Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Lily Tomlin at TCM

Elisa Leonelli · Wednesday, April 20th, 2022

When I learned that Lily Tomlin would be honored at this year's TCM Classic Film Festival with a hand and footprint ceremony at Hollywood's Chinese Theater on April 22, I knew I had to write about my interaction through the years with this ground-breaking comedian and political activist, an icon of the LGBTQ community.

Lily Tomlin © Elisa Leonelli 1984

I first met Lily at the 1976 Emmys, when I accompanied my ex-husband, nominated as one of the writers on *The Lily Tomlin Special*.

Watch a young Lily Tomlin's comedy routine when accepting a special Tony award for *Appearing*

Nightly, presented by Lauren Bacall in 1977. She won a second Tony in 1986 for the one-woman show that I saw her perform live in Hollywood, *The Search for Signs of Intelligent Life in the Universe*, written by Jane Wagner, Lily's partner since 1971 and wife since 2013.

As an entertainment journalist, I interviewed her several times, about movies like *9 to 5* (1980) with Jane Fonda and Dolly Parton, *All of Me* (1984) by Carl Reiner with Steve Martin (screening at TCM), *A Prairie Home Companion* (2006) by Robert Altman, *Admission* (2013) and *Grandma* (2015) by Paul Weitz.

Lily Tomlin, Jane Fonda (c) HFPA 2015

Tomlin was often a presenter at the Golden Globes, in 2015 with Jane Fonda, her longtime friend and costar in the comedy series *Grace and Frankie* that I have been eagerly watching since it first aired in 2014. I also loved seeing Martin Sheen and Sam Waterston as their former husbands, so I look forward to the rest of the 7th and final season available on April 29 on Netflix.

Read the profile I wrote in 2015, when Lily Tomlin received two of a total of seven Golden Globe nominations from the journalists of the Hollywood Foreign Press.

Elisa Leonelli, Lily Tomlin (c) HFPA 2015

In 2015 Lily answered my question as to whether there were any upsides to being in your 70s: “Well, you can’t avoid it, so you have to see the advantages, and that’s what we had in mind for *Grace and Frankie*. We wanted to do a show that was humorous and moving, that inspires people to have hope for aging instead of just turning over and avoiding everything or staying indoors, in fact we want people to become more ferocious and more audacious, because they are at an age now where what does it matter? Start acting up, doing everything you can to create a ruckus and to help the world, also live and enjoy, because it’s never too late to start over again.”

When I asked her about abortion, a controversial issue back in 2015 and now in 2022, Lily replied: “I don’t think anybody is for abortion, but you have to be for choice, because you are not in the shoes of the woman who is pregnant, so you have to have that flexibility, which some people will never have. The Republicans said they would not even allow abortion to save the life of the mother, so that’s a very stringent opposition. We step back and we step forward all the time, but that’s something that you have to leave to the individual.”

There are many other events and screenings at the 2022 TCM Classic Film Festivals, which runs from Thursday April 21 to Sunday April 24. Check out the program here and get your tickets now!

Featured Image: Lily Tomlin (c) HFPA 2004

P.S. Watch here Lily Tomlin thank you speech after introduction by Jane Fonda and Ben Mankiewicz.

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