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BECOMING GARY GRANT

A FILM BY MARK KIDEL

with the voice of JONATHAN PRYCE, written by MARK KIDEL with NICK WARE, editing CYRIL LEUTHY, cinematography JEAN-MARIE DELORME, music THE INSECTS and ADRIAN UTLEY, set designer VALERIE VALERO, archive researchers JOAN COHEN, TIM JORDAN, EUGENIE GAUBERT, editorial advisor MARK GLANCY, post-production editing ANDREW FINDLAY, colour grading GREGOIRE AUSINA, sound editing & mixing ADAM WOLNY, production manager KATYA LARAISON, commissioning editor ARTE France NATHALIE VERDIER, executive producers ANNIE RONEY & SUE TURLEY, associate producer FABRICE ESTEVE, produced by CHRISTIAN POPP & NICK WARE, international distribution ARTE FRANCE





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BECOMING CARY GRANT

A FILM BY MARK KIDEL

85 minutes - France 2017 - B&W/Color - HD - 5.1

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#BecomingCaryGrant



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SYNOPSIS

BECOMING CARY GRANT presents a radically new perspective on one of the greatest of all Hollywood actors. Known for his suave sophistication, Grant became an icon through his roles in some of the great films of the golden area of Hollywood cinema. But Grant was also a troubled man; he described himself as peering cautiously from behind a mask, a facade, never revealing his true self, nor allowing others to truly know him.

Grant was born Archie Leach in Bristol, England. When he was 11, his father committed his mother to a mental asylum, without telling his son. Archie's sense of abandonment would create a void in his life, and he failed to deal with its consequences until he reached midlife, when he became one of the first people to take LSD as a therapy. In more than 100 sessions with a Beverly Hills psychiatrist, Grant revisited his life and exorcised his demons. Finally, he could declare "at last, I am close to happiness".

This film uses these words and many other insights from his unpublished autobiography to let Cary tell his story himself. The images are drawn largely from surprisingly cinematic material shot by Cary, most of which has never been seen before. His film-maker's eye brings us a rich tapestry of people, places and impressionistic images that evocatively reflect the ups and downs of his inner journey.

The film features contributions from friends who have never spoken before, from critic David Thomson who regards Cary as the greatest actor of all time, and Professor Mark Glancy whose new findings and insights feature throughout the film. It includes a treasure trove of extracts from Cary Grant's films, some of the well-known ones – screwball comedies and Hitchcock classics – as well as less familiar movies that throw a revealing light on Cary's identity – *None But the Lonely Heart*, *Mr. Lucky* and *Father Goose*.

The film is framed by his LSD sessions, and takes the viewer from his difficult childhood, through his 30 years of stardom to the joy of his later years, becoming a father and married to fifth wife Barbara Jaynes.

The words of Cary Grant are spoken by the celebrated actor Jonathan Pryce (*Game of Thrones*, *Wolf Hall*, *Pirates of The Caribbean*, *Tomorrow Never Dies*, *Brazil*) and the music is by Bristolian musicians from Portishead and The Insects.

BECOMING CARY GRANT is no ordinary biopic, but a film that allows us to enter into Cary Grant's intimacy, to plumb the depths of his insecurity and to journey with him through a unique journey of self-exploration, and ultimately, redemption.



BECOMING
CARY GRANT



INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR MARK KIDEL



What drew you to make a film about Cary Grant, above all other film stars of the golden age?

I did not choose Cary Grant: it was more like he chose me! I was approached by producer Nick Ware, a long-time Cary Grant fan and asked if I was interested in making a film about him. I am not a fan and I only knew a few of the films he had starred in, a couple of Screwball comedies, the Hitchcock classics and *Charade*. I am always open to suggestions that come my way, and these often lead to really interesting films. I thrive in unexplored territory.



I was interested in Cary Grant's background – working-class Bristol (the city I have lived in for the last 25 years)- and his extraordinary escape from provincial England and conquest of Hollywood. All of this after losing his mother at the age of 11. I have made a number of films that explore the burden of being a star in terms of personal identity – not least *Boy Next Door* which looked at the way in which Boy George denied the raunchier side of his sexuality during the Culture Club days, in an attempt to remain 'safe' for an audience that was prejudiced by homophobia but enjoyed the play-acting of drag.



I spent a little time reading up on Grant, and very soon came across a marvellous article in *Vanity Fair*, by Judy Balaban and Cari Beauchamp, "Cary in the Sky with Diamonds". They described how Cary has embarked on three years of intensive LSD therapy in the late 1950s. Judy had been to the same doctor in Beverly Hills and described the sessions very vividly. Cary Grant later wrote an autobiography, only parts of which were published in a women's magazine. He talked about how LSD therapy had liberated him from the traumatic experiences of his childhood, and how he had relived his whole life during the 100 or so trips he took at the height of his midlife crisis. I immediately saw the possibility of using his LSD flashbacks as a way of telling his story, although I had no idea how I would visualise this without succumbing to clichés. When we discovered the film he had shot on colour 16mm in the later 1930s, the problem was solved.

Many people have no idea that Cary Grant took LSD. It is in such contrast to his public image. What led him to take it?



It's never a simple thing to explain why people do things. Motivations are complicated. LSD was very fashionable as a quick-fix therapeutic tool in the California of the 1950s, long before it became a recreational drug with political undertones. Cary Grant partly took LSD to deal with the stress of pretending he really was the smooth, debonair star that everyone loved. He never completely left Archie Leach, the kid from Bristol, behind. He was also trying to get to the bottom of his inability to trust women and hold down long-term relationships. He wrestled with a deep insecurity around women that went back to the time his mother disappeared from one day to the next, and he had not been told why. He believed that she had died, when in fact, as he discovered 21 years later, she had been locked up in the local psychiatric institution, for little more than being OCD and over-suspicious of a philandering husband.



He became an American citizen, but was actually born in Bristol, England. Did his family and his home town mean much to him?



He remained deeply ambivalent, I think, about his home town, as do many migrants. He was immensely ambitious and very courageous, and set on making a fortune. The life and image he constructed for himself in Hollywood bore no obvious relationship to his roots. In this he is no different from Charlie Chaplin, Noel Coward, Alfred Hitchcock or other working-class Brits who re-invented themselves in the USA. Nevertheless, he wrote regularly to his father, and then to his mother once he had reconnected with her. And he also visited her in Bristol. But on no account did he want the only person in the world who still called him "Archie" to visit him in Hollywood. She was desperate to come – although he claimed otherwise – so kept her well away.



Some of the best directors he worked with, in particular Cukor and Hitchcock, recognised something of his true background, as well as the insecurity that came from constantly pretending he was Cary Grant, not Archie Leach. He came closest to being true to his origins in *None But The Lonely Heart*, the 1940s film written and directed by friend and socialist Clifford Odets. This is not the Cary Grant that most fans rave about, there is nothing smooth or debonair about him in this dark role. His working-class background may be reflected in more subtle way: Cary Grant often played a gentleman, but always one with the common touch, and without taking himself more seriously. His immense popularity owed a lot to this 'democratic' quality. He was always one of us.



The private films used in the documentary are almost all filmed by Cary Grant himself. How did you approach them and what do they reveal about his personality?

I vividly remember my feelings when I first watched over three hours of the footage Cary shot around 1938-41. Most of it is in 16mm colour, with that characteristic washed out quality that gives it a dream-like aura. I immediately sensed that this unique and very personal footage would help us evoke the inner journey he undertook while on LSD: rarely used literally, so that the people that appear in the individual shots and sequences need not be identified, but used to evoke his inner world and the images thrown up by his memory and his unconscious. A number of recurring motifs suggested the things that drew him and resonated with something in his own imagination, or spoke to his soul. The women, clearly charmed by the man with the movie camera, opened up to his cinematographer's gaze and spoke volumes about his own presence. No one points a camera – especially when it is used as a kind of note-taking or journal-making device – without revealing unconscious thoughts and desires. So I realised, after my initial intuitions about this being perfect material for the film, that it was also valid material, in the sense that it was authentic to Cary Grant's psyche and inner life. Apart from the ever-present women, there are many shots of boats, as if the boats that made him dream of escaping from Bristol as a child, remained in some way a symbol of the possibility of reinventing oneself on distant shores. I felt reassured when Barbara Jaynes, Cary's fifth wife, told me, after seeing the rough cut of the film, that he was always deeply moved by boats, particularly when they were leaving the quayside.

The most challenging task was finding ways of integrating not just the 'home movies' but extracts from his movies, so that they speak to each other and resonate in a way that reveals something about Grant's psychology. It is the case, though, that great actors are often cast in parts that resonate with their inner life - sometimes just because the director or producer has an intuitive feel for this kind of resonance. For this reason, there was no shortage of moments in Cary's films that could play perfectly well alongside the very personal content of the footage he shot himself.

Last but not least, Grant was not just an aesthete when it came to clothes or buying art. He shot film with an unerring sense of framing. Just about every shot in the 3 hours of movies we found is beautifully framed from the start, and when he pans or tilts he knows just where to start and when to finish. This was a great gift to us!

How much do you think Cary Grant created his screen persona, and how much was really due to the directors he worked with, like Hitchcock, Hawks and Leo McCarey?

The creation of a screen persona is a very complex process. Cary himself talked a little and wrote in his unpublished autobiography of the influence of a number of film and theatre actors. He learned timing from vaudeville, and refined the art for the screen. He adopted an accent and deportment borrowed from British actors like Noel Coward, who aped the British upper classes. He was naturally charming and had a great sense of humour – all those who knew him mentioned this. But as we have been told by others, he had a depressive side, and he was clearly very insecure, even when wearing the mask of Cary Grant. It is this insecurity – and vulnerability – that contributes, to my mind to making him so unique among male leads. Leo McCarey, according to biographer Mark Glancy, was a model of the suave gentleman, with a tinge of American informality. Hawks and Hitchcock, in their different ways, played with the insecurity they sensed in Cary Grant, and with the actor's help, created a persona that was charming, cruel, unpredictable and yet immensely likeable.

What seems evident to me is that Cary was often cast in films that offered the opportunity for him to mirror his innermost qualities and the turmoil that undermined the suave and playful exterior. In this instance, I am not sure we can talk of it being his own conscious or deliberate work or the directors'. All of them proceeded intuitively, and played creatively with what lay before them.

David Thomson, the film critic featured in the documentary, calls Cary Grant “the best and most important actor in the history of cinema”. After making the film, do you understand why he says that?

David Thomson was writing about the minimalism of Cary Grant's acting, his understanding that, on screen, less is always more, both in terms of the details of body language and facial expression. In vaudeville and the theatre, Archie Leach had learned to play for the gallery, exaggerating his movements, facial expressions and the tone of his voice, in order to reach the entire audience. He learned perhaps better than any other actor, once he started acting on screen that stage acting did not translate well to the screen. It made for clichés and caricature rather than showing the panoply of human emotions in an authentic, believable and engaging way. The journey from *Singapore Sue*, his first screen role, to the screwball comedies is extraordinary. There is no evidence in the earlier part of what he would be capable of.

David Thomson argues that Cary Grant's instinctive but “immensely intelligent” interiorisation of emotion – living the part rather than blasting it out in a literal fashion – paved the way for Method acting, the naturalism of Brando and others.





You have chosen not to talk about the rumours that Cary Grant was gay, or his long term friendship with Randolph Scott. Why is that?

We gave this a great deal of thought, and in an earlier, longer rough-cut of the film, there was a sequence about Cary's relationship with Randolph Scott, with whom he shared a house in the 1930s. There were many rumours about Grant being gay, but there were rumours of this kind about many Hollywood stars. There are famous photographs, very present on the web, of Cary with Randy, looking like a gay couple. But as our consultant on the film, historian Mark Glancy pointed out these were, without exception, taken by Paramount Studios, at a time when homosexuality was illegal in the US. The photos featured prominently in fan magazines aimed almost exclusively at a female readership. The headlines spoke of the two men as bachelors in need of feminine care. Cary had grown up from the age of 14-22 rooming with men, when he toured with the acrobats and later vaudeville acts. He was very comfortable around men, and after Randolph Scott, there were other men with whom he had lasting and close friendships, notably millionaire Howard Hughes.

Mark Glancy, who is himself gay, has an open-mind about the gay issue. It is clear that Cary really liked women: the home movies are full of young women smiling at the man behind the camera, who hardly ever films men in swimming trunks but very often scantily dressed women.

We have been endlessly asked "was he gay?", almost always the first question. I detected a kind of prurience there, and also a wish for him to be in some way flawed, so a question with a slight homophobic undercurrent.

The truth of the matter is that we cannot be certain. He never wrote about it in his unpublished autobiography, which we have used almost exclusively as his inner voice in the film. The women in his life (not least his 5th wife Barbara, and 3rd wife Betsy Drake) were adamant about his sexual interest in women. Did he have close relationships with men, some of them sexual? There is some evidence for this. But that is true of so many actors, of so many people. So the important question for us was "did any of these relationships matter enough to change our approach to the story?" Our answer was no.



What about the soundtrack?

Music is incredibly important to me as a film-maker – and as a film-lover. So many soundtracks, especially for documentaries, provide little more than a kind of sound filler, used excessively and without any sense of how music affects mood as well as emotions. *Becoming Cary Grant* is a film about a man's deep emotional journey in mid-life.

I have known Adrian Utley of Portishead, and his friends Bob Locke and Tim Norfolk, commonly known as The Insects, for some time. We all live in Bristol, a city not just famous for the music that emerged in a wildly creative surge in the early 1990s, but because of a love of cinema. I knew that Adrian was a real connoisseur of film soundtrack, from Bernard Hermann and John Barry to Ennio Morricone and that he had written a new score for Dreyer's *The Passion of Joan of Arc*. The Insects have a considerable record as creators of soundtrack music for fiction, animation and natural history documentary.

In evoking the acid trips that Cary Grant had taken in the 1950s, I was keen to create and use images and music that would avoid the psychedelic clichés of the 1960s. I guessed that Adrian and the Insects would easily find a way of making film music that was dreamy and dramatic. It was for good reason that the music they had made in the early 1990s was called 'trip-hop'.

In his top-floor studio in Kingsdown, Adrian created a range of highly evocative drones, which are used throughout the film, in conjunction with the Insects swathes of sound, only slightly narrative in feel.

In addition to the specially composed music, I chose three key pieces of classical music, all of which play a crucial part at key moments in the film, and the narrative of Cary's life: the slow movement from Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 23 – a deeply melancholic and beautiful piece of music – which accompanies the moments when we learn of the disappearance of Cary's mother when he was 11 years old. When Cary finally realises, after months of therapy, that his problems with women are largely caused by his lack of trust, and his inability to receive or give love, I chose the very stirring Sarabande from Bach's Orchestral Suite No. 2, with the softly cathartic sound of the solo flute. Towards the end of the film, when we hear of Cary's fulfilment as a father, no longer the film star, but himself, with his beloved daughter Jennifer, I used the slow movement of Rachmaninov's Piano Concerto No.2. It is full of limpid emotion, and I listened to it because I knew that Dr Hartmann often played it for the people he gave LSD to.



DIRECTOR MARK KIDEL

BIOGRAPHY

Mark Kidel is a film-maker, writer and critic specializing in the arts and music. He works mainly in France and the UK. Recent films include "The Juilliard Experiment" (2016) "The Island of 1000 Violins" (2015), "Martin Amis's England" (2014), "Elvis Costello: Mystery Dance" (2013), "Road Movie: The Music of John Adams" (2013), "Colouring Light: Brian Clarke-An Artist Apart" (2011).

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 Hôpital Laennec, and a ground-breaking series on architecture and symbolism.

He has written widely about music for most of the leading newspapers in the UK. He is a co-founder with Peter Gabriel of WOMAD, the world music festival.



SELECTIVE FILMOGRAPHY

So You Wanna Be A Rock'n'Roll Star (1975)
Rod the Mod has Come of Age (1976)
New York: The Secret African City (1989)
Le Paris Black (1990)
Kind of Blue: An Essay on Melancholia and Depression (1994)
Boy Next Door: Boy George (1994)
Naked and Famous: Tricky (1997)
Alfred Brendel: Man and Mask (2000)
A Hospital Remembers (2000)
Ravi Shankar: Between Two Worlds (2001)
Paris Brothel (2003)
Bill Viola: The Eye of the Heart (2003)
Mario Lanza; Singing to the Gods (2005)
Hungary 1956: Our Revolution (2006)
A Journey with Peter Sellars (2007)
Soweto Strings (2007)
Set the Piano Stool on Fire (2010)
Road Movie: A Portrait of John Adams (2013)
Elvis Costello: Mystery Dance (2013)
Martin Amis's England (2014)
The Juilliard Experiment (2016)

TECHNICAL LIST

A film by **Mark Kidel**
Written by **Mark Kidel with Nick Ware**
Editing **Cyril Leuthy**
Cinematography **Jean-Marie Delorme**
Music **The Insects and Adrian Utley**
Post-production editing **Andrew Findlay**
Color grading **Grégoire Ausina**
Sound editing & mixing **Adam Wolny**
Editorial advisor **Mark Glancy**

The words of Cary Grant spoken by **Jonathan Pryce**

Archive researchers **Joan Cohen & Tim Jordan**
Archive coordinator, additional research **Eugénie Gaubert**
Set designer - ADC **Valérie Valéro**
Production manager **Katya Laraison**

Produced by **Christian Popp & Nick Ware**
Executive producers **Annie Roney & Sue Turley**

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Produced by **YUZU Productions**
In coproduction with **ARTE France**
In association with **ro*co films productions**
International distribution **ARTE France**

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YUZU PRODUCTIONS

YUZU Productions is a Paris-based production company created in 2012 by Fabrice Estève and Christian Popp, two producers who have put their international experience and knowledge in common to produce high quality and challenging media content for television, the cinema screen and digital media.

In 6 years YUZU Productions has produced 12 documentaries, and 3 short fictions most of them in coproduction with international producers, and with broadcasters such as ARTE, France Televisions, Showtime, Smithsonian Networks, Al Jazeera Networks, ZDF, CCTV10, RTS, RTBF, VRT, SVT, TVC, TVE, YLE, S4C, TG4, CBC, UR, RTP, Ceska Televisie, ERT... The company has been one of the 6 nominees for the prestigious Procirep Best Documentary Producer award of the Year 2015.

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