

# METROPOLIS

MOST FANS AND STUDENTS OF SF CINEMA AGREE THAT FRITZ LANG'S METROPOLIS (1926) REMAINS ONE OF THE MOST VISUALLY POWERFUL FILMS IN THE HISTORY OF THE MOVIES. IT IS ONLY FITTING, THEREFORE, THAT STARBURST'S COVERAGE OF THE PICTURE SHOULD BE AS VISUAL AS POSSIBLE  
CAPTIONS BY PHIL EDWARDS.

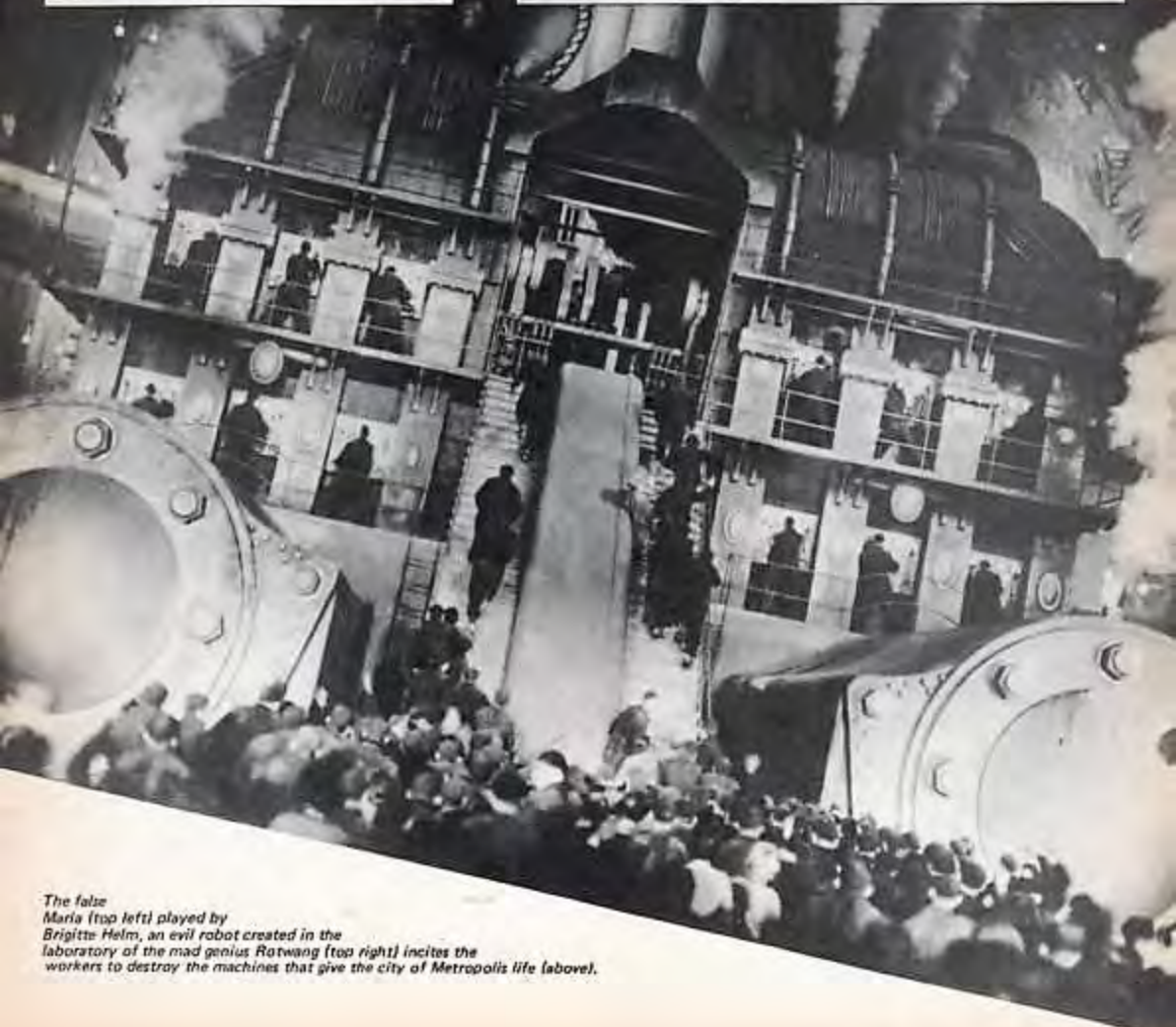
*In 1924 German director Fritz Lang visited the United States to study American film-making techniques. As Lang's ship entered New York Harbour, he was struck by the futuristic look of the city's skyline. The image of that skyline formed the spring-board for Lang's next film Metropolis.*



Below: Inspired by the false Maria, the workers rampage through the subterranean machine rooms, smashing the super-scientific devices that keep the city of Metropolis alive. Below right: Though supposedly set in the far-flung future, the sets of Metropolis had a distinct deco feel to them. Below left: The original ad art for the film credited only director Fritz Lang and scriptwriter Thea Von Harbou.







*The false Maria (top left) played by Brigitte Helm, an evil robot created in the laboratory of the mad genius Rotwang (top right) incites the workers to destroy the machines that give the city of Metropolis life (above).*

Right: The very idea that the ruler of the city of Metropolis would want to cause the destruction of his own empire remains one of the most ridiculous plot-lines in the history of the cinema. Nevertheless, he hires the original mad scientist, a suitably deranged chap called Rotwang (Rudolph Klein-Rogge), to create a robot double of Maria, a beautiful girl who has a strange influence over the workers

of the city. The plan is that the robot Maria should take advantage of the workers' loyalty and incite them to riot, thereby destroying the city. Below: The exterior scenes of the teeming streets of Metropolis were achieved using a form of stop-motion animation, similar to the process used by such pioneers as Willis O'Brien and Ray Harryhausen. One sequence that lasted one minute on the screen took six days to film.





Right: Freder, son of Frederson, experiences the plight of the workers first hand when he changes places with one of them in order to continue his search for Maria. Below: To create the robot, which was eventually transformed into the false Maria, the special effects team made a full body cast of Brigitte Helm. The robot suit was constructed over this cast in a synthetic wood material. The finished suit was articulated at the joints then spray painted to give a metallic finish. Below right: Metropolis was photographed by Karl Freund, who went on to direct Karloff's *The Mummy* (1932). Bottom: "Worth losing a hand for," cried Rotwang, bandishing his mechanical hand under the nose of his employer.

