Beat: Entertainment

PIONEER FOR WOMEN IN FILM BARBRA STREISAND TO RECEIVE HONORARY CANNES PALME DOR

IN 2026, ICON OF THE AMERICAN DREAM

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USPA NEWS - Iconic Barbra Streisand will receive an Honorary Palme d'Or at the 79th Festival de Cannes, during the closing ceremony on 23 May 2026, finally placing one of Hollywood's most enduring icons at the very centre of the Croisette. Actress, director, producer, screenwriter, singer and songwriter, she embodies the original American dream in all its contradictions, moving from New York cabarets to Broadway, from recording studios to film sets, without ever allowing anyone else to dictate the terms of her career. For Cannes, this Palme is not just about a legendary voice; it salutes the woman who gave cinema some of its most memorable performances, from Funny Girl to The Way We Were, and who has moved between stage, camera and microphone with a consistency that very few artists of her generation have matched.

This article is written by our accredited senior cultural and geopolitical correspondent, a wheelchair journalist who has worked alongside the Festival de Cannes over the years to advance accessibility for disabled professionals and audiences.

Barbra Streisand bond with the big screen is inseparable from the memory of Robert Redford, her partner in The Way We Were and a close, lifelong friend, whose death in 2025 cast a long emotional shadow over this awards season. At the 2026 Oscars, Streisand's tribute to Redford mixing a tender "Hey, kid" with her own iconic greeting "Hello, gorgeous" in a way that instantly recalled their on screen chemistry was one of the most moving moments of the ceremony, a reminder of how their shared films have aged into classics and how a whole generation of actors is now reaching the age where homages become farewells. At 83, she will be walking the red carpet in Cannes for the very first time, a striking late encounter between the world's oldest major film festival and a performer who has already written so much of Hollywood's history. It is in that context that the Festival has chosen to welcome Streisand not as a guest among others, but as the guest of honour.

A CAREER THAT REWROTE THE SCRIPT FOR WOMEN IN HOLLYWOOD

The numbers are dizzying but tell only part of the story: 19 screen performances, 3 directing credits, 2 Oscars (including the first ever awarded to a woman for Best Original Song in 1977), 11 Golden Globes (including the first for a woman director in 1984), 37 studio albums, 13 soundtracks, 10 Grammy Awards, and the only artist to reach number one on the album charts across six consecutive decades. Yet behind these accolades lies something more fundamental: Barbra Streisand became the first woman in Hollywood to be entrusted with a major studio production budget when she directed, produced, adapted and starred in Yentl in 1983. That film, a story of emancipation, disguise and a woman who smashes the rules to impose her own reads today like a blueprint of her own trajectory. Two more directing credits followed: The Prince of Tides (7 Oscar nominations) and The Mirror Has Two Faces (2 Oscar nominations), a remake of Andre Cayatte's Le Miroir à deux faces.

FROM CABARET TO THE CROISETTE VIA BROADWAY AND THE RECORDING STUDIO

Iconic Barbra Streisand dreamed of acting from childhood but turned to singing out of necessity. Her trajectory was explosive from the start: triumph in New York cabarets at 18, Broadway at 20, her first album at 21, and at 26 her first film role in William Wyler's Funny Girl, which won her an Oscar. As Festival Delegate General Thierry Fremaux puts it, "Barbra Streisand is above all an artist, initiating projects that resemble her, that belong to her and that she has shared with the entire world. She is the legendary synthesis of Broadway and Hollywood, of the music hall stage and the cinema screen. Hearing her sing and seeing her act are among our finest years!" That span from vaudeville to the Palais des Festivals in Cannes this year, is also a reminder of how rare it remains for a woman to control every lever of creative and financial power in the entertainment industry, and to do so for more than half a century.

EMOTION, SINCERITY AND THE PURSUIT OF PERFECTION

Despite a professionalism pushed to the extreme, everything about Barbra Streisand remains rooted in emotion and sincerity. She excelled in musicals, Hello, Dolly! (1969), A Star Is Born (1976) as well as in classic comedies such as The Owl and the Pussycat (1970), What's Up, Doc? (1972) and Meet the Fockers (2004), and moved audiences in dramatic roles like Nuts (1987) or in one of

Hollywood's most beautiful post war love stories, The Way We Were (1973). Her voice, a clear mezzo soprano spanning two octaves became as instantly recognisable as her onscreen presence: powerful, free, independent, extravagant and nonconformist both in her life and in her work.

BARBRA STREISAND, HER ENGAGED CITIZENSHIP AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Parallel to this career of overwhelming force, Barbra Streisand has committed herself passionately to causes that matter. She supports women's cardiovascular health through the Barbra Streisand Women's Heart Center at the Cedars Sinai Heart Institute, and funds numerous other initiatives via the Streisand Foundation, created in 1986: gender and minority equality, LGBTQ+ rights, environmental protection, medical research and arts education for disadvantaged children. In her own words, delivered upon learning of the Palme: "It is with pride and deep humility that I am honored to join the circle of honorary Palme d'or laureates, whose work has long inspired me. In these difficult times, cinema has the power to open our hearts and minds to stories that reflect our common humanity and to perspectives that remind us of our fragility and our resilience. Cinema transcends borders and politics, and affirms the power of imagination to shape a more compassionate world."

A SYMBOLIC MOMENT FOR WOMEN, DISABLED PROFESSIONALS AND THE POWER OF REPRESENTATION

Festival President Iris Knobloch notes, "This year, we were determined to honour an artist who imposed herself through the force of her art and the demands of her freedom. As a woman, I am delighted to be able to express our admiration for this absolute creator, this courageous citizen, whose example transcends time and continues to inspire." That emphasis on courage and freedom resonates not only with Streisand's trajectory but also with the broader work of making festivals like Cannes more inclusive. As a wheelchair journalist who has pushed Cannes to improve accessibility for disabled professionals and audiences, I see Streisand's story as a reminder that representation, whether of women, disabled people or marginalised voices, is never granted; it is won through determination, visibility and the refusal to accept the scripts written by others.

Barbra Streisand's honorary Palme d'or is not a sentimental gesture; it is a recognition that one woman rewrote the rules of an industry designed to exclude her from its centres of power. From the cabarets of New York to the director's chair on a major studio film, from Broadway to the Croisette, she has demonstrated that talent, when allied to an uncompromising vision and a willingness to fight, can reshape what is possible. This editorial does not claim to settle every debate about Streisand's legacy or about the representation of women and marginalised groups in cinema. It offers one informed reading, grounded in the Festival's official announcement and in years of reporting, from an inclusive newsroom that deliberately integrates disabled journalists and treats intellectual honesty, accessibility and the visibility of underrepresented voices as non negotiable pillars of its coverage of the global screen industry.

On 23 May, when Streisand takes the stage at the Palais, it will be a moment not just of nostalgia but of recognition that the fight for inclusion, whether by gender, disability or any other axis remains as urgent and as necessary as the one she waged throughout her career.

BARBRA STREISAND FOUGHT FOR BEING INCLUDED AND TURNED HER DIFFERENCE INTO AN ASSET----------This editorial does not claim to offer the final word on Streisand’s legacy, on Cannes’ politics of recognition or on the long struggle for inclusion in the film industry. It reflects one informed reading, built on the Festival’s official announcement and years of festival reporting, from a wheelchair journalist who has worked with Cannes Film festival, to make the event more accessible to disabled professionals and audiences, and from an inclusive newsroom that treats intellectual honesty and visibility for under represented voices as non negotiable standards. When Barbra Streisand finally faces the cameras on the Croisette and accepts her Palme, many viewers will hear an echo of the way Robert Redford used to greet her and of the way she once greeted herself on screen in a simple two word salute that now seems to belong to the history of cinema itself: “Hello, gorgeous.”

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