



Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton: A Romance Made and Broken in Hollywood

Charles River Editors

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*Includes pictures.

*Includes their own quotes about their lives and careers.

*Includes a bibliography for further reading.

Hollywood is full of cautionary tales for child actors like Judy Garland, Jackie Coogan, and Macaulay Culkin, who all soared to fame in their youth only to suffer family feuds, drug addiction, or other ill effects of becoming famous so early in life. Even those child actors for whom stardom was not traumatic, such as Shirley Temple, had great difficulty succeeding in Hollywood as an adult, with their careers effectively over by the time they reached adulthood.

On the other hand, the life of Elizabeth Taylor bears little in common with the paradigm of the troubled child star. After arriving in the United States at the age of 9, Taylor was indoctrinated into the life of the Hollywood studio system shortly after child stars Judy Garland and Mickey Rooney, but while Garland suffered great trauma at the hands of the studio system, Taylor's early experience in Hollywood represented the flip side of the coin. Groomed for a life in Hollywood by her zealous mother, Taylor enjoyed her life in the motion picture industry and reveled in the privileged lifestyle and opportunities she enjoyed by virtue of her profession. Acting supplied her with a lavish lifestyle and, more importantly for her, constant attention. From an early age, Taylor displayed a vociferous love for living in the public eye.

In many ways, Taylor enjoyed being in the public spotlight and living the lifestyle of the rich and famous, and her personal life very much resembled a performance suitable for Hollywood. Taylor faced great adversity throughout her life, including being married on eight different occasions to seven different spouses and fighting battles with weight and drug addiction. Still, while many actors grow resentful of public attention, even during her moments of personal struggle Taylor thrived on public attention and enjoyed a mutually adoring relationship with the American public.

In the 1960s, the most popular actor in the world was Richard Burton, a hard-drinking Welshman who was nevertheless so professional that he was one of the preeminent stage performers of his day. In fact, he performed Shakespeare so magnificently that he was compared to British legend Laurence Olivier, and that success ultimately led to a film career that earned him 7 Academy Award nominations, as well as BAFTA and Golden Globe awards for Best Actor. Given his accomplishments on the stage and in Hollywood, Burton became one of the world's most recognizable leading men, so it seemed fitting that he engaged in one of Hollywood's most legendary romances with Elizabeth Taylor while on the set of *Cleopatra*, one of the era's most notorious movies. In fact, his tumultuous relationship with Taylor, which included two marriages, dominated tabloids and remains the one thing most people associate with Burton today, despite the rest of his accomplishments.

Burton's high-profile marriage to Taylor helped bring attention, but it also led to more self-destructive behavior, and in a sense it represented the peak of Burton's career. Over the last decade of his life, Burton began appearing in mediocre films, and due to his declining health and constant drunkenness, his performances were mediocre as well, often involving incoherent slurring. The fast life ultimately caught up

with him in 1984, when a cerebral hemorrhage killed him at the age of 58. Fittingly, it was the same cause of death that befell his alcoholic father in 1957, just as Burton was at the precipice of Hollywood stardom.

This book examines the lives and careers of the famous lovers. Along with pictures and a bibliography, you will learn about Taylor and Burton like never before.

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