

Short Review: “The Return of Dr. X” (1939) by Dr. John L. Flynn



The Return of Dr. X (1939). Warner Brothers, b/w, 62 min. Director: Vincent Sherman.

Producer: Bryan Foy. Screenwriter: Lee Kathy. Based on the novel *The Doctor's Secret* by William Makin. Cast: Humphrey Bogart, Dennis Horgan, Rosemary Lane, Wayne Morris, and John Litel.

Though not a direct sequel to Michael Curtiz's “Dr. X” (1932), this film was more imaginative than most sequels of the day, and owed much of its vision and style to that earlier film. Directed by Victor Sherman (his first motion picture), this minor thriller focuses on a modern vampire (Bogart) who terrorizes a major metropolis. Bogart, his hair white-streaked and complexion grisly, becomes a scientific vampire who, when resurrected from the dead by a mad doctor (Litel), must feed on living blood in order to survive. Although the film resembles plots taken from both “Frankenstein” (1931) and “Dracula” (1931), it was able to transcend the mad scientist motif to stand on its own merit. The film was produced on a low budget, and featured Bogart in his only horror movie, but failed in its initial release. However, after Bogart's successes in “The Maltese Falcon” (1941) and “Casablanca” (1942), the motion picture was re-issued by Warner Brothers as a second feature and became moderately successful. Here’s looking at you, kid!

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