

TRANS HEAVEN, PENNSYLVANIA

A FILM BY HANSEN BURSIC



PUBLICITY CONTACT

HANSEN BURSIC FILM

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LOGLINE

In the early 2010s, hundreds of Transgender women took over a small American town each year for a legendary weekend-long party – one that changed their lives and the town forever.

SYNOPSIS

In the 1970s and 1980s, the small Pennsylvania town of New Hope was among a few safe havens outside of major cities for gay men to find community. Over 30 years later, the town's legacy remained, but now for a different community: transgender women.

Trans Heaven, Pennsylvania explores the untold story of legendary, weekend-long parties that saw hundreds of transgender women and self-identified crossdressers take over the town, traveling from all over the country to meet other people like them. Through both interviews and stunning animation sequences that utilize never-before-seen archival photography, audiences not only get a glimpse into the heyday of these events in the early 2010s but also the iconic gay bar The Raven which became the unlikely cornerstone of these weekends.



RUN TIME

12 MIN

GENRE

DOCUMENTARY

COUNTRY

USA

YEAR

2024

ASPECT RATIO

16:9



A CREATIVE HOPE INITIATIVE PROJECT

The Creative Hope Initiative, created by independent development and production studio TRAVERSE32 in conjunction with Outfest, is an incubator program that provides mentorship and funding for five emerging LGBTQ+ documentary filmmakers, including *Trans Heaven* director Hansen Bursic. The end product was five short documentaries highlighting local queer stories in the legendary queer enclave of New Hope, Pennsylvania.

TRAVERSE³²

OUTFESTTM



BEN PROUDFOOT
HE/HIM

Through the Creative Hope Initiative, Bursic was paired with Academy Award-winning documentary filmmaker Ben Proudfoot who helped guide the film team through the making of *Trans Heaven*. A 2020 Forbes 30 Under 30 entrepreneur, Proudfoot is the founder and creative force behind Breakwater Studios. He is the director behind both *The Queen of Basketball* and *The Last Repair Shop*, both of which won an Oscar for Best Short Documentary.



ANIMATION

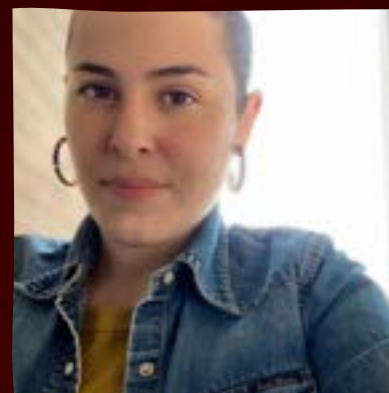


The playful animation style of *Trans Heaven* was inspired by the vast archive of hundreds of photos gifted to us by photographers from over 10 years of Raven events. Under the leadership of animation director Pamela Chavez, our animation team was tasked with bringing new life to the fun and iconic looks of women throughout the decade. These photos, along with images from the New Hope Celebrates Archives of the Raven Bar and its ads in the '70s and '80s, made our film's distinct animation style come to life.

PAMELA CHAVEZ

ANIMATION DIRECTOR, ANIMATOR &
ILLUSTRATOR | SHE/HER

Pamela Chavez is a Costa Rican-American animation writer and director. Her animations can be seen in award-winning films like Emily Cohen's *Fruits of Labor* (PBS) and Adelina Anthony's *La Serenata* (HBO). Her 2019 short film *Caracol Cruzando*, funded in part through the New Media Grant from Latino Public Broadcasting, screened at the PBS Online Film Festival, Ottawa International Animation Film Festival, Outfest, and at the acclaimed 92nd Street Y in New York City, among others.



DIRECTOR & STARS



HANSEN BURSIC

DIRECTOR | HE/HIM

Hansen Bursic is an award-winning filmmaker, journalist, and programmer living and working between his hometown of Pittsburgh, PA and Los Angeles, CA. Bursic's debut documentary *The Toothmans*, which told the story of a trans teenager and her family living in rural Pennsylvania, screened internationally at festivals including Frameline and won several awards, including a Best Documentary Award from the Lancaster International Short Film Festival. Along with being a 2023 Creative Hope Initiative Fellow, Bursic was recently named a DOC NYC Documentary New Leader and one of the Ford Foundation-backed Rockwood Documentary Leadership fellows.



JENNIFER LYDON

FILM PARTICIPANT | SHE/HER

Jennifer Lydon is the force behind the parties featured in the documentary. Seeing a lack of spaces for Transwomen like herself to find community and safely enjoy themselves, Lydon founded the now legendary Raven events. Now retired from party planning, she is currently living in suburban Philadelphia near her eight grandkids and is an accounts manager at Metro Media, which runs the #1 free daily newspaper in the US.



KARLEIGH WEBB

FILM PARTICIPANT | SHE/HER

Karleigh Webb owes a lot to the Raven events as they were a core reason she decided to come out publically as Transgender. She is an Emmy Award-winning, GLAAD Award-nominated sports journalist and broadcaster, currently contributing to *Outsports*. When not chasing a story, Webb is a crisis operator for Trans Lifeline, North America's only 24-hour, 7-days-a-week hotline dedicated to the needs of transgender people. Webb is also a lifelong athlete, budding duathlete-triathlete, runner, softball player, and member of Connecticut-based Reapers Women's Football.

PRODUCERS



SAMANTHA K. TAN

SHE/HER

Samantha K. Tan is a Los Angeles-based producer and writer. She is best known for co-producing *Tree's Blood* in partnership with Nickelodeon and Paramount, starring Ayo Edebiri and Rose Byrne, along with producing Megan Lee's *En Pointe* and AJ Starzak's award-winning short *My Monster and I*. Her dramedy series, *Ambitious*, was a 2022 Sundance and The Asian American Foundation Fellowship & Scholarship recipient. She also worked as a Line Producer's Assistant on Max's *The Flight Attendant* and *The Sex Lives of College Girls*.

NIC CORY

HE/HIM

Nic Cory is a director, producer, and VP of Development at Traverse32. Most recently, he developed Cecilia Gentili's *Red Ink* with Killer Films, produced *Triple Threat* off-Broadway, and served as Associate Producer on Billy Porter's film directorial debut for MGM. At the beginning of the pandemic, he directed Michael Urie in a livestream benefit of *Buyer & Cellar*, which raised over \$300,000 for BC/EFA's Covid-19 Emergency Relief Fund. His first film, *The Singing Telegram*, debuted at Cinefest in 2023.



DANIEL BROOKS

HE/HIM

A trained and licensed psychoanalyst by career profession, Brooks has also spent his life in storytelling by way of published magazine and newspaper writing, coupled with a love for theater. His ties to the New Hope community date from the mid-1990s. In 2003 he founded an LGBTQ+ organization that evolved into the award-winning New Hope Celebrates, a nonprofit that programs events and activities for the overall community year-round, and New Hope Celebrates History, an interactive online archive documenting five decades of LGBTQ+ life in the diverse and inclusive Pennsylvania small town.



PRINCIPLE CREW



SOWJENYA KUDVA

EDITOR | THEY/THEM



Sowjanya Kudva has worked as a filmmaker for over 20 years, specializing in producing and editing. In their current role as an assistant professor of Cinema & Television Arts at Elon University, Kudva focuses their scholarship on production studies, multimodal media literacy, and the political economy of communications. Their most recent narrative short film, *(in)convenience* (Alexandra Greenspan, 2023), is currently on the festival circuit, and, as of Feb 2024, it has screened at 20 festivals and won 4 awards.

MAD BISHOP

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY | HE/HIM

Mad Bishop is a queer and trans filmmaker working out of Philadelphia and NYC. He was awarded his MFA in Film from Temple University, where he presented work at Farocki Now — A Temporary Academy in Berlin, Germany. Most recently he served as co-DP for Oscar-nominated filmmaker Sami Khan's *Angel Dose*. Their work has been broadcast on PBS's WHYY, and screened at festivals including CAAMFest, Mountainfilm, and Amsterdam Lift-off. His photography work was recently commissioned by *Mergoat Magazine*, for their Transecologies Issue.



ARIEL LOH

COMPOSER | THEY/THEM

Ariel Loh is a trans/queer Asian American music producer, mixer, and composer based in Los Angeles. Their work has made appearances on Billboard, Rolling Stone, BBC, NPR, Vice, MTV, as well as major streaming services. As a producer, Ariel's productions have amassed over 500 million streams on Spotify and landed them a RIAA gold certification. As a film composer, they have scored the gamut from horror films to children's television. Ariel is also an avid organizer in the queer music community in LA in NY and also makes ambient music under the moniker Window Seat.



STILLS



ADDITIONAL CREDITS

ASSOCIATE PRODUCERS

Madelyn Van Trieste
Luke Bonzani

ANIMATOR

Dustin Garcia

ARCHIVAL PRODUCERS

Shanti Avirgan
Madelyn Van Trieste

JENNIFER STAND-IN ACTRESS

Gianna Marino

SOUND MIXER

Oliver Snook

SOUND RECORDIST

Stephano Saldutti

CELLIST

Distant Cowboy

COLOR BY

Reason Studio

COLORIST

Roy Sun

CAMERA OPERATOR & GAFFER

Easton Carter Angle

ADDITIONAL CINEMATOGRAPHY BY

Bob Krist | Helen Stern | Sara Scully

PRODUCTION ASSISTANTS

Allison Kirchoff | Colleen Mulville
Isabella Ngov | Lydia Perry

ADDITIONAL MATERIALS PROVIDED BY

Bob Krist | Bruno Cesarone | Charles Bertrand | Chaise Cortes De Vargas | D.J. Taffy Davis | Friday Annes Keyes | Janelle Crossley | Jennifer Lydon | Jenny Cory | Karleigh Webb | Lilly Belle Croix | New Hope Celebrates Archives | Philip Nicolosi | Robert Ebert | Sandra Empanada | Sandy Martin | Sara Scully | Sharon Stones

ADDITIONAL CREDITS

APPEARANCES BY

Bobbie Lembo | Chaise Cortes De Vargas | Christine Zuba | D.J. Taffy Davis | Friday Annes Keyes | Jennifer Lydon | Jenny Cory | Kaelin Devlin | Karleigh Webb | Lilly Belle Croix | Lisa Empanada | Loretta Falconer | Sandra Empanada | Sandy Martin | Sharon Stones

PRODUCTION EXECUTIVES FOR NEW HOPE CELEBRATES

Jobert Abueva | Bucks County Genealogical Society | Mike Burns & Richie Cordover | Frank DeLuca | Duck Soup | Drew Hailey & Company | Hailey Patel | MCL Healthy Solutions | Christine Jennings | David Newhart | Judith Norris | Jennifer Norris | Hannah Hope Shipley | Michelle Smith & Claire Shaw | Bob Szwajkos

THE PRODUCERS WISH TO THANK

The town of New Hope, PA | Martine McDonald | Kieran Medina | IPG/Mediabrands | Jeff Matloff | Heather Stanislaus | Nicole Wool | Jason Stermer | New Hope Celebrates | Bob Krist | Robert Ebert | Philip Nicolosi | Stephen Stahl | Steve Lau | Bruno Cesarone | Chris Messina | The Herald Foundation | Herald Publishing Co. | The Raven Cabaret Singers | River Towns Magazine | Russell Eiffert | Tim McMurtry, for capturing and preserving the memory of Mother Cavellucci | The residents and "characters" of New Hope | Outfest

THE DIRECTOR WISHES TO ADDITIONALLY THANK

Anne Thow | Bari Buiso | Ben Proudfoot | The Cub Room | Dashiel Johnson | Eve & Mark Bursic | Isabelle Nicole Herman | Janelle Crossley | Jenny Cory | Jess Gaurin | Jonah Varquez | Joy Davenport | Karen Kendra Holmes | Kase Peña | Kieran Medina | Kristal Sotomayor | Martine McDonald | Natalie Jasmine Harris | New Hope Inn and Suites | Pebbles McWhorter | Queer Filmworkers United | Red Star Rentals | Sophia Davis | Staci Seams | Victoria Datta | 4 The Love of Thingz

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