

# INVASION

*of the*  
**BODY  
SNATCHERS**



MUSIC FROM THE MOTION PICTURE  
COMPOSED AND CONDUCTED BY CARMEN DRAGON

"If there's news,  
we'll print it!"

# The Santa Mira Dispatch

**THE WEATHER**  
For today and Monday  
sunny, with light winds.  
See Page 17

VOL. 142—NO. 24

SANTA MIRA, CALIFORNIA, SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 1956

PRICE 5 CENTS

## BODY SNATCHERS AND DRAGONS

by Jeff Bond



Produced at the height of the 1950s "sci-fi boom," director Don Siegel's *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* contradicted its dozens of forbears from that decade. Most of them had either depicted explorations of outer space by mankind or threats in the form of giant insects, marauding dinosaurs or hostile space aliens, but *Invasion* offered something different.

Based on a story by science fiction writer Jack Finney entitled "The Body Snatchers" (serialized in *Collier's* magazine), *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* did involve a hostile invasion from space—but an internalized one, with ordinary citizens of a small town quietly absorbed into an emotionless hive mind that takes its victims in their sleep. They awaken the same people, but different—unfeeling and detached from all but the common will to survive and spread. The effect of the story was one of psychological terror: the terror of losing one's own personality—one's soul, in effect—to something incomprehensible.

Producer Walter Wanger saw movie potential in Finney's story, and purchased rights to it before it even

completed its run in *Collier's*. Wanger was a Hollywood titan who had once run Paramount Studios, but had fallen on hard times after some big-screen failures and a shooting incident that had put him in jail for four months for attempted murder.

After his jail stint Wanger returned to work at Allied Artists—formerly Monogram Pictures, a factory for low-budget quickies. Allied Artists and its management had ambitions to make more important movies, and Wanger's collaboration with director Don Siegel on a gritty drama called *Riot in Cell Block 11* was a step in that direction. Siegel had been kept under contract as an editor at Warner Bros. for years despite ambitions to direct, having won Oscars for two short films he'd made as a director in 1945. He had a half dozen movies to his name as a director by the time he made *Riot in Cell Block 11*, but the prison film was the first to gain him notice as a maker of feature films.

Wanger brought *The Body Snatchers* to Siegel, who agreed that the story had the makings of an exciting movie project. Screenwriter Daniel Mainwaring, who'd written screenplays for such classic film noirs as *Out of the Past* and *They Made Me a Killer*, wrote the script, and the studio budgeted the film at \$300,000 with a shooting schedule of under a month. Siegel shot the film during March and April 1955, and the studio titled it *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, a designation that Siegel thought went against the grain of the intelligent, psychological kind of film he was trying to make.

Casting for the movie presented challenges—actors Gig Young, Joseph Cotten and, eventually, Richard Kiley



all passed on the lead role of physician Miles Bennell, leading to the casting of actor Kevin McCarthy, still primarily known for playing Biff in the 1951 film adaptation of *Death of a Salesman*. Siegel cast other roles with an eye for the familiar, and a number of cast members either hailed from beloved Americana classics or would later become television icons. As the vaguely Bohemian couple Jack and Teddy Belicec (who harbor a creepy pod duplicate of Jack on their pool table for some of the film), Siegel cast actors King Donovan and Carolyn Jones. Donovan would have been familiar to TV viewers



from the sitcom *The Bob Cummings Show*, and Jones had appeared in both comedy and dramas on television and on the big screen (in the next decade she would gain fame as Morticia Addams, the vampiric wife and mother on *The Addams Family*). Tom Fadden, the wiry-haired actor familiar from Frank Capra's *It's a Wonderful Life*, played one of the film's first "victims," the uncle of worried Wilma Lantz (Virginia Christine, who would later hawk Folger's coffee as the comforting "Mrs. Olsen" in dozens of television commercials).

Siegel had planned an even more subversive connection to *It's a Wonderful Life*—he'd wanted to cast wholesome actress Donna Reed as female lead Becky Driscoll, Bennell's love interest, who late in the film becomes a "pod person" herself. Reed proved unavailable, and after considering Anne Bancroft and Vera Miles, Siegel cast the stunning Dana Wynter as Becky.

Makeup artists created full body casts for Donovan, Wynter and Jones so that they could be seen "forming" from the alien pods, and in Wynter's case the framing of



the shot suggests nudity in a way that was daring for the time. Mainwaring's screenplay was also surprisingly adult, with Bennell and Becky both coming off divorces and Bennell sprinkling a constant stream of innuendo about his "bedside manner" as he puts the moves on his old flame Becky. Allied Artist executive Steve Broidy objected to the film's humor and had Siegel cut a great deal of it out of the film, reducing the running time to well under 90 minutes. Broidy also disliked Siegel's ending, with Bennell screaming into the camera, "They're already here! YOU'RE NEXT!" The finale was to become a classic screen moment, but Broidy insisted that Siegel film a prologue and epilogue that showed Bennell stumbling into a hospital to explain his story, and two doctors (played by Whit Bissell and Richard Deacon) alerting authorities at the end when they finally come to believe Bennell. Siegel hated the idea of the bookend scenes but obediently filmed them anyway, although his casting (with the ubiquitous Bissell seeming a regular from every 1950s sci-fi movie and the sardonic Deacon best known for his comedy work) seemed designed to make viewers take the scenes less than seriously.

Broidy and Allied Artists in fact had little faith in *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, and the film sat on the shelf for 10 months after filming before finally being released in early 1956.

Audiences accustomed to attacks by giant insects and marauding mutants must have been unnerved by *Invasion's* more subtle, skin-crawling suspense. Although most of the principals didn't discern a political slant to the film (actor McCarthy thought it a satire of "Madison Avenue"), audiences and critics quickly imprinted the film with their own agendas, seeing it

as either a hysterical warning about Communism or a reaction to the Senator Joseph McCarthy hearings and fervent *anti-Communism*. The film was one of the first to create a mood of all-out paranoia, portraying the citizens (and even the police force) of a seemingly idyllic small town as an insidious threat, and friends and lovers as people who might turn into ruthless enemies without warning. In that way it anticipated the post-Watergate, paranoid cinema of the 1970s, and a sophisticated



1978 remake of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* undertaken by Philip Kaufman became the last word in that shadowy genre, even boasting a cameo from McCarthy, still screaming "You're next!" to heedless San Francisco drivers. "Pod people" became a useful slang term for any lemming-like, unimaginative person, and even the film's title became shorthand for subversion and brainwashing. With its stark black-and-white photography and breathless suspense sequences, the 1956 film still stands as a classic today.

## One of the most unusual yet

successful artistic decisions made in the production of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* was the assignment of composer, arranger and conductor Carmen Dragon to write the film's score. Dragon had over a decade of experience in writing music for films by 1956—in fact he had won an Oscar for one of his very first movie assignments, 1944's *Cover Girl*, without receiving screen credit for the work (he shared the award with Columbia Pictures music director Morris Stoloff). He had also scored *Mr. Winkle Goes to War* (1944), *Young Widow* (1946), the Hedy Lamarr pictures *The Strange Woman* (1946) and



*Out of the Blue* (1947), *The Time of Your Life* (1948), *Kiss Tomorrow Goodbye* (1950), *Night Into Morning* (1951), *People Against O'Hara* (1951) and *Gunpoint* (1955). Dragon was a far better-known personality than most film composers of the period: he had 5000 hours of radio broadcasts to his credit, had conducted some of the world's most prestigious symphony orchestras, made dozens of album recordings (particularly with the Hollywood Bowl Symphony Orchestra) and was famed for his pops and light-classical arrangements, including one of the most popular arrangements of the song "America, the Beautiful."

That might not have seemed like the best endorsement for someone needed to score a bone-chilling exercise in psychological horror, but with *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* Dragon not only showed that he could produce a work on the level of any sci-fi/horror score of the period—he also anticipated some techniques and effects that would not come into common use until several years after the movie's release.

Dragon's *Invasion* score is at times frenetic, complex and with very little obvious repetition, making its build-

**Side A**

1. Main Title 1:57 2. No Bananas Today 0:55 3. Where Are You?/Don't Worry About Me 4:15  
4. Tell Me Who 3:17 5. If I Should Die 2:09 6. Shadows in the Night/Hysteria 1:40 7. The Voices 1:29  
8. I'm Taking You to My House/They Won't Believe Me 4:17

Total Time: 19:59

**Side B**

1. Wilma/The Devils Workshop/Get Help/Yell for Help 7:24 2. No More Tears/Waiting for You 5:44  
3. Open the Door 1:38 4. They're Over There 3:10 5. No! Never! 2:26

Total Time: 20:22

Total Album Time: 40:21

COMPOSED AND CONDUCTED BY  
**CARMEN DRAGON**



INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS © 2015 Paramount Pictures. Motion Picture Artwork, Logos and Photography © 1996 Paramount Pictures. All Rights Reserved. WARNING: Unauthorized duplication is a violation of applicable laws. Printed in the U.S.A. Released by La-La Land Records, Inc. 150 S. Glendale Blvd., #9252, Burbank, CA 91502 [www.lalalandrecords.com](http://www.lalalandrecords.com)

