

arte
DISTRIBUTION
presents

LIZA MINNELLI

HOLLYWOOD'S GOLDEN CHILD



DIRECTED BY LUCIE CARIÈS

PRODUCED BY **arte** FRANCE & **MORGANE**
PRODUCTION

FOREWORD

Ruby slippers, a fearful lion, a black and white door that opens onto a Technicolor world, and Dorothy, fiercely courageous: I am 8 years old when my uncle shows me THE WIZARD OF OZ. Afterwards, I can't stop singing "We're off to see the Wizard."

Kirk Douglas' disturbing laugh and dimple, Lana Turner's blonde hair and heavy eyelids, the captivating atmosphere of the Hollywood studios at work: I am now 10 years old and Vincente Minnelli's THE BAD AND THE BEAUTIFUL complicates matters. Creating magic is not as glamorous as it seems and I understand that movies are also there to reveal life's complexities.

"Wilkomen, Bienvenue, Welcome..." I become a teenager, and my sister (4 years my elder) starts listening to strange songs over and over again. She tells me about Kurt Weill, the Kit Kat Club, and a film that I absolutely must see. To please her, I buy the cassette tape and then it's my turn to listen to CABARET again and again on my precious Walkman. When I finally discover the film, I am overwhelmed by the sensuality of these men dressed as women, horrified by the description of the rise of Nazism in 1930's Berlin, and above all, above all I am fascinated by Sally Bowles. Her fingernails painted green, her fragility, her vivacity, and her haircut. When Liza Minnelli appears on the screen, I see only her. I watch and re-watch CABARET until my VHS tape is torn to shreds.

Then: the revelation. A tsunami passed through me when my mother informed me (yes, it was my mother who told me!) that Dorothy was Sally Bowles' mother. And that Liza Minnelli was her father's daughter. Everything suddenly made sense in my personal pantheon; my artistic taste was coherent: glamor and turmoil, flamboyance and torment. I have been reflecting upon Liza Minnelli ever since. How did she develop her identity with such a lineage? How could she be comfortable choosing the same career as Judy Garland? Who is she? What is she made of? What drives her? I want to make a film about Liza Minnelli in order to celebrate the last heiress of a world that my own family raised me to love.



TREATMENT

Fred Astaire said it best: "If Hollywood was a monarchy, Liza Minnelli would be our hereditary princess." It's true that in many ways, Liza Minnelli is the last successor of a changing world. She embodies two sides and two eras of American culture. She built a bridge from west to east, from the big Hollywood studios of the 50's, to the modernity of the films of Martin Scorsese and Bob Fosse in New York. Her trajectory is unique: from a Hollywood princess born in 1946, to the Queen of the Night in 1970's New York.

Liza Minnelli is a multi-talented artist who sings, dances, and acts with incandescent talent and wild generosity. She inspired great songwriters who wrote *NEW YORK, NEW YORK* and *CABARET* for her. She invented an iconic look as the character Sally Bowles, and reigned for decades on the Broadway stage. Martin Scorsese's muse, she was the first to create a television show exclusively about herself, *LIZA WITH A Z*, directed by Bob Fosse. And she sold-out the greatest venues in the world, including three weeks at New York's iconic Radio City Music Hall.

The list of diverse accomplishments goes on, but it's important to remember that Liza Minnelli is also her parents' daughter. Her father Vincente Minnelli directed a number of masterpieces of Hollywood's golden age, including *AN AMERICAN IN PARIS* and *THE BAD AND THE BEAUTIFUL*. And her mother was none other than Judy Garland, the unforgettable Dorothy in *THE WIZARD OF OZ* and the titular star of *A STAR IS BORN* - a child of the stage, crushed by the Hollywood studios, plagued by addiction, and dead at forty-seven; a loving and tortured mother that Liza adored.



Liza says, “my father gave me my dreams, my mother gave me my drive.” The relationship between the two women, two glamorous artists, is made up of love and rivalry, of hard work and fame. We will tell Liza's story with this relationship in mind, and consider the impact it had on her coming of age. From Judy, she learned to face the dark side of success, to live with her inner demons. And since throughout her life, Liza Minnelli never stopped referring to her mother, we will do the same and let Judy Garland's presence inform the film.

Their relationship was burdened by Judy's troubled childhood; she once said “I only know one thing, it's that I don't want to be a mother like mine.” Judy loved her three children immensely but she was already broken – Hollywood's tyranny would eventually finish off the destruction – and it was often Liza's role, as the oldest, to protect her mother from herself.



Later Judy will bring young Liza into the spotlight, making everything more complicated. Sharing the same career also means sharing the same spotlight. Faced with Liza's talent, Judy will oscillate between feelings of immense pride and painful rivalry. It's just as ambivalent for Liza: tired of being perpetually compared to her mother and held back by a lineage too heavy to carry, she will nonetheless become the protector of Judy Garland's damaged image.

Perhaps it isn't by chance that Liza's career only truly takes off just after Judy's death. It's also the moment when the young woman will succumb to addiction as well. She is only 23 years old but she must cope with the voracious demands of the media. She must live with being born under the watchful eye of the cameras and with the whole world having witnessed her mother's vacillations.

“One time I was going to school and I passed a newspaper stand and it said: ‘Judy Garland runs naked through her house trying to kill herself.’ And all of the children on the school bus started to laugh at me. And I knew that wasn't true, because I'd been with her (she has the tone of a child making excuses; it's very troubling) I went home and I was crying: ‘Mama, it's not true. You have to tell them it's not true so they can write it differently.’ She said: ‘No. Let them build a legend.’”

As for Liza, she will refuse to be a Hollywood legend; the price to pay is too high. Instead, she flees to New York and adopts the town as her own. A new legend is written, and it's much sweeter: Liza creates a song to the glory of the city in 1977 and from now on, New York is forever linked to it. It's NEW YORK, NEW YORK, a love song to the 'city that never sleeps.'

In New York, she inspires the greats. She shakes up Broadway as a muse for Kander and Ebb, who wrote the biggest musicals of the 70's. She energizes Scorsese, is imitated by Freddie Mercury, inspires Michael Jackson, sings with the Pet Shop Boys and is venerated by Lady Gaga.

Liza Minnelli, full of talent and excess, is no doubt the ultimate true star of Hollywood. The last successor, who lived her entire life in front of the cameras, telling her life story to interviewers all over the world. It is therefore Liza Minnelli who will paint her own portrait. She is the one who will show us her sincerity, generosity and resilience. A woman who always gets back up again.



arte DISTRIBUTION

the ultimate reference for factual documentaries



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



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



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



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



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