

"THERE AIN'T NO
LADY MAGICIANS."



QUEEN OF MAGIC

ORIGINAL SCREENPLAY BY
KATHY DISTEFANO

QUEEN OF MAGIC

BY CONNIE BOYD

THIS MONTH'S ARTICLE IS THE MOST COMPLEX I'VE TACKLED TO DATE. THE SHORT FILM, "QUEEN OF MAGIC" WRAPPED UP TAPING LAST MONTH. IT IS UNIQUE AS IT WAS CREATED BY WOMEN – WRITTEN BY A WOMAN AND PRODUCED BY A TEAM OF WOMEN – AND NONBINARY FILMMAKERS. THE SCRIPT FOR THE FILM HAS ALREADY RECEIVED ACKNOWLEDGMENT AND I PREDICT MORE TO COME. IT'S A TRUE MAGICAL WOMEN QUEEN TEAM.



The screenplay was inspired by the first "Queen of Magic" Adelaide Herrmann and it's loosely based on her true story and memoirs. The story is set in the 1890's Victorian era featuring a young, leading lady character, Addison Ellery. Addison is portrayed as the first female who dared to pursue her dream by challenging societies patriarchy to become a star magician.

As women in an under-represented industry each of the films female professionals, albeit cast and/or crew members, can easily identify with the aspiring magician and her struggles. Each of the exceptional women included in this article understand, firsthand, what it takes to defy tradition and overcome the odds.

The film was shot on the East Coast between New York and New Jersey this summer. There were three location settings; a wealthy abode in the 1870's in London, England; a boarding house in Brooklyn and a Vaudeville Theatre in New York City both set in the 1890's.

Producer Gina Marie Rodriguez explains, "the brilliant Art Department and Production Design Team did a fantastic job designing a custom Brooklyn Boarding House era set which was constructed at the Brooklyn Photo Studios in NYC".

The Union County Performing Arts Center (UCPAC) aka the Rahway Theatre provided an authentic, ambience for the performance settings. The historic

“MAGIC HAS A WOMAN PROBLEM.”
MARGARET STEELE, AUTHOR, MAGICIAN
& MAGIC HISTORIAN

"QUEEN OF MAGIC" SYNOPSIS

At a very young age, Addison Ellery fell in love with magic. From upper-class Victorian England to the slums of New York City, Addison trekked across the pond to pursue a career in show business. After many failed attempts on her own, Addison met Olivia Albin. Olivia admired Addison's resilience and became her most loyal and only fan.

In this short film, we see Addison struggling to overcome her biggest obstacle in the 1890s – being a woman in a male dominated industry. After being rejected by theater after theater, because, "there ain't no lady magicians," Addison decides to don a new persona, The Amazing Ace. With coattails and a dedicated assistant at her side, Addison sets out to defy the odds and prove that there are opportunities for lady magicians.

and cultural landmark is included in the National Register of Historic Places and actually served as a Vaudeville House for many years. Despite opening in 1928 the architecture was similar enough to the era the film is depicted in to be a perfect choice.

Finally, the stunning James Ward Mansion in Westfield, NJ, with its 18th century architectural inspirations served as the upper-class London home. It was at this location they depicted Addison's London flashbacks, where the young protagonist grew up.

Holly Curran the film's leading lady explained, "every location looked perfect for the Victorian period. That was a true feat for an independent short film. The sets and environment allowed me to settle deeper into the scenes and my character. That ambiance and the costumes, hello corsets, were a massive help as well".

Stacey Maltin the film's Director also added, "we are working with a lot of VFX in postproduction to account for the period outdoor locations".

For safety and practicality purposes they engaged an armorer for the film. As they were reenacting Adelaide Herrmann's dangerous bullet catch, safety was a legitimate concern. A "cold gun" (with no blanks) was used as often as possible.



Gina Marie Rodriguez
Lead Producer

Film Credits

Produced by Rose and Pearl Entertainment

In Association with Besties Make Movies

Lead Producer - Gina Marie Rodriguez

Written by Kathy DiStefano

Directed by Stacey Maltin

Leading Actress - Holly Curran

Supporting Actress - Kathy DiStefano

Magic Consulting - Margaret Steele, Sara Crasson
and Jessica Jane Peterson



Kathy DiStefano
Writer



Stacey Maltin
Director

KATHY DISTEFANO

SCREEN WRITER, PRODUCER, SUPPORTING ACTRESS

"Queen of Magic" was conceived and written by Kathy DiStefano. In this production, Kathy wears three hats as the writer, a producer and an actress cast into the role of Addison's assistant, Olivia Albini.

Thanks to author and magic historian Margaret Steele, Kathy discovered the memoirs of the legendary star magician Adelaide Herrmann, billed as "Queen of Magic" in the Victorian era. It was Adelaide who was Kathy's muse to write her screenplay.

Mirroring Adelaide, Kathy's leading lady, Addison refuses to accept defeat and confronts and overturns societies historical conventions. "In the feature-length version of the script there are many odes to Adelaide. Addison's character has taken on a life of her own, but the core of Addison's being is Adelaide", explains Kathy.

Kathy herself was fascinated with magic as a child,

series "Last Life" which has acquired over 40,000,000 views.

She hopes her work will motivate young women to pursue their passions; to stop society from dictating what they can or cannot achieve because of their gender. "I hope girls will continue to create magic in many areas that at first seem impossible".

As the "Queen of Magic" script developed, her passion for magic has been re-ignited. Kathy states, "as a result of my research into magic history and women in magic my love and appreciation for magic and 19th century history has grown immensely".



she performed magic with her brother, "mindlessly conforming to gender roles, becoming a female assistant to a male magician". Kathy admits she didn't pursue her own passion, "it never occurred to me to be the magician", citing the obvious lack of female role models to emulate by example.

Kathy is best known for her role as a writer, producer, and star of the supernatural web-

As part of her research Kathy recorded "man-on-the-street" interviews asking, "can you name a female magician"? The results were an astounding "no" and Kathy realized "I could go out all day for days asking this question and not once run into someone





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SECRETS REVEALED

- I'm currently in grad school at University of California, Irvine pursuing a Master's degree in English.
- I'm obsessed with *Friends* and I'm a huge Monica fan.
- I love literally anything creative/artistic: drawing, painting, singing, dancing, crafting, sculpting, graphic design, you name it. If it has a creative aspect, I'm all for it. - Union Township Halloween window painting champ 6 years in a row, not to brag. ;)

- I'm a huge dork. I love the renaissance faire, playing Dungeons and Dragons and video games, reading comic books, and going all out for Halloween and themed parties and events.

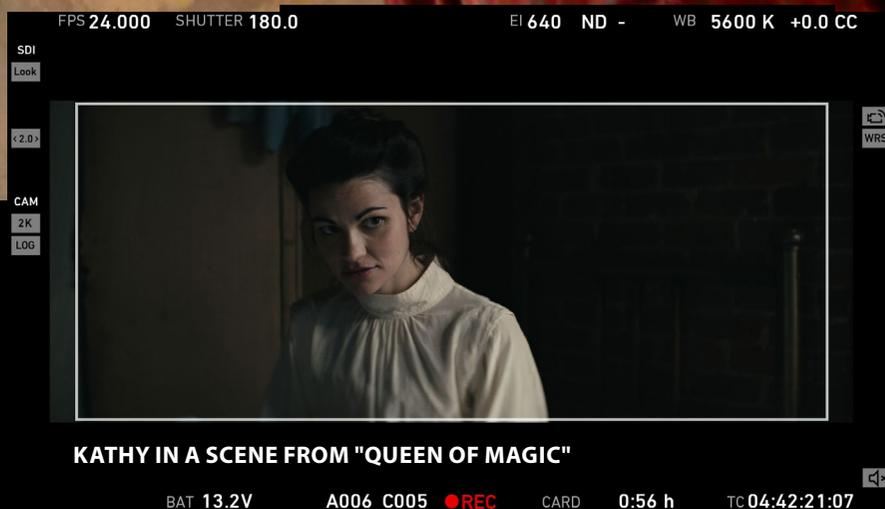
Favorite Quote
"Imagination is the only weapon in the war against reality."

Lewis Carroll or Jules de

Gaultier (The origin is debated.)

Dream Encounter

I'd love to meet Brit Marling. I think she's very inspirational and I'd love to pick her brain about her path in the film industry. I also think we'd get into some pretty gnarly sci fi conversations.



who knew a different answer. Women have been consistently overlooked and omitted from magic's historical timeline". With this film Kathy is hoping to change perceptions and awareness.

With over six plus years as a "work in progress" her screenplay has evolved. She states, "this project has grown with me and my skills. It has become a huge motivator to continue in the film industry and to not give up. It's a dream to shoot this film and see my story come to life on film. The entire cast and crew have been amazing to work with in skill, attitude, and enthusiasm. I am so grateful to every single person that has played a part in making this film and I am personally in awe of the serious talent that has participated in this project".

GINA MARIE RODRIGUEZ

LEAD PRODUCER

Gina Marie Rodriguez is the lead producer of “Queen of Magic”. Her experience as a filmmaker, director, actress, writer and festival founder has served her well in this film. “Queen of Magic” advocates equality. Gina has long been an advocate for both fairness and equity, making this pairing a perfect fit.

She admits that when she was a young girl, she was “naïve enough to believe that we as a society had moved past a time of prejudice and sexism”. Experience and maturity have changed that opinion and she now, “hopes that this movie will inspire everyone to see that passion matters”.

Gina admits that, “it takes courage and bravery to not adhere

time. It took a lot of creativity to craft the magic shots”.

Gina cites the power and talent of the team she assembled to account for the production’s success. “It’s a joy to watch and work with such an incomparable cast and crew. Not only are they exceedingly talented, but they are a pleasure to be around”.

Thanks to her “Queen of Magic” experience Gina’s love for storytelling and for filmmaking has been renewed and solidified. Once again she is optimistic about the future and more projects to come.

“

... NAIVE ENOUGH TO BELIEVE THAT WE AS A SOCIETY HAD MOVED PAST A TIME OF PREJUDICE AND SEXISM.”

to what is expected of us or what society dictates”. She firmly believes that it is important and worthwhile to pursue the real enthusiasm you feel for a topic and to be true to yourself.

Her knowledge of magic was “shockingly little” pre-production. Thanks to screenwriter Kathy Distefano and the production process she’s developed a newfound love for Adelaide Herrmann and a respect for the dexterity and showmanship it takes to execute magic well.

She explained, “to become an adept magician takes years of training. While our leading ladies did learn some magic for their roles, we relied on “movie magic” to be practical and timely. We had a lot of film to shoot in a very short period of



SECRETS REVEALED

1. The Sandra Bullock movie, "While You Were Sleeping" is a balm for my anxiety. The fact that a film can have the power to soothe and bring me peace is THE reason why I make movies. Sharing stories is powerful.

2. I wanted to be a clinical psychologist before I landed in the arts. Sometimes I consider going back to school for psychology. I majored in Communication and Theater Arts the first time around.

3. I am fascinated by linguistics and language. I am currently working to learn Spanish as a second language. I am not yet fluent, but I do pretty well in Spanglish.

4. I would like to write a script that highlights my mixed heritage in the near future. I am both Italian and Puerto Rican and very proud of both cultures

FAVORITE QUOTE

"Take your broken heart, make it into art."
Carrie Fisher

DREAM ENCOUNTER

This is a tough question. I need to choose more than one. I would love to meet Nora Ephron (assuming we can time travel), Nancy Meyers and Sandra Bullock. All of whom are strong women within the film industry and whom I admire a great deal. Can you tell I'm a rom-com girl at heart?



STACEY MALTIN

DIRECTOR

The quote on the top of page 37 reflects the skill and positive feedback Stacey Maltin's masterful directing abilities elicit.

Stacey is the co-founder of the production company "Besties Make Movies" and an award-winning filmmaker and performer. Through her lens we view an authentic perspective and compelling storytelling. Her show-reel is so good and displays such diversity of performance you can't wait to see more.

With this film Stacey had an ace up her sleeve. Years ago, she toured as a magician's assistant nationally and internationally. She explains, "it started as an acting job, but I ended up in illusions like the levitation and getting cut into three pieces. You never know how odd jobs from your past will end up benefiting you in the future. This one definitely did".

"Queen of Magic" was Stacey's first opportunity to direct a period piece. She delved into the specifics of 1890's locations, period wardrobe, hair styles and more. To quote her directly, "it was an incredible experience".

She believes the film is an important opportunity to defy the societal desire to stereotype people and to "stick them in boxes," figuratively and literally. Stacey explains, "people in general still associate directors and cinematographers with men, for example. Ideally audiences who see the film might start to break their own societal walls down and stop thinking about what "should" be and what "could" be."

She is hoping that "Queen of Magic" will bring awareness to magic and female magicians much like the film "Hidden Figures" did for the three African American female mathematicians, Katherine Johnson, Mary Jackson and Dorothy Vaughan, who worked at NASA during the Space Race. She states, "I think it's incredibly important to highlight that women have been excelling in almost every field you can imagine. You might



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not be aware of their names or associate women with those professions, but they do exist".

As Stacey completes her directorial work in post-production I am excitedly awaiting the final, magical results.



"Our Director, Stacey Maltin is a force to be reckoned with and I learned so much from watching her run her set with both authority and kindness. I can only hope to be half the director she is."
 Gina Marie Rodriguez - Lead Producer "Queen of Magic"



Jeffrey Weber as Samuel Brummer



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SECRETS REVEALED

- My 6th-grade project was actually all about Vaudeville and I've been super obsessed with Vaudeville and vaudeville performers for years.

- I love prestige TV and movies but I also have a weakness for dating reality shows like Fboy Island (I know, I know)

- Sex from the female gaze and sex positivity in film is a part of my mission to highlight as an artist

FAVORITE QUOTE

This is a quote in Hebrew:

הנממ לטכיל וירוח זב התא אלו, רומגל הכאלמה דילע אל

"It is not up to you to finish the work, but neither are you free to desist from it."

From the book *Pirkei Avot*

DREAM ENCOUNTER

Lin Manuel Miranda! I actually filmed him for a docu-project but I was aiming for super-professional and desperately trying not to geek out, so if I actually had the opportunity to sit with him for coffee and talk about art that would be pretty epic.



STACEY MALTIN

HOLLY CURRAN

STARRING ROLE - LEADING ACTRESS

Holly Curran plays the leading lady role as Addison in "Queen of Magic".

She is a talented actress with many credits, one of which includes a recurring role as Penny Pann in one of my favorite series, "The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel".

With her portrayal of an ambitious, aspiring magician, attempting to defy the odds in the 1890's, she has developed a newfound respect for magicians. She believes, "my lack of magical technical skills increased my appreciation of magic as an artform".

Holly spoke with contemporary female magicians to understand the role and challenges they encountered to be a woman magician. With that character development research she realized, "what happened to Addison at the turn of the century bears too much resemblance to the way women in magic are still treated in 2022. I'd like our audiences to become aware of these challenges and ultimately, I hope we can support female magicians more".

In the film, it's the power of support by Olivia, Addison's loyal friend, admirer and assistant that Holly hopes will resonate with audiences. She dreams that the film will inspire others to use their energy to uplift the people around them through encouragement; using their positivity to bolster others' self-confidence.

MY LACK OF MAGICAL TECHNICAL SKILLS INCREASED MY APPRECIATION OF MAGIC AS AN ARTFORM".

Holly revealed, prior to being cast as Addison, "I always enjoyed magic, but never thought too deeply about it. I didn't fully understand the true genius behind magic performances". She did however gravitate to and appreciate the childlike sense of wonder good magic elicits. She explained, "as an adult very few experiences can replicate that".

Holly finished by saying, "it has been my privilege to play the role of Addison. Everyone who worked on this film has been absolutely lovely. A special shout out to magician Jessica Jane who performed during the vaudeville performance. She just blew us all away."



SECRETS REVEALED

-I'm from New Jersey. And I'm incredibly proud of my home state. I grew up 45 minutes from the beach and New York City and I loved every moment. Also, the bagels and pizza are the best here - no contest.
-I'm half Armenian! Growing up in Jersey, I didn't know any Armenian people outside of my own family. Moving to LA has been amazing for this reason!
-I love to cook and bake. I digitized my recipes and I keep them in my google drive so I can access them anywhere.
-I love to sing, play the guitar and ukulele (I'm learning piano), and write songs. I released an EP earlier this year called Chapstick.



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Favorite Quote

"It always seems impossible until it's done."

Nelson Mandela

Dream Encounter

I'm a massive Taylor Swift fan. I would probably die of joy if I got to meet with her and pick her brain.

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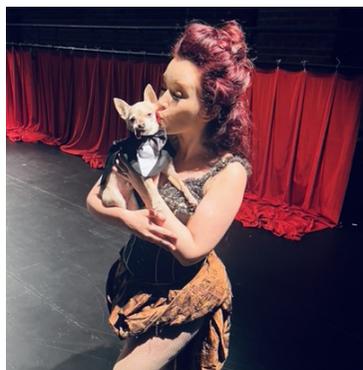
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PHOTO BY STACI SAGLIANO

JESSICA JANE WAS BORN INTO SHOW BUSINESS. HER MOTHER WAS A MAGICIAN'S ASSISTANT AND HER UNCLE IS A PROFESSIONAL MAGICIAN. AS A CHILD SHE RECALLS VIVIDLY THE TIME SHE SPENT WITH HER MOTHER IN A SWORD BASKET. IT WAS A NATURAL PROGRESSION THAT SHE BECAME A SOLO MAGICIAN.





MAGICIAN - CAMEO PERFORMANCE

JESSICA JANE PETERSON

Jessica was intrigued when she learned about the "Queen of Magic" film from Instagram. She reached out to the screenwriter Kathy DiStefano and began a dialogue. Jessica is a magic history buff and the film, inspired by Adelaide Herrmann, tapped into her interests and passions.

About her experience performing

magic for the film at the UCPAC theatre she states, "the whole team had such passion and I love that. It was such a special opportunity because of the PEOPLE. I had the opportunity to be onstage with Holly Curran. Her charisma and drive are inspiring."

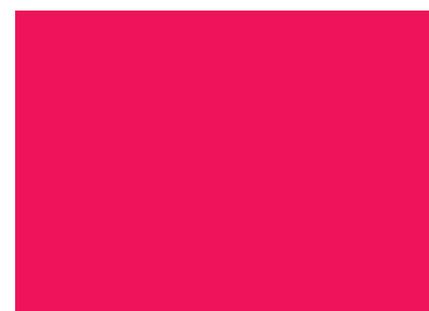
Jessica has performed on television shows like "Fool Us" and in

documentary shows, but this was different. She explains, "I was fortunate enough to do a bit of acting in addition to my act. It was a huge learning experience as I had never acted on screen before. Unlike the stage a look or slight smile can convey so much emotion. It was such a blast".

Fortunately, the Fire Marshall approved



**IT WAS A HUGE LEARNING EXPERIENCE
AS I HAD NEVER ACTED ON SCREEN
BEFORE."**





Jessica's "Fire Act" for the shoot. The costumer, Brynne Oster-Bainnson created a fabulous vaudeville-style costume that included a corset and skirt. Hair and make-up by Jazmin Patiño complimented the Victorian performance look and Jessica felt, "right on point".

When asked what she modified for her film performance Jessica replied, "I realized I would need to tone down my facial expressions and movements since I am as

stage performer who usually works in large theaters."

The casting of Jessica Jane, a successful female magician, in the film is another example of the film's commitment to inclusivity and its support of women in magic.

“ THE COSTUMER, BRYNNE OSTER-BAINNISON CREATED A FABULOUS VAUDEVILLE-STYLE COSTUME THAT INCLUDED A CORSET AND SKIRT.”



FINAL THOUGHTS FROM CONNIE BOYD

"Queen of Magic" is an important magic film first. The women included in this article are truly remarkable, magical women. The story they are presenting and messages they hope to deliver through the film transcends entertainment to sociological changes. Their evident respect for each other and their abilities, along with the passion for this project are uplifting. It's an honor to be asked to write this article about them. ■

Secrets Revealed

-I used to be a mermaid at Ripley's Aquarium of the Smokies.

-When I was younger, my pelvis was broken while I was being sawn in half... that moment made me want to be outside of the box from then on!

-In my teen years, I actually lived on the streets for a bit. I would perform street magic for the funds to get my next meal. It has made me extremely grateful to have a roof over my head and food in the fridge.

-I dated an Elvis impersonator and got dumped for a Priscilla Presley Impersonator. He literally said to me, "Well Honey, you'll always be my Ann-Margaret...but Elvis didn't end up with Ann now did he?". Then he sang 'Always on my Mind'...I swear...and that's not my weirdest ex! Ha!

Favorite Quote

I use this quote to end every single one of my shows!

"Being on the Tightrope is Living. Everything else is waiting."

Karl Wallenda

Dream Encounter

Coffee with Carol Burnett!

