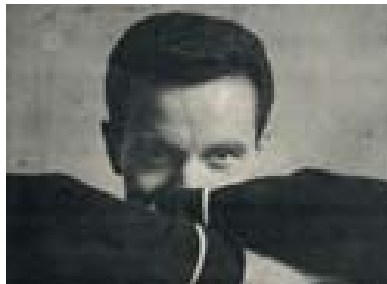


verve
PICTURES

'TIS AUTUMN THE SEARCH FOR JACKIE PARIS



THE GREATEST VOICE YOU NEVER HEARD

A Film by Raymond De Felitta

RUNNING TIME: 100 minutes

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SYNOPSIS

In 1991, Raymond De Felitta was listening to a Jazz station and heard a singer by the name of Jackie Paris. Entranced by his style and technique, De Felitta began researching Paris. He learned Paris had opened for Lenny Bruce, that his voice was admired by among others, Ella Fitzgerald, Nat Cole and Sarah Vaughn. However, his research abruptly ended when he read in The Biographical Dictionary of American Music, that Paris had died in 1977. De Felitta thought that was the end of the story but one night in March of 2004, he was reading the New Yorker Magazine and saw an advertisement listing Paris' comeback at the Jazz Standard. Stunned, he wondered where had Paris been all these years, what had come of his life and why had a singer of this talent fallen into such obscurity.

'Tis Autumn - The Search For Jackie Paris is not just a documentary about a great but unheralded jazz singer. It's a film that explores the very nature of what it is to live the life of an artist--any artist. Filmmaker Raymond De Felitta examines the life of cult favorite jazz singer Jackie Paris, but at the same time he might as well be exploring the life of any artist in any discipline, too many of whom share the same fate that Paris did; the explosive debut followed by the years of ups and downs, the constant hope that success, though out of reach, is around the corner, the private tragedies that grow out of artistic frustration, and the final, self-inflicted wounds which all too often cause the once promising to descend into bitterness and chaos, a prelude to vanishing completely.

Working with rare found footage and new interviews with jazz legends such as Billy Taylor, George Wein, Mark Murphy and Ruth Price, as well as the final concert footage and last interviews Jackie Paris ever gave -- De Felitta constructs an emotional mystery story which asks the question, who or what is to blame when a great talent goes from sensation to footnote during their life span?

A Note from the Director

Jackie Paris (an Italian-American born in Nutley, New Jersey) burst on the jazz scene in post-war New York. A "singer's singer" and one of the first true be-bop vocalists, he immediately attracted the attention of Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie, with whom he toured. Peggy Lee and Ella Fitzgerald both declared him their favorite male vocalist and the brilliant (and opinionated) Charles Mingus hired Paris as his vocalist for his own artist run record label, 'Debut'. His voice was a one-of-a-kind instrument, alternating between a harsh bluesy-ness and a deeply sensual baritone for ballads. He released five LP's in the 1950's and early '60's, one of which contained his world famous recording of "Skylark" which the songs composer, Hoagy Carmichael, considered the ultimate rendition of the song. He won the Downbeat Critics Poll as 'Best New Male Vocalist' in 1953 and consistently made the Esquire Top Vocal picks, placing in the top ten six years in a row.

So why have you never heard of him? The story of Jackie Paris is one of great promise and opportunity mixed with bad luck, bad timing and a bad self-image, which led the volatile singer to burn many bridges. By the early 1970's, many thought he had died.

Indeed, when I found a mention in the New Yorker magazine, telling of Paris performing at the Jazz Standard in March 2004, I thought it was a mistake. But Paris was alive, seventy-nine years old and trying once more to re-launch a career that had faltered decades before.

The idea of going to a nightclub to hear a performer I'd thought was long dead was a bizarre one, but there was no missing it. Though I couldn't picture what the singer on the album covers that I'd seen might look like as an older gentleman, I knew I'd be able to recognize him the instant I heard his voice. There was no mistaking the characteristic phrasing, the bending of notes and the original sense of time—it was really Jackie Paris. I was agreeably surprised to see how time had treated the aging be-bopper.

It was a moment when he was taking a break during his set that left a mark on my life that will never vanish. Jackie took a seat offstage while his trio kept on playing—taking what was clearly a much needed rest. I looked over at him, and saw that he was staring back at me. “Was it all in vain?” his dark eyes seemed to ask. After the show, I introduced myself as a filmmaker and devoted fan. I used words like “unique” and “singular” to express my enthusiasm. To my surprise, he was somewhat cool to my adulation. (Later I realized that these words must have stung—he was everything but “popular” in his career and that must have grown wearisome.) By the end of our conversation I knew it was my mission to document Jackie Paris' story. We began filming him a few days later.

He was also battling bone cancer and would have only another three months to live. We set to work, making a filmed record of the dying jazz giant telling his mysterious life story. He opened his phone book to us and many of the last jazz greats still living were interviewed on camera, sharing their thoughts about Paris, the history of the music, and how the record business changed and did many of them in. (Others in the film include George Wein, founder of the Newport Jazz Festival; Mark Murphy, jazz vocalist; Dr. Billy Taylor, legendary jazz pianist and educator; James Moody, jazz saxophonist and composer of the now classic “Moody's Mood For Love”; Phil Schaap, New York radio jazz disc jockey and historian; Ruth Price, singer and founder of the Los Angeles nightclub “The Jazz Bakery”; Howard Rumsey, bass player and founder and promoter of the famous “Concerts By The Sea” series in California).

The film premiered at Sundance 2006, and has played at more than twenty five film and music festivals in North America and Europe and won the ‘Best Documentary’ award at the Kansas City Filmmaker's Jubilee.

Raymond De Felitta, Director

BIOGRAPHY

Raymond De Felitta (Writer/Director) grew up between New York and Los Angeles. He received an Oscar-nomination for his AFI thesis short *Bronx Cheers*. His first feature, *Café Society*, premiered at Directors' Fortnight in Cannes in 1995, while his second feature, *Two Family House*, won the 'Audience Award' at Sundance 2000, and also received an Independent Spirit Award nomination for 'Best Screenplay'. He recently directed Paul Reiser's *The Thing About My Folks*, which received the 'Audience Award' at last year's Santa Barbara Film Festival. Raymond is a Nicholl Fellow (for his screenplay, *Begin The Beguine*), twice a National Board of Review 'Award of Merit' recipient in filmmaking (*Two Family House*, *The Thing About My Folks*), a member of the WGA, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, and co-chair of the DGA's Independent Directors Committee East with Steven Soderberg. He's also a talented jazz pianist. *'Tis Autumn – The Search for Jackie Paris* is his first documentary film.

David Zellerford (Producer) began his career by writing and directing plays in Seattle's fringe theater community, which led him to New York to pursue a MFA in Film at NYU, where he was awarded the esteemed Ang Lee Fellowship. The World Premiere of his first feature film, *Five Years*, garnered the award for 'Best Feature Film' at the 2002 Victoria Independent Film & Video Festival and went on to play more than 40 film festivals worldwide. As a writer and producer he has had projects in development with InDigEnt (*Playhouse '91*, co-written with director Raymond De Felitta) and Filbert Steps Productions (*Murdering Michael Malloy*, also co-written with De Felitta based on Zellerford's play *Murder Trust*). He lives between Brooklyn and Greenport, New York, and when he's not making pictures (and sometimes when he is), he works as a consultant in advertising and branded entertainment.

JACKIE PARIS DISCOGRAPHY

There are only 2 recordings available in the US on the *Audiophile* label: *Jackie Paris* and *Nobody Else But Me*, and Jackie's last recording *The Intimate Jackie Paris* on the Hudson label. All of the other recordings of Jackie as a leader are out of print, or in the case of the CDs on the *Emarcy* label, are only available in Japan. There are, however, a number of CDs available at present that contain one or more tracks of Jackie singing as a "guest" artist or as part of a compilation.

CORAL – 10"

"THAT PARIS MOOD", C. 1954

CRL56118: You're Mine You, We'll Be Together Again, Who Can I Turn To?, Cottage For Sale, More Than You Know, Detour Ahead, The Things We Did Last Summer, I'm Through With Love.

(*JACKIE PARIS*, vocal; *BILLY TAYLOR*, piano; *EARL MAY*, bass; *KALDI MADI*, drums; *CHARLIE SHAVERS*, trumpet. Recorded in New York, 1954.)

Also on VOGUE CORAL LRA 10038 (UK)

BRUNSWICK - 12"

"SKYLARK"

Now available on CD as a Japanese import!

C. 1954

BL54019: (Reissue of CORAL– 10" CRL56118 with deletion of "**The Things we did Last Summer**", plus 5 new tracks:

Only Yesterday, If Love Is Good To Me.

(*JACKIE PARIS*, vocal; *NORMAN LEYDEN*, leader, arranger; *BILLY TAYLOR*, piano; *TRIGGER ALBERT*, bass; *CARMEN MASTERN*, guitar; *BUNNY SHAWKER*, drums; *HYMIE SCHERTZER*, alto; *AL KLINK*, tenor; plus 4 strings.)

I Had A talk with A Daisy , Skylark, Idle Gossip.

(*JACKIE PARIS*, vocal; *NEAL HEFTI*, leader, arranger; *BILLY TAYLOR*, piano; *SANDY BLOCK*, bass; *ED GRADY*, drums; *GEORGE BARNES*, guitar; *HARRY BRAUER*, vibes; plus 10 strings.)

WING – 12"

"CAN'T GET STARTED WITH YOU, Songs by Jackie Paris, C. 1955

60004: (Originally titled, "**PARIS IN SWINGTIME (Jackie, that is.)**". There was some objection to the original photo of couples cuddling on the beach, and the entire album was ultimately changed to "JACKIE PARIS, Songs by Jackie Paris" and the cover photo became a headshot of Jackie. Mention has been made in some record catalogs of this album being released as EMARCY #36095, but no copies have ever surfaced.)

There Will Never Be Another You, Wrap Your Troubles In Dreams, Indiana.

(JACKIE PARIS, vocal; MANNY ALBAM, arranger; BILL TRIGLIA, piano; MILT HINTON, bass; BARRY GALBRAITH, GUITAR; OSIE JOHNSON, drums; SAM MAROWITZ, HAL McKUSIC, tenor; AL EPSTEIN, baritone. Recorded November 28th, 1955.)

Heaven Can Wait, Strange, Heart of Gold, That Old Devil Called Love, I Can't Get Started, Cloudy Morning, Whispering Grass Don't Tell the trees, Goodnight My Love.

(JACKIE PARIS, vocal; Same rhythm section; REMEO PEQUE, flute, oboe, English horn, bass clarinet; JANET PUTNAM, harp. Recorded November 29th & 30th, 1955.) Also on EMARCY CD (Japan) EJD3047 and Vinyl 195J-10106 – with "new" tracks **Don't Hurt The Girl, Tell Me Something Sweet – from a single MERCURY 70992**. Earlier released on MERC. SFX 10529 (Japan)

EASTWEST

"THE JACKIE PARIS SOUND"

Now available on CD as a Japanese import!, C. 1957-1958

LP4002: We Three, It's Only A Paper Moon, This Is My Night To Dream, Someone's Rocking My Dreamboat.

(JACKIE PARIS, vocal; JOE BENJAMIN, bass; BARRY GALBRAITH, guitar; ED SHAUGHNESSY, drums. Recorded in New York, November 13th, 1957)

I'll Get By, ON A Slow Boat To China, You're Getting To Be a Habit With Me, Until The Real Thing Comes Along

(JACKIE PARIS, vocal; WENDELL MARSHALL, bass; BARRY GALBRAITH, guitar; BILLCLARK, drums. Recorded February 13th, 1958.)

This Year's Kisses, I've Got A Pocket Full Of Dreams, It's A Pity To Say Goodnight, It Could Happen To You.

(JACKIE PARIS, vocal; HANK JONES piano; JOE BENJAMIN, bass; BARRY GALBRAITH, guitar; ED SHAUGHNESSY, drums; EDDIE WASSERMAN, tenor. Recorded February 25th, 1958)

TIME

"JACKIE PARIS SINGS THE LYRICS OF IRA GERSHWIN", C. 1960

LP70009: **Girl Of The Moment, Fun To Be Fooled, This Is New.**

(JACKIE PARIS, vocal; IRVING JOSEPH, piano; JOE BENJAMIN, bass; BARRY GALBRAITH, guitar; CHARLIE PERSIP, drums; BOB ROSENGARDEN, percussion; SPENCER SINATRA, flute, GEORGE RICCI, HARVEY SHAPIRO, ALAN SHULMAN, cellos; GENE ORLOFF, violins

My Ship, Sure Thing, For The Life Of Me, Long Ago And Far Away

(JACKIE PARIS, vocal; IRVING JOSEPH, piano; JOE BENJAMIN, bass; AL CASMATI, BARRY GALBRAITH, guitar; ROY HAYNES, drums; PHIL BODNER, flute, sax; JOE WILDER, trumpet; GEORGE RICCI, HARVEY SHAPIRO, ALAN SHULMAN, cellos; GENE ORLOFF, violin.)

THE GIRL THAT GOT AWAY, Let's Take A Walk Around The Block, That Moment Of Moments, There's No Holding Me, One Life To Live.

(JACKIE PARIS, vocal; IRVING JOSEPH, piano; GEORGE DUVIVIER, bass; BARRY GALBRAITH, guitar; ROY HAYNES, drums; PHIL BODNER, flute, sax; CHARLIE SHAVERS, trumpet; EDDIE COSTA, vibes.) Recorded n New York, February 23rd, 1960.

Also on **TIME CD** (Japan) 32-JCT-105

IMPULSE

"THE SONG IS PARIS", C. 1962

A-17, AS-17: **Jenny, If Love Is Good To Me.**

(JACKIE PARIS, vocal; BILL HAMMOND, flute; PHIL BODNER, bass clarinet; GEORGE DESSINGER, oboe; GENE ORLOFF, HARRY LOOKOSFSKY, ARNOLD EIDUS, PAUL GERSHAM, violins; CHARLES McCRACKEN, cello; GLORIA AGOSTINI, harp; BARRY GALBRAITH, guitar; JACK LESBERG, bass; TED SOMMER, drums. Recorded in New York, Jan. 22nd, 1962.)

Nobody Loses All The Time.

(JACKIE PARIS, vocal; CLYDE REASINGE, IRV MARKOWTIZ, AL DIRISI, LEWIS GLUCKIN, trumpets; DOM GRAVINE, PAUL FAULISE, BILL SCHALLEN, PHIL GIACOMBE, trombones; HAL McKUSICK, TOM ALFANO, JOHN MUTAUGH, HOWARD RITTNER, reeds; PHIL BODNER, flute; JANET SOYER, harp; BARRY GALBRAITH, guitar; GEORGE DUVIVIER, bass; MAURICE MARK, drums; WILLARD DILLON, percussion. Recorded January 24th, 1962)

Duke's Place, My Very Good Friend In The Looking Glass, 'Tis Autumn

(JACKIE PARIS, vocal; DICK BERG, DON CORRADO, ART CERY, RAY ALONGE, french horns; BILL HAMMOND, flute; PHIL BODNER, alto flute; ROMEO PENQUE, tenor, flute; GEORGE DESSINGE, bassoon; GLORIA AGOSTINI, harp; BARRY GALBRAITH, guitar; GEORGE DUVIVIER, bass; SOL GUBIN, drums. Recorded January 26th, 1962.)

Everybody Needs Love, Cherry, Thad's Blues, Tonight, Cinderella

(JACKIE PARIS, vocal; HANK JONES, piano; GEORGE DUVIVIER, bass; ROY HAYNES, drums. Recorded May 8th, 1962.)

Arranged and Conducted by BOBBY SCOTT

Also on MCA VIM 5594 (Japan) and HMV CLP 1627 (UK)

DIFFERENT DRUMMER

"JACKIE PARIS, ANNE MARIE MOSS, LIVE AT THE MAISONETTE, C. 1975

DD1004: My Shining Hour, Thou Swell, Bright Lights and You Girl, Where is Love, Medley: I Didn't Know What Time it Was/I Believe In You. Medley: You've Made Me So Very Happy/You Don't Know What Love Is/Happy/Move Out. Jumpin' At The Woodside

(JACKIE PARIS, ANNE MARIE MOSS, vocals; MIKE ABENE, piano; HARVEY SWARTZ, bass; STEVE GADD, drums.) Recorded September 28th, 1974.

AUDIOPHILE

"JACKIE PARIS", C. 1982

AP158: I Have Dreamed, Detour Ahead, Everything Must Change, This Too Shall Pass, What I See in You, I Can Only Pretend, Young and Foolish, Summer Soft

(JACKIE PARIS, vocal; CARLOS FRANZETTI, piano; MIKE RICHMOND, bass; JOE LABARBARRA, drums)

AUDIOPHILE-CD

"JACKIE PARIS – NOBODY ELSE BUT ME", C. 1988

APCD245: Nobody Else But Me, More Than You Know, But Beautiful, Not While I'm Around, Stardust, Speak Low, Haunted Heart, Back Home In Indiana, I Wish I Knew, You Don't Know What Love Is, Medley: This Is Always/As Time Goes By.

(JACKIE PARIS, vocal; JIM McNEELY, piano; MIKE RICHMOND, bass; KEITH COPELAND, drums.) Recorded July 11th, 12th, 1988

EMARCY (Japan) CD

"Lucky To Be Me", November 1988

EJD-2: You And The Night And The Music, I Thought About You, Out Of This World, Lucky To Be Me, When The Sun Comes Out, Dancing In The Dark, I Remember Clifford, Daahoud, I Should Care, While We're Young, My Ideal, All or Nothing At All

(JACKIE PARIS, vocal; JIM McNEELY, piano; MIKE RICHMOND, bass; ADAM NUSSBAUM, drums. Recorded November 27th, 1988)

EMARCY (Japan) CD

"Love Songs", November 1989

PHC E-5020: That's All, Falling In Love with You, You'd Be So Nice To Come Home To, Some Enchanted Evening, Deep Night, How Deep Is The Ocean, Until The Real Thing Comes Along, Wrap Your Troubles In Dreams, My Old Flame, Dearly Beloved.

(JACKIE PARIS, vocal; JIM McNEELY, piano; MIKE RICHMOND, bass; KENNY WASHINGTON, drums; RANDY BRECKER, trumpet, flueglehorn. Recorded November 27th and 28th, 1989

Hudson CD

"The Intimate Jackie Paris", This CD can be purchased on line, January 1999

HUD-1001: But Beautiful, Time After Time, 'Tis Autumn, This Is Always, Emily, Too Soon, Gee Baby, Ain't I Good To You, I Should Care, Lovelight, Every Time We Say Goodbye, When I Lost You

(JACKIE PARIS, vocal and guitar; MIKE RICHMOND, bass. Recorded December 19th and 20th, 1999)

Plydor CD Japan

"Skylark", Uccc-9056

This is a Japanese CD re-release of the classic album on Brunswick Records available as an import in a special "paper sleeve" edition from several sources.

SSJ Presents

"The Jackie Paris Sound", YKCJ-303 (WQCP-321)

This is a Japanese CD re-release of the classic album on East-West Records remastered and re-released in a special "paper sleeve" edition as an import, available at East Wind Imports

78 & 45 RPM RECORDS

MGM - 78 RPM

C. 1947

10114: **Skylark, Your Red Wagon.**

10186: **I've Got a Crush On You, I've Got a Way With Women.**

10497: **Lonesome Lover Blues, Tormented**

(JACKIE PARIS, vocal, guitar; DERYK SAMPSON, piano; BILL LOLATTE, bass) ***"I'm Getting Sentimental Over You" and "September In The Rain" were also recorded on this date but were evidently never released.***

NATIONAL - 78 RPM

C.1949

9094: **Goodbye Sue, Old Master Painter, 'Round Midnight, Please**

(JACKIE PARIS, vocals; DICK HYMAN, piano; TOMMY POTTER, bass; JOHN COLLINS, guitar; ROY HAYNES, drums; EDDIE SHU, tenor sax, harmonica. Produced by LEONARD FEATHER.) The 'Round Midnight recording from this date can be found on the Emarcy 36016, 33 1/3 RPM LP, "Advance Guard of the 40's" According to Jackie, "Round Midnight" was apparently released on National. There is speculation that **Please** was released on the reverse side.

DEBUT – 78 RPM

C.1952

M101: **Portrait, Recognition** (no vocal).

(JACKIE PARIS, vocal; PHILIS PINKERTON, piano; CHARLES MINGUS, bass; AL LEVITT, drums; GEORGE KOUTZEN, cello; LEE KONITZ, alto sax.)

M102: **Paris In blue, Make Believe.**

(JACKIE PARIS, vocal; JOHN MEHEGAN, piano; CHARLES MINGUS, bass; MAX ROACH, drums; PAIGE BROOK, flute; JACKSON WILEY, cello.)

RCA - 78 RPM

C. 1954

20-5118: **I Miss You So, Chance Of A Lifetime.**

(JACKIE PARIS, TAMARA HAYES, vocals; RALPH BURNS Orchestra)

CORAL - 78 & 45 RPM

C.1954

61065: **When I Lost You. Idle Gossip***

61116: **Skylark, Talk With a Daisy***

1201: **I Know Why** (with NORMAN LEYDEN Orchestra.)

Opus One (with TONY SCOTT Orchestra.)

61251: **Crazy Heart, Preach Brother Preach.**

61340: **Java Jive, True**

(all other titles: JACKIE PARIS vocal; NEAL HEFTI Orchestra.)

61426; **Love is a King, I Need Your Love.**

(JACKIE PARIS vocals, LEO DREYER Orchestra.)

BRUNSWICK - 78 & 45 RPM

C.1953

80217: **If Love Is Good To Me, Only Yesterday**

(*JACKIE PARIS* vocal; *NORMAN LEYDEN* Orchestra. Also on Brunswick LP: BL54019 "Skylark")

80239: **You Go To My Head, Cool Blues.**

(*JACKIE PARIS* vocals with Terry Gibbs "Sextet": *TERRY GIBBS*, vibes; *CLAUE NOEL*, piano; *KENNY O'BRIEN*, bass; *SID BULKIN*, drums; *DON ELLIOT*, mellophone. Recorded May 27th, 1953. Also ON Brunswick 45 EP Album, EB97102 and 33-1/3 RPM LP: BL54002, "Jazztime, USA, Vol.3"

C.1953

?80243: **Fabulous Figs, That Feller McKeller** (no vocal)

(*JACKIE PARIS* vocal with Terry Gibbs "Orchestra": *TERRY GIBBS*, vibes; *CLAUE NOEL*, piano; *KENNY O'BRIEN*, bass; *SID BULKIN*, drums; *TURK VAN LAKE*, guitar; *DON ELLIOT*, mellophone; *AL PORCINO*, *JOHN MANDEL*, trumpets; *ALBERT EPSTEIN*, baritone. Recorded September 9th, 1953

MERCURY - 78 & 45 RPM

C.1956

70992: **Don't Hurt The Girl, Tell Me Something Sweet.**

These two tunes have been added to EMARCY CD (Japan) **EJD-3047** and EMARCY LP (Japan) 1950J-10106.

WING - 78 & 45 RPM

C.1956

W90053: **Indiana, Heart Of Gold.**

For personnel, see Wing LP: 60004, "Jackie Paris" (AKA: "Can't Get Started With You)

MERCURY - 45 RPM

C.1959

71515: **I Can Hardly Wait 'Til Saturday Night, Claw** (no vocal)

(JACKIE PARIS vocals with Terry Gibbs "Dream Band")

"Guest" Appearances and Compilation Tracks

Some of the albums that Jackie was a guest on, such as some of the Mingus recordings, are still in print, and a number of individual songs from Jackie's earlier recordings have been re-released on compilations.

UNRELEASED RECORDINGS

Paris 'Round Midnight

'Round Midnight, All Of You, Funny, I'll Be Around, Up With The Lark, What Is This Thing Called Love?, Blue In Green, Joy Spring, Stella By Starlight

(JACKIE PARIS, vocal; CARLOS FRANZETTI, piano; MIKE RICHMOND, bass; ADAM NUSSBAUM, drums; LEW SOLOFF, trumpet; PAQUITO D'RIVERA, sax.)

You And I

People Will Say We're In Love, You Must Have Been A Beautiful Baby, Funny, You And I, Limehouse Blues, She Needs Me, My Buddy, Anywhere I Wander

(All-star 16-piece band. Arranged by Bobby Scott and Micheal Abene.)

VARIETY REVIEW, Sundance 2006

Uncovering why a great be-bop jazz singer fell into near-total obscurity is only one accomplishment of Raymond De Felitta's magnificent and moving "'Tis Autumn: The Search for Jackie Paris." Taking a time-out from his feature directing ("Two Family House," "The Thing About My Folks"), De Felitta seems a born documaker. He brilliantly constructs a tale born of a genuine love of jazz and a need to understand how Paris went from sensation to footnote in a generation. Pic will be essential viewing for jazz fans, but also could attract a wider aud if billed as an emotional mystery story. A swinging vid life is assured.

Akin to how Mark Moskowitz, who wanted to find out what happened to novelist Dow Mossman, made his marvelous doc "Stone Reader," De Felitta gets hooked on Paris and can't let go. De Felitta heard a mellifluous voice on Charles Mingus' "Paris in Blues" recording that combined innate sadness and reverie with a propulsive sense of swing.

Crucially, pic takes periodic pauses between De Felitta's voice-over first-person accounts and interview segments for the pure sound of Paris' voice - the best evidence the film has to confirm his greatness.

How obscure is Paris? Try this: One of the standard jazz reference tomes has Paris dying in 1977, when in fact he was still working at the time, more than 30 years after he exploded on New York's be-bop scene. (Paris actually died on June 14, 2004.)

De Felitta begins searching for Paris discs and re-issues, and when he uncovers one in a store, it's misfiled under Oscar Peterson. Almost no Paris dates or records are available, to this day, on any U.S. label.

The film's mystery - how could the singer of choice for everyone from Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie to Mingus, ranked by critics in the class of Sinatra and Tony Bennett and called "Chet Baker times 10" by singer Billy Vera, drop out of sight - develops into a fascinating profile of a somewhat self-destructive artist of reputedly immense ego and violent temper, and with a family history worthy of a John Irving novel.

There are also the moments of plain bad luck: Touring as an opening act for Lenny Bruce (who helped urge Paris to work in some audience banter), Paris was the subject of a rave letter Bruce wrote to a powerful agent that could have easily revived his career. But, for no known reason, Bruce never mailed the letter.

Pic is crammed, but not to the point of exhaustion, with such telling details. De Felitta's real coup is spending quality time with Paris, interviewing him at length after learning that the singer was trying to kick-start his career once again with a gig at New York's Jazz Standard club.

Paris fibs to the director that he had no children, but, instead of taking him at his word, De Felitta tenaciously tracks down Stacy Paris and ex-con, heavily tattooed son Michael and gets them to talk about Jackie's physical abuse.

The more complex Paris' personal life becomes during pic's unflagging 101 minutes, including frank revelations about his troubled brother Gene, the clearer it becomes that the singer had authentic emotional reserves to draw upon for his crooning. His version of Hoagy Carmichael's standard, "Skylark," remains the classic rendition, and pic's sequence devoted to the song perfectly encapsulates Paris' art.

A who's who of the jazz world appears on screen, from critic Ira Gitler to impresario George Wein Typical of the film going the extra mile is how De Felitta ventures to Banning, Calif., to track down the world's top authority on all things Paris, J.D. Ehrhard.

John Wayland's editing, as well as soundtrack and sound editing (care of Ken Meyer), are elegantly judged. Lindy Agron is a key behind-the-scenes participant as researcher, and entire work is sculpted with great, personal care.

In a quirky touch that feels just right, Peter Bogdanovich, Frank Whaley, Nick Tosches effectively read reviews and reports about Paris in a visually theatrical setting.

HOLLYWOOD REPORTER REVIEW

By Frank Scheck

Dec 11, 2007

NEW YORK - Part adoring fan letter, part meditation on the elusive nature of fame and success, part investigative piece, " 'Tis Autumn: The Search for Jackie Paris" is a music documentary of uncommon richness. Although roughly hewn in its elements, Raymond De Felitta's portrait of a legendary jazz singer who flirted with the big time before lapsing into obscurity is fascinating.

The titular and perfectly named subject was a Jersey-born, Italian-American singer who seemed to have it all: Good looks, a haunting voice and a terrific facility for be-bop phrasing made him a favorite among such legends as Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie, and he toured with both. Paris was named best new male vocalist of 1953 in a Down Beat Critics Poll, and his recording of "Skylark" was considered a classic.

And yet his career fell apart and he disappeared, to the point where one jazz reference book stated that he died in 1977. This was the assumption of the filmmaker, who became fascinated by the singer when he happened upon one of his old recordings. So he was quite surprised when, in 2004, he came across a listing for an appearance by the then-79-year-old Paris at a Manhattan jazz club.

This resulting profile, featuring commentary by such jazz figures as Billy Taylor and George Wein, as well as such authors as Harlan Ellison and Ira Gitler, attempts to get to the mystery of the singer's failed career. The frail but clear minded Paris, who died not too long after his comeback attempt, adds his own perspectives on the tale.

The film's many dramatic revelations – from the effusive recommendation letter to a high-powered agent that Lenny Bruce wrote but never sent to the embittered son whose existence was denied by Paris but who was tracked down by the dogged filmmaker – add up to complex psychodrama.

We also get to hear many samples of Paris' beautiful recordings, which vividly remind us of the tragic loss the jazz world suffered by his fall from grace.

CAST & CREW

WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY
RAYMOND DE FELITTA

PRODUCED BY
DAVID ZELLERFORD

EDITOR
JOHN WAYLAND

FEATURING
JACKIE PARIS
NORMAN BOGNER
JOE FRANKLIN
BILLY VERA
HOWARD RUMSEY
WILL FRIEDWALD
HARLAN ELLISON
RUTH PRICE
GENE DAVIS
DR. BILLY TAYLOR
MARK MURPHY
IRA GITLER
TERRY GIBBS
JAMES MOODY
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