

Monsters

Cert 12A UK 2010 93 mins

Crew

Director	Gareth Edwards
Screenplay	Gareth Edwards
Cinematography	Gareth Edwards
Editor	Colin Goudie
Production Designer	Gareth Edwards
Music	John Hopkins

Cast

Scot McNairy	Andrew Kaulder
Whitney Able	Samantha Wynde
<i>Plus featured extras including</i>	
Mario Zuniga Benavides	ticket seller
Annalee Jeffries	homeless woman

Synopsis

A NASA space probe carrying organisms from one of the moons of Jupiter crashes in Central America, infecting a large swathe of Mexico with huge alien creatures.

When magazine publisher's daughter Sam is injured in an accident south of the Infected Zone, her father instructs freelance photographer Andrew to check that Sam is OK, then escort her to the nearest port to board a ferry back to the US. Their train fails to get through, but Andrew and Sam complete the journey to the port on foot, hitchhiking and by bus, arriving just in time to buy (for a vastly inflated amount) a ticket on the final ferry out. They spend the evening but not the night together....

Abridged from Sight & Sound Dec'10

Making imaginative use of a \$500,000 budget, this feature debut by British writer-photographer-director Edwards is a sci-fi road movie set in Mexico, where six years earlier a NASA capsule crashed while transporting alien life forms from a satellite of Jupiter. The area is now quarantined to control the [monsters](#), its borders patrolled by the army, with a vast wall erected on the US frontier. Resembling Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* fallen into the hands of George Romero, the brisk story concerns an American photojournalist (Scot McNairy) compelled by a media tycoon boss to escort his errant daughter (Whitney Able) to the safety of the US. The journey by train, bus, truck, boat and finally foot involves horrific experiences and encounters, plausibly handled, with remarkable special effects and discreet glimpses of the tentacular creatures that walk the land. The film feeds on the current American paranoia about threats from south of the Rio Grande and is a remarkable piece of work, full of neat touches.

Philip French The Observer Dec'10



Reviews

Monsters has been widely, and with good reason, compared to Neill Blomkamp's apartheid satire *District 9*, which also imagined extra-terrestrials in a post-awe spirit. These dirty, ramshackle creatures were just another species of the dispossessed, to be feared and hated by the white overclass. Edwards's movie imagines that Nasa received news of alien life out in the galaxy, sent up a space probe to recover some of its seeds and spores, but that the returning craft crashed in Mexico, where the aliens came to grow and roam, turning that entire nation into a bio-hazard zone. Could the panicky US authorities have deliberately allowed the alien-bearing spacecraft to crash down Mexico way, thus keeping the yucky immigrant aliens well out of American territory? Either way, the situation is now a Swiftian cartoon: the rich nation fearing its poorer neighbour. It is here that photojournalist Kaulder, played by Scot McNairy, finds himself on assignment, snapping the aliens and their

human victims. He is furious to be ordered to "babysit" his boss's beautiful, vulnerable daughter Samantha (Whitney Able), accompanying her through the ultra-dangerous alien zone to the US border. Inevitably, their relationship begins to change.

Both the satire and the human story are more involving than in *District 9*, and McNairy, in particular, gives an excellent and very convincing performance. This is a very postmodern sci-fi, with its downbeat approach to the monsters themselves, but with a hugely involving love story. Edwards's movie – he writes, directs, produces and creates visual effects – has also drawn explicitly on classic models. He channels the upriver nightmares of Herzog and Coppola, with a strong streak of Spielbergian wonder at the sight of two aliens apparently dancing, or communicating, or having sex – an epiphany that sets the seal on the humans' relationship. And the final sequence in which Kaulder and Sam gaze at the protective great wall America has created, musing on how America looks from the outside, is a superb final gesture: mysterious, daunting and sad. The idea of a "journey" has become absurd in the age of reality TV. Yet this one has really meant something.

Peter Bradshaw, Guardian Dec'10