

BASIL RATHBONE



BASIL RATHBONE (1892 - 1967)

Born Philip StJohn Basil Rathbone in Johannesburg, South Africa in 1892, his family was forced to flee the country three years later because his father was accused by the Boers of being a British spy at a time when Dutch-British conflicts were leading to the Boer War. The Rathbones escaped to England.

He is considered the greatest swordsman in Hollywood history, superior even to on-screen foes Errol Flynn and Tyrone Power. However, because he was so frequently cast as the villain, he won only two on-screen duels in his career - as Tybalt in *Romeo and Juliet* (1936), for which he earned an Oscar nomination, and as Captain Esteban Pascuale against the friar (Eugene Pallette), who was so outclassed by "the Capitan" he was harmlessly disarmed in a matter of seconds, in *The Mark of Zorro* (1940). His last, filmed when the actor was 63, was with Danny Kaye in *The Court Jester* (1955). It is considered by some the best sword fight ever filmed. He was widely known for his role as Sherlock Holmes.

Rathbone fought in the British army during World War I and was awarded the Military Cross for bravery under fire.

