
Excalibur

1981

FILMOGRAPHY



Excalibur - 1981

Director: John Boorman

Production Co.: Orion, *through* Warner Brothers

Release Date: April 10, 1981

DVD: Warner Home Video

IMDB Site: <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0082348/>

Cast:

Arthur	...	Nigel Terry	Perceval	...	Paul Geoffrey
Merlin	...	Nicol Williamson	Mordred	...	Robert Addie
Guinevere	...	Cherie Lunghi	Uther Pendragon	...	Gabriel Byrne
Lancelot	...	Nicholas Clay	Gawain	...	Liam Neeson
Morgana	...	Helen Mirren	Leondergrance	...	Patrick Stewart

Script: <http://moviescriptsources.com/movie-script.php?id=157>

Major Reviews:

New York Times: <http://movies.nytimes.com/movie/review?res=9505EFD61138F933A25757C0A967948260>

Chicago Sun (Roger Ebert): <http://rogerebert.suntimes.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/19810101/REVIEWS/101010322>

Salon: <http://www.salon.com/entertainment/movies/dvd/review/2000/09/07/excalibur/index.html?CP=IMD&DN=110>

Additional:

TV Tropes: <http://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Film/Excalibur>

Synopsis:

[John Boorman](#) directed this gloriously savage interpretation of Arthurian legend loosely based on [Thomas Malory](#)'s novel *Le Morte d'Arthur*. By turns gleaming and filthy, tender and bloody, the film is a visually stunning epic which is never less than compelling. [Nigel Terry](#) is perfectly cast as Arthur, whose unwavering trust and faith are shown to be both quietly heroic and aching naïve. Interestingly, the quest for the Grail is the least effective part of the film, despite bold cinematography by [Alex Thomson](#) (who was nominated for an Oscar) and a fine performance by [Paul Geoffrey](#) as Perceval, whose greatest desire is attained in his dying sight. It is the scenes of Camelot in which [Boorman](#) is at his most effective, as Arthur is betrayed by the burning passions of Guenevere ([Cherie Lunghi](#)) and Lancelot ([Nicholas Clay](#)), whose boiling internal forces cannot be denied, whatever the cost. The wicked Mordred ([Robert Addie](#)) and Morgana ([Helen Mirren](#)) are commanding when onscreen, and [Nicol Williamson](#)'s performance as the grandiosely self-sacrificing Merlin is outstanding. [Liam Neeson](#) and [Patrick Stewart](#) also appear in this dense, passionate, and stirring triumph featuring a marvelous [Trevor Jones](#) score. The gruesome effects by [Peter Hutchinson](#) and [Alan Whibley](#), however, and sights such as a knight having sex in full body armor make this a fairy tale strictly for adults.

Suggested Readings:

Lacy, Norris J. "Mythopoeia in *Excalibur*." *Cinema Arthuriana*. ed. Kevin J. Harty. Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, Inc., 2002. 34-43. Print

Whitaker, Muriel. "Fire, Water, Rock: Elements of Setting in John Boorman's *Excalibur* and Steve Barron's *Merlin*." *Cinema Arthuriana*. ed. Kevin J. Harty. Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, Inc., 2002. 44-53. Print

De Weaver, Jacqueline. "Morgan and the Problem of Incest." *Cinema Arthuriana*. ed. Kevin J. Harty. Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, Inc., 2002. 54-63. Print

Aronstein, Susan. *Hollywood Knights*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan. 2005. Print*

*Special Attention to Chapter 7, "Return of the King: Arthur and the Quest for True Manhood".

Suggested Questions:

1. How does the Boorman's Arthurian tale exemplify the popular image of the middle ages?
2. Why does Boorman condense characters and events and what effect does this have his retelling of the Arthurian legend?
3. What aspects of fin 'amor are present in the relationship between Lancelot and Guinevere? How does this contrast with the relationship between Arthur and Guinevere? Uther and Igraine?
4. How does the notion of kingship and leadership differ from Fuqua's King Arthur to the Arthur of *Excalibur*?
5. What is the effect of Boorman's use of unrelated elements like Wagner's score from *Götterdämmerung* and the legend of the Fisher King in his retelling of the Arthurian legend?
6. What is the connection between the sword, the dragon, the land and the king?
7. Compare and contrast the social and political context of Malory and Boorman's days and how it influenced their portrayals of Arthur and Camelot?