



POMPEII

Workshop: Pompeii in the cinema

Pompeii: The life, death and
rediscovery of a Roman town
(HPAH5078/HPAH6078)

A CITY WILL FALL.

A HERO WILL RISE.



How many buildings can you recognise that appear to be recreations of structural remains from Pompeii?

- Amphitheatre + Large Palaestra.
- Forum area:
 - Including Temple of Jupiter, monumental arches and Macellum.
- Herculaneum or Marine Gate?
 - Graves along road into a city gate.
- Street scenes.
 - Steps over paved road (316 in total).
- Influence of Lawrence Alma-Tadema for Marcus Cassius Severus' house?



Other elements

- Gladiatorial equipment.
 - Londinium.
- Graffiti and frescos from Pompeii?
 - Paintings on Amphitheatre walls.
- No escape!
 - Popular trope?



Movie parallels

- Gladiatorial side kick / hero?
 - Compare Atticus to Juba (*Gladiator*) and Draba (*Spartacus*).
 - Private performance / practice gladiatorial combat.
 - Developing friendship.
 - Winning one's freedom (cf. Proximo)!
- Allusion to Roman law.
 - *Quo Vadis*.
- Whipping / lashes!
- Chariot race / pursuit!
 - *Quo Vadis*; *Ben Hur*; *Fall of the Roman Empire*, etc.

Does CGI create a sense of verisimilitude (a sense of “realness”) or does it detract from the movie?



- CGI – opening up new possibilities, or a lazy shortcut?
- *Contra* thousands of extras and huge costly sets of the swords and sandals era.
- Plot and dialogue trumping all considerations? Or an undemanding *specular*?



House of the Little Fountain

Do the “divine” or bird’s-eye shots of the city detach the audience from the *pathos* of the inhabitants of Pompeii or does it enliven our experience of the unfolding events?

- Roman world: visual and literary outputs that imagine can envisage a bird’s-eye view.
- “On the long ridge of the Janiculan Hill lie the few acres belonging to Julius Martialis... Hence you may see the seven hills, rulers of the world, and contemplate the whole extent of Rome...” **Martial *Epigrams* 4.64.**

Can you discern any influences from other “Roman” movies, either of the classic swords and sandal era (mid-20th century) or more recent films?

- The trop of Romans as decadent?
 - Kiefer Sutherland’s British accent!
- The dangers of tyranny and imperial power?
 - e.g., *Quo Vadis* and *Spartacus*?
 - Models of cities and hubris (e.g., Nero in *Quo Vadis*).
- Chariot scene!
- *Gladiator* and *Agora* the aerial shots, but more restrained?



8,000 scrolls were painstakingly created for the library in the film *Agora*.
Heavy use of the Cinecittà set in the HBO-BBC series *Rome*.

Are there any underlying themes or subtexts (forms of social or religious commentary)?

- Anti-imperialist, or just recycled tropes from earlier swords and sandals movies?
 - Rome / emperor as corrupt.
- Various allusions to gods (no Christian sub-text).
 - No *deus ex machina*.
 - “mobile lararium” (Atticus).
 - Our knowledge vs. theirs?
- The portrayal of women in the film to suit modern tastes, even if anachronistic?

