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BACK

## Film

# It's the ultimate battle: Scotland v Godzilla!

**What if a 40-storey mutant reptile invaded? Stephen Phelan asks the country's big guns how they'd cope – and reveals exclusive details of Scotland's own Godzilla Plan**

**T**his is not a game. This is real and everything you are about to read is the truth. The Ministry of Defence has a Godzilla Plan, a strategy to bring down the beast that makes T-Rex look like Barney the Dinosaur.

An MoD spokesman claimed that to regard the idea of a large-scale mutant crawling from the Clyde as the stuff of preposterous fantasy "would clearly be blinkered and irresponsible" – and added that the possibility demands "immediate attention and serious action".

Despite enquiring, rather worryingly, if Godzilla is "that giant ape", the source went on to explain the procedures that would be instituted to repel a 40-storey amphibian behemoth bent on the complete destruction of Scotland.

"This would almost certainly require a combined operation between the Royal Air Force and the Navy," he said.

"Our first step would be to contact the reptile keepers at Edinburgh or Glasgow Zoo. We would hope to gain vital information as to possible points of vulnerability on a mutant reptile of this magnitude, and would take into account factors such as the temperature of the creature's blood.

"Then, without obstructions such as low cloud cover, I feel the lizard might well represent a sporting challenge for our boys in blue. I'm fairly confident that with the right information and conditions we could eliminate the threat with as little damage and as few civilian casualties as possible."

He also said the military could not afford to take the time to gauge the animal's intentions, and that prudence and security would demand a "shoot first" policy.

## WHY GODZILLA 98 IS A LOSER

■ It's not Godzilla. Director Roland Emmerich tells us that the Toho Corporation, creators of the original Godzilla, only gave stipulations as to the number of toes and fins the creature should have. "Any other restriction was thrown out," he declares proudly. Emmerich, as you may remember, also directed *Independence Day* – a film pronounced "insulting and mindless" by discerning four-year-olds.

■ Emmerich's radical revision of the monster is based on the spurious assumption that

destruction has been done to death. So instead of actually wrecking anything, this Godzilla runs and hides like a great big girlie.

■ The film's enormous budget seems to have been spent on nicking the *Jurassic Park* T-Rex from Steven Spielberg's office foyer and gluing big fins to it.

■ There is a lengthy sequence in the new film in which the characters tackle a nest of Godzilla's offspring. Sadly these are not little Godzooks who amuse us with their feeble smoke-breath and

inclined to give the creature the benefit of the doubt," he said. "We would also consider the MoD's belligerent and reactionary response inappropriate in today's enlightened society."

He added, gravely: "Godzilla is a nuclear mutation, and mankind must take the blame for him."

Greenpeace refused to comment on the Godzilla Plan on the grounds that they are



Yikes: Glasgow City Council would use Godzilla to promote the friendly city





Something bigger came along"

"not an animal rights organisation" – despite the fact that Godzilla is the alleged product of irresponsible treatment of nuclear materials.

Richard O'Grady, director of Glasgow Zoo, elaborated on the manner in which humans might be cruelly presumptuous in their treatment of the outsized mutant.

"Many wrongly assume that, because reptiles are deaf and dumb, they must also be stupid. In fact, anyone with a pet iguana could give you many examples of its intelligence. They are also happiest when they have enough space to get a good view of what's going on. This could well be the case with Godzilla."

Mr O'Grady did express concern over the cunning and relentlessness of reptile carnivores, and admitted that if Godzilla displayed similar characteristics, he would get in his car and "drive away fast".

If Godzilla proved to be good-natured and docile, however, and was only destroying Glasgow "by accident", he would instead favour an action designed to "lure the mutant onto a steamer such as the Waverley, and take him somewhere else.

## Reviews

### Sling Blade

Just what is it with the American South? The men drink too much and sweat rivers under the armpits, while the womenfolk lounge about in clinging dresses. There's a Piggly Wiggly at every corner and a mental hospital on every hill. The emotional weathervane is always set to thunderous.

*Sling Blade* is a film straight out of the classic William Faulkner/Flannery O'Connor/Tennessee Williams stable. Half-bright Karl Childers (Billy-Bob Thornton) gets out of the loony bin after serving 25 years for matricide and gets taken in by little sprog Frank (Lucas Black) and his widowed mum Linda (Natalie Canerday). But storm clouds are gathering in the form of Linda's hard-drinking boyfriend Doyle (C&W star Dwight Yoakam), who wops

## Storm clouds gathering

the kid and demands that Karl be kicked out. Before too long the temperature's rising and it isn't surprising that Karl finds those murderous old urges starting to resurface.

You know it's destined to end in tears. But its brilliance is undiminished.

### Kiss or Kill

This Australian film is also mighty fine. Played out amid the spartan landscapes and Man Ray skies of inland Oz, it spins the tale of a scam-artist couple (Frances O'Connor and Matt Day) on the lam after one of their victims winds up dead – with each suspecting the other of murder. Writer-director Bill Bennett tackles this intense road movie like a man set free, and *Kiss or Kill* is a marvellous hall-of-mirrors thriller – a weave of shadowy characters and disorientating jump-cut pyrotechnics.

Ingenu star O'Connor (who also cropped up in last year's winsome *Love and Other Catastrophes*) is a face to watch.

### Mad City

Take a spoonful of *Dog Day Afternoon*, a pinch of *His Girl Friday* and a soupçon of *Broadcast News* and you (pretty much) have *Mad City*, a lightning-paced hostage caper with John Travolta as a renegade security man holed up in a museum with super-slick TV reporter Dustin Hoffman.

Best known for his hard-hitting political sagas, director Costa-Gravas turns more playful here, rustling up a lively satire on the whole management of American news. Great performances and definitely one to see.

All films open on July 10  
Xan Brooks

Like Liverpool," Mr O'Grady added, perhaps jokingly.

City of Glasgow officials have been more pragmatic in their responses, offering ideas based on the assumption that the monster, rather than having all the moral discrimination of a falling girder, possesses an intrinsic sense of civic duty.

Lord Provost Pat Lally said: "Providing the creature could be relied on to emerge regularly, we would be pleased to use it to promote the city. The one thing Glasgow is

### 'Godzilla is a nuclear mutation and mankind must take the blame for him'

missing is a monster, and we feel Godzilla could be an effective part of our 'Glasgow – the Friendly City' campaign – at least until something bigger came along."

Mr Lally made no comment on the issue of mass carnage and urban devastation.

Representatives of Glasgow's City of Architecture 1999 council were also unperturbed by the possibility of a terrifying invasion. A spokeswoman told us of her plans to control and utilise Godzilla's appetite for destruction.

"We would advocate a policy of selective demolition," she said. She went on to explain that the organisation's recent Push the Plunger initiative revealed the three Glasgow buildings the public would most like to see destroyed – Tay House, Sauchiehall Shopping Centre, and St Enoch's Shopping Centre. Glasgow 1999 believes the populace would be delighted if Godzilla was to "play ball" and enter into a contract to perform controlled demolitions.

But the manager of St Enoch's was both horrified and angered by this proposal.

"Look, this is a highly successful centre, and 99 per cent of the people who come through these doors would strongly dispute this ridiculous idea. You have to get a balance of views, and I would suggest that many of our 20 million customers would be horrified to see this shopping centre destroyed by a gigantic mutant."

Whatever the filmgoer's view on Godzilla, it's clear that organisations all over the country are taking the threat of his impending arrival seriously. The shadow of Godzilla looms large over Scotland.

TBIS

Godzilla opens on July 17



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