

Oscar Week Flashback: How Photographer Joe Arce 'Got the Shot' of Oscar Winner Liza Minnelli

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on April 19, 2021 - 8:26pm

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CHICAGO – My portrait of Liza Minnelli is one of my favorites not just for what appears in frame, but equally for the story of what happened after the shutter was clicked. This was back in 1992, when my focus was on Rock and Roll photojournalism, and I had been granted access to Liza through Tower Records in Chicago. She was promoting her “Live From Radio City Music Hall” release.

I somehow had imagined working with Liza Minnelli would be a major pain in the ass and that the Oscar winning actress would be nothing short of a headache-inducing pampered Diva. I couldn't have been more mistaken. She greeted me with a warm handshake and her only request was that I photograph her either directly straight on or from her better left side. I assured her she wasn't in possession of a bad side.



Snow Dancing: Oscar Winner Liza Minnelli in Chicago, circa 1992

Photo credit: Joe Arce of Starstruck Foto for HollywoodChicago.com

The Tower Records team provided me with a private area behind the scenes where i could get my shots shortly before the sold-out event began. Soon we were joking around like old buddies. Following our quick shoot she asked me if I could hang around during the signing ... to keep her company as a friendly familiar face in the crowd.

To pass the time, I took a bunch of "B-roll" shots during the signing event, which lasted for three hours, but my focus soon shifted to the increasingly heavy snowfall outside the windows. It was obvious we were now in the grip of a near white-out Chicago blizzard. At least four inches of snow had transformed the landscape while Liza signed CDs for the multitudes.

Following the signing event, I followed Liza and her crew into the elevator, that descended down to the parking garage. The moment the door opened she grabbed my arm saying that she would die on the spot if she didn't immediately have a cigarette. She made a beeline out the door into the storm, dragging me like a rag doll. "Hey I don't think death by pneumonia is good for your voice!" I observed. "Oh, don't be such a baby!" she replied, "I love the snow!"

So there I was standing outside in a nearby abandoned parking lot – looking like a member of the Donner Party – while Liza with a Z was puffing away in the middle of a blizzard. She offered up a hug as I prepared to leave and as I walked away she suddenly yelled "Hey Joe!" I

turned around and was immediately stunned with a Cy Young snowball blast hitting me square in the chest. She howled with laughter as i scooped up a handful of snow as well.

"Oh you wouldn't dare!" she challenged. "I'm a star, baby!" Laughing, she brought her hands up to her face framing it in a mock vogue pose. I channeled my former little league pitcher days and lobbed a slow strategic strike safety towards her leg.

"Oh it's on!" she warned, swallowing her laughter. "You are sooo dead!"

And thus began a full on snowball fight, a Battle Royale between the photographer and the Diva. Her team was coming out at this time as her limousine pulled up. They looked on in disbelief as Liza yelled "Oh, one more thing Joey!" I turned around and BAM! ... another bullseye shot to the chest.

"That's one more for the road!" she said. "The yellow brick road home, honey!" It was my turn to laugh. Liza ducked into her waiting limo and was off ... vanishing from view in a swirling vortex of white.

*Photo and Story by: **Joe Arce of Starstruck Foto for HollywoodChicago.com***

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