

A confrontation of faith and passion set against a background of political intrigue!

# The Devils

By John Whiting  
Feb 10, 11 & 13-18  
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UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA-LINCOLN



# DO YOU DARE VENTURE INTO... THE VIDEO VAULT

Lane Van Ham/Daily Nebraskan



By Lane Van Ham  
Staff Reporter

"Well, well. You've got up the nerve for another venture into the Video Vault -- or perhaps this is your first visit.

"If that's the case, let me introduce myself: I am the Old Flick Fiend, here today to introduce a picture truly out of this world. Keep listening and don't space out, because Earth is being invaded! I hope you'll blast off then check this out when you're done reading -- I'd invite you all over to the Vault for a private screening, but I've gotta work on my tan for next week's feature . . ."

Remember when aliens were the bad guys?

It's hard, I know, but try to forget the image of visitors from outer space being little wrinkled guys with glowing hearts who say "phone home" a lot and imagine big black suited invaders making threats, zapping your neighbors, and doing the same to you if you say any different.

Yeah, now that's what I call alien invaders. They can be found in Columbia's 1956 release, "Earth vs. The Flying Saucers."

As the movie opens, newlywed scientists Russell and Joan Marvin are driving to their job at a rocket test site. As one might imagine, this provides numerous possibilities for silly marriage banter, but fortunately we are spared by an exciting UFO sighting.

Being good little skeptics, however, the two decide they have witnessed nothing and don't let it bother them. Besides, they have to concentrate on the launching of a new experimental test rocket. Interestingly, this is the twelfth such test. The previous 11 rockets have all crashed after launch.

Scientists to the core, the

Marvin's dig into the base's bunker for their honeymoon -- just in time to be buried by debris, as aliens (who are responsible for the crash of the rockets) invade outside. We catch a glimpse of the aliens in their bulky and rather unimpressive black suits as they shoot soldiers and take Joan's dad captive.

Upon their rescue from the bunker, Russell and Joan are put into government custody for a full investigation. It seems that the invaders have selected Russell as their liaison with Earth, and eventually contact is made. Russell breaks out of custody to meet the aliens on a beach, and is pursued by Joan and a military officer, who are in turn followed by a cop on a motorcycle.

This leads to a confrontation on the beach where the cop stares at the UFO and threatens, "I'm gonna phone headquarters." Once inside the ship, the earthlings learn, among other things, that the aliens wear suits of "solidified electricity" and find Joan's dad, who is, as the sheriff in "Night Of The Living Dead" might say, "all messed up." The aliens are from "a disintegrated solar system," and need a new place to live.

Discerning viewers will probably note that no one ever wonders if it might be possible for both races to inhabit Earth, which might be a little better than having a war, but wouldn't make much of a movie.

In any case, Russell comes up with some cool new weapons to take on the aliens with that positively puts the Strategic Defense Initiative to shame. First, he decides to use a sound weapon to shatter the invading craft. This doesn't work very well, so it's on to plan two: disrupting the magnetic fields which the aliens use to maneuver their ships.

At this point, there isn't a great

deal of difference between this movie and countless others where aliens invade and Earth makes a comeback. But there is one particularly incredible thing about it, and that's the special effects of Ray Harryhausen.

Harryhausen did the stop-motion animation for movies like "Jason and the Argonauts" and "Clash of the Titans," usually putting his talents to use making monsters and so forth. But in "Earth vs. The Flying Saucers," Harryhausen was faced with another task. The producers couldn't afford the special effects involved in creating and destroying miniature models, so they got Harryhausen to create a similar effect with stop-motion.

While there is, as critic Jeff Rovin has written, a "jagged unreality" to the final product, it's fun to watch the aliens mount their final invasion and destroy most of Washington, D.C.'s landmarks. Boom, there goes the Washington monument. Smash, an alien ship crashes into the Capitol. Neato.

Meanwhile, the rest of the final battle is comprised of neat stock footage and an extremely convincing scene of an alien craft shooting down a jet fighter. Eventually, the disruption plan works (at the expense of D.C.'s tourist attractions) and a mass broadcast says, "The present danger is ended."

"Earth vs. The Flying Saucers" is no masterpiece, but it's certainly not a bad movie either. Mainly it's a good example of the alien invasion theme, but most people seem to agree that it's Ray Harryhausen's effects that push it out from the mountains of other invasion movies and make it interesting to watch.


"Earth vs. The Flying Saucers" is available at Blockbuster Video.

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