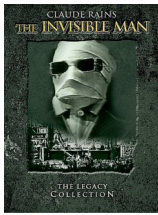


The Invisible Man (1933)



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Claude Rains was perhaps one of the most recognizable character actors from the classic era of film. He was able to play almost any part. Among his best known roles were Captain Louis Renault in *Casablanca* and Prince John in *The Adventures of Robin Hood*. *The Invisible Man* was his first major film role. Prior to this film he had only appeared on screen in one silent film short. The rest of his early acting life had been spent on the hardwood stages. In *The Invisible Man*, Mr. Rains stars as Dr. Jack Griffin, who disappears one day while working in the lab of his friend and mentor Dr. Cranley. His mysterious disappearance from the lab has Flora, Dr. Cranley's daughter and Jack's girlfriend, worried regarding his whereabouts. Unbeknownst to the two of them Jack Griffin has done more than simply walked away from the lab and them. He has literally disappeared, becoming completely invisible. Wrapped in bandages to hide his invisibility he sets up a lab in a local Inn to work on a way to bring himself back to normalcy. Sadly the formula which made him invisible is also affecting his mind and he is becoming more unbalanced and violent as time passes.

Claude Rains was picked for the title role of *The Invisible Man* based on his voice. He spoke clearly and enunciated well and this is exactly what director James Whale was looking for. A lot had to be conveyed through voice alone in this film. While Claude Rains is on screen for about ninety-eight percent of the film, his face is only seen for a few seconds at the end of the film. It was an interesting beginning to what turned into a major film career.

The Invisible Man was part of the Universal Shock Theatre collection that was released to television stations in the late 50's. This collection of films made up a large part of the early film libraries for the many different horror theater programs that sprang up on local channels around the country such as Indianapolis/Bloomington Channel Four's Nightmare Theatre with Sammy Terry. Many of these films fell into two categories. Vintage horror films, such as *Dracula*, *Frankenstein*, and *The Wolf man* which varied greatly from the stories on which they were based and what came to be known as Schlock Horror. Films so bad they bordered on being unintentional comedies. *The Invisible Man* was different. Universal Studios had written many different treatments for the story with none of them remotely like the book. One outline even had the story taking place on Mars. Scriptwriter R.C. Sherriff who had never read the original H.G. Wells novel decided to read the original story before choosing which treatment to use to write his script. Unsurprisingly, he felt that the novel was the best of them all and used the H.G. Wells novel as the basis for his screenplay. Because of this, *The Invisible Man* holds truer to the original story than most of Universal's horror films. The film still holds up well, considering the time it was made and state of the special effects of the day. It is one of the true classics of early film horror.

Posted by Keith C. on August 30, 2016

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