

Document Citation

Title	Spione
Author(s)	Richard Jameson
Source	<i>Kit Parker Films</i>
Date	1979
Type	distributor materials
Language	English
Pagination	
No. of Pages	1
Subjects	
Film Subjects	Spione (Spies), Lang, Fritz, 1928

SPIONE

(SPIES)

(Germany/1928) silent \$30.00

135 minutes at silent speed of 16 fps (90 minutes at sound speed).

Directed by Fritz Lang - Screenplay by Thea von Harbou - Cinematography by Fritz Arno Wagner - Designed by Otto Hunte, Karl Vollbrecht - Produced by Ufa. Players: *Rudolph Klein-Rogge, Gerda Maurus, Willy Fritsch, Lupu Pick, Lien Deyers, Graighall Sherry, Fritz Rasp, Hertha von Walther.*

Fritz Lang has created some of the most visually intense of cinematic experiences, but even within his canon they don't come any more intense than *Spione*. Doktor Mabuse isn't in this one, not by name—though the same actor, Rudolf Klein-Rogge, takes the role of criminal mastermind Haghi, whose intentions remain, as ever, merely to rule the world. The world of *Spione* is utterly Mabusian: people watch people watch people, diabolical forces lunge into the frame without warning, the most mundane objects prove to be deadly weapons, and when one character disappears, she doesn't simply vanish from her home—the home itself is discovered utterly stripped of her personal identity, with electric wires hanging out of the walls where even the lamps and outlets have been removed.

The *mise-en-scene* is abstract, geometric, purified of distracting irrelevancies: every gesture, every angle, every element of the *decor* or adjustment of the lighting reinforces the sense that we are watching a nightmare version of reality—an often blackly comic nightmare, and always an exhilarating one, but a nightmare nonetheless. And the editing, the absolute inevitability with which each shot chillingly “answers” the one that went before, regardless of commonplace space-time logic, evokes a profoundly surreal vision of the Langian world. That his world and the Mabusian are one and the same is explicitly acknowledged at both the beginning and the end of the film—and no other film has a more breathtakingly swift beginning, nor an ending that more thrillingly testifies to the superior validity of its own peculiar kind of reality over and above that bland environment the rest of us inhabit. Without question the finest of Lang's silent films, and one of his very best films from any period. —RTJ

Richard Jensen

Kit Parker 1979