

JULIE CHRISTIE **“AWAY FROM HER”**

JULIE CHRISTIE (Fiona Anderson)

Arguably the most genuinely glamorous, and one of the most intelligent, of all British stars, Julie Christie brought a gust of new, sensual life into British cinema when she swung insouciantly down a drab northern street in John Schlesinger's *Billy Liar* (1963).

Trained for the stage at Central School, after an Indian childhood and English education, she first became known as the artificially created girl in TV's "A for Andromeda" (1961), before making her cinema debut in 1962 in two amusing, lightweight comedies directed by Ken Annakin, *CROOKS ANONYMOUS* and *THE FAST LADY*. She then went on to perform in seasons at the Birmingham Repertory Theatre and the Royal Shakespeare Company.

Schlesinger cast her as the silly, superficial, morally threadbare *DIANA OF DARLING* (1965), for which she won the Oscar, the British Academy Award and New York Critics' award, and which is now powerfully resonant of its period, and again as Thomas Hardy's willful Bathsheba, in *FAR FROM THE MADDING CROWD* (1967), with other 60s icons, Terence Stamp and Alan Bates. Her Lara intermittently illuminates David Lean's *DR. ZHIVAGO* (UK/US, 1965) and the color cameras adored her.

Notwithstanding her beauty, she continued to make the running as a serious actress in demanding films such as Joseph Losey's *THE GO-BETWEEN* (1971), as the bored upper-class woman who ruins a boy's life by involving him in her sexual duplicities; Nicolas Roeg's *DON'T LOOK NOW* (UK/Italy, 1973), with its famously erotic love scenes between Christie and Donald Sutherland; she then appeared in *Uncle Vanya* on Broadway directed by Mike Nicholls and in three US films with Warren Beatty: Robert Altman's *MCCABE & MRS. MILLER* (1971), as a tough Cockney madame out west, (for which she was nominated for an Academy Award) *SHAMPOO* (1975) and *HEAVEN CAN WAIT* (1978).

She was greatly in demand, but became much more choosy about her roles as her own political awareness increased. This means that some of her later films – *MEMOIRS OF A SURVIVOR* (d. David Gladwell, 1980) and the documentary *THE ANIMALS FILM* (d. Victor Schonfeld, 1981), *THE GOLD DIGGERS* (1984), Sally Potter's feminist take on several Hollywood genres - were seen by comparatively few people.

However, the talent and the beauty remained undimmed in such British films as *RETURN OF THE SOLDIER* (d. Alan Bridges, 1982), Kenneth Branagh's *HAMLET* (UK/US, 1996) as Gertrude, and, in the US, *AFTERGLOW* (d. Alan Rudolph, 1997), for which she was Oscar-nominated. In 1995, she returned to the stage in a revival of Harold Pinter's *Old Times* directed by Lindy Davies to laudatory reviews.

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