

THE LONDON CRITICS ON *ARMY OF SHADOWS*

(excerpts from reviews of its March, 2006 British release)

"***** (FIVE STARS - highest rating) Forget about the bullet-ridden hell-storms or raffish derring-do of your conventional second world war picture: this is a world of cold, grey-painted rooms, as often as not containing immobile figures dripping with blood.... *Army of the Shadows* owes much to Melville's gangster films, in the particular attention it pays to the same stately codes of loyalty, sacrifice and honor that the director put to such brilliant effect in *Le Samourai* and *Le Cercle Rouge*, the two films he made either side of this... **Complex and gripping, it's a lost masterpiece.**" – **THE GUARDIAN**

"**A TERRIFIC THRILLER**....Of the themes with which Melville deals so superbly – disguised emotion, organization, trust, quiet courage, betrayal and grief – the most important is that of loyalty (and its price). **The film boasts a startling visual quality**, too – the suspenseful twilight escapades are shot with a beautifully muted, steely-grey color palette – and it is **laced with moments of dry, sardonic wit** that serve only to emphasize its devastating emotional core even more. – **TIME OUT**

"From its extraordinary opening shot of the Wehrmacht goose-stepping down the Champs-Élysées, Jean-Pierre Melville's portrayal of French Resistance fighters **grips tighter than a Gestapo handcuff**Melville, a master of understatement, never lets us forget the reality of torture and death that shadowed this underground "army". Less celebrated than his 1967 *Le Samourai*, but in its **noirish compositions and fatalistic cool**, it is at least its equal."

– **THE INDEPENDENT**

"**The restored print of a Jean-Pierre Melville classic easily beats its modern competition**Has the same stark, graphic quality and the same muscular direction that is associated with Melville's gangster movies... some of the escape sequences have a white-knuckle tension to rival anything in, say, *Le Samourai*.. ... If the responsibility of bringing some of France's most lauded fighters to the screen was a weighty one, it doesn't show in the brilliantly understated performance that Ventura delivers." -- **THE TIMES**

"**Uncompromising** in its depiction of human frailty and brutal oppression. The action is tense. Dark shadows and long moody silences predominate. The dialogue is clipped and sparse: Melville's heroes are men and women of few words and big deeds..... This being a Melville film, the action is **supremely exciting**. There are rescue sequences that are the equal of the famous heist scenes in his gangster movies. **His characters meanwhile are even cooler.**"

-- **FILM FOUR**