

THE THOUSAND FACES OF CHRISTOPHER WALKEN

Directed by Marie Brunet-Debaines
Produced by Ellis Films

52'

Summary

One of the most unique global stars, Christopher Walken was long confined to the image of his iconic roles as eccentric and sadistic antagonists. It's a reputation the actor has gradually sought to shed in order to break free from it.

Aspiring to show audiences sides of himself other than those of all-powerful perverts and criminals, Christopher Walken has never ceased to surprise in roles that defy expectations. Opening himself up to more gentle, vulnerable, or comical characters, he has also turned—as a means of returning to the roots of his art—to comedy and dance to reinvent himself.

Punctuated by archival footage, film clips and featuring interviews with the actor and insights from several of his collaborators, this unique and sensitive portrait traces the gradual artistic emancipation of an icon who is as spectacular as he is fundamentally unique.

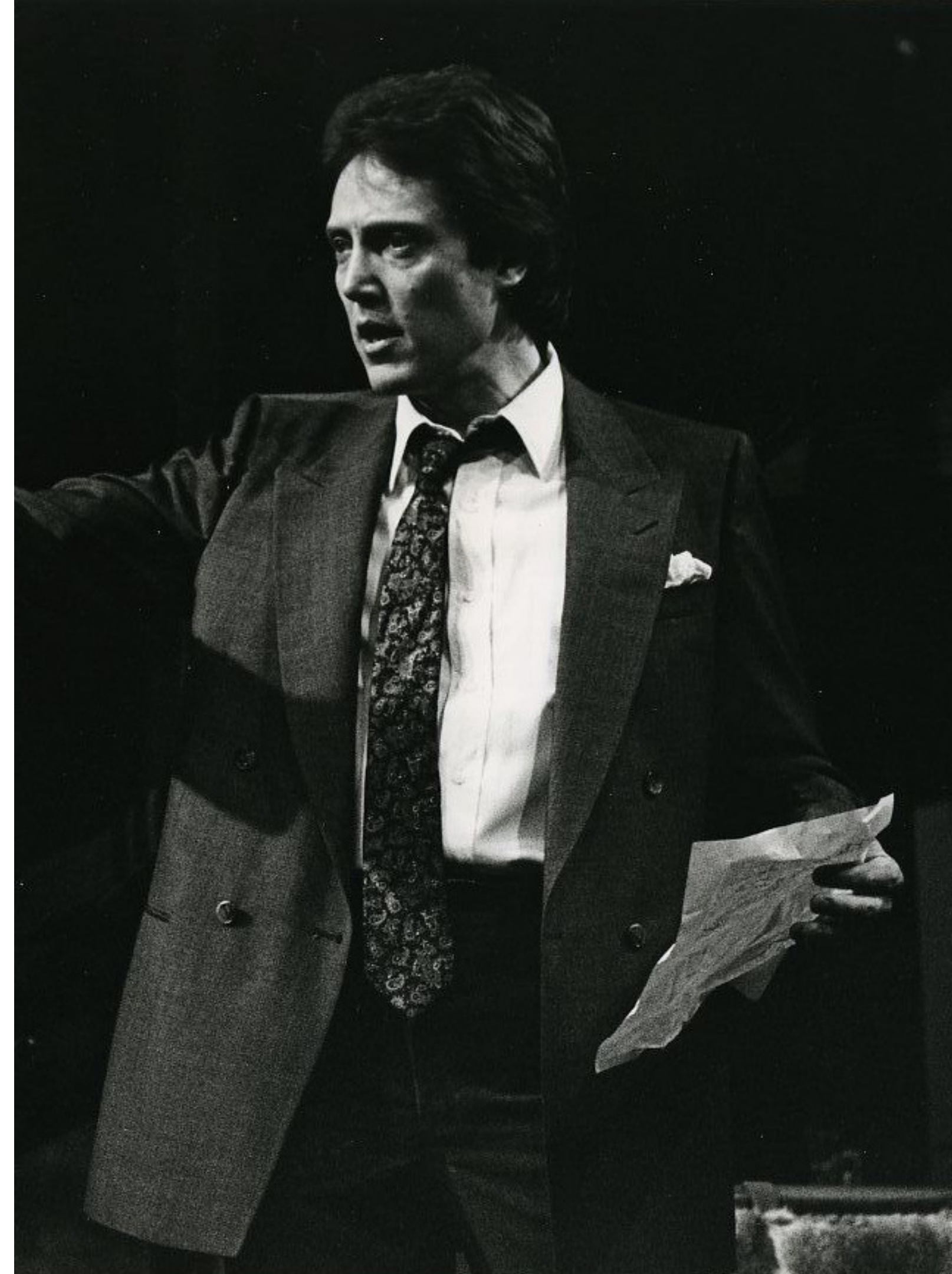


Synopsis

Over the past four decades, he has portrayed nearly every outsider and villain in cinema. From the relentless gangster to the ruthless criminal, from the unscrupulous businessman to the deadly creature, Christopher Walken has left a lasting impression on entire generations of viewers with his dark and spectacular characters.

Yet nothing suggested that this child of the theater—who had worked in television and trained on the Broadway stage—would become one of the giants of New Hollywood. First noticed in a musical, the young man who had imagined making a living as a dancer was called upon to perform in theater before the film industry took notice of him. With *The Deer Hunter*, Michael Cimino gave him the opportunity to step into the spotlight by casting him as a tormented veteran—a role that would earn him an Oscar.

His early career was marked by intensity and violence, during which Christopher Walken took on increasingly tough and unsettling roles. From Johnny Smith in *The Dead Zone* to Max Zorin in *A View to a Kill*, Frank White in *King of New York*, Max Schreck in *Batman Returns*, Vincenzo Coccotti in *True Romance*, and the Headless Horseman in *Sleepy Hollow*, the actor masterfully established himself as the undisputed embodiment of evil.



Director's Statement

With a career spanning nearly 60 years and a staggering body of work totaling more than a hundred films, Christopher Walken is one of those unforgettable faces of cinema. With a beauty as angelic as it is unsettling, a gaze as distant as it is penetrating, and an aura as evanescent as it is electrifying, the actor embodies all the paradoxes that make him utterly elusive.

By turns violent or fragile, silent or talkative, comic or tragic, hateful or pitiable, the many characters he has portrayed have demonstrated the breadth of his abilities and his versatility—a dense and eclectic filmography, yet one that is all too often reduced to a single type of character: the villain. It is precisely this evolution in artistic demands and ambitions—and the way the actor sought to break free from this one-dimensional image—that this documentary aims to highlight.

Far from merely embodying crime and violence, this true chameleon and jack-of-all-trades set out to broaden his repertoire as his reputation grew: by collaborating on projects as surprising as they were daring, by revealing other facets and talents to the audience, and by making numerous artistic and media appearances. His desire to break free from this single label was fulfilled by turning to his earliest passions—dance and comedy, two cornerstones of a childhood steeped in show business—which the artist has often referred to in explaining the origins of his uniqueness.

Built on the strength of its narrative, this portrait will be equally grounded in its visual power. Used as a backdrop, the aesthetics and atmosphere of New York City—where the actor has spent most of his life—will accompany his evolution: a recurring motif shown in constant flux across neighborhoods and eras, the city will help bring to life the evolution of his image and the gradual shift in the characteristics of his characters. Through an exclusive, in-depth interview with the actor, snippets of interviews and film clips, and archival footage providing context on New York City and its history, this portrait traces the extraordinary journey of a one-of-a-kind artist—as extravagant, demanding, and resolutely surprising as he is—who has become a true icon over the course of his career.

Filmmaking Approach

Throughout this portrait, the footage used will be as rich as it is diverse. Accompanied by a voice-over narration, the actor's life and work will be brought to life through numerous film clips and behind-the-scenes footage, television productions in which he appeared, excerpts from interviews he has given over the years, family and childhood photographs, as well as archival footage of New York City serving as the backdrop to his life and career.

The off-camera commentary and this diverse collection of footage will regularly feature an original music score that is understated, elegant, and melodious, reminiscent of the style and compositions of musician Joe Delia, a regular contributor to Abel Ferrara's films and the composer of the scores for all the films in which Christopher Walken has appeared.



The Material

- **Film clips:** A selection of evocative scenes and images from films of varying degrees of fame will showcase the evolution of his acting, his characters, and his appearance—from *Me and My Brother*, his first film, to *Dune*, his most recent, including *Annie Hall*, *The Deer Hunter*, *The Dead Zone*, *King of New York*, *Batman Returns*, and *A Late Quartet*.
- **Behind-the-scenes footage:** In addition to the film clips, the film will feature behind-the-scenes footage—makeup sessions, pre-shoot preparations, conversations with directors, and interviews—all of which offer insight into how his various collaborators viewed him.
- **TV sketches and music videos:** In particular, the film will feature footage from the music video directed by Spike Jonze for DJ Fatboy Slim's song *Weapon of Choice*, in which Christopher Walken—who was nearly 60 at the time of filming—appears dancing in a hotel lobby—a performance that was widely praised.
- **Early appearances and promotional archives:** early artistic appearances, promotional and television interviews, family archives, newsreel footage, and press photos will round out this collection.
- **Archival material for context:** The actor's account of his childhood will be supplemented by a wealth of archival footage illustrating the setting and cultural references that shaped his upbringing—including images showing the arrival of European immigrants in the United States in the early 20th century, when he discusses his parents' move to New York.
- **Footage shot in New York City:** The city's archival footage will be complemented by contemporary shots taken in the various neighborhoods frequented by the actor, guided as much by his biography as by his filmography, and which will echo images from his films.
- **Exclusive interview:** An in-depth interview, conducted specifically for this documentary, will serve as the narrative thread and give the actor himself the opportunity to speak about his career.



One More Time by Robert Edwards, 2015



The Anderson Tapes by Sidney Lumet, 1971



The Deer Hunter by Michael Cimino, 1978



A View to a Kill by John Glen, 1985

arte DISTRIBUTION



Joséphine LETANG
Head of International Distribution & Marketing
j-letang@arteFrance.fr



Alec HERRMANN
Head of Acquisitions
a-herrmann@arteFrance.fr



Audrey KAMGA
a-kamga@arteFrance.fr
Sales Manager
Canada, USA, South America, Israel & MENA Region



Alexandra MARGUERITE
a-marguerite@arteFrance.fr
Sales Manager
UK, Ireland, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Greece,
Eastern Europe, Asia
Africa: a-morel@arteFrance.fr



Franka SCHWABE
f-schwabe@arteFrance.fr
Sales Manager
Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Switzerland,
Netherlands, Scandinavia, Iceland, Australia, New Zealand