

## Document Citation

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THINGS TO COME (United Artists, 1936) 130 min.

Producer, Alexander Korda; director, William Cameron



Margaretta Scott and Raymond Massey in Things to Come (1936).

Menzies; based on the book The Shape of Things to Come by H. G. Wells; screenplay, Wells and Lajos Biro; art director, Vincent Korda; costumes, John Armstrong, René Hubert, and the Marchioness of Queensberry; music, Arthur Bliss; special effects, Ned Mann; special camera effects, Edward Cohen and Harry Zech; camera, George Perrinal; editor, Charles Crichton.

Raymond Massey (John Cabal/Oswald Cabal); Cedric Hardwicke (Theotocopulos); Margaretta Scott (Roxana); Ralph Richardson (The Boss); Edward Chapman (Pippa Passworthy/Raymond); Maurice Bardell (Dr. Harding); Sophie Stewart (Mrs. Cabal); Derrick de Marney (Richard Gordon); Ann Todd (Mary Gordon); Pearl Argyle (Katherine Cabal); Kenneth Villiers (Maurice Passworthy); Ivan Brandt (Mitani); Anthony Holles (Simon Burton); Allan Jeayes (Mr. Cabal); John Clements (Airman); Pickles Livingston (Horrie Passworthy); Patricia Hilliard (Janet Gordon); George Sanders (Pilot).

H. G. Wells' book The Shape of Things to Come, published in 1933, was a philosophical exploration of what the future might

hold for mankind. Three years later a quasi-adaptation of the work was made for the screen, detailing what the next one hundred years would be like. Since Wells was a firm believer that conflict and struggle were part of man's destiny, his account focused on this aspect of life.

Set in the city of Everytown, the film commences on Christmas Eve, 1940 and the beginning of World War II. By 1966 the world is devastated and "wandering sickness" is plaguing the land. Into the battered city comes scientist John Cabal (Raymond Massey). Alighting from his plane he tells the Boss (Ralph Richardson), who is waging a war with the hill tribes, that he is from the Airmen base at Basra and that he and his colleagues intend to rebuild civilization. The narrative then jumps to the year 2036 and the community is now a futuristic city, overseen by Cabal's descendant, Oswald Cabal (Massey). In this peaceful, prosperous and sterile city trouble brews. A noted sculptor, Theotocopulos (Cedric Hardwicke), tries to lead a revolt, hoping to return society to the more humanistic ways of yesteryear. Cabal, however, stops the revolt and instigates the launching of a space ship to the moon. Passengers in the space craft are the Cabal's son and the sculptor's daughter. Perhaps on the new land there may be a more compassionate way of life.

Made on a huge scale, Things to Come is at its most impressive when totally visual: the scenes of devastation after the final war, when cities are shambles and the survivors have regressed back to near savagery; and the city of the future, with its clear spirals and swift flying machines. The major drawback of the production is its overemphasis on polemics and its failure to give dimensions to the characters. These aspects were responsible for the film's financial failure. As the New York Herald-Tribune complained, "... [it] hints of great things in the cinema rather than provides them."

In Cinema of the Fantastic (1972), Chris Steinbrunner and Burt Goldblatt note, "Things to Come stands unique. No other film has been made that quite attempts its chronology, or provides in such stirring detail the sweep of its hundred-year look into the future. Even though its heroes are somewhat cardboard and its brave new world somewhat placid, Things to Come's singular vision makes it a film still very viewable today ... and perhaps a film not too far out of date when we catch up with it in the year 2036."