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SFFest '68

Friday, November 1

9:45 P.M.

FALSTAFF

(Chimes at Midnight)

Great Britain

Source: Peppercorn-Wormser, Inc. **Production:** Harry Saltzman.

Direction and Script: Orson Welles. **Leading Players:** Orson Welles, Keith Baxter, John Gielgud, Margaret Rutherford, Jeanne Moreau, Norman Rodway.



When **Chimes at Midnight** was premiered at the Cannes Film Festival two years ago, Orson Welles admitted that he had always longed to portray Sir John Falstaff on the screen. To him, this character is Shakespeare's nostalgic farewell to whatever was left of "merrie Englande", the boisterous romantic Elizabethan period that fostered the lyrical artistry of Marlowe, Bacon, Spenser and Shakespeare himself. This is Welles' third Shakespearean film, based on the Falstaff scenes from both parts of Henry IV and references in Holinshed's Chronicles. The relationship between Falstaff and Prince Hal is not the simple, comic relationship that one finds in the play but the foreshadowing of the end, of a dying England, worn-out and betrayed, like Falstaff after his rejection. As a result, Welles' **Falstaff** (as it is called for American release) is a cinematic lament, very beautifully-realized, very personal in its interpretation, and always touched by Welles' quixotic imagination. There is no doubt that the film will be more striking to those spectators who have read the plays, and literary purists may be rather unnerved by Jeanne Moreau's Macbethian approach to Doll Tearsheet. Perhaps the most striking sequences are those concerning the battle, with armored knights being lowered to their horses by pulleys, and an amazing descent of soldiers from a spirited clash of arms and clangor, into an infernal mudwright of disjointed limbs. The film was shot in Spain, but the cast is predominantly British, with Keith Baxter and John Gielgud superbly articulating the poetry of Hal and King Henry, and Ralph Richardson's voice reading from Holinshed above the action. Then, there is Welles' old greybeard, clumsy, lonely and absurd. Without a doubt, he has heard the chimes across the snowy landscape, for his portrayal is a muted one, the sad contentment that comes from a true-to-life dream.

Short: Death of a Provincial. Poland. Krzysztof Zanussi.