CHERRY GROVE STORIES

Fire Island’s best kept secrets
A film by Michael Fisher

cherrygrovestories.com

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CHERRY GROVE STORIES CREDITS

Executive Producer
Michael Fisher

Original Score
Barb Morrison

Camera Work
Robert Jakubik
Ron Noel
Michael Fisher

Post Supervisor
Melissa Huffsmith-Roth

Sound Editing and Mixing
Jonathan Jetter
for Right Angle Productions

Film Transcoding
Rafik Video

Producer
Gary Sacks

Director
Michael Fisher

Script
Scott Lawrie

Editor
George Lyter

Color Grade
Irving Harvey

Additional Music
The Blizzard Twins

Associate Producer
George Lyter
Gary Sacks

Cherry Grove Stories is 74 minutes; distribution rights are being handled by The Film Collaborative (thefilmcollaborative.org).
**CHERRY GROVE STORIES CHRONICLES THE FIRE ISLAND TOWN THAT BECAME “A CELEBRATION IN THE FACE OF OPPRESSION”**

A New Documentary Traces the Evolution of the “Gay Shangri-La”

**Synopsis**

In an era when it was illegal for two men to hold hands in public, the pristine beachfront hamlet of Cherry Grove on Fire Island, N.Y., was a safe haven for gays who were often targeted for arrest and prosecution. Through interviews with residents and new and archival footage, Michael Fisher’s oral history of the enclave uncovers long-hidden secrets and exposes little known stories that are more relevant than ever today.

Fisher, who has been going to Cherry Grove for 32 years, was inspired to make the film by long-time resident Michael Delisio. “Michael was one of the first men to go to Cherry Grove in the 1950s,” Fisher says. “He is a great storyteller, and his tales of the early days of Cherry Grove inspired me to capture the many anecdotes about the community before all the old timers are gone.”

In *Cherry Grove Stories*, residents recount the history of the hamlet, starting in the 1940s when gay men first began congregating in a place that offered a rare refuge from the pervasive homophobia of the time. They tell many funny, even outrageous tales: the first drag parties, when attendees had to hide their dresses and heels under the floorboards of their hosts’ house for fear of being arrested for wearing women’s clothes; escapades in the infamous Meat Rack, and how some escaped police raids by hiding in the bay; and the first drag flotilla on the Fourth of July in 1976, when drag queens “invaded” the nearby Pines.

Fisher believes the current anti-LGBT climate makes *Cherry Grove Stories* more important than ever. “Men were still being arrested in the Meat Rack in the 1970s, which is not that long ago, and there has been heightened harassment there today,” he points out.

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**Director's Bio**

Designer and creative director Michael Fisher has designed retail spaces for Apple, JCPenney, Coach and Club Monaco. A first-time filmmaker, he has a B.F.A. in painting from Temple University and has always been interested in the storytelling powers of film. He began his career in window display before segueing into store design and visual merchandising. The chief creative officer of the marketing company, MYKNYC, Fisher has been going to Cherry Grove since 1985, which sparked his interest in the community and its history. He and his husband own a house in the hamlet.

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All photos courtesy of Cherry Grove Archives Collection.
“Cherry Grove was the best kept secret in the gay world for decades and decades.”

“I arrived at the dock I looked down and I saw all these beautiful men in Speedos and high heels and I thought I’d gone to heaven.”

“There was a feeling that this was our place.”

Interviewees

Richard (Dicken) Acraman
Anthony Ardilio
John H. Behan
Travis Behnke
Jay Bennett
George Cabell
Angelo Cavallo
Dominic DeSantis
Charles DelOrfano
Jack Dowling
Susan Freedner

Nick Fiore
Thom Hansen aka Panzi
Audrey Hartmann
Robert L. Hartwig
Donald J. Hester
Gabrielle Horowitz-Prisco
Paul Jablonski
Vito LaSorella Jr
Patrick Lehman
Robert Levine
David H. Littleton
Richard Lorio

John Marino aka Johnny Pool
Michael J McPherson
Adrian Milton
Shirley Munnell
Louis Nelson
George O’Donnell
Michael Pinto
Juan F. Punchin
Joyce Rodgers
Robert Scherffius
Logan Slaughter

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