



NEW RELEASES

Swan Song

Director's Statement

Back in 1984, I walked into my small-town gay bar for the first time – The Universal Fruit and Nut Company. There he was, glittering on the dancefloor. Wearing a teal feather boa, fedora and matching pantsuit, 'Mister Pat' Pitsenbarger was busting old school moves straight out of Bob Fosse. I was 17, and Pat was a revelation.

Years later, when I set out to write my autobiographical *Edge of Seventeen*, I immediately thought of Mister Pat. I went back home to hunt him down, only to discover Pat had just suffered an aneurism and was temporarily unable to speak. But his lover David told me stories about how Pat was once the most fabulous hairdresser in Sandusky, Ohio, about his legendary drag performances and about how he used to shop at Kroger's dressed as Carol Burnett – in 1967! This was a man who always had the courage to be himself, long before that was safe.

The truth is, Mister Pat inspired me to write *Edge of Seventeen*. I wrote a significant 'Pat' character as my protagonist's mentor, but midway through the shoot, the part got cut. I always knew my muse would return someday in my writing, and when he finally did many years later, I looked for Pat again only to learn he just passed away. Sadly, Pat's legendary hand-beaded rhinestone gowns are all lost to time. Only a shoebox remains – filled with some tarnished jewellery and a half-smoked pack of Mores.

Swan Song is a love letter to the rapidly disappearing 'gay culture' of America. As it has become more acceptable to be queer, what used to be a thriving community is rapidly melting back into society. Thanks to assimilation and technology, small-town gay bars like The Universal Fruit and Nut Company are becoming extinct. *Swan Song* is dedicated to all the forgotten flaming florists and hairdressers who built the gay community and blazed the trail for the rights many of us cling to today. But, above all, for me this film is about learning that it's never too late to live again.

Todd Stephens on 'Swan Song'

Can you talk about how your past works have led you to Swan Song?

Swan Song is a return to the more serious side of my Gemini self. After the wacky world of *Another Gay Movie* I wanted to go back to my roots and finish what I think of as my 'Ohio Trilogy' (started by *Edge of Seventeen*, then *Gypsy 83*). Honestly though, it took me years to find the courage to reveal the more personal/autobiographical side of myself again. But after many false starts and several amazing therapists, I finally got up the nerve to reopen my heart. In many ways, the character of Pat is me, telling myself it's not too late to do what I love.

Was this film written with Udo Kier in mind?

I should make Udo happy and say yes, but I actually had Gene Wilder in my head when I wrote the first draft. But after spending more than a year searching for the perfect Pat, it became clear that the only human being on

this planet who could fully do him justice was Udo Kier. Watching Udo's performance on set every day was like witnessing a master class in acting.

What was Udo's first reaction to the screenplay?

Udo called me right away, and said he loved it. I jumped on the first plane to Palm Springs to meet him, and the rest is history. Udo was very gracious with helping to get the film off the ground – I later returned to Palm Springs to shoot a Kickstarter video in his fabulous living room. One of the biggest bonuses of making *Swan Song* has been making a new best friend in Udo. He's family now.

Can you talk about your attraction to small-town America?

Sandusky, Ohio is where I was born and raised, and will always be a huge part of who I am. I've had a love/hate relationship with my hometown over the years – it's like I couldn't wait to leave and now I can't wait to return. Times have changed since we filmed *Edge of Seventeen* there in 1997 and felt like we needed to keep the film's gay storyline in the closet. In fact, when producer Eric Eisenbrey and I arrived back in town to start preproduction for *Swan Song* Sandusky was celebrating its 3rd Annual Gay Pride Festival. My queer inner child almost couldn't process it! After years of being down and out, Sandusky's reawakening helped inspire Pat's rebirth in the film.

If you could choose anyone living or dead, who would you choose to do your hair for your funeral?

The late, great Mister Pat, of course! But, assuming he's all booked up after the film comes out, my second choice would be the late Sydney Guilaroff, whose genius Hollywood creations inspired our final look for Linda Evans. Who am I kidding, though? In reality – I told my husband Tim he has to personally style my hair in the casket because he's the only one who really knows how I do it, *haha*.

What's your drag name and what song do you perform?

Lazy Susan. And probably something by Stevie Nicks. But only if I feel like it.

Production notes

SWAN SONG

Directed by: Todd Stephens
©: Swan Song Film LLC
Production Company: Luna Pictures
Presented by: Luna Pictures
In association with: House of Gemini
Executive Producers: Rhet Topham, Meghan Hogrefe, Jay Fraley, Rick Hogrefe, Drew Sklar
Produced by: Todd Stephens, Eric Eisenbrey, Tim Kaltenecker, Rhet Topham, Stephen Israel
Line Producer: Kenneth Altman
Unit Production Manager: Kenneth Altman
Location Manager: Nick Avery
1st Assistant Director: Vernon Guinn
Script Supervisor: Kimberlee Andrews
Casting by: Eve Battaglia, Lina Todd
Written by: Todd Stephens
Director of Photography: Jackson Warner Lewis
Visual Effects: Santiago Figueira W.
Edited by: Spencer Schilly, Santiago Figueira W.
Production Designer: Kassandra DeAngelis
Art Director: Vince Calabrese
Set Decorator: Teresa Strebler
Costume Designers: Shawna-Nova Foley, Kitty Boots
Key Hair/Make-up: Lydia Kane
Main Title Design: Santiago Figueira W.
Original Score: Chris Stephens
All Instruments Played by: Chris Stephens
Music Supervisor: Gerry Gershman
Sound Designer: Arjun. G. Sheth
Production Sound Mixer: Matthew Gelzer
Sound Mixer: Arjun. G. Sheth

Cast

Udo Kier (*Mister Pat Pitsenbarger*)
Jennifer Coolidge (*Dee Dee Dale*)
Ira Hawkins (*Eunice*)
Stephanie McVay (*Sue*)
Thom Hilton (*Gabriel*)
Justin Lonesome (*Miss Velma*)
Tom Bloom (*Walter Shanrock*)
Shanessa Sweeney (*Ro Ro*)
Jonah Blechman (*Tristan*)
Annie Kitral (*Miss Gertie*)
Bryant Carroll (*Lyle*)
Shelby Garrett (*Evie*)
Catherine Albers (*Janie*)
Eric Eisenbrey (*David*)
Roshon Thomas (*Shaundell*)
Dave Sorboro (*Josiah*)
Ray Perrin (*Scottie*)
Tim Murray (*nurse*)
Michael Urie (*Dustin*)
Linda Evans (*Rita Parker Sloan*)

USA 2021©
105 mins

A Peccadillo Pictures release

IN PERSON & PREVIEWS

Mark Kermode Live in 3D at the BFI

Mon 13 Jun 18:30

Restoration Preview:

Dr. Who and the Daleks + Q&A

Sun 19 Jun 11:30

Restoration Preview:

Daleks' Invasion Earth 2150 A.D.

Sun 19 Jun 14:30

Experimenta Presents: Premiere: Wayfinder + Q&A with director

Larry Achiampong

Tue 21 Jun 18:15

Burning an Illusion + intro by actor Cassie McFarlane

Mon 27 Jun 18:00

Preview: The Afterlight + Q&A with director Charlie Shackleton

Wed 29 Jun 18:20

NEW & RE-RELEASES

Vampyr

Continues from Fri 20 May

Get Carter

Continues from Fri 27 May

Benediction

From Fri 3 Jun

Pickpocket

From Fri 3 Jun

All My Friends Hate Me

From Fri 10 Jun

Bergman Island

From Fri 10 Jun

Swan Song

From Fri 10 Jun

Wings of Desire (Der Himmel über Berlin)

From Fri 24 Jun (Q&A with Wim Wenders on Sat 25 Jun 15:00)

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