

Victor Frankenstein. Seth Brundle. Rotwang. Amateurs. The most evil and the most genius of all evil geniuses in cinema is one you have probably never heard of. Dr. Hans Reinhardt of Disney's *The Black Hole* surpasses them all.

While alone on his spaceship, the *Cygnus*, for "twenty earth years," Dr. Reinhardt created anti-matter energy *and* made enough of it to power the entire Earth.

But he wasn't always alone. The crew of his ship prepared the return to earth but Dr. Reinhardt wished to remain in space for his black hole experiments. His crew mutinied, but Reinhardt managed to round them all up using a brigade of robots he had secretly constructed.

Although Dr. Reinhardt was a genius, such a large ship could not be operated by a single man. Those crew that were not killed were made into mindless drones programmed to operate the *Cygnus*. In other words, he invented mind-control. Humans became humanoids. When explaining the drones to our heroes he says, "I've made companions of a sort. They look a bit medieval, but I'm a romantic."

The only part of humanity remaining in the drones comes from their need to eat. So, Reinhardt makes a garden on a space ship--a garden big enough to feed an army. That army is the original crew now beset as the mindless humanoids who still gotta eat three squares a day. In spite of this very human need, Dr. Reinhardt succeeded in something profane: he destroyed their human spirit. As proof, one of the heroes notes, "The process [of turning humans to drones] is irreversible. Death is their only release."

Keeping his robot workers obedient and brain-dead made possible one of his greatest accomplishments, which Dr. Reinhardt himself called, "a Mexican standoff." When our heroes discover Reinhardt, his ship is in a standstill with a black hole! The most destructive force in the universe from which

light itself cannot escape and this man sits on the edge of oblivion in a staring contest with it. How did he do this? Simple. He created anti-gravity.

Dr. Reinhardt's anti-gravity also made it possible to *walk* around on the ship like you walk through a shopping mall. This freed the movie production team from having to use wires and make the actors "float" on set in what would have been costly zero-gravity scenes. His anti-gravity was so good that even when the humans crawl *outside* the ship while on the brink of the black hole's event horizon, they do not need space suits. In reality, Gordon Cooper, a member of the original seven astronauts of Project Mercury, the first American to orbit over a communist country (China), was at the time of the *The Black Hole*, part of Research and Development at Disney. He said: "At the end [of *The Black Hole*], the survivors make a mad scramble outside the Cygnus without a space suit on. The actors didn't want to wear them. It didn't look good. So we had to coast on artistic license." So, Dr. Reinhardt could even make a hard-science astronaut disobey the laws of physics.

But Dr. Reinhardt's *absolute* greatest accomplishment was coming up with the formulas that, with the proper trajectory and angle, would "slingshot" him on his ship *through* a black hole. The character Kate McCrae (played by Yvette Mimieux), as she and the other survivors were about to hurtle through the black hole itself, said of Dr. Reinhardt, "Let's pray he was a genius." Those are the final words spoken in the movie. Was her prayer answered? Surely this was Reinhardt's flaw, the part of his story where his hubris was his undoing--his white whale? It turns out the mad doctor was indeed correct. He *did* discover a way to go into a black hole. Where you end up is another question, but his formulas were bereft of error. He did, however die on the Cygnus never knowing this. A large display monitor fell and crushed him.

Reinhardt's only real error is a small matter with his sentry robots. These are his armed guards, or (at the time) Disney's version of Storm-troopers. But first, recall his successes: Dr. Reinhardt figured out anti-

matter, made an energy source to power Earth, secretly constructed a robot battalion, captured an entire crew of people and put them under his power with mind-control, made a garden *in space*, devised a way to resist a black hole, made his own anti-gravity, and calculated the formulas for travelling *into* a black hole. However, after all those accomplishments, he could not build one simple thing: a mechanism on the sentry robots to enable them to *bend at the knee*. They walked stiff-legged. The actors inside the costumes were probably told to "act like a robot." That they did. Besides, why would anyone, including the director of the movie itself, disobey Dr. Reinhardt?

Nonetheless, we must remember the most evil mad genius scientist, Dr. Hans Reinhardt as he says in his own words, "It's high time others learned of their mistakes and my triumphs."