



**SEED MONEY: THE CHUCK HOLMES STORY  
TIP SHEET**

**Title** Seed Money: The Chuck Holmes Story

**Genre** Documentary

**Running Time** 72 Minutes

**Format** DCP / Blu-ray

**Aspect Ratio** 16:9 (1.78)

**Sound** Stereo

**Copyright** 2015

**DIRECTOR**

Michael Stabile

## **PRODUCERS**

Michael Stabile, Ben Leon, Jack Shamama

## **EDITOR**

Bryan Darling

## **CINEMATOGRAPHER**

Ben Leon

## **ORIGINAL MUSIC**

Stephen Vesecky

## **CAST**

Jeff Stryker, Steven Scarborough, Chi Chi LaRue, John Rutherford, John Waters, Tom Chase, Jim Bentley, Steve Cruz, Phil St. John, Terry LeGrand, Jake Shears, Carole Migden, Ken Horan, Jerry Goldstein, Sabin Grey, Vaughn Kincey, Jim Hodges, Scott Pearson, Mark Leno

## **LOGLINE**

With Falcon Studios, pornographer Chuck Holmes built an empire on flesh and fantasy, but when he attempts to channel his fortune into the emerging gay rights movement, he finds he's not entirely welcome.

## **PARAGRAPH SYNOPSIS**

With Falcon Studios, gay porn mogul Chuck Holmes built an empire on flesh and fantasy — the gay Hugh Hefner. From 1972 to 2000, Chuck fought the FBI, vice squads and an epidemic to document the emerging gay culture, and provide gay men across the country with a vision of life that was unashamed and celebratory.

Chuck's business brings him fortune beyond imagining, and powerful friends, but when he attempts to channel his millions into a gay rights movement of the 90s, he finds that his money is sometimes more welcome than he is. **SEED MONEY** is the story of Chuck Holmes, one of the gay rights movement's most unlikely pioneers.

## **WEBSITE**

[www.chuckholmesdoc.com](http://www.chuckholmesdoc.com)

[www.facebook.com/chuckholmesdoc](http://www.facebook.com/chuckholmesdoc)

## **FESTIVAL REPRESENTATIVE**

Jeffrey Winter The Film Collaborative

137 N. Larchmont Blvd., #606

Los Angeles, CA 90004

818-679-8751 cell

cell 323-466-3535 office

[jeffrey@thefilmcollaborative.com](mailto:jeffrey@thefilmcollaborative.com)



## NOTES ON THE FILM

In 2002, pornographer Chuck Holmes' name was installed over the San Francisco LGBT Center, and public outrage was swift. Detractors called the move — in recognition of the late gay mogul's \$1 million bequest to the beleaguered center— “insane,” fearing it would only fuel right-wing allegations about the gay community's obsession with sex. What those critics missed, and what continues to be missed over a decade later, is the role pornographers like Holmes played in building the gay rights movement we know today.

As the head of Falcon Studios, Chuck Holmes might have been the most influential gay filmmaker in gay history, his work viewed by millions of gay men at a time when most representation of gay life was either homophobic or relegated to the art house. He dined with politicians and power brokers, and helped fund a nascent gay rights movement. Yet, because of how he made his living, few know his name.

Starting in the early 70s, Chuck revolutionized the newly legal gay porn industry, assertive in his belief gay men deserved positive representations, and that quality gay films would help them change their sense of self. He fought legal battles and personal demons, surfacing in the late 80s as a major contributor to the growing gay rights movement — only to find that the community he helped create now thought of him as a liability.

Because little footage of Chuck exists, the filmmakers use Chuck's own Falcon films — along with stories from Chuck's friends, rivals, stars and politicians — to tell the vivid and dramatic story of one of the gay rights movements most unlikely heroes.

- Chuck arrives in San Francisco at the height of the sexual revolution, and begins documenting the culture.
- Throughout his career, Chuck faced arrest and imprisonment for making gay films.
- The look created by Chuck — blonde, preppy, wholesome — was the standard emulated by the entire gay porn industry.
- Chuck's own demons surface during the AIDS epidemic, when fearing the loss of his business, he fights against using condoms in films.
- Chuck experiences a rebirth, and becomes an important gay philanthropist, serving on the board of both the Human Rights Campaign and the Victory Fund, and as a major fundraiser for Bill Clinton.
- Chuck is often closeted about his business, and many in the gay politics see him as a liability, and his checks are returned.

**SEED MONEY** follows the sensational story of Chuck's incredible rise, his role in gay culture — and his struggle to achieve respect.



## SYNOPSIS

For nearly thirty years, fueled by the twin fires of the sexual revolution and gay liberation, Chuck Holmes's Falcon Studios reigned as the world's largest producer of gay pornography, using film to change the way a generation of gay men saw themselves and helping them come to terms with sexuality.

Chuck arrives in San Francisco in 1971, an Indiana farm boy with a passion for sex and a head for business. At a time when mainstream culture depicts gay life as sick, lonely and criminal, Chuck offers an alternative that is exuberant, unashamed and available on 8mm reels. An avid collector of porn, he senses an opportunity, and enlists directors like John Travis and John Summers to begin producing 8mm reels with an eye for quality.

Falcon films quickly become the standard by which the rest of the industry is judged, and business explodes. The films begin to reflect and amplify the images of gay liberation in San Francisco, documenting the changing styles of gay men.

But radical outness isn't easy. As a distributor of adult material, Chuck faced both vice squads and FBI indictments. A trial in Texas in 1973 lands friend and fellow filmmaker Matt Sterling in prison, but Chuck beats the charges. As other filmmakers go to jail, Chuck begins buying up their companies and solidifying his position.

Chuck becomes incredibly wealthy, and mixes with gay figures like Halston, David Geffen and Calvin Klein. He also faces personal demons, including drug abuse, and the company begins to falter. In the mid-80s, he also discovers he has AIDS. Despite this, he fights putting condoms on performers, feeling it will hurt business.

But as Chuck confronts the new reality, he shifts. He gets sober, focuses on health, and begins using condoms on models. The battles transform him, forcing him to confront his own demons and realize that he could play a role as a leader in the growing gay rights movement.

Chuck's wealth and power open doors but he remains deeply closeted about his business success, aware that the higher he climbs socially, the greater the potential fall. He begins donating money to gay causes, in particular the Human Rights Campaign Fund (now the HRC), where he serves on the Board of Directors. He also becomes a major contributor to the Democratic Party and Bill Clinton.

But Chuck's money is not always welcome. When checks are returned and invitations rescinded, he is crushed. His health deteriorates, and he passes away from complications related to AIDS in 2000.

Even in death, Chuck's money is not without controversy. After a million dollar bequest to a new San Francisco gay and lesbian center, causes outrage against many in the gay community who regard his public association with the center embarrassing and distasteful.

Chuck is the gay culture's Gatsby. With his vast wealth, he was as envied financially and as he was whispered about socially. *Seed Money* — the story of Chuck's rise and fall and legacy — will change the way we think about sex and cinema and assimilation.

While the resources Chuck provided to gay rights were his proudest act, it was his films that may have been his most significant contribution. Through extensive use of the films themselves, archival material and interviews with Chuck's friends, lovers, activists and fellow adult filmmakers, we take Chuck from San Francisco in the 1970s to Capitol Hill in the 1990s to tell the fascinating story of one of the most influential — if controversial — filmmakers in gay history.

## THE CREATIVE TEAM

### **Michael Stabile (Director)**

Michael Stabile is a writer and director who has written about the gay rights and sexuality for over ten years. His written work on sex and sexuality has appeared in the Huffington Post, The Daily Beast, Salon, Playboy, the New York Times and many others. His first short film, *Smut Capital of America* premiered at the 2011 Tribeca Film Festival, screened at the 2011 Frameline Festival and won Best Documentary Short at NewFest. *Seed Money* is his first feature.

### **Ben Leon (Director of Photography)**

Ben Leon is a videographer and editor who worked is currently a director and in-house media producer at the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts. He worked as the DP and Editor on *Smut Capital of America* (Best Documentary Short, NewFest 2011) and many other independent narrative and documentary projects.

### **Bryan Darling (Editor)**

Bryan Darling is an accomplished editor and director. Darling has worked as an editor with Travis Mathews (*Interior. Leather Bar, I Want Your Love*) and James Franco (*I Think You're Totally Wrong, Return to Black Planet*).

### **Jack Shamama (Producer)**

Jack Shamama is a journalist and filmmaker who produced Travis Mathews' groundbreaking gay narrative, *I Want Your Love*.