



Legends of Hollywood: The Life and Legacy of Marlene Dietrich

Charles River Editors

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*Includes pictures of Dietrich and important people, places, and scenes.

*Includes Dietrich's own quotes about her life.

*Includes a Bibliography for further reading.

"Glamour is what I sell, it's my stock in trade." – Marlene Dietrich

When Marlene Dietrich first became a household name in the United States, she introduced a new standard for female sexuality on screen. Her performance in *The Blue Angel* (1930) not only stands as one of the most glamorous roles ever played but also one of the frankest depictions of the femme fatale ever captured on screen. Moreover, the film essentially set the tone for the image that Marlene Dietrich would cultivate over her career: unabashedly sexual but wrapped in an air of mystery. Most stars are beautiful and talented in ways that make them noticeable, but it is generally counterbalanced by an approachability that renders them accessible to a diverse audience. Marlene Dietrich, on the other hand, did not follow this model; ever since *The Blue Angel*, her star persona has rested on a foundation of exoticism.

Of course, the mythical qualities of Dietrich's image were no accident. Her most famous director, Josef von Sternberg, did his best to accentuate the foreign and exotic nature of his most famous actress, and in conjunction with that, the most famous images of Dietrich portray her glowing face juxtaposed against a shadowy silhouette, with the ornamental composition making it seem almost as though she were an artificial creation. Her life off-screen was no less exotic, as they were filled with an endless string of affairs that only enhanced the Marlene Dietrich myth.

At the same time, however, there is a complexity to her performances that extends far beyond the artificiality of the costumes and the sensuality of her appearance. The significance of Dietrich's career lies in the way that she combined feminine sensuality with masculine independence; she may have introduced a more overt form of female sexuality to cinema, but her films also inaugurated a female independence that had yet to surface in Hollywood. Moreover, the narrative of her life reveals much about both German and Hollywood, as well as the cabaret culture of Berlin and the politics of Nazi Germany and America before and after World War II. Film stars become famous for their performances, but they are not separate from the cultures in which they operate.

Legends of Hollywood: The Life and Legacy of Marlene Dietrich profiles the life and career of one of Hollywood's most iconic actresses. Along with pictures of important people, places, and events, you will learn about Marlene Dietrich like you never have before, in no time at all.

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