



Thursday 15th September

Celebrate 50 years of West Side Story with UPC and MGM HD

West Side Story is 50 this Friday (16th September) and MGM HD will be celebrating with an evening dedicated to the classic musical. Starring screen icons Natalie Wood and Richard Beymer, this electrifying musical sets the ageless story of Romeo and Juliet in the slums of New York in the 1950s.

Available on UPC HD channel 325 the musical will air at 9pm in glorious True HD to coincide with its original release date. Also airing on the night is a special documentary about the making of the movie – *West Side Memories* at 8pm which is a must for fans of the film.

With a memorable soundtrack which stayed on the top of the US billboard charts for a record breaking 54 weeks, West Side Story has heavily influenced pop culture over the years. Stars such as Little Richard, Barbra Streisand, Tom Waits and Pet Shop Boys have all covered songs from the soundtrack while Michael Jackson also paid homage to the movie's dancing in both his Beat It and Bad videos.

A winner of 10 Academy Awards, West Side Story is the biggest Oscar-winning musical of all time, beating the record Gigi set three years before with its nine Oscars. It remains the most successful musical on the Oscars list, and has the fourth largest haul of all films, behind Titanic, Ben Hur and The Lord of the Rings: Return of the King.

Tune in to MGM HD on UPC HD Channel 325 from 8pm on Friday.

ENDS

Did you know.....

- West Side Story was the first film to win a Best Director Oscar for two directors (Robert Wise and Jerome Robbins), a feat not repeated for 46 years later, when Joel Coen and Ethan Coen shared the award for No Country for Old Men.

- The stage version was originally planned as a story about a Catholic boy falling in love with a Jewish girl. The working title was "East Side Story".
- Director Robert Wise hired New York gang members to control crowds on location, and fought to shoot on location in New York City.
- The boys' jeans were dyed, re-dyed and "distressed," using special elastic thread to allow for the severity of the choreography.
- Robert Wise's original choice to play Tony was Elvis Presley.
- Audrey Hepburn was offered the role of Maria, but she turned it down, because she was pregnant with Sean H. Ferrer at the time.
- Throughout the movie, Natalie Wood wears a bracelet on her left wrist, not for any aesthetic reason, but because she had injured her wrist in the scene of The Green Promise when she fell on the bridge that collapsed during the severe rainstorm, causing an unsightly bone protrusion on her wrist. She wore the bracelet to hide the injury. It became her trademark in all of her movies.
- Marni Nixon - who dubbed Natalie Wood's singing vocals - also had to sing some of Rita Moreno's vocals as Moreno developed a cold during the production and could not sing.
- The film ran in Paris for a grand total of 249 weeks, making it the longest running film in French history
- During the entire production, the actors wore out 200 pairs of shoes, applied more than 100lbs of make-up, split 27 pairs of trousers and performed in 30 different recording sessions.