

BOHEMIAN RHAPSODY THE LEGACY OF QUEEN

New biographical film *Bohemian Rhapsody* is a foot-stomping celebration of Queen, their music and their extraordinary lead singer Freddie Mercury, who defied stereotypes and shattered convention to become one of the most beloved entertainers on the planet. The film traces the meteoric rise of the band through their iconic songs and revolutionary sound, their near implosion as Mercury's lifestyle spins out of control and their triumphant reunion on the eve of Live Aid.

By Elaine Lipworth

GROUND-BREAKING and iconic British rock band Queen have defied the odds, remaining vanguards of music and pop culture over the decades. Not only does their music defy categorisation and break convention; it transcends generations. Unlike many 70s and 80s groups that came and went, Queen remain as relevant today as they were then.

"Whenever and wherever people hear Queen's music, it's instantly recognisable," says Brian Southall, who spent 15 years as head of press, marketing and promotion for Queen's record label, EMI. "You could release

'Bohemian Rhapsody' tomorrow and it would be a hit."

Starring Rami Malek in an uncanny performance as Freddie Mercury, *Bohemian Rhapsody* charts Queen's extraordinary story, from the band's roots as bright London college students, to the dazzling heights of international stardom, when they filled stadiums across the world, including the legendary 1985 performance at Live Aid, which was watched by a global audience of 1.9 billion and raised money for the famine in Ethiopia.

Infused with indelible Queen songs, the film highlights the dynamics of the trailblazing band, both on and off stage, and focuses on the moving

and complicated personal story of Freddie Mercury, exploring his relationships with his muse, Mary Austin, who became a lifelong friend after they split up, and with the men in his life. It examines the band's evolution, and later Freddie's struggle with AIDS. Engrossing and fantastically entertaining, the film relates how the band shook the music world, rolling out hit after exciting hit, from 'Killer Queen' to 'Another One Bites The Dust', the ingenious and operatic 'Bohemian Rhapsody' to the "stomp stomp clap" of their signature anthem 'We Will Rock You'.

Perhaps the most striking of those hits was 'Bohemian

Rhapsody,' which appears on Queen's album *A Night at the Opera* and is widely regarded as a masterpiece. It has been 43 years since the song rocketed to the number one spot in the UK, going on to become a global hit. The song was groundbreaking not only for its operatic influences, but also for its length (it ran to almost six minutes). Emotive and quite simply one of the most beautiful pop songs of the era, it was written by Freddie Mercury. Brian Wilson (of the Beach Boys) describes the song as "a fulfilment and an answer to a teenage prayer – of artistic music". The making of the track is depicted in the movie; showing how the band spent weeks recording hundreds of overdubs for their 'mini opera.'

"Queen were different from anything else going on at that time," reflects renowned British journalist and author, Mick Brown. "Their songs turned into

anthems. At football games and boxing matches, in fact every kind of big sporting event, the crowds will burst into 'We Will Rock You', written by Brian May – and then, if your team wins a game, there is always a refrain of 'We Are The Champions', which Freddie wrote."

In fact, 'We Are The Champions' was voted the World's Favorite Song in 2005. And, in 2011, a team of scientific researchers concluded that the song was "the catchiest in the history of popular music." "You couldn't calculate writing a song with that kind of appeal," says Mick.

It wasn't only the band's music and marketing that was unique, however. Their electrifying stage performances were colourful and wildly flamboyant. Mick remembers Freddie Mercury "prancing around the stage in a leotard in an almost carnivalesque, Pierrot-style performance." Utterly charismatic, "he also wore

a silk kimono red shorts and suspenders." With their bangles and scarves and skin-tight jeans and wings under their arms, Freddie and the others "were an inspiration to all those bands who started wearing spandex ... like Judas Priest and Mötley Crüe."

"Queen weren't a passing phenomenon like punk; they were a worldwide hit-making machine," says Brian. "Their influence extends far beyond any one of their songs. Freddie is certainly the best frontman I've ever seen, and Queen is unquestionably the best live band I have ever seen. "They deserve a great film! You don't make hit records for so long and not have people wanting to know how you did it – they want to get the story behind the music – it's fascinating. Queen is one of a handful of bands that has survived the passing of time, musical fads, fancies and genres." •

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A special screening of *Bohemian Rhapsody* is available for Rotary group bookings from Thursday, November 1. All proceeds raised will go towards the *End Polio Now* campaign. Get your club to book a screening now.

