

SLAUGHTERFILM

REVIEWING THE FILMS THAT ARE LEGENDARY, EVEN IN HELL!

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PODCAST 112

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WRITTEN REVIEW: [Gila!](#)



By CORY CARR

Sometimes, there is nothing better than to kick back on a warm summer night and watch some classic atomic-age science fiction while you throw back a brew or two. Not every film from that era is an award winner, but their monster-charm is often more than satisfying.

Recently Jim Wynorski [*Not of This Earth*, *Chopping Mall*, *Deathstalker 2*] remade one such film, *The Giant Gila Monster*. The result was *Gila!*, which aired on the Syfy Channel and has recently been released on DVD.

Gila! is a period piece, retelling the story from the original film, about a mutant gila monster terrorizing a small mid-western town in the late 50's.

The tale begins when Betty, the Mayor's daughter, and her high school sweet heart, Don, turn up missing. The Mayor, worried that Betty is the victim of a kidnapping plot, calls the local Sheriff in to investigate. The Mayor even goes as far as to threaten the Sheriff's job if he doesn't get down to the bottom of his daughters disappearance.

Under manned and under funded, the Sheriff reaches out to Chase for help, who is the local mechanic, hotrod aficionado and is also friends to both Betty & Don. They search the teens favorite haunts and make-out spots, but this turns up little more than Don's abandoned car.



Some strange happenings begin to taking place along the country side. Damaged property, missing livestock and town drunks report sightings of monsters. The Sheriff lucks out when he finds some green goop while investigating shots fired at the old Swenson place.

The Sheriff takes the goop to a biologist, who informs him that the green stuff is the venomous saliva of a gila monster. It isn't apparent to the Sheriff that the gila monster has grown to the size of a tank, that is until the gila derails a train. Now it becomes obvious that a giant lizard is responsible for all the strange happenings, as well as several missing persons.

The Sheriff, Chase and the townsfolk band together to save the community from the larger than life menace, but in the end it is Chase who destroys the beast. With some handy, yet volatile nitroglycerine, Chase sets his hotrod on a collision course with the gila monster. He

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bails out at the last second and his car careens into the monster blowing it's reptilian parts sky-high.

With the town now safe, and the Sheriff in the good graces of the Mayor, Chase is free to share with everyone “[The Mushroom Song](#)”, which is one of the strangest things I've ever heard, but that's a story for another day.

THE VERDICT

I can easily say that [Gila!](#) is one of the few remakes that is better than the original. The 1959 film, while endearing, moved along at a snails pace and the special effects left much to be desired. [Gila!](#) takes the source material and fleshes out the characters as well as the plot, streamlining the narrative into something that will keep your attention. Which can't always be said about the original film.

While [Gila!](#) is worth checking out, I feel that fans of the original may be the ones who get the most enjoyment from [Gila!](#). Before watching [Gila!](#), I found the original on [Youtube](#) [which I understand is in the Public Domain] and it was interesting to see how certain characters and plot elements evolved. The CGI and the occasional line weren't were quite as good as I thought they should have been. But it's classic b-movie fun.



There was a time in the United States when teenagers would pile into their cars and head out to the local Drive-In theater, looking to do one of two things;

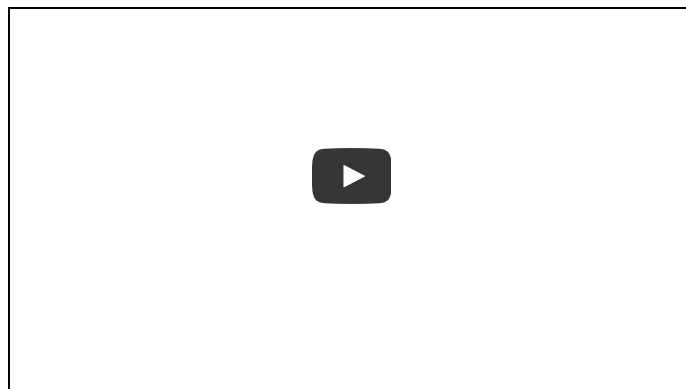
1. Make out in the back seat.
2. See radiation create giant monsters that wreck towns.

[Gila!](#) is a love letter to the American car culture of yester year, even more so than it is about a giant lizard. It embodies everything great from that time. The cars, the music, the drive-in restaurant and the atomic-age of sci-fi. It's kind of interesting how connected all these things were/are in their respective ways.

Consider the original film for a moment. People would have driven their cars to the drive-in, a place specifically for watching a movie in our car, to see a movie that may very well have been made for the drive-in, which was about a “*Giant Gila Monster*” but really was just a showcase for a collection of bad-ass cars. It's funny to think how important our cars once were.

Speaking of cars, every car in [Gila!](#) is amazingly restored. Even the cars that aren't hotrods are beautiful.

Watching [Gila!](#) gives me the feeling that director Jim Wynorski and writers William Denver, Steve Mitchell, Jim Nielsen & Paul Sinor, all must have fond memories of that period. It makes me feel like I was born a generation late.



The Lost Empire

If you're looking for more of Wynorski's work, check out [The Lost Empire](#), the film that kicked off his illustrious career. It's about a “*trio of femme fatales infiltrates a fortified island where a satanic syndicate holds women captive to fight in as gladiators in tournaments.*” Ummm, YES PLEASE!