

Robert Capa: In Love and War

(Docu)

An American Masters production in association with Muse Film and Television. Produced by Anne Makepeace. Executive producer, Susan Lacy Co-producer, Joanna Rudnick. Directed, written by Anne Makepeace.

By **JOE LEYDON**

Anne Makepeace's docu profiles the life of noted war photographer Robert Capa.

Arguably the greatest, bravest and most influential war photographer of the 20th century, Hungarian-born Robert Capa gets a respectful and respectable bio treatment in Anne Makepeace's well-researched docu. Set to premiere May 28 as an "American Masters" presentation on PBS, "Robert Capa: In Love and War" traces photog's life and career from his leftist radicalism in pre-WWII Budapest to his violent end as the first American war correspondent to die in Vietnam. Appropriately, pic places greatest emphasis on Capa's life-risking work as documenter of the Spanish Civil War, London Blitz and D-Day landing on Omaha Beach.

Deftly interweaving archival material, interviews with surviving acquaintances and, of course, stunning still photos, Makepeace fashions a multifaceted portrait of a complex figure. While down and out in '30s Paris, pic notes, Capa initially turned to photography simply to make a quick buck. Gradually, however, idealism trumped pragmatism. To paraphrase one of Makepeace's interviewees, Capa -- a lifelong supporter of leftist causes -- started taking pictures as his own way of battling fascism.

Pic depicts the drop-dead handsome Capa as a compulsive gambler -- whether on the battlefield, where he routinely dived with death to get great shots, or at the racetrack, where he wagered fortunes to finance his Magnum photo agency. The great love of his life, writer-photographer Gerda Taro, perished while on assignment during the Spanish Civil War. After that, "Love and War" suggests, Capa often

appeared utterly fearless (even in the eyes of battle-hardened G.I.s), because he felt he had nothing left to lose.

Born Endre Friedman in 1913, he reinvented himself as a vet photographer named Robert Capa while seeking work during his hardscrabble days in Paris. He based his new moniker on U.S. filmmaker Frank Capra, shortly after success of latter's "It Happened One Night." Decades later, Capa would in turn influence another great American filmmaker. Steven Spielberg appears in "Love and War" to describe how he drew inspiration from Capa's D-Day pics while planning the opening scenes of "Saving Private Ryan."

Docu also covers Capa's other Hollywood connections, duly noting his one attempt at acting -- playing a wily Egyptian in "Temptation," a half-forgotten 1946 B-movie directed by Irving Pichel -- and his brief but intense love affair with Ingrid Bergman during filming of Alfred Hitchcock's "Notorious." Pair tried to keep their romance a secret, but Hitchcock apparently noticed. Indeed, "Love and War" conjectures that Hitchcock used Capa as a role model for James Stewart's love-wary, globetrotting shutterbug in "Rear Window."

Camera (color), Nancy Schreiber; editor, Susan Fanshel; music, Joel Goodman; sound, Judy Karp. Reviewed on videocassette, Houston, Jan. 31, 2003. (At Sundance Film Festival -- Documentary Competition) Running time: 84 MIN. Narrator: Robert Burke