

I started this week by telling you about an entertainer who was a footballer, and then about an entertainer who was a comedian, and today I'll finish off by telling you about an entertainer who was a singer - and one of the greatest singers of all time. This was JUDY GARLAND, who died in London in 1969 at the age of only 47.



She was born in the American state of Minnesota in 1922. She started singing very young, performing with her sisters in music halls, where she was talent-spotted at the age of 13 and signed up to appear in films for the studio Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (or MGM). She was teamed up with another young actor - MICKEY ROONEY - and they appeared in a number of films together, starting in 1937. In order to keep their young actors working late, the very bad people in charge of the film studio would feed the actors pills to keep them awake, and then other pills to help them sleep. This was something that was to have a terrible effect on Judy Garland for the rest of her life as she found she became addicted to these pills, and she was eventually to die from taking too many of them. But that was all in the future - she was becoming a well-known film star and was about to become one of the most famous film stars in the world. The film that made Judy Garland world famous was *THE WIZARD OF OZ*, which was released in 1939 and told the story of a young girl from Kansas who was magically transported to the land of Oz, where she helped a lion regain his courage, a tinman his heart, and a scarecrow his brain. Judy Garland's performance of the song *SOMEWHERE OVER THE RAINBOW* during the movie was an instant classic - nobody would ever sing the song better or more movingly:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PSZxmZmBfnU>

Judy Garland won a special Oscar for her performance in *The Wizard of Oz*. At the age of 16, Judy Garland was already a bit too old to play the part of Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz* (Dorothy is supposed to be 11 years old!) - and Judy was again treated very badly by the movie studio that desperately tried to get her lose weight to conceal how old she was. So after the release of *The Wizard of Oz*, Judy moved onto more grown-up roles. Her next big hit was in 1944. The film was *MEET ME IN ST LOUIS*, and contained another two instant classic songs. The first was *THE TROLLEY SONG*:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hwP6kNIDg30>

The second was a beautiful Christmas song, called *HAVE YOURSELF A MERRY LITTLE CHRISTMAS*:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CreWsnhQwzY>

This song - which has been covered by so many singers since Judy Garland (maybe you could sing it to your mummy and daddy and Ines at Christmas!) - would not even exist but for her. The writer of the song had come up with some really terribly lyrics for the song, all about how future Christmases will be really horrible because everyone we love will have died. Judy Garland said, 'You must be joking - why would I sing something like that?' The writer refused to budge, and Judy said, 'This is such a lovely song - it would be terrible if we couldn't use it because you can't come up with some better words for the song.' And the writer backed down and came up with the song we know today.

Despite her success, Judy found it increasingly difficult to cope with life and the insecurities she had over her weight and her looks. MGM became increasingly impatient with her



problems - even though it was responsible for them - and the last musical she made with MGM was a film called SUMMER STOCK in 1950. This film contained another classic song, GET HAPPY:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q7d0NRewzW4>

This was the last scene filmed for *Summer Stock*, and was therefore the last scene ever shot by Judy Garland as part of an MGM musical. MGM told Judy her contract to appear in their films was terminated, and she was left to make a career for herself. She started giving concerts that were sold-out very quickly, touring Great Britain in 1951. She also got back into films, starring in *A STAR IS BORN* in 1954. Everyone thought Judy would definitely win the Oscar for Best Actress for her performance - so much so that a camera crew was set up in her hospital room (where she had just given birth to a baby boy) to televise her acceptance speech when she got it. But the Oscar went to another actress, and Judy would never again get as good a role as she did in *A Star is Born*.



Instead, Judy turned to television, starring in THE JUDY GARLAND SHOW from 1961 to 1964. Here she is, singing with her daughter LIZA MINNELLI, who would go on to become a famous movie singer herself:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IRtJicbCMIg>

She was only 41 at the time that clip was shot, but the pills she was taking and the drink had a very bad physical effect on her. Her performances began to suffer, and that would cause her to drink more and take more pills. She was locked into a bad situation, and it all finally came to an end when she died in 1969. It was a very sad end for her, but we have to hope she is now in a place where she can experience for herself some of the joy she brought to so many people in her life. To appreciate just how much she packed into her 47 years, here is a final video, which contains short clips from every film that Judy Garland ever made:



[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xymM0Vw3z\\_g](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xymM0Vw3z_g)