
Pit stop on the set of 'Grand Prix' with Françoise Hardy

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John Frankenheimer's 1966 film, a fast-paced story of Formula 1 excitement, featured many genuine racing legends on set - and a young French singer by the name of Françoise Hardy...

With James Garner, Eva Marie Saint, Yves Montand, Brian Bedford, Antonio Sabàto and Toshiro Mifune in starring roles, John Frankenheimer had put together an impressive international cast. Yet the real reason for the success of 'Grand Prix' - one of 1966's ten biggest box-office hits that year, winning three Oscars - was the thrill of the racing scenes, thanks in large part to help from Phil Hill: he captured real-life footage with on-board cameras at some 1966 Grands Prix, and also drove a GT40 camera car during the making of the film. Other big names making guest appearances on screen included Graham Hill, Juan Manuel Fangio, Jim Clark, Jochen Rindt and Jack Brabham.

Fast cars, melancholy looks



There was another reason for movie-goers to buy tickets, and that was the actress who took the role of driver's girlfriend Lisa, namely the alluring Françoise Hardy. Her melancholy looks and gentle smile had already bewitched Mick Jagger and David Bowie, and on the set of Grand Prix, where she posed wearing the helmet of fellow actor James Garner, and at the wheel of a Ferrari, she likewise put the film crew under the spell of her innocent charm. She actually suffered from severe stage fright and hated being the centre of attention; hence the picture below, in which she perches, somewhat lost-looking on a float to help launch the film in New York, is all the stranger.

From Grand Prix to style icon



From the 1970s onwards, Françoise Hardy was only rarely seen in public, although she was still very much in the public eye thanks to her fashion photoshoots for Dior and Yves Saint Laurent.

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