

## Rosencrantz & Guildenstern Are Dead ★★★

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**Year of Release:** 1990

Review by Randy Parker

**Country:** USA

**Verdict:** See It

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*Bill & Ted Meet Hamlet* just as well could have been the title of *Rosencrantz & Guildenstern Are Dead*, Tom Stoppard's clever film adaptation of his popular play. In the original Shakespearean version of the story, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern were minor characters (childhood chums of Hamlet), appearing in only a couple scenes. Stoppard's gimmick is to retell *Hamlet* entirely from their point of view. These two meandering medieval misfits take center stage, and their verbal banter and petty squabbles are a nonstop source of amusement. Stoppard imaginatively weaves Ros-

encrantz and Guildenstern's misadventures into the general *Hamlet* story line by having them wander in and out of scenes lifted directly from Shakespeare. The result is an inventive mixture of old and new. Happily, Stoppard's witty script and assured direction get first rate support from the cast, especially Gary Oldman, whose droll performance as Rosencrantz is sublimely entertaining. Oldman and co-star Tim Roth have created two truly exasperating nitwits ... who also happen to be irresistibly endearing.

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