

go for the offer...a crisp \$100 bill is what they get in return for signing a piece of paper. Their stories are all different and (aside from one guy who fears what's under his bed) untypical of a horror film. One African American attorney fears his old neighborhood and the thugs that populate it. Another girl fears public humiliation and degradation as men gawk at her underwear-clad body. Naturally their fears come to reality, but it's done in such a way that the viewer is always left in the dark as to whether or not these things are actually happening.

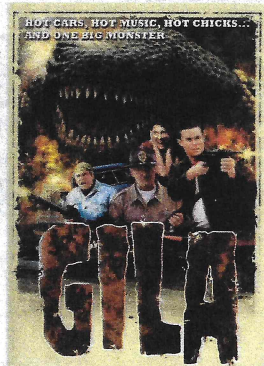
The Ghostwriter character is not some wisecracking villain, but a mysterious fellow (who has a great voice) that pops in and out of the picture throughout the running time. Some very disturbing, nightmarish visions accompany the story with violence and cool monsters. The characters are well written, and an unusual amount of time (for a horror flick) is spent on developing relationships....so dead-on (pardon the pun) are these scenes that you could mistake this for a Hollywood chick flick (or maybe a comedy). The acting is likewise spot-on with everyone delivering memorable performances. It's refreshing to see people truly acting like they are scared. In most scary films this aspect more often than not falls by the wayside.

**What Really Frightens You?** was written and directed by Richard Haines (whose debut film as director was *Splatter University*). He has managed to take the horror film to another level and sadly not enough people are even aware of it. When originality has been lacking most, **What Really Frightens You?** is a refreshing blast of air. In fact stick around after the credits roll for a great end scene that plays better than a similar one in *Twilight Zone-The Movie* from 1983. Simply put this is probably the best horror film you haven't seen. Highly recommended. Available on DVD from Celebrity Video.

## REMAKES

### GILA

Considering how many remakes there have been in last 10+ years how come Jim Wynorski's remake of *The Giant Gila Monster* (1959) never gets mentioned? Well I realize most of you would chuckle at that opening sentence and say "who cares about Wynorski anyway?" Well I DO dammit! Furthermore this debuted on the Sy Fy channel back in 2012 which is further proof why nobody gives a shit. Yet all of that negativity aside how many fans have actually *seen* it? Ok now I've got your attention...



The back of the DVD case says "based on the 1959 drive-in classic *The Giant Gila Monster*" but this is really a remake...and a close one at that. The setting is presumably the same as the original... 1959. The production features a number of classic cars along with cool '50s rock tunes including bits by Gene Vincent and others. Also the original music contains liberal doses of the Theremin which was THE instrument for inducing eerie chills to theater goers back in the '50s. The clothing and hair style is pretty good for the most part. The wholesome nature of the original is left intact as well. Main character Chase (Brian Gross) is out to do well no matter what the situation. He wants to please anyone and everyone including his invalid sister who needs leg braces to walk. I wasn't sure if they'd include his musical side in this version but lo and behold they wait until the very end to unleash..."The Mushroom Song"! Yup all praise to the Lord is handled well...only this time on an acoustic guitar! Amidst all of this good natured activity there's a giant gila monster prowling across the land eating up livestock and humans! It's up to Chase, the sheriff and a small group of friends & family to stop the thing.

The real key to a film like this are the special effects. In this day and age CGI seems to be the only option for filmmakers willing to tackle the giant monster genre. Not only that but they've become common place on the dreaded Sy Fy network with all kinds of numskulled productions popping up nightly. I have to admit that the effects on the gila monster are pretty good. The creature is rendered in such a way that it looks like a full blooded creature and not some hokey cartoon. Its movements are smooth and the creature's texture colorful and realistic. Oh sure some of the destruction it causes isn't as smooth, but kudos to the filmmakers for at least having it wreak havoc on a train and other vehicles. Plus more credit has to be dealt out for at least presenting this film with a straight face and not some silly staged comedy. On top of that the characters are well written and the acting is also pretty good. Fans should get a kick out of seeing Kelli Maroney (a blast from the past) portray a deputy who likes to read sleazy detective magazines! Even Don Sullivan (who essayed the role of Chase in the original) gets a nice cameo.

All in all *Gila* retains all of the fun vibe the '50s flicks had...something solely needed in many of today's efforts I might add. Without any swearing (save for one "bastard" and a few "damns" and "hells"), nudity or violence these kinds of films are a dying breed. It seems silly then that the "unrated" tag is slapped on the DVD case since this is PG all the way. As far as new monster flicks go this is as good as it gets. Seriously.

The DVD from the Polyscope Media Group contains some tributes to the original film including the rollickingly good trailer. I only wish that they would have included a black and white version of the new film since that would have been icing on the cake! As it stands I hope this film finds a new audience (away from the dreaded TV crowd) since monster kids old and new will love this. It's a great movie to show to kids. Kudos to Jim Wynorski for giving fans a real popcorn muncher. Highly recommended.

### PATRICK

Confession time...I've never seen the original *Patrick*. When I read it was about a comatose guy moving stuff with his mind all the while lying in bed...well it sure sounded boring. However with renewed interest in Australian filmmaking it seemed like a good idea to revisit Patrick after all the years so I took the plunge...



The story stays the same...Patrick is a special patient at a clinic where the new nurse, Sharni Vinson, takes a liking to the poor chap. His doctor (played by Charles Dance) wields a dark secret, or does he? Why does Patrick only respond to the new nurse? Is he the one causing all sorts of objects to move? Is he responsible for murder? Can she help him or is it too late? All of these questions are answered and make for engaging viewing.

Director Mark Hartley (the guy who looks like me) brings a fresh voice to the proceedings. The atmosphere is palpable stuff, actually reminding me of a vintage Hammer production. Vinson is wonderful in the lead role. She has just the right amount of pathos and vulnerability to pull off the character. It's a change of pace after seeing her mess people up *good* in last year's *You're Next*. It was also nice to see Dance portray such an evil bastard. Heck the last time I saw him he was bald and swapping spit with Signourney Weaver in *Alien 3*! Hartley also uses flashbacks and wicked nightmares to ramp up the proceedings. Another key element is how Patrick is able to communicate via computer and smart phone (all Apple products...do they need more residuals?). Add to all of this a wonderful score by Pino Donaggio and you have a winning recipe. My only complaint would be some lackluster effects work (silly CGI mostly), yet it's never too intrusive and Hartley wisely avoids overdoing it.

I'll have to go and check out the original to compare the two but I'm pretty certain the newest excursion fires on all the right cylinders.