



# Legends of Hollywood: The Life Claudette Colbert

*Charles River Editors*

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\*Includes pictures.

\*Includes Colbert's quotes about her own life and career.

\*Includes a bibliography for further reading.

“I know what's best for me, after all I have been in the Claudette Colbert business longer than anybody.” –  
Claudette Colbert

The 1930s were the height of the classical Hollywood era, known for lavish studio productions by heavyweights like MGM, RKO, Warner Brothers, Paramount, and 20th Century Fox, which were operating at the height of their powers. Every major studio possessed a long roster of contract players, and films were released at such a rapid pace that it made for an especially competitive environment within the industry. Even while America remained in the throes of the Great Depression, the film industry continued to flourish, and movies easily supplanted the theater as the main attraction for American entertainment. Indeed, it would be no exaggeration to claim that the film industry reached its zenith during the decade precisely because it offered an affordable (if very temporary) escape from the anxieties of the economic woes of the era.

Despite that competition, Hollywood's biggest star at the box office in 1938 was French actress Claudette Colbert, who had already won an Oscar for Best Actress in *It Happened One Night* (1934) and used her Broadway experience from the previous decade to become perhaps the industry's most famous screwball comedienne. The fact that Colbert had gotten that far was impressive, given that Hollywood loved to cast foreign actresses in stereotypical roles, and she once noted, “In the very beginning, they wanted to give me French roles... That's why I used to say my name Col-bert just as it is spelled instead of Col-baire. I did not want to be typed as ‘that French girl.’”

Far from being pigeonholed, Colbert went on to perform in dozens of films, earning several nominations for Academy Awards and acting in both comedic and melodramatic roles effectively. Even as her film career waned, she resurrected her career both on television screens and the stage in the 1950s, and she continued to be an award winning stage performer well into her 70s. In 1999, the American Film Institute ranked Colbert the 12th best female screen legend, ahead of beloved actresses like Ginger Rogers and Grace Kelly.

*Legends of Hollywood: The Life and Legacy of Claudette Colbert* examines the life and career of one of Hollywood's biggest stars. Along with pictures of important people, places, and events, you will learn about Claudette Colbert like never before, in no time at all.

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