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Ed McMahon Dies at 86

Late night Johnny Carson fixture loses to pneumonia



SOVIET DUD: A scene from "Katyn."
POLISH FILM INSTITUTE

Movie Review: 'Katyn'

By JOHN SMITHIES
Epoch Times Staff

This is a commendable but badly directed exhumation of a terrible massacre committed by the Soviet Communist Party in 1940.

The killing of some 15,000 Polish army officers in the Katyn forest still resonates over the country. Until the fall of Russian communism in 1989 details were unknown as to what happened to these officers, with the Russians blaming the Germans for the massacre. In 1992 Boris Yeltsin finally admitted that the massacre had been directly authorized by Joseph Stalin.

Obviously this is a subject that the world needs to see—but it's one that deserves a better director than Andrej Wajda.

Wajda—a veteran of Polish cinema—fails to provide an emotional core to his film. There are just too many characters, none of whom we are given time to connect with, and many that are introduced and never seen again. It makes for a confusing and unsatisfying watch.

The closest we come to a sympathetic storyline is that of Anna, wife of army general Andrzej, who is separated from her husband when he's taken off to a Soviet concentration camp. Both Maja Ostaszewska as Anna and Artur Zmijewski as Andrzej have a fair crack at their roles, but often seem bogged down by the self-important dialogue.

It is a shame that for the most part, Katyn is talky, plodding and overly aware of its own significance. The shocking climax, as the soldiers are mercilessly shot by the Soviets, is too little, too late.

Worthy and dull—it's a bad combination.

LOS ANGELES (Reuters)—Ed McMahon, a fixture on U.S. late-night television for 30 years as the full-throated announcer and sidekick for Johnny Carson on NBC's "The Tonight Show," died on Tuesday at 86 after battling a series of illnesses in recent months.

The veteran TV personality best known for his nightly introduction of Carson in a deep, booming voice with the drawn-out line, "Heeeeeeeeee's Johnny!" died at a Los Angeles-area hospital, and was immediately hailed by friends and former colleagues as an icon of American popular culture.

"He died early this morning with his wife and loved ones by his side," his spokesman Howard Bragman said. McMahon had been battling pneumonia, among many other illnesses.

Outgoing, affable and possessing a robust, baritone voice, McMahon began his career with stints as

a bingo caller, carnival barker and boardwalk pitchman before becoming a broadcast announcer and TV host.

Trained as a U.S. Marine fighter pilot during World War II, he flew missions in Korea in the 1950s.

He went on to become one of the most celebrated sidekicks in TV history as Carson's right-hand man on "The Tonight Show" from 1962 to 1992, when Carson retired as host.

The gregarious McMahon, a frequent comic foil for the Carson during ad-libbed banter at the top of the show, was familiar even off camera for his "Hi-oooooh!" and frequent guffaws at Carson's monologue jokes, especially when a punch line fell flat. Carson died in 2005 at age 79.

"Ed's introduction of Johnny was a classic broadcasting ritual -- reassuring and exciting. Ed was a true broadcaster, and an integral part of Johnny Carson's 'Tonight Show.' We

will miss him," talk show host David Letterman said on Tuesday.

ENDURING CATCHPHRASE

McMahon's signature introduction of Carson endured as a catchphrase. Jack Nicholson's maniacal character in the 1980 movie thriller "The Shining" announced "Heeeeeeee's Johnny!" as he burst through a door to menace his wife with an ax.

McMahon was a leading figure on several other TV shows, too, including the talent show "Star Search" in the 1980s.

He was a long-time co-host of Jerry Lewis' annual telethon benefiting the Muscular Dystrophy Association, and he became well-known as the presenter of the American Family Publishing sweepstakes, as well as a pitchman on numerous TV commercials.

Lewis said McMahon was "a dear, dear friend. We were always making jokes, cracking each other up ... It's

hard to imagine doing the (telethon) without him."

California governor and former movie star Arnold Schwarzenegger said America had lost "one of its greatest and most memorable television personalities."

"From 'Star Search' to the 30 years he spent in our living rooms as an integral part of the 'Tonight Show,' Ed brought joy and laughter to millions of Americans," Schwarzenegger said in a statement.

McMahon made headlines a year ago when he defaulted on a \$4.8 million mortgage on his six-bedroom Beverly Hills mansion, although he later found a buyer and avoided foreclosure.

The star blamed his financial woes on having broken his neck about 18 months earlier, leaving him unable to work. He also sued Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, accusing it of failing to diagnose the neck fracture and botching two operations.



Ed McMahon.
PHOTO BY STEPHEN SHUGERMAN/
GETTY IMAGES



STANDING STRONG: Streisand is working on a new jazz album with Diana Krall.
SEAN GALLUP/GETTY IMAGES

Streisand Hits Jazz on First Studio Album in Four Years

LOS ANGELES (Reuters)—Barbra Streisand has joined forces with Canadian jazz singer-pianist Diana Krall on her first studio album in four years, which is set for release on September 29, her record label said on Monday.

Columbia Records said the album "Love Is The Answer" is Streisand's first full-length collection of new studio recordings since 2005's "Guilty Pleasures" and her first album since "Live In Concert 2006."

Last year, Streisand was preoccupied with the U.S. election campaign but the singer/actress said this year she had managed to get back to the business of entertaining with a new president in the White House as she was able to relax again.

"Love Is The Answer" presents the artist as a cabaret and jazz singer of emotional clarity, depth and matu-

rity," Columbia Records, a unit of Sony Corp, said in a statement.

On the new album, Streisand works for the first time with Grammy-winning Krall and her quartet of guitar, bass, and drums as well as songwriter Johnny Mandel, whom she worked with on her 1993 "Back to Broadway" album.

Song titles for the album have yet to be announced.

Streisand, 67, has blazed an extraordinary trail through music, theater, film and television in the four decades since she became the toast of Broadway.

She is the winner of 10 Grammys, two Academy Awards—Best Actress, "Funny Girl" and Best song, "Evergreen"—and numerous Emmys. Last year she was inducted as a Kennedy Center honoree.

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