



SXSW: *Monsters From the Id* Says Earth Needs Scientists

By Lewis Wallace [✉](#) March 14, 2009

AUSTIN, Texas — The world needs more giant mutant lizards, and more brainiac scientists who rise up to fight the monsters.

That's the premise of *Monsters From the Id*, a new documentary that looks at the positive social impact of science fiction films from the '50s.

The movie, which had its world premiere Friday night at the South by Southwest film festival, was made by first-time director [Dave Gargani](#), who talked about the benefits of films that tell simplistic, good-versus-evil stories and frame scientists as superheroes.

"I think we've kind of lost that today," Gargani said after his movie screened at Austin's [Alamo Drafthouse](#). "We didn't feel fearful. We felt hopeful."

Gargani's message seems to fly in the face of current trends in sci-fi and comic book television shows and movies. At a time when movies and television shows earn critical and fan acclaim by "going dark," a la complex and bleak productions like *The Dark Knight* and Sci Fi Channel's *Battlestar Galactica* reboot, Gargani's call for simpler, more motivational messages from Hollywood seems ripped straight from the less-complicated '50s.

His movie intercuts alternately cheesy and beautiful scenes from that era's sci-fi flicks and interviews with scientists and media experts. The basic premise is that, while Cold War-era films with their giant squids and shiny robots obviously delivered an anti-communist message, they also served as useful propaganda for the U.S. space program.

Scenes from *Forbidden Planet* and *The Day the Earth Stood Still* will be familiar to any fan of classic sci-fi flicks. Gargani, who's far too young to have seen them when they were in theaters, says he came by his love of the genre naturally.

"My father made me watch these movies," he said.

Monsters From the Id comes across as part educational movie, part propaganda piece for pushing private space exploration and grooming a new generation of young scientists.

The movie, which Gargani said started out as a six-minute video collage of sci-fi scenes set to electronica music originally titled *Puffed Wheat*, now runs 71 minutes. But you might not see it in theaters any time soon: The director is working to get clearance rights from the movie studios that produced the classic films sampled in *Monsters From the Id*.

"We're still working on it," Gargani said.