# KLAATU YOU (9)

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*One in a weekly* [*series of enthusiastic posts*](http://hilobrow.com/tag/klaatu-enthusiasm/)*, contributed by HILOBROW friends and regulars, on the topic of our favorite pre-*Star Wars *science fiction movies.*

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**SILENT RUNNING | d. DOUGLAS TRUMBULL | 1972**

I was raised on requiem; the entire 1970s, economically austere, militarily precarious, environmentally collapsing, felt like one long funeral for the future. At 7 or 8, I didn’t know the difference between bearing witness and merely watching, but endangered-species documentaries like *Say Goodbye* and extinction-themed full-length cartoons like *Last of the Curlews* kept me in a consistent mood of dutiful mourning. And none more so than the end-times sci-fi parable *Silent Running*.

I can’t think of this movie without the first teardrop piano figure of Peter Schickele’s haunting score playing in my head; director Douglas Trumbull composes the movie in expansive sensory swaths — long takes, celestial vistas, often wordless — that soak into the mind on a lived-experience level. We’re walking the paths of a paradise which has itself been cast out: the last forests of our paved-over planet, shot into space supposedly for safe keeping, in vast biodomes floating in the outer solar system. Tended by naturalist Freeman Lowell (Bruce Dern) and staffed by uncaring bros who symbolize everyone else on Earth, the balance is delicate, and then tips over when the order comes to simply nuke the trees instead of bringing them home to re-green the world.

The story soon becomes a Last Man narrative, carried with heartbreaking conviction on Dern’s shoulders, when Lowell desperately kills his crewmates, fakes a disaster and looks after the one remaining dome while trying to convince Mission Control that the ship is stranded and should be heroically left behind. Seventies cinema often tried escaping to the past, in self-exiled mountain-man stories like *Grizzly Adams* and *Jeremiah Johnson*, but the world ahead of us has made Lowell such a misfit that he has to leave the planet altogether and take the wilderness with him.

We know that the human race itself, and Lowell’s crusading type especially, is going extinct, and the film’s many lapses in logic (If the domes are pre-fitted for bombs as we see, why did anyone believe they were made to save the forests at all? If Lowell’s such a born gardener, why does he forget that plants need sun when the ship swings behind Saturn?) are swept away by the feeling of bad-dreamlike inexorability.

The film saw forward and in some ways harkened far back. Lowell’s only companions are the two “drones” Huey and Dewey, who prefigure R2-D2 and all the other cute little robots (and arguably, anthropomorphized smart-home gear) that proliferated after him; Lowell’s disputes with his unfeeling or intimidated comrades, and his ultimate choice of sacrifice to his principles, can be traced back to *Antigone* (which also includes sacred duties involving soil). An uncomfortably males-only version, but perhaps advisedly so, for the feminine is a strong absence throughout the film: the snapshot of an unnamed young girl Lowell feels he’s fighting for (an abandoned daughter?); the astral voice of Joan Baez in two eerie rustic-future ballads; and of course the remnants of Mother Earth herself.

The movie’s assault on nature felt all too familiar in the year I first saw it, but at least we could witness this deferred to a distant future. As I write in fall of 2019, the Amazon is burning, and kids like the girl in Lowell’s photo are taking over the streets to push that future ever farther. I’ll keep my eyes on it.

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**KLAATU YOU:** [INTRODUCTION](http://www.hilobrow.com/2020/01/01/klaatu-enthusiasm-intro/) by Josh Glenn | Matthew De Abaitua on [ZARDOZ](http://www.hilobrow.com/2020/01/01/klaatu-enthusiasm-1/) | Miranda Mellis on [METROPOLIS](http://www.hilobrow.com/2020/01/08/klaatu-enthusiasm-2/) | Rob Wringham on [THE INVISIBLE MAN](http://www.hilobrow.com/2020/01/15/klaatu-enthusiasm-3/) | Michael Grasso on [THE ANDROMEDA STRAIN](http://www.hilobrow.com/2020/01/22/klaatu-enthusiasm-4/) | Gordon Dahlquist on [2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY](http://www.hilobrow.com/2020/01/29/klaatu-enthusiasm-5/) | Erik Davis on [DARK STAR](http://www.hilobrow.com/2020/02/05/klaatu-enthusiasm-6/) | Carlo Rotella on THE OMEGA MAN | Madeline Ashby on KISS ME DEADLY | Adam McGovern on SILENT RUNNING | Michael Lewy on THIS ISLAND EARTH | Josh Glenn on WILD IN THE STREETS | Mimi Lipson on BARBARELLA vs. SINS OF THE FLESHAPOIDS | Vanessa Berry on THE FLY | Lynn Peril on ATTACK OF THE 50 FOOT WOMAN | Peggy Nelson on SOLARIS | Adrienne Crew on LOGAN’S RUN | Ramona Lyons on THE MAN WHO FELL TO EARTH | Kio Stark on THE STEPFORD WIVES | Dan Fox on FANTASTIC PLANET | Jason Loeffler on THX 1138 | Devin McKinney on IDAHO TRANSFER | Mark Kingwell on THUNDERBIRDS ARE GO | Judith Zissman on CREATURE FROM THE BLACK LAGOON | William Nericcio on DEATH RACE 2000 | Brian Berger on THE BEAST FROM 20,000 FATHOMS | Gary Panter on ANGRY RED PLANET | David Levine on THE STEPFORD WIVES | Karinne Keithley Syers on ALPHAVILLE | Carolyn Kellogg on IT CAME FROM OUTER SPACE | Alice Boone on CHARLY | Sara Ryan on ESCAPE TO WITCH MOUNTAIN | Lisa Jane Persky on PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE | Luc Sante on THE TENTH VICTIM | Mandy Keifetz on TBD | Molly Wright Steenson on FAHRENHEIT 451 | Rob Walker on CAPRICORN ONE | Charlie Jane Anders on TBD | Lisa Kahlden on PANIC IN YEAR ZERO! | Sherri Wasserman on LA JETÉE | J.C. Gabel on INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS | Chris Lanier on IKARIE XB-1 | others TBD.

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LULU](http://hilobrow.com/2019/01/02/seriocomic-1/) | [VIZ](http://hilobrow.com/2019/01/30/seriocomic-5/) | [MARSUPILAMI](http://www.hilobrow.com/2019/03/13/seriocomic-11/) | [ERNIE POOK’S COMEEK](http://www.hilobrow.com/2019/04/10/seriocomic-15/) | [HELLBOY](http://hilobrow.com/2019/02/20/seriocomic-8/) | [& dozens of other comics.](http://hilobrow.com/tag/seriocomic/) **TUBE YOUR ENTHUSIASM (2018):** [LOONEY TUNES](http://hilobrow.com/2018/08/01/tube-your-enthusiasm-1/) | [THREE STOOGES](http://hilobrow.com/2018/08/02/tube-your-enthusiasm-2/) | [THE AVENGERS](http://hilobrow.com/2018/08/19/tube-your-enthusiasm-19/) | [ROCKY & BULLWINKLE](http://hilobrow.com/2018/08/04/tube-your-enthusiasm-4/) | [THE TWILIGHT ZONE](http://hilobrow.com/2018/08/05/tube-your-enthusiasm-5/) | [& 20 other Fifties (1954–1963) TV shows](http://hilobrow.com/tag/tube-enthusiasm/). **WOWEE ZOWEE (2018 weekly):** [UNISEX](http://hilobrow.com/2018/01/03/wowee-zowee-1/) | [UNDER THE 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BLOOMSBURY GROUP](http://hilobrow.com/2017/02/15/squadgoals-7/) | [THE HONG KONG CAVALIERS](http://hilobrow.com/2017/02/22/squadgoals-8/) | [VI ÄR BÄST!](http://hilobrow.com/2017/03/29/squadgoals-13/) & [dozens of other squads](http://hilobrow.com/tag/squadgoals/). **GROK MY ENTHUSIASM (2016 weekly):** [THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF LUNCH](http://hilobrow.com/2016/01/13/grok-my-enthusiasm-1/) | [WEEKEND](http://hilobrow.com/2016/01/20/grok-my-enthusiasm-2/) | [MILLION YEAR PICNIC](http://hilobrow.com/2016/01/27/grok-my-enthusiasm-3/) | [LA BARONNE EMILE D’ERLANGER](http://hilobrow.com/2016/02/03/grok-my-enthusiasm-4/) | [THE SURVIVAL SAMPLER](http://hilobrow.com/2016/02/10/grok-my-enthusiasm-5/) | [& dozens more one-off enthusiasms](http://hilobrow.com/tag/grok-enthusiasm/). **QUIRK YOUR ENTHUSIASM (2016):** [“Tainted Love”](http://hilobrow.com/2016/08/01/quirk-your-enthusiasm-1/) | [“Metal”](http://hilobrow.com/2016/08/02/quirk-your-enthusiasm-2/) | [“Frankie Teardrop”](http://hilobrow.com/2016/08/03/quirk-your-enthusiasm-3/) | [“Savoir Faire”](http://hilobrow.com/2016/08/04/quirk-your-enthusiasm-4/) | [“Broken English”](http://hilobrow.com/2016/08/05/quirk-your-enthusiasm-5/) | [& 20 other Seventies (1974–1983) new wave singles](http://hilobrow.com/tag/quirk-enthusiasm/). **CROM YOUR ENTHUSIASM (2015):** [DARKER THAN YOU THINK](http://hilobrow.com/2015/08/03/crom-your-enthusiasm-1/) | [THE SWORD IN THE STONE](http://hilobrow.com/2015/08/04/crom-your-enthusiasm-2/) | [OUT OF THE SILENT PLANET](http://hilobrow.com/2015/08/05/crom-your-enthusiasm-3/) | [THIEVES’ HOUSE](http://hilobrow.com/2015/08/06/crom-your-enthusiasm-4/) | [QUEEN OF THE BLACK COAST](http://hilobrow.com/2015/08/07/crom-your-enthusiasm-5/) | [& 20 other Thirties (1934–1943) fantasy novels](http://hilobrow.com/tag/crom-enthusiasm/). **KERN YOUR ENTHUSIASM (2014):** [ALDINE ITALIC](http://hilobrow.com/2014/08/01/kern-your-enthusiasm-1/) | [DATA 70](http://hilobrow.com/2014/08/02/kern-your-enthusiasm-2/) | [TORONTO SUBWAY](http://hilobrow.com/2014/08/03/kern-your-enthusiasm-3/) | [JOHNSTON’S “HAMLET”](http://hilobrow.com/2014/08/04/kern-your-enthusiasm-4/) | [TODD KLONE](http://hilobrow.com/2014/08/05/kern-your-enthusiasm-5/) | [& 20 other typefaces](http://hilobrow.com/tag/kern-enthusiasm/). **HERC YOUR ENTHUSIASM (2013):** [“Spoonin’ Rap”](http://hilobrow.com/2013/07/29/herc-1/) | [“Rapper’s Delight”](http://hilobrow.com/2013/07/30/herc-2/) | [“Rappin’ Blow”](http://hilobrow.com/2013/07/31/herc-3/) | [“The Incredible Fulk”](http://hilobrow.com/2013/08/01/herc-4/) | [“The Adventures of Super Rhyme”](http://hilobrow.com/2013/08/02/herc-5/) | [& 20 other Seventies (1974–1983) hip-hop songs](http://hilobrow.com/tag/herc-enthusiasm/). **KIRK YOUR ENTHUSIASM (2012):** [Justice or vengeance?](http://hilobrow.com/2012/07/30/kirk-your-enthusiasm-1/) | [Kirk teaches his drill thrall to kiss](http://hilobrow.com/2012/07/31/kirk-your-enthusiasm-2/) | [“KHAAAAAN!”](http://hilobrow.com/2012/08/01/kirk-your-enthusiasm-3/) | [“No kill I”](http://hilobrow.com/2012/08/02/kirk-your-enthusiasm-4/) | [Kirk browbeats NOMAD](http://hilobrow.com/2012/08/03/kirk-your-enthusiasm-5/) | [& 20 other Captain Kirk scenes](http://hilobrow.com/tag/kirk-enthusiasm/). **KIRB YOUR ENTHUSIASM (2011):** [THE ETERNALS](http://hilobrow.com/2011/02/21/kirb-your-enthusiasm-1/) | [BLACK MAGIC](http://hilobrow.com/2011/02/21/kirb-your-enthusiasm-2/) | [DEMON](http://hilobrow.com/2011/02/22/kirb-your-enthusiasm-3/) | [OMAC](http://hilobrow.com/2011/02/22/kirb-your-enthusiasm-4/) | [CAPTAIN AMERICA](http://hilobrow.com/2011/02/23/kirb-your-enthusiasm-5/) | [& 20 other Jack Kirby panels](http://hilobrow.com/tag/kirb-enthusiasm/).