

YUZU PRODUCTIONS presents in coproduction with ARTE a MARK KIDEL film



BECOMING

CARY GRANT

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For the first time one of Hollywood's greatest stars tells his own story, in his own words. From a childhood of poverty to global fame, Cary Grant, the ultimate self-made star, explores his own screen image and what it took to create it.



SYNOPSIS

Cary Grant is one of the most enduring icons of the Hollywood golden era. Described by the film historian and biographer David Thomson as “The greatest screen actor of all time”, Grant is without doubt the actor whose style as the suave and elegant man-in-the-suit has remained iconic and modern: his image is still used in advertising and inspired Don Draper in *Mad Men*.

Grant played with the notion that the man born Archie Leach had become “Cary Grant” and that this persona, such a powerful target for the audience’s projections, hid a constant search for self-discovery. In 1958, at the height of his success, Grant is a troubled man in a failing marriage. He becomes one of the first people to experiment with LSD, taking it as a psychiatric treatment in therapy in sessions with Dr Mortimer Hartman in Beverly Hills. He returned again and again, taking it at least 100 times. It opened up enormous self-discovery for him, and he became one of its primary advocates.

The film begins at this crisis moment of his life, as Hitchcock’s *North by Northwest* becomes one of his biggest hits and he begins an affair with Sophia Loren - emotional, vulnerable and helplessly in love. We travel back with Cary on his long journey of self-discovery: to his poverty-stricken childhood in Bristol, England, and the incarceration of his mother in a mental hospital, (a fact hidden from him for 20 years) and his long apprenticeship as an acrobat and stage actor, making 28 films before stardom. This key period is the making and becoming of Cary Grant, leading to the birth of the alter-ego that finally made him a star in 1937.

Through his screwball period, his premature retirement and the late 50s comeback, Grant remained a hugely popular actor but an almost completely unknowable man. His personal demons, anxieties and frailties were kept hidden. But Hitchcock captured this darker side, the unknown Grant, in 4 films - he remained ‘under suspicion’ as in their first feature together in 1941.



TREATMENT

Cary Grant never gave a filmed interview – he controlled his image too much to allow it to happen. This film will instead use primary source material, including extensive use of his personal home movies, never seen before. His words will be drawn from press interviews, his many letters to his mother and the autobiography that was never published. The film will weave Grant's re-evaluation of his life on LSD through the story of his career, and will visually contrast his early childhood with his later life in Beverly Hills. We reflect his immaculate tailoring and personal style, and show how the tumbler and clown became the world's most graceful actor. The film will also be rich in archive of Beverly Hills in the 1950s, Broadway in the 1913s and Bristol in the 1910s.

INTERVIEWS

Amongst our interviewees are Cary Grant's widow Barbara Jaynes, who has given us exclusive access to Cary's personal archive, and who talks movingly of their years together. His only child, Jennifer, reflects on the contrast between her dad and Cary the movie star. Judy Balaban speaks for the first time on camera about her long friendship with Cary, which began when she also went for regular LSD sessions with Dr Hartman from 1959 onwards; Professor Mark Glancy is writing a new book about Cary, with many new insights based on his private papers, and renowned film critic David Thomson analyses his career, and explains why we still care about Cary Grant, 30 years after his death.

Above all we will get closer to Archie Leach and Cary Grant than ever before – "The Man from Dream City", as critic Pauline Kael dubbed him, will finally become flesh and blood.

THE DIRECTOR

Mark Kidel is a filmmaker, writer and critic specialising in the arts and music. He works mainly in the France and the UK. Recent films include "The Island of 1000 Violins" (ARTE), "Fabienne Verdier: Peindre l'instant" (France 5), "Elvis Costello: Mystery Dance" (BBC and ARTE), a film on Englishness with the writer Martin Amis (ARTE), "Road Movie: The Music of John Adams" (ARTE and BBC), "Colouring Light: Brian Clarke-An Artist Apart" (BBC). His documentary portraits have included the pianists Alfred Brendel and Leon Fleisher, Ravi Shankar, Balthus, Bill Viola, Norman Foster, Robert Wyatt, Tricky, Derek Jarman, Boy George, and the 20th century composers Varèse and Xenakis. He has also made a number of films on African music, personal film essays on melancholia, the experience of death and loss in Paris's Hospital Laennec, and a groundbreaking series on architecture and symbolism (BBC2). He is a co-founder with Peter Gabriel of WOMAD, the world music festival.



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