

Ellen Kuras, director. *Lee*. MS Participations, 2024.

Lee Miller is an American female icon. Born in Poughkeepsie, NY, in 1907, she became a famous model and eventually found her calling behind the camera. She apprenticed under Man Ray, and together they created a type of film development called solarization. More than an apprentice, model, and muse, Lee Miller would later become a photojournalist for *Vogue* magazine. She is most famously known for her World War II coverage in Europe, which this movie focuses on from 1937 until Germany's surrender in 1945. Sadly, she is mostly lost to history. This film is based on her son's book, which is the only authorized biography of Lee Miller's life. The film's accuracy of her images and of her correspondence show a painstaking attention to detail.

The movie starts in Paris, just before the war in 1937. Dates are not clear throughout; it is up to the viewer to figure it out. In this opening scene, Miller is among friends, daydrinking and picnicking with a group of painters, poets, and artists enjoying their freedom, basking in the sun, and speaking light heartedly about this "new chancellor Hitler," concerned yet not alarmed. It is at this lunch where she meets her future husband, Roland Penrose, an artist and painter in his own right. They are falling in love just as the war breaks out. Miller, a headstrong and determined woman, pursues a position as *Vogue's* premier photojournalist. The audience is made to feel Lee and Roland's commitment. However, the film forgets to mention his many indiscretions over their forty years together, most notably with circus performer and contortionist Diane Deraiz. *Lee* glosses over the struggles in their marriage, which survived long distance, budding careers, infidelity (one may call it an "open marriage") and most of all, war.

This film is centered on the life of Lee Miller, and WWII merely stands as a backdrop. Since it is a biopic focused on her time during the war, the war should be treated with more specifics. During the Blitz, Germany's air bombardment of England in the fall of 1940, Lee merely states as a witness, "forced houses inside out, streets upside down and created chaos for the people of London; but everyone carried on and I did whatever I could to capture it." She further mentions, stone-faced, a "single-minded" capacity to continue work-not a single hint of the fear and horror or even mention of the 40,000 killed during the Blitz that annihilated much of England between September 1940 and May 1941.

Throughout the film, Lee is portrayed as an impossible woman: a drinker, thoroughly stubborn, chain-smoking in almost every scene, and determinably cantankerous above all else. We also see a woman who is deeply loyal to her friends, intolerant of sexism in her field, and independent in a marriage. She has no qualms about who she is and how she comes across, even when she might appear as an inferior mother.

One truly remarkable and artful feat that deserves recognition is the re-rendering of Lee Miller's photographs. The precision that the production sought to reconstruct her work is evident during the credits of the film, when her original photos are juxtaposed against the reshoots. If this film fell short in other ways, it justified itself wholeheartedly by its reimagining of Lee Miller's most impactful work. The most central part of her legacy, however, are the photos she took at Buchenwald in early 1945, after the Nazi officers had fled. She never fully recovered after seeing the unimaginable horrors of bodies stacked in train compartments and those left alive fighting off starvation. The movie concludes with the liberation of the concentration camps.

The message of this film is ultimately the power of Lee's work, how courageous she was and how determined she was to record the truth of a monstrous war. There can be no Holocaust denial because of the photographs she took. Audiences looking for a deeply impactful, albeit slightly flawed film on an incredible woman's journey need look no further than *Lee*. Even with its shortcomings, it is a different perspective of WWII. Hopefully it reaches a new generation of viewers, so they may be introduced to an indelible woman and her work.

*Sylvia Walker*

James Mangold, director. *A Complete Unknown*. Searchlight Pictures, 2024.

*A Complete Unknown* is a biographical drama based on Elijah Wald's 2015 book *Dylan Goes Electric! Newport, Seeger, Dylan, and the Night That Split the Sixties*. Set against the backdrop of the tumultuous 1960s, the film chronicles a brief yet pivotal period in legendary songwriter Bob Dylan's (Timothée Chalamet) career. Bob Dylan himself was actively involved in the making of the movie. This film captures his bold transition from folk singer to rock icon,