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**When Stars Collide**

**By Stephen Schochet**

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During the silent era it was thought a waste of money to make a movie with more than one star. Personalities like Charlie Chaplin, Harold Lloyd and Buster Keaton were considered potent enough box office on their own. But with dwindling attendance during the great depression MGM decided to feature Hollywood's first all star ensemble cast in *Grand Hotel* (1932) starring the mammoth egos of Joan Crawford, Wallace Beery, John Barrymore and Greta Garbo. The director Edmund Goulding was unable to let Joan Crawford and Garbo have any scenes together for fear they might try to upstage each other. Although she complimented her Swedish co-star's beauty, Crawford hated Garbo's demands for top billing. Knowing that Greta hated tardiness and Marlene Dietrich, Crawford was constantly late and played Dietrich's records loudly on the set.

Crawford had another classic encounter with rival Bette Davis on the set of *Whatever Happened To Baby Jane* (1962). Betty, knowing that Joan was the widow of Alfred Steele, the former head of the Pepsi Corporation, had a Coke dispenser brought in for the cast and crew. When Joan was late Bette, an often nasty woman but a total pro, would proclaim loudly, "Is the Widow Steele ready yet?" Joan retaliated by lining her dress pockets with weights so in a scene when Davis had to drag Crawford's nearly dead character across the floor, she almost broke her back.

Male stars don't always get along either. On location in Japan, for the filming of *The Teahouse Of The August Moon* (1956), Glenn Ford paid a visit to his co-star Marlon Brando's dressing room. "Marlon did you eat one of the chocolate chip cookies my wife sent me?" "No I didn't Glenn." "OK." Ford hesitated at the door. "Marlon, all you to do was ask, you didn't have to take one." Ford left to shoot his next scene giving the infuriated Brando time to go into Ford's dressing room and smash the remaining cookies with a sledgehammer.

Another Ford, Harrison, had a dustup with Brad Pitt during the making of *The Devil's Own* (1996). At first Pitt was excited to be working with the older actor, but his enthusiasm waned as the script focus moved away from his sympathetic young Irish killer to Ford's middle-aged, happily married policeman.

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Ford perhaps threatened by the younger star, accused Pitt of trying to be an apologist for the IRA. The film was delayed almost every day for hours as Pitt, Ford and director Alan Pakula would argue about the script. The budget skyrocketed to over ninety million, became a box office failure and led to Columbia Pictures head Mark Canton, being fired. During the production when the two had stars had fight scenes together they took out their frustrations by landing real blows.

An all star male cast can make it hard to stand out. Steve McQueen had been so desperate to appear in *The Magnificent Seven* (1960), he had intentionally crashed a car and used his minor injuries to temporarily get out of his television series *Wanted Dead Or Alive* (1958–1961). He snuck down to Mexico while he was "recuperating" to work on *Magnificent*. His new challenge was how not to be overshadowed by the movie's star Yul Brynner. The colorful, bigger than life Brynner was actually five foot nine (same as McQueen) and concerned about his height on screen. For the first scene between Chris (Brynner) and Vin (McQueen) the Swiss Mongolian actor built a hill of dirt that would allow him to tower over his co-star. But Steve kept blowing his lines. Before each new take he would kick some dirt

out from underneath Yul's hill. By the time he got the scene right Brynner was nearly standing in a hole.

Sometimes the most petty arguments will break out between male stars and their leading ladies. A tender scene in *The Bishop's Wife* (1947) was delayed because Cary Grant and Loretta Young couldn't face each other. Both insisted that their left profiles were more their more photogenic half and strongly pushed for that position in front of the camera. After the standoff lasted a few hours the furious producer Sam Goldwyn came down to the set and shouted, "If I photograph only half, I pay only half!" The problem was solved with Young gazing out the window and Grant coming up from behind, placing his arms around her and gently resting his chin on her shoulder, so both left profiles remained in full view.

Ten years later Grant fell in love his leading lady Sophia Loren while making *Pride And Passion* (1957). Their co-star Frank Sinatra got extremely jealous. Trying to make friends Loren explained to Sinatra in Italian that she was worried about her English for upcoming publicity interviews. As usual the devil took over Sinatra. He advised her to use foul language in every sentence. Especially the "F" word which was a term of endearment to Americans. When Sophia conducted her first press conference the shocked reporters asked her where she learned to speak like that. After a few good belly laughs, she was advised to make Cary Grant her new English teacher.

Stephen Schochet is the author and narrator of the audiobooks *Fascinating Walt Disney* and *Tales Of Hollywood*. The Saint Louis Post Dispatch says, "these two elaborate productions are exceptionally entertaining." Hear realaudio samples of these great, unique gifts at

### **Support With Stars And Stripes**

**By Hallidae Thomason**

## When Stars Collide

It is a great thing to be proud of and grateful for the country you come from. It is an even greater thing, I submit, to show your pride and gratefulness in ways that are proactive and productive. One of the best ways that I, as an American, have decided to actively support my country is by displaying our nation's stars and stripes in every place that I can.

My country's flag, the stars and stripes, is perhaps the most American of all symbols we have. Among other things, houses, schools, businesses and even cars choose to show their support for America by displaying proudly the stars and stripes. You do not have to drive very far down any street or through any neighborhood in our country before you see a flag flying high in the wind.

There is something about the stars and stripes that makes people feel really American and reminds them about the sacred history of our nation. Most Americans cannot help but think of the great freedoms that our country enjoys and the sacrifices that have been made in order to attain that freedom with each sight of the stars and stripes they have. The stars and stripes remind Americans of the founding of our country, of the great Civil War that took place to bring freedom to many of our captives, and of the men and women who have spent their lives to preserve the lives of others.

Not all Americans love the stars and stripes like I do. In fact, some people choose to harm and even burn the American flag in protest against the values or actions of our country. Often during times of war, for example, Americans can be found burning the stars and stripes to symbolize the way our country is being destroyed through war. Although in some ways burning a flag seems to go against everything that America stands for, in other ways this kind of protest is exactly what forms the substance of America: freedom. America is the kind of place where Americans can spend their life honoring and protecting the stars and stripes or harming and destroying the stars and stripes. Each response to our country's freedoms must be tolerated by the other.

There are many ways to show your support for the country you love. However, there are few ways as striking and memorable as displaying proudly the stars and stripes.

A long time history lover, Hallidae Thomason is an author about all things patriotic. Learn more about the stars and stripes of our great country by checking out

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