



For Release: Oct. 23, 2001

TCM Explores Untold Story of Marlene Dietrich, Her Political Activism and Personal Struggles in Original Documentary to Premiere Dec. 27

Grandson Directs and Produces Documentary Set to Air in Celebration of Dietrich's 100th Birthday

Turner Classic Movies (www.turnerclassicmovies.com) will celebrate Marlene Dietrich's 100th birthday with the world premiere of *Marlene Dietrich: Her Own Song*, a unique documentary on the German-born cabaret singer and acclaimed actress, on Dec. 27, at 8 p.m. ET (special encore presentation at 11:30 p.m.). Narrated by Jamie Lee Curtis and directed and co-produced by Dietrich's grandson, J. David Riva, the documentary probes beyond Dietrich's glamorous persona, famous love affairs and legendary performances to explore the untold story of her artistic achievements and her involvement in American politics and personal struggles with Nazi Germany. Three of her films, including *JUDGMENT AT NUREMBURG* (1961, Dec. 27, 1 a.m.), will accompany the documentary, and a 19 film festival will continue every Thursday in January 2002.

Filmed in Germany, Los Angeles and Washington, D.C., the documentary explores Dietrich's behind-the-scenes role as a political activist while chronicling her rise as a young stage and silent-film actress in Berlin during the stormy 1920s. Unlike any other actor in history, Marlene entertained the troops for two tours during WWII, often placing her own life in danger, while also aiding the war bond effort. Putting her life before others, she often went to the front lines to help rally the spirit of the troops and even lived in the camps with the soldiers. She was subject to frostbite and forced to endure the harsh conditions similarly faced by the troops. The documentary details her continued efforts to support the American troops fighting the Nazi regime after her career began to dwindle. Film clips, including exclusive footage of Dietrich and interviews with family, friends and historians, will show the fierce individuality and personal convictions that caused Dietrich to fight for her beliefs, though it meant that she was declared an enemy by her native country.

"America took me into her bosom when I no longer had a native country worthy of the name," Dietrich once said, "but in my heart I am German—German in my soul."

The documentary, written and co-produced by Karin Kearns, features personal insights from Dietrich's daughter and biographer, Maria Riva; the first-ever interview from her sister's son in Germany; an interview with singer and friend Rosemary Clooney; and an interview with Burt Bacharach, who accompanied her on her concert tours.

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Historical perspective of her support of efforts to overthrow the Nazi regime was provided by friend and Nobel Peace Prize Nominee and German Nazi hunter Beate Klarsfeld and author and film historian Dr. Felix Moller.

Dietrich, who performed on stage until age 70 and lived to be 91, died in self-imposed exile in Paris. She launched her career in Hollywood when she appeared in *THE BLUE ANGEL* (1930, Jan. 3, 10 p.m.) after many years of acting and singing in Germany. She became an overnight success but faded from the spotlight, refusing to return to Germany to appear in movies for the Nazis, through Joseph Goebbels, Hitler's minister of propaganda, made numerous attempts to lure her back. Instead, she helped the Allied war effort by selling bonds, attending USO frontline concerts and performing with American entertainers abroad, earning her two of the highest medals that can be awarded to a civilian from America and France.

As the *Star of the Month* in January, TCM will continue showcasing Dietrich's career with 19 films, including *DESTINY RIDES AGAIN* (1939, Jan. 3, 8 p.m.), *RANCHO NOTORIOUS* (1952, Jan. 10, 10 p.m.) and *DESIRE* (1936, Jan. 17, 8 p.m.). In addition, turnerclassicmovies.com will feature a special section devoted to Dietrich, with photos, descriptions and trailers from many of her films as well as a chance to win a copy of *Marlene Dietrich: Photographs And Memories*, a new book compiled by Jean-Jacques Naudet with captions by Maria Riva (Marlene's daughter). A remarkable visual record highlighting more than 400 photographs of Dietrich and her beloved possessions, the book includes personal recollections by Ernest Hemingway, Josef Von Sternberg, Jean Cocteau, Kenneth Tynan and Edward G. Robinson.

Turner Classic Movies, currently seen in more than 50 million homes, is a 24-hour cable network from Turner Broadcasting System, Inc., an AOL Time Warner company. TCM presents the greatest motion pictures of all time from the largest film library in the world, the combined Time Warner and Turner film libraries, from the '20s through the '80s, commercial-free and without interruption. For more information, please visit the TCM Web site at www.turnerclassicmovies.com.

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