

ALEXANDER DUMAS'

# *The Three Musketeers*

"There were, once upon a time, four Marx Brothers, four Beatles and now there are the three Musketeers. I haven't had such a good time at a new movie in years."

Peter Bogdanovich, director of "Paper Moon" and "Thelma & Louise" writing in New York Magazine



## THE THREE MUSKETEERS

ALEXANDER SAUND.....

OLIVER REED- RAQUEL WELCH

NICHARD CHAMBERLAIN.....MICHAEL YORK.....FRANK FINLAY- CHRISTOPHER LEE- GERALDINE CHARLH

NICHARD LESTER...THE THREE MUSKETEERS...SIMON WAARD...FRANK DUNAWAY.....

CHARLTON HESTON.....

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THE THREE MUSKETEERS

"ONE FOR ALL AND ALL FOR ONE"



*Raquel Welch as Constance and Michael York as D'Artagnan.*



*Charlton Heston as the imperious Cardinal Richelieu.*



## *En Garde!*

*(L to R) Oliver Reed (Athos), Frank Finlay (Porthos),  
Michael York (D'Artagnan) and Richard Chamberlain (Aramis).*

## *A Frequently Told Swashbuckling Tale*

**At present count, there are nearly thirty film versions of the classic swashbuckler written by Alexander Dumas in serialized form in 1844.** Set in 17th century France, the novel recounts the adventures of a young man named D'Artagnan after he leaves home to travel to Paris and join the ***Musketeers of the Guard***. The story has inspired a long list of cinematic adaptations ranging from silent black and white films to widescreen technicolor action adventures, animated short features and a mini-series on British television. The earliest film version dates back to 1903 and the most recent was the 2011 big budget spectacle directed by Paul W. S. Anderson with Milla Jovovich and Orlando Bloom. The acting talent ranges from the biggest names of the golden age of Hollywood (Douglas Fairbanks, John Wayne and Gene Kelly) to such contemporary actors as Charlie Sheen, Kiefer Sutherland and Chris O'Donnell.

By far the most entertaining and fully realized version is the one directed by Richard Lester in 1973. The Twentieth Century Fox film was released in the spring of 1974 to critical acclaim and robust box-office returns. It boasted an international cast that eclipsed all the other adaptations in star power and acting talent: Oliver Reed, Michael York, Faye Dunaway, Raquel Welch, Richard Chamberlain, Geraldine Chaplin, Jean-Pierre Cassel, Simon Ward, Spike Milligan, Christopher Lee, Roy Kinnear and Charlton Heston.



*Faye Dunaway as the alluring and deadly Milady De Winter.*

Lester not only brought a dazzling display of swashbuckling action to the table, but also a pointed (pun intended) satirical edge that humanized the exalted reputation of these legendary characters. Leveraging the humor and irreverent tone of George MacDonald Fraser's script, Lester did not hesitate to show the musketeers in an unflattering light. Nevertheless, his affection for them was evident in every frame no matter how outrageous or undignified the situations became.

Viewed today, the film remains a rollicking, freewheeling joy ride from start to finish. Lester's musketeers are anything but one dimensional action figures, rather, they are an unruly bunch who approach conflict with more blunt force than panache. The dialog often feels improvised to underscore the off-handed rhythm of the scenes. Whenever Lester allows the swordplay to go on a bit too long, he tosses in unexpected moments of droll humor that liven things up considerably. Adding to the fun is a recurring chorus of anonymous background characters who mutter snarky asides about the mishaps of the featured players.

***Among the starry cast, Michael York makes the most of D'Artagnan's brash and bumbling country bumpkin, while Oliver Reed brilliantly captures the brooding spirit at the heart of Athos.*** Reed, in particular, seems to relish the opportunity to play a sullen musketeer whose unshakable passion for one woman has convinced him that "life is viewed best from the bottom of a bottle." It should surprise no one that Faye Dunaway creates a deliciously evil Milady de Winter. Dunaway invests the part with a mesmerizing combination of alluring beauty and steely intelligence. She goes much deeper than Lana Turner ever did with her glamorous turn in MGM's glossy 1948 version. Charlton Heston, known primarily for playing heroic good guys in epic action films, concocts a devilishly beguiling Cardinal Richelieu. He steals nearly every scene he is in including those opposite the brilliant British comedian Spike Milligan. Frank Finlay as the vain Porthos makes the most of his limited screen time, while Richard Chamberlain strikes the right blend of foppish dandy and dashing rogue to nail his role as Aramis.



*Michael York and Richard Chamberlain*



*Oliver Reed*



*Faye Dunaway and Charlton Heston*

## *In Hot Pursuit of the Queen's Diamonds.*



*Geraldine Chaplin as Queen Anne with her devoted lady-in-waiting and seamstress Constance (Raquel Welch).*

**As the romantically inclined Queen Anne, Geraldine Chaplin creates a memorable portrait of a royal whose delicate surface masks a cunning sense of entitlement.** Her clandestine romance with the Duke Of Buckingham (Simon Ward) sets the Musketeers off on a harried chase to recover the diamond necklace she has given her lover as a keepsake.

Equally in step with the boisterous spirit of Lester's film

is Christopher Lee as the dastardly Rochefort, primary henchman to the Cardinal and nefarious partner with Milady (Dunaway). Both of them are in cahoots with Cardinal Richelieu to ruin Queen Anne by exposing her affair with the Duke of Buckingham. Lester takes full advantage of Rochefort's eye patch to mine comic gold out of his physical liability. Before this film, Lee was known primarily for playing Count Dracula in series of British horror films and he

brings a surprising flair for comedy to the table. Spike Milligan, a highly respected member of the British "Goon" comedic troop and the Monty Python team, plays the dimwitted Monsieur Bonacieux with the right dose of stupefying cluelessness. Rounding out the stellar cast is Roy Kinnear as D'Artagnan's loyal-to-a-fault servant, who graciously takes the brunt of many strenuous pratfalls throughout the film.



*Christopher Lee as the treacherous Rochefort.*



*Raquel Welch and Spike Milligan are roused from their marital bed.*

## *A breakout comedic role for Raquel Welch.*

**Best of all is gorgeous Raquel Welch as Constance Bonacieux, the devoted lady-in-waiting and seamstress to Queen Anne.** Lester gives Welch many moments to shine as the klutzy dressmaker who is forever stepping into spittoons or tripping up stairs. Welch wisely plays it as if she is blissfully unaware of the physical havoc she wreaks on almost everyone she encounters. She also projects a convincing brand of demure feminine charm. Quite deservedly, she won the **Golden Globe for Best Actress in a Comedy** for her performance. During the Film Society of Lincoln Center's tribute to her in New York, Welch admitted she was dumfounded about how to play a character

who essentially falls down all the time. Before filming, she requested a meeting with the director to figure out how to play the accident prone Constance. Lester suggested she think of Buster Keaton or one of the great silent film comedians who excelled at pratfalls and outlandish physical comedy. Welch, however, felt Keaton was "a bit too dour" and instead found her inspiration in the sweet, self-effacing style of Stan Laurel. The actress said she borrowed Laurel's wobbly head movements to convey the endearing naivete of her character.



***Raquel Welch as Constance, dressmaker and confidante to Queen Anne.***



***Michael York as D'Artagnan romances the beautiful seamstress (Welch).***

## *Vigorous sword fights but few stunt doubles.*

***Although the film is set in 17th century Paris and the French countryside, Lester found historically accurate representations in the villages, cathedrals and castles of Spain.*** All of the exterior scenes were shot in and around Madrid and Toledo, while the interiors were filmed at the ***Estudios Cinematografica Roma*** in Madrid. Location filming took place over the summer of 1973, which was one of Spain's hottest summers on record. Christopher Lee reported that the temperature hit 126 degrees Fahrenheit on the day the entire cast filmed D'Artagnan's induction into the Musketeers in a sweltering courtyard. To make matters worse, the actors were wearing multilayered costumes made of cotton and wool along with leather boots, wigs, hats, stays and other accessories that were faithful to the period.

Lester insisted that the actors be trained in sword fighting and use real swords in the fight scenes. This led to many injuries during production with Michael York receiving several cuts, bruises and scrapes along the way.

Christopher Lee reported that during one of the more vigorous fight scenes, Lester implored him to attempt a difficult stunt that resulted in a torn knee ligament. He stated that Lester avoided using stunt doubles at every turn. He wanted the actors doing as many of the fight scenes as possible to add to the authentic feel of the film. Lester's penchant for realism extended to the ladies as well. Neither Dunaway nor Welch relied on stunt doubles for their climactic fight scene near the end of the film. Welch suffered a sprained wrist when she failed to duck as Dunaway tossed her on the palace floor. Instead of stopping the action, Lester kept the cameras rolling and Welch's fall is in the final cut.



***Faye Dunaway in femme fatale mode.***



***Dunaway and Welch battle for the diamonds.***

## *Elaborate Set Pieces and An Irreverent Tone*

**The director also kept multiple cameras shooting at the same time to capture the spontaneity of each scene.** This technique allowed him to finish the film on schedule and have ample footage from which to choose the best takes. Rehearsals were kept to a minimum so the actors had less time to think about their performances and

in the stark setting of a convent courtyard where the nuns have just finished hanging out white sheets to dry. Lester and his ace cinematographer, David Watkin, make terrific use of color and camera placement to show how casually the musketeers and the Cardinal's guards approach their bloody battle at the sacred site. Other memorable

courtyard with the royal family's dogs acting as real life chess pieces. When the Cardinal deliberately intervenes, he triggers a melee of canine confrontation on the life size chess board. In Richard Lester's cinematic world, few conventions escape his satiric point of view.



more freedom to be in the moment when the cameras rolled. The film makes the most of several visually rich set pieces to showcase the action. The first major sword fight takes place

set pieces include a clandestine meeting between two lovers in a laundry that eventually erupts into a brawl. That is followed by an amusing game of chess on the palace



**Cardinal Richelieu (Heston) remains above the fray.**



**Frank Finlay as Porthos makes the most of his brief screen time.**

## *The Salkind Clause*

**At some point during filming, producers Ilya and Alexander Salkind decided to release the film in two separate parts.** They had more than enough footage to support the decision and clearly understood the financial benefits of getting two films for the price of one. But this decision was not communicated to the actors who had agreed to appear in one film, not two. In the DVD extras, Raquel Welch states her lawyer was the first to catch it and he quickly went after the producers to obtain payment for her participation in the second film. Soon after, the other actors joined the legal donnybrook and agreements were reached for them to receive a percentage of their initial salary for the second film. This little kerfuffle resulted in the creation of ***The Salkind Clause*** which became a standard part of all SAG (Screen Actors

Guild) contracts. The clause stipulates how many films are being made to insure proper compensation for the actors.

The second film appeared a year later with the logical title of ***The Four Musketeers***. The decision to release what was originally conceived as a roadshow attraction with an intermission as two separate films doesn't significantly affect the viewing experience. The first film, subtitled ***The Queen's Diamonds***, stands on its own as a lively swashbuckler with a decidedly comic tone. It gives each of the leading actors (with the exception of Dunaway) many wonderful moments to shine throughout the elaborately staged set pieces. The second film, subtitled ***The Revenge of Milady***, gives Dunaway her well deserved showcase with its

dramatic flashback of her tortured love affair with Athos (Reed). This segment is very rich in period detail and romance as it becomes abundantly clear why Reed harbors deep feelings of hatred toward Milady. Their ill-fated romance becomes the dramatic underpinning for the darker parts of remainder of the story.



***Milady (Dunaway) tempts the Duke of Buckingham (Simon Ward).***



## AWARDS FOR "THE THREE MUSKETEERS"



### 1975 BAFTA (British Academy of Film and Television Arts) Awards

#### Five Nominations

- Film Music -- Michel Legrand
- Best Art Direction -- Brian Eatwell
- Best Cinematography -- David Watkin
- Best Costume Design -- Yvonne Blake
- Best Film Editing -- John Victor-Smith

### 1975 Evening Standard British Film Awards

- Won: Best Comedy -- Richard Lester, Director



### 1975 Golden Globe Awards

- Won: Best Motion Picture Actress - Musical or Comedy -- Raquel Welch
- Nominated: Best Motion Picture - Musical or Comedy

### 1974 National Board of Review, USA

- Won: NBR Award / Top Ten Films



### 1975 Grammy Awards

- Nominated: Best Original Score Written For A Motion Picture -- Michel Legrand

### 1975 Writers Guild of Great Britain

- Won: Best British Comedy Screenplay -- George MacDonald Fraser

#### **Top To Bottom:**

- *Faye Dunaway on set with producer Illya Salkind.*
- *Richard Chamberlain presenting Raquel Welch with her Golden Globe award for Best Actress in a Comedy.*
- *Welch and Spike Milligan discussing a scene with director Richard Lester.*