

“On the Road to Al Jolson”

Detailed information

We are Andrea Oberheiden and Jens Reinke, two German graduate students of German Literature and Media Studies from Kiel, Northern Germany.



You can find more information about us on this website.

After meeting each other at our university, we started to work on a documentary about the World's Greatest Entertainer, Al Jolson. That was in spring of 2006.

We had heard of "The Jazz Singer" (1927), being the first talking picture, in one of our lectures. Out of curiosity, we obtained the film and watched it. Since seeing Jolson in the scene where he sits at the piano singing "Blue Skies", then starting to talk to his "mother", we have been dealing with this man every single day.

Because of Jolson's ability to electrify two young people belonging to a completely different time and culture, we immediately decided to do something in order to reclassify his place in history. We had smaller intentions when we started, but our project has grown while proceeding.

Before watching the first talkie, we had never heard about Al Jolson before. After finding out how big he once was, and how significant his influence on today's culture and music industry still is, we couldn't believe that he is almost forgotten. That's the incentive that keeps us going.

We have completed the main part of our film shooting by now. It led us to the USA for several times in order to make interviews, and in order to shoot at different locations that are connected with Al Jolson. We talked to a lot of interesting people, who said even more interesting things – fans, scholars, former colleagues, family members, etc. We also completed some Jolson shorts, which you can find under the menu section "Projects" on this website.

Our work has already quickened interests: We were able to talk about it in a TV talk show in New York City, several articles appeared in German newspapers, we won at a German film contest with our Jolson film shorts two years in a row, we organized a Jolson weekend at a movie theater in our hometown Kiel (in collaboration with our university), and we also brought "The Jazz Singer" back onto the big screen in Kiel, where it was last shown in 1930. Our next plans are to show our shorts and a feature research film we made, called "Al Jolson and The Jazz Singer", at several national and international film festivals, as well as getting TV stations interested in it.

The next step after this will be to focus on completing our feature documentary: "On the Road to Al Jolson".

So far we've been financing most of our expenses from private resources, with a total amount of approximately \$12,000. We still need about \$7,000 in order to co-finance our last trip to the US, a trip to Lithuania, and some technical investments that have to be made. That's why we are turning to anyone interested in this subject to ask for help.

- Thank you for considering to become a part of our Jolson adventure! With your help we hope to complete our film in late 2010.

Our goal is to spread the word about Jolson and have more and more people see, hear and understand: "You Ain't Heard Nothin' Yet!"

For further information, please feel free to browse our website, or to contact us at: andrea.oberheiden@kielnet.net