



BIG SCREEN CLASSICS

The Incredible Shrinking Man

The Incredible Shrinking Man

Directed by: Jack Arnold

©: Universal Pictures Company, Inc.

a Universal-International picture

Presented by: Universal-International

Produced by: Albert Zugsmith

Assistant Director: William Holland

Screenplay by: Richard Matheson

From a novel by: Richard Matheson

Director of Photography: Ellis W. Carter

Special Photography: Clifford Stine

Optical Effects: Roswell A. Hoffman,

Everett H. Broussard

Film Editor: Al Joseph

Art Direction: Alexander Golitzen,

Robert Clatworthy

Set Decorations: Russell A. Gausman,

Ruby R. Levitt

Gowns: Jay A. Morley Jr

Make-up: Bud Westmore

Hair Stylist: Joan St. Oegger

Trumpet Soloist: Ray Anthony

Music Supervision by: Joseph Gershenson

Sound System: Westrex Recording System

uncredited

Co-ordinator: Ray Gockel

Unit Manager: Lew Leary

2nd Assistant Director: Wilbur Mosier

Script Supervisor: Dorothy Hughes

Screenplay: Richard Alan Simmons

Camera Operator: William J. Dodds

Camera Assistant: Robert Pierce

Gaffer: Tom Oulette

Best Boy Electrician: Everett Lehman

Cable Man: Henry Janssen

Key Grip: Stanley Gulliver

Co-grip: Jim Hilbert

Stills Photography: William Walling

Special Effects: Charles Stine

Assistant Property Master: Roy Neel

Props Maker: Whitey McMahan

Property Master: Ed Keyes

Wardrobe Master: Rydo Loshak

Wardrobe Mistress: Martha Bunch

Make-up: Jack Kevan

Hair Stylist: Virginia Jones

Sound Recordist: Clifford Cunliffe

Sound: Leslie I. Carey, Robert Pritchard

Mike Man: Roger Parish

Sound Editors: George Ohanian, Bob Hirsch

Cast:

Grant Williams (*Scott Carey*)

Randy Stuart (*Louise Carey*)

April Kent (*Clarice*)

Paul Langton (*Charlie Carey*)

Raymond Bailey (*Doctor Thomas Silver*)

William Schallert (*Doctor Arthur Bramson*)

Frank Scannell (*barker*)

Helene Marshall (*nurse*)

Diana Darrin (*nurse*)

Billy Curtis (*midget*)

uncredited

Luce Potter (*Violet*)

USA 1957©

81 mins

Digital 4K

SPOILER WARNING The following notes give away some of the plot.

Of all of the cautionary science fiction films produced in the 50s, *The Incredible Shrinking Man* is just as thought-provoking for audiences today as it was during the Eisenhower era. Whether you see it as anti-nuclear paranoia or a male anxiety nightmare or a philosophical tale about man's place in the universe, the film conveys a sense of the fantastic that resonates deeply with most viewers who see it. It all begins, deceptively enough, on a lazy summer day with Scott Carey (Grant Williams) and his wife Louise (Randy Stuart) sunbathing on their yacht at sea. When Louise goes below deck momentarily, a strange cloud materialises on the water's surface and quickly envelops Scott in a concentrated mass of radioactive-like particles before vanishing without a trace. In the subsequent weeks, Scott becomes alarmed at the unexplained changes in his body marked by weight loss, clothes that don't fit, and his slowly shrinking height. The doctors are at a loss to stop his reverse growth while Scott and Louise struggle with the extraordinary circumstances and unwanted media attention. Yet, the shrinking continues, exposing Scott to dangerous predators which previously never posed a threat to him such as the family cat or a large spider that roams the basement floor.

Science fiction and horror novelist Richard Matheson, author of *I Am Legend*, *Hell House* and other works that were later made into films, had never written a screenplay until he was approached by producer Albert Zugsmith to adapt his novel *The Shrinking Man* for the screen. According to the writer, he first had to restructure the narrative: 'They couldn't do *Last Year in Marienbad* (1961) back then; the story had to be in chronological order, to begin at the beginning and progress from there. I wrote it that way in my novel originally but it got tedious, so I decided I would structure it the way I had structured *I Am Legend*: start smack-dab in the middle and then, in flashbacks, bring the story up to date.' Matheson, however, was forced to write the screenplay for *The Incredible Shrinking Man* as a linear narrative and scenarist Richard Alan Simmons was later brought in for rewrites.

Jack Arnold, the director of *The Incredible Shrinking Man*, was not the sort of studio craftsman critics singled out for recognition at the time even though he had helmed such popular fantasy films as *It Came from Outer Space* (1953), *Creature from the Black Lagoon* (1954) and *Tarantula* (1955). Yet, despite the title, *The Incredible Shrinking Man* was not your typical low-budget production. Technicians laboured for eight months on the special effects photography alone and during the seven weeks of pre-production shooting, the set was closed to all but the essential cast and crew. Not all of the scenes involving the diminutive Scott required special effects. Giant props such as a twelve-foot-long sewing needle or a gigantic mousetrap were constructed for key scenes.

Arnold's depiction of the sexual disintegration of the Carey's marriage is rendered through a series of subtle but surreal moments which accent the couple's increasing alienation. And it leads to one of the film's most memorable scenes which was often cut from television showings – Scott's chance meeting with a midget showgirl at a diner (a scene which fades out with the certainty that they will have an affair). Since Grant Williams was six-foot-one, Arnold couldn't convincingly use a real midget to play the carnival worker so he filmed the two actors against oversized furniture. In an interview with Bill Kelley for *Cinefantastique*, he recalled, 'I used real midgets in the scene in the barroom. They were projected from behind onto a process screen, while the couple was seated in a booth and the midget walked up to say the girl was wanted at the circus. In the park scene, I had an oversized bench and sprinkler. It was easier doing that than using split screen with a real midget and Grant Williams.'

BIG SCREEN CLASSICS

The Incredible Shrinking Man

Tue 24 Sep 20:40; Mon 7 Oct 18:40

Les Demoiselles de Rochefort The Young Ladies of Rochefort

Wed 25 Sep 18:05

UK Premiere of restoration: The Exterminating

Angel El angel exterminador

Wed 25 Sep 18:10 + intro; Tue 8 Oct 20:50

Hunger

Thu 26 Sep 20:40

The Miracle Worker

Fri 27 Sep 18:15; Tue 1 Oct 20:50

Rio Bravo

Sat 28 Sep 14:50

12 Angry Men

Sun 29 Sep 12:30

Rear Window

Wed 2 Oct 18:00 + intro by film and talks

programmer & writer Nadia M. Oliva

Barton Fink

Thu 3 Oct 20:45

King of the Hill

Fri 4 Oct 18:10

The Piano

Sat 5 Oct 15:45

Le Trou

 The Hole

Sat 5 Oct 20:30

The Servant

Sun 6 Oct 12:30

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Equally challenging was Scott's battle with the giant spider which involved the use of a trained tarantula, one which had previously been the star of Arnold's *Tarantula* and went by the name of Tamara. On the day screenwriter Matheson visited the set, he recalled 'they shot the flood scene, with the giant pencil and the water heater breaking. Poor Grant Williams, that guy looked beat! He nearly killed himself; he was almost blinded by an arc light, he was nearly electrocuted, he was half-drowned! Boy, did he work hard!'

One of the more amusing behind-the-scenes anecdotes occurred during the water heater sequence, according to Arnold in the *Cinefantastique* interview: 'He's now about an inch and a half or two inches tall, and he makes his home in an empty match box. The matchbox is under a heater, and the heater begins to leak. I was confronted with the problem of getting drops to fall in proportion to the size of the man. We tried everything, but no matter how we spilled the water, it didn't look like an oversized drop. Then I remembered how in my ill-spent youth I found some strange rubber objects in my father's drawer, and not knowing what they were, I filled them with water, took them to the top of the building where we lived in New York, and dropped them over the side. I recalled that they looked great when they hit, and that they held a tear shape. So I asked the crew, "Has anyone got a condom on him?" With much reluctance, one of the guys finally confessed that he had one. We filled it with water, tied it at the top, and dropped it. It had a tear shape, exactly in the right proportion, and it splattered on impact. So we ordered about 100 gross of them. I put them on a treadmill and let them drop until the water pipe was supposed to burst, and it was very effective. At the end of the picture, I was called to the production office. They were going over all my expenses and they came across this item of 100 gross of condoms, so they asked me, "What the hell is that for?" I simply said, "Well, it was a very tough picture, so I gave a cast party." And that was all I told them.'

The ending was not the one the studio had in mind and Arnold stated in his interview with Bill Kelley that it was 'the only fight I had with them on *The Incredible Shrinking Man*, and I won it. They wanted a happy ending, but I said, "Over my dead body." So they said, "Well, let's test your ending." And at the previews it went over so well, they agreed it was best to keep it.'

Richard Matheson, for one, was also not particularly happy with the quasi-religious slant of Scott's final narration which was written by Jack Arnold. In fact, he dismissed the entire picture as a disappointment at first. 'I have a tendency always to have in my mind an image of what a picture should be, and of course the picture almost never matches the image,' he confessed. 'Sometimes it takes me a long time before I look at it for what it is.'

The Incredible Shrinking Man, it took me forever! My son Richard finally got me to come around by pointing out to me how unusual it was for that time and how wonderfully visual it was.'

Whether it's destined to be remade or not, it's hard to imagine anyone surpassing the 1957 version. Movie critic Geoff Andrew said it best in the *Time Out Film Guide*: 'Not merely the best of Arnold's classic sci-fi movies of the 50s, but one of the finest films ever made in that genre... to the strains of Joseph Gershenson's impressive score, we arrive at the film's philosophical core: a moving, strangely pantheist assertion of what it really means to be alive. A pulp masterpiece.'

Jeff Stafford, tcm.com