

# The Cinema Circuit

By MARTIN DICKSTEIN

Harold Lloyd in Worthy Surroundings at the Strand—"Metropolis,"  
an Achievement of Screen Craftsmanship, Settles  
Down in the Rialto Theater.

## "Metropolis"

RIALTO THEATER—"Metropolis," a Ufa production, directed by Fritz Lang; distributed in the United States by Paramount.

### THE CAST.

John Masterman.....Alfred Abel  
Eric, his son.....Gustav Froelich  
Rotwang, the inventor.Rudolf Klein-Rogge  
Joseph.....Theodor Loos  
No. 7.....Heinrich George  
Mary.....Brigitte Helm

IF EVER there was cause for the cinema critics to shout hosannas to the dark heavens above Times Square and to prance ecstatically in the streets, that cause was present at the Rialto Theater on Saturday evening, when "Metropolis" was revealed for the first time in this town. If there ever was a cinematic masterpiece (having just this minute come in from my own dancing) worthy of the designation, this latest screening from the Ufa studios of Germany is the ultimate masterful stroke.

Thus are taxed the bounds of all critical restraint, and having been taxed to the point of parting, restraint shall have no place in these subsequent placing of wreaths.

In "Metropolis" is conceived in impressionistic sequences a strange and sinister city of the future, an awesome community of concrete and steel which rises a hundred stories above the surface and goes down a hundred levels below. In this forbidding metropolis men, who are as automatons and not humans, live in strange, box-like tenements hundreds of feet underground, suggestive of the fanciful abodes of the characters of H. G. Wells or Jules Verne. These automatons, who are as men and yet are not men, sweat in drudgery long days and nights for one—John Masterman—who, in his headquarters high above the city, grips the destinies of them all in his two hands.

This John Masterman has a son who, as this strange tale is to reveal, is an idealist whose dream is the emancipation of his father's slaves and who would rebuild this ungodly city upon foundations of Love and Humanity. This youth has fallen in love with the fair daughter of one of his father's workers. Together they are pledged to bring ease to all those thousands of spirit-broken slaves, who live not even to see the sun but to tend constantly, maddeningly, the furnaces of Moloch and in the end to die, like the Phoenicians, in the heat of their own fires.

It is not urgent, nor does the space permit, to relate how Rotwang, the inventive genius of Masterman, succeeded in creating a human being in the very image of the workman's beautiful daughter, but lacking only a soul; how this artificial creature turned against her creators by inciting the workers to rise up and destroy the metropolis of Masterman; how, like Babel of old, the city came to a terrific end, and how, finally, the youthful idealist, brought Brain and Hand together to build anew upon the ruins.

It is more a thing of wonder how, by amazing photographic and superb dramatic effects, these things came to pass upon the screen.

In miniature, though the results are startlingly realistic, the steel and granite masses of the futuristic city rise to wondrous heights—descend to inconceivable depths below the streets. Strange aircraft are seen whirring by at approximately mid-level of the towering structures, and

fantastic looking motor cars rush along on specially constructed roadways which hang suspended in air. Truly a metropolis of some future day. One observes the workmen, a hangdog look upon each haggard face, shuffling along in prison-like formations to their labors at the machines of Moloch, while the relieved shifts shuffle by in opposite direction and descend in enormous elevators to their tenements in the bowels of the earth. All these are scenes as impressive as they are imaginative.

Fritz Lang, an ingenious German director, produced "Metropolis" from a story by his wife, Thea von Harbou, who was also author of the recent screen play, "Siegfried." The cast, of course, is entirely strange to these shores. John Masterman is played by Alfred Abel; his son, by Gustav Froelich. Rudolph Klein-Rogge portrays the inventor, Rotwang, while the workman's daughter (and the mechanical image of her) is notably personified by Brigitte Helm. Channing Pollock is responsible for the English subtitles.

In am wondering with what degree of humiliation our own American producers and directors (with their record of trivial screen accomplishments) will stand before "Metropolis" when they see it. And what will be the thoughts of the Colleen Moores and the Corinne Griffiths and the Esther Ralstons when (having seen this film) they take up again their own silly duties in the Kleig light of Hollywood?