



Undressing Emmanuelle: A memoir

By Sylvia Kristel

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The candid and heartbreakingly honest memoir of Sylvia Kristel, the cinema icon of the 1970s who played the lead role in the worldwide sensation erotic Emmanuelle films.

1974: After a year of wrangling with the censors, the erotic film, Emmanuelle, is a blockbuster sensation on release in France and a box office triumph around the world from Japan to the States. The image that adorned cinemas across the world was of an unknown 20 year old posing naked, innocent and vulnerable on a wicker chair. Overnight Sylvia Kristel was propelled into international superstardom (at the height of her fame she was invited to address the Brazilian parliament) and turned into an icon of sexual liberation.

Sylvia Kristel was born of a dysfunctional family and an impossibly strict religious education. But having won the Miss TV Europe competition in 1973 she was driven by her own ambition to be an actress on the world stage and auditioned for the part of the innocent seductress in Emmanuelle. Through the phenomenal success of the three Emmanuelle films she starred in, she became the darling of Hollywood, as she seduced and was seduced by the rich and the beautiful of the golden age of cinema. But she found herself typecast as Emmanuelle and often played roles that capitalized upon that image, most notably starring in an adaptation of 'Lady Chatterly's Lover', and a nudity-filled biopic of World War I spy, Mata Hari, in which she played the title role. Almost inevitably she became the victim of her own innocence as it was Emmanuelle people wanted, not Sylvia. The price that she paid for her meteoric rise was an equally rapid descent into an excess of alcohol and drugs as her tempestuous family life threatened to fall apart all together.

Naked, candid and heart-breakingly honest, 'Undressing Emmanuelle' tells the story of one of Europe's most celebrated cinema icons and the price she paid for her beauty and innocence.

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Editorial Review

Review

'Far from being seedy, this is an elegantly written book. The prose is simple, evocative and highly readable. I found myself wishing that our home-grown celebrities would write books full of ideas and feelings, not glossy magazine therapy-speak. A few of her highly stylised sentences tell far more about the whys and wherefores of exposure and fame than all the trash clogging the bestseller lists of late.' Belle de Jour, The Times 'This is a poignant, semi-intentionally hilarious autobiography. Her story is gripping.' Sunday Times 'A remarkable memoir. A series of impressionistic snapshots, delivered in austere, melancholic prose, it is quite unlike other show-biz memoirs and its candour is raw. Sylvia is a cult icon, she loosened our inhibitions. But the price was high.' Bridget Hourican The Gloss Magazine 'This is the kind of book that you want to press in to the hands of Big Brother contestants, X Factor stars, the people who have made Jordan's "novel" the number one bestseller in the land, Victoria Beckham. For a sharp lesson in what it is to be the object of men's desire, "Undressing Emmanuelle" is a darkly discomfiting read. There's no bitterness or regret, and although there's a Francophone quality to the writing -- it gives the book a reflective edge that lifts it above the kind of celeb memoir commissioned here in Britain. This is the examined life.' Observer 'The childhood scenes are evocative and disturbing. As Kristel mulls over "the chaos of my young life", the reader will be wondering why she didn't replace Liv Ullmann as Ingmar Bergman's muse. But that career path was not to be.' Daily Telegraph 'Art-house misery memoir, effectively written in spare, exacting prose.' Time Out 'A very entertaining and at times hilarious tale.' Evening Herald 'A brave book, written with rare self-awareness for one of its kind.' Sunday Business Post

About the Author

Sylvia Kristel was born 1952 in the Netherlands. At the age of 17 she started modeling and won the Miss TV Europe in 1973. Her cinema career was launched by the phenomenal worldwide success of 'Emmanuelle' in 1974. After starring in a number of 'bonkbuster' films and winning her fight against drugs, alcohol and cancer she quit acting and is now an artist in Amsterdam.

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