

many leading roles next to the likes of George Raft, Randolph Scott, Lee Tracy, and Harold Lloyd.



**Figure 10 Still from *Maniac* (1934)**

Kong's son (we never see his mother, but wait till the chapter on apes<sup>42</sup>) has white fur, unlike his old man, and is only about 12 feet tall. He's also more of a clown than a menace, providing little more than comic relief for an already overused plot line. This was intentional. Screenwriter Ruth Rose, knowing that they'd never surpass the original, said, "If you can't make it bigger, make it funnier." Good logic, but still a sad fate for the only offspring of The Eighth Wonder Of The World. He is given, at least, an heroic end.<sup>43</sup>

1936's *Revolt of the Zombies* concerns an Oriental priest on the Franco-Austrian border during the First World War. He is serving a life sentence in prison because he knows the secret of turning men into

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<sup>42</sup> The Kong puppet was actually one used in the original film, stripped down and re-furred.

<sup>43</sup> Next time you watch *Citizen Kane*, watch the scene where Kane and his party go to the beach. In the process shot of the beach and cliffs in the background, you will see a bird flying by. It's a pterodactyl. The footage used for the background is borrowed from *Son Of Kong*.

zombies. As he is preparing to destroy the parchment containing the secret location of the formula (conveniently written down and in his possession, *in the cell*), an officer, Colonel Mazovia kills him and steals the secret formula. Flash forward to post war Cambodia, where all the Allied countries are after the formula to destroy it forever. Of course, Mazovia is after the formula for his own fiendish purposes, there's a love triangle, some cheesy zombies, and Lugosi's eyes from *White Zombie* superimposed over some scenes.

All this sounds terribly promising, if not downright exciting, but it's not. It's so poorly executed that it's difficult to watch. It's great for insomnia, however.

The last example I'll offer from the 30's era came out in the last year of the decade, 1939. It was *The Return of Dr. X*. As the name would imply, it was a sequel to (you guessed it) *Dr. X* (1932), directed by Michael Curtiz, who went on to direct *Casablanca*, along with *Mystery of the Wax Museum*, *Angels with Dirty Faces*, *Yankee Doodle Dandy*, and *White Christmas*.

*Doctor X* starred Lionel Atwill as Dr. Xavier (Dr. X, obviously) and Kong's love interest Fay Wray, and wasn't a bad flick. It had a reporter character that grates on the nerves a little, but overall, it's a pretty effective movie, shot in early two-strip Technicolor®, with some genuinely creepy scenes.

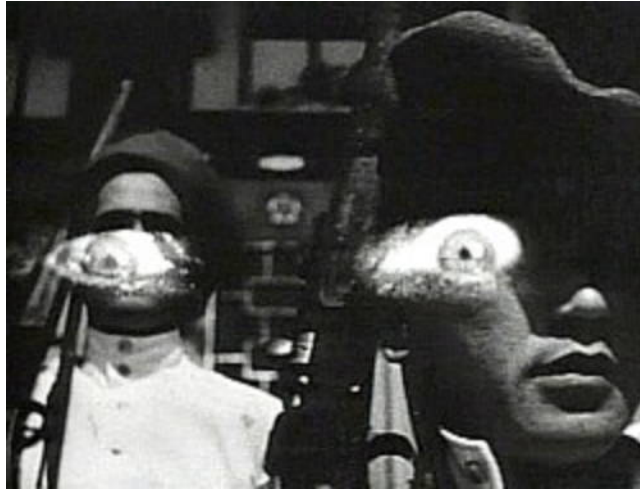
The good doctor's return in 1939, however, was not so great. For one thing, and here we go again with the cheesy casting choice, Lionel Atwill did not return as Dr. Xavier.<sup>44</sup> The studio, Warner Brothers, originally wanted Boris Karloff to play the role, but for some reason, went with Humphrey Bogart. I shudder to think of Bogart in this role. So did Bogart.

"This is one of the pictures," he said, "that made me march in to Jack Warner and ask for more money again. You can't believe what this one was like. I had a part that somebody like Béla Lugosi or Boris Karloff should have played. I was this doctor, brought back to life, and the only thing that nourished this poor bastard was blood. If it had been Jack Warner's blood, or Harry's, or Pop's, maybe I wouldn't have minded as

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<sup>44</sup> Actually, the character wasn't the same as in the original, anyway, so he didn't really return from the original film, but from the dead in this remake. Marketing.

much. The trouble was, they were drinking mine and I was making this stinking movie."<sup>iii</sup>



**Figure 11** Lugosi's eyes superimposed on a scene from *Revolt Of The Zombies* (1934)

That pretty much sums it up. This movie scared Bogart more than it did its audiences. Adding Huntz Hall<sup>45</sup> to the cast didn't help matters, either, but he's been more obnoxious in other roles. Something else scary loomed on the horizon: The Second World War. This would give Hollywood something besides an excuse for John Wayne to make something besides westerns. It would add a seed to the sci-fi plot factory that flourishes to this day, and something we will discuss in the next chapter. WWII gave us the bomb.

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<sup>45</sup> One of the East Side Kids. Not as obnoxious as Leo Gorcey.