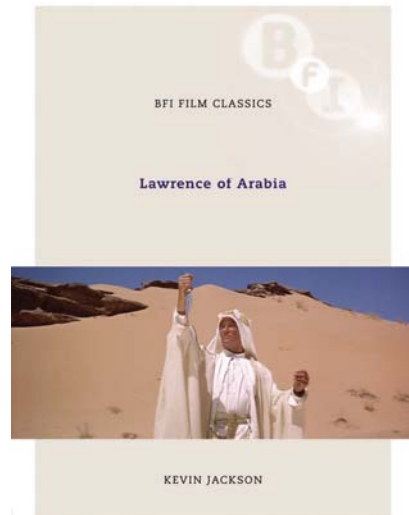


Books press release

BFI FILM CLASSICS



Lawrence of Arabia

Kevin Jackson

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This July the BFI launches the redesign of its popular and acclaimed Film Classics series with three titles – *Lawrence of Arabia*, *The Big Lebowski* and *City Lights*.

Almost half a century after its triumphant release, *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962) continues to be regarded as one of the masterpieces of popular cinema, and it remains a vivid inspiration to film-makers from Steven Spielberg and Martin Scorsese to Spike Lee and Martin Campbell. Almost every aspect of its production – Robert Bolt's powerful and intelligent script, Freddie Young's rapturous colour photography, and above all David Lean's masterful direction – has been admired as a high point of cinema history. Spielberg has even called the film 'a miracle'.

But these garlands were not easily won. As Kevin Jackson shows, the process of bringing T. E. Lawrence to the screen was a long and often bitter battle, with many reverses. Marlon Brando was the producer's first choice for the lead role, and Albert Finney the favoured substitute; Robert Bolt, a leading member of GND, spent part of the production in prison, and then entered into a fierce credit dispute with the original screenwriter, Michael Wilson; Lean and his producer, Sam Spiegel, were locked in endless financial and creative arguments, and the epic shot was a logistical nightmare. And, long before Spiegel and Lean joined forces, the Lawrence story had already defeated many earlier film-makers, notably Korda, whose abortive attempts to bring the Desert Revolt to the screen lasted well over a decade.

Beginning with an account of the extraordinary and paradoxical character of its hero's flawed genius, Kevin Jackson's study investigates not only the victories and defeats of Lean's masterpiece but also the longer history of *Lawrence of Arabia* and the cinema.

About the author

Kevin Jackson is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts, a Companion of the Guild of St George, and a Regent of the Collège de 'Pataphysique. Previous publications include *Withnail and I* (2004).

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About BFI FILM CLASSICS

The BFI Film Classics is a series of books that introduces, interprets and celebrates landmarks of world cinema. Each volume offers an argument for the film's 'classic' status, together with discussion of its production and reception history, its place within a genre or national cinema, an account of its technical and aesthetic importance, and in many cases, the author's personal response to the film.