
STRIKE A POSE

A FILM BY ESTER GOULD AND REIJER ZWAAN



THE OTHER ROOM

SERENDIPITY FILMS

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PRODUCTION INCENTIVE

MEDIAFONDS



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CINE MIEN



PRESSKIT

IN SHORT

Title	Strike a Pose
Genre	Documentary
Length	83 minutes
Premiere date	February 15, 2016
Directors	Ester Gould Reijer Zwaan
The Dancers	Luis Camacho Oliver Crumes III Salim Gauwloos Jose Gutierrez Kevin Stea Gabriel Trupin † Carlton Wilborn
Director of Photography	Reinout Steenhuizen
Sound recordist	Carla van der Meijs
Editor	Dorith Vinken
Composer	Bart Westerlaken
Sound designer	Marc Lizier
Creative Producer	Thomas den Drijver
Producers CTM Docs	Rosan Boersma Sander Verdonk Denis Wigman
Producers The Other Room	Ester Gould Reijer Zwaan
Co-producer	Ellen de Waele - Serendipity Films
Distributor Benelux	Cinemien
International publicity	Thessa Mooij - Silversalt PR

CONTACT

Producer

CTM Docs

Rosan Boersma
Emmastraat 21
1211NE Hilversum
The Netherlands
+31356474040
rosan@ctm.nl

The Other Room

Ester Gould
The Netherlands
+31621898908
ester@gouldframe.nl

Reijer Zwaan
The Netherlands
+31651213029
reijer.zwaan@nieuwsuur.nl

Co-producer

Serendipity Films

Ellen de Waele
Belgium
+32499463695
ellen@serendipityfilms.be

Distributor Benelux

Cinemien

Amsteldijk 10
1074 HP Amsterdam
The Netherlands
+3120 577 6010

Sales agent North America

XYZ Films

Todd Brown & Nate Bolotin
3103 S La Cienega Blvd
Los Angeles, CA 90016
United States
+1 310 956 1550
info@xyzfilms.com

International publicity

Silversalt PR

Thessa Mooij
United States
+49.175.100.7515
thessa@silversaltpr.com



Kevin Stea, Gabriel Trupin, Oliver Crumes III (1990) -© Lisa Guarnieri

TAGLINE

What does it take to express yourself? The surprising and moving story of Madonna's most famous troupe of dancers.

LOGLINE

In 1990, seven young male dancers - 6 gay, 1 straight - joined Madonna on her most controversial tour. On stage and in the iconic film Truth or Dare they showed the world how to express yourself. Now, 25 years later, they reveal the truth about life during and after the tour. Strike a Pose is a dramatic tale about overcoming shame and finding the courage to be who you are.



Jose Xtravaganza

In 1990, seven young dancers joined pop star Madonna on her most controversial world tour. Wild, talented and barely twenty, the dancers set out on the trip of a lifetime. Their journey was captured in *Truth or Dare*, one of the highest-grossing documentaries ever. As a self-proclaimed mother to her six gay dancers plus straight Oliver, Madonna used the film to take a stand on gay rights, freedom of expression and the fight against AIDS. Madonna's flamboyant dancers became icons of sexual freedom, inspiring people all over the world to be who you are.

At the height of the AIDS epidemic and in the aftermath of the conservative Reagan era, *Truth or Dare* introduced audiences to fun-loving, bold and larger-than-life gay characters. The film was ground-breaking, featuring two guys kissing passionately during the famous *Truth or Dare* scene. Madonna, determined to push the envelope, defended the film ferociously: "If you keep putting something in people's faces, eventually, maybe they can come to terms with it." The message stuck: even today, the dancers receive thank-you letters from people around the world recalling how the film changed their lives.

Although they were pivotal to Madonna's message, the dancers weren't living it. In fact, Gabriel wasn't proud of being gay at all. After failing to persuade Madonna to cut out the kissing scene that would 'out' him to his family and friends, he filed a lawsuit against her. A few years later, the 26-year-old died of AIDS, a disease that had shamed him into silence. And Gabriel wasn't the only one: Carlton - big, bold and the only dancer who was trusted to lift up the pop icon - was HIV-positive and almost collapsed under the secret that he was carrying on tour. Years of faking and lying distort his life to this day. A third dancer is still hiding an important part of himself and now finally wants to open up.

In *Strike a Pose*, we encounter the dancers on a new journey. For the first time they tell us how hard it has been to live the liberated life they were promoting on stage. Their incredible stories reveal how fear of other people's judgment holds us back and how hard it is to accept yourself when you feel different. Twenty-five years after the tour and the film that marked pop and gay culture as much as their own lives, the dancers, their dramatic stories and their fierce moves inspire us once again. What does it really take to express yourself?

ABOUT THE MAKERS

BIO ESTER GOULD

Ester Gould (1975, Peterculter) is a Scottish-born documentary filmmaker who lives and works in Amsterdam. She studied Film and Journalism in Amsterdam and New York (NYU Tisch School of the Arts) and began her career as a researcher and scriptwriter for acclaimed director Heddy Honigmann. Since 2005 she has been directing her own documentaries for Dutch public broadcasters. Her first feature-length documentary *Shout*, jointly directed with Sabine Lubbe Bakker and shot in Syria and the Israeli Golan Heights, won the prize for Best Film at the London International Documentary Film Festival in 2010. *A Strange Love Affair with Ego* (2015) - her second feature documentary - premiered at IDFA and won the award for Best Dutch Documentary and an EDA Award for best female-directed film from the Alliance of Women Film Journalists. *Strike a Pose* - which premieres at the Berlinale's Panaroma - is her third feature-length film.



BIO REIJER ZWAAN

Reijer Zwaan (1981) is a journalist and filmmaker for Dutch Public Television. He works as deputy editor-in-chief for *Nieuwsuur* (Newshour), the main current affairs program in the Netherlands. Since he started there in 2004, he gained experience as an investigative reporter and as head of the political desk. Reijer studied Political Science in Amsterdam and New York (New School University). Before that he studied acting at the Lee Strasberg Theatre Institute. He was born and raised in Amsterdam. Reijer was 11 years old when he first saw *Truth Or Dare*. He was fascinated by the film and as the years passed, he couldn't help but ask himself what might have happened to the young dancers who had made such an impact. Now *Strike A Pose* - his first feature length film - will premiere at the Berlinale's Panaroma.



CTM DOCS

With our documentaries we aim to reveal what otherwise will remain hidden. We strive to make films that move, shock or motivate; that reveal universal truth in individual human stories. In short, we want our films to move you. To achieve this, we develop a clear strategy for each film. This means that in this fast changing industry, we actively seek new possibilities to create, finance and distribute our documentaries. We are constantly looking for the right mix of artistic vision and international commercial potential. CTM Docs stems from the collaboration between Denis Wigman and Rosan Boersma, and it combines over thirty years of experience with zeal and ambition. CTM Docs works closely together with Marijn Wigman from CTM Films. CTM Docs & Films are part of the CTM Group, which operates in the industries of music publishing, artist management as well as in the fields of music, TV and film production.

Projects:

Forget Me Not by Jan Jaap Kuiper in coproduction with ThankEve Productions and IKON. Premieres at Movies that Matter 2016.

Life, Love & HIV by Nadia Moussaid. KRO-NCRV, Teledoc Campus 2015.

Hollywood Banker by Rozemijn Afman.

Maarten van Severen, Places Found But Not Yet Made by Moon Blaise in coproduction with Pain Perdu (Canvas/Belgium).

Made in Iran by Charlotte Scott-Wilson in coproduction with OAK Motion Pictures



Carlton Wilborn

DIRECTORS' STATEMENT

By Ester Gould & Reijer Zwaan

We both remember seeing *Truth or Dare* as teenagers in a Dutch cinema. The concert footage was a trip to watch – Rolling Stone named *The Blond Ambition Tour* the Greatest Concert of the 1990s – but the backstage footage of Madonna and her male dancers was what made the film truly groundbreaking. The dancers were loud, outspoken and above all: a range of striking characters. Part of *Truth or Dare*'s impact is the result of Madonna's great hand in casting.

Ever since we first saw *Truth or Dare*, we've always wondered what happened to the seven dancers who made such an impression on both of us. We were touched by the film's message and underlying themes: homage to freedom and love, an invitation to break grounds, to bond with others by creating your own family. For Reijer, it was his first encounter with gay culture too. Ester was just as impressed by Madonna's breaking down of the boundaries between masculinity and femininity, sex and religion, race and gender. With the years came a better understanding of how political the film actually was.

When we started looking for the dancers on the Internet, we found that we were definitely not the only ones whose lives have been influenced by the film. So many people have 'felt' it: that they expressed a freedom to be who you are and not care what others think of that. And all of this at the height of the AIDS epidemic, when widespread fear made it not an easy time at all to be 'different'. That's when we realized that there might be a bigger story to tell.

In the summer of 2014 we travelled to the United States to meet the individual dancers. We were blown away by their strong personalities and deeply touched by their stories about life during and after the tour. Each of them has gone through hardship - in different ways they have struggled with pride, shame and self-doubt - but they've all come out stronger. Their passion for dance remained: their bodies never failed them. While the film is story-driven, we chose to add more abstract, poetic dance scenes to underline how dance is one of the most direct forms of self-expression.

For us, the film is more than a reflection on an important period in pop and gay culture or a story about early stardom. It's an ode to non-conformism: daring to be yourself is a lifelong challenge, precisely because we all want to belong.

CREDITS

THANK YOU

LUIS CAMACHO
OLIVER CRUMES III
SALIM GAUWLOOS
JOSE GUTIEREZ
KEVIN STEA
GABRIEL TRUPIN
CARLTON WILBORN

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Written & directed by	Ester Gould & Reijer Zwaan
Director of Photography	Reinout Steenhuizen
Sound recordist	Carla van der Meijs
Editor	Dorith Vinken
Composer	Bart Westerlaken
Sound designer & mixer	Marc Lizier
Sound editor	Erik Griekspoor
Sound post-production	Cinénumerique
Musicians original score	Botte Jellema - Guitar Philippine Hugén - Violin
Colorist	Bart Verraest
Post-production supervisor	Diede Zillinger Molenaar
Post-production facilities	Storm Post Production Jack Kuiper
Poster & title design	Sander Brouwer
Trailer edit	Spark Maurits Malschaert
Insurance	Lynn Pollack AON Entertainmentverzekering
Legal	Roland Wigman VWS Advocaten Donaldson + Callif, LLP
Music clearances	Steve Gordon Law
The Netherlands Film Fund	Doreen Boonekamp Suzanne van Voorst Pieter Fleury Frank Peijnenburg Maarten Wijdenes
The Netherlands Film Production	José van Doorn

CREDITS

Incentive	Stine Flex
CoBO Fund	Jeanine Hage
	Peter van Beek
	Ina van der Spoel
Flanders Audiovisual Fund (VAF)	Pierre Drouot
Aids Fonds	Angelique Brevé
	Wijnand van der Werf
	Bert Herberigs
	Froukje van Dieren
Dutch Cultural Media Fund	Ingrid van Tol
Broadcasters	Channel 8
	SVT
	YLE
North American sales	XYZ Films
Distribution Benelux	Cinemien
Production Accountants	Matthijs van der Horst
	Larissa Zoethout
Fixers US	Ilja Willems
	Marieke Oudejans
Line producer	Marijn Wigman
Office producer	Karen Hough
	Julie Ng
Creative producer	Thomas den Drijver
Executive producer	André de Raaff
Co-producer Serendipity Films	Ellen de Waele
Commissioning editor SWR	Simone Reuter
Production coordinators NTR	Astrid Prickaerts
	Joachim van Trommel
Commissioning editors NTR	Oscar van der Kroon
	Marloes Blokker
Producers The Other Room	Ester Gould
	Reijer Zwaan
Producers CTM Docs	Rosan Boersma
	Sander Verdonk
	Denis Wigman

This film is a production by CTM Docs and The Other Room

in co-production with

NTR
Serendipity Films
SWR in collaboration with Arte

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Aids Fonds

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Luis Camacho, Jose Gutierrez, Oliver Crumes III, Kevin Stea (1990)
