



Marlene Dietrich Collection Berlin is a division of Filmmuseum Berlin - Deutsche Kinemathek

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Dear friends and fans,

Alexandre Andre pointed out that we shouldn't forget the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Marlenes appearance at the "Café de Paris" in London which resulted in her first famous Live LP (and one of the rare original Live LPs). But before we do the anniversary celebration we thought it also interesting to let you know what lead to the "Café de Paris" engagement. So lets go back to the show which started her never-ending world tour.

### 51 Years Ago

On December 15 1953 Marlene had her first show-appearance after World War II in the Congo Room of Las Vegas "Sahara" Hotel. She received \$90.000 for singing nine songs in half an hour for a period of three weeks. But it wasn't the singer, it was the dress (and the money) that made the headline nationwide. And not one single review to start without the word "grandmother"...

Here's a review which we found in Marlenes archive from an unknown source:

Las Vegas, Dec. 16—The world's most glamorous grandmother, Marlene Dietrich, opened here last night (Tuesday) and what she didn't exactly serve up as entertainment she dished out in sensationalism. Dressed as daringly as any night club entertainer could dare, coupled with a type of song number and delivery reminiscent of anything except polite drawing rooms, la Dietrich could just as well have been entertaining in Polly Adler's

reception parlor as the Congo Room of the Sahara. Not that this is bad - for Vegas - providing she had a better semblance of an act. Box office she is; sexy she is; a personality she is, but since she is virtually entirely in the arena of singers she's facing the competition of the proven champs and she doesn't come up to it.

### *No Need For Eyestrain*

Her gown, if it can be called that, is practically her act. It's more of a skin-tight negligee, sufficiently sequined in black from the waist down not to cause a riot—but, from the waist up, it's a different but plainly read story. In fact, it's virtually nothing, with no bra and no disguise other than an infrequent toss of a black fur stole. However, she doesn't toss the stole far enough or often enough to seriously block anybody's vision.

Even if she was a smash singer, any songs she might deliver would have to take second place to the gown. Nobody could be paying attention to a voice when the vision is so plain and, in truth, so hypnotic. She was on opening night for 28 minutes of singing, not counting a brief later appearance in a circus production number in which she showed her magnificent gams in a ringmaster costume, and for anybody who was listening she did "Baubles, Bangles and Beads" (not suited to her or for an opener), "See What the Boys in the Back Room Will Have," "La Vie en Rose," "I'm the Laziest Gal in Town" (with interpolations), "Lili Marlene," "Johnny" (A German sex tune), "Naughty Lola" and "Falling In Love Again."

*Don't Listen — Look!*

But it's less important to listen than to look. To her great credit as a show manly personality, she has the audience rooting for her all the way. She lives up to everything physically that her films and publicity have built up over the years and, with editing and some much needed patter material that will take her out of the strictly chanteuse class and offer her more as the personality, who knows but that she could be a class entertainer as well. Certainly that shocker of a gown would not then be necessary, but for this date it serves its purpose in helping make her a good business draw at her reputed \$30,000 weekly salary for three weeks.

The Sahara very smartly has surrounded her with an exceptionally entertaining show produced by George Moro and beautifully costumed by Jean Louis.



Foto: John Engstead  
Filmmuseum Berlin – Marlene Dietrich  
Collection

*Shawn A Real Find*

Dick Shawn is one of the truly bright young comics to come along in recent years. He's fresh and he's able, his talent and promise showing through despite a noisy opening night dinner audience and the faulty sound caused by the setting up of special lighting for mag publicity purposes. He's on up ahead of Miss Dietrich and helps considerably in setting a good audience mood. Shawn is most reminiscent of a younger Danny Kaye and with natural development of his obviously great ability, coupled with excellent appearance, he may go as far as Kaye.

In Rudy Horn, the Sahara is presenting one of the most sensational jugglers seen in a long time. He's of the Serge Flash and Bob Ripa school, but he starts where those greats left off. He's a wizard in juggling rubber balls and hoops, and then closes with the tremendous trick of catching and balancing individually tossed six cups and six saucers while he's perched on a unicycle.

*These Ponies 4-Legged*

Horn is the show's smash novelty opener and the Sahara has an equally fine novelty closer in the standard Gautier's Steeplechase. This act is a startling departure for a nitery, in that it includes four Shetland ponies as well as dogs and a monkey, but it pays off for great returns in the colorful circus production finale, which displays the eight chorines and four showgirls, all beauties, to fine advantage.

Buddy Cole is the musical director for Miss Dietrich's act, while Cee Davidson conducts the orch for the entire show, and both do an expert job.

And here is a report by Aline Mosby which UP sent out on December 22 (printed December 23) about a meeting with designer Jean Louis:

HOLLYWOOD, Dec. 23 UP—A Frenchman who designed that "bosomless" dress for Marlene Dietrich said today he feared "a riot" would result if other women took up the fashion.



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The original famous dress by Jean Louis.  
Textile archive of Marlene Dietrich Collection  
Berlin

Fotos: Michael Lüder

Grandma Dietrich stunned a nightclub audience when she sauntered onto the stage of the Sahara Hotel in Las Vegas wearing a transparent dress for her nightclub debut.

The filmy \$8,000 gown was lined from the hips down. From the waist up, it wasn't. The famous bosom of the movies' senior glamour queen was in view virtually in its entirety. A few sequins and rhinestones sprinkled here and there were not effective - as a disguise as she bowed and moved about the stage. But the creation, the most talked-about undress since Marilyn Monroe's calendar garb, was designed for the stage only, said designer Jean Louis.

"I would not advise other women to take up the fashion," he announced in his office at Columbia Studio.

"It certainly would cause a riot. If the woman is married it would be cause for divorce!

"That dress at a party would start a lot of comment," he added.



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Jean Louis confided he designed Marlene's nearly-nude dress as revenge on movie censors. All the time they censor the low-cut movie costumes he makes for Rita Hayworth and other stars at the studio, he lamented.

"This time," he whispered, "I went haywire." He said Marlene ordered a gown that would be "a mix-up of Folies Bergere in Paris and Hollywood." It took 10 studio dressmakers three months to make three identical gowns, in white, gold and black.

Jean Louis admitted he and the 53-year-old actress were aware what would show when the dress was fitted. He said they realized the "weight of the rhinestones would drop the dress down a bit." "I wanted to make the skirt transparent to show her legs, but she didn't want that," he explained. "I was heartbroken. So - I show the other part of her body. Why not? It is pretty.

"Her figure is like a teen-ager's. On anybody else the gown would look cheap, in bad

taste. She is the only woman who can get away with it.

"On her," he said, "it is glamour."

#### Cables to Marlene:

What a gallant soldier. True daughter of war.  
How bright the star dust shines from Capricorn's  
mountain lair  
Dorothy Arzner

All my thoughts admiration and love with you  
for your opening  
Very Brynner

Good luck darling Marlene and all love  
Charlie Feldman

The best of luck tonight and every night – Will  
see you very soon  
All my love Eva Gabor

All my best of tonight  
Love Lena Horne

Tote that mink, crack that whip, and Dietrich  
rides again  
Love, Mitch [Leisen]

Everybody in town talks of nothing but you and  
that's the way it should be. We love you. Rest  
in between times  
Mercy and Fletcher [Markle]

Wonderful news regarding your opening – May  
your happiness continue always  
Mae Murray, Hotel des Artites

Can you hear us cheering from here  
Love and luck, Mitch [Leisen] and Billy [Wilder]



More reviews and reports at  
[www.soundlikemarlene.de](http://www.soundlikemarlene.de)