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HOLLYWOOD

Billie Eilish The World's a Little Blurry movie review: Breathtaking Apple documentary is everything you wanted

Billie Eilish The World's a Little Blurry movie review: Apple's brilliant documentary traces the meteoric rise of the music industry's most mercurial performer.

By Rohan Naahar

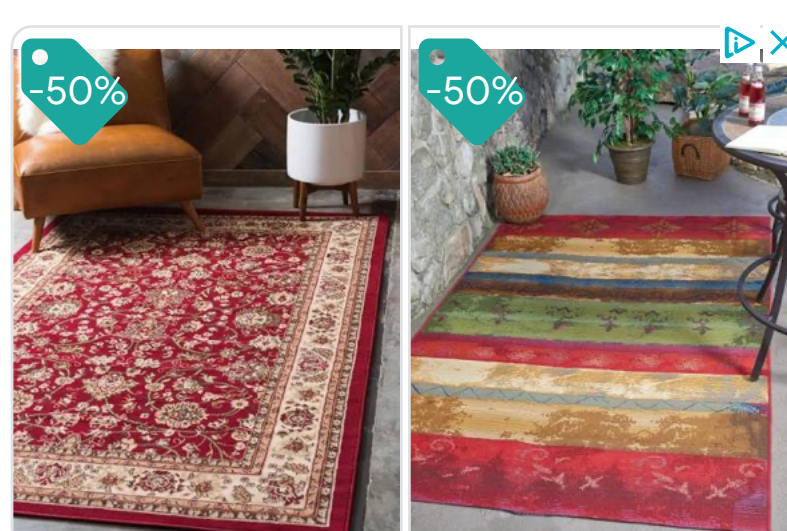
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Billie Eilish The World's a Little Blurry movie review: Apple's documentary traces the meteoric rise of the music industry's most mercurial performer.

There is a moment in the 2013 Justin Bieber concert film, Never Say Never, in which Bieber physically reaches out towards the sea of fans before him. The 3D gives the illusion that the pop-star is actually within touching distance of the teenage girls who'd happily sever their fingers for the opportunity. A similar moment unfolds in Billie Eilish: The World's a Little Blurry, another documentary about a teenage pop singer's rise to the top of the pyramid, but this time, it's you that wants to reach out.

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Exhausted yet fiercely empathetic, Billie in one scene experiences a bout of Tourette Syndrome, twitching uncontrollably as fans hound her for selfies. And in that moment, even if you aren't familiar with her, there's nothing you'd want to do more than leap through your screen and give her a hug.

Watch the Billie Eilish: The World's a Little Blurry trailer here

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Unlike the glorified publicity gimmick that was the Bieber film, the new Billie Eilish documentary, out on Apple TV+, is astonishingly heartfelt — more than a story about the fallout of fame, it's a coming-of-age tale about a teenager, and the rare bond that she shares with her brother.

Instead of crafting a potential promotional tool for her future album, director RJ Cutler latches onto the human narratives in Billie's larger-than-life story — from passing her driving test to surviving her first big breakup; from her struggles with depression to the general sense of awe with which she views her brother, Finneas.

One of those narrative arcs involves Bieber, whom she idolised to the point of unhealthy obsession in her 'youth'. Thanks to a seemingly endless reservoir of home videos, The World's a Little Blurry includes footage of Billie's reaction when Bieber first DM-ed her, and later, of their very first in-person meeting. It doesn't play like the meeting of two megastars with six Grammys between them, but more like the union of two kindred spirits — one who barely survived this crazy adventure, and the other who's on the cusp of embarking upon it.

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You can imagine how old I felt watching Bieber play Yoda to Billie's Luke Skywalker -- the Dumbledore to her Harry Potter, if you will -- but the times have changed. Like Bieber, who found fame after he was spotted in a YouTube video shot by his mom, Billie became a sensation on Spotify before she even released her debut album — produced in Finneas' bedroom. And it's a sign of how young Billie is that she doesn't recognise Orlando Bloom when he hugs her at Coachella. Later, when Finneas tells Billie, a Gen-Z icon, that the Gen-X gent who moments ago was gushing about her, played Will Turner in the Pirates of the Caribbean films, she blurts out, "That guy!?"

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Billie Eilish and her brother Finneas composed the James Bond theme song in a trailer.

And then, of course, there's the music. Director Cutler, best known for his wintour's documentaries (and for providing a fascinating peek inside Anna Wintour's mind in The September Issue), uses Billie's songs to emphasise the dramatic themes of his film. In a sense, she's scored the soundtrack to her own life. The scene in which she breaks up with her boyfriend is followed by an unbroken performance of i love you, during which her wispy voice cracks on stage while singing the hook.

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Her parents, who are a constant presence in her life and in the film, were always suspicious of the guy. It's heartening to see them accompany Billie (and Finneas), on their journey. The siblings make melancholy music because they've grown up in a melancholy world, their mother says in one scene. They've witnessed their parents struggle in the aftermath of the Great Recession; they're surrounded by political upheaval and environmental collapse. And yet, they're able to see the beauty in each other.

A scene in which Billie takes her car out alone for the first time is particularly profound. Her father gives her the usual pep-talk — look both ways, take the longer route if you miss a turn, always err on the side of caution — and then waves her goodbye. There's a sense that he's sending his daughter off to the races, with the understanding that she won't be back until years later, when the mania around her calms down. Driving around Hollywood, Billie lists all the things that she appreciates in life — her family, her fans, her car, her dog; almost as if to remind herself that she shouldn't be unhappy. And yet, on more occasions than she'd like to admit, she is.

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The world failed Bieber, Britney Spears, and countless others like them. There's no stopping Billie Eilish from taking off, her family knows this. But it helps to have the sound of home in your ear as you go interstellar. That's the only thing that can stop the world from feeling a little blurry.

Billie Eilish The World's a Little Blurry

Director - RJ Cutler

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