Dr. John L. Flynn



The Day the Earth Stood Still (1951). 20th Century Fox Pictures, b/w, 92 min.

Director: Robert Wise. Producer: Julian Blaustein Screenwriter: Edmund H. North.

Based on the short story "Farewell to the Master" by Harry Bates. Cast: Michael Rennie, Patricia Neal, Hugh Marlowe, Billy Gray, Sam Jaffe, and Lock Martin.

One of the first Hollywood films produced during the science fiction boom of the 1950's, the movie reflected our worst fears about atomic war and our own paranoia, prejudice and bigotry. When an emissary from an alien confederation (not unlike *Star Trek's* United Federation of Planets) arrives by flying saucer in Washington, D.C., Klaatu (Rennie) warns the peoples of the earth that violence and aggression will no longer be tolerated by the other civilized worlds. But before he can deliver his complete message to a gathering of world leaders, he is gunned down by military forces that view his pacifist ways as an even greater threat to world peace. Subsequently, his eight-foot-tall

robot Gort fries a few tanks and soldiers with his cyclopean laser beam, and forces them to reconsider. Klaatu's society has totally eliminated war and hostility by empowering a police force of robots to patrol the planets in flying saucers, and mankind must submit to peace, or else be destroyed. A powerful motion picture way ahead of its time, even if you don't stop long enough to think about its Christ allegory.

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