



EXECUTIVE PRODUCED BY  
JOSH GAD BILLY PORTER JOHN CAMERON MITCHELL

# TIME WARP

PRODUCED BY SUSAN MARGOLIN JEN CHAIKEN EDITED BY FRANK KERAUDREN  
DIRECTED AND PRODUCED BY ALLISON SLOAN BERG



Dir. Allison Berg | 112 Min | US

It's a rite of passage for people all around the world — but in the small community of Rock Springs, Wyoming, the tradition of a “shadow cast” acting and singing the lines of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* as the 1975 camp classic plays on a screen behind them was as unusual as seeing a feather boa in the local coal mines. That is, until Kenny Starling created the first drag and queer theatrical troupe in all of Wyoming in 2022. For the LGBTQIA+ community there, the Starling Company's announcement that they'd be putting on *Rocky Horror* at a local 370-seat theater was an exuberant, full-hearted expression of queer joy. In the vivid, timely, and life-affirming documentary *TIME WARP*, director ALLISON SLOAN BERG captures the energy and enthusiasm that the performance and the preparation for brings to a group of people — many young, some less-young — who come out of their shells through the liberation that is a *Rocky Horror* shadow cast performance.

But not everyone is okay with Kenny (pronouns: any) and their cast and crew's plans to bring *Rocky Horror* to Rock Springs, and there are moments of pushback by some in the town, causing worry and wariness on the part of the actors. Yet Kenny's decision to lead with love yields surprising results — not least the impact this time-honored valentine to self-acceptance has on the troupe, many of whom have never performed at all, much less in such a cornerstone of queer culture. At a time in American life when LGBTQIA+ people face violence, intimidation, and legal threats — especially in places where queer visibility is rare — a performance like this, and Starling's goal of kindness, understanding, and love, is more poignant than ever. Soon the *Rocky Horror* message of “Don't dream it, be it” becomes a rallying cry for the Starling Company and the queer community of Rock Springs.

**World Premiere**  
Sat, June 6 - 8:15pm  
Village East by Angelika

**Second Screening**  
Mon, June 8 - 8:30pm  
Spring Studios

**Third Screening**  
Sat, June 13 - 8:15pm  
Village East by Angelika

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## INTRODUCTION

*“It’s easy to dream what you want to be, and what you want the world to be, but it takes real courage to actually go out and do it. It’s hard to do, especially in smaller communities.” — Kenny Starling*

For almost 50 years, the famous “flop-turned-phenomenon” *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* has inspired countless costumed homages. Yet most meaningfully, *Rocky Horror* and its characters (including Dr. Frank-N-Furter, Magenta, Janet, Brad, Eddie, Columbia, and Riff Raff) have cultivated connection — and given a voice to many a young person coming out — in the LGBTQIA+ community. The movie, its music, and its message of “Don’t dream it, be it” provide a dream space made real as fans put their all into emulating the cult classic live onstage as the film plays behind them in what is called a “shadow cast” performance, an affectionate tradition dating back to two years after the original film’s 1975 release.

But as hundreds of thousands of Rockys have been seduced by an equal number of Janets, and even more young people get inspired by the fishnet-adorned Frank (the “Sweet Transvestite” from *Transexual, Transylvania* — as if you didn’t know), no moment has seemed quite as dangerous for America’s LGBTQIA+ community than now. In the vibrant documentary *TIME WARP*, director ALLISON SLOAN BERG (*The Dog, Witches in Exile*) documents a present-day *Rocky Horror* shadow cast performance by a group called the Starling Company in rough-hewn Rock Springs, Wyoming, a mining town with a population of just over 22,000 located 3 hours south of Jackson Hole, 3 hours west of the state capital of Cheyenne...and 3 hours from Laramie, Wyoming, where Matthew Shepard was murdered in 1998 for being gay.

That Rock Springs had never seen anything quite like the Starling Company is perhaps obvious, and to state that there is an alarming rise in violence and intimidation against trans and gay people and Pride fests in rural America is terrifyingly all too true (as heard in the film, for far-right extremist groups, small towns offer “less security and less resistance”). But in October 2022, KENNY STARLING debuted the Rock Springs troupe with a drag performance of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* in which they appeared as Frank-N-Furter alongside a cast that included students, parents, a drag queen, a Japanese exchange student, and an ex-cop/city council member playing the bandaged muscle-monster Rocky. The

result was emboldening and energizing. But the drag and queer joy, not to mention the pelvic thrusts, drove some insane, as the “Time Warp” song goes.

Berg says discovering Starling and their troupe in Rock Springs was like a bolt of lightning.

“It was 2022, Roe was overturned that June, and people were talking about how we were regressing as a nation, wondering what rights we were going to lose next, and that it felt like we’re living in a literal time warp,” says Berg. “One night I was thinking about Frank-N-Furter — as one does — and the ‘time warp’ idea coalesced. Covid had shut down so many live performances. I thought, Can you even put on a *Rocky Horror* performance now, and would that be a problem in certain states?”

“I started researching theater companies that were doing exactly that in maybe three or four different red states,” says Berg. “I went on a fansite and found different announcements and where they were taking place: One was at a former church in Mississippi and looked perfect, but there was no shadow cast; it was just the movie. Another took place on Halloween, which isn’t [that unusual]. One was in a liberal college town in a red state, so that wasn’t quite right. Then I found a casting call for the Starling Company, and I looked it up on Instagram and it said, ‘The first drag and queer theater company in Rock Springs, Wyoming.’ I was like, oh this is getting even better!”

“When I reached out to Kenny Starling, they thought it was a scam,” laughs Berg. “I didn’t know they’d started the company just 10 days earlier — their first company! We talked a few days later, which happened to be on the first day of auditions. On our Zoom call, we felt a kinship. I felt like what they created the company for was *exactly* what I would have dreamed to capture in a documentary.”

“With Allison, it was an immediate connection,” says Starling, a native of South Carolina who had moved to Wyoming. “I was like, yeah, this person’s going to be family right away.”

### OVER AT THE FRANKENSTEIN PLACE...

Berg quickly got to Wyoming for the start of rehearsals and hit the ground running. “I had funding for two weeks, but I’d packed for two months because I thought to myself, ‘This is going to work out *somehow!*’ — with some projects, you have to be your delusional, optimistic self,” says Berg. “Some days I was filming by myself, other days a friend would drive down from Jackson Hole, or friends from New York would come with me to film. Because we didn’t have a lot of funding, the trajectory of the film

actually mirrored the trajectory of Kenny’s show; as the Starling Company gathered steam, so did my film. Both the show and the documentary aligned with a grassroots-driven idea.”

Though she had originally considered including three or four other productions in different places, Berg says that “After the first week or two, I was telling my producers, ‘The whole film is going to be *Rocky Horror* and *Rock Springs* — we don’t need to go anywhere else, it’s all here.’ It’s a verité film, but it’s also a character-driven film, and there were so many incredible people who comprised this cast. In terms of filming people in the cast, if we captured something with our cameras someone wasn’t comfortable with, they could speak with us about it. I feel like when you make a film like this, you’re asking for people’s trust, and you have to earn it, and you need to stick with it. I wanted to make a film everyone would feel proud of, and proud of the experience that they were a part of.”

Starling guided the troupe as manager, director, and actor while getting props, costumes, and staging set up, and dealing with residents seen in the film expressing— to varying levels of agitation — discomfort with the show. All while being aware of the threats to people of any intersectionality in rural areas like *Rock Springs*.

“The way I present myself helps people feel more comfortable in situations. It helps ease them in because I see people, and I see when people can have anxieties,” says Starling. “There was some general nervousness in the cast because they’re theater kids, and they want to do really well. But everybody was so excited at what could be because here we were starting something new and that was surreal for a lot of people. Making a documentary about it felt like we were just adding one more positive thing to the experience — so everybody was down to clown, basically.”

“Kenny is so charismatic — and the mission of their theatre company, and what they are trying to do, is so amazing — but also, the people who ended up being a part of their company had incredible stories,” says Berg. “I felt that everybody in the cast — Kaley, who plays Magenta; Tasha and Hana, who share the role of Janet; Tim, who plays Rocky; Gabriel, who plays Riff Raff; Valerie, who plays Eddie; and the ensemble of Transylvanians like Dejanae, Megan, and Bones — would be great to follow.”

Says Starling, “I’ve had a lot of experience in other places, particularly on the East Coast, which is, of course, a completely different culture when it comes to theater — and the performing arts in general — than Wyoming. So, coming to *Rock Springs* and doing that with a shadow cast production was really an exercise in making peace and learning to meet people where they are artistically and in their life. Then

it was crucial to just be able to go with the flow, and help them find the best of themselves, which is the whole point of *Rocky Horror* and this queer art that we're doing. When Allison and her team came in, and were so gracious and understanding with every interaction, it was a little like therapy for me, personally!"

### THE SWORD OF DAMOCLES

TIME WARP captures a celebration of queer joy in a place where it may not be understood and sees people coming together as they face anti-LGBTQIA+ discrimination, anger, and other hurdles.

"Not everyone in town was supportive of this production, as we see in the film," says Berg. "But it was interesting to see Kenny's reaction to all of that... they were very determined and very confident, and they knew how important this show was to the people involved. We see that in the film, and about how so much of what Kenny does is about inclusivity. They are leading with, and fighting with, love."

Says Starling, "When I first heard [the complaints], I broke down in tears — I'm sad for these people who will never experience the queer joy that my cast and I get to experience. Somebody provided **that** for me when I was younger: a space to be myself, to drop the mask, to try new things. That's really what leads me through all this, being able to provide that to other people."

Theater, and both the film and performance of *Rocky Horror*, anchors Starling's origin story.

"When I was about 8 my parents got divorced, and my siblings and I lived with our mom, and she got into theater," says Starling. "A lot of the actors she worked with were drag queens and drag kings in a small South Carolina town. So, this explosion of queer culture — and Southern queer culture, in particular — came into my life at 8 or 9 years old, and it was around that time that I watched *Rocky Horror* for the first time with my mom, and I was immediately hooked. 'Oh, there's somebody on screen who has curly hair like me, who isn't quite a boy and isn't quite a girl, but is really alluring'...and it stuck with me, and continued to stick with me until about age 15, when I saw *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*. And then I had an idea: I said to friends, 'What about doing *Rocky Horror*? There's a cult following, and it would be a good fundraiser for our community.' So that was my deep dive into performing *Rocky Horror* at age 16 or 17, when I first directed the show and played Frank-N-Furter."

Says Berg, “I can’t imagine what it’s like to be a young person now in this country, especially if you’re part of the queer community. TIME WARP is a way to celebrate who you are and the people you love. It shows that when you’re there and visible for each other, there’s a strength that can change things.”

Getting the production “on its feet” had its harrowing moments. “There were a few rehearsals where I was worried for Kenny in terms of, was their troupe going to be ready in time?” says Berg. “Everyone had school schedules or work schedules, and the college kids had [schedules] to navigate around. But then, as often happens, down to the wire, people pull it all together.”

“When the whole production was finished, we all felt like a family, the cast *and* the documentary team,” says Berg. “It was such a joy, truly a queer joy, to be there in the room with them. It just felt like, at a moment that often feels so hard, to make a project that we knew could be inspiring — and inspiring and joyous for young people, and especially for young people in rural areas — I felt so grateful.”

#### SCIENCE FICTION/DOUBLE FEATURE

“We felt in many ways like our trajectories kind of mirrored each other, Kenny’s show and this documentary,” says Berg. “I remember some of the cast members saying to crew members that they felt almost like us being there was like they were performing for *us*. It made rehearsals better. That was cool because sometimes as a doc film team, you wonder, ‘Are we just in the way?’ But we were really welcomed. Our being there was additive rather than something that people had to put up with.”

The film crew got to see many of Starling’s cast truly become themselves.

“I watched people open up and change, and not only the cast,” says Berg. “The community Kenny built ended up building even *more* community. For a few cast members, we literally witnessed them coming out of their shells. So, some of it wasn’t about what they said to us, but what you see. [Witnessing the cast flourishing] was exactly what we hoped the message of this film would be.”

“How many small business owners, or how many theater owners, get an opportunity to talk through in real time the issues they’re facing within a community?” says Starling of filming TIME WARP. “I was also leaving a relationship, moving houses, *and* getting the production going. All these things were coming at me at the same time as I was 25 years old, trying to figure out myself in the world.”

“This wasn’t just an opportunity to connect with others in the community — it was also a chance to connect with people I had no awareness of existing before this happened, who were intrigued by the work I wanted to do in this small community in the middle of nowhere,” adds Starling. “Then more people joined, and people kept believing in what we were doing, which is so great and so humbling.”

The film’s executive producers include performers and Broadway legends JOSH GAD (*The Book of Mormon*), BILLY PORTER (*Kinky Boots*, *Cabaret*), and JOHN CAMERON MITCHELL (*Hedwig and the Angry Inch*), whose help and participation was invaluable, Berg says.

“John Cameron Mitchell was kind enough to host a screening of a previous film I directed, and I’m such an enormous fan of John’s work,” says Berg. “When we were making this, and when Kenny did *Hedwig* in Rock Springs, I sent John a sizzle reel of this film and he was immediately supportive. And Billy Porter was the same — we shared the sizzle reel, and Billy saw what was there and was game to come on board. With Josh Gad, a mutual person in our lives thought he’d be supportive of this project, and they were right. Josh has been great. It’s been wonderful to have them all on board.”

Says Gad, “TIME WARP is exactly the kind of documentary that needs to be made and seen right now. Its relevance is in fact unfortunate. Its timeliness is yet another reminder of just how far we still have to go with regard to simply allowing people to be who they are, without ever having to apologize and/or hide. With *Rocky Horror* once again back in the zeitgeist, now is the time to celebrate this story of perseverance, acceptance, and unconditional love, especially since we seem to have entered a time warp in which all of these ideals are under attack.”

“Places like Rock Springs are the areas in America where we need to be doing the work” of making things better, says Berg. “I hope this film can serve not only as a way of experiencing the queer joy Kenny brought with this show and their company, but also that other people can be inspired to do something like this in the places *they* live. As Kenny says, ‘If it can happen in Rock Springs, it can happen anywhere!’”

###

**CREDITS:**

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**PRODUCED BY**

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**PRODUCED BY**

JEN CHAIKEN

**EDITED BY**

FRANK KERAUDREN

**EXECUTIVE PRODUCER**

JOSH GAD

**EXECUTIVE PRODUCER**

BILLY PORTER

**EXECUTIVE PRODUCER**

JOHN CAMERON MITCHELL

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**EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS**

JAMES COSTA  
GARY HESS

**INSPIRED BY THE EXTRAORDINARY WORK OF RICHARD O'BRIEN, THE ORIGINAL  
DREAMER, WITHOUT WHOM NONE OF THIS WOULD EXIST**

**INTRODUCING:**

KENNY STARLING

**AND FEATURING THE CAST AND CREW OF THE STARLING COMPANY'S PRODUCTION  
OF THE ROCKY HORROR PICTURE SHOW:**

Emcee..... Tara Lipsyncki  
The Lips..... Aimee White  
Brad Majors..... Devin Manfull  
Janet Weiss..... Hana Tanaka / Tasha Seppie  
The Criminologist..... Roy O. Hansen Jr.  
Riff Raff..... Gabriel Garcia  
Magenta..... Kaley Sikora  
Columbia..... Chelsea Putnam  
Rocky Horror..... Tim Robinson  
Frank n' Furter..... Kenny Starling  
Eddie..... Valerie McCoy  
Dr. Everett Scott..... Randy Randles  
The Transylvanians... Max "Bones" Rogers  
Dejanae Westbrook  
Ethan Travers  
Marquel Hawkins  
Megan Rice  
Molly Beard  
Hana Tanaka / Tasha Seppie  
  
Director..... Kenny Starling  
Props..... Shelby Pergande, Nessi Pergande  
Costumes..... Ivy Kropf, Sue Lozier, Shelby Pergande, Nessi Pergande,  
Shawna Randles, Tara Lipsyncki  
Puppet Designer.... Dan Varas  
Tech Crew..... Cadence Alldredge, Olliver Turner, Deku

Photography..... Rose Basham

**CO-EXECUTIVE PRODUCER**  
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Allison Walsh  
Derek Wieseahn  
Allison Berg

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**MUSIC BY**

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Dash Hammerstein  
Jordi Nus  
Elizabeth P.W.

**MUSIC SUPERVISOR**

Doug Bernheim

**LEAD FIELD PRODUCER**

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**FIELD PRODUCERS**

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