



Phallic Frenzy: Ken Russell and His Films (Cappella Books)

Joseph Lanza

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Ken Russell has made some of the most daring, disturbing, and beautifully photographed films of all time. Drawing from a wealth of historic and literary references, Russell's subjects are astounding: deranged Ursuline nuns in a 17th-century French province, the inner demons of Mary Shelley and Lord Byron, the sexual angst of Tchaikovsky, the emotionally drained life of Rudolph Valentino, the messianism of a pinball wizard, the fury of lesbian vampires, the introspections of prostitutes. Russell's movies offer not just brazen sensationalism but food for thought; they horrify yet inspire. And through it all, Russell maintains a simultaneously impish and intellectual sense of humor.

The first full biography of the director, *Phallic Frenzy* is far from a dry, film-by-film analysis. It shows how Russell's real life has often been as engaging and vibrant as his film scenarios. Here you'll learn how Alan Bates and Oliver Reed compared their penis sizes for the nude wrestling scene in *Women in Love*; how Russell disfigured Paddy Chayevsky's script for *Altered States* by having the actors holler out the lines as fast as possible, accompanied by spewed food and streams of spittle; and how Russell was slated to direct *Evita*, starring Liza Minnelli, and the "creative differences" that ensued. A madcap tale full of wild ideas, surreal situations, and a cavalcade of colorful personalities, *Phallic Frenzy* is as thrilling a ride as any Ken Russell film.

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