

AUTOMAT PICTURES PRESENTS

I am Divine

THE TRUE STORY OF THE MOST
BEAUTIFUL WOMAN IN THE WORLD

NOW A BIGGER THAN LIFE DOCUMENTARY

FROM THE DIRECTOR OF
SPINE TINGLER! THE WILLIAM CASTLE STORY
& WRANGLER: ANATOMY OF AN ICON



COMING SOON

**Automat Pictures, Inc.
Presents**

I am
Divine

Divine was my close friend and fearless muse. Who else could convincingly turn from teenage delinquent to mugger, prostitute, unwed mother, child abuser, fashion model, nightclub entertainer, murderess, and jailbird? All in the same movie? That's why I am giving my full blessing to a new documentary feature film, I AM DIVINE, to be directed by award-winning filmmaker Jeffrey Schwarz.

- John Waters

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TIP SHEET

Title	I Am Divine
Genre	Documentary
Running Time	85 Minutes
Format	HDCam
Aspect Ratio	16:9 (1.78)
Sound	Stereo Lt/Rt
Shooting Format	Panasonic AF100, Canon 5K Mark II
Editing System	Final Cut Pro
Copyright	2013
Producer / Director	Jeffrey Schwarz
Producers	Lotti Pharriss Knowles, Lance Robertson, Jon Glover
Editor	Phillip J. Bartell
Composer	Michael "The Millionaire" Cudahy
Co-Producers	Stan Duran, Paul Marcarelli
Associate Producers	John Alexander Foxworth, Josh McCullough, Michael O'Quinn, Taryn Teigue, Eric Weber
Logline	The story of Divine, aka Harris Glenn Milstead, and how he became John Waters' cinematic muse and an international drag icon.
Synopsis	<i>I Am Divine</i> is the story of Divine, aka Harris Glenn Milstead, from his humble beginnings as an overweight, teased Baltimore youth to internationally recognized drag superstar through his collaboration with filmmaker John Waters. Spitting in the face of the status quos of body image, gender identity, sexuality, and preconceived notions of beauty, Divine was the ultimate outsider turned underground royalty. With a completely committed in-your-face style, he blurred the line between performer and personality, and revolutionized pop culture. <i>I Am Divine</i> is a definitive biographical portrait that charts the legendary icon's rise to infamy and emotional complexities.
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I Am Divine

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SYNOPSIS

Young, chubby Harris Glenn Milstead liked musicals, was drawn to feminine pursuits, and was bullied. He was privately playing “dress-up games” in his mother’s clothes. By 1963, Glenn was brave enough to show up at a party with his then girlfriend dressed as an astonishingly passable Elizabeth Taylor, among the many glamorous stars he openly idolized.

After meeting a crowd of gay hipsters and freaks. Glenn started camping it up, shoplifting, writing bad checks, and smoking grass. Glenn also met the man who was about to change his life - John Waters. Like Glenn, Waters was obsessed with movies and they bonded over the films of Russ Meyer and Jayne Mansfield. They began to forge a new character, one which mocked the conventional “pretty” drag queens that aspired to look as real as possible. With Waters’ encouragement, this character started to emerge. She was outrageous, outlandish and obviously overweight. Glenn’s wicked, rebellious side matched the sensibilities of Waters, and John christened his new star “Divine” and they started making films together.

Eat Your Makeup (1967) featured Glenn as Jackie Kennedy in a reenactment of the Kennedy assassination. *Mondo Trasho* (1969) features Divine as a busty, blonde bombshell trashing around town. In *Multiple Maniacs* (1970), Divine plays a homicidal criminal who goes on a killing spree and is raped by a giant lobster. His persona became increasingly outrageous, as though Waters knew he was providing a way for Glenn to channel his anti-establishment rage.

When the San Francisco drag troupe The Cockettes got wind of Divine and John Waters, they flew them both out for a command performance. For the trip, make-up artist Van Smith shaved Divine’s head giving him plenty of space for those signature eyebrows that would become his iconic look. After being greeted with open arms by mobs of fans, Glenn made a clean break from his past and decided to live his life as Divine.

Pink Flamingos (1972), firmly launched Divine as an underground sensation. Because its plot concerns a competition for “the filthiest people alive,” it made sense that Divine would become the filthiest actress alive. John talked Divine into eating dog poop as the capper to all the mayhem, and the film became a midnight movie blockbuster. It made Divine famous, and as a publicity stunt succeeded beyond anyone’s wildest expectations.

Female Trouble (1974) followed, where Divine played the insane Dawn Davenport. It featured scenes ripped from Divine’s past, as Dawn leaves home after trashing her family’s Christmas tree. Divine’s shocking visage began to appear on punk rock t-shirts, and his influence began to be felt in that grungy world.

Despite the films’ success, Divine wanted legitimacy beyond his shit-eating grin. His theater career began in New York when he appeared in *Women Behind Bars* and *The Neon Woman*. Divine’s ability to command a stage proved that he could

have a career outside of John Waters movies. He was beginning to live the life of the international celebrity he always wanted to be, and joined the ranks of the beautiful people that partied at Studio 54.

Divine was looking for a way to supplement his income, and with the help of business manager Bernard Jay, found just the solution – becoming a disco diva. After recording a series of successful dance singles, Divine went on a whirlwind tour of discos around the world. Though filled with creative output, these years were extremely difficult in a personal way. Underground theater and disco didn't pay well, and his chronic overspending continued. This meant a seemingly endless stream of exhausting appearances that began to take a toll on his health.

For their next collaboration, John and Divine decided it was time for an image change in the form of Francine Fishpaw in *Polyester* (1981). Divine would star alongside his teenage idol, Tab Hunter. For Divine, this was a legitimizing experience, and he delivered a tour-de-force performance as a long-suffering housewife. Tab Hunter loved working with Divine so much that he sought him out to co-star with him in *Lust in the Dust* (1985), a parody of Spaghetti westerns. Divine, ever the trouper, learned how to ride a donkey and worked in sweltering desert heat. His co-stars remember a serious devotion to his craft, and a desire not to let anyone down.

By this point, the persona of Divine had taken a firm hold, but Divine desired legitimacy as a character actor, and to play male roles. Memories of eating shit on a street in Baltimore and his larger than life persona made this nearly unattainable. But years of increased interest in John Waters led to the film that put him on the mainstream pop culture map. *Hairspray* was a loving flashback to the early 60s that dealt with race relations and outsider triumph. The lead role of teenaged Tracy Turnblad was one that Divine coveted, but understood that it would have been a stretch for the audience to believe him in the role. Tracy was played by newcomer Ricki Lake, and the two formed a loving almost maternal friendship.

Rave reviews for *Hairspray* gave him the praise he always craved and it looked like he might realize his dream of becoming a working character actor - a star and a legitimate performer in one. Riding high on the reception of *Hairspray*, Divine was cast on the hit show, *Married With Children*. The night before the shoot, Divine went to his hotel room, studied his script, and died in his sleep of a massive heart attack. He joined the ranks of artists tragically taken from us at the peak of their career.

I Am Divine is a story about a man who fought against what society considers conventionally beautiful. It's about addiction. It's about fame. It's about the quest for the spotlight and artistic respect. Divine's complete commitment to being and expressing himself perhaps did more to promote notions of freedom and acceptance than he knew. He certainly paved the way for legions of misfits to come.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Before the video revolution of the 1980s, it was damn near impossible for a suburban kid like myself to see the kinds of movies I read about in Danny Peary's *Cult Movies* book. One of the titles Peary wrote about was *Pink Flamingos*, a movie so demented, depraved and disgusting I became obsessed with finding out everything I could about the people who made it.

Even before seeing any of his films, John Waters became my personal god, and I devoured his autobiographical books *Shock Value* and *Crackpot*. I was still a closeted teenager with no tangible connections to gay culture, so John's sensibility helped to lead me down a path of embracing my own difference. John's relationship with his leading lady Divine was also inspiring. Their friendship and artistic collaboration gave me hope that I might someday find like-minded people and be able to express my true nature like they did.

In 1988, I was in my first year of college and finally getting to see all of Divine and John Waters' movies. Each film was more jaw-dropping than the next and Divine's performances were fearless and courageous. Just after the release of *Hairspray*, John and Divine's breakthrough success, I opened the newspaper and saw that Divine had died. It seemed so cruel and unfair that after receiving the best reviews of his career and on the verge of mainstream acceptance, he wouldn't be able to enjoy the fruits of his labor.

Years later, I had the pleasure of collaborating with John Waters when he appeared in my film *Spine Tingler! The William Castle Story*. In 2007, I produced *You Can't Stop the Beat: The Long Journey of Hairspray* for the DVD of the 2007 remake, which featured a section about the original film. Getting to meet all of John's collaborators on *Hairspray* gave me the idea to mount a tribute to Divine that would deepen our appreciation for this iconic performer and ensure his legacy for a new generation. A documentary could honor Divine in just the way he always craved - as a serious artist and immortal star.

Like the John Waters protagonists he portrayed in numerous films, Divine was the ultimate outsider. Spitting in the face of the status quos of body image, gender identity, sexuality, and preconceived notions of beauty, Divine still succeeded in becoming an internationally recognized recording artist and screen icon. He gives courage to anyone who's ever been mocked, ridiculed, and ostracized, and gives us all hope that anything's possible.

His story is about fame. It's about the quest for the spotlight and artistic respect. And in the end, it's a story of a man estranged from his family and their beautiful reunion. It's also the ultimate "it gets better" story about a bullied fat kid who had the last laugh on his tormentors. With this regard for Divine's emotional complexities comes *I Am Divine*, which will celebrate the Most Beautiful Woman in the World's life and art.

NOTES ON THE FILM

Like the John Waters protagonists he portrayed in numerous films, Divine was the ultimate outsider. His success is one that triumphs against the harsh rigors of cultural norms and stereotypes. Spitting in the face of the status quos of body image, gender identity, sexuality, and preconceived notions of beauty, Divine succeeded in becoming an internationally recognized recording artist and character actor of stage and screen.

From his humble beginnings, Glenn went from the often-mocked, schoolyard fat kid to underdog royalty, standing up for millions of gay men and women, female impersonators, and punk rockers, among countless other socially ostracized people. With a completely committed in-your-face style, he blurred the line between performer and personality and revolutionized pop culture.

Unsurprisingly, behind the glitter this torchbearer battled demons throughout his life - addiction, compulsions, and familial estrangement. To follow Divine's path is to strut in high heels down a zigzag hall of gilded mirrors reflecting images of gender, performance, fame, and identity. Furthermore, like many performers, he struggled to maintain the outlandish persona he created, and often battled the character of Divine in his strive for legitimacy as an actor.

With this regard for Divine's emotional complexities, and recognition of the enormous influence of his life and work, comes *I Am Divine*. This definitive biographical portrait of Harris Glenn Milstead, directed by award winning filmmaker Jeffrey Schwarz (HBO Documentary Films' *Vito*, *Wrangler: Anatomy of an Icon*, *Spine Tingler! The William Castle Story*), will span the entirety of his life - from his misfit youth in Baltimore, his rise to infamy, to long after his demise, where he still continues to influence performers and artists today. In the end, *I Am Divine* honors Harris Glenn Milstead in just the way he always craved - as a serious artist and immortal star.

His story is also told through dozens of new interviews with family, friends, colleagues, and devotees who ruminate and recollect. Subjects include John Waters, mother Frances Milstead (who provided her final interview just months before she passed away), co-stars Ricki Lake, Mink Stole, Tab Hunter and Susan Lowe, personal assistant Jay Bennett, friends Greg Gorman, Pat Moran, Vincent Peranio, surviving members of the Cockettes, as well as Holly Woodlawn, Michael Musto, Bruce Vilanch, and many more.

THE CREATIVE TEAM

JEFFREY SCHWARZ - Producer / Director



Jeffrey Schwarz is a leading producer of studio EPKs (electronic press kit), Blu-ray and DVD content, original television programming, and documentary feature films. He has produced content for major studio releases for directors such as Martin Scorsese, David Lynch, Jonathan Demme, Ron Howard, Sam Mendes, Wes Craven, Rob Reiner, Joe Dante, Barry Sonnenfeld, Adam Shankman, Paul Verhoeven, John Carpenter, Chris Columbus, Sidney Lumet, and the Coen Brothers. His latest documentary feature is HBO Documentary Films' *Vito*, about the beloved gay activist and author of *The Celluloid Closet*. It premiered at the 2011 New York Film Festival, and made its television debut on HBO in July, 2012. His first feature documentary was *Spine Tingler!*

The William Castle Story, about the legendary Hollywood showman. It won the 2007 AFI Fest Documentary Audience Award among many other festival honors, was released in 2009 by Sony Pictures Home Entertainment, and is currently airing on Turner Classic Movies. It was followed by *Wrangler: Anatomy of an Icon* (2008), the award-winning portrait of adult film star Jack Wrangler. *Wrangler* is distributed by TLA Releasing and plays regularly on the LOGO network. He is currently in production *Tab Hunter Confidential*, about the 1950s screen heartthrob.

LANCE ROBERTSON - Producer



Lance Robertson is a musician/performer and DJ that hails from St. Louis, MO. He is also the host of the kids show "Yo Gabba Gabba!" that airs on Nick Jr. A lifelong music lover, Lance took the plunge into live performing when he became a member of the technodelic band My Other Self. After he moved to Los Angeles, he once again became involved with live music as part of the electronic duo The Ray Makers. As great as his love of music, Lance is equally passionate about film - in particular the films of John Waters and his main muse, Divine. Lance continues his "Yo Gabba Gabba!" nationwide road tour through early 2013, after which he plans to bring more projects to the screen.



LOTTI PHARRISS KNOWLES - Producer

Lotti Pharriss Knowles is a writer, producer and partner in Weirdsmobile Productions, Inc. She is producer of the short films *Shadow.net*, (Winner, Best Thriller - Dragon*Con Independent Short Film Festival); and *Weak Species*, based on the writings of cult author Dennis Cooper (Winner, Best Short - FilmOut San Diego and Honolulu Rainbow Film Festival). Lotti also produced the world premiere run of her play *Because They Have No Words*, co-written with Tim Maddock about his experiences as a volunteer in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina. The play was nominated for two 2007 LA Stage Alliance Ovation Awards for Best Ensemble and World Premiere Play. A native of the San Francisco Bay Area, Lotti holds a BA in Performance

Studies from Northwestern and an MA in Theatre from University of Illinois at Chicago.

JON GLOVER - Producer



Jon Glover has worked on television and film documentaries for Lucasfilm, Ltd., 20th Century Fox, HBO, Nickelodeon, Discovery Channel, A&E, Travel Channel and National Geographic Channel. In addition to researching for the Emmy-winning series Biography for A&E he has produced and researched on such notable documentaries as *Empire of Dreams: The Story of the Star Wars Trilogy*, *I.O.U.S.A.*, *Square Roots: The Story of SpongeBob SquarePants* and *Where I Stand: The Story of Hank Greenspun*. Jon has been involved in several projects for Automat Pictures and was an associate producer on the HBO documentary *Vito*.

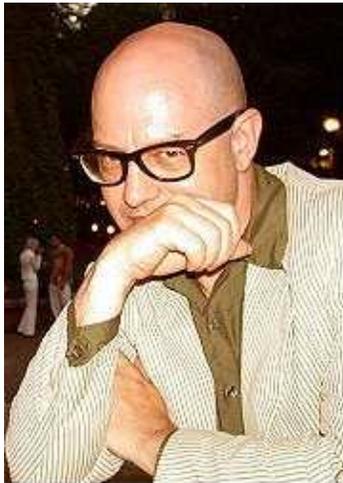
PHILLIP J. BARTELL - Editor



Editor Phillip J. Bartell has worked with a number of established directors, serving as additional editor on Curtis Hanson's *In Her Shoes*, Bill Paxton's *The Greatest Game Ever Played*, and the Russo Brothers' (of *Arrested Development*) Steven Soderbergh/George Clooney-produced *Welcome to Collinwood*. He edited the 2010 Sundance World Audience Award winning drama *Undertow* (Contracorriente), and has also edited Robert Cary's *Ira & Abby* and *Save Me*, Q. Allan Brocka's *Boy Culture*, Patrik Ian Polk's TV series *Noah's Arc*, *A Good Funeral*, directed by David Moreton, 2008's *Noah's Arc: Jumping the Broom*, Jason Bushman's *Hollywood, je t'aime*, and recent Tribeca Film Festival online audience award winner, *Spork*. Bartell has worked in the editorial

departments on films by Spike Jonze, Gus Van Sant, Robert Altman, Sean Penn, Allison Anders, Diane Keaton, Vadim Perelman, and Adam Shankman. He has also directed a feature, *Eating Out 2*, and two short films, *Crush* and *L.T.R.*, which were featured in the theatrically released shorts collections *Boys to Men* and *Boys Life 4*.

MICHAEL "THE MILLIONAIRE" CUDAHY - Composer



Michael Cudahy (better known by his nom-de-showbiz, “The Millionaire”) hails from the frozen wastes of New England. He made his mark as the leader of the avatars of modern mood music, Combustible Edison. Cudahy’s tenure with CE included an unrelenting schedule of national and international touring (including the opening slot for Bryan Ferry’s 1995 tour), three CDs with Seattle’s legendary Sub Pop label and a string of TV and radio appearances. CE’s music has appeared in *Sex and the City*, Terry Gilliam’s *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* and Mercedes-Benz television ads. CE composed and performed the original score for Quentin Tarantino’s anthology comedy *Four Rooms*. The Millionaire makes his home in LA, and has served as musical director for the Velvet Hammer Burlesque; leading a 13-piece Bollywood orchestra; recording as one half of the electronic duo SuperCasanova; and performing DJ duties at LuxuriaMusic.com, The Edison lounge and The Standard hotel. His recent work includes the original scores for *I Am Divine* director Jeffrey Schwarz’s documentaries *Spine Tingler! The William Castle Story* and *Wrangler: Anatomy Of An Icon* and the Women-In-Prison exploitation epic, *Sugar Boxx*. Cudahy is an alumnus of the Berklee College of Music.

INTERVIEWEES

JOHN WATERS
RICKI LAKE
TAB HUNTER
MICHAEL MUSTO
MINK STOLE
HOLLY WOODLAWN
BRUCE VILANCH
GREG GORMAN
FRANCES MILSTEAD
SUE LOWE
PAT MORAN
MARY VIVIAN PEARCE
VINCENT PERANIO
JACKIE BEAT
DENNIS DERMODY
JOHN EPPERSON aka LYPSINKA
JOSHUA GRANNELL aka PEACHES CHRIST
And many more!