

Basil Rathbone His Life and His Films



BOOK DETAILS

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BOOK SYNOPSIS

To the average moviegoer, the name of Basil Rathbone conjures up an image of fiction's most famous detective Sherlock Holmes. Certainly, of all the actors who have played the Baker Street sleuth, his interpretation was definitive. Yet, for cinema aficionados, the actor was much more than the personification of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's character. He began his film career in 1921 in *Innocent*, which was one of several silent films in which he appeared. He was also Mr. Murdstone in *David Copperfield*, Richard III in *Tower of London*, Louis XI in *If I Were King*, Tybalt in *Romeo and Juliet*, Captain Estaban Pasquale in *The Mark of Zorro*, Sir Guy of Gisbourne in *The Adventures of Robin Hood*, and Baron Wolf von Frankenstein in *Son of Frankenstein*. For most of his years in motion pictures, Rathbone was the victim of type casting. During the 1930s, he was known as the screen's ultimate villain, constantly in demand by producers to carry out dastardly deeds against such heroes as Errol Flynn, Tyrone Power, Ronald Colman, Gary Cooper, and Leslie Howard. He also appeared opposite such leading ladies as Greta Garbo, Norma Shearer, Loretta Young, Olivia de Havilland, and Joan Crawford. Rathbone earned Academy Award nominations for Best Actor in a Supporting Role for his performances as Tybalt in *Romeo and Juliet* (1936) and as King Louis XI in *If I Were King* (1938). He portrayed Sherlock Holmes in fourteen Hollywood films made between 1939 and 1946 and in an Old Time Radio series. His later career included roles on Broadway, as well as television work. He received a Tony Award in 1948 as Best Actor in a Play. Through the 1950s and 1960s, he appeared on television as a panelist on the game show *The Names the Same* (in 1954), and he also took roles in cheap film thrillers of far lesser quality, such as *The Black Sleep* (1956), *Queen of Blood* (1966), *The Ghost in the Invisible Bikini* (1966), *Hillbillies in a Haunted House* (1967, also featuring Lon Chaney Jr and John Carradine.), and his last film, a low-budget, Mexican horror film called *Autopsy of a Ghost* (1968). He is also known for his spoken word recordings, including his interpretation of Clement C. Moore's "The Night Before Christmas." Rathbone's readings of the stories and poems of Edgar Allan Poe are collected together with readings by Vincent Price in *Caedmon Audios The Edgar Allan Poe Audio Collection* on CD. Rathbone also made many other recordings, of everything from a dramatised version of *Oliver Twist* to a recording of Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf* (with Leopold Stokowski conducting) to a dramatised version of Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol*. On television he appeared in two musical versions of Dickens's *A Christmas Carol*: one in 1954, in which he played Marley's Ghost opposite Fredric March's Scrooge, and the original 1956 live-action version of *The Stingiest Man In Town*, in which he starred as a singing Ebenezer Scrooge. In the 1960s, he also toured with a one-man show titled (like his autobiography) *In and Out of Character*. In this show, he recited poetry and Shakespeare, as well as reminisced about his life and career. He appeared with Vincent Price and Boris Karloff, in *Tower of London* (1939) and *The Comedy of Terrors* (1964). The latter was the only film to feature the "Big Four" of American International Pictures horror films: Out-of-print for over thirty-five years, Michael B. Druxman's *Basil Rathbone: His Life and His Films* is a carefully researched work that thoroughly examines the life and professional career of one of Hollywood's most respected character actors. This new edition includes an Introduction by the author, a Biography, Filmography, and more than 250 rare photographs.

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