INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS (1956)

Directed by Don Siegel

WEDNESDAY September 3rd 7PM

SATURDAY September 6th 7PM



Could there be a film more appropriate to this time and place?

Shot in under a month and on a limited budget, Don Siegel's **Invasion of the Body Snatchers** (1956) went immediately from B-movie to certified classic. This noirish take on Jack Finney's novel has been remade, parodied, and referenced ever since, with "pod people" entering the common lexicon as shorthand for emotionless, unthinking robots. After almost seventy years the original still holds its own against later re-interpretations: a tight, effective thriller that acts as a mirror for almost any fear one can project onto it.

Dr. Miles Bennell (Kevin McCarthy) lands in a psychiatric ward being treated for Capgras Syndrome after a terrifying week in fictional Santa Mira, California. The film backtracks to the origin of his seeming delusion: he and his girlfriend (Dana Wynter) discover that a race of aliens who grow in plant-like pods have been replacing every citizen with a duplicate, incapable of emotion or independent thought. Conquest of the U.S., and then the world, is growing closer every moment and we follow their fraught attempts to reverse the course of the invasion and get word out to those who are yet unchanged.

While initially ignored by critics, it was a commercial smash hit, and audiences began debating its theming. 1950s America, a silent invasion from within sapping individuals of their agency and identity: was this a critique of McCarthyism? Communism? Recent news reports of wartime brain-washing? Both Siegel and Finney disavowed any specific reference, insisting the story was meant to entertain. But this only stands as testament to the plot's metaphoric capacity. The fear of losing oneself or others to outside influence can be mapped onto virtually any enemy, depending on the audience goer's perspective. We all have someone or something we see as the "pod people" (for Siegel, it was Hollywood studio executives). The real fear in the end is, then, will your version of the pod people win?