

Nina Franoszek Press Reviews: European Actresses –Real Women



European actresses: Real women in reel roles

By Claudia Puig
USA TODAY

Films are made with a different sensibility in Europe, says Su Lesser, chair of the British Academy of Film and Television Arts/Los Angeles.

„There isn't that tradition in Europe of big, blockbuster movies. We don't have special effects. Our films have more ensemble casting, and they're much smaller movies. Our story lines focus on human and personal issues. A lot of the product produced in Europe is public-domain material. When it's written by Jane Austen, for example, there are wonderful parts for women. Most of the films in Europe are independent pieces, and a good many of them are based on literature. There are strong women's roles in literary works.”

In addition to the luxury of better material, European actresses have broader training than most American-bred stars, training that allows them to show off their acting chops. An emphasis on theatrical experience and training, combined with a greater focus on inhabiting a character and less on possessing a perfect 10 face and figure, also contributes to their reputations as exceptional actors. „Generally, Europe has a tradition of developing actresses, and Hollywood has a tradition of developing female movie stars,” says Janine Basinger the chair of Wesleyan University's film studies department. Gloria Stuart, who at 87 was the oldest Oscar nominee for her supporting role in *Titanic*, agrees. „Most of the European actors and actresses, when they're not working on a film are out in the provinces acting in the theater,” she says. „They make their own opportunities... They seem to be able to keep working all the time. They don't have to be waitresses.”

Americans' legendary inferiority complex when it comes to matters of culture often can propel people to hand over awards to the seemingly more cultured and refined Europeans, “There's the patina, the accent,” Helena Bonham Carter former Oscar nominee (*Wings of the Dove*) says.

“Perhaps because we come from that theater tradition, people credit us with a certain amount of respect above American actors. There's a veneer of respectability about being European. I don't mind, I'll play it for all it's worth.”