

“MIRACLE ON 42ND STREET”

A documentary about Manhattan Plaza

LOG LINE

The story of Manhattan Plaza - a housing complex in New York City for people in the performing arts, and how it led to the revitalization of midtown Manhattan. *Miracle on 42nd Street* is the first film to focus on the story of affordable housing for artists.

SYNOPSIS

Miracle on 42nd Street is a one-hour documentary about the untold history and impact of the Manhattan Plaza apartment complex in New York City. Starting with the background of the blighted Hell's Kitchen neighborhood and the building's initial commercial failure in the mid-1970s, the story recounts how – in a moment of bold inspiration or maybe desperation - the buildings were “re-purposed” as subsidized housing for people who worked in the performing arts, becoming one of the first intentional, government supported, affordable housing for artist residences.

The social experiment was a resounding success in the lives of the tenants, and it led the way in the transformation of the midtown neighborhood, the Broadway theater district and local economy. The film makes a compelling case for the economic value of the arts and artists in America. The success of Manhattan Plaza has become a role model for similar experiments, which the film features, around the country, in places like Ajo, Arizona, Providence, Rhode Island and Rahway, New Jersey.

Narrated by acclaimed actor/writer Chazz Palminteri, *Miracle on 42nd Street* features on-camera interviews with people whose lives were positively impacted by the complex, including Alicia Keys, Terrence Howard, Donald Faison, Larry David and Samuel L Jackson, Angela Lansbury, Giancarlo Esposito, and many others.

SELECTED CAST (As themselves)

Larry David (Actor, Writer)

Giancarlo Esposito (Actor)

Donald Faison (Actor)

Terrence Howard (Actor)

Alicia Keys (Recording Artist)

Angela Lansbury (Actor)

Samuel L. Jackson (Actor)

Kenny Kramer (Comedian)

Estelle Parsons (Actor)

Jim Vallely (Writer, Producer)

Chazz Palminteri (Narrator) is a renowned actor, screenwriter and producer, best known for his Academy Award®-nominated role in Woody Allen's *Bullets over Broadway* and the 1993 film *A Bronx Tale*, based on his play of the same name. Chazz received the 1996 Leadership in Entertainment Award from the Coalition of Italo-American Association, Inc. and was honored by President Clinton with a Special Achievement Award for the Performing Arts from the National Italian American Foundation in Washington, D.C.

SELECTED CREW

Alice Elliott (Director/Producer) is the Academy Award®-nominated documentary filmmaker of *The Collector of Bedford Street* whose films are dedicated to celebrating the role of community activism in elevating the quality of people's lives. Her short *Body & Soul: Diana & Kathy* was nominated for an International Documentary Association Award and her films have been presented in over 100 film festivals, as well as on HBO and PBS. She is a 2012 Guggenheim Fellow award recipient. In addition to her documentary work, she is a full-time teacher at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts. Currently she is co-directing *The Dismantled* with Emmy Award winning director Jason DaSilva.

Joal Ryan (co-screenwriter) is an award-winning journalist who has written for the New York Times, the Los Angeles Times, Variety and Yahoo!

Steve Ryfle (co-screenwriter) is a journalist who has written for the Los Angeles Times, San Francisco Chronicle, Chicago Tribune, and Cineaste. He co-produced and co-wrote the documentary feature *Bringing Godzilla Down to Size* (2008) and hosts a podcast, *Desegregating Hollywood: Race, Film and TV*.

Mary Jo Slater (Producer) was an original tenant of Manhattan Plaza. As a working single mother, she was able to launch a successful career as a producer and an award-winning casting director. While still a resident at Manhattan Plaza she produced the off-Broadway hit *Starting Here, Start Now* and went on to cast ABC's *One Life To Live* and many Hollywood films such as *Ace Ventura: Pet Detective* and the Academy Award®-nominated film *The Contender*.

Lisa Shreve (Producer/Editor) is an Emmy Award winning and Oscar®-nominated filmmaker. She has edited and produced over one hundred television documentaries, feature films, newsmagazine segments, music videos and corporate films. She has worked with such figures as Barbara Walters, Diane Sawyer, John Stossel, Linda Ellerbee, Mike Wallace, Peter Jennings, Michael Bay and Michael Moore. Ms. Shreve is presently producing *Outlaw*, a short dramatic film and *The Peacemaker*, a commercial written and directed by comedy writer Ned Rice.

Erika Lockridge (Producer) is the manager and owner of Bahr Productions, a film and television production company. Erika's producer credits include: *The Dust Factory* for MGM/UA starring Hayden Panettiere and Armin Mueller-Stahl; *The Forger* starring Josh Hutcherson; *10,000 Days* on Syfy starring John Schneider; *The Devil's Violinist* directed by Bernard Rose.

Joanne Storkan (Producer) is the founder and executive producer of Honest Engine Films (est. 2004). Formerly a journalism and English teacher, she now produces documentaries and feature films. Some of her credits include: *Dirt McComber - Last of the Mohicans*, *A Brave Heart - The Lizzie Velasquez Story*, *Wild Target*, the Bill Nighy/Emily Blunt comedy directed by Jonathan Lynn, and the award winning documentary entitled *Camp Unity*, filmed in Iraq.

Nancy McLeod Perkins (Producer) has worked in casting for thirty years. First in New York City, where she lived in Manhattan Plaza with her actor husband, Ron Perkins, and then in Los Angeles. She was formerly head of casting at Universal Television and also an independent casting director where her credits include co-casting the pilot of *Parks and Recreation* (with Allison Jones) and the series casting for HBO's *The Newsroom*. Currently, she lives in Los Angeles with her husband, Ron, and works as a casting consultant in television.

Cindy Cowan (Producer) is the former head/owner of Initial Entertainment Group, a leading foreign sales and production company which garnered many awards for such films as *Traffic*, with Michael Douglas, Catherine Zeta Jones, Oliver Stone; *Savior* with Dennis Quaid; *If These Walls Could Talk* with Cher, and Demi Moore; and *Very Bad Things* with Cameron Diaz and Christian Slater. Since forming Cindy Cowan Entertainment, she has produced *Red Lights* with Robert DeNiro, Sigourney Weaver, *Scorched* with Woody Harrelson. Currently she has *Air-12* in pre-production with Millennium, *The Untitled Luther Campbell Story* with RatPak, *The Michael Marcum Story* with Amazon, and *Expiration Day* with Jeff Thomas directing.

Cindy Bond (Producer) is a globally recognized leader and pioneer of the faith and family marketplace, working in the distribution, sales, marketing, finance and/or production of over 200 films. She began her career as a producer in 1990. In 1996 Bond co-founded Norann Entertainment, with Interstate Batteries Chairman Norm Miller. In 1999 Cindy co-founded a U.S. theatrical distribution company Providence Entertainment. In 2002 Bond co-founded a U.S. theatrical distribution, marketing and production company, Promenade Pictures, with former Paramount Pictures President/MGM/UA Co-Chairman Frank Yablans. In 2008, Bond co-founded Mission Pictures International, to open up the international marketplace for faith friendly films.

Eric Small (Producer) is a writer, producer, director for television and film. His credits include: *Rubicon* for Paramount Pictures, *The Dust Factory* for MGM/UA, *Maximum Risk* for Columbia Pictures, *The Probe* for FX and 20th Century Fox, *Penn & Teller: Bullshit!*, the Emmy nominated and WGA award-winning original series for Showtime, *10,000 Days* the IAWTV winning, Streamy and ADG nominated original web series on Syfy, *Jump Rope Sprint* for Filmbuff and *The Boys of Winter*, an IRNE nominated original play. Eric is a member of the Academy of Television Arts & Sciences, DGA, WGA, and IAWTV.

Ken Aguado (Executive Producer) has been a studio executive and producer for over 25 years. He has written dozens of articles about filmmaking and is also the author of the bestselling how-to book, *The Hollywood Pitching Bible*. His producer credits include *The Salton Sea*, starring Val

Kilmer for Warner Bros, *Sexual Life*, starring Kerry Washington and Anne Heche for Showtime, and the film *Standing Up*, written and directed by DJ Caruso (*Disturbia*) His most recent film, *An Interview with God*, which he also wrote, is now in post-production.

Arash Ayrom (Editor) is an editor, post producer, and filmmaker living in Los Angeles. Born in Tehran, Iran, he dreams in film, lusts after cars, and writes about hamburgers. He's also a big proponent of technology, especially in the democratization of the filmmaking process. His infrequently updated website is www.arashayrom.com.

Sheila Maniar (Archival Producer) is a New York-based filmmaker. Miss Maniar's most recently was the Co-Producer for *Disco Demolition* for Red Bull Music Academy and the Emmy-nominated *Through A Lens Darkly*, which premiered at the 2014 Sundance Film Festival. Miss Maniar has extensive archival research and clearance experience including the Oscar-winning *Citizenfour*. Miss Maniar was the Archival Clearance Researcher for Jonathan Demme's Academy Award-nominated *Mandela: Son of Africa, Father of a Nation* and the Projection Researcher for the Tony-nominated play *Evita*.

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QUOTES FROM PEOPLE IN THE MOVEMENT

"Manhattan Plaza is often called the 'Miracle on 42nd Street', and if I did nothing else in my life but be associated with that, my life would be complete. It is the type of place to live that has to be duplicated throughout the major cities of this country."

Irving Fischer, Manhattan Plaza Builder

"You cannot see Manhattan Plaza as anything other than, economically, an extraordinary development opportunity for the city of New York. And that if affordable housing can actually be a growth generator as opposed to some sort of drain on public services then Manhattan Plaza has served a broader purpose."

Jeff Brodsky, Related Properties - Owners of Manhattan Plaza

"Businesses and economic activity follow people. And they particularly follow people like artists. So if you bring artists into the center of town, and this is true in a lot of very challenged and difficult neighborhoods all across the country, you bring artists in there and those places start to transform."

Rocco Landesman, former chairman, National Endowment for the Arts

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QUOTES FROM THE CAST

"Played my first song that I wrote lyrics to, and played the music to, on that piano, in that apartment, in that building."

Alicia Keys

“For as much as I could have a sense of community, there was a sense of community at Manhattan Plaza.”

Larry David

“I learned to play guitar there. I learned to play piano there. I learned how to act. I had my first kiss there. That place nurtured my dreams.”

Terrence Howard

“It’s a very idealistic approach to housing for people who work in our business, in the theater. It was a wonderful sociological experiment.”

Angela Lansbury

“Do I think there could be another building like Manhattan Plaza? No. Not for what Manhattan Plaza has done for the community of Hell’s Kitchen. There’s something magical about that place, you know what I mean? There’s something special about it.”

Donald Faison

HISTORY OF THE FILM’S PRODUCTION

The idea of a documentary about Manhattan Plaza was born when two of Hollywood’s top casting directors, Mary Jo Slater and Nancy Perkins, were having lunch in Los Angeles. The business conversation soon turned to their shared history of living in Manhattan Plaza. What a shame, they thought, that more people weren’t aware of this successful experiment in housing for artists. Both felt Manhattan Plaza had made a huge difference in their lives and their careers and the idea was born to show their appreciation through a documentary. From that lunch, a true passion project was off and running. From then on it was full speed ahead.

Mary Jo engaged two of her New York City pals, Oscar nominated documentary director Alice Elliott and Emmy Award winning editor Lisa Shreve to collaborate in bringing the story to life. Mary Jo then contacted friends and acquaintances and began fundraising. Nancy Perkins, too, reached out to her show business contacts. Soon, producers Erika Lockridge and Joanne Storkan were on board. As Angela Lansbury, Larry David, Samuel L. Jackson and other famous alumni of Manhattan Plaza agreed to be interviewed, the production team grew. Producers Cindy Bond and Cindy Cowan brought their expertise as well and the project expanded. As the time to finish the film came into view, producer Eric Small joined the team and then veteran Hollywood producer Ken Aguado stepped in as executive producer to get this labor of love to the finish line.

HISTORY OF THE MANHATTAN PLAZA

Construction of the Manhattan Plaza buildings began in the early 1970’s as part of a larger plan to revitalize the blighted Westside of Manhattan. At that time this part of Manhattan (between west 34th and 59th Streets) was known as “Hell’s Kitchen.” While the neighborhood included

Media Press Kit

world-famous Broadway theaters, the area was more infamous for its rampant crime, drugs, pornography and prostitution.

As originally planned, the buildings were a commercial venture intended to provide affordable housing for middle and upper income people who, it was hoped, would move in and help revitalize the blighted area. But things did not go as planned.

As a result of New York City's financial crisis of the early 1970s, and the fact that middle class people did not want to move to Hell's Kitchen, construction stopped and the buildings sat vacant, the apartments unrented. Then came an idea. Out of what many saw as a failure, others saw as unique opportunity. When developers, elected officials, community leaders, representatives of the theatrical industry and the federal government joined forces, no one could have predicted the outcome. Manhattan Plaza would re-open its doors as subsidized, affordable housing for the people who had always been the backbone of this community – the people who made their living in television, movies and the performing arts.

This energetic and creative population took hold as the building's primary tenants and, little by little, hard-working artists and their families replaced the prostitutes and drug dealers. Restaurants and small businesses replaced the porn parlors and gang-controlled dive bars. Slowly, jobs were created, tourism increased, property values rose - all increasing the City's tax revenue. Manhattan Plaza and the revitalized Westside of New York became a resounding economic success.

Since then the list of tenants whose lives were profoundly impacted reads like a who's who of show business and the arts, all because - at one time in their lives - they were given a chance to survive and thrive when they needed a helping hand.

TECHNICAL SPECS

Total Run Time: 68 Minutes
Color: Color, Black & White
Language: English
Sound: 5.1 mix
Resolution: 1080p
Aspect Ratio: 1:85
Print Format: DCP

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