

Short Review: “Island of Lost Souls” (1932) by Dr. John L. Flynn



Island of Lost Souls (1932). Paramount Pictures, b/w, 62 min. Director: Erle C. Kenton.

Producers: Waldemar Young and Philip Wylie. Screenwriter: Karl Struss. Based on the novel by H.G. Wells. Cast: Charles Laughton, Richard Arlen, Leila Hymans, Bela Lugosi, Kathleen Burke, and Arthur Hohl.

Edward Parker (Arlen) finds himself stranded on the tiny tropical island of Dr. Moreau (Laughton) when an angry ship's captain leaves him behind. Moreau is very secretive about his work, but Parker eventually discovers the mad doctor is a whip-cracking taskmaster to a growing population of his own gruesome human-animal experiments. His one prize result, Lota (Burke), is the beautiful and erotic panther woman, but because she has rejected Moreau and set her sites on Parker, the doctor seeks to destroy him. Parker's fortunes for escape look up after his fiancée Ruth (Hyams) arrives on another ship, but by then, Moreau's tribe of near-humans is on the warpath, and no one is safe. Based on the 1896 novel The Island of Dr. Moreau by Wells, the story was meant to be a parable about man playing God, not an essay on sado-masochism. Bela Lugosi appears as the Sayer of the Law, and Kathleen Burke who was to become a staple of B-movies makes an indelible impression as the sexy panther woman. Me-ow!

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