Beat: Entertainment

SOPHIA LOREN

THEN, NOW AND TOMORROW

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USPA NEWS -

A nostalgia for a lost Italy impregnated the interview with one of the last surviving stars from the Golden Age of Hollywood, film legend and singer Sofia Villani Scicolone Lazzaro, better known as "Sophia Loren"□.
Last Sunday, hosted by the California Center of the Arts, the luminous Italian diva offered a touching glimpse of the woman behind the celebrity, a multi-dimensional portrait of her incredible life, struggles of her childhood in war-torn Naples, to her life as a screen legend, icon of elegance, devoted mother and grandmother. Loren"" who, in fact, speaks very clear English - walked down memory lane, through her 65-plus year career working with legends such as Vittorio De Sica, Stanley Kramer, Michael Curtiz, Sidney Lumet, Charlie Chaplin, George Cukor, Lina Wertmüller, Robert Altman and Rob Marshall ultimately leading to triumphant Oscar performances.

Born 20 September 1934, growing up in World War II Italy, Loren´s life of glamour and success was preceded by years of poverty and hardship. From trying times in Pozzuoli where she shared her grandmother´s house with her single mother and sister, often enduring starvation and humiliation, Loren shared blossoming from a "toothpick-thin girl"□ into a beautiful woman during adolescence. Getting her start by winning a beauty pageant she recounted, almost in defiance of her great beauty, "not feeling pretty at all"□, "no, I was just okay, not pretty. My face is too short, my mouth is too big, and my nose is too long."□

As one of the most beautiful movie stars in the world and one of Italy's national treasures, her memorable acting career spanning more than six decades, Sophia Loren became known for her dramatic and comic roles, and famed costars such as Cary Grant, Peter Sellers, Charles Boyer, William Holden, Marlon Brando, Jean-Paul Belmondo, Frank Sinatra, Gregory Peck, Jack Lemmon, Paul Newman, especially, Marcello Mastroianni. "The most charming was Marcello Mastroianni,"□ she explained. "He was important in my career because I worked with him for 20 years of my life, we knew each other very well"□.

Loren´s and Mastroianni´s "20 films together"□, are charming, likable and funny pictures like Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow (1963), which won the Oscar for best foreign film. Loren´s tantalizing striptease is still considered one of the most sensual moments in film evoking the frustration of sex, carried by her mesmerizing self-confidence. Crowd-pleasing, neo-realistic "Two Women" (1960), "my favorite movie"□, directed by Italian master Vittorio De Sica, changed Miss Loren's career earning her an Academy Award for her performance as a mother who tries to escape the bombings of World War II with her 13-year-old daughter; a harrowing loss of innocence tale. In addition to the Academy Award, Loren has also won five Golden Globes, six David di Donatello Awards, a Grammy and the Cecil B. DeMille Award for lifetime achievement.

Chatting about her leading men, Loren made it clear she was not a fan of Marlon Brando "was not easy, difficult to work with, he was a great actor, but difficult."□ They co-starred in "A Countess of Hong Kong"□ and she recalls Brando keeping her and Charlie Chaplin waiting, ultimately Chaplin reprimanded him for it. Clark Gable she liked, "but he had a watch and it rang every evening at five. When it rang, he would leave the set abruptly and not come back, a very serious man, very silent. Peter Sellers: "□funny, funny but in real life he was a little sad, very melancholic person, very sad, he was a very good actor, professional"□. Charlie Chaplin: "□a pillar of our profession. Sinatra (Frank): "loved Sinatra, but he did not want to sing on set"□, Cary (Grant) and O´Tool (Peter in Man of La Mancha) "were very British, very, very British, wonderful sense of humor, very nice men."□ "Burton (Richard) stayed at my house while fighting with Taylor (Elizabeth) who lived in a hotel, he was very much in love with her"□ and then there was Cary Grant..."□he was married and sowas I,a very good actor, a special person, very nice, a great actor. He was my mentor, friend and often producer"□.

When asked about her favorite female Hollywood actress, Loren responded without blinking: “Meryl Streep, of course. I do love her. She is very talented, very professional. But the younger generation doesn´t know how to be glamorous. They are only sexy, not glamorous. It comes with a security in who you are. You either have it, or not“.

It was after she met the acclaimed Italian director Carlo Ponti, “love of my life“ whom she married 1966, that her career took off. He renamed her "Sophia Loren" and got her cast in the 1953 film Aida. One year later came her breakthrough role in “The Gold Of Naples“, gaining international fame when starring in “Boy On A Dolphin“. Crossing the Pond in 1958, she found a new home in Hollywood where she was cast in “Desire under the Elms“ alongside Anthony Perkins, based upon the Eugene O'Neill play.

Together Ponti and Loren had two children: Edoardo born in 1973, a film maker and Carlo Jr, born in 1968, an orchestra conductor. They remained married until his death in 2007. Loren who now leads a fairly reclusive “comfortable life in Switzerland, outside Geneva“, prefers to spend time with her children and grandchildren “my family is everything to me. I live for my family; my grandchildren are the most beautiful children I´ve ever seen. My happiness is being a mother and grandmother“ she answered when asked about what the future holds for her.
Loren´s life story, the highs,the lows, the ups and downs, remind us that difficult roads can lead to beautiful destinations after all and as her good friend Sinatra would say: "The lady certainly did it her way." Grazie signora Loren!

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483 Green Lanes
UK, London N13NV 4BS
contact (at) unitedpressagency.com
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