



BIG SCREEN CLASSICS

Henry V

Henry V

Directed by: Laurence Olivier
Production Company: Two Cities Films
Produced by: Laurence Olivier
The Associate Producer: Dallas Bower
Production Unit: Alec Hayes, F.G. Bangs, Laurence Evans
Assistant Director: Vincent Permane
Continuity: Joan Barry
By: William Shakespeare
The Text Editor: Alan Dent
The Director of Photography: Robert Krasker
Colour Director: Natalie Kalmus
Associate [Colour Director]: Joan Bridge
The Operating Cameraman: Jack Hildyard
Chief Electrician: W. Wall
Special Effects: Percy Day
The Editor: Reginald Beck
The Art Director: Paul Sheriff
Assisted by: Carmen Dillon
Scenic Artist: E. Lindegaard
The Costume Designer: Roger Furse
Assisted by: Margaret Furse
Hairdressing: Vivienne Walker
Make-up: Tony Sforzini
The Music by: William Walton
Played by: The London Symphony Orchestra
Conducted by: Muir Mathieson
The Sound Recorders: John Dennis, Desmond Dew
Master of the Horse: John White
Made at: D&P Studios

uncredited

Production Supervisor for L.O. Productions:
Phil C. Samuel
2nd Assistant Director: John Alexander
3rd Assistant Director: Patrick MacDonnell
Assistant Continuity: Dorothy Thomson
Casting: Irene Howard
Matte Shots: Henry Harris, George Blackwell
Back Projection: Charles Staffell
Focus Puller: Norman Foley
Assistant Camera: Irvin Pannaman
Technicolor Technician: George Minassian
Stills: Wilfrid Newton
Assembly Cutter: Gordon Hales
Assistant Editor: Anne Barker
2nd Assistant Editor: Bill Lenny
Draughtsmen: William Bowden, Betty Pierce
Sound Camera Operator: Harry Raynham
Boom Operator: Stanley Lambourne
Boom Assistant: Roy E. Bloxham
Sound Maintenance Assistant: Wally Day
Dubbing Crew: Alan Wheatley, Anthony J. Kay, J. Luscombe
Dubbing Editor: Harry Miller

Cast:

Leslie Banks (*Chorus*)
Felix Aylmer (*Archbishop of Canterbury*)
Robert Helpmann (*Bishop of Ely*)
Vernon Greeves (*the English herald*)
Gerald Case (*Earl of Westmoreland*)
Griffith Jones (*Earl of Salisbury*)
Morland Graham (*Sir Thomas Erpingham*)
Nicholas Hannen (*Duke of Exeter*)
Michael Warre (*Duke of Gloucester*)
Laurence Olivier (*King Henry V of England*)
Ralph Truman (*Mountjoy, the French Herald*)
Ernest Thesiger (*Duke of Berri, French Ambassador*)
Frederick Cooper (*Corporal Nym*)
Roy Emerton (*Lieutenant Bardolph*)
Robert Newton (*Ancient Pistol*)

Britain was at war when Olivier directed and starred in *Henry V*. In the spirit of Shakespeare's play, the film uses history as lens through which to refract contemporary political concerns. The film was heralded as a landmark in the cinematic interpretation of Shakespeare's work, while also being a key piece of wartime propaganda.

It was at the request of the Ministry of Information that Olivier left his station in the Fleet Air Arm to direct *Henry V*. Filmed throughout 1943 and 1944, by the time of its release in the wake of D-Day few could have missed the relevance of Henry's rallying speech: 'Once more unto the breach, dear friends'. The presentation of a small army overcoming their continental adversaries would no doubt have struck a chord for anyone following the progress of the Normandy landings. And the opening aerial shot, sweeping over a model of Elizabethan London, was preceded by a dedication: 'To the Commandos and Airborne Troops of Great Britain – the spirit of whose ancestors it has humbly been attempted to recapture in some ensuing scenes.' This would have been a stirring sight for survivors of the Blitz.

Olivier's adaptation foregrounded the young king's heroism and was rooted in his powerful and charismatic central performance. He received a special Oscar that year for 'outstanding achievement as actor, producer and director'. Olivier cut Shakespeare's text to remove some of the darker undertones of the play, which Kenneth Branagh's later *Henry V* (1989) restored.

One of the most celebrated aspects of *Henry V* is its bold design scheme created by Roger Furse, Carmen Dillon and Paul Sheriff. All were previous collaborators with Olivier: Furse on theatrical productions of Shakespeare at the Old Vic, and Sheriff and Dillon on *The Demi-Paradise* (1943). Furse (1903-72) was responsible for the costumes. Shot in brilliant Technicolor, the vibrancy of *Henry V* owes much to his majestic sense of pageantry.

The film was a visual feast for those still reeling from the impact of clothes rationing in the Second World War. 'It shines like a jewel,' exclaimed the *Bristol Evening News*, while the *Birmingham Mail* remarked that the magnificence of the costumes would be 'simply staggering' to anyone 'who knows how many clothing coupons make five.'

The art director, Sheriff, was born in Moscow in 1915 as Count Paul Shouvaloff and came to Britain as a political refugee when his connections to the tsar put his family in jeopardy. Working as a mining engineer before training as an architect, he initially served as a translator to Russian designers working in the British studio system until wartime call-ups left a shortage of art directors.

Sheriff's close collaborator was Carmen Dillon, who described herself as Britain's 'only woman art director'. Although this wasn't entirely true, few enjoyed the longevity and prominence of Dillon within the film industry, and she made great inroads for women working in a male-dominated sector. She was also one of the first to be formally credited as 'art director'. Training as an architect with the Architectural Association (alongside another great of British art direction, L. P. Williams), Dillon started her career designing 'quota quickies' for Fox during the 1930s, before making her way to Rank.

Freda Jackson (*Mistress Quickly*)
George Cole (*boy*)
George Robey (*Sir John Falstaff*)
Harcourt Williams (*King Charles VI of France*)
Russell Thorndike (*Duke of Bourbon*)
Leo Genn (*the Constable of France*)
Francis Lister (*Duke of Orleans*)
Max Adrian (*The Dauphin*)
Jonathan Field (*the French messenger*)
Esmond Knight
(*Fluellen, captain in the English Army*)
Michael Shepley
(*Gower, captain in the English army*)
John Laurie (*Jamy, captain in English army*)
Niall MacGinnis
(*Macmorris, captain in English army*)
Frank Tickle (*the governor of Harfleur*)
Renee Asherson (*Princess Katherine*)
Ivy St. Helier (*Alice, a lady-in-waiting*)
Janet Burnell (*Queen Isabel of France*)
Brian Nissen (*Court, soldier in the English army*)
Arthur Hambling (*Bates, soldier in the English army*)
Jimmy Hanley (*Williams, soldier in the English army*)
Ernest Hare (*a priest*)
Valentine Dyall (*Duke of Burgundy*)
UK 1944
141 mins
Digital

BECOME A BFI MEMBER

Enjoy a great package of film benefits including priority booking at BFI Southbank and BFI Festivals. Join today at bfi.org.uk/join

SIGHT AND SOUND

Never miss an issue with **Sight and Sound**, the BFI's internationally renowned film magazine. Subscribe from just £25*
* Price based on a 6-month print subscription (UK only). More info: sightandsoundsubs.bfi.org.uk



BFI PLAYER

We are always open online on BFI Player where you can watch the best new, cult & classic cinema on demand. Showcasing hand-picked landmark British and independent titles, films are available to watch in three distinct ways: Subscription, Rentals & Free to view.

See something different today on player.bfi.org.uk

Join the BFI mailing list for regular programme updates. Not yet registered? Create a new account at www.bfi.org.uk/signup

Sheriff and Dillon went on to work together for many years, frequently describing their relationship as a professional marriage. Although Sheriff took the senior credit on most of the productions, their work was balanced and mutually respectful, with Dillon, a creative problem-solver, often taking the lead on built structures.

Henry V moves between three stylistic models. Opening in Elizabethan London with a realistic but obviously staged rendering of the Globe Theatre (a play within a play), it then moves between the furore of the battlefield, shot on location in Ireland, and an anti-realist design aesthetic. This latter was inspired by medieval illuminated manuscripts and plays with flattened perspectives and stylised backdrops.

The film's model work is particularly impressive. It opens with an aerial shot which sweeps over a model of Elizabethan London, including the Globe Theatre nestled on the banks of the Thames. Based on J.C. Visscher's early 17th-century London map, the model measured an impressive 50 feet by 70 feet and took more than two months to make.

Claire Smith and Nathalie Morris, bfi.org.uk, 19 April 2016

A contemporary review

Opinions will differ over this film. The present reviewer believes that a very high proportion of the beauty of Shakespeare's plays resides in superb language properly spoken and that stage action is secondary in importance. *Henry V* is no exception to the other plays. The audience is expected to concentrate on hearing the great speeches, but the film medium demands a movement which has to be artificially introduced. In the reviewer's opinion this detracts not a little from the force of all these scenes.

The need to keep the screen alive has caused the producers to make the first act of the play – as the reviewer thinks unwisely as later it becomes realist – a picture of the first performance as given at the Globe Theatre, and in this connection to introduce some rather poor slapstick fooling between Felix Aylmer as the Archbishop of Canterbury and Robert Helpmann as the Bishop of Ely. Too great an accent is thus placed on what is in effect a very minor scene. Similarly the filmic value of the Battle of Agincourt is such that the battle scene is over-stressed and even the charming courtship scene in Act 5 is dragged out unduly in relation to the way in which it would normally be played on the stage and its importance to the play as a whole. The wisdom of some of the cuts, notably the discovery of the conspiracy, may be questioned.

These things apart, the colour is excellent and Paul Sheriff's sets are gems of exquisite design and colouring in the manner of the Cinquecento. The charge of the French cavalry at Agincourt is unforgettable cinema. On occasion Olivier is inclined to rant, especially in the big speeches. Robert Newton's Pistol is an interesting conception, but we could have had more of Bardolph and Nym. Renee Asherson is a lovely Princess Katharine and plays her part delightfully, most ably aided and abetted by Ivy St. Helier as the duenna lady-in-waiting. The other characters are characters and not lay figures. The film, in short, is a notable achievement of purely British cinema, not least because it will introduce Shakespeare to millions who would never dream of seeing the play performed on the stage.

Monthly Film Bulletin, December 1944