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A ZEITGEIST FILMS RELEASE in association with KINO LORBER

STUDIO 54

SYNOPSIS

For 33 months, from 1978 to 1980, the nightclub Studio 54 was *the* place to be seen in Manhattan. A haven of hedonism, tolerance, glitz and glamour, Studio was very hard to gain entrance to and impossible to ignore, with news of who was there filling the gossip columns daily. Steve Rubell and Ian Schrager, two college friends from Brooklyn, succeeded in creating the ultimate escapist fantasy in the heart of the theater district. Rubell was the outgoing *bon vivant* who wanted to be everybody's friend and was photographed with every celebrity *du jour* who entered the club and Schrager was the behind-the-scenes creative mastermind who shunned the limelight. Studio 54 was an instant success and a cash cow, but the drug-and-sex-fueled dream soon imploded in financial scandal and the club's demise. With unprecedented access to Schrager, who tells the whole unvarnished story for the first time, and a treasure-trove of rare footage, director Matt Tyrnauer (*Valentino: The Last Emperor; Scotty and the Secret History of Hollywood*) constructs a vivid, glorious portrait of a disco-era phenomenon, and tells the story of two friends who stuck together through an incredible series of highs and lows.

MATT TYRNAUER, DIRECTOR STATEMENT

From the inception of this film, I saw *Studio 54* as a way to tell the story of a particular, and now very distant-seeming, period of the later part of the 20th century—the time that began with the sexual revolution touched off by the Pill in early 1960s, and culminating with the tragedy of the HIV-AIDS crisis, starting in the early 1980s.

The 33 months which comprise the prime of Studio 54's life were the last, volcanic burst of exuberance of this time of unique freedom--that freedom having been vanquished with the advent of HIV-AIDS. For this reason, as well as the milieu of New York City in the mid-1970s, I made up an imaginary genre, to guide us in making the film: Disco Noir.

I see Studio 54 as the most powerful symbol of what we now can perceive, with hindsight, as a lost world—a modern paradise lost.

Studio 54 was not just a nightclub, it became an international phenomenon, a byword for its era. Its most celebrated distinguishing characteristics—celebrities, sex, drugs, disco—have, over the years, become smoke screens, obscuring the much more significant story of its origins, the reasons for its overwhelming success, and its ultimate collapse.

This film seeks to set the record straight, focusing on the human story that is often distinct from mythic tales that have grown up around a once-sacred nightspot occupying an abandoned theater on West 54th Street. Among my goals was to give context, and a voice, to the surviving people who built Studio. The ambitious, ingenious team who created the place—Ian Schrager and Steve Rubell—invented a veritable dream factory that made the fantasies of the legions who clamored to get in come true. Studio—as much living theater as discotheque--changed the social structure and culture of New York City, and had a strong ripple effect on societies worldwide.

Studio's story, though it played out in the tabloids and global press, is a very human one, rooted in the era of New York City's lowest moment, when, on the brink of financial collapse, the old ways of New York society decisively shifted, and a door was suddenly open to anyone with enough gumption to rise straight to the top of the heap. Schrager and Rubell are poster children for this marvelous, wild and woolly time. There were almost no rules in that anarchic, analogue and more innocent era--or so it seemed in comparison to today--and "the boys from Studio," in effect, became emperors in a decadent, decaying megalopolis.

Schrager and Rubell's fall from grace, and the demise of the greatest nightclub (and one of the greatest social experiments) of all time, is what makes their story—a platonic love saga—and the story of Studio, operatic. Schrager and Rubell rose as their city was collapsing, and its most glittering, potent and inspired denizens clung to Studio as their communal safe place. They brought a new kind of magic to the city, which ended up defining an era.

As Schrager and Rubell's empire crumbled, New York City began to rise from the ashes. The duo had to start all over again, and find new success, at the dawn of a new age (still our current one), where a place like Studio 54 can never exist again.

BIOS

MATT TYRNAUER, DIRECTOR

Matt Tyrnauer is a writer, director, producer, and award-winning journalist whose recent films include *Valentino: The Last Emperor*, which premiered at the Venice Film Festival and was short-listed for an Academy Award for best documentary feature; *Scotty and the Secret History of Hollywood*, about the secret history of sex in Hollywood in the pre-Stonewall era; *Citizen Jane: Battle for the City*, which premiered at the 2016 Toronto International Film Festival; and *Jean Nouvel: Reflections*, which premiered at the 2016 New York Film Festival.

Tyrnauer's upcoming projects include the dramatic adaptation of his eponymous Vanity Fair article "Once Upon a Time in Beverly Hills"; *Don't Mess with Roy Cohn*, about the Svengali behind Joseph McCarthy and Donald Trump, and the 10-part documentary series *Home* for Apple.

Tyrnauer is also an award-winning journalist, who has written for *Vanity Fair*, where he has been editor-at-large, special correspondent and is now a contributing editor. His work has also appeared in other publications including *GQ*, *The New York Times*, *Architectural Digest*, *L'Uomo Vogue*, and *Numero*.

Tyrnauer is a native of Los Angeles.

COREY REESER, PRODUCER

Corey Reeser is a producer and director whose recent film projects include *Scotty and the Secret History of Hollywood*, about the secret history of sex in Hollywood in the pre-Stonewall era; *Citizen Jane: Battle for the City*, which premiered at the 2016 Toronto International Film Festival and *Jean Nouvel: Reflections*, which premiered at the 2016 New York Film Festival.

His upcoming projects include *Don't Mess with Roy Cohn*, about the Svengali behind Joseph McCarthy and Donald Trump, the dramatic adaptation of Matt Tyrnauer's Vanity Fair article "Once Upon a Time in Beverly Hills," and *Home*, a 10-part documentary series for Apple.

Reeser also has a long history of partnering with premiere brands, entertainment studios, and filmmakers to provide innovative branded content and marketing campaigns, including BMW, Apple, Under Armour, Microsoft, Universal Studios, Walt Disney Studios, Paramount Pictures, and Warner Bros.

JOHN BATTSEK – PRODUCER / MD - PASSION PICTURES

Battsek conceived Academy Award-winning *One Day in September*, and has since been responsible for over thirty feature documentaries including BAFTA Outstanding Debut Winner *The Imposter*, and Academy Award and BAFTA winning *Searching For Sugar Man*.

Battsek has been nominated three times for a PGA Award and was the recipient of 2013 prestigious Grierson Trustees Award for Outstanding Contribution to Documentary.

ANDREA LEWIS – EDITOR

Andrea Lewis is a Los Angeles based documentary film editor and producer whose recent work includes the short film *Jean Nouvel: Reflections* (New York Film Festival, Chicago International Film Festival, 2016), and the documentary *Citizen Jane: Battle for the City* (Toronto International Film Festival, DOCNYC, 2016).

She is currently editing and producing a documentary about Roy Cohn.

TOM HURWITZ, ASC – CINEMATOGRAPHER

Tom Hurwitz is one of America's most honored documentary cinematographers. Winner of two Emmy Awards, the Sundance and Jerusalem Film Festival Awards for Best Cinematography, Hurwitz has photographed films that have won 4 academy awards and several more nominations. His features and television programs have won literally dozens of awards, Emmy, Dupont, Peabody, Directors Guild and film festival awards for Best Documentary, over the last 25 years.

Award-winning films and programs that he has photographed include: *Valentino: The Last Emperor*, *Harlan County USA*, *Wild Man Blues*, *My Generation*, *Down and Out in America*, *Faith and Doubt at Ground Zero*, *I Have a Dream*, *Killing in the Name* and *Questioning Faith*. In addition, films that he has directed have won the Cine Golden Eagle (for *Bombs will Make the Rainbow Break*) and have been shown in festivals around the world. He is also a founding member of the faculty of The MFA Program in the Social Documentary at New York's School of Visual Arts.

STUDIO 54

A&E Indie Films Presents
An Altimeter Films and Passion Pictures Production

Produced and Directed by Matt Tyrnauer

Produced by John Battsek, p.g.a.
Produced by Corey Reeser, p.g.a.

Executive Producer
Molly Thompson

Executive Producers
Robert Sharenow
Elaine Frontain Bryant

Executive Producers
Andrew Ruhemann

Editor/Co-Producer Andrea Lewis

Co-Editors
Morgan Hanner
Jason Hardwick

Co-Producers
Noreen O'Toole
Troy Benjamin
Graham High

Associate Producer
Alison Schnapp

Director of Photography Tom Hurwitz, ASC

Music Supervisor Liz Gallacher

Original Score by Lorne Balfe

USA - 2018 - 98 mins - Color - DCP and Blu-ray

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