

Short Review: “Dr. Cyclops” (1940) by Dr. John L. Flynn



Dr. Cyclops (1940). Paramount, 75 min. Director: Ernest B. Schoedsack. Producer: Dale Van Every. Screenwriter: Tom Kilpatrick. Cast: Albert Dekker, Janice Logan, Thomas Coley, Charles Halton, Victor Kilian, and Frank Yaconeilli.

Dr. Thorkel (Dekker), the bald, bespectacled researcher of the title, is experimenting with the reduction of humans to one fifth of their normal size at a clandestine laboratory buried deep in the Peruvian jungle. Why is it that these mysterious labs are always buried deep within the jungle instead of sunny, Southern California? When a group of American explorers (Logan, Coley, and Halton) accidentally stumble upon his work, he uses them to further his sick dream of world domination. But, like all mad doctors of the Thirties and Forties, the subjects of his work turn on Thorkel, first by blinding him, then luring him to his death down a mindshaft. Directed by Ernest B. Schoedsack, the man who gave us the mighty ape “King Kong” (1933), the film was a special effects extravaganza with lots of rear screen projection, matte photography, and enormous props. But the real strength of the piece is Dekker's sinister portrayal of the mad scientist. Once his glasses have been broken, and that is every geek's nightmare, the parallels to the Ulysses/Cyclops story deliberate, he becomes a maniacal monster, much like Frankenstein's

creation, and throws the character into maximum overdrive. The film is a much over-looked, minor classic!

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