

# Olympia (BFI Film Classics)

Taylor Downing

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Leni Riefenstahl's Olympia is one of the most controversial films ever made. Capitalizing on the success of Triumph of the Will, her propaganda film for the Nazi Party, Riefenstahl secured Hitler's approval for her grandiose plans to film the 1936 Berlin Olympics. The result was a work as notorious for its politics as celebrated for its aesthetic power. Taylor Downing provides an indispensable guide to this major work of film documentary. He gives the full story of how Riefenstahl negotiated relative independence from the Nazi authorities by pitting Hitler against Goebbels, the propaganda minister, who wanted complete control. Downing also gives a filmmaker's insights into the logistical and technical problems thrown up by managing a production which employed nearly forty cameramen to shoot 400,000 metres of film. He concludes that though its political effect was to glorify Nazi achievements, the film undeniably set the standard for Olympic filmmaking for the next five decades.



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