

Document Citation

Title	Metropolis
Author(s)	
Source	<i>Publisher name not available</i>
Date	
Type	program note
Language	English
Pagination	
No. of Pages	1
Subjects	Lang, Fritz (1890-1976), Vienna, Austria
Film Subjects	Metropolis, Lang, Fritz, 1926

Metropolis (1927)

Credits: Director: Fritz Lang. Writers: Fritz Lang, Thea von Harbou (then Mrs. Lang). Photographers: Karl Freund, Gunther Rittau. Special photographic effects: Eugene Schufftan. Art directors: Otto Hunte, Erich Kettelhut, Karl Vollbrecht. Sculptures: Walter Schultze-Middendorf. Music: Gottfried Huppertz. Shooting: 310 days, 60 nights. 107 min.

Cast: Brigitte Helm(Maria), Alfred Abel(John Fredersen), Gustave Frolhich (Freder Fredersen), Rudolph Klein-Rogge(Rotwang), Heinrich Georg(foreman), Fritz Rasp(Grot), Theodor Loos, Erwin Biswanger, Olaf Storm, Hans Leo Reich, Heinrich Gotho, Margarete Lanner, Max Dietze, Georg John, Walter Kuhle, Arthur Reinhard, Erwin Vater, Grete Berger, Olly Boheim, Ellen Frey, Lisa Gray, Rose Leichtenstein, Helene Weigel, Beatrice Garga, Anny Hintze, Helen von Munchoten, Hilda Woitscheff, Fritz Alberti, and 750 secondary roles, plus over 30,000 extras.

Andrew Sarris puts Lang in the Pantheon of film directors, along with Renoir, Lubitsch, Sternberg, and Ophuls, all European by birth. Of his Pantheon, which also includes Chaplin, Flaherty, Ford, Griffith, Hawks, Hitchcock, Keaton, Murnau(another European) and Welles, he says: "To speak any of their names is to evoke a self-contained world with its own laws and landscapes."

On Lang: "Fritz Lang's cinema is the cinema of the nightmare, the fable, and the philosophical dissertation. Lang's apparent weaknesses are the consequences of his virtues. He has always lacked the arid sophistication lesser directors display to such advantage. Lang's plots generally go inexplicably sour or sentimental at the very end. His characters never develop with any psychological precision, and his world lacks the details of verisimilitude that are so important to realistic critics. However, Lang's vision of the world is profoundly expressed by his visual forms...If Renoir is humanism, Lang is determinism. If Renoir is concerned with the plight of his characters, Lang is obsessed with the structure of the trap...There is something of the voyeur in Lang; vide the flashlight sequence in Metropolis and the false mirror in the last Mabuse. His films take place in a closed world, but their formal brilliance and intellectual conceptions are incontestable. Lang is the cerebral tragedian of the cinema, and his lapses into absurdity are the evidence of a remote sagacity, an intellect that transforms images into ideas...A curious pattern of paranoia runs through Lang's films...As the servant of an allegedly optimistic film industry, Lang is singularly succesful in undercutting audience expectations of a moral balance regained...Nonetheless Lang makes sentimental exceptions to this paranoia in the trustworthy love of beautiful girls... Sentimental exceptions aside, Lang might argue that in a century that has spawned Hitler and Hiroshima, no artist can be called paranoiac; he is being persecuted."

Lang to Bogdanovich(in Fritz Lang in America)about Metropolis: "The story of the year 2000. The workers live ten floors underground and the Master lives on top--it was all very symbolic." And: "I was not so politically minded in those days as I am now. You cannot make a social-conscious picture in which you say that the intermediary between the hand and the brain is the heart--I mean that's a fairy tale--definitely. But I was very interested in machines...Anyway I didn't like the picture...Should I say now that I like Metropolis because something I have seen in my imagination comes true--when I detested it after it was finished?"

Metropolis was UFA's most expensive picture to that date, costing over two million marks, and was released in America by Paramount Famous Lasky Corp.

A filmography appears in Sarris' American Cinema, an interview in his book of interviews with film directors. Bogdanovich's book is especially good, written simply as an edited version of a long interview with Lang in 1965.