

BEAUTIFUL LIKE CANTERING ARABIANS

ARABIAN HORSES IN FEATURE FILMS

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The captivating beauty of Arabian horses conquered the hearts of a legion of people involved in the movie business, and not just the film-makers. It also caused many of them to become renowned breeders and friends of these beautiful creatures.

The steed of the divine Valentino

One of the most famous Arabian breedings in the US was founded by Will Keith Kellogg (1860–1951), who made his fortune in the food industry, specifically by producing breakfast cereal. In 1925 he established the Pomona Arabian Horse Ranch. Horses bred at that facility were often used in promotional film campaigns. The most famous stars of Hollywood at that time posed with his beautiful animals: Gary Cooper, Tom Mix, Mary Pickford, Clara Bow, Olivia de Havilland, Will Rogers, as well as Ronald Reagan. Actors also used Kellogg's steeds in movies. The stud's most famous horse was the born in 1916 stallion **Jadaan** (Abbeian – Amran/Deyr, bred by Hingham Stock Farm). At the personal request of Rudolph Valentino the stallion was rented for a fee to be used in the exotic melodrama "Son of Sheikh", 1926, directed by George Fitzmaurice. However Kellogg was disappointed that the production studio and Valentino did not respect the contract – the name of the horse and the name Pomona Arabian Horse

Ranch were to be featured in the credits, yet this did not happen. An unexpected event – the sudden death of Valentino, made the horse a star. He later starred in blockbuster travelling performances in the States and Europe as "the last horse to be ridden by Valentino". He was also featured in other Hollywood hits: „The Garden of Allah" (directed by Rex Ingram), „The Desert Song" (1929, directed by Roy Del Ruth), „Beau Ideal" (1931, directed by Herbert Brenon), „The Scarlett Empress" (1934, directed by Josef von Sternberg) and „Under Two Flags" (1936, directed by Frank Lloyd). During the filming of the latter Jadaan is said to have displayed a remarkable presence of his equine mind – the actor who was riding him during a loud and bustling battle scene fell off his back. The horse did not bolt, but obediently and patiently waited until the rider got up. Jadaan died in 1945. Another famous steed from Kellogg's breeding was **Barakat** 1932 (Fondak – Meca/Ursus, bred by Marquis de Domecq), which was ridden by Tyrone Power in "Suez" (1938, directed by Allan Dwan).

Black is beautiful

One of the most famous Hollywood movies, which featured an Arabian stallion, was „The Black Stallion" (1979, directed by Carroll Ballard), based on the story by William Farley from 1941, which lived to see as many as sixteen book sequels. It was

Hidalgo – Ocean of Fire



photo: Forum Film Poland

Beautiful like cantering Arabians Arabian horses in feature films

a story about the friendship of a boy and horses, which formed and grew strong on an island, where both the boy and horse were shipwrecked. The general opinion was that the movie aptly showed the magical, almost spiritual relationship between horse and man. The movie received two Oscar nominations – for Best Film Editing and for Mickey Rooney for Best Actor in a Supporting Role. The movie was produced by none other than Francis Ford Coppola and the phenomenal music was composed by his father Carmine Coppola. A sequel to the film was produced in 1983: "Black Stallion Returns" (directed by Robert Dalva), and during 1990–1993 it was made as a popular television show. Starring as the main hero was the famous champion **Cass Ole** 1969 (Al-Marah Cassanova – La Bahia/Hanrah, bred by Donoghue Arabians). The horse was so valuable that it did not participate in galloping or swimming scenes – three other horses filled in for the champion. The steed became a true celebrity, receiving the Human Society Award for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, and even visiting the White House during the presidential inauguration of Ronald Reagan. He was put down in 1993.

El Mokhtar 1971 (Galal – Mohga/El Sareei, bred by the Egyptian Agricultural Organization), substituted Cass Ole in many scenes of the second instalment of the story, especially in the race scenes. He did not live to see the premiere – he was put down after a severe colic attack. In 2003 a featurette prequel was produced, "The Young Stallion" (2003, directed by Simon Wincer), shown in IMAX theatres.

Trot and canter

A large number of Arabian horses (according to some sources the greatest in the history of film) appeared on the set of the famous epic film „Lawrence of Arabia” (1962, directed by David Lean). They could also be admired in “Ben Hur” (1959, directed by William Wyler) and later in “The 13th Warrior” (1999, directed by John McTiernan), where an Arabian with an ability to jump was ridden by Antonio Banderas as Ahmed Ibn Fahdlan of Baghdad. While some years ago we had the chance to see “Hidalgo – Ocean of Fire” (2003, directed by Joe Johnston). The latter told the story of a deadly raced over 3000 miles, which supposedly really did take place in 1890 on the Arabian desert wilderness. The critics complained about the old-fashioned nature of the spectacle, but Arabian horse enthusiasts were satisfied: many of them considered that the film fully conveyed the beauty of this breed.

Many famous Hollywood personas belonged and belong to the group of Arabian lovers, treating it as an investment, as well as breeding and riding them. These include Shirley MacLaine, Kim Novak, the deceased in 2009 Patrick Swayze, Kenny Rogers, Robert Wagner, Wayne Newton and director Mike Nichols, creator of “The Graduate” and “Working Girl”, a many time buyer and lessee of Polish Arabian horses.

Showing particular activity and expertise in this subject was Swayze. He took a liking to Straight Egyptian horses, which he bred with his wife Lisa Niemi at his ranch in California. His father was a cowboy in Texas as a young boy and participated in rodeos. Already then Swayze was fascinated with horses. His favourite Arabian was **Tammen** 1982 (Abenhetep – Talgana/Talal, bred by Tom McNair), about which he used to say that he is a friend with an inimitable personality. Swayze claimed that horses are like dancers – their beauty is perfectly functional.



Polish actor Daniel Olbrychski on his Arabian horse Cudny

Poles love Arabians

It is known that Arabian horses are successfully bred in Poland since ages. **Bandos** 1964 (Negatiw – Bandola/Witraż), purchased at the Janów Podlaski Sale by David Murdock of Ventura Farms for 806 thousand dollars, was featured in the soap opera “Dynasty”.

Polish Arabians were often used in movies, especially in historic productions. Polish actor Paweł Deląg recalled that on the set of

“Quo vadis” (2001, directed by Jerzy Kawalerowicz) Tunisian and Berber horses displayed a certain amount of shyness and the Arabians were the most brave. One of the greatest enthusiasts of Arabian horses in Poland is actor Daniel Olbrychski who starred in the Oscar-nominated movies “Ziemia obiecana” (“Promised Land”) by Andrzej Wajda, “The Tin Drum” by Volker Schlöndorff, “Potop” (“The Deluge”) by Jerzy Hoffman. As he recalled, a horse of this breed saved his health and maybe even life when the actor suffered a serious leg injury. On the set of “Ogniem i mieczem” (“With Fire and Sword”, 1999) by Jerzy Hoffman, which featured many Arabians, especially as the horses of the Cossacks, the actor rode atop his own horse **Cudny** 1992 (Balon – Cudna/Eternit, bred by Bialka Stud). Polish television TVP dedicated a document titled “Daniel i konie” (“Daniel and horses” 2009, directed by Daria Galant) on the relationship between Olbrychski and horses. 