

“Amelia”, a poignant look at history

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Period films are among my favorites, they're like time travel to a time long past. Some are hard to watch when one knows the outcome from history. So it is with "Amelia", which is the life of legendary American pilot Amelia Earhart. The movie gives us an inside look at the motivations that challenged this woman to compete in a profession few women dared. Amelia Earhart accomplished many firsts in flying and it was her attempt to become the first woman to fly around the world that will forever seal her place in history. Amelia Earhart's achievements include the first woman to fly across the Atlantic on June 18-19, 1928, the second person to fly solo across the Atlantic in 1932, and the first person to solo from Hawaii to California in 1935.

"Amelia" fills in a lot of the details not commonly known from history books. The historic first woman to fly across the Atlantic was pulled together by George Putnam (Richard Gere), a New York publicist who had promoted aviator Charles Lindbergh's book. His plan included looking for a suitable woman pilot. He selects the little-known Amelia Earhart (Hilary Swank), and introduces her as "Lady Lindy" in the PR campaigns. One of the key motivational factors for Amelia was that on this flight she would be little more than a passenger with males as the pilot and co-pilot. When they arrived in London after the flight, huge crowds welcomed them and the pilots, Wilmer Stutz and Louis Gordon, were all but forgotten in the media frenzy surrounding the first woman to fly across the Atlantic. As Putnam continued PR for Amelia, they fell in love and married. As the years progressed, Putnam understood and supported Amelia as she set more first records in flying. Almost ten years after she set her first flying record, Amelia decides on the ultimate, to be the first person fly around the world.

With her navigator, Fred Noonan, and her Lockheed Electra aircraft, they take off to start the journey. All goes well for more than three fourths of the flight. During the last few hundred miles, they were last heard from about 100 miles from a small Pacific Ocean piece of real estate known as Howland Island on July 2, 1937. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt authorized an immediate search, and to this day, no trace has ever been found. "Amelia" is a heart-warming movie of courage and determination, and although as with most films on history, we know how it ends...

Starring Hilary Swank, Richard Gere, Ewan McGregor, Christopher Eccleston, Joe Anderson, and Cherry Jones. Directed by Mira Nair; written by Ronald Bass & Anna Hamilton Phelan; Rated PG for some sensuality, language, thematic elements and smoking; Fox Searchlight Pictures release. Runtime: 111 minutes.