

# [PDF] How To Be A Movie Star: Elizabeth Taylor In Hollywood

**William J. Mann - pdf download free book**

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**Description:**

**Product Description** In the 60s, Elizabeth Taylor's affair with the married Richard Burton knocked John Glenn's orbit of the moon off front pages nationwide. Yet, despite all the gossip, the larger-than-life personality and influence of this very human woman has never been captured. William Mann, praised by Gore Vidal, Patricia Bosworth, and Gerald Clarke for *Kate*, uses untapped sources and conversations to show how she ignited the sexual revolution with her on-and off-screen passions, helped kick down the studio system by taking control of her own career, and practically invented the

big business of celebrity star-making. With unputdownable storytelling he tells the full truth without losing Taylor's magic, daring, or wit.

Readers will feel they are sitting next to Taylor as she rises at MGM, survives a marriage engineered for publicity, feuds with Hedda Hopper and Mr. Mayer, wins Oscars, endures tragedy, juggles Eddie Fisher, Richard Burton and her country's conservative values. But it is the private Elizabeth that will surprise--a woman of heart and loyalty, who defends underdogs, a savvy professional whose anger at the studio's treatment of her led to a lifelong battle against that very system. All the Elizabeth's are here, finally reconciled and seen against the exciting years of her greatest spirit, beauty, and influence. Swathed in mink, staring us down with her lavender eyes, disposing of husbands but keeping the diamonds, here is Elizabeth Taylor as she was meant to be, leading her epic life on her own terms, playing the game of supreme stardom at which she remains, to this day, unmatched.

**A Q&A with William J. Mann, Author of *How to Be a Movie Star*** **Q:** There have been more books on Elizabeth Taylor than just about any other star in Hollywood. Why do we need another one? **A:** As entertaining as some of those books have been, none has really explored how she did it--how she created the culture of celebrity that we have today. Elizabeth Taylor really invented the modern enterprise of fame. Everyone from Madonna to Britney to Miley Cyrus is taking a page from her book. **Q:** How were you able to chart this phenomenon? **A:** It's helpful to understand how Hollywood works. Publicists and press agents would like us to think everything is spontaneous and real. Hey, those two stars making a movie together just happened to fall in love on the set! That it also provides a publicity bonanza is completely separate. There was no coordination, no manipulation. At least that's what they'd like us to think. **Q:** Was that true for Taylor then? Were her legendary romances all manufactured for how they'd play in the press? **A:** Not at all. Elizabeth was and is a passionate, independent woman. She always believed in what she was doing. For example, I chronicle the frantic press coverage and feverish public interest in her first marriage, when she was just 18, to Nicky Hilton--who, incidentally, was Paris Hilton's granduncle. As a romantic teenager, Elizabeth was gung-ho about making the marriage work--no matter that MGM was stage-managing the whole thing. They pushed this innocent girl into a marriage that turned out to be abusive and traumatic for her all so they could publicize a film, *Father of the Bride*, which was timed to come out at the same time. So Elizabeth was a movie bride at the same time as she was a real-life bride, but real life had far more dire consequences. **Q:** So that must have been an early lesson for her in star-making, albeit a very difficult one. **A:** Certainly she learned early on how the game was played. But what's wonderful about Elizabeth is that she never became jaded or cynical or dishonest. In fact, I think she's one of the most authentic stars ever to come out of Hollywood. She never lied to the public the way other stars did. But previous biographies have limited their approach to simply chronicling her passionate heart--without taking into account how these romances and marriages and scandals actually benefited her career. She really did fall in love with Eddie Fisher and Richard Burton while they were married to other women. But that didn't mean she and those around her didn't understand just how advantageous the headlines could be for Elizabeth. **Q:** But it's always been said that the scandals with Fisher and Burton threatened to end her career, that the studios worried the public would turn its back on such a "scarlet woman." **A:** That's just the spin. That's what they had to say. It was the old conventional wisdom. But Elizabeth is actually a very important figure in terms of celebrity culture. More than anyone else, she bridges the divide between Old Hollywood and New Hollywood. Old Hollywood, represented by the studios and conservative columnists like Hedda Hopper, expected the scandals to destroy Elizabeth. Indeed, they did their best to make sure she was penalized. But Elizabeth, who was being advised by a new breed of canny publicists and agents, knew that in this emerging Hollywood, there really was no such thing anymore as bad publicity. **Q:** She was pretty damn famous, wasn't she? Far more famous than anything we have today, like Britney and Paris and the rest? **A:** Absolutely. Especially in the 1950s and 1960s, when everything she did made headlines. Husbands, romances, movies, health crises,

diamonds. John Glenn was making his historic orbit of the Earth but many newspapers still went with the Taylor-Burton scandal in Rome as their top story. **Q:** And this then became the norm for celebrity culture? It changed the concept of "news." **A:** Exactly. In the past, serious publications wouldn't lower themselves to cover movie stars. But suddenly there were editorials about Elizabeth Taylor all across the country. She was an enormous cultural influence. She showed that one could still be famous outside of the old studio structure by engaging her own team of personal managers and press agents. As a child and teenaged star, she learned all those valuable lessons at MGM. Then she took what she had learned and made it work for her on her own. And turned out to be an even bigger star outside the studio than she was before. **Q:** Was she a better actress or a better movie star? **A:** I think Elizabeth would acknowledge that she excelled more often as "movie star" than she did as "actress." But she could really be damn good at times. Here's something that sets her apart from these modern-day stars who, whether they know it or not, are following her playbook. Elizabeth understood that fame is an exchange with the public. For every headline there needed to be a good movie. You had to give something back. She never simply coasted on her fame. Instead, she turned in some truly outstanding performances in *A Place in the Sun*, *Giant*, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, and *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*--there are others, but those are her four best, in my opinion. **Q:** She's known for so many health crises. There was the time she almost died in London and the whole world watched and waited for news. How true was all that? **A:** Everything's true with Elizabeth. Whether or not she was as critical as she and those around her claimed, there's no doubting the sincerity of the experience for her. But even still, that shouldn't discount just how brilliant she and her publicists were in using that experience to her advantage. A year before, in the wake of the Fisher scandal, she had been tarred as Hollywood's home-wrecker. Now she was hailed as Lazarus back from the grave. In the book, I document the fascinating process of how this particular episode played out in the press and then climaxed with her winning her first Academy Award. It's a perfect illustration of the book's title: *How to Be a Movie Star*. **Q:** So you're saying that Elizabeth Taylor was far more shrewd than we've been led to believe. **A:** Absolutely. Far, far more shrewd. You know, "smart" has never been the first word that comes to mind when we think of Elizabeth Taylor. Glamorous, beautiful, alluring, sure. But in fact she was perhaps the smartest of all the old stars in knowing how to both maintain her fame and preserve a real private life as well. She didn't sacrifice personal happiness on the altar of fame, as so many others did. She had both. **Q:** Would modern-day Hollywood exist without Elizabeth Taylor? **A:** Well, it sure would look a heck of a lot different. Elizabeth was the first female star to demand a million dollars a picture and a percent of the grosses. The deals she struck in the early 1960s really changed the financial structure of Hollywood. When she heard not long ago that Julia Roberts was getting something like twenty million a picture, she just smiled and said, "I started it." I think it's a perfect irony that a woman who so loathed the old studio system helped create the business model that replaced it. **Q:** What else do you reveal about Elizabeth that we never knew before? **A:** There's considerable new information on her mother, a fascinating woman in her own right, as well about as Mike Todd, Elizabeth's third husband who really set her on the road to the kind of extraordinary fame she eventually enjoyed. There are some important re-considerations on how she met and married Todd, and the same with Eddie Fisher, and then Richard Burton. It's so important to understand these people's lives in context with everyone else that was happening around them, and I attempt to do that here with Elizabeth, to not have her life read like pages from some old *Photoplay* magazine. **Q:** But to do that, you need fresh sources. Did you find new sources writing the book? **A:** I was fortunate to get many people close to Elizabeth to speak with me, both on and off the record. I was also able to get my hands on important documents that had never been used before or severely under-utilized. A journal kept by the producer of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* allowed me to get an inside, up-close view of the making of that picture. George Stevens' personal papers recreated the intimate day-to-day production of *Giant* and *A Place in the Sun*. Then there were Hedda Hopper's private letters and Mike Todd's FBI files and records from the MGM legal department and depositions Elizabeth gave in the lawsuit Fox brought against her. You really have dug out this new stuff or else you end up relying on old newspaper clippings, which are recycled

by every biographer.

**Photographs from *How to Be a Movie Star: Elizabeth Taylor in Hollywood* (Click on Images to Enlarge)**

1939: Elizabeth with her mother Sara, and brother Howard 1941: Elizabeth's first publicity photo, Universal Studios

1945: Elizabeth posing with Roddy McDowall Early 1950s: Publicity photo (photo not included in the book)

**From Publishers Weekly** In his proficient and titillating biography of one of the last greats to emerge from the Hollywood studio system, Mann (*Kate: The Woman Who Was Hepburn*) spotlights Taylor's feverish, sensuous years during the high '50s and '60s, when she set her own standards of fame, both moral and professional. Tinged by scandal as well as touched by greatness as an actress, Taylor was the first female movie star to earn a million dollars for a movie plus a share of the profits (*Cleopatra* in 1963). Mann relishes depicting Taylor's larger-than-life appetites, whether for men, jewels or food, and marvels at her ability to arouse and sidestep scandal, as well as to demonstrate continually a singular devotion to her acting craft, as captured in *A Place in the Sun* and *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* Taylor managed not only to play along with the old Hollywood system perfectly—for example, allowing MGM to orchestrate her first marriage to Nicky Hilton in 1950 in order to pump publicity for her film *Father of the Bride*—but to flout it outrageously, e.g., by becoming the ultimate home wrecker in Eddie Fisher's marriage, and all to her advantage. Mann employs an authoritative voice, promising intimacies but still remaining respectful of his subject, and concentrates on Taylor's skillful use of marriages and illness to get what she wanted. By refusing to apologize for her flagrant adulterous affair with Richard Burton, Taylor possibly spurred the sexual revolution of the 1960s, Mann suggests. Reading this life is like gorging on a chocolate sundae. (Oct.)

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