

**LORBER**

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**presents**



## **Who Is Harry Nilsson? (And Why Is Everybody Talkin' About Him)**

**A film by John Scheinfeld**

USA, 2010, 116 minutes

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## Synopsis

A wildly entertaining, star-studded documentary about The Beatles's favorite American musician, *Who Is Harry Nilsson (And Why Is Everybody Talkin' About Him)?* is a vibrant and definitive portrait of one of the most talented singer-songwriters in pop music history. Directed by Emmy and Grammy nominee John Scheinfeld (*The U.S. vs. John Lennon*), the film combines compelling interviews with Nilsson's family, friends and colleagues — including Brian Wilson, Randy Newman, Robin Williams, Micky Dolenz and Yoko Ono — with rare and never-before-seen archival footage, home movies, and excerpts from a recently discovered oral autobiography. Delving deeply into Nilsson's artistic process (including the genesis of classic tunes like “One is the Loneliest Number”), his combative friendship with John Lennon, and the addictions that haunted him in and outside the studio, Scheinfeld also depicts a devoted husband and father who finally found a measure of peace outside the passing glare of fame.

## Credits

Written & Directed by John Scheinfeld  
Produced by David Leaf & John Scheinfeld / Authorized Pictures  
Executive Produced by Lee Blackman  
Edited & Co-Produced by Peter S. Lynch II  
Music by Harry Nilsson

## Full Cast List

Gerry Beckley  
Lee Blackman  
Perry Botkin, Jr.  
Ray Cooper  
Micky Dolenz  
Stanley Dorfman  
Terry Gilliam  
Bruce Grakal  
Doug Hofer  
Mark Hudson  
Dustin Hoffman  
Danny Hutton  
Eric Idle  
Rick Jarrard  
Al Kooper  
Trevor Lawrence  
John Lennon  
The Monkees  
Randy Newman  
Annie Nilsson

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Beau Nilsson  
Diane Nilsson  
Olivia Nilsson  
Una Nilsson  
Zak Nilsson  
Yoko Ono  
May Pang  
Van Dyke Parks  
Richard Perry  
Dick Smothers  
Tom Smothers  
Ringo Starr  
Joan Taylor  
Three Dog Night  
Jon Voight  
Jimmy Webb  
Paul Williams  
Robin Williams  
Brian Wilson  
Fred Wolf

## **About the Director**

A former executive at Paramount Pictures Television and MTM Enterprises, Emmy and Grammy nominee John Scheinfeld is a respected writer, producer and director of documentaries, bringing a broad spectrum of experiences and interests to pop culture, music, historical and spiritual projects for broadcast, cable and theatrical exhibition.

His other feature film credits include *The U.S. vs. John Lennon* (2006), an official selection of the Venice Film Festival, the Telluride Film Festival, the Toronto International Film Festival and the London Film Festival, and *We Believe* (2009), about the love affair between Chicago and its baseball team, the Cubs. His work for television includes *Electric Youth: Teen Stars in the Music Business*, an Emmy-nominated A&E special, *The Divine Bette Midler*, a special episode of A&E's award-winning *Biography* series, and *No Fighting in the War Room...or...Dr. Strangelove and The Nuclear Threat*, about the historical context of Kubrick's film.

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## **About the Man / About the Film**

(adapted from text provided by Authorized Pictures)

Harry Nilsson was an enigma. And that's about the only thing you can say about him with any certainty.

In a career spanning over 30 years, he never performed live in concert. He was considered by many music critics and some of his peers (including Randy Newman and Brian Wilson) to be one of the best songwriters of his time — yet his greatest fame and success came as a singer of other people's songs. He was a legendary party animal, drinking John Lennon and Keith Moon under the table, but he was also a devoted husband and father.

The people that knew and loved him talk about Nilsson as gregarious, shy, reclusive, wild, endlessly fun, a complete lunatic, a sonofabitch and a pussycat. A millionaire before he was 30, Nilsson was courted by the elite of popular music, film, television and publishing, riding the crest of a remarkable wave of success. In just a few short years, however, his glorious voice would be in tatters, his health in ruins, and he would be without a record contract.

Nilsson's music is as contradictory as the man himself. The general public may recall hearing "Everybody's Talkin'" in the classic film *Midnight Cowboy*, tapping their feet to the quirky and infectious "Coconut" ("*Put de lime in de coconut...*"), cranking up the speakers to the hair-raising rocker "Jump Into The Fire," or singing along to the whimsical "Me And My Arrow" from Harry's animated film *The Point!* They may even bask in a warm nostalgic glow every time they hear "Best Friend," the theme song from the beloved 60's TV comedy *The Courtship of Eddie's Father*. But few are aware that one man was responsible for these wildly disparate recordings.

For years, writer/director John Scheinfeld and his producing partner David Leaf had tried without success to interest television networks in commissioning a documentary about Nilsson's extraordinary life — but it wasn't until Lee Blackman, Nilsson's friend and attorney (and representative for his estate), secured private financing that production on *Who is Harry Nilsson? (And Why Is Everybody Talkin' About Him)* finally began. Determined to gather testimony only from those who really knew Nilsson, Scheinfeld and Leaf taped over 30 interviews at many locations in the United States and United Kingdom. It was a labor of love for all concerned.

As in all Scheinfeld productions, there was a commitment to uncovering as much rare and unseen audio/visual material as possible. This task was made much harder by the fact that Nilsson rarely appeared and/or performed in public. In addition to scouring the world's archives and the holdings of private collectors, Scheinfeld and Leaf prevailed upon Nilsson's friends and extended family, who freely and generously shared their photos, home movies, private recordings and personal memorabilia. "Do it for Harry" became the mantra for everyone associated with the making of the film.

The filmmakers were also granted unprecedented access to the Sony/BMG archive, resulting in a treasure trove of photos, promotional films, master recordings, unreleased recordings, remixes

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and film elements that help bring Nilsson's remarkable saga to life. Included in the film are performances from two BBC specials, *The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour*, *Playboy After Dark* and *Beat Club*, plus promo films, music videos and home movies. Also featured are clips from *Did Somebody Drop His Mouse?*, an unfinished documentary about the recording of the 1972 album *Son of Schmilsson*, as well as excerpts from Nilsson's recently discovered oral autobiography.

Jam-packed with over 60 songs, the film contains wall-to-wall music featuring classic Harry, unreleased Harry and rare Harry. With the generous support of Sony/BMG, Scheinfeld was also able to go into the studio and re-mix more than two dozen Nilsson tracks, stripping off the vocals. "Over the years," says Scheinfeld, "I was so focused on Harry's extraordinary vocals that I didn't fully appreciate the beauty and impeccable production value of the music that lay beneath. These exquisite recordings, produced by Rick Jarrard, Richard Perry, John Lennon and Harry himself, reveal extraordinary beauty, poignancy, energy, pain and humor, all of which combine to create a powerful score for all aspects of Harry's life story as portrayed in the film."