

IT MUST EAT YOU TO LIVE!

Nobody did it quite like Mr. BIG – Bert I. Gordon. There is such an innocence and joy to his classic genre films, and, despite their low budgets, the way in which he solved the problems of special effects on a shoestring is always interesting and sometimes truly ingenious. It was a different world back then – a young man with a dream could come to Hollywood and get lucky. He could be in the right place at the right time and suddenly and instantly fulfill his dream of becoming a filmmaker. That's the way it was with Mr. BIG. He made a string of classic horror B-movies – *The Cyclops*, *Beginning of the End*, *The Amazing Colossal Man* (and its sequel, *War Of The Colossal Beast*), *Attack Of The Puppet People*, then, later, *Food Of The Gods* and *Empire Of The Ants*. Most of them had giant beasts of one sort or another (save for *Puppet People*, which had teeny-tiny people), and all of which are a ton of fun to watch. He also delved into other genres with *Tormented*, *The Boy and the Pirates*, *Village Of The Giants*, *Picture Mommy Dead*, and even a couple of sex comedies. His films had major playdates in major theaters, some broke attendance records, and most have lived on thanks to endless television broadcasts, video, DVD – and I'm sure at some point his films will find their way to blu-ray.

In 1958 alone, Mr. BIG made three movies – *Attack Of The Puppet People*, *War Of The Colossal Beast*, and the wonderful *Earth vs. the Spider* (aka *The Spider*). And

not just any spider, no, a big, bad mutant spider, along with the obligatory teenagers, the missing father, the school science teacher, the police, and the town in which the mutant spider runs amok. We first meet the mutant spider while teenage Carol's father is driving home – he has a present in the car for her, a nice charm bracelet. Unfortunately, his trip home is interrupted by the sudden appearance of the mutant spider, and he comes to a surprisingly gory end. Teenage Carol, alarmed that her father hasn't returned, enlists the aid of her teenage boyfriend, Mike. They go in search of missing dad and find his empty battered truck, which is near a cave. They continue searching in the cave, find the present he was going to give her, and also find a huge spider web. Shortly thereafter, they find the mutant spider and escape just in the nick of time.

They go to the police, and from there it's a breathtaking ride through the film's brisk seventy-two minutes. There's suspense, thrills, a little humor, and then a literally electrifying finale in which the mutant spider meets its end. The cast is engaging and likeable and the film is wonderfully shot in black-and-white by Jack Marta. Mr. BIG designed all the special effects and they're really fun – in a way special effects aren't anymore. Oh, today they're better, bigger, perfect – but somehow not as cool as in days of old.

Right from the beginning, Mr. BIG found a composer for his films whose music was just as deliriously wonderful as Mr. BIG's films. Albert Glasser was one of the most prolific B-movie composers

in history. He scored hundreds of movies and TV shows. He joined Mr. BIG on his second film, *Beginning Of The End*, and did every BIG picture up through *The Boy and the Pirates*. Glasser, born in Chicago in 1916, came to Hollywood in the 1930s and late in that decade landed a job at Warners as a copyist, working with heavyweight film composers like Max Steiner and Erich Wolfgang Korngold. He began doing some orchestrating, and then went right into composing his own scores for a plethora of B-movies.

His score for *Earth vs. the Spider* is Glasser at his best. It's just a perfect genre score, beginning with his grand main title, complete with its wailing theremin. His music pulses through most of the film, propelling it from one scene to the next with suspense music, chase music, mutant spider music – it's classic B-movie horror music, the kind that anyone who grew up in the 1950s will instantly recognize.

It's so pleasing to finally bring some Albert Glasser to CD, and also pleasing to continue our trip down memory lane with the films of Mr. BIG – Bert I. Gordon. Gordon and Glasser – it was a match made in B-movie heaven.

— Bruce Kimmel