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King of the monsters! : films with Godzilla from 1954 to 1965

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SUMMARY

King of the Monsters!

Films with Godzilla from 1954 to 1965

This book enters an established field in film studies dealing with the phenomenon of Godzilla and *Kaiju Eiga* – the Japanese films about giant monsters. Many film critics and historians, such as Ed Godziszewski, Steve Ryfle or William M. Tsutsui approached Godzilla through the lens of interpretation, Honda Ishiro's authorship and historiography. My perspective, however, does not see the monster as a social phenomenon but as an aesthetic one.

King of the Monsters analyzes the first six Godzilla films as complex works of art which reacted to different cultural areas and were created by different groups of artists. Therefore, standing in opposition to the established view of *Godzilla* as the „pacifist vision“ of the director Honda Ishiro. There were more actors responsible for the final works of art: second director Tsuburaya Eiji, producer Tanaka Tomoyuki and even cinematographers with their teams and established poetics such as Tamai Masao.

I use the concept of cultural assimilation when describing how those actors constructed Godzilla films in relation to different aspects of popular culture. The series reacts to the success of American monster movies in Japan, Japanese Puroresu wrestling, children's stories and much more. All these parts of popular culture were eventually – on a different scale – absorbed by Godzilla.

That is one part of my argument – the reason Godzilla series stayed so attractive to its viewers. A broader dialectics between narrative and stylistic continuity and discontinuity. Godzilla devoured not only popular entertainment but other works of art and social themes. However, certain aspects were recurring with each next film, however, with slight variations. Each film utilized different

genre conventions as well. From *gendai-geki*, salaryman comedy, American adventure films, spy, or journalist films and sci-fi.

This book, then, understands first six Godzilla films as aesthetic constructs created by large groups of people with the main intention to stay attractive to its viewers.