

Samantha bond and
sean bean starred in
edward hall's
production of
macbeth



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I suppose it was unfair to the cast of Macbeth, but I was rather wary of the production, I expected little more than a competent performance from well-known actors who were trying to create a more 'serious' image and re-launch their careers. I found it difficult to envisage Sean Bean, a James Bond and Lord of the Rings veteran, playing convincingly the torn and unpredictable Macbeth. I, therefore, entered the theatre with what I hoped to be insufficient expectation.

I wondered as to the ability of Sean Bean's acting, viewing him more as a box office draw than as a serious Shakespearean actor. My doubts were confirmed as Bean strode around the stage in a leather coat, unshaven and barking in his flat Yorkshire accent the great words of one of Shakespeare's more established plays. Sean Beans acting was, at its best, wooden, and highlighted by Samantha Bonds far superior understanding of Shakespeare's use of language and verbal antithesis. It seemed apparent that Sean Beans casting and the plays production was aimed primarily at the vast numbers of GCSE students due to visit the theatre. The sexual electricity between Macbeth, the witches and lady Macbeth accompanied by periods of obviously intended revulsion (Malcolm's vomiting etc) seemed merely for the entertainment and delight of the 16 year olds.

The play had a very 'English' feel to it. Macbeth's coronation with its Latin music, the military pomp and the lack of emotion led us to believe that the play was set as far from the untamed heaths of Scotland as it is possible to be. Samantha Bond, seen in Goldeneye and from then in all 007 movies is no stranger to the stage; she was seen recently in The Vagina Monologues, Dinner with Friends and The memory of Water, a stark contrast to Beans 12-
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year break from the stage. Samantha Bond commanded the stage with ease and spoke the words as if they were her own.

She appeared totally comfortable as Lady Macbeth and added some much needed realism to the play. She managed to slip easily between the role of powerful wife and vulnerable hostess. She acted as if she were in a team, allowing Shakespeare's words centre stage in a way Sean Bean was ill equipped to do. Edward Hall's ideas for the production are, at times, questionable. His reasons for casting Sean Bean, Julian Glover and Adrian Schiller in roles they seemed to find impenetrable were left a mystery. Julian Glover (Duncan) found it difficult to differentiate between goodness and dullness.

His attempt at saintly kindness left the audience bored by his substance less performance. He was unable to play either of his roles convincingly, his time as the porter made the audience cringe at his Glaswegian accent and un-humorous attempt at the speech. Adrian Schiller's attempt at Malcolm was laughable, his interpretation of Malcolm as a manipulative and shifty character lacked realism. The set was, once again more for dramatic effect and less for the enhancement of the play. The set was one of welded steel and industrial appearance.

The idea of bringing the play to a more modern day setting was admirable but badly carried off, lacking the degree of detail needed to make it believable. Fights with steel broad swords and flaming torches with smoke filled battle scenes gave only the flamboyant impression that they were trying to take the focus off the bad acting. The banquet scene was rather

predictable but was acted well by the majority of the cast. Barnaby Kay was a convincing Banquo but was let down by Beans garish attempt at attention seeking. Bean seemed incapable of adding emotion to his voice and chose instead to up the volume as a substitute.

Kay gave a haunting edge to an otherwise mediocre performance, his face covered in blood and his eyes following Macbeth. Samantha Bond appears the weary hostess and the other actors all portray the uncomfortable atmosphere perfectly this is spoiled, once again, by Sean Bean. There seemed a surprisingly small amount of focus on the witches' words, which were glossed over using music and singing. All three were dressed in evening dress, just as Lady Macbeth was. The witches were portrayed not as ugly hags but as beautiful young women, which was a refreshing change from the usual stereotyped versions seen in Royal Shakespeare Company and Roman Polanski films.

The way the play was presented was well thought out if poorly executed. The way Edward Hall interprets it as a love story as well as a horror story is refreshing, Samantha Bond confirms herself as both an excellent modern but also classical actress, Barnaby Kay shows himself to be an able and competent actor and Sean Bean proves that not all actors have the capacity to do Macbeth justice.