

PROSPECTUS

The Den

A Feature Documentary

Prepared for: Prospective Investors and Financing Partners

Prepared by: Ted Kamp, Magnitudes Foundation

1. THE STORY

*The Den i*s the story of a nice Jewish family who, unbeknownst to most of the people who knew them, ran a gay bar in New Brunswick, New Jersey. Not only did they provide a welcoming space for gay patrons starting way back in 1957, when the state liquor board was closing such places, but they also spent two years in court, fighting that liquor authority. In 1967, they won a landmark decision in the New Jersey State Supreme Court that recognized that gay people have a right to congregate in public without harassment. This is a dramatic but also warm and funny story about a family, a community and a largely unknown landmark in gay civil rights.



The New York Times

NEW YORK, TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 1967

High Court in Jersey Overturns A Ban on Homosexuals in Bars

Special to The New York Times

TRENTON, Nov. 6 — The State Supreme Court ruled today that homosexuals had every right to gather in bars "so long as their public behavior conforms with currently acceptable standards of decency and morality."

The court overturned the revocation or suspension of the licenses of three New Jersey bars for "permitting apparent homosexuals to congregate at their licensed premises," holding:

More Evidence Required

The ruling said that those charges were not enough and that the commission must prove that homosexuals indulged in immoral activity.

The court asked the commission to "prepare a fair and sensible regulation, which while permitting apparent homosexuals to assemble and patronize licensed establishments, prohibits overtly indecent conduct and public displays of sex-

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The Main Characters:

Manny and Leah Mack - They met in the Catskills in the 1940's where they learned the art of Jewish hospitality. They moved to New Brunswick, NJ and started a restaurant called Manny's Den in 1944. In the 1950's they welcomed the gay patrons looking for somewhere to socialize when that was a risky behavior. And in the 1960's, their business was threatened by the state liquor board.

Dick Mack - Manny and Leah's son, Dick took over running the business in the mid-60's. When the Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) raided Manny's Den in 1965, chose a path almost unheard of at that time: he fought back. With the help of esteemed lawyers Theodore Meth and David Morris, he engaged in a two year legal battle that ended in an unprecedented LGBTQ+ civil rights victory in the New Jersey State Supreme Court. The Den, as the business came to be known, expanded and thrived for decades.

Peter and Randi Mack - The children of Dick and Paula Mack grew up in the 1960's and 70's with a thriving family business they could not talk about at school. Gay culture was a normal thing for them, though, and they became the face of The Den when it blossomed into a booming nightclub in the 80's, 90's and 2000's.

Access, vérité and additional interview elements:

We have:

- Full participation and a production agreement with Peter and Randi Mack.
- Access to the hundreds of photos from The Den's long history.
- Interviews with dozens of people in their 30's to their 80's who speak passionately about its personal and community impact.
- Interviews with scholars of LGBTQ+ history that broaden the story and place it in the perspective of political and social change.

Why now?

There was a time when everything was stacked against gay people, when the simple act of going out and being themselves in public was terrifying. Fighting against this took tremendous courage, not just from gay people but also from straight

people who were willing to stand up for them. What the Macks did back then is **what we need to do right now:** speak up and **join the struggle for those who are being "othered" by political opportunists.** *The Den* tells a story that is relevant to our times but also delivers an inspirational message to those who despair: **We can resist, we should persist and we can win.**

4. MARKET & AUDIENCE

Comparable titles & their outcomes:

- Documentaries about the long struggles of the LGBTQ+ community have been a staple of the festival circuit and can be amply found across all the major streaming platforms. This is particularly true in June, when special banners promote these titles for Pride Month.
- Some classics include *Paris is Burning*, *How to Survive a Plague*, *Before Stonewall,* and *We Were Here.*
- Netflix alone is currently airing *The Death and Life of Marsha P. Johnson, Brother Outsider: The Life of Bayard Rustin, Outstanding: A Comedy Revolution*, and **two films that tell similar stories about the bridge between the gay and straight worlds**. *Will & Harper* tells the story of Will Ferrell's road trip with his old friend Harper Steele, and their intimate processing of her recent gender transition. *Circus of Books* is a delightful film about a nice Jewish couple who ran an adult book shop that became an epicenter for gay Los Angeles.

Target audience:

- Documentary/social-issue viewers! Gays! Jews! Streaming platforms building "impact" slates!

Distribution landscape:

- We are developing a festival strategy for both major venues such as Sundance, Tribeca, SXSW, etc and the niche/LGBTQ+ fests such as Frameline, NewFest, Outfest, etc.
- We are planning an impact campaign with partners such as LGBTQ+ advocacy orgs, schools, Jewish organizations, who can drive grassroots screenings.



2. THE ASK

We are seeking $275,000 to complete production. This will consist of two phases.

Phase One, estimated at $90,000 will bring us to a **festival cut** and includes:

- Remaining interview shoots with legal and historical experts.
- Story producing in prep for edit
- Offline Editing
- Graphics/animation package
- Music Library/Composer

Phase Two, estimated at $178,000 will allow for completion of the project and includes:

- Post-production elements, such as post supervisor, color correction, sound mix, etc.
- Music licensing for all those songs by Donna Summer and the like.
- Archival footage/stills licensing & clearance.
- Legal, accounting, insurance, E&O and other business costs.
- Marketing & festival strategy
- All network/streamer deliverables

Full budget breakdowns available upon request

3. THE TEAM

Ted Kamp - Producer/Director
Ted Kamp is a family friend of the Macks, going back to the 1940's, when his father and Dick Mack knew each other from childhood through the business scene of New Brunswick. Over the past 30 years, Ted has worked as an Executive Producer/ Showrunner across many television genres, including documentary, comedy, unscripted series, late night and game show. For History, he directed and produced documentaries such as *The Definitive Guide to the Mob* and *Sniper: The Ultimate Competition* and was Co-Executive Producer on the Discovery feature documentary *Fin*, directed by Eli Roth.

In the unscripted world, he directed and produced hit shows like *Last Comic Standing*, *Last Call with Carson Daly*, *Wicked Tuna*, *Only in America with Larry the Cable Guy* and *Hoffman Family Gold*. Under his stewardship as Executive Producer and Showrunner of *Ice Road Truckers*, the show was nominated for a 2018 Critics Choice Award.

Jacob Strunk - Cinematographer/Producer
Award-winning writer and filmmaker Jacob Strunk hails from the dark woods of Wisconsin. His narrative films have screened in competition across the world. He directs and produces the celebrity-driven talk show *Grave Conversations*, co-produced and hosted by David Dastmalchian.

Other recent collaborators include Disney, The Jim Henson Company, Nerdist Industries, Amy Poehler's Smart Girls, Defy Media, Screen Junkies and the Smithsonian's Wilson Center. His 2002 film *Valhalla* was short-listed for a Student Academy Award, and he has received filmmaking grants from Kodak and Fotokem.
He continues to work extensively in the documentary world with an emphasis on social equity and policy reform.

Links to samples of Ted and Jacob's work available upon request.

Ita Kennedy - Advisory Executive Producer

Ita has been a key advisor throughout the process and is wildly qualified to get us over the finish line. A native of Ireland, she is an executive producer with over 25 years of experience delivering complex international productions across six continents, in more than 50 countries. She has run budgets from $10,000 to $40 million and coordinated teams of up to 1,500 personnel, from maritime shoots in the Atlantic to remote locations in Greenland, Africa, and the Pacific. Her credits include seven seasons of the Emmy Award-winning *The Amazing Race*, the *Below Deck* franchise, *Wicked Tuna*, and *Brave the Wild*, for NBCUniversal, Warner Bros., National Geographic, and Animal Planet, along with feature work as a PGA producer on *Trick*. She specializes in foreign entity setup, global tax incentives, and union and non-union production on both sides of the Atlantic.

An **Editorial Staff** will be built based on scheduling. We have a long list of exceptional working editors from our many years in television. The current excerpt was edited by **Mathys van de Bruggen**, a veteran of dozens of unscripted shows such as *The Ultimate Fighter*, *Wicked Tuna* and *Ghost Hunters*.

Advisors: We have assembled an ad hoc Advisory Board through friends and contacts in the documentary world and in academia. We have had sage advice from filmmakers **Matt Tyrnauer** (*Valentino: The Last Emperor*, *Studio 54*, *Scotty and the Secret History of Hollywood*) and **Laura Gabbert** (*City of Gold*, *No Impact Man*). Our academic advisors include professors **Kristyn Scorsone of Rutgers University**, **Anna Lvovsky of Harvard**, and **Bill Singer, Co-Founder of the National LGBT Law Association**, among many others.

4. CONCLUSION

We are thrilled to resurrect the heroic work done by the Macks, their trailblazing lawyers and the vibrant gay community of Central New Jersey. We will lose the Oscar to some film about the Holocaust, Gaza or the Ukraine, but that's not what's important.

We know that this film, and its inspiring tale of courage, perseverance, love and family will endure forever.



APPENDIX - DOCUMENTARY OUTLINE

SECTION ONE: What Was The Den?

An overview of what one bar in Central New Jersey meant to so many people. This includes:

- Meeting Peter and Randi Mack, the third-generation operators of The Den, who tell us about their grandparents (Manny & Leah Mack) and father (Dick Mack),
- The story of how a restaurant called Manny's Den, run by a heterosexual family, became The Den, an iconic gay bar and then nightclub, run by the next two generations of that same heterosexual family.
- How supporting gay customers exposed the family to extraordinary personal risk.
- Hearing from dozens of LGBTQ+ people, who represent five decades of patronage, talking about what this space meant to them.

SECTION TWO: The Historical Significance of the Gay Bar

In a fun and incredibly informative segment, we will hear about:

- The earliest recognizable ancestors of the modern gay bar — the Molly Houses of eighteenth-century London, where working-class men in women's clothes performed mock marriages and gave each other women's names.
- The role of gay bars in the criminalization of homosexuality.
- The stunning emergence of a public gay culture, from Harlem's Pansy Craze of the 1920s and 30s to San Francisco's emergence as a queer culture hub from the Gold Rush days into the 1940s and 50s.
- How New York City gay bars in the 1960s (including the Stonewall Inn) came to be dominated by the American Mafia, who operated filthy spaces and extorted the customers.

SECTION THREE: The 111 Wines & Liquors Case

Back to Manny's Den in 1965. Their liquor license has been suspended, their livelihood is in danger. Do they fold under the pressure? Not at all. We hear how:

- The Macks banded together with two other gay-friendly establishments, Murphy's Tavern in Newark and Val's Bar in Asbury Park, widening the scope of the fight against the Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC).
- They found remarkable legal counsel in Theodore Meth, a revered legal scholar, and David Morris, a then-closeted Black corporate lawyer who would go on to become an important figure in gay civil rights.
- The Den fought through losing their appeal before the ABC and again in the Appellate Division, but persisted in bringing the case to the NJ State Supreme Court.
- How The Den's legal team pushed the powerful state attorneys into a constitutional corner, resulting in a shocking victory.

SECTION FOUR: The Aftermath

What The Den became after the 1967 legal triumph is its own amazing saga. We hear how:

- The fully liberated Manny's Den morphed into The Den, a dedicated gay bar that only got stronger in the 60's and 70's, even after a city redevelopment project forced them out of their original location.
- The Mack family business still remained secretive. Randi and Peter grew up in the middle of a gay culture they could not talk about at school. Dick had to separate his long, ongoing career as a US Army Reservist from his life as the proprietor of a gay bar.

- In the 1980s, after being denied a license to operate on downtown's lively George Street, The Den moved to funky (and slightly scary) Hiram Street. The dance floor was jammed every night.
- After getting bounced from Hiram Street by eminent domain, the Macks bought an old bowling alley in Somerset, NJ, and The Den became a multi-space night-club, bar, and restaurant. This was Peter and Randi's Den and it thrived until 2016, when the internet age finally rendered the old gay disco obsolete.

SECTION FIVE: The Reunion

In July 2025, Den patrons gathered at Sophie's Bistro, the restaurant operated by Peter Mack at the last site of The Den. We hear from a cornucopia of voices who tell of:

- The many stories of how they, as terrified young queer people, walked into The Den and found a safe haven.
- The relationships that formed in this place, including romantic partnerships that have lasted for 30 and 40 years.
- The undying love that, to this day, flows strongly between the Mack dynasty and their patrons.

END — CLOSING CREDIT SONG

After dedicating the film to the late Manny, Leah, and Dick Mack, the closing credits roll over a slide show of Den fabulousness, set to a custom-made Oscar-bait closing song. But not the sappy ballad type — this will be a disco-era BANGER, an all-star collaboration among artists like RuPaul, Madonna, Trixie Mattel, Cardi B, Mary J. Blige, Chappell Roan, etc. (why not dream?) ending this experience with exuberance and joy.