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MOVIES

The Girl Who Left Nothing to Chance



Yvette Mimieux may seem shy and demure—but she's really fiercely determined to reach the Hollywood heights

By PEER J. OPPENHEIMER

LANA TURNER was discovered sitting at a counter in Schwab's Drugstore.

Kim Novak was seen by an agent while she was bicycling through Beverly Hills.

But the most unusual movie discovery of all took place three years ago in the Hollywood Hills. A slim, blonde, blue-eyed, 16-year-old girl was galloping her horse along a bridle path when a press agent's helicopter developed engine trouble—and made a forced landing right in her path! Publicist Jim Byron took one look at beautiful Yvette Mimieux, handed her his card, and announced, "If you want to get into the movies, call me."

Yvette didn't wait around for another wild coincidence to boost her toward stardom—she isn't that kind of girl. Despite her aura of shy demureness, she is a strong-willed person who leaves nothing to chance.

Before Yvette had met Jim Byron on the bridle path, she had begun to build up a solid reputation as one of the West Coast's most promising young photographer's models. She had turned to modeling rather than to acting because her father, Rene Mimieux, did not want her in show business. As a young immigrant from France, he had played bit parts in a number of Hollywood movies, including Cecil B. DeMille's silent epic, "King of Kings." But he decided against a film career and took a job with an electronics firm instead.

Yvette's mother, Mexican-born Carmen Montemayor, didn't have strong feelings about a film career for her daughter. She just wanted her to be happy.

SO YVETTE did not meet a solid wall of parental opposition when she decided—after careful consideration—that Jim Byron's card was the key to the career she really wanted. And as soon as she had made her decision Yvette set out like a house afire to become an actress.

"I knew there was a lot of work to be done and the sooner I got started the better prepared I'd be when my chance came," Yvette told me when I visited her recently on the island of Kauai, where she was on location for her latest movie, "Diamond Head."

Yvette heard about a young director from New York who was attempting to form an acting group. But it was Yvette who found an abandoned store that could be rented for \$25 a month, and it was she who scrubbed the floors and painted the walls to get the little theater in shape for use as a showcase. The troupe soon developed into a thriving drama workshop that presented a continuing series of plays—and Yvette appeared in most of them.

But Yvette realized she needed a well-rounded education to get ahead. Typically, she refused to settle for anything short of the very best. She earned a scholarship to Nico Charisse's ballet classes, studied modern rhythm with Roland DuPree, and talked the highly selective Maestro Cepparo into teaching her operatic singing.

With determination like that behind it, Yvette's film career couldn't help but skyrocket. "The Light in the Piazza" established her as Hollywood's hottest young star. And "Diamond Head," which has the same director, Guy Green, should do even more to boost her career.

YVETTE's experience with directors has not always been happy. She did not get along with Vincent Minnelli, who directed her in "The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse." She feels his impatience and shouting resulted in her giving a bad performance.

But she has a sure defense against such badgering. If there is a difference of opinion, she will never argue. Instead, a blank look comes over her face as she disappears into a world of her own. And she remains there until she has won her point!

Yvette's talent for keeping silent extends to her relations with the press. She was married in December, 1959, to Evan Harlan Engber, a UCLA psychology major—but she has never admitted it.

Why? Partly because her publicist wants to surround her with an air of mystery. But the reasons go deeper. As Yvette said: "The less I give of myself to the public, the less I can be hurt."

As a result, only her family and close friends know where and how she lives. The only way to contact her is through her parents or her manager.

But studio executives don't mind the inconvenience. Why should they—as long as Yvette continues to captivate a larger and larger audience of movie-goers?