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HANGOVER LOUNGE

Present

**'TISAUTUMN
THE SEARCH FOR
JACKIEPARIS**

A Film by Raymond De Felitta

RELEASE DATE: December 7, 2007 (NYC)

RUNNING TIME: 100 minutes

RATING: Not Rated

OFFICIAL WEBSITES:

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SYNOPSIS

In 1991, Raymond De Felitta was listening to a Jazz station and heard a singer by the name of Jackie Paris. Entranced by his style and technique, De Felitta began researching Paris. He learned Paris had opened for Lenny Bruce, that his voice was admired by among others, Ella Fitzgerald, Nat Cole and Sarah Vaughn. However, his research abruptly ended when he read in The Biographical Dictionary of American Music, that Paris had died in 1977. De Felitta thought that was the end of the story but one night in March of 2004, he was reading the New Yorker Magazine and saw an advertisement listing Paris' comeback at the Jazz Standard. Stunned, he wondered where had Paris been all these years, what had come of his life and why had a singer of this talent fallen into such obscurity.

'Tis Autumn - The Search For Jackie Paris is not just a documentary about a great but unheralded jazz singer. It's a film that explores the very nature of what it is to live the life of an artist--any artist. Filmmaker Raymond De Felitta examines the life of cult favorite jazz singer Jackie Paris, but at the same time he might as well be exploring the life of any artist in any discipline, too many of whom share the same fate that Paris did; the explosive debut followed by the years of ups and downs, the constant hope that success, though out of reach, is around the corner, the private tragedies that grow out of artistic frustration, and the final, self-inflicted wounds which all too often cause the once promising to descend into bitterness and chaos, a prelude to vanishing completely.

Working with rare found footage and new interviews with jazz legends such as Billy Taylor, George Wein, Mark Murphy and Ruth Price, as well as the final concert footage and last interviews Jackie Paris ever gave — De Felitta constructs an emotional mystery story which asks the question, who or what is to blame when a great talent goes from sensation to footnote during their life span?

A Note from the Director

Jackie Paris (an Italian-American born in Nutley, New Jersey) burst on the jazz scene in post-war New York. A “singer's singer” and one of the first true be-bop vocalists, he immediately attracted the attention of Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie, with whom he toured. Peggy Lee and Ella Fitzgerald both declared him their favorite male vocalist and the brilliant (and opinionated) Charles Mingus hired Paris as his vocalist for his own artist run record label, ‘Debut’. His voice was a one-of-a-kind instrument, alternating between a harsh bluesy-ness and a deeply sensual baritone for ballads. He released five LP's in the 1950's and early '60's, one of which contained his world famous recording of “Skylark” which the songs composer, Hoagy Carmichael, considered the ultimate rendition of the song. He won the Downbeat Critics Poll as ‘Best New Male Vocalist’ in 1953 and consistently made the Esquire Top Vocal picks, placing in the top ten six years in a row.

So why have you never heard of him? The story of Jackie Paris is one of great promise and opportunity mixed with bad luck, bad timing and a bad self-image, which led the volatile singer to burn many bridges. By the early 1970's, many thought he had died.

Indeed, when I found a mention in the New Yorker magazine, telling of Paris performing at the Jazz Standard in March 2004, I thought it was a mistake. But Paris was alive, seventy-nine years old and trying once more to re-launch a career that had faltered decades before.

The idea of going to a nightclub to hear a performer I'd thought was long dead was a bizarre one, but there was no missing it. Though I couldn't picture what the singer on the album covers that I'd seen might look like as an older gentleman, I knew I'd be able to recognize him the instant I heard his voice. There was no mistaking the characteristic phrasing, the bending of notes and the original sense of time—it was really Jackie Paris. I was agreeably surprised to see how time had treated the aging be-bopper.

It was a moment when he was taking a break during his set that left a mark on my life that will never vanish. Jackie took a seat offstage while his trio kept on playing—taking what was clearly a much needed rest. I looked over at him, and saw that he was staring back at me. “Was it all in vain?” his dark eyes seemed to ask. After the show, I introduced myself as a filmmaker and devoted fan. I used words like “unique” and “singular” to express my enthusiasm. To my surprise, he was somewhat cool to my adulation. (Later I realized that these words must have stung—he was everything but “popular” in his career and that must have grown wearisome.) By the end of our conversation I knew it was my mission to document Jackie Paris' story. We began filming him a few days later.

He was also battling bone cancer and would have only another three months to live. We set to work, making a filmed record of the dying jazz giant telling his mysterious life story. He opened his phone book to us and many of the last jazz greats still living were interviewed on camera, sharing their thoughts about Paris, the history of the music, and how the record business changed and did many of them in. (Others in the film include George Wein, founder of the Newport Jazz Festival; Mark Murphy, jazz vocalist; Dr. Billy Taylor, legendary jazz pianist and educator; James Moody, jazz saxophonist and composer of the now classic “Moody's Mood For Love”; Phil Schaap, New York radio jazz disc jockey and historian; Ruth Price, singer and founder of the Los Angeles nightclub “The Jazz Bakery”; Howard Rumsey, bass player and founder and promoter of the famous “Concerts By The Sea” series in California).

The film premiered at Sundance 2006, and has played at more than twenty five film and music festivals in North America and Europe and won the ‘Best Documentary’ award at the Kansas City Filmmaker's Jubilee.

-- Raymond De Felitta, Director

BIOGRAPHY

Raymond De Felitta (Writer/Director) grew up between New York and Los Angeles. He received an Oscar-nomination for his AFI thesis short *Bronx Cheers*. His first feature, *Café Society*, premiered at Directors' Fortnight in Cannes in 1995, while his second feature, *Two Family House*, won the ‘Audience Award’ at Sundance 2000, and also received an Independent Spirit Award nomination for ‘Best Screenplay’. He recently directed Paul Reiser's *The Thing About My Folks*, which received the ‘Audience Award’ at last year's Santa Barbara Film Festival. Raymond is a Nicholl Fellow (for his screenplay, *Begin The Beguine*), twice a National Board of Review ‘Award of Merit’ recipient in filmmaking (*Two Family House*, *The Thing About My Folks*), a member of the WGA, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, and co-chair of the DGA's Independent Directors Committee East with Steven Soderberg. He's also a talented jazz pianist. *'Tis Autumn – The Search for Jackie Paris* is his first documentary film.

David Zellerford (Producer) began his career by writing and directing plays in Seattle's fringe theater community, which led him to New York to pursue a MFA in Film at NYU, where he was awarded the esteemed Ang Lee Fellowship. The World Premiere of his first feature film, *Five Years*, garnered the award for 'Best Feature Film' at the 2002 Victoria Independent Film & Video Festival and went on to play more than 40 film festivals worldwide. As a writer and producer he has had projects in development with InDigEnt (*Playhouse '91*, co-written with director Raymond De Felitta) and Filbert Steps Productions (*Murdering Michael Malloy*, also co-written with De Felitta based on Zellerford's play *Murder Trust*). He lives between Brooklyn and Greenport, New York, and when he's not making pictures (and sometimes when he is), he works as a consultant in advertising and branded entertainment.

CAST & CREW

WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY

RAYMOND DE FELITTA

PRODUCED BY

DAVID ZELLERFORD

EDITOR

JOHN WAYLAND

FEATURING

JACKIE PARIS
NORMAN BOGNER
JOE FRANKLIN
BILLY VERA
HOWARD RUMSEY
WILL FRIEDWALD
HARLAN ELLISON
RUTH PRICE
GENE DAVIS
DR. BILLY TAYLOR
MARK MURPHY
IRA GITLER
TERRY GIBBS
JAMES MOODY
TEDDY CHARLES
PHIL SCHAAP
RAY PASSMAN
GEORGE WEIN
JOAN PARIS
JEANIE PARIS
J.D. EHRHARD
FRANCOIS ZALACAIN
ARMEN DONELIAN
JACK KLEINSINGER
HANK JONES
JOE WILDER
EDDIE BERT
BARRY NEWMAN
MIKE DOUGLAS
ANNE MARIE MOSS
LORRAINE CONDOS
DAVID GRAUSMAN
SHERYN GOLDENHERSH
PAT COOPER

STEVE CONDOS
STACY PARIS
MICHAEL PARIS

AND

PETER BOGDANOVICH
FRANK WHALEY
NICK TOSCHES

WITH MUSICAL PERFORMANCES BY

JACKIE PARIS
ANNE MARIE MOSS
MICHAEL WEISS
MIKE RICHMOND
JIMMY MADISON

PHOTOGRAPHED BY

JEREMY SAULNIER
CHAD DAVIDSON
ELI HEITIN
RUBEN O'MALLEY

RESEARCH

LINDY AGRÓN

EDITORIAL CONSULTANT

DAVID LEONARD

MIX & SOUND DESIGN

KEN MEYER

AUDIO

BARRY ROSE
CHARLIE GREENE
JOHN SCHEAFFER

LIVE AUDIO

DAVID GRAUSMAN
SETH COOPER
MARTIN GOODMAN

SURROUND RE-MIXER

REX RECKER
audioENGINE

PRODUCTION ASSISTANTS

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KEN RECCOR
MADELINE SHAPIRO

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CHARLOTTE STRICK

TITLE DESIGN

JULENE BELLO

TITLE ANIMATION

RANDY GELMAN

JEFF WILLIAMS

PHOTOSHOP & AFTER EFFECTS

JEFF WILLIAMS

COLORIST

FRED KELLER

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NORTHERN LIGHTS POST

SUITE SPOT STUDIOS

SALES GRAPHICS

POSTWORKS NEW YORK

COMPANY 3