

Movie Magic

A new documentary on master filmmaker Steven Spielberg offers an intimate portrait of one of the most important directors of our time.

BY JEAN NAYAR

Above: Spielberg making magic on the set of *Schindler's List* (1993).

With almost 50 years of filmmaking under his belt, legendary director Steven Spielberg shows no signs of slowing down (his latest film, *The Post*, starring Tom Hanks and Meryl Streep, will be released later this year). In a new feature-length documentary called *Spielberg*, which debuts Oct. 7 on HBO, director Susan Lacy offers an inside look at the experiences that have shaped the master filmmaker's point of view and inspired him to create some of the most groundbreaking movies of our time. Here, Lacy dishes on her intimate interviews with Spielberg and her stunning portrait of his life and career.

Why did you choose to make a documentary about Steven Spielberg, and why now?

As the creator and executive producer of the *American Masters* series on PBS, I spent close to 30 years documenting American cultural giants and had always wanted to include Steven Spielberg. As I moved to HBO in order to focus purely on directing, Spielberg consented to my making a film about him. I knew he was approaching 70, so it was the right time for us both.

What surprised you most about him?

That the busiest man in the film industry was willing to make time for so many extensive interviews with

me. I ended up with over 30 hours of interview material with him alone. His enthusiasm for what he does has not diminished one iota since he broke on the scene with *Jaws* at the age of 29.

What, in your opinion, are his most important contributions to American culture?

Spielberg's contribution to American culture is incalculable. He goes where his heart and intellect take him, and while he is one of the most successful filmmakers in history, I don't think the marketplace drives his decisions about what films to make. *Schindler's List*, *Munich*, *Lincoln* and *Bridge of Spies*, for example, were not guaranteed box-office successes, but they dealt with subject matter of personal importance to Spielberg and were an enormous contribution to our understanding of important historical events.

Highlights of Spielberg?

There are themes which run through Spielberg's work which make him a highly personal filmmaker, something I suspect will surprise many people who think of him as primarily a commercial filmmaker. This film attempts to explore the complexity and humanity of Spielberg as he reveals it in his work.