

STUDIOCANAL

A M A Z I N G
G R A C E



Run Time: 87 minutes
UK Release date: 10th May 2019
Rating: PG

UK PUBLICITY CONTACTS

Organic Publicity tmg-studiocanal@organic-publicity.co.uk
Margy Pellegrino, UK Publicist – Margy.Pellegrino@studiocanal.com
Matt Dinsdale, Head of UK Publicity - Matthew.Dinsdale@studiocanal.com

Images and press materials: www.studiocanal.co.uk/press

SYNOPSIS

The never-before-seen movie featuring Aretha Franklin recording the most successful gospel album of all time, *Amazing Grace*.

Amazing Grace is crafted from never-before-seen footage originally captured in 1972.

AMAZING GRACE – THE ALBUM

Atlantic Records was the pioneering home of Ray Charles, Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young, Otis Redding, Led Zeppelin, Cream, Roberta Flack, John Coltrane, and scores of other great Jazz, R&B and Pop artists. The Coasters, The Drifters, Ruth Brown, Ray Charles, Solomon Burke, Otis Redding, Sam & Dave, Wilson Pickett head the list of African-American stars that the label marketed during the 1950s and 1960s.

Aretha Franklin had originally been signed to Columbia Records by John Hammond, who also signed Billie Holiday, Count Basie, Bob Dylan, and Bruce Springsteen. When her Columbia career failed to ignite, Atlantic Records signed her, and under the guidance of Jerry Wexler, Franklin's career was transformed.

Starting in 1967, her string of hits – "I Never Loved A Man", "Respect", "Baby I Love You", "Chain of Fools", "Think", "Don't Play That Song" – kept Atlantic Records at the top of both the Pop and R&B charts. Franklin's success disguised the fact that the label was losing touch with its R&B heritage following the death of Otis Redding and Ray Charles' defection to a rival company.

Love of Soul Music, from the Supremes to Al Green, had united Americans across racial lines.

However, by the early 1970s, the Civil Rights movement had fractured coupled with the assassinations of Martin Luther King and Malcolm X. This led to the growth of the Black Power movement and a growing alienation of African Americans – and their music – from the white mainstream culture. Labels, like Atlantic Records (which became part of Warner Communications by 1970), saw their future more and more in the exploding market for white rock groups and singer-songwriters.

By 1971, Aretha Franklin was known as the Queen of Soul. In the culmination of five years of chart-topping hits, she and her producer, Jerry Wexler of Atlantic Records, decided her next recording would take her back to the music of her youth, to the world of American Gospel music.

Amazing Grace was not intended as a swan song, but it would turn out to be an elegiac moment in American musical history as well as a salute to the gospel heritage that had transformed American music in the 1960s.

AMAZING GRACE – THE FILM

When Franklin was planning her album, Warner Brothers agreed to film the session in 1972.

Warner Communications, the parent company of Warner Brothers Films and the Warner, Reprise, Elektra and Atlantic labels, had reaped the rewards of that new buzzword, “corporate synergy” with the success of the 1970 Michael Wadleigh film and album of *Woodstock*. Warner had paid \$100,000 for the rights and the film grossed \$17 million and the album sold three million copies. Warner Communications hoped for *Amazing Grace* to have that same success.

Warner Brothers' Director of Music Services, Joe Boyd (*Nick Drake*, *Pink Floyd* Producer), proposed hiring Jim Signorelli, a documentary filmmaker and his team of 16mm cameramen. However, before Signorelli's deal could be signed, Warner Brothers' CEO, Ted Ashley, mentioned the project during a meeting with Sydney Pollack. At the time, Pollack was recently nominated for an Academy Award for Best Director for his film, *They Shoot Horses Don't They*. Pollack immediately signed up for the project upon hearing Franklin's name.

Recorded live at Rev James Cleveland's church in Watts, California in front of a lively audience/congregation, *Amazing Grace* would become the highest selling album of Franklin's career and the most popular Gospel album of all time.

However, the film was never released publicly.

Sydney Pollack was a feature-film director. When recording, sound is usually post-synched on the back-lot. After the remarkable two days of recording, the editors threw up their hands. There were no clappers, no marks to guide the sound into synch with the picture. Pollack hired lip readers and specialist editors but received no luck.

The film languished for almost 40 years before former Atlantic staff producer/Wexler protégé Alan Elliott came to Wexler and ultimately to Pollack. Together, Elliott, Wexler, and Pollack approached Warner Brothers about using new digital technology to match sound to picture and make a film out of the raw footage.

Forty-seven years later, this film is a testimony to the greatness of Aretha Franklin and a time-machine window into a moment in American musical and social history.

PRODUCER ALAN ELLIOTT INTERVIEW

How was the process of purchasing the film from Warner Bros like?

Elliott: It was easy! Sydney Pollack and I had been having conversations about the film and then he unfortunately got sick. He called me one day to tell me he wanted me to finish the film and that he told Warner Films the same. So, my agent, Ari Emanuel, made the deal with Warner Films and we were off and running.

How long have you been working on this film?

Elliott: Since 1990

What were the technical difficulties that arose with the film?

Elliott: The film and audio shot in 1972 had no synchronization.

Did you know about the audio issue prior to purchasing the film?

Elliott: No, I did not!

What was it that ultimately fixed the audio?

Elliott: Digital technology from Deluxe Entertainment services and my great friends, Gray Ainsworth and Beverly Wood, helped fix the audio.

Was there anything you had to leave out of the film? What made you decide what to leave out?

Elliott: Yes. My first cut was 3 and ½ hours. I was in a first screening with a friend who had just had prostate cancer...and so that informed editing choices (we needed to go faster!).

Was there anyone from the film that helped with the post-edit?

Elliott: Many choir members and Alexander Hamilton came to screenings and in all, just having them in the screenings informed my choices.

What is your favorite Aretha Franklin song from the album "Amazing Grace"?

Elliott: That would be "God Will Take Care of You", and I had to edit it out of the film because it didn't fit!

ARETHA FRANKLIN***More Than Six Decades of Artistry***

Aretha Franklin was a giant of popular music and a global cultural icon. One of the best-selling musical artists of all time, with more than 75 million records sold worldwide, the undisputed “Queen of Soul” created an amazing legacy of more than six decades. She had sung before heads of state and foreign royals and gained admiration from fans, colleagues, and fellow artists across all genres. She is known all over the world simply by her first name: Aretha.

Her vocal mastery and artistic excellence have been recognized numerous times throughout her distinguished career. Twice voted as the number one Greatest Singer of All Time by Rolling Stone magazine, Franklin is the recipient of the U.S.A.'s highest civilian honor, The Presidential Medal of Freedom, as well as an 18-time Grammy Award winner, and a recipient of the Grammy Lifetime Achievement and a Grammy Living Legend honor. Aretha was the youngest individual ever to receive the coveted Kennedy Center Honor; the first female inductee into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame; the second female inductee into the US Music Hall of Fame; and an inductee into the Gospel Music Hall of Fame.

Aretha's gospel album, *Amazing Grace* is the biggest-selling album and the best-selling live gospel album of all time. The album, *Amazing Grace* is enjoying a revival nearly 50 years after it was recorded, which follows the long-awaited documentary about the making of that legendary double live album, which opened to stellar reviews. CBS honored Aretha's career on March 10th, 2019 with *Aretha: A Grammy Tribute for the Queen of Soul*.

Aretha has been proclaimed internationally as “the voice of the civil rights movement, the voice of black America,” and a “symbol of black equality.” In 1968, her spiritually uplifting voice was heard around the world singing at the funeral of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and in 1972 at the funeral of the Queen of Gospel Mahalia Jackson. Aretha's acclaimed voice was declared a “natural resource of the state” in 1985 by the Department of Natural Resources of the State of Michigan. Aretha would later reach a milestone in her historic career by singing at the first inauguration of President Barack Obama.

AMAZING GRACE – THE FILM SONG LIST

Night #1

“On Our Way”

“Wholy Holy”

“What a Friend We Have In Jesus”

“How I Got Over”

“Precious Memories”

“You’ve Got A Friend”

“Precious Lord Take My Hand”

“Amazing Grace”

“My Sweet Lord” (Instrumental)

Night #2

“Mary Don't You Weep”

“Climbing Higher Mountains”

“Old Landmark”

“Never Grow Old”

“Old Landmark” (End Credits)

CREDITS

AMAZING GRACE

ARETHA FRANKLIN

JAMES CLEVELAND

CHOIR DIRECTOR:
ALEXANDER HAMILTON

GUITAR:
CORNELL DUPREE

ORGAN:
KENNY LUPER

PERCUSSION:
PONCHO MORALES

DRUMS:
BERNARD PURDIE

BASS:
CHUCK RAINEY
CHRISTINE ADAMS
ALONZO ATKINS
LUCY AYERS
JAMES A. BROOFIELD
EUGENE BRYANT
SYNDRUL DRAHE
MARY ANN HALL
MARGERIE LUPER
CHARLES MAY
ETHEL RUTH MCISAAC
ODESSA L. MCCASTLE
STANLEY B. MILLER
LINDA JEAN OVENLAND
RASHI PARK

THE SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY CHOIR

DONNA J. HAMMOND
DARRYL HARDY
BETTY HOLLINS

STUDIOCANAL

JOSEPHINE HOWARD
SHERMAN JAMES
DOLORES JONES
JOHANNIE PEARL KNOX
LINDA J. PAYTON
DIANE M. RATCLIFF
GILBERT STANLEY
ANNETTE MAY THOMAS
BOBBY WASHINGTON
AUNDIE WODSON
BARBARA ANN WILSON

REALIZED AND PRODUCED BY:
ALAN ELLIOTT

COLOR AND BALANCE:
REBECCA ARCE

EDITOR:
JEFF BUCHANAN

MUSIC MIXER:
JIMMY DOUGLASS

PRODUCER:
JOE BOYD

PRODUCER:
ROB JOHNSON

PRODUCER:
CHIEMI KARASAWA

PRODUCER:
SPIKE LEE

PRODUCER:
SABRINA V. OWENS

PRODUCER:
JERRY WEXLER

PRODUCER:
TIRRELL D. WHITTLEY

STUDIOCANAL

PRODUCER:
JOSEPH WOOLF

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS:
STEFAN NOWICKI
JOEY CAREY

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS:
ALEXANDRA JOHNES

DELUXE LABS:
GRAY AINSWORTH
BEVERLY WOOD

LEGAL & MORALS:
JOHN BOYD

SPECIAL THANKS:
REVEREND WILLIAM BARBER, II
ARI EMANUEL
MATT FARMER
JULIE HUNTSINGER
PHIL JACKSON
TOM LUDDY
SYDNEY POLLACK
PETER SELLARS

ORIGINAL ALBUM PRODUCED BY:
ARETHA FRANKLIN
ARIF MARDIN
JERRY WEXLER

ART DIRECTION AND TITLES:
MATHIEU BITTON

SPECIAL THANKS:
CLARENCE FRANKLIN
EDWARD FRANKLIN
THEODORE WHITE, JR.
KECALF FRANKLIN
&
THE FRANKLIN FAMILY

STUDIOCANAL

ORIGINALLY RECORDED LIVE AT:
THE NEW TEMPLE MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH, LOS ANGELES.

RECORDING ENGINEER:
RAY THOMPSON FOR WALLY HEIDER

ATLANTIC RECORDS STAFF ASSISTANT ENGINEERS:
JIMMY DOUGLASS
GENE PAUL
GEORGE PIROS

FOR DELUXE:
GREG ORTIZ - RE-RECORDING MIXER
GREG FAUST - RE-RECORDING MIXER
SERGE PERRON – AUDIO CONFORM / EDITORIAL
ALICE TAYLOR – ADDITIONAL AUDIO CONFORM / EDITORIAL
BRIAN GEER – SOUND TRANSFER ENGINEER
PAT MCCORMICK – SOUND TRANSFER ENGINEER

COLORIST:
KELLY REESE

AUDIO PROJECT MANAGERS:
BOB HEIBER
CHRIS REYNOLDS
RON BONK
KIM GOTT

FOR KEY CODE MEDIA:
MIKE CAVANAGH
ED FRIESEMA
MICHAEL KAMMES
ZEKE MARGOLIS

PRODUCED IN ASSOCIATION WITH SUNDIAL PICTURES

SUNDIAL SPECIAL THANKS:
LAUREN FAJARDO
MORGAN WHITE
MEG AND TOBE CAREY
SARA AND NORMAN I. COHEN
PAUL NOWICKI
SANDY NOWICKI



POST•PRODUCTION SERVICES AND SUPERVISION •FINAL CUT USA, INC

CO-PRODUCER:

STEPHANIE APT

SPECIAL THANKS:

PAM FIX

BUD ARCE

CHRISTINA ARCE

BILL FIX

TOM MCGUIRE

RICK LEVY

SCOTT AND MICHELLE BAUMAN

JOHN BOYD

MIKE STOLLER

BILL WITHERS

LARRY GELBART

TED CHAPIN

LIESL COPLAND

KEVIN IWASHINA

THOMAS MINTZ

MIKE WEISS

JAY KOGEN

BRIAN MUSBURGER

JON GRIES

BILL STEINKAMP

DONNA OSTROFF

GWENDOLYN QUINN

LORNE MICHAELS

BISHOP CARLTON PEARSON

TONY HEILBUT

ANDREA GOERTLER

DOMINIQUE TRENIER

JEFF JAMPOL

PAUL WEXLER

ARIF MARDIN

JOE MARDIN

DAVID REMNICK

REUBEN CANNON

SPIKE JONZE

STEVE SPIRA

JULIA VALET

KURT GALVAO

CHARLES HOBSON

STUDIOCANAL

ULTAN GUILFOYLE
LINDA BURROW
CHRIS WILLMAN
ELVIS MITCHELL
JEFF JAMPOL
ALAN LIGHT

SPECIAL THANKS:

KEN BURNS
DAVID MILCH
ISIAH THOMAS
JEANIE BUSS
AMOS NEWMAN
JOHN BOYD
LOU ADLER
JOHN BATTSEK
RODNEY SHARPP
JACK ELLIOTT
BOBBI ELLIOTT
JOANNA ELLIOTT
JONATHAN ELLIOTT
BENNY MEDINA
ELLIOT WECHSLER
JORDAN WECHSLER
JOSH ARCE
LISA WEISSMAN-WARD
DESMOND ARCE
LENNON ARCE

SPECIAL THANKS:

ALEXIS MCGILL JOHNSON
DYLAN JOHNSON
SARA JOHNSON
KRISTEN L. WHITTLEY
KENNEDI WHITTLEY
TAYLOR WHITTLEY
JENNIFER WOOLF
BECKY WOOLF
ELIZABETH WOOLF
THE GERSHONS
THE FISHELLS
THE HOMONOFFS

STUDIOCANAL

MARY HALL
LADY ALICIA HAMILTON
ALEXANDER HAMILTON
MR. JONES
MR. SMITH

DEDICATED TO:

POP AND MOM...
TO ARETHA FRANKLIN...
TO JERRY WEXLER...
TO SYDNEY POLLACK...
TO THE SOUTHERN CAL CHOIR...

AND... MORE THAN ANYONE OR ANYTHING...
TO REBECCA, MABEL AND IRIS.

ALL OF US MADE A BEAUTIFUL FILM...
A JOYFUL NOISE...
AND I LOVE YOU.

THANK YOU.
-ALAN