

# calling hedy lamarr

## Credits

### **With**

Anthony Loder  
Denise Loder-DeLuca  
Charles, Edie and Caitlin Stansel  
Hans Janitschek  
Peter Shen  
Sgt. Major Roy Dunnegan  
Arlene Roxbury  
Marianna Newton †  
David Hughes  
Marc Levin  
Peter Gardener  
Arianné Ulmer-Cipes  
Joe Pohan  
Patricia Place  
Heidi Schoeler  
Lilyan Chauvin  
Claudia Genah  
Stephanie Khalighi  
Sara Rinde  
Lynn Segerblom  
Nancy Greco  
Jorie Lodes

### **Written and Directed by**

Georg Misch

### **Camera**

Jon Sayers

### **Sound**

Peter Utvary  
Elisabeth Reeh  
Georg Misch

### **Montage**

Michael Palm

### **Creative Consultant**

Anthony Loder

### **Production Manager USA**

Dagmar Hovestadt

### **Production Managers Europe**

Susanne Guggenberger  
Ursula Wolschlager  
Andrea Ufer

### **Original Music**

Jim Howard

### **Theme Song**

"I Wish I Was a Hollywood Producer In the 40's"  
by Anthony Loder & Daryl Birch

### **A Coproduction of**

MISCHIEF FILMS, Wien -  
HANFGARN & UFER Filmproduktion, Berlin –  
LONE STAR PRODUCTIONS, London

### **Development Funding**

Medienboard Berlin-Brandenburg

### **Produced with the Support of**

Filmfonds Wien  
Medienboard Berlin-Brandenburg  
Österreichisches Filminstitut

### **In Cooperation with**

WDR / ARTE Sabine Rollberg  
BBC *Arena* Anthony Wall  
AVRO Wolter Braamhorst

### **Producers**

Gunter Hanfgarn - Ralph Wieser - Martin Rosenbaum,  
Georg Misch, Anthony Loder

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## Synopsis

Who was she really? Viennese girl. Hollywood goddess. Inventor. A success story. A failure. Rich. Poor. Forgotten. Rediscovered. The studio wanted her to be beautiful and nothing else. Her son wanted a loving mother. Her six husbands, a wife. And herself? A film that examines the traces left behind by the most beautiful inventor in the world, told as a mixture of modern myths, fabricated legends, and true stories.

„Would you believe I was a famous star? It's the truth!“

Hedy Lamarr



## The Film

### The Most Beautiful Woman In Films! - MGM

#### A Face, a Tag Line, an Invention.

Two facets that don't seem to belong to the same woman. A Hollywood star as an ingenious inventor piques our curiosity. The director Georg Misch is interested in how truth and myth intertwine. He listens to stories about her told by people who knew her. He dissects the history of the woman with the exotic eroticism who not only made surprising and daring decisions in her private life, but who caused a sensation with an intrepid film project right from the start. What is left? – her first film *Ecstasy* with its scandalous nude scenes, movies that nobody has seen or heard of, a sixty-year-old son who is still struggling with his relationship to his mother, an invention whose patent ran out too soon, so that what has become a cornerstone for wireless communications, which are in constant use in our everyday lives, brought its inventor late fame but never earned her any money.

#### At the end of the day what lingers is the echo of her fascinating beauty.

The way the film handles the archive material from various sources reflects the inner conflicts of a Hollywood diva whose other talent as a mathematical genius and inventor was not allowed to unfold so as not to endanger her aura as a successful goddess of the silver screen. As we peel away the convolution of myths that grew up about her while she was still alive what gradually emerges is the portrait of a modern woman beyond the Hollywood star.

In the last decades of her life the telephone became her only means of communication with the outside world, even with her children and close friends. She often talked up to six or seven hours a day on the phone, but she hardly spent any time with anyone in person in her final years.

For this reason, though also of course because of the significance of her invention to modern communications, the telephone has been chosen as the “structuring motif” of the movie. The interviews in the movie have been staged as telephone calls and lead the viewer through time like a nostalgic conference with the film's protagonists.

*Calling Hedy Lamarr* isn't, however, a portrait; it is above all a film about the Hollywood diva from the perspective of her son Anthony Loder, a fairly successful telephone dealer in Los Angeles who wants desperately to be the Hollywood producer of a feature film about the life of his mother. Through his research he encounters contradictory statements and fantastic theories. There is often only a fine line between truth and lie. Many times the conversations between him and the other protagonists shift and take on a magical aspect, and in a supernatural way Hedy Lamarr sometimes even seems to join in. The Hollywood diva's purported schizophrenia is expressed dramaturgically as a persistent shifting between the extremes of her character and is a strong pattern in the film.

**The meaning of truth must be constantly reinterpreted.**

Lamarr's death in February 2000 marked the end of one of the most complex Hollywood biographies of the last century. The film ends where Hedy Lamarr's story began: in Vienna. In her will she asks that her ashes be strewn in the Vienna Woods. A homecoming she always dreamed of but which she never managed to make during her lifetime.

# calling hedy lamarr

## Press Comments (Excerpts)

Director Georg Misch examines a fascinating life shrouded in myth and invention. Lamarr is a compelling subject and her son is a fascinating figure. Lamarr's son is the second star of the film, Anthony Loder as he pines for understanding of the elusive miasma of his mother. In an inventive, seamless conceit of blending present day phone call interviews with Lamarr's archival phone calls, Georg Misch has crafted an entertaining and provocative homage to the luminescent Hedy Lamarr.

**Shaz Bennett, American Film Institute**

Beach Buzz: "Calling Hedy Lamarr" is one of "Five fest films worth digging into".

**The Hollywood Reporter, 19-25/10/2004**

In "Calling Hedy Lamarr" the director, Georg Misch, guided by the son of the Vienna-born Hollywood diva who died in 2000, sets out in search of Hedy Lamarr. The title of this film, which received an honorable mention, is on the one hand an allusion to Lamarr's passion for talking on the telephone – even many of the interviews have been staged as teleconferences, while on the other hand, it also reminds the viewer that during WWII Lamarr, who was once dubbed the "most beautiful woman in the world," together with the composer George Antheil developed a method for conducting secure radio transmission that today forms the basis of modern telecommunications and from which her son as the owner of a telephone shop only profits in a most indirect way. Thirdly, there is in the title the aspect of filial invocation: the image of the son, his magnifying glass in hand, poring over countless photos of his mother.

**Der Standard, 16/08/2004**

In the International Critic's Week at Cannes, an Austrian (co-)production received the distinction of honorable mention: Georg Misch's *Calling Hedy Lamarr*, an unorthodox portrait of the Hollywood diva who was born as Hedwig Eva Maria Kiesler in Vienna. Misch's entertaining collage weaves together different strands of the fascinating biography of the legendary actress dubbed the most beautiful woman in the world, who is also credited with the revolutionary invention of frequency hopping, a technology that is today indispensable for mobile telecommunications. Yet none of the leads investigated are capable of penetrating the Lamarr myths: what might at times seem like shadowboxing is ultimately the stylistic equivalent of a curriculum vitae in which it is no longer possible to distinguish between truth and legend.

**Die Presse, 16/08/2004**

At the Locarno International Film Festival, Georg Misch's amusing documentary *Calling Hedy Lamarr* received the distinction of honorable mention.

**Die Welt online, 15/08/2004**

And last but not least, most striking among the documentaries were portraits like Georg Misch's *Calling Hedy Lamarr*.

**Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 16/08/2004**

In Locarno one of the most moving films was a documentary about the Hollywood actress Hedy Lamarr. In *Calling Hedy Lamarr* the Viennese director Georg Misch investigates in an ironic and playful but at the same time quite serious manner the phenomenon of the worshiped diva, who was once considered the “most beautiful woman of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.” A star who sacrificed her life for the sake of creating her own image, whose consumption of uppers and downers wreaked havoc on her health, but who, unlike Marilyn Monroe, outlived her own fame, her face destroyed by plastic surgery and her self on the verge of schizophrenia.

**News.de, summer 2004**

... Protagonists of other films have also become trapped in the memory of the past. Anthony Loder – the son of the Austrian-born Hollywood diva Hedy Lamarr – has only one objective in life and that is to preserve an image of his mother that made her “the most beautiful actress of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.” With *Calling Hedy Lamarr* the Austrian director Georg Misch has produced a sometimes ironic, sometimes endlessly sad commentary about the loss of reality, a work for which he received an honorable mention in the International Critic's Week.

**Oberösterreichische Nachrichten, 16/08/2004**



## The Biography

### Hedy Lamarr – The Strange Woman

Hedwig Eva Maria Kiesler, who later under the name of Hedy Lamarr was to have the kind of Hollywood career everyone dreams of, was a student of Max Reinhardt, the wife of a munitions manufacturer, and the cause of a European scandal in her “first life.”

#### ***Ecstasy* – A scandal and at the same time the temporary end of her film career**

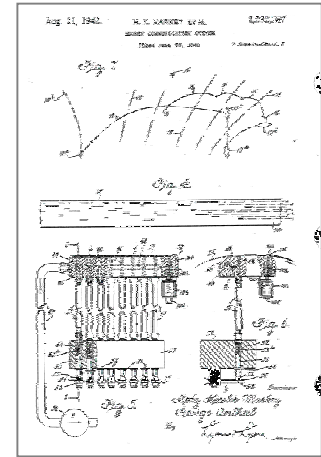
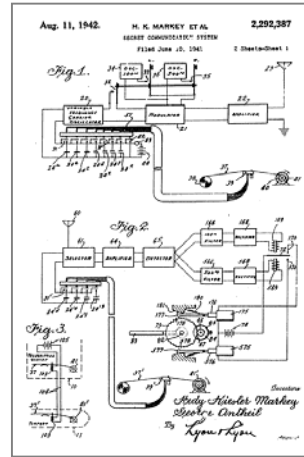
Her film appearance in 1933 in a nude role in the Austrian-Czech film *Ecstasy* by Gustav Machatý was a tremendous scandal in cinema history.

But the actress disappears from public life at the age of 19 when she marries the Austrian munitions manufacturer Fritz Mandl, who tries in vain to buy all existing prints of the scandalous film. He hides his young wife away for safekeeping. Lamarr endures four years of married life in a golden cage before she leaves her husband and emigrates to the United States in 1937.

#### **On the ship to America – A contract with MGM**

Louis B. Mayer gives her a contract but insists that she changes her name first. MGM markets her as the most beautiful woman in the world. It isn't long before the rising star Hedy Lamarr finds a place in the MGM firmament. In her promising Hollywood debut “Algiers” she stars with Charles Boyer as 'Pepe Le Moko.' Her 'exotic' sex appeal makes headlines. In the following productions the studio tries to turn her into a really big star with roles alongside Spencer Tracy, Claudette Colbert, Clark Gable, James Stewart, and William Powell. Hedy Lamarr is considered the brunette answer to the super famous “Hollywood bombshells”. Among her most popular films are *Boom Town* (Jack Conway, 1949) and *Samson and Delilah* (Cecil B. DeMille, 1949); the critics are less than enthusiastic, her break into big time stardom never comes. Hedy Lamarr goes down in history as the most beautiful woman in the world, her movies leave no mark. From a film history point of view the movies she made outside of Hollywood remain the most interesting – *Ecstasy* by Gustav Machatý, *The Strange Woman* by Edgar Ulmer and *Experiment*





*Perilous* by Jacques Tourneur. *The Strange Woman* seems to be the programmatic precursor of the biography of Hedwig Eva Kiesler.

### Strange – misunderstood by many.

She tries to make her sphere of activity go beyond the inflexible “star mold.” As a Jew who converted to Catholicism she is both sensitive to and aware of the political developments taking place in Europe. From her years of being married to the munitions manufacturer Fritz Mandl she has heard a lot about information systems and is quite aware of the problem of the vulnerability of radio communications. When she by chance meets the avant-garde composer George Antheil, the so-called “enfant terrible of music,” at a party in Hollywood in 1940, she not only finds someone who shares her weariness of the world of superficial beauty, but for the first time someone who understands her idea of frequency hopping. Lying on the living room rug Lamarr and Antheil use a box of matches and its contents to fashion a device for the radio control of torpedoes that wouldn't be susceptible to interception or jamming. They invent a torpedo guidance system using 88 frequencies – analogous to the 88 keys of the piano and patent their invention.

### A life of beauty, a hideous end.

In 1958 her Hollywood career is over, she has plastic surgery done numerous times in the years to follow. She wants to stay the most beautiful woman in the world, her “look” is copied by many actresses and serves as a source of inspiration for a number of fictional characters (*Catwoman*, Disney's *Snow White*, the replicant in *Blade Runner*).

She is arrested repeatedly for shoplifting. She sues people and companies alike, including Mel Brooks for using her name in *Blazing Saddles* (1974) and the software company Corel Corporation for using her photo for the cover of one of its products.

She avoids public appearances, only maintains contact with a few confidants via the telephone. She was married six times, had three children (two of her own – a son and a daughter, and an adopted son with John Loder). In 2000 she dies at the age of 85, lonely and forgotten.



## The Invention

### **They wanted her face not her brains.**

#### **1940: Janet Gaynor throws a dinner party.**

Hollywood beauty Hedy Lamarr makes small talk with the enfant terrible of film music composition George Antheil. The next day they get together again. She has finally found someone she can discuss her idea of frequency hopping with. What follows is not a love affair but an intense exchange about radio controlled torpedoes. One can assume that the subject came up over a political discussion about Nazi Germany. Hedy Lamarr came from a Jewish family and was exposed, no doubt, to quite a bit of information about weapons and defense from the time she was married to the munitions manufacturer Fritz Mandl. Her idea focused above all on the radio guidance of torpedoes and ultimately on preventing the enemy from understanding the radio signals. Her idea was in fact quite simple, like all great ideas – if it was possible to intercept a frequency, why not use the switching of frequencies in rapid succession to encode transmission – so-called frequency hopping?

Antheil had been fooling around at the grand piano; Lamarr was leaning against the instrument singing along while Antheil kept switching keys, and this was when the inspiration for the implementation of the idea struck her – why not use player piano rolls to control the radio tuners.

#### **My God, I can see them saying, “We shall put a player piano in a torpedo.” -- George Antheil**

Lamarr and Antheil, as they will tell the story later, stretch out on the living room rug and put their ideas onto paper. Piano rolls for the code input and the same for deciphering the code. Radio signals that switch their frequency quickly could only be deciphered by their recipient in this way. An invention which has become the cornerstone for secure wireless information transmission.

Lamarr and Antheil had wanted to support their country during the war; they worked out their idea and submitted it to the patent office. They received a patent in 1942. Hedy Lamarr, under her married name Hedy Kiesler Markey, was awarded patent #2,292,387, along with co-inventor George Antheil, for a



"Secret Communication System." This seminal invention was the first instance of spread-spectrum communications based on frequency-hopping techniques. [August 11, 1942]

**The Navy declared the patent unfeasible and piano rolls cumbersome.**

Hedy Lamarr wants to work with the National Inventors Council on a regular basis. She is advised not to forfeit her brilliant film career and is convinced instead to sell kisses for war bonds. With a price of \$50,000 for a single kiss she has soon sold millions of dollars worth of bonds.

**Spread Spectrum Utilizations – Where the Lamarr and Antheil invention is being used:**

GPS  
CDMA  
Blue Tooth  
Wireless Internet  
Cordless phones  
Milstar Defense Satellite

They never earn a penny on the patent. After it expired (17 years later) the US government reevaluated the idea and developed it further.

The wireless communication company WI-LAN pays Hedy Lamarr for the right to use her name to promote its products.

*wi-lan universe: star quality: hedy lamarr*

*Hedy Lamarr... Talented actress, Hollywood star of "Ziegfeld Girl" and many other movies, Max Factor's "Girl of the Year 1938", glamorous screen diva and... one of the major innovators of wireless technology. Her innovation formed the basis of spread-spectrum communications and it is the keystone for thousands of spread spectrum patents in existence today. ...*



## **The Director About His Film**

### **Georg Misch – “Sometimes it was as if she were still controlling things even from the afterlife.”**

Nobody knows the whole story of Hedy Lamarr. There isn't much material that can be trusted. To tell a story that is based on fact wouldn't do Hedy Lamarr justice. I could have done a portrait of Hedwig Kiesler in that way, but not of Hedy Lamarr, the most beautiful woman in the world. Who was this woman? Sometimes I couldn't tell what was true and what was make-believe anymore. There are so many stories that have been told. That is why *Calling Hedy Lamarr* didn't end up a biographical film in the usual sense. Every claim and alleged truth would have merely continued the mystification process. I wanted to trace the inner conflict of this torn character but also to reveal the illusionary game she even played with the people closest to her. It wasn't just in a technological sense that she was a gifted inventor; she was constantly reinventing her whole life.

### **“She got herself entangled in a web of truth and myth.”**

It was exactly this blend of truth and myth, this life in a web of half truths and lies she'd spun herself that interested me most. A web in which she often no doubt also felt trapped.

### **“The tragedy of a two-faced woman”**

From the beginning I had the impression that to her the most important thing was to be understood. She wanted to be recognized. She wanted people to forget for a moment the Hollywood star and see her as Hedwig Eva Maria Kiesler from Vienna. Somehow her beauty got in the way. Her 'look' was copied by many fellow actresses and even decades later used as a model for the replicant Rachel in *Blade Runner*. In a certain sense she was one of the first super models, more so than an actress. Her beauty was like a shield she used to protect herself but which caused her a lot of damage as well.

### **“Instead of frequency hopping a star in the Hollywood firmament”**

She knew beauty and intelligence, but as two irreconcilable parts of her being. Like the flip sides of a coin. One or the other. The most beautiful woman in the world, after all, can't work in an office for technological developments. Her role was to be a star. A two-fold tragic fate because her fame as a star only lasted briefly and the rest of her life she spent completely forgotten and much of the time scraping by at the poverty level, just barely making ends meet. Not until just before her death did she receive a share of recognition for the great impact her invention has made.

I'm sure she would have been a beautiful woman until she died, but she wasn't able to leave that up to Nature and had plastic surgery done countless times to keep from aging. That was bound to go wrong. In the end she was disfigured and reclusive. That's one of the truths, she was disillusioned with life, felt lonely and believed society owed her something.

### **“The dream of a different life”**

Like in my film *I'm From Nowhere* I also stumbled completely unexpectedly in *Calling Hedy Lamarr* on this dream of a different life. This notion, this obsession people have that the grass is always greener on the other side. Perhaps it's one of mankind's most basic drives, in any case this yearning often leads to emotional loss of orientation or miscalculation.

Hedy Lamarr often yearned to lead a normal life, be recognized as an inventor, not be a star. Her children still live this myth of being famous as a kind of mirror image. They have normal lives and professions and dream of being famous, of “coming out” into the limelight, of recognition for their artistic talents. These aspirations take on an even more tragic note when one considers the sad effects this fame had on their mother and indirectly on their family life. A life far removed from reality, fueled by longing, the hope of rescue, and the intense, all-consuming desire to be recognized.

That's what I focused on in my film, this desire to be recognized. In my film I gave Hedy Lamarr the understanding and respect she yearned for.



**Anthony Loder:** *'I just remembered, there is this song that I wrote 30 years ago about mom, I'll just sing it for you'*

*Playing my guitar for Hedy Lamarr  
Sitting at the table with Gable  
Sunglasses and a big cigar  
swimming in a pool with Betty Grable  
talking on the phone with CB deMille  
eatin' some gumbo with Garbo  
Got my nose in the air, acting like a big wheel,  
and everybody is sayin' I am horrible.  
Oh I am wishing I was a Hollywood producer in the 40's  
He's wishing he was a Hollywood producer in the 40's  
I can see me now doin' the jitterbug at the Hollywood canteen  
Chauffeured to a party on the sunset strip  
in the backseat of a limousine  
a big black limousine  
I'd smiling at the faces, bettin' on the races  
Acting real super with Cooper  
I'd be the biggest ham on the Hollywood scene  
Here goes my name all over the screen  
Build a big city just to burn it right down  
10 thousand people in the background  
Costs a lot of money but what do I care?  
My name is written on the back of my chair.  
Oh I am wishing I was a Hollywood producer in the 40's  
He's wishing he was a Hollywood producer in the 40's*

....

*'And it goes on like this, might be nice for the end credits of your film, what do you think?..'*



## Filmography Hedy Lamarr

- 1930 **Geld auf der Straße** (Money on the Street) Directed by: Georg Jacoby, Austria 1930  
**Man braucht kein Geld** (His Majesty King Ballyhoo) Directed by: Carl Boese, Austria 1930
- 1931 **Die Blumenfrau von Lindenau** (Storm in a Water Glass) Directed by: Georg Jacoby, D/A 1931  
**Die Koffer des Herrn O.F.** Directed by: Alexis Granowsky, D 1931
- 1933 **Ektase** (Ecstasy) Directed by: Gustav Machatý, Czechoslovakia/Austria 1933
- 1938 **Algiers** – Lamarr’s erster Hollywoodfilm, Co-Star ist Charles Boyer, Remake von “Pepe le Moko” (1937)  
 Directed by: John Cromwell, US 1938
- 1939 **Lady Of The Tropics** – Mit Robert Taylor. Directed by: Jack Conway, US 1939
- 1940 **I Take This Woman** – Mit Spencer Tracy. Directed by: W.S. Van Dyke, US 1940  
**Comrade X** – Mit Clark Gable. Directed by: King Vidor, US 1940  
**Boom Town** (dt.Titel: Draufgänger; österr. Titel: Die Stadt der Glückjäger) Directed by: Jack Conway, US 1940  
**H.M. Pulham, Esq.** Directed by: King Vidor, US 1941
- 1941 **Ziegfeld Girl** – Mit Lana Turner, James Stewart, Judy Garland, ein klassisches MGM Musical Drama.  
 Directed by: Robert Z. Leonard, US 1941  
**Come Live With Me** – Mit James Stewart Directed by: Clarence Brown, US 1941
- 1942 **Tortilla Flat** – Mit Spencer Tracy, John Garfield und Frank Morgan. Directed by: Victor Fleming, US 1942  
**Crossroads** (The Man Who Lost His Way) Directed by: Jack Conway, US 1942  
**White Cargo** – Mit Walter Pidgeon, Frank Morgan, Richard Carlson. Directed by: Richard Thorpe, US 1942
- 1943 **The Heavenly Body** – Mit William Powell. Directed by: Alexander Hall, US 1943
- 1944 **The Conspirators** - Mit Paul Henreid, Peter Lorre und Sydney Greenstreet. Directed by: Jean Negulesco, US 1944  
**Experiment Perilous** (dt.TV-Titel: Experiment in Terror) Directed by: Jacques Tourneur, US 1944
- 1945 **Her Highness And The Bellboy** – Mit June Allyson und Robert Walker. Directed by: Richard Thorpe, US 1945
- 1946 **The Strange Woman** – Mit George Sanders. Directed by: Edgar G. Ulmer, US 1946
- 1947 **Dishonored Lady** (dt. Titel: Frau ohne Moral) Directed by: Robert Stevenson, US 1947
- 1948 **Let’s Live a Little** – Mit Robert Cummings. Directed by: Richard Wallace, US 1948
- 1949 **Samson and Delilah** – DeMille Spektakel mit Lamarr als Delilah und Victor Mature als Samson.  
 Directed by: Cecil B. DeMille, US 1949
- 1950 **Copper Canyon** – Western mit Ray Milland and Macdonald Carey. Directed by: John Farrow, US 1950  
**A Lady Without Passport** Directed by: Joseph H. Lewis, US 1950
- 1951 **My Favorite Spy** – Mit Bob Hope. Directed by: Norman Z. McLeod, US 1951
- 1953 **L’ Eterna Femmina** – Auch bekannt als “The Face That Launched a Thousand Ships” mit Lamarr als Helana von Troja. Auch bekannt als “Loves of Three Queens.” Directed by: Marc Allégret, I 1954
- 1957 **The Story of Mankind** Directed by: Irwin Allen, US 1957
- 1958 **The Female Animal** Directed by: Harry Keller, US 1958

## Filmography Georg Misch

**Georg Misch** is director and producer, born in 1970, studied at the University of Stirling and the National Film School, NFTS in Great Britain. His works to date include documentary films for BBC, Channel 4 and ARTE as well as commercials. He lives and works in London and Vienna.

- 2002 **I am from Nowhere** (80 min, Super 16)  
Documentary for BBC Arena / ARTE / ZDF  
World premiere: Filmfestival Locarno 2002
- 2000 **Style Tribes – Fashion** (56 min, DigiBeta)

### Short Films:

**Lines** (1999, 5 min, Channel4), **Ere we go** (1998, 26 min, S16), **Trautonium** (1997, 26 min, S16),  
**Lifestories: Douglas Bryson** (1997, 5 min, Channel4), **Insight** (10 min, ARD / ABC)





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