

# Shakespeare Films in the Making: Vision, Production and Reception

By *Russell Jackson*

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**Shakespeare Films in the Making: Vision, Production and Reception** By Russell Jackson

Shakespeare Films in the Making examines the production and reception of five feature-length Shakespeare films from the twentieth century, focusing on the ways in which they articulate visions of their Shakespearean originals, of the fictional worlds in which the films are set, and of the movie-makers' own society. Warner Brothers' 1935 *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and MGM's 1936 *Romeo and Juliet* were products of the Hollywood system and reflect the studios' desire to enhance their status with 'prestige pictures'. Olivier's 1944 *Henry V* was part of Britain's cultural war effort and embodies visions of the medieval past and ideal leadership. The *Romeo and Juliet* films of Renato Castellani (1954) and Franco Zeffirelli (1968) embodied visions of Renaissance Italy that contrast - in differing ways - with MGM's film. This book offers readings of these significant and influential films, supported by extensive archival research, including studio documents, script revisions, publicity materials and reviews.

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### **Editorial Review**

#### Review

"Jackson's book is written in a lively and witty style and manages to scatter its own gold dust over its treatment of these five representative films drawn from the first four decades of Shakespeare on film in the age of sound. Shakespeare Films in the Making will delight the general reader and instruct the grizzled scholar as well as leading the field of Shakespeare on film criticism and theory a productive path from the archives to the viewing room."

-Samuel Crowl, Ohio University, Comparative Drama

""Russell Jackson's newest book, Shakespeare Films in the Making, carries weight from its title shot to its closing credits. Here, the editor of the Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare on Film not only displays his encyclopedic knowledge of Shakespeare on film, but also he establishes "Shakespeare films" as a genre unto themselves. He proves with energy, lucidity, and interpretive subtlety not only that there is such a genre (like the Western or the Murder Mystery) but also that assessing Shakespeare films requires a thorough understanding both of the history and the processes of film making. This, then, is not a book for Shakespeareans who do not watch movies. Or films. Or cinema. It is a crucial book for those who see in film a popular medium as worthy of serious study as the quartos, folios, and editions which bring us Shakespeare. And it most certainly is a book that will aid all who use movies in their teaching of Shakespeare or who analyze Shakespearean texts as interpreted by film."

-Helen M. Whall, College of the Holy Cross

""The singular strength of Russell Jackson's much-anticipated book, Shakespeare Films in the Making, is its ability to uncover all the films which, for various reasons, were never made during the making of an unusual cluster of Shakespeare adaptations... most admirably, the amount of research that is packed into Shakespeare Films in the Making demonstrates the tireless spirit of inquiry that motivates the best work. Having begun, perhaps, as the "children of an idle brain," the visions engaged by Russell Jackson here have grown up, creating a kaleidoscopic window onto a world which-despite remaining unscreened-can now be seen."

-Courtney Lehmann

#### About the Author

Russell Jackson is Allardyce Professor of Drama in the Department of Drama and Theatre Arts at the University of Birmingham.

### **Users Review**

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#### **Esther Price:**

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