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CRIMES OF DR. MABUSE, THE (Das Testament von Dr. Mabuse), Germany, 1933

Certificate: A. *Distributors:* A.B.F.D. *Production Company:* Nero Films. *Producer:* Seymour Nebenzal. *Director:* Fritz Lang. *Script:* Thea von Harbou and Fritz Lang. *Photography:* Fritz Arno Wagner. *Supervising Editor (U.S. version):* Gregg Tallas. *Design:* Karl Vollbrecht and Emil Hasler. *Music:* Hans Erdmann. *Leading Players:* Otto Wernicke (*Inspector Lohmann*), Rudolf Klein-Rogge (*Dr. Mabuse*), Gustav Diesl (*Kent*), Oscar Beregi (*Dr. Baum*), Vera Liessem (*Lilli*), Camilla Spira (*Anna*), also Karl Meixner, Rudolf Schundler, Theo Lingen, Paul Henckels. 6,412 ft. 72 mins.

Das Testament von Dr. Mabuse was the sequel to Fritz Lang's earlier silent film *Dr. Mabuse, der Spieler*, which told of the anarchistic Mabuse, the master criminal who evolved perfect crimes, but who was subsequently driven insane. In the sequel, Mabuse succeeds in hypnotising Dr. Baum, the director of the asylum in which he is incarcerated, into taking over his criminal organisation, and, when he dies, Baum believes himself to be Mabuse and embraces his philosophy. Inspector Lohmann is called in to track down those responsible for the new series of daring crimes which are taking place all over Germany, and he is assisted by Kent, a disillusioned member of the gang. A number of clues prove that the asylum director is the master mind and he makes a desperate bid to escape by car, but is pursued by Lohmann and his men. Baum's mind finally gives way completely, and he returns to Dr. Mabuse's old cell in the asylum, destroyed by his own insane lust for power.

The film under review, a re-issue from America, is a completely ravaged version of Lang's gripping and significant melodrama of the early '30's, severely shortened (the original ran for about two hours), and fitted out with an atrocious sound-track of dubbed American voices, which makes Mabuse's syndicate sound like refugees from a minor "B" thriller. The original German film had many notable qualities: a firm control of narrative and dramatic effect; Fritz Arno Wagner's naturalistic photography; an ingenious use of sound and silence; wonderfully atmospheric sets, and, of course, Lang's powerful condemnation of the "superman" philosophy (and Nazism, by implication), which caused the film to be banned in Germany and Lang to leave the country for France and then America. Twenty years after it was made some of the acting now appears over-stressed, but even in this version something of the power of the original survives. One's final impression, though, is of an act of vandalism of a kind now becoming alarmingly frequent.

Suitability: A, B.

J.G.

MFB: Jan. 1954