

Filmmaker Statement

JOHN HEMMER & THE SHOWGIRLS

When I met John, he was humble about his past, but I sensed a mix of pride and regret under the surface. What started as a short nostalgia piece turned into an exploration of resilience in the face of adversity, and the increasing importance of purpose as a driving force in one's senior years.

John's recollections were of the golden age in live entertainment. He and his show business cohort are the embodiment of this unique lost period of American nightlife. They performed at large-scale supper clubs such as Lou Walters' World Famous Latin Quarter, On and Off-Broadway productions, as well as smaller regional rooms and cabarets that populated cities throughout the United States and beyond. The nightclub era from the 1920s through the mid-century was a heyday for performing arts and New York City was a mecca.

JOHN HEMMER & THE SHOWGIRLS is also a personal journey, told through the eyes of singer/entertainer, John Hemmer. John graced many stages during his time and worked for decades to preserve his Latin Quarter collective's legacy. More so, however, this documentary is a story about someone who led a remarkable life, enjoyed great career highs and faced serious obstacles as they presented themselves, coming out stronger on the other side. I believe it's John's creative spirit and relationships that aided in the positivity and profound fortitude he exhibited throughout his life.

John and his fellow entertainers bring to light the significant link between community and vitality. Our personal and shared histories shape who we are, bind us, and contribute to our greater understanding of ourselves as a culture and society.

My hope is that this backstage glimpse at a bygone era also reveals ways in which creativity and community aid in our ability to feel relevant, and help us to harvest meaning through our daily lives as we grow older.

The broader project, John Hemmer Archive continues John's work by actively documenting performer experiences through oral history interviews, the collection of memorabilia and their exhibition. Its mission is to raise awareness and produce a resource for a significant and underrepresented era in music and performing arts, which deserves its due recognition in our cultural record.

Kirsten Larvick