

# Notoriety Triggers the Breaking Point in ‘Lovelace’

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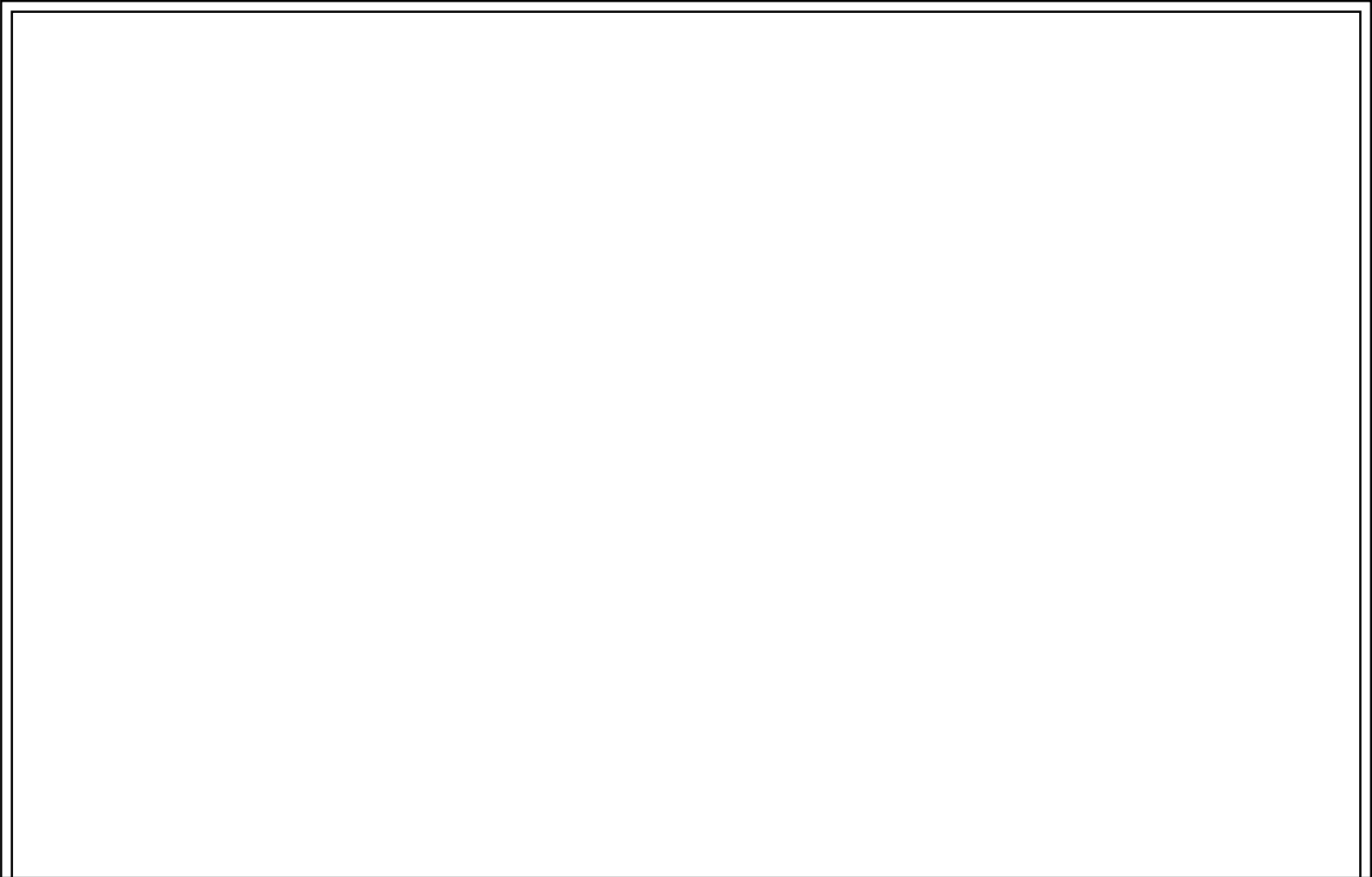
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CHICAGO – It was one of the strangest star-is-born stories in show business history. One porn film – “Deep Throat” – permeates the American consciousness at precisely the right time. The “lead” actress in the film becomes a household name – and then becomes a victim of it – in ‘Lovelace.’

The film is the story of Linda Boreman, AKA Linda Lovelace, during a crucial ten years of her existence. “Deep Throat” was released in 1972, and “Lovelace” chronicles the before and after effect of that film on Linda Boreman. This is brutal stuff, for the world of pornography isn’t exactly sunshine and rainbows. The new crowned Linda Lovelace is manipulated by her husband Chuck Traynor, and forced into a celebrity that involves an exaggerated skill set (as all pornography portrays), virtually no pay (despite the film making several hundred million dollars) and a husband willing to sell her into essential prostitution. Amanda Seyfried as the title character gives a vulnerable and precise portrayal, but it is the culture around her that has gone mad, and has no problem abusing a victim of its circumstance.

Linda Boreman (Amanda Seyfried) is a recently minted Florida resident in 1970, after her parents (Sharon Stone and Robert Patrick) move there from New York. One year after an unwanted pregnancy and giving up the child, Boreman meets Chuck Traynor (Peter Sarsgaard), who owns a club where Linda briefly worked as a dancer. They fall in love and marry, as Traynor begins to experiment with 8mm porn films, starring his new wife.





Linda Lovelace (Amanda Seyfried) Makes Her Debut in ‘Lovelace’  
*Photo credit: Dale Robinette for RADIUS-TWC*

These films gain notice from the more mainstream porn industry, rapidly developing as movie theaters emptied by television are willing to show “X-rated” fare. Linda Traynor is renamed Linda Lovelace, and stars in the most famous porn movie ever, “Deep Throat.” The timing of its release in 1972 – post the sexual revolution and with theater owners willing to show it – make it a sensation. The victim of this success is Linda Lovelace, exploited and abused by Chuck Traynor.

The brutality meter goes red zone in this film, and its portrayal of spousal abuse is hard to take. This is not a happy story, even as Linda publishes her exposé in 1980 (her story is so harsh, the publisher makes her take a lie detector test). Amanda Seyfried and Peter Sarsgaard, portraying Linda and Chuck, completely express the mistreatment and exploitation, to the extent that a husband was willing to pimp his wife for fame. Even though the character of Chuck gets a bit of a comeuppance, Sarsgaard turns in a authentic performance as an insecure coward willing to sell out – and physically assault – the person he supposedly loves.

Amanda Seyfried is a actress who is willing to take some risks – her dewy eyed, almost pixie-doll looks are constantly being challenged by the actress herself, in films such as “Chloe,” “Gone” and “Red Riding Hood.” She was willing to expose herself to the porn industry as Linda in this story, physically and mentally going through the phases of being Lovelace in her brief notoriety. She portrays the reluctantly crowned porn queen as a scared kitten – even in an awkward bow she gives to a celebrity crowd after a “Deep Throat” screening – but also portrays the post-porn Linda with quiet dignity.

The direction of Rob Epstein and Jeffrey Friedman (“Howl”) contains the shorthand of Linda’s physical toll, but not the point of her escape and recovery. The film is rendered in flashbacks, from the point of Linda’s testimony to her publisher. This takes out a whole section of her redemption, and weakens the story somewhat – it feels like a longer film that was cut down just to the essentials. Those essentials are the brutal nightmare that being Linda Lovelace was, and the filmmakers spin it as a cautionary tale.





The film 'Deep Throat' Goes Mainstream in 'Lovelace'  
Photo credit: Dale Robinette for RADIUS-TWC

The supporting cast is one of committed all-stars. On the porn industry side, Bobby Cannavale, Hank Azaria and Chris Noth add the right amount of sleaze, and James Franco exposes Hugh Hefner as simply a higher class of pornographer. Sharon Stone completely understands the mother role in Linda's life, and excises all of her usual glamor. Even smaller roles like Debi Mazur – as Linda's "Deep Throat" co-star and make-up artist – speak to the commitment the cast had in projecting this American Dream gone to hell.

The final dark comedy joke in "Lovelace" is that "Deep Throat" eventually brought in an estimated 600 million dollars in profit. Shadowy figures and hustlers bought houses, funded retirements and paid off politicians on the back of Linda's one "performance" – for which she was paid \$2500. In essence, "Deep Throat" does represent America, the part that completely gets screwed.

*"Lovelace" has a limited release, including Chicago, on August 9th. See local listings for theaters and show times. Featuring Amanda Seyfried, Peter Sarsgaard, Sharon Stone, Robert Patrick, Chris Noth, Bobby Cannavale, Hank Azaria, James Franco and Debi Mazar. Screenplay by Andy Bellin. Directed by Rob Epstein and Jeffrey Friedman. Rated "R"*



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By [PATRICK McDONALD](#) [19]  
Senior Staff Writer  
[HollywoodChicago.com](http://HollywoodChicago.com)  
[pat@hollywoodchicago.com](mailto:pat@hollywoodchicago.com) [18]

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