

Short Review: “The Island of Dr. Moreau” (1977) by Dr. John L. Flynn



The Island of Dr. Moreau (1977). American International, 98 min. Director: Don Taylor.

Producers: John Temple Smith and Skip Steloff. Screenwriters: John Herman Shaner and Al Ramrus. Based on the novel by H.G. Wells. Cast: Michael York, Burt Lancaster, Nigel Davenport, Barbara Carrera, and Richard Basehart.

The best of the three adaptations of H.G. Wells’ classic science fiction novel, this one deviated the least in terms of plot or characterization. Deported from England because of his cruel, unholy experiments on animals, Dr. Moreau (Lancaster) begins changing animals into humans on a small South Pacific island. These “creatures” (led by Basehart) are coerced by Moreau to forget their beastly nature, but the appearance of a stranger (York) on the island paradise causes them to revert back, and ultimately destroy the mad doctor. In this adaptation, Lancaster is perfectly cast as the brooding scientist, and easily overshadows Laughton’s sadistic maniac from the 1933 version or Brando’s wiggled-out sociopath in the 1996 version. York is perfect as the handsome stranger who happens by, and future Bond-girl Barbara Carrera is sexy, desirable, and worth the price of admission.

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