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Scarlett Johansson

American actress and singer

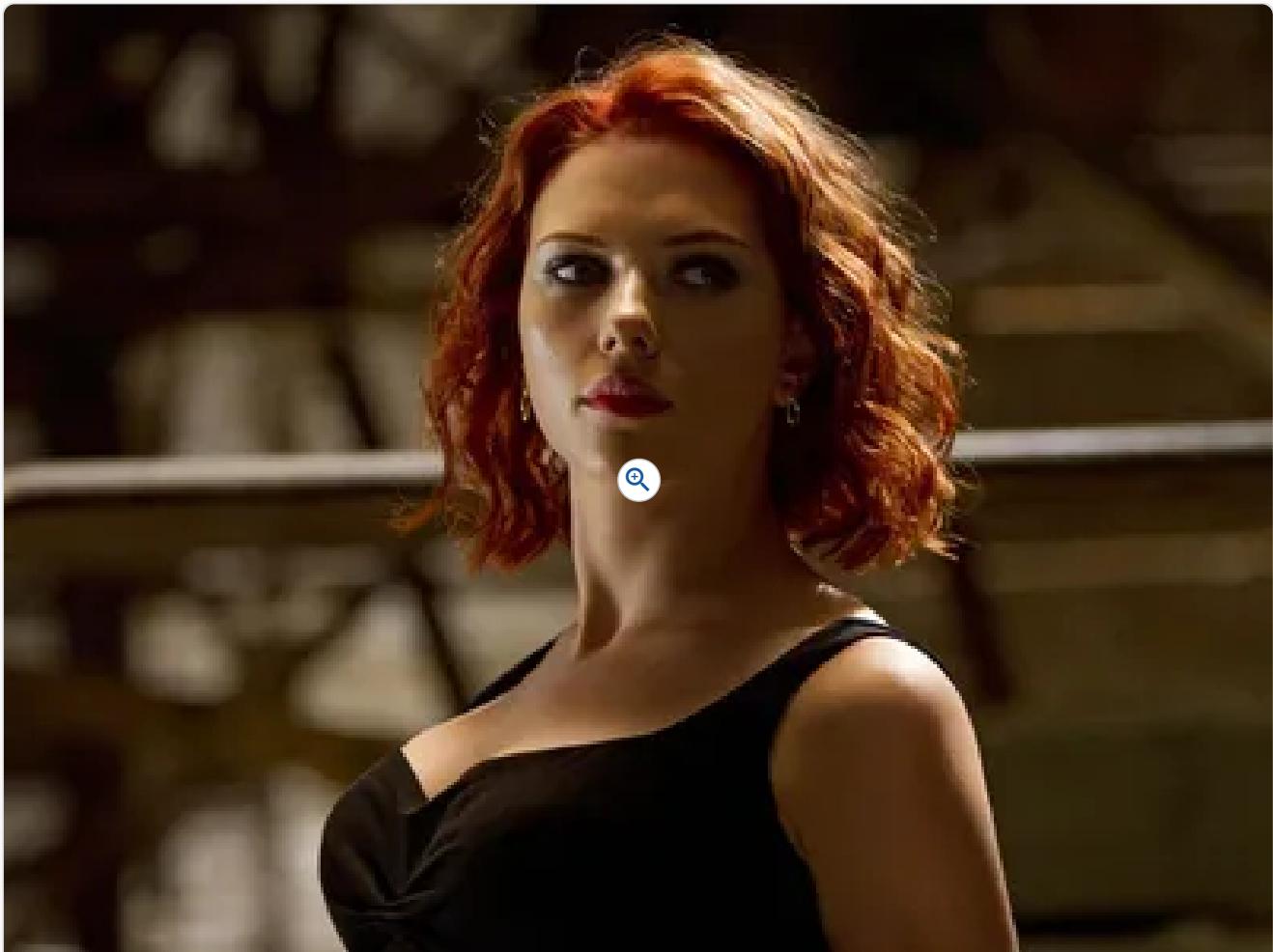
Written by [Alison Eldridge](#)

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Scarlett Johansson

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Born: November 22, 1984 (age 38) • [New York City](#) • [New York](#)

Notable Family Members: spouse [Ryan Reynolds](#)

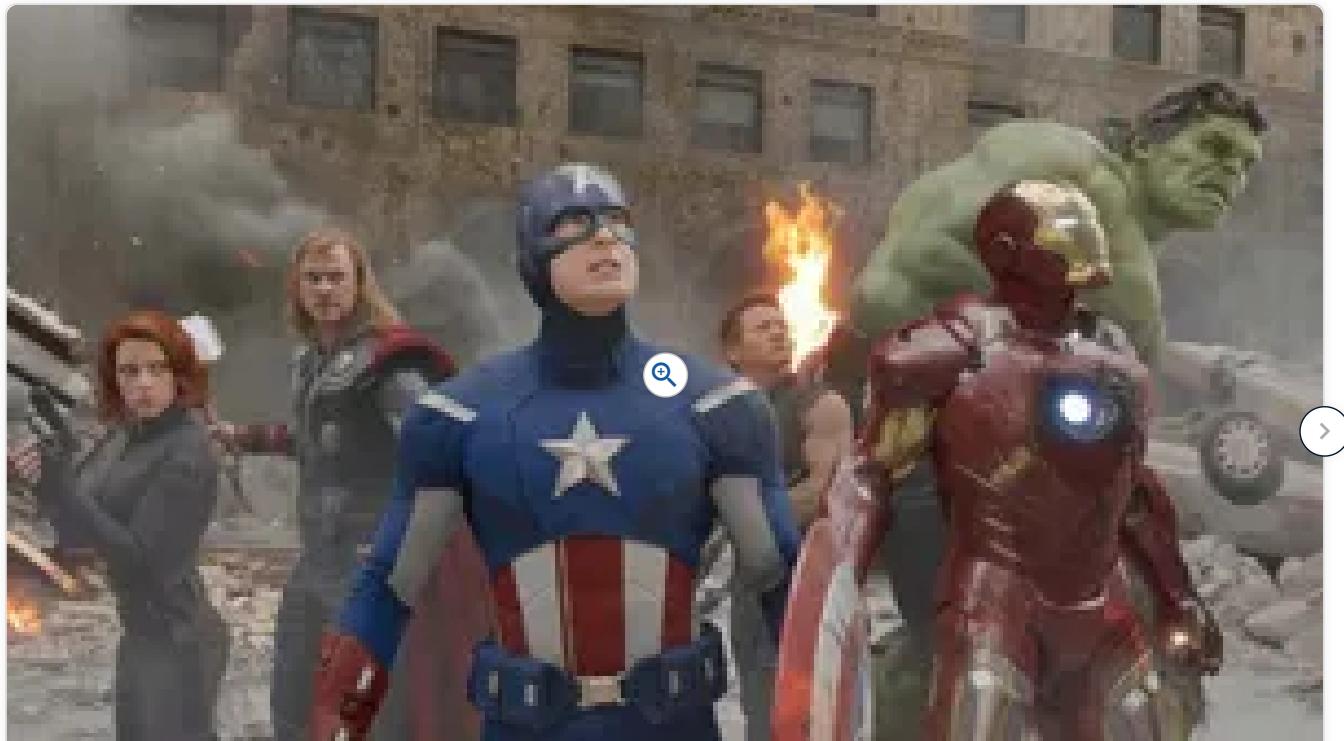
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Scarlett Johansson, (born November 22, 1984, New York City, New York, U.S.), American actress and singer whose acting range earned her a place among the most popular actresses in Hollywood.

Johansson, daughter of an architect and a producer, was raised in New York City. She and her twin brother, Hunter, were the youngest of four siblings. She developed an interest in acting at a young age, auditioning for commercials by age seven. Soon after, she enrolled at the [Lee Strasberg](#) Theatre Institute and later attended the Professional Children's School in [Manhattan](#) to further hone her craft. At age eight she appeared alongside [Ethan Hawke](#) in the Off-Broadway production *Sophistry*, and at nine she made her film debut in [Rob Reiner's North](#) (1994). Johansson subsequently appeared in *Just Cause* (1995), but her first breakthrough came with *Manny & Lo* (1996), a coming-of-age film about orphaned sisters who run away. She next earned critical acclaim for her role as a teenager who has suffered a disfiguring accident in *The Horse Whisperer* (1998), and she gained further attention as [cynical](#) teen outcast Rebecca in *Ghost World* (2001).

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Johansson came into her own playing more adult roles, notably that of the disillusioned Charlotte, a young woman bored with her life and her marriage who starts a complicated relationship with a middle-aged man (played by [Bill Murray](#)) in *Lost in Translation* (2003), and Griet, a housemaid who bewitches painter [Johannes Vermeer](#) ([Colin Firth](#)) in the historical drama *Girl with a Pearl Earring* (2003). In 2005 she appeared to critical acclaim in director [Woody Allen](#)'s *Match Point*, and she later starred in his films *Scoop* (2006) and *Vicky Cristina Barcelona* (2008). Also in 2005 she costarred in her first big-budget action movie, *The Island*, alongside Ewan McGregor. Johansson continued to explore her acting range in the period drama *The Other Boleyn Girl* (2008), the [romantic](#) comedy *He's Just Not That into You* (2009), and the heartwarming drama *We Bought a Zoo* (2011).



The Avengers

In 2010 she made her [Broadway](#) debut in *A View from the Bridge* and won a [Tony Award](#) for best actress. That same year she appeared in the action film [Iron Man 2](#) as Natasha Romanoff, a secret agent otherwise known as the Black Widow, a role she went on to [reprise](#) in the superhero blockbusters [The Avengers](#) (2012), [Captain America: The Winter Soldier](#) (2014), [Avengers: Age of Ultron](#) (2015), [Captain America: Civil War](#) (2016), [Avengers: Infinity War](#) (2018), [Avengers: Endgame](#) (2019), and [Black Widow](#) (2021). She switched gears completely at the end of 2012, portraying actress [Janet Leigh](#) in the biopic [Hitchcock](#).

In 2013 Johansson returned to the Broadway stage in a revival production of [Tennessee Williams](#)'s Pulitzer Prize-winning *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*. Later that year she starred as a woman dating a man who is addicted to pornography in the romantic comedy *Don Jon* and provided the voice of a [sentient](#) computer [operating system](#) in director [Spike Jonze](#)'s romance *Her*. She played a mysterious alien who drives around Glasgow and abducts men in *Under the Skin* (2013), a kindhearted restaurant hostess in *Chef* (2014), a woman who develops superpowers after a mind-expanding drug enters her system in *Lucy* (2014), and a starlet in the [Coen brothers'](#) comedy *Hail, Caesar!* (2016). Johansson's 2017 credits included *Ghost in the Shell*, in which she portrayed a cyborg woman who battles criminals, and *Rough Night*, a comedy about a bachelorette party. Two years later she played a mother harbouring a Jewish girl in the [Nazi](#) satire *Jojo Rabbit* and a woman undergoing a divorce in *Marriage Story*. Her performances earned Johansson her first [Academy Award](#) nominations; for the former film she received a nod for supporting actress, and the latter movie netted her a lead actress nomination.



In addition, Johansson lent her throaty voice to a number of characters, including a computer-animated version of the snake Kaa in a live-action [adaptation](#) of Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book* (2016) and an alternative-rock singing porcupine in the animated family film *Sing* (2016) and its [sequel](#) (2021). In 2018 she voiced an alluring canine in Wes Anderson's animated feature *Isle of Dogs*.



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Johansson also pursued opportunities aside from acting. After appearing on a charity album of star-studded song covers in 2006 and making a brief appearance singing backing vocals for [the Jesus and Mary Chain](#) at the 2007 [Coachella music festival](#), she released her first album, a collection of [Tom Waits](#) covers called *Anywhere I Lay My Head*, in 2008. The following year she released an album of duets with Pete Yorn, called *Break Up*. The pair released the EP *Apart* in 2018.

— Alison Eldridge

— The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica

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Home > Entertainment & Pop Culture > Actors

Meryl Streep

American actress

Alternate titles: *Mary Louise Streep*

Written and fact-checked by [The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica](#)

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Meryl Streep

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Born: June 22, 1949 (age 73) • [New Jersey](#)

Awards And Honors: Cecil B. DeMille Award (2017) • Golden Globe Award (2017) • Golden Globe Award (2012) • Academy Award (2012) • Golden Globe Award (2009) • Academy Award (1983) • Academy Award (1980) • Emmy Award (1978) • Academy Award (2012): Actress in a Leading Role • Academy Award (1983): Actress in a Leading Role • Academy Award (1980): Actress in a Supporting Role • Cecil B. DeMille Award (2017) •...[\(Show more\)](#)

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Top Questions

What was Meryl Streep's first film?

When did Meryl Streep win both a Golden Globe Award and an Oscar?

Whom did Meryl Streep portray in the film *A Cry in the Dark*?

When was Meryl Streep awarded the Commander in the Order of Arts and Letters?

When did Meryl Streep win the Cecil B. DeMille Award?

Meryl Streep, original name **Mary Louise Streep**, (born June 22, 1949, [Summit, New Jersey](#), U.S.), American [film](#) actress known for her masterly technique, expertise with [dialects](#), and subtly expressive face.

Early life

Streep started voice training at age 12 and took up [acting](#) in [high school](#). In 1971 she graduated from [Vassar College](#) in [Poughkeepsie, New York](#), with a degree in [drama](#) and costume design. After working in [summer stock](#) theatre, Streep studied drama at [Yale University](#), where she earned a master of fine arts degree in 1975. She then moved to [New York City](#) to begin a professional career as an actress.

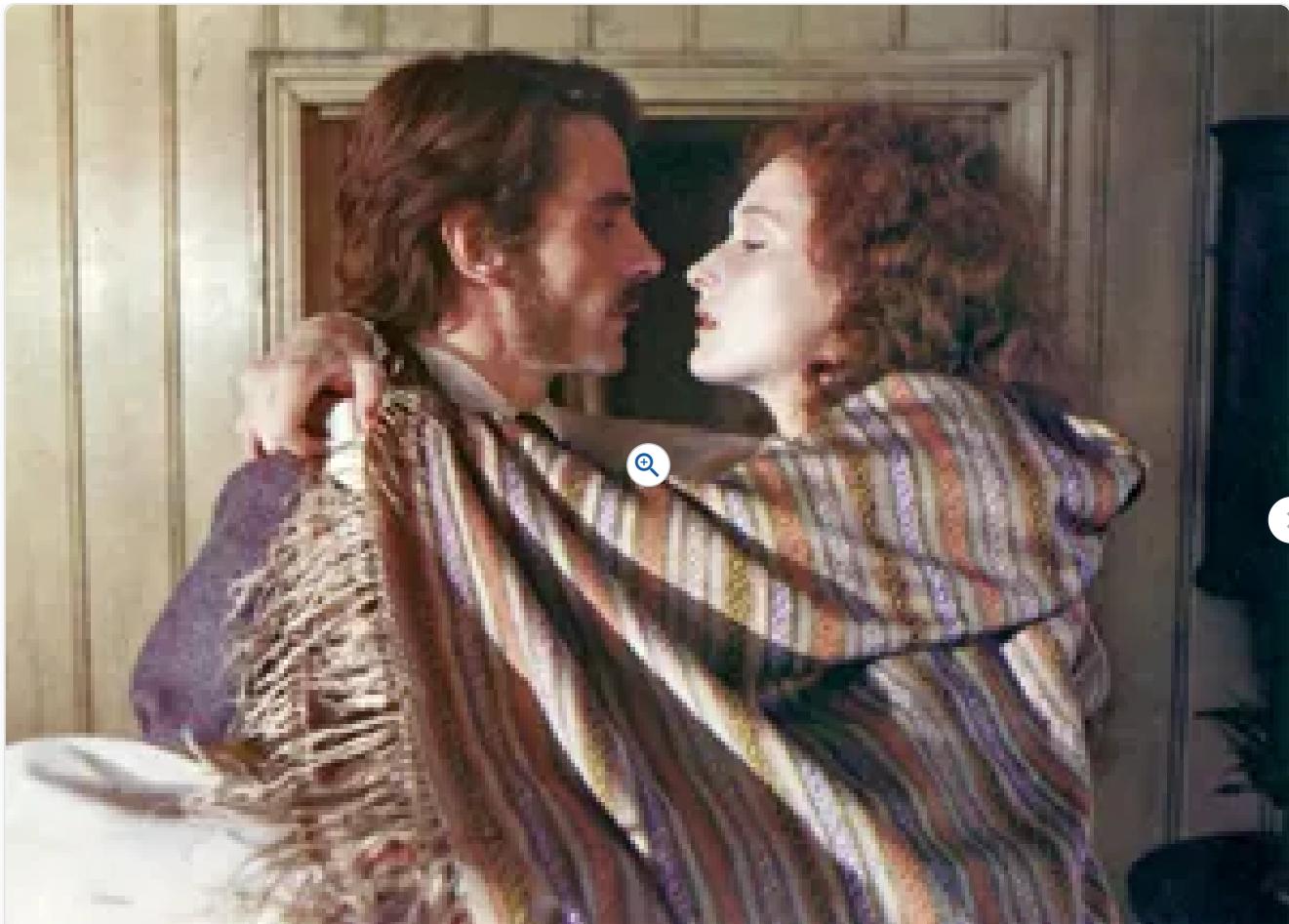


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Stardom: *The Deer Hunter*, *Sophie's Choice*, and *Silkwood*

Streep made her [Broadway](#) debut in 1975 with *Trelawny of the "Wells."* Two years later she appeared in her first feature film, *Julia* (1977), but it was her performance in *The Deer Hunter* (1978) that earned Streep [widespread](#) recognition. Though her role was relatively small, she displayed a quiet softness that contrasted sharply with the bravado of the male characters and deepened the film's testament to the devastating effects of the [Vietnam War](#) on young Americans. That same year she starred in the television miniseries *Holocaust*, for which she won an [Emmy Award](#).



Jeremy Irons and Meryl Streep in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*

Over the next 10 years, Streep confirmed her reputation as one of Hollywood's finest dramatic actresses. Her performances in *Kramer vs. Kramer* (1979)—as a mother who leaves her young son and then fights to regain his custody—and *Sophie's Choice* (1982)—as a Polish survivor of a Nazi concentration camp—earned her Academy Awards for supporting actress and leading actress, respectively. She further demonstrated her range and her gifts for rendering complex emotional states and seamless characterization in such roles as a modern-day actress portraying a Victorian woman of mystery in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1981), a factory-worker-turned-activist in *Silkwood* (1983), and the aristocratic Danish author Isak Dinesen in *Out of Africa* (1985). She won the Cannes film festival and New York Film Critics' Circle awards for best actress for her moving performance in *A Cry in the Dark* (1988) as Lindy Chamberlain, the real-life Australian mother accused of having murdered her baby daughter although she claimed that the child was carried off by a dingo.

A devil, Julia Child, and Margaret Thatcher

By the late 1980s Streep's reputation as a brilliant technical actress came to be a burden. Her name was typically associated with a serious, often depressing sort of film, and some critics complained that her performances lacked compassion. As a result, Streep tried to change her popular image by appearing in a handful of comedies, including *Postcards from the Edge* (1990) and *Death Becomes Her* (1992), and in the action-adventure film *The River Wild* (1994). For the most part, these films were not well received, and Streep returned to dramatic films that required more technical skill and less personal charisma. She gave memorable performances in *The Bridges of Madison County* (1995), *Marvin's Room* (1996), *One True Thing* (1998), and *The Hours* (2002).



Meryl Streep in *The Devil Wears Prada*

In 2003 Streep received an unprecedented 13th Academy Award nomination—for best supporting actress in *Adaptation* (2002); [Katharine Hepburn](#) originally held the record with 12 nominations. Streep earned another Oscar nomination (for best actress) for her portrayal of an overbearing fashion magazine editor in *The Devil Wears Prada* (2006). In 2008 she played Donna, a middle-aged woman reunited with three of her former lovers, in the musical *Mamma Mia!* and later that year starred with [Philip Seymour Hoffman](#) in *Doubt*, about a nun who suspects a priest of having inappropriate relationships with children at a Catholic school; her performance in the latter film earned Streep another Academy Award

nomination. She also garnered critical acclaim for her portrayal of famed American chef [Julia Child](#) in *Julie & Julia* (2009), a role for which she received a [Golden Globe Award](#) and her 16th Oscar nomination.



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[It's Complicated](#)

Streep later provided the voice of Mrs. Fox in the animated *Fantastic Mr. Fox* (2009), a film [adaptation](#) of Roald Dahl's children's book, and starred with [Alec Baldwin](#) and [Steve Martin](#) in *It's Complicated* (2009), a comedy about a divorced

woman having an affair with her remarried ex-husband. She then stepped into the role of [Margaret Thatcher](#) in *The Iron Lady* (2011), a portrait of the former British [prime minister](#). For her performance, Streep earned her eighth Golden Globe Award and third Oscar. In the lighthearted *Hope Springs* (2012), she and [Tommy Lee Jones](#) starred as a couple trying to save their stagnant marriage. She next evinced a razor-tongued [matriarch](#) whose husband has committed suicide in *August: Osage County* (2013), adapted from [Tracy Letts](#)'s play; for her performance, Streep earned her 18th Oscar nomination.

Later films

In 2014 Streep appeared as the dispassionate leader of an ostensibly [utopian community](#) in *The Giver*, based on the novel for young readers by Lois Lowry; as a minister's wife who cares for mentally ill women in the [western](#) *The Homesman*; and as a vengeful witch in the film adaptation of [Stephen Sondheim](#)'s musical *Into the Woods*. She was nominated for an Academy Award for best supporting actress for the latter role. Streep then slipped into the role of a [feckless](#) (and unsuccessful) rock-and-roll singer who attempts to [reconcile](#) with her family in *Ricki and the Flash* (2015). After depicting woman-suffrage pioneer [Emmeline Pankhurst](#) in *Suffragette* (2015), Streep delivered an ebullient and sympathetic performance in the [title role](#) of *Florence Foster Jenkins* (2016), about the tragicomic but ultimately inspiring efforts of a syphilitic society [matron](#) to establish an opera career. For her work in the film, Streep received her 20th Oscar nomination.





Meryl Streep

Streep next starred in *The Post*, portraying Katharine Graham, owner of *The Washington Post*. The drama, directed by Steven Spielberg, chronicles the newspaper's publication of the *Pentagon Papers*. For her performance, Streep was nominated for another Academy Award. She then reprised her role as Donna in *Mamma Mia! Here We Go Again* and played a disorderly cousin to the eponymous character in *Mary Poppins Returns* (both 2018). In 2019 Streep took a turn on television, joining the critically acclaimed cast of the HBO series *Big Little Lies* for its second season. That same year she starred in *The Laundromat*, Steven Soderbergh's farce about the *Panama Papers* scandal, and portrayed Aunt March in *Little Women*, an adaptation of Louisa May Alcott's beloved classic. Her films from 2020 included *The Prom*, a musical in which a theatre troupe tries to help a gay teenager, and Soderbergh's *Let Them All Talk*, about an award-winning author who reunites with several old friends during a cruise. Streep next played a narcissistic U.S. president in *Don't Look Up* (2021), a dramedy about an impending comet strike that will destroy Earth.

In addition to receiving numerous acting awards, Streep was made Commander in the Order of Arts and Letters (the highest cultural award presented by the French government) in 2002. In 2010 she was elected an honorary member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters. The following year Streep received a Kennedy Center Honor. In 2017 she was given the *Cecil B. DeMille Award* (a Golden Globe for lifetime achievement).

The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica

This article was most recently revised and updated by Amy Tikkonen.