THE WONDERFUL, HORRIBLE LIFE OF LENI RIEFENSTAHL (1993)
Directed by Ray Müller

In the 1930s, Leni Riefenstahl was arguably the most important and accomplished female filmmaker of her generation; however, since her primary sponsor was Adolf Hitler, and her best-known work was a hagiographic documentary on the 1934 Nazi Party congress entitled Triumph of the Will, a long and unending debate has raged whether Riefenstahl was a fascist propagandist or a talented artist whose crime was merely doing a job too well. Macht der Bilder: Leni Riefenstahl is an exhaustive two-part look at Riefenstahl's life and work, exploring her early careers as a dancer and actress, reconstructing the making of Triumph of the Will and Olympia (an elaborate and visually striking record of the 1936 Berlin Olympic Games), and her later success as a still photographer, cultural anthropologist, and underwater filmmaker. While the film was made with Riefenstahl's participation, director Ray Müller does not shrink from exploring both sides of the issues of her work with the Nazi regime (she claims to have never been a member of the party and to have been unaware of the genocide of Jews and other "undesirables," while Muller presents evidence that strongly suggests the contrary) even as it celebrates her accomplishments and fierce determination (as a girl she could climb mountains in her bare feet, and in her nineties she was still an avid scuba diver). Macht der Bilder: Leni Riefenstahl was released in the United States under the title The Wonderful, Horrible Life of Leni Riefenstahl. ~ Mark Deming, Rovi

France | UK | Germany | Belgium
188 minutes