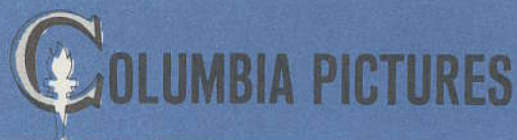


# NEWS



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## BILLY ROSE'S FABULOUS AQUACADE RE-CREATED FOR "FUNNY LADY"

When Billy Rose produced his famous Aquacade -- a colorful, streamlined revue in a pool -- at the 1939-40 New York World's Fair, there were those who thought the idea would go down the drain. But, like so many of Rose's enterprises, the splashy spectacle was a hit and, in fact, became one of the most amazing success stories in the anthology of show business.

To reproduce this chapter in entertainment history or not -- that was the decision faced by producer Ray Stark and director Herbert Ross when they were preparing "Funny Lady," their new motion picture starring Barbra Streisand, James Caan and Omar Sharif. The romantic musical comedy-drama focuses on the chapter in the life of Fanny Brice following the "Funny Girl" period and dramatizes her romantic and business relationship with Rose.

"We felt we should include the Aquacade -- incidentally, our version is a try-out in Cleveland, not New York -- because it was one of the high marks of Billy's professional life and the background for his meeting with Eleanor Holm, the champion swimmer he married after Fanny," Ross says. "But the thought of trying to re-create the Aquacade was mind-boggling. Where, for beginners, do you find a group of swimmers trained to perform together?"

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The question was bruited about in aquatic circles and some encouraging information came back.

"Ray and I heard about a woman coach named Marion Kane, who had disbanded a team of synchronized swimmers called the San Francisco Marionettes. She believed she possibly could pull together an ensemble for us," Ross continues.

Ms. Kane was able to enlist 25 of her former swimmers who agreed to drop out of their regular lives for a month to appear in the film, a Rastar production for Columbia Pictures release. They trained in Santa Rosa, Calif. for three-and-a-half weeks, eight full hours a day, before flying to Hollywood for the filming of the spectacular sequence.

The Aquacade was photographed at night in the Los Angeles Swim Stadium's Olympic pool, decorated with fountains, batteries of colored lights and flaming torches. As a prelude to the in-water action, shadowy dancers performed (to the Billy Rose standard, "Me and My Shadow") a poolside ballet that was projected on huge screens. An ingenious arrangement of mirrors and lights made it possible for the shadows to grow from normal size to a height of 20 feet.

When the swimmers themselves took to the pool, they made sports and film history as the largest group of aquatic performers ever to appear ensemble.

"All the girls are champions and each holds individual titles," Ms. Kane pointed out. "Most of them started synchronized swimming around

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12 or 13 years old and some stayed at it until their mid-twenties. It takes a lot of effort and requires intelligence as well as physical skill. The routines are complicated. I liken it to figure-skating rather than water ballet."

Whichever, the swimmers are breathtaking as they glide and spiral through the water, executing graceful configurations to the music. But the best was yet to come in the filming. Just as the production number reached its climax and the cynosure of all eyes was a lovely brunette rising out of the water on a platform through a geyser, a water-winged clown plunged over, tipping the Aquacade star from her perch.

The party splasher? Barbra Streisand, portraying Fanny Brice in the picture, which also headlines Roddy McDowall, Ben Vereen and Carole Wells. The dunked damsel was Heidi O'Rourke, known as the world's most perfect synchronized swimmer, who portrays Eleanor Holm.

"Heidi won straight tens in scoring four times one year," Ms. Kane revealed. "It was unprecedented."

According to the coach, synchronized swimming -- a style which brooks no splashing and uses the eggbeater kick while working the hands as rudders -- is coming into its own finally. Almost like gymnastics performed in the difficult environment of water, it's about to receive Olympic Games recognition and at the 1973 world meet in Belgrade was one of four water sports represented.

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Since it is generally conceded that Billy Rose's Aquacade gave synchronized swimming its initial impetus (competitions began in the Midwest in the early Forties and gained AAU status in 1946), it seems a deft bit of timing that the Aquacade has surfaced again to throw the entertainment spotlight on the sport. One could say it's all worked out swimmingly.

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