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DVD Spotlight

Billie Holiday, "The Life and Artistry of Lady Day" (Idem/MVD). 2 stars.

"Lady Day" deserves better.

Billie Holiday, the troubled songstress who rose to fame after being discovered by John Hammond in 1933, is the subject of this all-too-brief documentary focusing on the woman who brought us unforgettable jazz classics like "Them There Eyes," "God Bless The Child" and the anti-racism masterpiece "Strange Fruit" among so many other songs.

While it does contain some rare footage of Holiday in performance, and other clips of her work of film, such as her role as a maid in "New Orleans" which also starred Louis Armstrong, there's simply not enough of it. There are some newsreel clips and tales of her arrests on narcotics charges (including one arrest while she was on her deathbed in a hospital), but most of the narration is dry and the footage is only fair in terms of picture quality.

It's also way too short a film to try and capture Holiday's extraordinary life. The main body of the DVD runs approximately 30 minutes and the bonus material, such as the clips from "New Orleans" bring it closer to an hour, but overall this one is a disappointment.

Rating Scale: One Star (poor) to Five Stars (a classic).