

Film Review: 'Anonymous' Such Stuff as Bad Movies Are Made On

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on October 28, 2011 - 8:41am

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Rating: **1.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – Roland Emmerich has been commonly mocked for his larger-than-life blockbusters that include “Godzilla,” “The Day After Tomorrow,” and “2012.” I would rather sit through a marathon of all three of those works back-to-back-to-back than suffer through “Anonymous” one more time. While those movies have undeniable flaws, they do so on a grand scale common with the words guilty pleasure. There’s absolutely nothing pleasurable about this self-serious and remarkably stupid drama.

Don’t get me wrong and assume that because I’m a writer and a former English major that I consider the subject matter of “Anonymous” to be hallowed ground. In fact, the opposite is true. There could have been a raucous, enjoyable period piece borne from the conspiracy theory that suggests that perhaps William Shakespeare didn’t write his famous works of art. I have no significant problem with the plot of “Anonymous” (although it is remarkably boneheaded and proven factually inaccurate by nearly anyone with a cursory knowledge of the time period or the people involved). It’s the execution that deserves scorn.



[Read Brian Tallerico's full review of "Anonymous" in our reviews section.](#) [15]

“Anonymous” opens with the great Derek Jacobi heading into a theater to give a performance. As we get glimpses of the scene to follow, the actor stands on a stage offering an introduction the piece. What if William Shakespeare was a thief, a man who put his name on plays for which he didn’t even write a single word? The stage performance transforms into film as we then see Ben Jonson (Sebastien Armesto) trying to hide a pile of manuscripts from a group of soldiers who burn down the Globe Theatre, grab Jonson, and torture the writer for information.

John Orloff’s deadly-dull screenplay then flashes back to reveal the origin of the manuscripts (which one correctly assumes are Shakespeare’s legendary works) and quickly suggests that they were written by Edward de Vere (Rhys Ifans), an Elizabethan leader forced to keep his talents hidden by William Cecil (David Thewlis), a powerful man convinced that creativity is evil. In a flashback within a flashback, it is suggested that de Vere wrote and performed in “A Midsummer Night’s Dream” at a very young age, inspiring Queen Elizabeth I (played in her youth as Joely Richardson and at an older age by Richardson’s real-life mother Vanessa Redgrave...yes, one of the only clever things about this production was its casting). Over the years, de Vere would live out elements of his notorious plays and the film suggests that the death of Polonius in “Hamlet” was actually inspired by a murder committed by de Vere and that the lead character in “Richard III” was based on Cecil’s puritanically dictatorial son Robert (Edward Hogg).



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“Anonymous” stars Rhys Ifans, Vanessa Redgrave, Sebastian Armesto, Rafe Spall, David Thewlis, Edward Hogg, Xavier Samuel, Sam Reid, and Joely Richardson. It was written by John Orloff and directed by Roland Emmerich. It is rated PG-13 and was released on October 28th, 2011.



Anonymous

Photo credit: Sony Pictures

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