

## The Day of the Triffids



Reviewed by Garry Victor Hill

Directed by Steve Sekely. Produced by George Pitcher. Executive Producer: Phillip Yordan. Screenplay by Bernard Gordon. Based on *The Day of the Triffids* by John Wyndham. Cinematography by Ted Moore. Art Direction by Cedric Daw. Editing by Bill Lowthwaite. Special Effects for the triffids by Hugh Skillen. Original Music by Ron Goodwin. A Phillip Yordan Production.

Cinematic length: 94 minutes. Initial distribution by Allied Artists Pictures. English cinematic release: July 1962; American cinematic release: April 1963. DVD release 2003. Check for ratings. Rating 70%.

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## Cast

Howard Keel	Bill Masen
Nicole Maurey	Christine Durrant
Janette Scott	Karen Goodwin
Kieron Moore	Tom Goodwin
Susan	Janina Faye
Mervyn Johns	Mr. Coker
Alison Leggatt	Miss Coker
Geoffrey Matthews	Luis de la Vega
Ewan Roberts	Doctor Soames
Ian Wilson	Greenhouse Keeper
Gilgi Hauser	Teresa de la Vega

## Review

The film begins with a prologue in which the narrator compares the triffids to the venus fly trap. The subsequent early scenes, which depicted such a fresh idea in this 1962 version has become too familiar from remakes and derivatives. A blinded man wakes up in a London hospital to find his sight restored, but that he has been left unattended. He appears alone in a hospital which looks so disordered that it seems a riot happened there. The streets appear the same way...

In this version we rapidly learn that all those who looked at a meteor shower the night before have been blinded and that the meteors were carriers for carnivorous mobile plants known as Triffids. They find the earth a perfect environment, with a perfect food supply of blinded humans and animals...

The central character, First Mate Bill Massen (Howard Keel) finds that the London of the blind is a nightmare and with a sighted schoolgirl (Janina Faye) he tries

escaping back to his ship and when that fails escapes to France, but conditions there are a better, but only for a time. This situation results because they find sighted people led by Christine Durant (Nicole Maurey) running her isolated chateau as a refuge for the blind. Tragically both the isolation and her good efforts do not last.



*The Triffids in a harmless state*

The story then switches to a lighthouse in Cornwall, where a dysfunctional couple Tom and Karen Goodwin (Jannette Scott and Keiron Moore) reside. Scientists, apparently marine biologists, their efforts change focus from stingray autopsies to trying to find a weak spot in the triffid's formidable biological defence system – while warding off intermittent triffid attacks.



*Janette Scott being menaced by a triffid*

The two narratives within the film, that in Cornwall and the other centred on Massen and Susan as they travel, never merge, but skilfully interweave. This is one of the film's strengths. Another strength is that through almost all of the film there is no symbolic discourse with rewards and punishments: as in a genuine plague, the good and the bad, the weak and the strong, all suffer indiscriminately. The scenes of the chaos caused by mass blindness as cities burn works so effectively because it is so unsparing. No calling on the fairies to resolve dangers happens until the end, when the triffid's weak spot is found and they are overcome. This happens too simply and too quickly to be creditable. A few explanatory minutes more added to the scientists' tests and then the denouement would have been mentally satisfying. Even so, the film conveys a good deal in its 93 minutes and the director does not indulge in the usual fault of those who have a large special effects budget: overly long timing of shots of epic scenes. His epic shots are more effective precisely because they last long enough to convey the message and move the story along but never go longer.



*Bill Massen walks through a devastated London. Traffic accidents and raging fires result from a blind population*

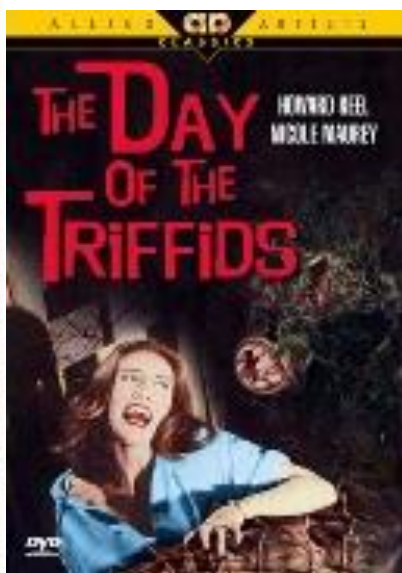
The film has some subtle moments where facial expressions and hollow voice tones convey meanings, but these clash with what are considerably less than subtle moments. Most such concern triffid attacks. Here close ups of faces in agony are accompanied by thundering, fast paced and way too loud music. We get the thrashing sort of arms of the monsters as the camera zooms in for close ups with all



the tact of a door to door salesman. Somebody watching the rushes should have reshot several scenes. Overall this effect lowers the quality of an okay film.

The 1981 television series was better not just because it was longer and therefore went into more depth, making the denouement more creditable, but because it was more restrained: as if someone saw the 1962 film and knew the mistakes to avoid.

### *Three studio shots of the stars*



Howard Keel, Keiron Moore



and Nicole Maurey



Paramount NICOLE MAUREY

