



presents

**WHO IS HARRY NILSSON**  
**(And Why Is Everybody Talkin' About Him)?**

**STARRING**  
**Harry Nilsson**

**Special Appearances by**

Gerry Beckley  
Micky Dolenz  
Terry Gilliam  
Mark Hudson  
Danny Hutton  
Eric Idle  
Al Kooper  
John Lennon  
Randy Newman  
Members of the Nilsson family  
Yoko Ono  
May Pang  
Van Dyke Parks  
Richard Perry  
The Smothers Brothers  
Ringo Starr  
Jimmy Webb  
Paul Williams  
Robin Williams  
Brian Wilson

**...AND MANY MORE...**

**THE FILMMAKERS**

Writer/Director.....John Scheinfeld  
Producers.....David Leaf & John Scheinfeld  
Executive Producer.....Lee Blackman  
Editor and Co-Producer.....Peter S. Lynch II  
Coordinating Producer.....Arlene Wszalek  
Soundtrack.....Nilsson

## **WHO IS HARRY NILSSON (And Why Is Everybody Talkin' About Him)?**

This wildly entertaining, incredibly emotional and star-studded documentary tells the story of one of the most talented and versatile singer-songwriters in pop music history...a man The Beatles dubbed their favorite American musician...whose career was as complex, exhilarating, maddening and inspiring as the man himself.

The Grammy® winning “Everybody’s Talkin” from the Academy Award® winning film, *Midnight Cowboy*...the Grammy® winning power ballad, “Without You”... the quirky “Coconut” (“*Put de lime in de coconut...*”)...the whimsical “Me And My Arrow,” and the poignant “One” (“...is the loneliest number”)...these distinctive recordings are all the work of one man, Harry Nilsson, and showcase the wide range of his talents.

A brilliantly gifted songwriter, Harry’s work has been covered by a wide range of artists (Herb Alpert and the Tijuana Brass, Harry Belafonte, Blood Sweat & Tears, Glen Campbell, Joe Cocker, Ella Fitzgerald, Aimee Mann, Bette Midler, The Monkees, The Ronettes, Barbra Streisand, Three Dog Night, The Turtles, The Yardbirds and others). And yet, with an irony that was typical of his career, his greatest fame and success came as a singer of other people’s songs. Blessed with a remarkable three and-a-half octave range, he won two Grammys® and was the recipient of 17 Gold Records, yet never compromised his unique musical vision.

The documentary, which *Ain’t It Cool News* says, is “everything a great documentary needs to be,” reveals how his personal life was as complex and contradictory as his music, from his spirited relationship with John Lennon to his close bond with Ringo Starr. It exposes a legendary “bad boy” party animal who was at the same time a devoted husband and father.

With Harry Nilsson telling most of the story in his own words and voice (using recordings taken from his unpublished oral autobiography), director John Scheinfeld paints a detailed and revelatory portrait of an extraordinary artist, bringing added emotion and intimacy to the story with over 50 Nilsson recordings, as well as rare or never-before seen film clips, home movies and photos from the Nilsson family album. Amidst the incredibly rare footage are performances from two TV specials he made for the BBC, *The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour*, *Playboy After Dark* and *Beat Club*, plus promo films, music videos and home movies. Also featured are clips from the Oscar® winning film, *Midnight Cowboy* and *Did Somebody Drop His Mouse?*, an unfinished documentary about the recording of the Harry’s 1972 album, *Son of Schmilsson*.

To this are added compelling interviews with top music and movie personalities who knew Harry well. Among them are Micky Dolenz, Terry Gilliam, Eric Idle, Al Kooper, Randy Newman, Yoko Ono, Van Dyke Parks, The Smothers Brothers, Jimmy Webb, Paul Williams, Robin Williams, Brian Wilson and many others.

As film critic Leonard Maltin noted, “*Who Is Harry Nilsson...?*” is a vivid portrait of a gifted man...what a great reminder of his talent.”

All music in the film was recorded by Harry. The soundtrack features over 50 songs from throughout his career, including all of his best-known hits, unreleased tracks and rare recordings.

This powerful documentary film transcends mere biography. It is a quintessential rock and roll story, an inspired examination of a unique era in music history as witnessed by people who were there. As one observer noted, “Because of who is interviewed, we are thrust back into that time and place so that we understand precisely why Harry was so important then...and why he still matters today.”

## **ABOUT THE PRODUCTION**

When you mention Harry Nilsson either people get it right away or they have no idea what you're talking about. The name may not ring a bell, but people know his music which touches the heart and sets the spirit soaring.

But how do you make a film about a man who purposefully stayed out of the public eye...a man whose determination to do things his way meant no concert performances and precious few appearances on television?

In **WHO IS HARRY NILSSON (And Why Is Everybody Talkin' About Him)?**, documentary filmmaker John Scheinfeld (*The U.S. vs. John Lennon, We Believe*) brings his superb story-telling skill to bear in creating a narrative with twists and turns every bit as dramatic as Harry's life. This compelling film offers keen insight into the rock and roll experience -- the pressures and temptations that impact on a young man eager to express himself creatively; the roller coaster ride of fame, celebrity and personal excess that enveloped the man even as his art evolves and matures; the self-destructive forces that conspire to destroy everything he worked so hard to achieve; an exploration of the madness that almost always goes hand-in-hand with genius; and how, by the end of an explosive life, he finds personal redemption.

In so many ways, this is the little film that could. To paraphrase a group of Harry's friends, it was a long and winding road from concept to finished film.

For years Scheinfeld and producer David Leaf had tried without success to interest television networks in commissioning a documentary about Harry's extraordinary life. It was not until Lee Blackman -- Harry's good friend, attorney and representative for his Estate -- secured private financing that production could finally begin. "In my view, Harry died far too young and was not fully recognized for his remarkable musical legacy," said Blackman. "Harry's widow, Una, and I wanted to change all that." Una agreed, saying "Even if no one else but my kids see this film, I want it made so they will know about their father."

Determined to gather testimony from people who really knew Harry, who went on the "Harry Ride," as Micky Dolenz aptly described it, Scheinfeld and Leaf taped over forty interviews at many different locations in the United States and United Kingdom.

As in all Scheinfeld productions, there was a commitment to uncovering as much rare and never-before-seen audio/visual material as possible. This task was made much harder by the fact that Harry rarely appeared and/or performed in public. In addition to scouring the world's archives and the holdings of private collectors, Scheinfeld and Leaf prevailed upon Harry's friends and extended family who freely and generously shared their photos, home movies, private recordings and personal memorabilia. "Do it for Harry" became the mantra for everyone associated with the making of this film.

Sony Music Entertainment (successor to The RCA Records Label for which Harry recorded) granted unprecedented access to its archive during the making of this film resulting in a treasure trove of photos, promotional films, master recordings, unreleased recordings, remixes and film elements that help bring Harry's remarkable saga to life.

Scheinfeld chose to utilize only Harry's music in this film so, in effect, the soundtrack is by Nilsson. Jam-packed with over 50 songs, the film has wall-to-wall music featuring classic Harry, unreleased Harry and rare Harry, all uniquely employed to propel the story line forward, comment on what's happening on-screen, or provide a window into what Harry might have been thinking or feeling at a given moment.

Most exciting, with the generous support of Sony, Scheinfeld went into the studio and remixed more than two dozen Nilsson tracks, stripping off the lead vocals leaving the original backing tracks. "Over the years," says Scheinfeld, "I was so focused on Harry's extraordinary vocals that I didn't fully appreciate the beauty and impeccable production value of the music that lay beneath. These exquisite recordings, produced by Rick Jarrard, Richard Perry, John Lennon and Harry himself, reveal extraordinary beauty, poignancy, energy, pain and humor, all of which combine to create a powerful score for all aspects of Harry's life story as portrayed in the film."

Scheinfeld first heard Harry's music on the radio when he was growing up and became a fan (he even used one track in a radio play he directed in college). But he knew little about the man himself. During production he was able to immerse himself in all things Harry, learning the truth behind the Nilsson mystique and he brings that knowledge to the forefront in this film. The result is an extraordinary documentary that presents its subject warts and all.

The film was screened as a Work-in-Progress at the Santa Barbara and Seattle international film festivals to great acclaim in 2006. Journalists, reporters, music writers and critics were poised to write reviews and feature articles about the film and Harry. The nearly 10,000 people on the movie's MySpace page chatted about the film endlessly, clamoring to see it. However, issues involving the use of Harry's master recordings in the movie that the filmmakers had no reason to anticipate emerged unexpectedly and delayed release of the film.

Happily, everything was finally resolved, but several years had been lost. Not only that, but the film distribution landscape had undergone a significant transformation. But Scheinfeld wouldn't take "No" for an answer. Personally contacting distributors, sending out screeners, he doggedly pursued a partner that would be as passionate about the film as everyone involved in making it. And then he connected with Richard Lorber of Lorber Films (now Kino Lorber). "Richard loved the film and had no intention of letting anyone else put it into the marketplace," recalls Scheinfeld. A deal was struck and release plans started to be formulated.

Finally, it seems, everybody will be talkin' about Harry Nilsson.

**FULL CAST LIST**

The cast of friends, peers, musical colleagues, collaborators and family features:

Gerry Beckley  
Lee Blackman  
Perry Botkin, Jr.  
Ray Cooper  
Micky Dolenz  
Stanley Dorfman  
Terry Gilliam  
Bruce Grakal  
Doug Hoefler  
Mark Hudson  
Dustin Hoffman  
Danny Hutton  
Eric Idle  
Rick Jarrard  
Al Kooper  
Trevor Lawrence  
John Lennon  
The Monkees  
Randy Newman  
Annie Nilsson  
Beau Nilsson  
Diane Nilsson  
Olivia Nilsson  
Una Nilsson  
Zak Nilsson  
Yoko Ono  
May Pang  
Van Dyke Parks  
Richard Perry  
Dick Smothers  
Tom Smothers  
Ringo Starr  
Joan Taylor  
Three Dog Night  
Jon Voight  
Jimmy Webb  
Paul Williams  
Robin Williams  
Brian Wilson  
Fred Wolf

## ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

### **JOHN SCHEINFELD** **Director/Writer/Producer**

Emmy® and Grammy® nominee John Scheinfeld is a respected director, writer and producer of documentaries, bringing a broad spectrum of experiences and interests to pop culture, music, historical and spiritual projects for broadcast, cable and theatrical exhibition.

Most notably, Scheinfeld directed, wrote and produced (with David Leaf) the feature film documentary *The U.S. vs. John Lennon*. It was an official selection of the Venice Film Festival, the Telluride Film Festival, the Toronto International Film Festival and the London Film Festival and was distributed worldwide by Lionsgate.

A new film, *We Believe*, a celebration of hope, loyalty, faith and the extraordinary love affair between a great city, Chicago, and its baseball team, the Cubs, was released on April 13<sup>th</sup>, 2010.

In addition, Scheinfeld is completing production on *Heaven*, a bold global exploration into diverse viewpoints...and shared goal...of reaching Heaven according to believers of Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism.

In 2009, in partnership with David Leaf, Scheinfeld produced an 8-part/four-hour documentary, *Norman Lear's TV Revolution*, distributed by Sony.

On the heels of a Grammy® nomination for producing 2005's *Beautiful Dreamer: Brian Wilson and the Story of SMiLE*, he directed, wrote and produced *Electric Youth: Teen Stars in the Music Business*, a 2-hour special for A&E for which he received an Emmy nomination as writer.

Previously, he directed, wrote and produced *The Divine Bette Midler*, a special 2-hour episode of A&E's award-winning BIOGRAPHY series as well as *No Fighting in the War Room...or...Dr. Strangelove and The Nuclear Threat* for Columbia Pictures Entertainment, a compelling documentary with commentary from Bob Woodward, Spike Lee, Roger Ebert and Robert McNamara.

With Leaf, in he wrote, produced and directed a 5-part miniseries for BRAVO, *The 100 Greatest Television Characters*. Also, with Leaf and on his own, he produced numerous retrospectives for PBS on such iconic stars as Nat "King" Cole, Bing Crosby, Jimmy Durante, Bob Hope, Dean Martin, the Marx Brothers, Ricky Nelson, Jack Paar, Peter Sellers, Frank Sinatra, Andy Williams and Jonathan Winters.

Scheinfeld also writes dramatic scripts for prime time television, creating and writing pilots for new drama series for ABC, CBS, Fox and NBC.

He received a B.A. in Communications and Sociology from Oberlin College and holds an M.F.A. in Radio/Television/Film from Northwestern University.

**DAVID LEAF**  
**Producer**

David Leaf is a WGAW and Peabody Award-winning writer, director and producer, best known for his work on feature documentaries, music-variety and live event specials as well as highly-regarded pop culture retrospectives.

As a director, Leaf's most recent feature is *The Night James Brown Saved Boston*. The critically-acclaimed, award-winning film (part of VH1's "Rock Docs" series) premiered at the 2008 SXSW Film Festival. Distributed outside North America by Fremantle, the film was an official selection at the 2008 Meltdown Festival in London and has also played to acclaim at festivals in Vienna, Prague and Barcelona.

In 2009, in partnership with John Scheinfeld, he produced an 8-part/four-hour documentary, *Norman Lear's TV Revolution* (distributed by Sony). Also with Scheinfeld, Leaf's feature films as a writer/producer/director include *The U.S. vs. John Lennon* (which premiered at the 2006 Venice Film Festival and was distributed worldwide by Lionsgate) and the feature documentary *Beautiful Dreamer: Brian Wilson and the Story of SMiLE* (Showtime), which Leaf wrote and directed. The film had a theatrical release in the UK and was nominated for a 2006 Grammy® Award.

As a writer, Leaf currently has two original screenplays in active development, one a love story/comedy, the other a conspiracy thriller.

Leaf's television credits include being one of the Emmy® nominated (and Peabody Award-winning) writers on the landmark all-network telethon *America: A Tribute To Heroes*. He also wrote and produced 2001's *An-All Star Tribute To Brian Wilson* (TNT). Other music/TV productions include *The Songwriters Hall of Fame* (Bravo), *The Score* (a limited series for Trio) and the Emmy® nominated *Billy Joel: In His Own Words* (A&E).

He has written such network specials as *The Kennedy Center Honors* (CBS) for which he won a WGAW award, *Farm Aid* (CMT), *Carnegie Hall Salutes The Jazz Masters* (PBS), *Gilda Radner* (ABC), *The Billboard Awards* (nine years) (FOX), *The Television Academy Hall Of Fame* (NBC), *The Creative Arts Emmy Awards* (Fox) and *Elvis: The Tribute* (ABC). Other solo writing/producing/directing projects include *You Can't Do That: The Making Of 'A Hard Day's Night'*, *Martin & Lewis: Their Golden Age of Comedy* (both for The Disney Channel) and *Lassie: Unleashed* (ABC).

For LSL Productions, Leaf wrote, produced and directed *The Bee Gees: This Is Where I Came In* (A&E), *The 100 Greatest TV Characters of All Time* (Bravo), *The Unknown Marx Brothers* (Disney Channel) and for PBS, *Jack Paar: Smart TV*, *When I Fall In Love: The One and Only Nat "King" Cole*, *Rosemary Clooney: Girl Singer*, *Bob Hope: The Road To Laughter*, *Sinatra: The Classic Duets*, *Vintage Sinatra*, and *Jonathan Winters: On The Loose*.

Leaf has written three biographies, including the best-selling authorized biography of the Bee Gees and the definitive Brian Wilson biography, *The Beach Boys & The California Myth*. In association with the Director's Guild of America, he conducted dozens of interviews for the textbook *Producing & Directing Live TV*. Leaf also edited a book-length history of A&M Records and wrote the Beatles and Beach Boys chapters for Capitol Records' 50th anniversary book.

**LEE BLACKMAN**  
**Executive Producer**

Lee Blackman, Harry Nilsson's long-time attorney and close friend, has been practicing law for over 35 years, representing a wide variety of writers, artists, directors, agents and managers, as well as many entertainment and other companies.

**EDUCATION / ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIPS / BAR ADMISSIONS:**

Lee attended Loyola University School of Law in Los Angeles. He received a Juris Doctor degree in 1972, and sat for and passed the California Bar Examination the same year.

Prior to attending law school, Lee received a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration at California State University, Northridge, and attended the Graduate School of Business Administration MBA Program at the University of Southern California.

**SPECIAL RECOGNITION:**

In addition to numerous letters of commendation from judges and bar associations, Lee has received three Recognition of Experience Certificates from the California Trial Lawyers Association, acknowledging his experience as a Trial Lawyer. He is rated "AV" (the highest rating attainable) by the prestigious *Martindale-Hubbell Law Directory*. As stated in *Martindale-Hubbell*, "The AV rating indicates very high to preeminent legal ability and very high ethical standards as established by confidential opinions from members of the Bar."

**MEDIA:**

Lee has been seen and heard on national television and radio programs. He and his cases have been written about in several books, major newspapers including *The New York Times*, *London Observer*, *Chicago Sun-Times* and *Los Angeles Times* (to name but a few), and national magazines from *People* to *Vanity Fair*.

**CREATIVE WORKS:**

Some of Lee's creative works include "Rescue by Chance", a true story published in *Sea Magazine*; *TripMaster – The Complete Checklist for Carefree Travel* (Champion Publications); the introduction/biography to *The Nilsson Anthology* songbook (Warner Bros. Publications); and the editing of liner-note booklets for numerous major-label CDs. He assisted the author, took photographs used in and edited portions of *A Clean Breast – The Life and Loves of Russ Meyer* (The Hauck Publishing Company, Inc.). Glamour photographs taken by Lee have been published in best-selling magazines in Europe and Japan.

**PETER S. LYNCH, II**  
**Editor and Co-Producer**

Peter S. Lynch, II has worked in the documentary field since 2000. In addition to his efforts on *Who Is Harry Nilsson (And Why Is Everybody Talkin' About Him)?*, Peter has edited the feature documentaries *Beautiful Dreamer: Brian Wilson and The Story of SMiLE* (nominated for a GRAMMY® as part of the *Brian Wilson Presents SMiLE DVD*), *The U.S. vs. John Lennon* and *The Night James Brown Saved Boston* – both recipients of a FOCAL International Award for best use of footage in a feature/factual production respectively.

Peter has edited numerous specials for PBS on such entertainers as Frank Sinatra, Bob Hope, Jack Paar, Rosemary Clooney, Nat “King” Cole and Ricky Nelson. In 2002, he served as associate producer of *In The Name Of Heaven*, a one-hour Easter special, for The National Geographic Channel. Lynch edited two-hour installments of A&E’s famed *Biography* series chronicling the lives of Bette Midler and Andy Williams, as well as the EMMY® nominated special *Child Stars III: Teen Rockers* – also for A&E. In 2004, he lent his talents to Bravo’s critically acclaimed 5-part series, *The 100 Greatest TV Characters*, and in 2009 his work was featured as part of *The Norman Lear Collection DVD Box Set* from Sony Pictures Home Entertainment.

Most recently Peter completed work on 90-plus minutes of bonus features to accompany the release of *Who Is Harry Nilsson...?* on DVD, served as co-producer and editor of *The Legendary Bing Crosby*, and produced and edited *Andy Williams: Moon River and Me* – both currently airing on PBS stations nationwide.

## HARRY NILSSON

“Original,” says the dictionary, means “capable of or given to thinking or acting in an independent, creative or individual manner.”

In life as in music, Harry Edward Nilsson III was a true original.

He was born in a very modest section of Brooklyn on June 15, 1941. His father abandoned the family when he was three years old, leaving his mother to struggle trying to raise Harry and his half-sister on her own. He once said that he spent half his early life in New York “going to school” and the other half in California “going to work.” At the age of 15 he hitchhiked back to Los Angeles after a series of adventures that included a wild death ride by truck through Juarez, Mexico.

Although he had no formal musical training, young Harry was determined to be a musician. He taught himself to play piano and began singing Everly Brothers-type tunes with his best friend. “We would harmonize and play the steering wheel and foot pedal. After I started singing, I just didn’t find enough songs that I liked, and I didn’t know the words to the rest, so I started writing my own.”

Harry paid the bills first as an usher at the Paramount Theater in downtown Los Angeles and, later, rose to the dizzying heights of Assistant Manager. Possessing a razor-sharp mind for figures, from 1960-67 he worked in the computer center at a bank in the San Fernando Valley, eventually rising to the position of Supervisor with 32 people working under him. In his spare time he continued to pursue his dream of making it in the music business by recording demos of other people’s songs, hawking his own compositions and singing on commercials. At one time he recorded a single for Mercury Records under the name Johnny Niles and then, in 1966, an LP under his own name for Tower Records.

Nilsson, whose grandparents were reportedly one of Europe’s foremost circus acts, finally received his big break in 1967 when The Monkees recorded his song, “Cuddly Toy.” Suddenly he was in demand, writing and recording his own material. A song on his first LP, a brilliant combination Beatles pastiche, caught the ear of the Beatles’ manager Brian Epstein who, before he died, tried to sign Nilsson as an artist. Nilsson opted to sign a long-term deal with RCA Records.

Although his first album and singles were not hits, he became a darling of the critics and acquired a reputation among the glitterati of the LA rock music scene as “a singer’s singer.” Demonstrating his unique versatility, Nilsson records always contained exciting and original music with imaginative arrangements that didn’t fit neatly into any one style.

One critic wrote, “His voice is incredible – a three-and-a-half octave range that cavorts through songs, subtly magnifying feelings with perfect intonation and unexpected musical shifts, often seeming more of an instrument than a voice.”

Harry went on to compose songs for other artists, wrote jingles for radio and TV commercials and was selected by Otto Preminger to write the entire score for his 1968 film, *Skidoo*. The following year he wrote and sang “Best Friend,” the beloved theme song for the TV series, *The Courtship of Eddie’s Father*.

A millionaire before he was Thirty, Harry’s songs were recorded by Herb Alpert and the Tijuana Brass, Harry Belafonte, Blood Sweat & Tears, Glen Campbell, Joe Cocker, Ella Fitzgerald, Aimee Mann, Bette Midler, The Monkees, The Ronettes, Barbra Streisand, The Turtles, The Yardbirds and others. In 1969, Three Dog Night had a monster hit with Harry’s composition, “One.”

As popular and in-demand as he was, Harry refused to perform live and rarely appeared on television. The result was a performer whose songs and friends are far better known than he.

Harry released an album of his own every year from 1967 to 1977, but never allowed himself to be pigeon-holed. Just when you thought you had him figured out, he’d take a unique Harry career-turn and issue a new LP that was nothing like the one before it (e.g. *Nilsson Sings Newman*, *The Point*, *A Little Touch of Schmilsson in the Night*, etc.).

His own recording of “Everybody’s Talkin,’ written by Fred Neil, won him a Grammy® in 1970 for “Best Contemporary Vocal Performance, Male,” brought him fame, fortune and a much wider audience. The song, incidentally, has been inducted into the Grammy® Hall of Fame and is also one of the “Songs of the Century” as compiled by the Recording Industry Association of America and the National Endowment for the Arts.

In 1969 he formed his own production company, Nilsson House, to produce himself and other artists. The following year Harry wrote and produced an animated musical film for television that included the Top 40 hit, “Me and My Arrow.” *The Point* was incredibly successful and remains a timeless piece of entertainment for children of all ages.

The next year saw the release of his platinum-selling album, *Nilsson Schmilsson*. It contained the quirky hit, “Coconut” (recently used in a popular Coca-Cola commercial) and “Without You” (another song he didn’t write) which went to Number One on the charts and brought him a second Grammy®, this time for “Best Pop Vocal Performance, Male.”

In 1974 RCA signed him to a new deal, reportedly with the biggest advance paid to a rock performer to date. He released 6 more albums before he stopped making records. Although he continued to dabble in music, most of his time in ensuing years was spent in other areas. He wrote the score for the movie *Popeye*, starring Robin Williams, adapted *The Point* for the stage, became a fervent advocate of Gun Control, wrote motion picture scripts with the legendary Terry Southern and formed an entertainment company that went public.

He died of a heart attack on January 15<sup>th</sup>, 1994, survived by his wife, Una and their six children and a child from a previous marriage.