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## Amy: A Film Review

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## **Amy – A Film Review**

By Lucas Dehner

The Oscar-winning documentary film, *Amy* (2015), directed by Asif Kapadia, follows the career of British singer/songwriter, Amy Winehouse. Winehouse rose to fame as one of the bestselling soul, rhythm and blues and jazz singers in the early 2000s -- selling millions of records and winning multiple Grammy awards for her soulful albums. The film begins by showing some clips from her early life and follows her to her death in 2011. The main players in this film are Amy Winehouse, her father, her two best friends, her former husband Blake Fielder-Civil, and the team of people helping her with her music career. All of these people played a key role in Amy's rise to stardom and her fall into drugs and alcohol. The film does a great job displaying how everything unraveled and why Amy's life went as it did.

One of the main conflicts that arises in the film is between Amy's love of singing and her dislike for the overwhelming reality of fame. In the film, Amy's friends discuss how Amy's idea of a perfect show is a small venue with a small, captive audience. However, this was only the case for the first portion of Amy's career. After she released her second album, *Back to Black*, Amy Winehouse quickly became a household name. This was unexpected and threw Amy and her team for a bit of a loop. The sudden fame was not quite what Amy had wanted and the film expresses this by talking about how all she wanted was the ability to walk down the street and not be hounded by paparazzi. The distress over the fame was not helped by those around her. Her husband at the time was into drugs, which led Amy to using as well -- as a type of coping mechanism. Amy had experienced issues with alcohol in the past, which were made worse by drug use.

Around this time, she also decided to make her promoter her manager. This contributed to Amy's issues because he, as well as her father, wanted to get Amy on tour, but her addiction issues always got worse when she was away from home. There were many attempts to get Amy into rehab for these problems, but the people around her did not do much to reinforce the habits she was learning at rehab, so she was never able to truly recover. Overall, the people around her seemed too focused on Amy's career, not Amy's health, and had this been the other way around, she may still be alive today.

I think the filmmaker does have a bias in a sense because a large portion of the movie stresses the fact that had something been done about Amy's issues, the story may not have ended as soon as it did. While watching the film, I picked up on a sense of bitterness toward some of Amy's friends and family, particularly her father. I think the filmmaker did not like her father because he was very much the voice in her life saying that the show must go on, no matter what. He was always in favor of her going on tour, and never seemed very on board with the idea of her going to rehab. There was also a time when he was doing a television series on what his life was like as Amy's father, and while shooting this series it seemed as though it was never about what Amy did or did not want to be filmed, but what her father thought the fans at home would want to see. Based on how he was portrayed in the film, I think out of all of the people in Amy's life, it took him the longest to realize just how deeply in trouble she was.

One major takeaway from this film is that fame is not always the happy, exciting thing it is portrayed as in the media, and it can have serious negative effects on people's lives. While the way we treat famous people today has changed slightly compared to what it was when Amy Winehouse was experiencing it, I think this is still very relevant in today's music business. There are a lot of young artists who love music but also really want to have a large following. Amy's story is a great

example of why we need to prepare rising artists for what may lie ahead of them, and educate them on how to handle their emotions when things get too overwhelming.

I would personally recommend this film to others because it dives deeply into the life of Amy Winehouse. Many people simply know her from the tabloid coverage following her death, but if they got to know the whole story, they would have a better understanding of why it happened. I also think this is a good film for aspiring artists to watch so they can digest the reality of what it is to be famous, so they can be prepared if they reach a similar level.