

San Francisco, April 19, 2019

THANKS TO HANK

World Premiere at the San Francisco LGBTQ Film Festival.

Producer, director, editor, and writer
BOB OSTERTAG

Animator
JEREMY ROURKE

Music
THE KRONOS QUARTET AND THE TIN HAT TRIO

Thanks to Hank is the story of a liberation movement, a plague, an unsung hero, and a gay activism that puts poor people first.

In San Francisco in the 1970s, Hank Wilson was the Johnny Appleseed of gay liberation. Everywhere he went, new organizations sprouted and thrived. Many are still with us. The gay film festival he hosted in 1977, with home movies and bedsheets push-pinned to the wall, is now The San Francisco LGBT Film Festival, with annual attendance over 60,000. The AIDS Candlelight Vigil he spearheaded in 1983 is now the International AIDS Candlelight Memorial, organized by 1,200 community organization in 150 countries. And much more, including the first gay teachers association in the US, the first community self-defense against gay bashing, the first research and advocacy concerning gay youth suicide, the first AIDS activist organization in San Francisco, and even San Francisco's first gay cabaret, where Whoopi Goldberg and Lea DeLaria got their start.

Amazingly, Hank did all that in his spare time. For two decades, his main work was managing a 150-room SRO hotel in San Francisco's most impoverished neighborhood an unfunded, informal, queer-staffed refuge and hospice for poor people dying of AIDS. Many hundreds died in Hank's hotel.

Hank lived as a sort of gay monk. He slept on the floor of a dingy roach-infested studio apartment and invited homeless people to sleep in his car. After his death in 2008, mourners marched down Castro Street chanting "Thanks to Hank."

Hank avoided the camera, so animation takes the place of the archival footage that would be available for most subjects of his stature. The hand-made animation of **Jeremy Rourke** fits beautifully with the story of this extremely modest man who slept devoted his life to the needs of those with the least. There is not a single archival image that is presented as a digital "still." Rather, all the photographs have been printed on paper and folded, cut, and manipulated by hand. We know of no other film that uses animation in this manner, and it is what pushes the film out of the realm of the ordinary documentary and into something more like art.

The music is another major part of the film, and is played by the internationally celebrated **Kronos Quartet** and the **Tin Hat Trio**.

The Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence open and close the film performing a ritual declaring Hank the Patron Saint of Queer Underdogs, Compassionate Action, Housing Justice, and Plague Survivors.

Prominent interviewees include Tom Ammiano, former President of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors and former California State Assemblyperson; and Lea DeLaria, star of Netflix' *Orange is the New Black*, who got her start at Hank's cabaret.

This film will be of interest to queer people everywhere, and to all who are interested in social justice. The **world premiere will be on June 27, 2019, at the San Francisco LGBTQ Film Festival**, the largest queer film festival.

Bob Ostertag (producer, director, writer, editor) is long-time activist in San Francisco's gay community and intimate friend of Hank Wilson. He has published more than twenty CDs of music, two DVDs, and five books. His writings on contemporary politics have been published on every continent and in many languages. Electronic instruments of his own design are at the cutting edge of both music and video performance technology. He has performed at music, film, and multi-media festivals around the globe. His radically diverse collaborators include the Kronos Quartet, postmodernist John Zorn, heavy metal star Mike Patton, transgender cabaret star Justin Vivian Bond, British guitar innovator Fred Frith, Quebecois film maker Pierre Hébert, EDM star R.Rose, and many others. He is rumored to have connections to the shadowy media guerrilla group The Yes Men. *Thanks to Hank* is his first feature film.

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