

KAIJU

RISING

REIGN OF
MONSTERS

FEATURING

SEANAN MCGUIRE · JEREMY ROBINSON · MARIE BRENNAN · DAN WELLS
LEE MURRAY · JONATHAN GREEN · MI BRENAN · CULLEN BUNN
MARI MURDOCK · NICK COLE · MELANIE R. MEADORS · KANE GILMOUR

AND MORE!

EDITED BY

N.X. SHARPS & ALANA ABBOTT

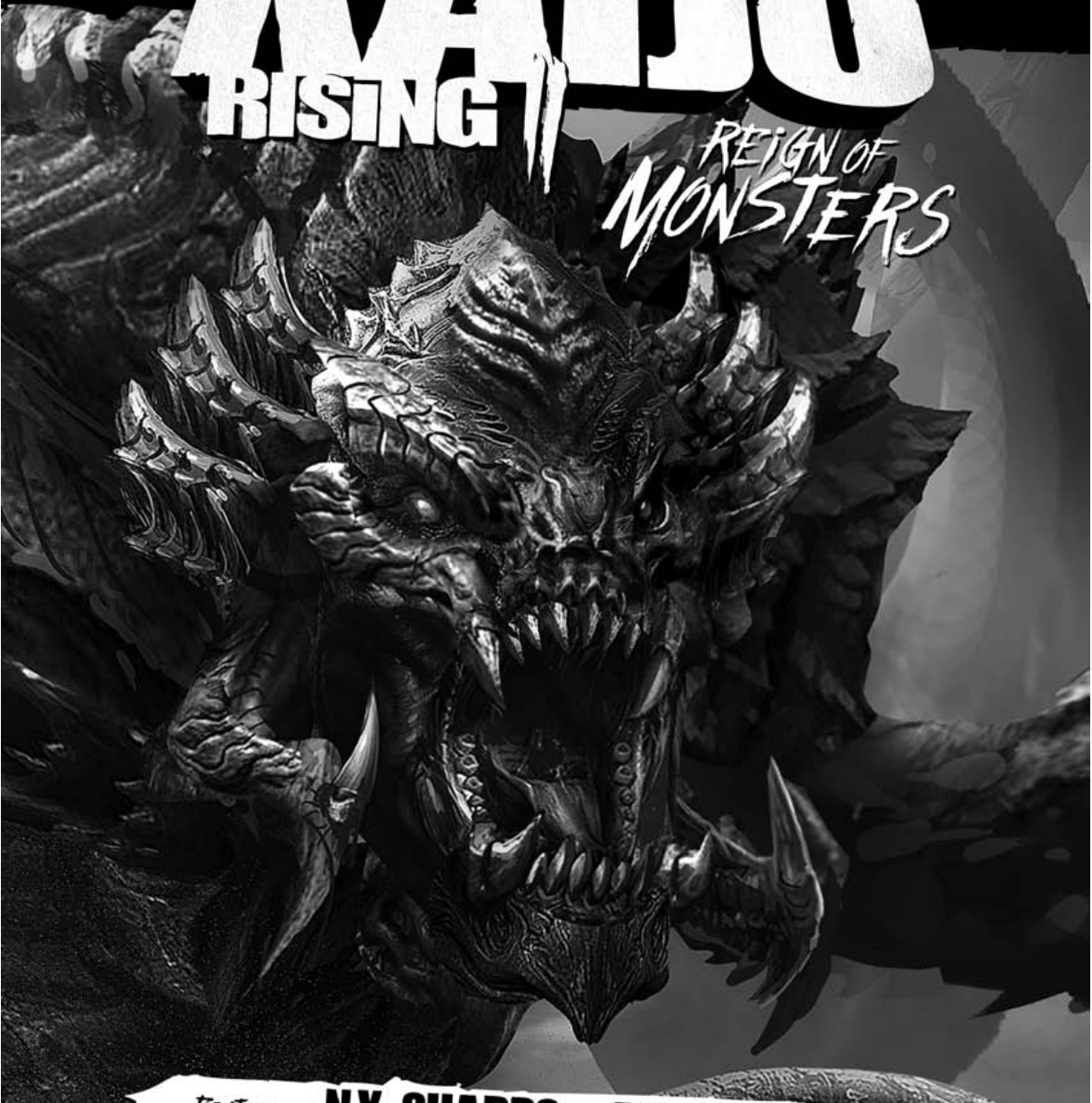
WITH A FOREWORD BY **ROBERT HOOD**



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KAIJU RISING II: Reign of Monsters
Outland Entertainment | www.outlandentertainment.com
Founder/Creative Director: Jeremy D. Mohler
Editor-in-Chief: Alana Joli Abbott
Publisher: Melanie R. Meadors
Senior Editor: Gwendolyn Nix

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Published by Outland Entertainment
5601 NW 25th Street
Topeka KS, 66618

Paperback: 978-1-947659-30-8
EPUB: 978-1-947659-31-5
MOBI: 978-1-947659-32-2
PDF-Merchant: 978-1-947659-33-9
Worldwide Rights
Created in the United States of America

Editor: N.X. Sharps & Alana Abbott
Cover Illustration: Tan Ho Sim
Interior Illustrations: Frankie B. Washington
Cover Design & Interior Layout: STK•Kreations

*Dedicated to the memory of Haruo Nakajima,
without whom Gojira could not have stomped.*

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FOREWORD:

WHEN MONSTERS RULE THE WORLD

ROBERT HOOD

GIVEN THAT YOU'RE READING THIS awesome book, you're probably of the school of thought that says, "Giant Monsters Rule!" right? It's a popular attitude, and one that's grown ever stronger in recent years. But when did this monstrous reign begin?

We like to fantasize that the earliest humans co-existed with those prehistoric giants, the ever-popular dinosaurs, whose rule lasted for something like 135 million years. Think of the Titanosaurs in particular (such as the Argentinosaurus, which is said to be the largest of them all), though the Brontosaurus and T-Rex are still the most popular dinosaurs. Is the popularity of giant monsters some sort of genetic throwback to distant ancestral memories? Alas, not only did nothing even vaguely human exist until a few million years *after* the dinosaurs died out, but also none of the earliest human beings looked anything like Raquel Welch in a furry bikini. Sad but true.

Of course, facts never hinder the human imagination, and in lieu of actual living giants, it didn't take humanity long to begin populating the world with monsters of the mind and soul. Consider, for example, the famous monsters of Greek (and Roman) mythology, such as Cyclops, Cerberus, Talos, and the Hydra. Several of these were the children of the Titans Typhon and Echidna ("the Mother of All Monsters"). Typhon himself was described as one "whose head brushed against the stars" when he stood erect.

But that's not all. Dragons, those huge winged serpents of many a fantasy, are almost universal in cultural legends, both as supernatural bad-guys and deities. Aboriginal Dreamtime legends contain Kulpunya, a giant dingo spirit, as well as the better-known Rainbow Serpent. Norse mythology has many humanoid giants, but also such monsters as Jörmungandr (the Midgard Serpent which encircles the earth). Sea-dwelling giants were plentiful, too, the Kraken being a popular foe. Another is the Finnish sea-monster Iku-Turso. Better-known is Leviathan of Biblical fame. Giant myth-based monsters, largely born of gods, were spawned on nearly every continent.

Things changed for giant monsters with the on-set of film-making—though in becoming the subject of entertainment rather than religious belief, they served a similar role, at least in some respects: both mythic tales and acknowledged fiction explore metaphorically the worries, uncertainties, and hopes of their various cultures. And they are all a reminder of our own fragile hold over the planet.

Ironically enough, the modern rule of giant monsters began with a dinosaur. In 1925, Harry O. Hoyt directed the first film version of Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Lost World*, which ended

with a Brontosaurus rampaging through London, creating a precedent of city-trashing for many giant monsters to come. The creator of the beast, Willis O'Brien, would go on to create the titular monster in 1933's *King Kong*, the first *real* giant monster film. Then in 1953, as fear of the consequences of the atomic bomb kicked in, Eugène Lourié directed *The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms*, with FX by Willis O'Brien's apprentice Ray Harryhausen (who would go on to create many other giant monsters). The success of *The Beast*, in turn, inspired Japan's Toho Studios to produce *Gojira* in 1954 (released in a re-worked form as *Godzilla, King of the Monsters* in the U.S.). *Gojira* director Ishirô Honda's film was a deliberate reaction to the 1945 destruction by atomic bomb of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, generalised to address the consequences of "dangerous" science. The worldwide success of *Godzilla* inspired Toho to create a plethora of increasingly bizarre monster films, known in Japan as *kaiju eiga* (monster films) or *daikaiju eiga* (giant monster films). *Godzilla* films are still being made today, both in Japan and the U.S. Meanwhile, other Asian countries began to film their own (generally less successful) giant monster flicks, the U.K. followed suit with 1961's *Gorgo* and others, and Hollywood during the 50s and beyond continued to create many more. The gradual development of complex CGI effects has, during the past decade or so, given a push to the genre that sees such films reigning over the box-office.

In the 1960s and 70s, comics starring giant monsters became popular, too, most notably such Marvel titles as *Where Monsters Dwell* and *Tales to Astonish*, with the most iconic of these monsters drawn by the master, Jack Kirby. Naturally, written giant monster stories—both short and long-form—followed

suit, often honouring the overwhelming Japanese influence on the subgenre by using their term: *Kaiju*. The first anthology to publish original giant monster stories was the award-winning *Daikaiju! Giant Monster Tales*, edited by myself and Robin Pen, in 2007. Two sequels followed. In the intervening years, many more anthologies have appeared, few as awesome as the best-selling *Kaiju Rising: Age of Monsters*, edited by Tim Marquitz and N. X. Sharps, and now its sequel, which you hold in your hands.

Kaiju Rising II: Reign of Monsters contains a plethora of great stories, written by some of the best writers in the field. You will be awed, amused, thrilled, terrified, inspired—emotions integral to the subgenre.

I'm glad to say the latest Age of Giant Monsters is in good hands.

INTRODUCTION

N.X. SHARPS

IT'S BEEN FIVE YEARS SINCE Guillermo del Toro's *Pacific Rim* stomped onto the big screen, popularizing the term "kaiju" amongst large swathes of Western theater-goers, and inspiring me and the team at Ragnarok Publications to create an anthology dedicated to a Japanese film genre featuring giant monsters. With the support of 444 backers, we successfully crowdfunded that anthology and released *Kaiju Rising: Age of Monsters* into the world. Plenty has changed since then but with *Pacific Rim: Uprising* and a bevy of other giant monster movies on the horizon (including a film adaptation of the beloved arcade game *Rampage* and the long-awaited showdown, *Godzilla vs. Kong*) now seemed like the perfect time to unleash a sequel of our own.

Editing a project like *Kaiju Rising II: Reign of Monsters* is gratifying on so many levels. It's an exciting exercise brainstorming what authors might best fit the overarching theme of the anthology while still managing to deliver their own unique

style. And once the submissions start rolling in and you get to read original fiction by your favorite authors before anyone else will? Talk about sublime! I knew the anthology would be good, but it wasn't until I started to read the submissions that I realized just *how* good. I held some expectations for what the stories of *Kaiju Rising II* might offer, but authors, beautiful beasts that they are, have a tendency to surprise you.

Rewinding a bit, let me just say that one of the things I love most about the first book, *Kaiju Rising: Age of Monsters*, is the degree of diversity in the content of the stories. It's a feature that is frequently mentioned in reviews, and I whole heartedly believe it's the anthology's greatest strength. I'm glad to say that *Kaiju Rising II: Reign of Monsters* only builds on that (hopefully earthquake-resistant) foundation. It's a leaner predator than its big sister, more King Kong-sized than the Godzilla that is *Kaiju Rising: Age of Monsters*, but the stories printed on the following pages still manage to span an assortment of genres—action, horror, post-apocalypse, alternate history, and science fiction. We've got stories of love and loss, revenge and redemption, duty and sacrifice, conservation and annihilation, all united under the aegis of kaiju. In the true monster movie tradition, our kaiju range from villains to victims, creatures of instinct, forces of nature, and in the words of *Jurassic Park's* Muldoon even a “clever girl” or two.

All books are a team effort, but none more so than an anthology. I've already touched on the incredible stories written by our amazing line-up, but I'd be remiss not to mention the hard work by those who made *Kaiju Rising II: Reign of Monsters* a reality. Alana Joli Abbott, my co-editor, really knows her craft, and her abilities have covered for any of my own shortcomings. Tan Ho Sim's awesome cover art is a perfect match for this

anthology, and I'll be proud to display it on my bookshelf. Frankie B. Washington has all the experience needed to illustrate kaiju, and his interior art evokes the essence of each of these stories. Without the determination and marketing expertise of Melanie Meadors, it would have been a much steeper hill to climb to reach our funding goal for the Kickstarter campaign. Shawn King's design sensibilities are second to none, and I'm astonished one of the big traditional publishers hasn't snatched him up yet. Outland Entertainment's fearless leader Jeremy Mohler deserves credit for deciding to take a risk on this project, and I'm eternally grateful that he did.

But perhaps the greatest member of the team is you. Yeah, you. Whether you backed the Kickstarter campaign, bought a copy after, borrowed this from a library, or stole it from your friend (don't give it back, just convince them to buy another copy)—we couldn't have done it without you. Without a reader, there's no audience, and it doesn't matter how good the book is or how much time and effort was sunk into it. So, thank you, even if you skipped ahead to dive straight into the stories like I would in your position. If you're a fan of kaiju I sincerely believe you will appreciate what these authors have achieved. If this is your first exposure to the genre, I hope *Kaiju Rising II: Reign of Monsters* can be your gateway drug to a wider, weirder world.

And with that, I am honored to introduce *Kaiju Rising II: Reign of Monsters*. The Age of Monsters has arrived, and the Reign of Monsters has begun.

N.X. Sharps

March 6, 2018