

Short Review: "The Last Man on Earth" (1964) by Dr. John L. Flynn



The Last Man on Earth (1964). Italian/Lippert Films, b/w, 88min. Director: Sidney Salkow. Screenwriters: Logan Swanson (Richard Matheson) and William Liecaster. Based on the novel *I Am Legend* by Richard Matheson. Starring; Vincent Price, Franca Bettoia, and Emma Danielli. Robert Logan (Price) is the last man on Earth, the lone survivor of a plague that has killed most of the world's population and turned the remainder into vampire mutants. At first, he searches for a medical explanation of the ancestral stigmata of the vampire in terms of symptoms that can be cured. But when he realizes there is no cure, he takes up mallet and stakes--the traditional tools of Dr. Van Helsing--to destroy as many vampires as he can during the day and fortify himself against their onslaught at night. Lonely and weary enough to make mistakes, Logan eventually falls into their clutches, and he is sacrificed to preserve their new order. Though flawed by low production values, this Italian-American co-production is the closest filmmakers have come to capturing the horror and paranoia of Richard Matheson's superior science fiction novel; ironically, Matheson was not satisfied with the final product, and withdrew his real name in favor of a pen name (Logan Swanson) for the movie's credits. The film was remade seven years later as "The Omega Man," with Charlton Heston.

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