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MOVIES

stardom. A slew of legends pay tribute in Dan Wingate's "Kaye Ballard: The Show Goes On!" including Woody Allen, Carol Channing, Ann-Margret, Jerry Stiller and Michael Feinstein (not only a renowned performer but a knowledgeable and fond archivist). Though the stories tend to be too brief, it's fun to hear Ballard reminisce about Marlon Brando and others. And it's dizzying to contemplate her many TV, film, theater and nightclub projects from the 1940s to the 20-teens.

Unfortunately, that proves too much to pack into a 90-minute movie. Names and stories fly by. There's no time for context. Most viewers under a certain age (perhaps 50?) will likely not know many of the people and shows referenced at breakneck speed. The lack of a clear chronology makes the story harder to follow. The emphasis is on the professional, not the personal; we learn next to nothing of her family until a brief, touching segment on her grandmother near the end. The Italian American actress was frequently typecast as an Italian caricature, but the fact that she often appeared in skin-darkening makeup to complete the stereotype isn't even mentioned, though repeatedly shown.

Ballard died last year at 93. Perhaps, despite its lack of structure, the film will inspire a new generation to investigate this funny lady who could sing the lights out.

'OLYMPIA'

Harry Mavromichalis' look at Oscar-winning actress Olympia Dukakis is, in some ways, the opposite cinematic approach to "Kaye Ballard." "Olympia" is much more about the personal than the professional, crafting an interior portrait of a woman at home

in her own skin.

There are fleeting clips from "Steel Magnolias" and "Bored to Death" and theatrical stills — the stage company she co-founded (the Whole Theater Company) comes across as her life's work — but the film really feels like a hangout in which some surprisingly personal questions are asked. Rather than delving into her Oscar turn in "Moonstruck," most of the related screen time concerns her prep for the Academy Awards ceremony. Of all her work, "Tales of the City" gets the most air, but in context of her serving as celebrity grand marshal for a San Francisco Pride Parade.

There's little attention paid to creating a cognitive timeline for viewers; the approach is definitely different.

She talks freely about her sex life and her complex relationship with her beloved, late husband. She visits her Greek ancestral home, where she runs into fans and chats with elderly ladies in the street. She comes across as a stubborn straight shooter who's unafraid to say what she thinks. But questions raised are left unanswered. Without a more probing look into her artistry, it's hard to think of "Olympia" as a definitive Dukakis profile — though it's certainly an unusual celebrity documentary.

'CREATING A CHARACTER: THE MONI YAKIM LEGACY'

Of the four documentaries, this one most offers a peek into a generally unknown world. "Creating a Character: The Moni Yakim Legacy" concerns the director, physical performer of international renown and movement master of institutions such as Yale Drama School, Stella Adler Conservatory and, most notably, the Juilliard School. Outsiders to theater may not be aware of the name Moni Yakim, but his teachings have influenced generations of actors.

Full disclosure: This reviewer had the excruciating pleasure of training with Yakim, albeit briefly. His sessions were as grueling as depicted in Kali Wilder's intelligent, well-executed documentary and could sometimes lead to genuine breakthroughs.

Yakim went from his native Israel to Paris to train in mime. A meeting with legendary acting teacher Adler took Yakim to New York. There, he fused his (and wife Mina's) experimental movement with Adler's evolving acting concepts. Yakim directed, among other works, the long-running original production of "Jacques Brel Is Alive and Well and Living in Paris"; John Houseman recruited him to help found Juilliard's drama division.

More than 50 years later, as his students flop and fly about, making nonobjective sounds and breaking their internal rhythms, what Yakim teaches may look flat-out insane. And that's kind of the point. Much of it divorces the performer from the albatross of thought. It's rewiring the instrument in search of purity and possibility. If acting is reacting, this is listening and talking with the body.

There are interviews with some of Yakim's famous students and disarming chats with the charismatic man himself. His methods remain fascinating after all these years ("Jacques Brel" was in 1968), but Wilder also lucks into a parallel story that couldn't have been planned and that succinctly conveys the value of Yakim's teaching.

'INMATE #1: THE RISE OF DANNY TREJO'

Despite Danny Trejo's screen image as a scary tough dude ("Heat," "Machete," "Runaway Train"), it has been a pretty poorly kept secret that he's a jolly, even sweet, guy offscreen. And while he certainly seems so in "Inmate #1: The Rise of Danny Trejo," peppering his interviews with frequent

laughter, the documentary may surprise even more in its depiction of the brutal life of crime that made it so easy for him to play those



Danny Trejo

intimidating roles. "I'd be scared to meet me in an alley too," he says. Born in 1944, Trejo grew up in Pacoima. "Not too much good happened between me and my dad," he says. So instead, he bonded with an uncle described as "a real gangster" who introduced him to boxing — and marijuana — at a very young age. At 12, Trejo followed his uncle into heroin use. From there, it was straight into robberies all over the Valley to sustain his habit. Trejo revisits some of the literal scenes of the crimes in the documentary — often locations Valley denizens will recognize.

His many crimes landed him several prison stints in notorious "gladiator academies." He was a violent inmate who became a boxing champion in San Quentin. Then he saw the light. Of all things, he credits the Beatles song "Hey Jude" as part of his wake-up call. He became an active speaker at prisons and for at-risk youths before falling into an acting career by accident (more than 350 credits, by IMDb's count).

There are the usual interviews with celebrities, family and friends, and disarming stories of interactions with other actors. What sets Brett Harvey's slickly made documentary apart, besides its engaging subject, is its convincing portrayal of a man who saw the error of his ways and worked to change himself. "Everything good that has happened to me has been the direct result of helping someone else," he says.

"I still owe a lot. I don't think I'll ever pay it off, but it sure is fun getting there."



Jorge L. Guerra, Jr.

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Despite the continued threat of COVID-19, it remains a good time to sell a home. Here are a few reasons why:

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New pending home sales in June are up double digits year-over-year.

Pending sales are a future indicator of closings one to two months out. New pending sales for Miami single-family homes increased 33.8% year-over-year to 1,820. New pending sales for condos increased 12.9% in June to 1,504.

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Miami single-family home prices have risen for 103 consecutive months, a streak of 8.5-plus years.

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