

## Short Review: "Dr. X" (1932) by Dr. John L. Flynn



**Doctor X** (1932). First National, b/w, 77 min. Director: Michael Curtiz. Producers: Robert Tasker and Earl Baldwin. Screenwriters: Richard Tower and Ry Rennahan. Cast: Lionel Atwill, Fay Wray, Lee Tracy, Preston Foster, Arthur Edmund Carewe, and Mae Busch.

This primitive, low-budget chiller from First National followed in the successful wake of Whale's "Frankenstein" (1931), but was not half as clever or interesting. Based on a stage play by Howard W. Comstock and Allen C. Miller, the story involves a series of murders at Blackstone Shoals Medical Clinic in Long Island, in which each victim's brain has been torn out and eaten. Six murders in the last six months, and each murder has occurred during a full moon. Police detectives suspect Dr. Xavier (Atwill) or a member of his staff, but wisecracking reporter Tracy and good-natured nurse Wray trace the murders to an amputee (Foster) who can seemingly grow new limbs upon request. But, in typical Hollywood melodrama, when the heroine is threatened, the hero, rescues her and destroys the mad scientists. Directed by Michael Curtiz, the film does have some

fine, expressionistic touches that merit a second viewing, even if the story does seem rather formula. No doubt that Curtiz brought some of those touches with him when he emigrated from Europe. A semi-sequel, entitled “The Return of Dr. X” (1939), followed seven years later, with Humphrey Bogart as a scientific vampire created by the titular mad doctor.

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