

# Anonymous



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

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### ROMEO + JULIET: AN E TICKET RIDE

The new release of Romeo and Juliet is fun, fast and exciting to watch. It is a slick cinematic rendition of Shakespeare's work brought to the screen for contemporary movie-goers. There is something for everyone in this movie. A timeless story, a dynamic cast, a hip soundtrack, great sets and costumes and plenty of action. From the beginning the audience is told, "buckle up, this Romeo and Juliet ride is going to be like no other Shakespeare you've ever ridden." This movie supports the notion that the stage is an actor's medium and the cinema is the director's. Romeo and Juliet is a feast for the eyes and does a great job of engaging the audience with the story at all times through various cinematic techniques and tricks which make understanding Shakespeare fun, interesting, fresh and easy.

Visually dynamic, and edited with a sense of urgency, most movie-goers will get caught up in the story and forget that they are listening to the Bard. It is Shakespeare's words and text, however, the sights and sounds are as clearly, possibly overshadowing, telling the same parallel story. One could say that there are visually emotional subtitles throughout the movie directing the audience to understand and engage in the most famous love story in an entirely new way. One can argue that this version of Romeo and Juliet would be understood even without spoken words. The camera-work tells the story as clearly as the text. There are very few moments in this movie when the camera stops moving. Like Oliver Stone's Natural Born Killers the editing is fierce and in your face. There is little time to think as the perpetual images flash across the screen. And it works. You become

entranced and cannot wait to see what happens next even if you are already familiar with the story. It feels new.

Like many contemporary Shakespeare productions, the text has been slightly edited but this does nothing to dilute the story. The dialogue, for the most part, is not delivered by master thespians, rather, we hear contemporary film actors delivering the Bard's words as though this were present day English in New York or Los Angeles. This works very well to keep the general movie-going audience engaged in the feeling of the words even if the actual words or their meanings are not heard or understood. Although Shakespearean purists might find it appalling that every word is not clearly audible, this is not the Globe. This is a movie made to be shown in the malls of America--not the halls of a theatre. There is no need to ask your neighbor for the meaning of the words, for their delivery within the context of the visual imagery makes all clear.

The contemporary sets and costumes also work well to compliment the contemporary delivery of lines. This is a modern day cosmopolitan city with beaches, gas stations and helicopters. There are constant visual metaphors and recognizable images used to convey meaning where there might be some confusion. The town square is a gas station, but we understand that this is a public place in which a private familial rivalry is occurring. The rapiers are guns, but a duel is a duel. The two warring families, the Capulets and the Montagues are presented as if they are two rival organized crime families. As a movie-goer, we have seen this conflict before and do not need to question why it would be so dangerous and extreme for the children of

these families to fall in love. The risks and challenges of this romance are obvious.

This Romeo and Juliet is successful on many levels for many reasons. But I believe the most successful aspect of this film is that it never forgets that it is a movie made for movie-goers. The audience feels very comfortable with everything going on the screen for it is all familiar and easily understandable through the interpretations of the film makers. Unlike other productions of Romeo and Juliet which I've seen, I believe the actual meanings and ideas of Shakespeare's story are more easily digested in this version. This movie knows it's audience well and does a great job of delivering the goods. It should therefore come as no surprise that the majority of the audience on opening night was young, excited and applauding at the movie's end.

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