

Short Review: “Metropolis” (1926) by Dr. John L. Flynn



Metropolis (1926). UFA and Decla Bioscop, b/w, 182 (128, 75) minutes. Director: Fritz Lang. Producer: Erich Pommer. Screenwriters: Thea von Harbou and Fritz Lang. Photographers: Karl Freund and Guenther Rittau. Cast: Brigitte Helm, Alfred Abel, Gustav Froehlich, Rudolf Klein-Rogge, Fritz Rasp, Theodor Loos, and Erwin Biswanger.

THE classic science fiction film of the silent era features a gigantic, sprawling city of the year 2000 A.D., known simply as “Metropolis,” and the socialist struggle of an underprivileged and downtrodden working class to wrest power from a cruel, upper class elite. When the leader’s teenaged son Feder (Froehlich) goes undercover to find out the plight of the worker himself, he falls for beautiful Maria (Helm). But mad scientist Rotwang (Klein-Rogge) has other plans for Maria, and transforms her image into a robot to incite the workers to revolt against the fascist state. The Robotrix, one of the finest realized images in all science fiction cinema, is subsequently burned at the stake, and the real Maria escapes to bring good will and unite the disparate factions. Fritz Lang’s visionary film was not immensely popular nor successful in its day, but has since become a beloved classic. “Metropolis” is indeed the amalgamation of every science fiction dream of the city of tomorrow, and the evocation of the Robotrix is still unequalled! The film was re-released in 1984 with a rock score by Georgio Muroder.

Copyright 2012 by John L. Flynn, Ph.D.