



American Legends: The Life of Bette Davis

Charles River Editors

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- *Includes pictures of Davis and important people, places, and scenes.
- *Includes Davis' own quotes about her upbringing, films and relationships.
- *Includes a Bibliography for further reading.
- *Includes a Table of Contents.

"Even the most inconsiderable film ... seemed temporarily better than they were because of that precise, nervy voice, the pale ash-blond hair, the popping, neurotic eyes, a kind of corrupt and phosphorescent prettiness ... I would rather watch Miss Davis than any number of competent pictures." – English critic Graham Greene, 1936

A lot of ink has been spilled covering the lives of history's most influential figures, but how much of the forest is lost for the trees? In Charles River Editors' American Legends series, readers can get caught up to speed on the lives of America's most important men and women in the time it takes to finish a commute, while learning interesting facts long forgotten or never known.

Bette Davis presided over Hollywood at a time in which the film industry was at its most influential. Every actress from Katharine Hepburn to Ingrid Bergman and Ginger Rodgers, themselves now considered among Hollywood's greatest icons, lived in the shadow of Bette Davis. Not only was Davis a box office sensation and commercial success - she became the highest paid actress in 1938 - but she garnered more critical acclaim than any other actress during the time period, as evidenced by the fact that she was the first actress to be nominated for 10 Academy Awards. Even more than two decades after her death, Davis remains popular, and films of hers, most notably All About Eve (1950) and Now, Voyager (1942), are routinely viewed by the public and continue to be taught in college film classes. Recently, her place in history was cemented when she was named as the second greatest actress of the 20th century by the American Film Institute behind only Katharine Hepburn (AFI 100 Years...100 Stars). Her legacy remains unbroken, not only because of her own film performances but also due to the influence she had on subsequent actresses.

While no one would question Bette Davis' importance in American film history, it is impossible not to acknowledge that her persona carries a novelty highly distinct from that of other actresses. Davis admittedly never possessed the glamour of Marlene Dietrich, Ingrid Bergman, or other such stars of the time period. Even Katharine Hepburn, another eccentric contemporary of hers, was considered far more capable of playing a romantic lead than Davis. As a result, Davis was relegated to appearing in roles that were less glamorous, unfortunate or even unsympathetic. At the same time, there were benefits that went along with the limitations; Davis was denied the opportunity to appear as attractive as possible before the audience, but she was also able to achieve a unique niche and receive roles that were in many respects more interesting than the one-dimensional characters portrayed by her contemporaries. In this regard, it was her "otherness" that paved the way for Bette Davis to receive the roles that would give her more wealth and critical acclaim than any actress that had come before her.

American Legends: The Life of Bette Davis profiles the life and career of one of America's most iconic actresses. Along with pictures of important people, places, and events, you will learn about Bette Davis like you never have before, in no time at all.

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