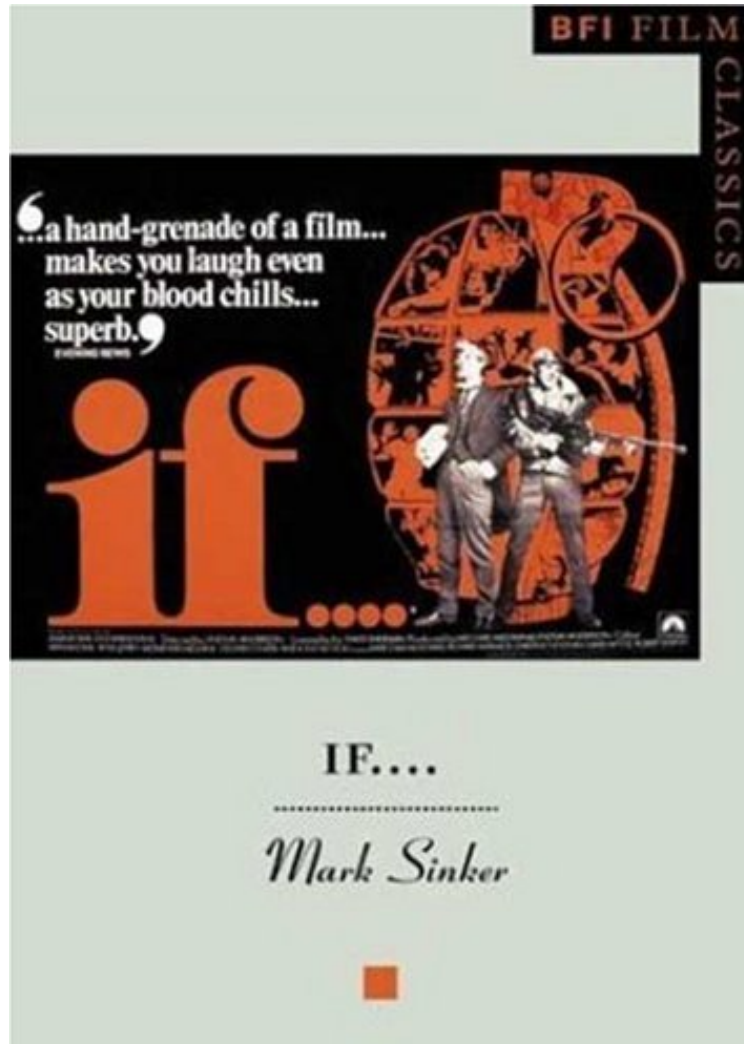


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## if... (BFI Film Classics)

*Mark Sinker*

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#1897144 in Books British Film Institute 2004-11-03 2008-01-22Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 7.21 x .27 x 5.70l, .36 #File Name: 184457040188 pages | File size: 36.Mb

**Mark Sinker : if... (BFI Film Classics)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised if... (BFI Film Classics):

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Sinker doesn't write straightforward prose, but instead around, ...By CustomerSinker doesn't write straightforward prose, but instead around, and sometimes behind his subject. But If.... is an obtuse film with layers of meaning, embedded deeply in British notions of class as well as the historical specificity of the 1960s. Less a work of plot than images and iconography, the juxtapositions it generated have endured and mutated across subsequent culture. So it is appropriate that the book focuses on exploring what isn't necessarily on the surface of the film -- the tensions and failures that induced its most unsettling moments, what it tried to mean as well as what it ended up meaning. This isn't criticism that makes the movie clearer. Rather, it makes the movie \*better\*.1 of

4 people found the following review helpful. if....only this book had been interesting...By Dash ManchetteEnglish boarding schools, or the Public Schools as they are apparently referred to on that side of the Atlantic, have been the basis for an entire genre of books and movies. Not that I am an expert. The closest I have come to reading a novel on the subject has been the fantastic *Never Let Me Go*, by Kazuo Ishiguro, which is a clunky fit given its dystopian plot. Yet the movie if... attracted me. Malcolm McDowell's first starring role, as the leader of the student rebels who push back against the system, seemed to promise an engaging flick ripe for interesting interpretation. And it did. I recommend the movie to anyone reading this review. This BFI book, however, is another matter. Although I have read a number of these BFI monographs that have allowed for a deeper and broader interpretation of a movie, I have also read a number that are just mind-bogglingly pretentious, filled with that type of lingo that makes one oh so aware of why criticism and pop culture interpretation are often viewed as so laughable by the general public. Although this particular book is not as bad as others I have read (such as the ridiculous *The Matrix* (BFI Modern Classics), by Joshua Clover), it is still filled with enough made up hyphenated words (e.g. 'teen-facist' or 'techno-[fill in the blank with something cool sounding]') to fall on the wrong side of the readability spectrum. Further, the book just seems to have little interesting to say. Sure, I got a bit out of it (justifying two stars rather than just one), but not as much as I would have liked, especially for such an interesting movie. In that respect, this entry in the BFI catalogue shares a lot with the BFI publication on *Eyes Wide Shut* (Bfi Modern Classics), by Michel Chion, in that, after reading the book, one is hard pressed to really remember all that much about it. On to the next one, I suppose.

Lindsay Anderson's film *if...* (1968), starring Malcolm McDowell as a schoolboy who leads a guerilla insurgency, imagines how repression, conformity, and fusty ritual at an English public school could lead to anarchy and bloody revolt. Its title is a sardonic nod to Rudyard Kipling's most famous poem, and its story a radical updating of Kipling's 1899 story *Stalky and Co.*, in which prankish rebels are groomed to police the empire. Released at a time of unprecedented student uprisings in Europe and America, *if...* provided a peculiarly English perspective on the battle between generations - the perennial war of the romantically passionate against the corrupt, the ugly, the old, and the foolish. Though its emotional surface is authentically anti-authoritarian, its intellectual substance, as Mark Sinker argues, is rooted in a deep familiarity with the symbols of English ruling-class values. No longer a vehicle for shock or dissent, *if...* is today enjoyed comfortably, even nostalgically, but for Sinker this renders its many knots and paradoxes, the moments of poetry that Anderson argued were cinema's *raison d'etre*, all the more fascinating.

From the Back Cover Lindsay Anderson's film *if...* (1968), starring Malcolm McDowell as a schoolboy who leads a guerilla insurgency, imagines how repression, conformity, and fusty ritual at an English public school could lead to anarchy and bloody revolt. Its title is a sardonic nod to Rudyard Kipling's most famous poem, and its story a radical updating of Kipling's 1899 story "*Stalky and Co.*," in which prankish rebels are groomed to police the empire. Released at a time of unprecedented student uprisings in Europe and America, *if...* provided a peculiarly English perspective on the battle between generations - the perennial war of the romantically passionate against the corrupt, the ugly, the old, and the foolish. Though its emotional surface is authentically anti-authoritarian, its intellectual substance, as Mark Sinker argues, is rooted in a deep familiarity with the symbols of English ruling-class values. No longer a vehicle for shock or dissent, *if...* is today enjoyed comfortably, even nostalgically, but for Sinker this renders its many knots and paradoxes, the moments of poetry that Anderson argued were cinema's *raison d'etre*, all the more fascinating. About the Author Mark Sinker is a contributing editor at *Sight and Sound*. His *Village Voice* essay on Iannis Xenakis was included in *Da Capo Best Music Writing* of 2003.