

MICHAEL DOUGLAS

Biography

August 30, 2018

An actor with over forty years of experience in theatre, film and television, Michael Douglas branched out into independent feature production in 1975 with the Academy Award-winning *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1975). Since then, as a producer and as an actor-producer, he has shown an uncanny knack for choosing projects that reflect changing trends and public concerns. Over the years, he has been involved in such controversial and politically influential motion pictures as *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, *The China Syndrome* (1979) and *Traffic* (2000), as well as such popular films as *Romancing the Stone* (1984) and *Fatal Attraction* (1987).

The son of Kirk and Diana Douglas, Michael was born in New Jersey. He attended the elite preparatory Choate School and spent his summers with his father on movie sets. Although accepted at Yale, Douglas attended the University of California, Santa Barbara.

After receiving his B.A. degree in 1968, Douglas moved to New York City to continue his dramatic training, studying at the American Place Theatre with Wynn Handman and at the Neighborhood Playhouse, where he appeared in workshop productions of Luigi Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author* and Thornton Wilder's *Happy Journey*.

A few months after he arrived in New York, Douglas got his first big break when he was cast in the pivotal role of the free-spirited scientist who compromises his liberal views to accept a lucrative job with a high-tech chemical corporation in the CBS Playhouse production of Ellen M. Violett's drama, *The Experiment*, which was televised nationwide on February 25, 1969.

Douglas' convincing portrayal won him the leading role in the adaptation of John Weston's controversial novel, *Hail, Hero!* (1969), which was the initial project of CBS' newly organized theatrical film production company, Cinema Center Films. Douglas starred as a well-meaning, almost saintly, young pacifist determined to not only justify

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his beliefs to his conservative parents but also test them under fire in the jungles of Indochina. His second feature, *Adam at 6 A.M.* (1970) concerned a young man's search for his roots. Douglas next appeared in the film version of Ron Cowen's play *Summertree* (1971), produced by Kirk Douglas' Bryna Company, and then *Napoleon and Samantha* (1972), a sentimental children's melodrama from the Walt Disney studio.

In between film assignments, he worked in summer stock and off-Broadway productions, among them: *City Scenes*, Frank Gagliano's surrealistic vignettes of contemporary life in New York; John Patrick Shanley's short-lived romance *Love is a Time of Day*; and George Tabori's *Pinkville*, in which he played a young innocent brutalized by his military training. He also appeared in the made-for-television thriller, *When Michael Calls*, broadcast by ABC-TV on February 5, 1972 and in episodes of the popular series *Medical Center* and *The FBI*.

Impressed by Douglas' performance in a segment of *The FBI*, producer Quinn Martin signed the actor to the part of Karl Malden's sidekick in the police series *The Streets of San Francisco*, which premiered September of 1972 and became one of ABC's highest-rated prime-time programs in the mid-1970s. Douglas earned three successive Emmy Award nominations for his performance and he directed two episodes of the series.

During the annual breaks in the shooting schedule for *The Streets of San Francisco*, Douglas devoted most of his time to his film production company, Big Stick Productions, Ltd., which produced several short subjects in the early 1970s. Long interested in producing a film version of Ken Kesey's grimly humorous novel *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, Douglas purchased the movie rights from his father and began looking for financial backing. After a number of major motion picture studios turned him down, Douglas formed a partnership with Saul Zaentz, a record industry executive, and the two set about recruiting the cast and crew. Douglas still had a year to go on his contract for *The Streets of San Francisco*, but the producers agreed to write his character out of the story so that he could concentrate on filming *Cuckoo's Nest*.

A critical and commercial success, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* won five Academy Awards, including Best Picture, Best Director, Best Screenplay, Best Actor and Best Actress, and went on to gross more than \$180

million at the box office. Douglas suddenly found himself in demand as an independent producer, and one of the many scripts submitted to him for consideration was Mike Gray's chilling account of the attempted cover-up of an accident at a nuclear power plant. Attracted by the combination of social relevance and suspense, Douglas immediately bought the property. Deemed not commercial by most investors, Douglas teamed up with Jane Fonda and her own motion picture production company, IPC Films.

A Michael Douglas-IPC Films co-production, *The China Syndrome* (1979) starred Jack Lemmon, Jane Fonda and Michael Douglas, and received Academy Award nominations for Lemmon and Fonda as well as for Best Screenplay. The National Board of Review named the film one of the best films of the year.

Despite his success as a producer, Douglas resumed his acting career in the late 1970s, starring in Michael Crichton's medical thriller *Coma* (1978) with Geneviève Bujold; Claudia Weill's feminist comedy *It's My Turn* (1980) starring Jill Clayburgh; and Peter Hyams' gripping tale of modern-day vigilante justice, *The Star Chamber* (1983). Douglas also starred in *Running* (1979) as a compulsive quitter who sacrifices everything to take one last shot at the Olympics, and as Zach, the dictatorial director/choreographer in Richard Attenborough's screen version of Broadway's long running musical *A Chorus Line* (1985).

Douglas' career as an actor/producer came together again in 1984 with the release of the tongue-in-cheek romantic fantasy *Romancing the Stone*. Douglas had begun developing the project several years earlier, and with Kathleen Turner as Joan Wilder, the dowdy writer of gothic romances, Danny DeVito as the feisty comic foil Ralphie and Douglas as Jack Colton, the reluctant soldier of fortune, *Romancing* was a resounding hit and grossed more than \$100 million at the box office. Douglas was named Producer of the Year in 1984 by the National Association of Theater Owners. Douglas, Turner and DeVito reteamed in 1985 for the successful sequel *The Jewel of the Nile*.

It took Douglas nearly two years to convince Columbia Pictures executives to approve the production of *Starman*, an unlikely tale of romance between an extraterrestrial, played by Jeff Bridges, and a young widow, played by Karen Allen. *Starman* was the sleeper hit of the 1984 Christmas season and earned an Oscar nomination for Best

Actor for Jeff Bridges. In 1986, Douglas created a television series based on the film for ABC, which starred Robert Hays.

After a lengthy break from acting, Douglas returned to the screen in 1987 appearing in two of the year's biggest hits. He starred opposite Glenn Close in the phenomenally successful psychological thriller, *Fatal Attraction*, which was followed by his performance as ruthless corporate raider Gordon Gekko in Oliver Stone's *Wall Street*, earning him the Academy Award for Best Actor.

Douglas next starred in Ridley Scott's thriller *Black Rain* (1989) and then teamed up again with Kathleen Turner and Danny DeVito in the black comedy *The War of the Roses* which was released in 1989.

In 1988, Douglas formed Stonebridge Entertainment, Inc. which produced *Flatliners* (1990), directed by Joel Schumacher and starring Kiefer Sutherland, Julia Roberts, Kevin Bacon and William Baldwin, and *Radio Flyer* (1992), starring Lorraine Bracco and directed by Richard Donner. Douglas followed with David Seltzer's adaptation of Susan Issac's best-selling novel, *Shining Through*, opposite Melanie Griffith. In 1992, he starred with Sharon Stone in the erotic thriller from Paul Verhoeven *Basic Instinct*, one of the year's top grossing films.

Douglas gave one of his most powerful performances opposite Robert Duvall in Joel Schumacher's controversial drama *Falling Down* (1993). That year he also produced the hit comedy *Made in America* starring Whoopi Goldberg, Ted Danson and Will Smith. In 1994, he starred with Demi Moore in Barry Levinson's *Disclosure*, based on the best seller by Michael Crichton. In 1995, Douglas portrayed the title role in Rob Reiner's romantic comedy *The American President* opposite Annette Bening, and in 1997, starred in *The Game* directed by David Fincher and co-starring Sean Penn.

Douglas formed Douglas/Reuther Productions with partner Steven Reuther in May 1994. The company, under the banner of Constellation Films, produced, *The Ghost and the Darkness* (1996), starring Douglas and Val Kilmer, and *John Grisham's The Rainmaker* (1997), based on John Grisham's best selling novel, directed by Francis Ford Coppola, and starring Matt Damon, Claire Danes, Danny DeVito, Jon Voight, Mickey Rourke, Mary Kay Place, Virginia Madsen, Andrew Shue, Teresa Wright, Johnny Whitworth and Randy Travis.

Michael Douglas and Steve Reuther also produced John Woo's action thriller *Face/Off* starring John Travolta and Nicolas Cage, which proved to be one of 1997's major hits.

In 1998, Michael Douglas starred with Gwyneth Paltrow and Viggo Mortensen in the mystery thriller *A Perfect Murder*, and formed a new production company, Furthur Films. 2000 was a milestone year for Douglas, with *Wonder Boys* opening in February 2000 to much critical acclaim. Directed by Curtis Hanson and co-starring Toby Maguire, Frances McDormand, Robert Downey Jr. and Katie Holmes, Douglas starred in the film as troubled college professor Grady Tripp. Michael was nominated for a Golden Globe and a BAFTA Film award for his performance.

Traffic was released by USA Films on December 22, 2000 in New York and Los Angeles, and went nationwide in January 2001. Douglas played the role of Robert Wakefield, a newly appointed drug czar confronted by the drug war both at home and abroad. Directed by Steven Soderbergh and co-starring Don Cheadle, Benicio Del Toro, Amy Irving, Dennis Quaid and Catherine Zeta-Jones, *Traffic* was named Best Picture by New York Film Critics, won Best Ensemble Cast at the SAG Awards, won four Academy Awards (Best Screenplay, Best Editing, Best Director, and Best Supporting Actor for Benicio del Toro) and has been recognized on over 175 top ten lists.

In 2001, Douglas produced and played a small role in USA Films' outrageous comedy *One Night at McCool's* starring Liv Tyler, Matt Dillon, John Goodman and Paul Reiser, and directed by Harald Zwart. *McCool's* was the first film by Douglas' company Furthur Films. Also in 2001, Douglas starred in *Don't Say A Word* for 20th Century Fox. The psychological thriller, directed by Gary Fleder, also starred Sean Bean, Famke Janssen and Brittany Murphy.

In 2002, Douglas appeared in a guest role on the hit NBC comedy *Will & Grace*, and received an Emmy Nomination for his performance. Douglas starred in two films in 2003: the MGM/BVI released the family drama *It Runs in the Family*, which Douglas produced and starred in with his father Kirk Douglas, his mother, Diana Douglas, and his son, Cameron Douglas, Rory Culkin and Bernadette Peters; and he also starred in the Warner Bros. comedy *The In-Laws*, with Albert Brooks, Candice Bergen and Ryan Reynolds.

In 2004, Douglas, along with his father Kirk, filmed the intimate HBO documentary *A Father, A Son... Once Upon a Time in Hollywood*. Directed by award-winning filmmaker Lee Grant, the documentary examines the professional and personal lives of both men, and the impacts they each have made on the motion picture industry.

In summer 2005, Douglas produced and starred in *The Sentinel*, which was released by 20th Century Fox in spring 2006. Based on the Gerald Petievich novel and directed by Clark Johnson, *The Sentinel* is a political thriller set in the intriguing world of the Secret Service, and Douglas starred alongside Keifer Sutherland, Eva Longoria and Kim Bassinger.

Next, Douglas filmed *You, Me and Dupree*, starring with Owen Wilson, Kate Hudson and Matt Dillon. The comedy was directed by Anthony and Joe Russo, and was released by Universal Pictures during the summer of 2006. In 2007, he made *King of California*, co-starring Evan Rachel Wood, written and directed by Michael Cahill, and produced by Alexander Payne and Michael London.

Michael had two films released in early 2009: *Beyond A Reasonable Doubt* directed by Peter Hyams; and *Ghosts of Girlfriend's Past* starring Matthew McConaughey and Jennifer Garner, and directed by Mark Waters.

He followed with the drama *Solitary Man* (2009), which was directed by Brian Koppelman and David Levien, co-starred Susan Sarandon, Danny DeVito, Mary Louise-Parker, and Jenna Fischer, and was produced by Paul Schiff and Steven Soderbergh. In Fall 2010, Douglas starred in *Wall Street: Money Never Sleeps*, reprising his Oscar-winning role as Gordon Gekko, and once again was nominated for a Golden Globe for his performance. Again directed by Oliver Stone, Douglas co-starred with Shia Labeouf, Cary Mulligan, Josh Brolin, Frank Langella and Susan Sarandon. In 2011, Douglas also had a cameo role in Steven Soderbergh's action thriller *Haywire*.

Behind the Candelabra, based on the life of musical 1970s/80s icon Liberace and his partner Scott Thorson, directed by Steven Soderbergh and costarring Matt Damon, premiered on HBO in May 2013. Douglas won an Emmy, Golden Globe and SAG Award as Best Actor in a television movie or mini series for his performance as the famed entertainer.

He followed with the buddy comedy *Last Vegas*, directed by John Turtletaub and co-starring Robert DeNiro, Morgan Freeman and Kevin Kline, and the romantic comedy *And So It Goes* (2014), co-starring Diane Keaton directed by Rob Reiner.

Douglas most recently starred in and produced the thriller *Beyond The Reach* (2014), directed by Jean-Baptiste Leonetti and costarring Jeremy Irvine, and he portrayed Dr. Hank Pym in Marvel's *Ant Man* opposite Paul Rudd (2015). The film was his first venture into the realm of comic book action adventure.

Douglas completed a spy thriller *Unlocked* (2017), which co-stars Noomi Rapace, Orlando Bloom and John Malkovich, and is directed by Michael Apted.

2017 was also the year Douglas traveled to China to take part in director Yan Han's action fantasy *Animal World*.

In 2018 Douglas again entered the Marvel Universe reprising his role of Dr. Hank Pym in *Ant Man and the Wasp*. 2018 also marked his return to television in Chuck Lorre's Netflix series "Kominsky Method," co-starring Alan Arkin.

He also completed the first season of Dr. Seuss's *Green Eggs and Ham*, an animated series for Netflix and will soon begin recording the second season.

In 1998, Douglas was made a United Nations Messenger of Peace by Kofi Annan. His main concentrations are nuclear non-proliferation and the control of small arms.

Michael Douglas was recipient of the 2009 AFI Lifetime Achievement as well as the Producers Guild Award that year. In Spring 2010 he received the New York Film Society's Charlie Chaplin Award. In 2011 Douglas was awarded the "Chevalier de Arts et des Lettres" in France by Frederick Mitterand, and he was awarded a second French Cesar for Career Achievement in 2016, becoming the only American to be given this honor twice.

Douglas has hosted 11 years of "Michael Douglas and Friends" Celebrity Golf Event which has raised over \$6 million for the Motion Picture and Television Fund. Douglas is very passionate about the organization, and for each tournament he asks his fellow actors and actresses to come out and show that "we are an industry that takes care of own."

Douglas is married to Catherine Zeta-Jones. The couple has one son, Dylan, and one daughter, Carys. Douglas also has one son, Cameron, from a previous marriage.

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