

Daily Movie Chat

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New York, March 18.—Cut from some 14 reels to program length, the fantastic German preachment on the machine age, "Metropolis," is doing for this season what "Variety" did for last.

Camera stunts more amazing than a chaotic dream are spun off by the dozen, and the imagination, ingenuity and art revealed have become the talk of the Manhattan critics.

Six months have elapsed since this film came over from UFA to the offices of Paramount, which concern, having purchased it, didn't know quite what to do with it. Many are the rumors that have trickled from the offices. At one time it was practically abandoned I am told. Then came the resolution to put it on as a big special, but box-office fear—that dread disease of the cinema chieftains—fell upon them.

It was turned over to Channing Pollock, since his name had been identified with plays of symbolic and spiritual drama. In his hands lay the tilting and much of the cutting.

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"Metropolis" is a fantastic concept of the future; a Jules Verne-esque concept of a time when buildings and machines will have reduced man to his least common denominator. Over this grotesque world reigns Mr. Masterman, who can control all life and activity by means of a system of buttons and dials. As in the play, "R. U. R.," man is reduced to a Robot.

Such a story naturally lends itself to super-fantastic settings and action. People live on two levels of earth; above and below the ground. They move with slow, pantomic motions; their skyline is the dream of the ultra modernist and they have forgotten soul and God. In fact, Masterman has just invented a machine to take man's place; man will no longer be necessary.

When rebellion, through spiritual awakening, finally comes, there is mob movement such as the screen has never seen, and the story itself becomes melodramatic enough to satisfy even those who follow Tom Mix's cattle rustling pursuits.

Also there is a flood scene I have never seen equaled upon the screen. On the other hand there is a great deal that reeks of the studio and some second rate acting.

I am told that Roxy offered \$100,000 for a release on the picture and that it was turned down, which seems reasonable enough, since Roxy's theater now competes with the new Paramount. The chieftains are still skeptical about its reception of the road, but—even if the lesson contained is partially missed by many—there still remains the love story, the rebellion and other thrillers. If efforts toward beauty, fantasy and art such as are here contained meet with calamity, there is little use to plead for the betterment of the cinema.