

Darling Lili

Darling Lili is a light-hearted 1970 American musical and spy film, written by William Peter Blatty and Blake Edwards, the latter also directing the film. It stars Julie Andrews, Rock Hudson, and Jeremy Kemp, with music by Henry Mancini and lyrics by Johnny Mercer. This was the last full musical to have song lyrics written by Johnny Mercer.

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Plot

The film is set in northern France during World War I, where British pilots have polite dog-fights with their German rivals.

On the ground, Lili Smith is a beloved English musical star, much admired by French and British pilots. She mixes with them at Cafe Can-Can. One American, Major Larrabee, has a particular interest in her. He organises a gypsy serenade outside her window and a night-time champagne picnic. However, she is actually a German spy. She starts asking questions about his squadron. Lili's uncle, who is in constant contact, is Colonel Kurt Von Ruger, a more obvious German spy and her main contact to pass information to the German authorities.

Larrabee showers her with red roses, takes her to art galleries and takes her on a row-boat. Although she is tricking him, she starts to have real feelings of love.

Darling Lili



Theatrical release poster

Directed by	<u>Blake Edwards</u>
Produced by	<u>Blake Edwards</u>
Written by	<u>William Peter Blatty</u> <u>Blake Edwards</u>
Starring	<u>Julie Andrews</u> <u>Rock Hudson</u> <u>Gloria Paul</u>
Music by	<u>Henry Mancini</u> <u>Johnny Mercer</u> (lyrics)
Cinematography	<u>Russell Harlan</u>
Edited by	<u>Peter Zinner</u>
Distributed by	<u>Paramount Pictures</u>
Release date	June 23, 1970 (Premiere) June 24, 1970 (Los Angeles)
Running time	136 minutes 107 min (director's cut) 190 min

- Arthur Gould-Porter as Sgt. Wells
- Ingo Mogendorf as Baron Manfred von Richtofen

Production

In 1967, Blake Edwards signed a four-picture deal with Paramount Pictures. The films he would make were *Waterhole#3*, *Gunn*, *Mr Lucky* and *Darling Lili*. Julie Andrews signed to play the lead in *Darling Lili*. Production was to start late in 1967.^{[2][3]} Executive producer Owen Crump began shooting second unit in 1967.^[4]

Edwards courted British comedian Benny Hill for a supporting role in the movie. During the audition, he asked Hill if he could do a Paris accent. Being a perfectionist, Hill asked Edwards if he wanted an east side or west side accent, but Edwards was not impressed by his attention to detail and recast the role with another actor.^[5]

Blake Edwards suffered continual interference from Paramount executives while making *Darling Lili*, and it was eventually edited by the studio largely without his input. The director later satirized the problems he faced in the film *S.O.B.* (1981), which was distributed by Paramount theatrically.

Edwards later claimed *Darling Lili* was budgeted at \$11.5 million but ended up costing \$16 million. He said half the cost was due to second unit filming in Ireland and he had pleaded with Paramount not to shoot in Europe due to the weather, but the studio insisted.^[6]

Problems with the May 1968 protests in France led to much of the planned Parisian shooting to be done in Brussels, Belgium.^[7]

Darling Lili made use of Lynn Garrison's aviation facility at Weston Aerodrome in Leixlip, Ireland. This collection of World War I replica fighter aircraft, facilities and support equipment was originally put together in support of 20th Century Fox's 1966 film *The Blue Max*. The aerial fleet included a Caudron 277, two Fokker DR 1s, three Fokker D VIIIs, two Se 5as and two Pfalz D IIIs (all full-scale replicas). In addition, the studio contracted with Slingsby Aircraft Ltd to build six 7/8th scale SE 5s (the "Mini SE 5").^[8] The Paramount production utilized the assembled aircraft for thousands of flying hours and accumulated hundreds of hours of aerial footage. Pilots were drawn from the Irish Air Corps and civilian circles. Charles Boddington and Derek Piggott did many of the more spectacular stunts.^[8]



Rock Hudson and Andrews kissing in *Darling Lili* (1970)



Slingsby Aircraft-built SE.5A scale replica during filming in Ireland in 1967

Music

The original score for *Darling Lili* was composed by Henry Mancini. He and Johnny Mercer wrote the title tune, as well as "Whistling Away the Dark" and "Your Good-Will Ambassador". Songs from the era were performed in the film, including "It's a Long Way to Tipperary", "Pack Up Your Troubles in Your Old Kit-Bag", "Keep the Home Fires Burning", and "Mademoiselle from Armentières".

Release