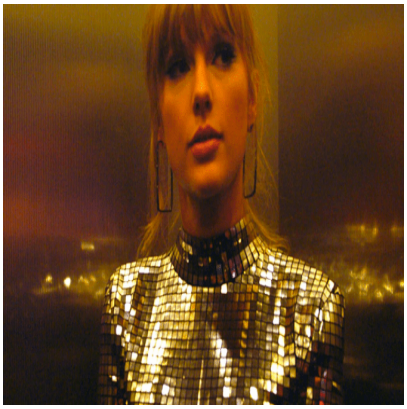


SUNDANCE FILM REVIEW: Taylor Swift Miss Americana

Description

Posted by Larry Gleeson

Taylor Swift: Miss Americana, directed by Lana Wilson, made its world premiere at the 2020 Sundance Film Festival on Opening Night. Admittedly, in tears after seeing Swift perform â??Better Man,â?• in Brian Loschiavoâ??s extraordinary documentary, *Bluebird*, at the 50th Anniversary of the Nashville Film Festival, I was intrigued. Utilizing present-day narrative voice-over from Swift, archival footage, still photos and current interviews from those closest to the megastar and cultural icon, a portrait of who Taylor Swift is, was, and will be is painted with both smooth and coarse strokes. Others appearing in *Miss Americana* are Swiftâ??s mother, best friend, publicist, producer and a plethora of others inside the starâ??s orbit. Using at times both documentary recording techniques of direct cinema and cinema verite, Jenny Roh, reveals as much and probably more than the spoken words. Admittedly, after seeing Swift perform in Brian Loschiavoâ??s documentary, *Bluebird*, at the 50th Anniversary of the Nashville Film Festival, I was intrigued.

Wilson begins with Taylorâ??s first song-writing attempts captured on home videos providing a glimpse into the driving force behind Swiftâ??s rapid ascent into stardom. At the age of 9, Taylor, seated on a performerâ??s chair looks directly into the camera and shares with her audience sheâ??s going to sing a song she wrote yesterday. Without missing a beat a cut returns to Taylor, again in a chair looking into the camera sharing with the audience she about to sing a song she wrote five minutes ago. These moments set the tone for the journey *Miss Americana* takes the audience. At once serious. At other times playful and introspective.

A few pivotal moments occur when Ms. Swift wins album of the year at age 16 â?? an unheard-of achievement â?? the youngest person to ever write, record and perform a number one hit and her rise to stardom is just beginning. What could have been a massive train derailment occurred at the VMA Awards. Swift was honored with the Video of the Year award. Mid-way through her speech a fellow performer under the influence jaunted out on stage, droopy drawers and all, high-jacked a microphone and began belligerently crying foul. Later this artist dubbed â??a jackassâ?• by the then President of the United States, Barack Obama, would lay claim to Swiftâ??s success by his sheer stupidity, ignorance, mean-spiritedness and jealous nature.

The young womanâ??s biggest career moment, normally a monumentally happy occasion, turned nightmarish as the young starlet appeared bewildered and somewhat dumbfounded by the chaotic moment. Loud boos and barbs were hurled from the audience as Swift left stage head-down, shoulder slumped. In present-day time Shift shares what was going through her mind. What transpired over the next few years is unparalleled in the history of the music industry. Swift pumped out four number one albums back-to-back-to-back-to-back. Each album remained at the number one slot on the charts for at least six weeks. No other group or performer, including the Fab Four (The Beatles) has accomplished such a feat.

Alone at the top without a life partner despite a close and loving mother-daughter relationship, Taylor realizes she wants an intimate partner to share the ups and downs of life. The only caveat is both parties decide it needs to be a private relationship. An exquisite camera shot of the couple walking focuses on the shadows cast on willowing grass. A maturing woman, Wilson reveals Swiftâ??s understanding of life and actions to ensure she and other women have an equal opportunity to enjoy success and live their lives to the fullest without regrets and without needing approval from an audience.

All I can say is stay tuned for more on this iconic performer as Swift will continue to reveal (seemingly at times reinventing) who she is in what is truly an art form. Her recent performances and videos continue to receive critical acclaim and her stadium and arena concerts are the hottest tickets in town. And, if thatâ??s not enough, Swift has entered the political ring with an endorsement for the 2018 U.S. Senatorial race in her home state of Tennessee.

If you donâ??t know who Taylor Swift is *Miss Americana* is the doc for you. And, if you think you know Taylor Swift, check out *Miss Americana* for a look into what makes Taylor tick. Highly recommended.

Category

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