



The Golden Girls of MGM: Greta Garbo, Joan Crawford, Lana Turner, Judy Garland, Ava Gardner, Grace Kelly, and Others

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Garbo and Crawford. Ava, Hedy, Judy, Liz epitomized Hollywood's golden era. With a trembling lip or sultry eye, with a tear or song or husky whisper, these women held moviegoers across America in their sway from the hard times of the 1930s through the booming postwar years to the early sixties. They were royalty and box office, and led pampered public lives—furs, jewels, designer gowns; limousines, flash bulbs, handsome escorts—that captured the national imagination. They also signed seven-year contracts with a morals clause, and the more they slipped, the more the secret abortions, efficient cover-ups, legal legerdemain, and dropped charges bound them to the wizard in their Oz, Louis B. Mayer. The slips are here along with the successes. Here, too, are the Blonde Bombshell Jean Harlow, Million-Dollar Mermaid Esther Williams, Sweater Girl Lana Turner, and bad girl Ava Gardner ("She can't act. She can't talk. She's terrific," declared Mayer after her screen test). From Jeanette MacDonald and Norma Shearer to Princess Grace and Dame Elizabeth Taylor, the sixteen portraits in this lively, photograph-filled volume, each accompanied by the star's filmography, tell the tales that have long lay hidden behind the gossip and the glories of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer's glamorous golden girls.

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From Reader Review The Golden Girls of MGM: Greta Garbo, Joan Crawford, Lana Turner, Judy Garland, Ava Gardner, Grace Kelly, and Others for online ebook

Emily says

The book contains 10 chapters with vignettes on different golden girls of MGM and at the end had a chapter with shorter vignettes on ones who were famous but not so naughty. The chapters started with something about how they were famous or a famous event or such. Then it would go back and say where they were born, a bit about their childhood, and then how they came to hollywood. Followed with how they became part of MGM, what they did for the system, who they married and such, then how it all ended for them.

I enjoyed reading about each of the different actresses (Jeanette MacDonald, Norma Shearer, Greta Garbo, Jean Harlow, Joan Crawford, Lana Turner, Judy Garland, Ava Gardner, Grace Kelly, Elizabeth Taylor, and the smaller ones on Heddy Lamar, Katharine Hepburn, Ester Williams, Debbie Reynolds, and June Allyson) and really they made me want to read more about them.

Barbara VA says

As Bree said, HORRIBLE writing, the exact same formula for every chapter, just change the name of the actress, all the men are the same. Makes all the women sound naive and ignorant, no just plain stupid. There were no original sources listed although she mentions speaking with Joan Crawford several times. I love old movies but this was just malicious gossip

Allen Quinn says

I've had a fascination with Hollywood, especially the Golden Age, since I was a kid. Always looking to watch interesting documentaries/biographies and read books on that period. Love MGM and the amazing performers of that time and am always on the hunt to learn something new about them. This book centered on the women of MGM. Seemed promising, but ended up being quite disappointing. Definitely a book you rent from a library as opposed to paying.

Much of the dialogue and stories Wayne proposes are highly questionable (and in my opinion, not very believable). You're better off reading this then going onto Wikipedia or Turner Classic Films, which I did after reading each chapter on a star, and watching documentaries/biographies.

One thing that caught my eye was the amount of mistakes (Jean Harlow was not in Grand Hotel, for instance), spelling errors, and sentences failing to include periods or commas. It looked very sloppy and it's annoying because those mistakes were so easy to fix. The price sticker on my copy was \$38.95. I wouldn't pay that for such lazy writing and editing. In addition, each vignette follows the exact same formula. It's really lame.

Each chapter breaks down a star. You get the classics, from Joan Crawford, Norma Shearer, Judy Garland,

Greta Garbo, Grace Kelly, Lana Turner, Ava Gardner, just to name a few. Then there's a second section that briefly covers celebrities whom the author finds less interesting/scandalous. It was a waste of time. Why bother? It felt like she just wanted to cram as many big names in there as possible. It was pointless.

If you're looking for an easy-to-read book to pass the time or you (like me) love Hollywood and the Golden Era, then I'd still give it a read (as long as you don't pay for it). I did learn a couple things I hadn't known before and at least it had me watching some more documentaries and biographies, so it did its job. I would still take a lot of the information/stories presented with a grain of salt (tho they are very amusing, I must admit) and seek out other books and sources.

Jan says

I love reading about actresses from this era. Much more interesting than the airbrushed actresses of today.

Michaelene says

The stories were interesting but I did agree with other reviews that it was the same formula over and over with each actress. Either way entertaining but I moved on to other books before I finished this one.

Roxanne says

This book is about the stable of girls that MGM had. Greta, Joan, Lana, Judy, Ava, Grace, etc. The thing is the public believed the persona of these actresses based on the roles that they played. But these ladies were regular humans just like the rest of us and they had messy lives. That does take away from their talent. In those days all this stuff got covered up to protect the MGM brand.

Lizabeth Tucker says

The MGM Studios boasted that they had "More Stars Than There Are in Heaven". With female stars such as Jeanette MacDonald, Greta Garbo, Joan Crawford, Judy Garland, and many more during the Golden Age of Cinema, it wasn't an idle boast.

These women were at the mercy of Louis B. Mayer, a man with the ability to recognize talent, but who also controlled everything in their lives. Nothing was done without his permission, from dating to marriage to divorce. He would even force them to get abortions, whether the actress was married or not, if it interfered with production.

The studios owned Los Angeles, including the police and the courts. No matter what the scandal or the crime, the studio fixer would make it go away.

Wayne has done a remarkable job of filling in scads of biographical history into each star's chapter, brutally honest about the good and the bad. But she also reveals glimpses into how the studio system contributed to their inability to think for themselves once they either left the management of the studio or after Mayer was forced out.

I was surprised by the number of typos and missing or incorrect words throughout the book. Of course, by the book's copyright date of 2002, most publishers had fired the majority of proofreaders. Pity that even major publishers like Carroll & Graf Publishers let their standards down so badly.

I loved this book! Even the small font used couldn't put me off. I believe the author has a companion book for the leading men of MGM. I shall definitely look into finding it to read as well. All in all, this was a smart buy at the Melbourne Beach Library Book Sale. 5 out of 5.

McKayla says

I always used to think that I missed the golden age of Hollywood. Reading this book made me realize that the so called "Golden Age" was like that for a reason. Every aspect of ones life in hollywood was controlled to make it seem that way. To make you want to be like your favorite movie star. Some of what these ladies had to go through and how they were treated was a little hard to read. Now I'm not so sad that I missed this era.

Jacquelyn Gill says

I wanted so much to like this book, which I thought would be a one-stop shop for background on many of my favorite Hollywood starlets. I shrugged off the lackluster writing, the cliches, the choppiness of the sections. Then, I started noticing glaring errors-- misattributed quotes, misspelled actors' names, or incorrect references (Jean Harlow was not in Grand Hotel, and there is no pier in Pasadena!).

After doing a little digging, I read that apparently this book is full of word-for-word chunks from previous books, and that there is serious contention over how much of her inside knowledge is even true. I'm not naive enough to think that the stars of the silver screen didn't have affairs or abortions, so, unlike some who can't bear to think of their screen idol as being less-than-pure, I don't object to the content. I was willing to overlook Ms. Wayne's poor writing because the stories were so fascinating. As I spotted error after error, I lost all trust in the author. If I want fiction, I'll stick to the movies.

The book is sloppy, error-ridden, and poorly organized (there are identical paragraphs for Norma Shearer and Joan Crawford's sections!). If I can't trust Ms. Wayne to get the known facts straight, how can I trust her about the juicy gossip? Never mind that the book misses a huge opportunity to really analyze the MGM era, and its impacts on, say, the film industry, pop culture, or female identity. Skip this one, and go check out Mick LaSalle's *Complicated Woman* instead.

ClassicHollywood says

Filled with behind-the-scenes information on our favorite Golden Girls, I have to admit I was shocked by this book!!! I feel slightly jaded, but wiser, though I haven't quite figured out if that's good thing yet. Ignorance really was bliss.

A plethora of all the down and dirty details, this book divulges secrets, affairs, and a lot of naughtiness. I kept trying to put it down,(because really I like my Classic Hollywood stars prim, proper and capable of immaculate conception)...I don't really want to learn they're human and capable of cheating on their husbands, friends, or introducing their kids to members of the mob.

I gave this book 5 stars, because if you know anything about Classic Hollywood, you know it wasn't really different from that trashy stuff we have in Hollywood today. The big difference? These esteemed actresses never went outside without their faces on and were under the thumb of very tyrannical , yet sometimes smart studio systems. Extremely well written, and insightful. Must Read.

Kendra says

Like the companion book on the male stars of MGM, this book is to be read with a grain of salt. The author shows her preferences and biases regarding certain stars.

Even so, it's interesting to catch a glimpse of the female stars of the golden era at MGM.

Wishing she'd added a few more: Cyd Charisse, Jane Powell, Kathryn Grayson, Leslie Caron...to name a few.

Amy says

I guess it is reality, but these stars lived lives that a just a bit too graphic for me. I would rather think of them as they looked on the screen, wholesome and pure.

Lorianne Reuser says

Enjoyable? Yes. Poorly written? Quite. Salacious? Oh hells yes. This was like reading a gossip column where the writer is out to make moral judgements on everyone - not overtly, but insidiously through constantly using every negative woman stereotype. Does the author even like her subjects? Why did she write this book? I'm not even sure.

And yet it still sparks! I read most of the book in one sitting because it just appeals to the part of you that wants to KNOW even if you doubt the truth of what you're reading.

So while I don't trust anything in this book, it was still a fun read and valuable for the little nuggets you hope are true - particularly all the mentions of friendships between some of these ladies scattered throughout!

Jay says

Salacious hogwash. As others have said this is poorly written, badly researched with glaring errors for the simplest of facts and unfounded claims of scandalous behavior with no supporting references given. The worst may be the invented private conversations, always featuring the most unbelievable claims in the book, that no one but the long dead participants could have been privy to. There are many thorough, informative books on all these women, this is vulgar trash. Skip it!

Ashley says

This is quite possibly the worst book I've ever written. I wasn't aware that you could pass off gossip and rumors as nonfiction. The writing sucks, too. The subject of this book has some wonderful potential, but the lousy writing, the lack of any real sources, and the fabricated dialogue kill it off. Too bad someone else didn't take this subject and write a book that had an ounce of truth to it. The Garbo section even quotes the Barry Paris book as a source, rather than taking the effort to find an original source. Terrible, terrible, terrible. I couldn't even make it through this book because the image of these actresses rolling over in their graves after this book was published has been stuck in my head ever since I started reading it.
