

Blu-Ray Review: 'The Complete Metropolis' Restores Timeless Masterpiece

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on November 18, 2010 - 12:35pm

- [Blu-ray Review](#) [2]
- [Brian Tallerico](#) [3]
- [Fritz Lang](#) [4]
- [HollywoodChicago.com Content](#) [5]
- [Metropolis](#) [6]
- [The Complete Metropolis](#) [7]
- [Theater, TV, DVD & Blu-Ray](#) [8]

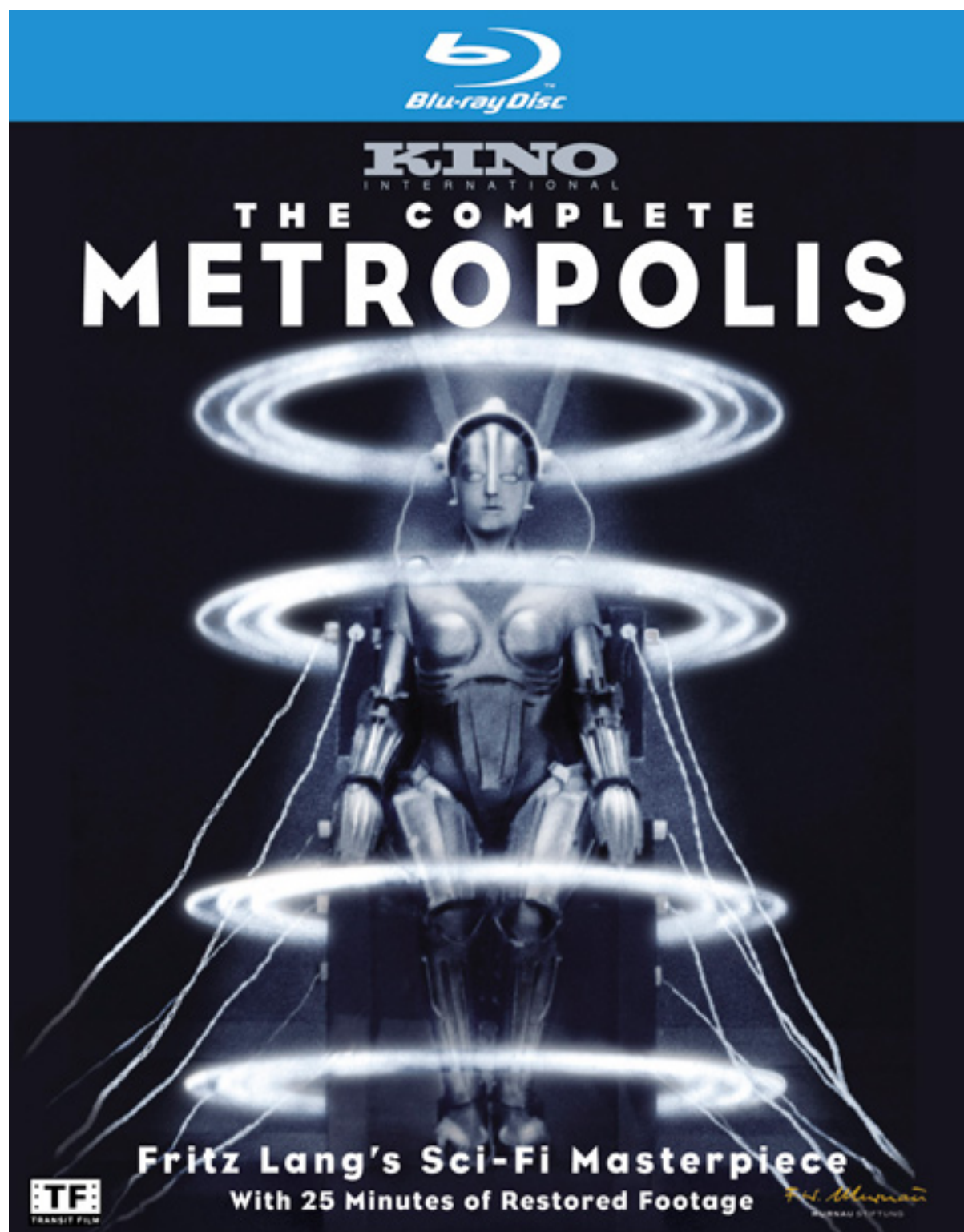
CHICAGO – One of the cinematic highlights of my life happened earlier this year when I was lucky enough to see “The Complete Metropolis” on the big screen. Fritz Lang’s legendary film is not only riveting by virtue of being one of the most influential of all time but the story that developed after it was made is a historically fascinating one. Almost a century after it was released, we can now see “Metropolis,” recently released on Blu-ray, in a more complete manner than ever before.



Blu-Ray Rating: **5.0/5.0**

The fact is that most early filmmakers and film watchers had no concept of where we would be today in terms of the longevity of the medium. Most historians estimate that a majority of the films released before 1930 are completely gone, likely destroyed and never to be found. Even the films we do have from that era are often truncated with whole reels lost to history. After the release of “Metropolis” in 1927, history started to abuse the film. A massive financial bomb at its time, the two-and-a-half hour film was cut up, re-edited and virtually destroyed by several alterations. History has seen multiple, shorter cuts since then.

In fact, by the time the film got to U.S. shores later in 1927, it was already an hour shorter. There’s even an '80s version with color tints and Queen music that found some popularity but the original was missing. In 2002, what we all assumed would be the definitive version was released from the original camera negative and the picture restored to the highest caliber it could be at the time.



The Complete Metropolis was released on Blu-ray on November 16th, 2010

Photo credit: Kino

Shortly after that release, Paula Felix-Didier, the curator of the Museo Del Cine in Buenos Aires acted on a suspicion that there was a version of "Metropolis" in the archives of her building and discovered a nearly-complete copy that was longer than any existing print by nearly half an hour. About a fifth of the film that had never been seen since the Berlin premiere would be unveiled for the first time. Years of restoration did the best they could to reincorporate footage incredibly damaged by the passage of time and "The Complete Metropolis" was finally released in theaters over 83 years after its Berlin premiere.

"The Complete Metropolis" is a must-see for anyone who dares to call himself a film buff. It is easily one of the most important films of all time. In fact, a solid case could be made that it's the MOST influential film ever made as it influenced all cinematic science fiction to come.

The footage found in Argentina is easy to spot as its both much more weathered than the nearly-perfect rest of the film and contains the wrong aspect ratio. While it's a bit distracting to not be able to watch the film exactly as it was seen in 1927, it's interesting to note exactly what's new by picking it out with the naked eye. And the restoration actually required some pre-existing shots to be re-edited as the found footage made it clear that we hadn't even been seeing what existed in the right order at all times.

What's new? It's not mere filler. Some of the found footage are entire scenes and even when it's just a reaction shot or two it has a profound influence on the entire film. "Metropolis" was always a dark film but this feels more melancholy than I remember. It's sadder. As for specifics, a few supporting characters have much larger roles including a significant scene in which Georgy experiences the night life at Yoshiwara and a scene where "The Thin Man" follows and torments the same worker whose identity Freder has taken is simply remarkable. Every one of the found 25 minutes serves to deepen Lang's timeless themes of unchecked power and the will of the people to revolt.

Imagine finding a few lost tracks to "Abbey Road." Imagine a lost Beethoven symphony. That's the parallel here. One of the most incredible movies ever made is even better than the history books had recorded. Buy it. Or stop calling yourself a movie buff.

Special Features:

- o Original 1927 score performed by the Rundfunk Symphony Orchestra, Berlin, conducted by Frank Strobel, and presented in DTS-HD Master Audio 5.1
- o "Voyage to Metropolis," a 50-minute documentary on the making and restoration of the film
- o Interview with Paula Felix-Didier
- o 2010 re-release trailer

"The Complete Metropolis" stars Alfred Abel, Gustav Frohlich, Brigitte Helm, Rudolf Klein-Rogge, Theodor Loos, Heinrich George, and Fritz Rasp. It was written by Fritz Lang & Thea von Harbou and directed by Lang. It was released on Blu-ray on November 16th, 2010. It is not rated and runs 148 minutes.



[9]

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- [3] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/brian-tallerico>
- [4] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/fritz-lang>
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- [6] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/metropolis>
- [7] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/the-complete-metropolis>
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