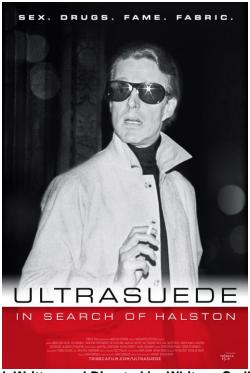


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A Vainglorious Pictures Production

### **ULTRASUEDE: IN SEARCH OF HALSTON**



Produced, Written and Directed by Whitney Sudler-Smith

Available on VOD December 26, 2011

### Select Theatrical Release

New York: January 20, 2012 at IFC Center

Los Angeles: February 10, 2012 at Laemmle Music Hall 3

Miami: February 16, 2012 at O Cinema

New Orleans: February 24, 2012 at Zeitgeist Multi- Disciplinary Arts Center

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#### **FILM SYNOPSIS**

"The 70's belonged to Halston"
The Fashion Walk of Fame

The 1970s, that glittering decade often defined by Saturday Night Fever and Sunday morning hangovers, is enjoying an "everything- old- is- new –again" moment. Baby boomers who lived through it fondly recall a time when fun wasn't hazardous to your health. Younger generations, who have no first-hand knowledge of those years, are experiencing "era envy," soaking up the movies and the music, and wishing they had seen all the high times and high style first-hand. Life seemed more glamorous then. Beauty was more beautiful, sex was sexier.

No one represented the 70's quite like legendary designer Halston and, in his new documentary, "Ultrasuede; In Search of Halston" filmmaker Whitney Sudler - Smith takes us on a fabulous fun-and-fact filled journey through that man's life and times. Smith has had a lifelong fascination with the 70's look and lifestyle and, using his self-confessed "era envy" to great effect, he reconstructs, recaptures, and revels in the glories of this truly great American artist. Halston was our country's first celebrity designer—both haute couturier and household name. In the 60's he took society by storm as "hat maker to the stars," and was propelled to the forefront when he created the inimitable pillbox hat that Jacqueline Kennedy wore to her husband's inauguration. When he launched his own line of clothing, his circle of clients—and close friends—included the most talked-about women of the world; Elizabeth Taylor, Liza Minnelli, Betty Ford, Babe Paley, Bianca Jagger, and Lauren Bacall.

This was a time when women really wanted to move. It was, after all, the disco era, and "shake your booty" was the motto. Halston's look, sleek by day, slinky by night, matched the mood of the times perfectly. He invented, in the words of Vogue's Andre Leon Talley, "casual chic." At the height of his fame in the '70s, he truly was the Emperor, not only of fashion, but of Style, putting his name, and his distinctive aesthetic, on everything from luxurious towels and sheets, to sunglasses, carpets, shoes, gloves, and a phenomenally successful line of fragrances. There was also his one-of-a-kind signature fabric, Ultrasuede, which was every bit as smooth as Halston himself.

Halston was also emperor of another world, namely New York City nightlife, and the fabled Studio 54 was where he held court. He surrounded himself with people so famous that none of them, like him, required more than one name -- Andy, Truman, Liza, Bianca. Every night was a party, full of dancing, drinking, and drugging, and every woman who mattered dressed in Halston. If any single image defines those divinely decadent nights it is a sexy star or a gorgeous "Halstonette," spinning on the dance floor in a swirl of sequins every bit as shiny as the disco ball above them.

At his pinnacle, Halston sold his business -- and his name – for an astronomical sum of money. Now he had a fortune to match his fame, but it couldn't protect him from the loss of control, both professionally and personally. With the rise of the Regan era, "Just say no" became the catch phrase, and Halston's many excesses and extravagances were suddenly out of fashion. Locked out of his own company, and unable to use the very name he had turned into a global brand, he dropped out of sight. His death from AIDS, a few years later, was final evidence of the end of an era. But Halston's glorious clothes, still worn on the red carpet today, and his concept of designer as brand name, prove that he was a true visionary.

Two years in the making, ULTRASUEDE combines a prodigious amount of archival footage, (meticulously researched and sourced from every possible outlet), and stunning still photographs brought to thrilling life with imaginative 3D effects. Most importantly, there is a fabulous array of interviews with various cronies, cohorts, commentators, witnesses, and survivors of Halston's empire: his best friend, Liza Minnelli; two of his leading models, Anjelica Huston and Pat Cleveland; fellow designers Dianne von Furstenberg, Stephen Burrows, Naeem Khan, and Ralph Rucci; musicians Billy Joel and Nile Rogers (both of whom used "Halston" as a lyric in hit songs); journalists Bob Colacello and Glenn O'Brien (of Andy Warhol's Interview), Jim Moore of GQ, Cathy Horyn of the New York Times, Amy Fine Collins of Vanity Fair, and Andre Leon Talley of Vogue, among others.

#### A CONVERSATION WITH DIRECTOR WHITNEY SUDLER-SMITH

#### Q: How did ULTRASUEDE come to you as a film - what was your inspiration?

Obviously I'd heard about Halston. Friends of my parents would talk about him at cocktail parties, and you couldn't escape the media attention he got. To me, he was just this incredibly handsome, cool guy, with a cigarette in his hand and a beautiful woman on his arm. How could I NOT find that image appealing? But, there's always something private behind every noteworthy public image. What could be a better basis for a documentary than juxtaposing the two?

Having grown up on films like 'Smokey and The Bandit' and 'Saturday Night Fever,' something about the quirkiness of the 1970's appealed to me from a young age. As I read more about the era, specifically New York of the 70's, I got more interested in doing a film about that time. I kept coming across the name 'Halston' and figured that making a film about him would be a great way to explore this unique slice of history.

## Q: You take us on such a fun-filled journey through Halston's life and times, including the glittering heyday of the 70's. No one represented the 70's quite like Halston. What are your thoughts on the decade of the 70's, and Halston's place within it?

The 70's were nuts. Who doesn't love the 70's? Everything was outrageous, everything was big. It was before AIDS and the whole city partied and discoed with wild abandon. Halston took that to a whole new level but, in his case, it wasn't just decadence or excess; it was chic, it was stylish, it was what everyone wanted to do. And, in light of the incredible hangover people suffered following Nixon, people yearned for things that were fresh and fun and easy. Halston's designs reflected that. He was much more than the face of Studio 54. I think Halston's style defined the decade's style.

Also, there was an inspiring cross-pollination of art, music and fashion in New York during the 70's. The city was also in many ways a living contradiction – the glitz, glamour and all-night parties at Studio 54 standing in stark contrast to the reality on the street. The city was at its creative pinnacle and socio-economic nadir at the same time. Halston seemed to me to embody this compelling paradox, and the era, perfectly; his incredible talent, his larger-than-life persona and ultimately his self-destruction dancing the night away together. As designer Ralph Rucci says in the film, Halston represented a time when 'hedonism was chic.'

#### Q: How did the film get off the ground? What was the process of getting the film made?

The film started off very modestly; it was initially an exploration of the great eras of decadence (Paris in the 20's, Berlin 30's), with a focus on New York in the 70's, and Halston as its figurehead. But, the more I delved into the subject, and the more people I talked to about Halston, the more I realized what a great story I had. Once it was purely about Halston, I was able to get some people to invest in the project, since no one could believe there hadn't already been a movie done about him. I gathered a team of talented producers and editors to help me shoot and shape the material. (They include writer/producer Anne Goursaud, producers Adam Bardach and Nicholas Simon and editor John Paul Horstmann.)

# Q: The film includes a fabulous array of interviews with various cronies, cohorts, commentators and witnesses of the Halston empire. What were your biggest challenges during filming?

Other than dealing with insane scheduling conflicts with all these Fashionistas (which is why it took two years to film), I think a greater challenge was getting a lot of Halston's associates to open up; a pretty salacious tell-all book was written about Halston in the early 90's, and someone had been trying for awhile to do a movie based on the book, so people were reticent to talk to me. They thought I had some association with the book, or was going to drag his name through the mud again with the drugs and nightlife, etc. I think when people learned I had interviewed Liza

Minnelli (his best friend), and that Andre Leon Talley was onboard to guide me through the various facets of Halston's life and fashion legacy, it was a lot easier to get other people to sign on. But that suspicion still exists. And of course we do mention the nightlife...

#### Q: What prompted you to be an on-camera character in your own movie?

This all began with my personal interest in the era, and I figured that if I served as a kind of "tour guide," the audience--especially younger audiences--would discover the material at the same time as I did. I really wanted to avoid a dry, journalistic, sober approach to history, especially because there was never an era LESS sober than the 70s! I also found that the interview process was helped enormously whenever I was on camera, alongside my subject. People were much more comfortable chatting with me because we were both "in it together" instead of my hiding behind the camera. Since I was completely myself, even when I was a little nervous or awkward, they were able to be themselves too.

### Q: You say you are "yourself" in the film, but it seems as if you are actually playing a role-a sort of 70s version of Whitney.

I always wondered what it might have been like to be there, at that moment, in those places, with those people, so I thought it would be fun to actually dress the part and show up in a variety of period looks. (I have to confess that a lot of the time I like to dress that like that anyway!)

## Q: Halston was clearly the country's first celebrity designer, both an haute couturier and household name. But what do you think people will learn about Halston that they weren't aware of before the film?

I'm hoping people will look beyond the years of partying at Studio 54, and really see what a great genius this man was; he put America on the map fashion-wise, and was a true artist, more than anything else.

#### Q: What do you want people to take away from this film?

Just how monumental he was within the world of fashion world. There was literally nothing small about him! He was an incredible visionary, and was the first American designer to exploit the world of licensing (he had his name on everything from luggage to carpets to Girl Scout uniforms). He also started a line at JC Penney which, at the time, was scandalous, and irreparably hurt the brand name (the line was discontinued after a year). Now, everyone, from Karl Lagerfeld to Isaac Mizrahi has some deal with a major retailer. Halston really wanted to bring high fashion to middle America...he wanted this country to look fabulous!

#### FILMMAKER BIOS

#### WHITNEY SUDLER-SMITH, Director

Whitney Smith was born in Washington DC. Having worked as screenwriter and filmmaker in Los Angeles for the past 13 years, ULTRASUEDE: IN SEARCH OF HALSTON is his feature-length directorial debut.

#### ADAM BARDACH, Producer

Adam Bardach has produced numerous documentary films including HATE.COM and A SEASON OF FURY for HBO's America Undercover and The Monster That Ate Hollywood for the PBS series Frontline. Adam recently produced and directed LIVING WITH LEW, the critically acclaimed documentary about a young writer's efforts to make a feature film after a diagnosis of Lou Gehrig's disease and Q: THE MAN, an intimate portrait of music legend Quincy Jones.

Adam was born and raised in London, England. His father, Gene Gutowski, was producer of early Polanski classics REPULSION, CUL-DE-SAC, FEARLESS VAMPIRE KILLERS and the Academy Award® winner THE PIANIST.

#### ANNE GOURSAUD, Writer/Producer

Anne Goursaud is an accomplished film director and editor.

It was Francis Ford Coppola who first spotted Anne's talent, giving her the chance to edit ONE FROM THE HEART. Since that time, she had directed and edited a wide range of projects and she has worked with some of the most highly acclaimed professionals in the movie industry. Her directing credits include the dark thrillers EMBRACE OF THE VAMPIRE and POISON IVY II, both for New Line Cinema, and the erotic drama LOVE IN PARIS (*Another 9 1/2 Weeks*) for Trimark. Her editing credits include Francis Ford Coppola's teen classic THE OUTSIDERS starring Matt Dillon and Tom Cruise, the Academy Award® hit BRAM STOKER'S DRACULA starring Gary Oldman and Anthony Hopkins, and IRONWEED starring Jack Nicholson and Meryl Streep for which they both received Academy Award® nominations.

Anne also edited Bruce Beresford's romantic comedies HER ALIBI and CRIMES OF THE HEART, John Duigan's epic drama WIDE SARAGASSO SEA, Janusz Kaminski's horror flick LOST SOULS, and the sequel to Chinatown, THE TWO JAKES, directed and starring Jack Nicholson. Most recently, she edited Universal Pictures' innovative Outkast movie-musical IDLEWILD and the edgy new independent feature EXPIRED, which premiered at Cannes. Currently, Anne is preparing a feature film starring Stephen Dorff, CORONADO. She has also finished a new script based on the true story of actress Jean Seberg, LITTLE AMERICAN.

Anne received a License en Histoire de l'Art from the Sorbonne and a Masters in Fine Arts from Columbia University. She is a member of the Director's Guild of America, the Editor's Guild, A.C.E, and the Academy of Arts and Sciences.

#### **NICHOLAS SIMON, Producer**

Nicholas Simon brings over fifteen years of exemplary production experience in both film and commercial work to his role as Producer. Nicholas began his career at Columbia University. After working with director Johnathan Demme at his production company, Clineca Estetica, Nicholas traveled to South East Asia where in 1995 he established the first international caliber production company in South East Asia. He has since opened up Indochina Productions, having recently completed a shoot for Legendary Pictures, I AM THAT MAN, in Cambodia.

Nicholas served as producer on numerous feature films including BEAUTIFUL COUNTRY (dir. Hans Petter Moland) STEP INTO LIQUID (dir. Dana Brown), and CITY OF GHOSTS (dir. Matt

Dillon). He has worked hand in hand with noted directors and producers Terence Malick, Oliver Stone, and Tran Anh Hung.

Nicholas has produced a multitude of award winning TV commercials with directors Joe Pytka, Vincent Ward, Ho Hsao Hsien and Carlton Chase among others.

His commercial work has won awards including the Gold at Cannes. His feature film work has screened at international venues such as Tribeca, Berlin and Cannes film festivals.

Since returning to Los Angeles in early 2004, Nicholas has produced among other films, the forthcoming R-rated comedy, THE BEST AND THE BRIGHTEST, starring Neil Patrick Harris, Amy Sedaris and Chris McDonald.

Current projects include producing screenwriter Scott Kosar's (THE MACHINIST, THE CRAZIES, AND TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE) directorial debut, a screenplay adaptation of Ed Sanders book, *The Family.* 

#### MARK URMAN, Executive Producer

Veteran film industry executive Mark Urman has been a leading force in the independent arena for over two decades. In July of 2009 he formed Paladin, his latest distribution venture, and the company released its first title, the highly acclaimed drama, DISGRACE, starring John Malkovich last fall.

For seven years, Urman headed up THINKFilm, a company he co-founded in 2001. THINK's slate included such acclaimed and successful films as SPELLBOUND, THE ARISTOCRATS, STRANGERS WITH CANDY, SHORTBUS, AVENUE MONTAIGNE, and HALF NELSON, which garnered a Best Actor Oscar Nomination for its star Ryan Gosling. In 2004, both THE STORY OF THE WEEPING CAMEL and BORN INTO BROTHELS received Academy Award® nominations in the feature Documentary category; with the latter taking home the prize. MURDERBALL, a double-prize winner at Sundance, was nominated for an Academy Award® in 2005, as was the Sundance 2007 prizewinner WAR/DANCE. That same year, TAXI TO THE DARK SIDE won the Academy Award® for Best Documentary, and more recent films Urman released at THINK included Sidney Lumet's BEFORE THE DEVIL KNOWS YOU'RE DEAD, Helen Hunt's THEN SHE FOUND ME, and Werner Herzog's Academy Award® nominated ENCOUNTERS AT THE END OF THE WORLD. Urman served as executive producer on MURDERBALL and "WAR/DANCE.

Prior to the formation of THINKFilm, Urman was co-president of Lionsgate Releasing, where he engineered the marketing and distribution of such hits as GODS AND MONSTERS, AFFLICTION, AMERICAN PSYCHO, DOGMA, THE RED VIOLIN and THE DINNER GAME, garnering nine Academy Award® nominations during his four years with the company. While at Lionsgate, he optioned, developed, and executive produced MONSTER'S BALL for the company, for which Halle Berry won the Academy Award® for Best Actress.

Urman has an impressive resume of film industry credentials in a career than spans over three decades. Prior to Lionsgate, he served as Senior Vice President at the international marketing and public relations firm Dennis Davidson Associates, where he headed the company's domestic division. While there, he worked on innumerable campaigns for such landmark independent films as THE COOK, THE THIEF, HIS WIFE, AND HER LOVER, THE CRYING GAME, LIKE WATER FOR CHOCOLATE, SHINE, SECRETS AND LIES, and BREAKING THE WAVES.

Before joining DDA in 1989, Urman spent nearly six years as Vice President of East Coast publicity at Columbia Pictures and, from 1982-84, he was head of marketing at Triumph Films, Columbia's specialized film distribution division. He began his career at United Artists, where he spent several years in international marketing and publicity.

Other Paladin releases include the indie comedy SPLINTERHEADS by Brant Sersen, whose previous film, BLACKBALLED won the SXSW Audience in 2005; THE LOSS OF A TEARDROP DIAMOND, based on a previously unproduced original screenplay by the legendary Tennessee Williams and starring Bryce Dallas Howard, Chris Evans, Ellen Burstyn, and Ann-Margret; Jeb Stuart's civil rights drama, BLOOD DONE SIGN MY NAME starring Nate Parker and Ricky Schroder; Shana Feste's acclaimed drama, THE GREATEST starring Pierce Brosnan, Carey Mulligan and Susan Sarandon, and HANDSOME HARRY, a drama starring Jamey Sheridan, Steve Buscemi, Aidan Quinn, and Campbell Scott, directed by noted director and indie pioneer, Bette Gordon.

#### **SHAWN HOPKINS SIMON, Executive Producer**

Shawn Hopkins Simon is a Los Angeles based literary manager and producer. Since beginning her career working for WME's (then ICM) literary agent Robert Newman right out of UC Berkeley in 1990, Shawn has worked with film and television writers and directors. Her credits include raising financing for client Burr Steer's film IGBY GOES DOWN, to executive producing this the 2010 Sundance Film Grand Prize Festival winner WINTER'S BONE.

Whitney Sudler-Smith's directorial debut ULTRASUEDE: IN SEARCH OF HALSTON has been a passion project and highlight of her career. Shawn is married to producer Nicholas Simon and they have a three-year old wonderful daughter Lulu.

#### JOHN PAUL HORSTMAN, Associate Producer

John Paul Horstmann is a picture editor residing in Echo Park, Los Angeles. In 2000 he designed a student television station at the University of Pittsburgh, where he taught editing and helped students produce their own television shows. In 2002 he was selected as one of two recipients of the coveted America Cinema Editors Internship. He has worked in feature editing since 2002, on films such as IDLEWILD (Outkast), THE AIR I BREATHE, and THE ASSASSINATION OF JESSE JAMES BY THE COWARD ROBERT ROBERT FORD, under many gifted feature editors. He has cut music videos for bands such as Modest Mouse and Bodies of Water, as well as various pilots and short films. ULTRASUEDE is his first film as picture editor to be released. He is currently cutting a dramatic feature on Maria Callas called MASTER CLASS, for director Faye Dunaway.

#### CHRISTOPHER FRANKE, Composer

A longtime member of the pioneering German electronic unit Tangerine Dream, keyboardist/composer Christopher Franke was born in Berlin on April 6, 1953, subsequently studying classical music and composition at the Berlin Conservatory. While playing in the progressive-rock group Agitation Free, he and his mentor set up a recording studio and began teaching courses in improvisation, laying the groundwork for what would become the Berlin School of Electronic Music, Through the school, Franke met Edgar Froese and Peter Baumann. joining them in Tangerine Dream in 1970. He remained with the group for nearly two decades, during that time greatly expanding the parameters of electronic music through his contributions to landmark records including Zeit, Atem, and Phaedra as well as influential film soundtracks like Sorcerer, Risky Business, and Legend. One of the first musicians to explore the full creative scope of the synthesizer, Franke proved particularly innovative in employing sequencers as percussion instruments, forging the dense, throbbing sound which became Tangerine Dream's trademark during the mid- to late '70s. He left the group in 1988 to mount a solo career, settling in Los Angeles two years later to pursue film work. In 1991, in addition to forming the Berlin Symphonic Film Orchestra (BSFO), Franke issued his debut solo album, Pacific Coast Highway. In 1993, he founded his own label, Sonic Images, subsequently releasing several collections of his music for the syndicated sci-fi series Babylon 5 as well as his continuing solo recordings. Until 2010, Franke composed the music for over 500 TV episodes and 30 feature movies.

#### **EDGAR ROTHERMICH, Composer**

Born in Germany, Edgar Rothermich studied music at the University of Arts in Berlin and graduated 1989 with a master's degree in piano and sound engineering. He worked as a composer and music producer in Berlin and moved to Los Angeles in 1991 where he continued his work on numerous projects in the music and film industry (The Celestine Prophecy, Outer Limits, Babylon 5, What the Bleep do we know, Fuel, Big Money Rustlas)

#### THOMAS GOLUBIC, Music Supervisor

Thomas Golubic is a Los Angeles-based music supervisor, DJ and Grammy-nominated record producer. His credits include the HBO series "Six Feet Under" and the AMC series "Breaking Bad" among other high-profile film & television projects. Thomas was nominated for Grammy awards twice for producing volumes 1 and 2 of the "Six Feet Under" soundtrack album, and with former partner Gary Calamar was responsible for the synchronization of Sia's "Breathe Me" in the final scene of the series. It is widely considered one of the most memorable uses of music in television, and launched Sia's music career in America.

Thomas' formative years, musically speaking, were spent as a DJ and music programmer for tastemaker LA radio station KCRW 89.9 FM. After ending his radio show in 2008, Thomas turned his attention to music production and live audio/video DJ work. He formed The Arbiters, a music collective that create mash-up music productions, with clients including Levi's, Nissan among others. Thomas has also become known as an innovative club DJ spinning broadly eclectic music sets often with live synchronized visuals. His SYNCHRONIZE re-score project, featuring live DJ re-scores of feature films has been featured at the Sundance Film Festival, Dubrovnik Film Festival and U.S. Comedy Arts Festivals, and monthly performances in Los Angeles. Turner Classic Movies profiled Thomas and the SYNCHRONIZE project in 2009.

#### **CREDITS**

Produced, Written, and Directed by: Whitney Sudler-Smith

Written and Produced by:
Anne Goursaud

Produced by: Adam Bardach

Produced by: Tim Maloney Nicholas Simon

Executive Producer: Shawn Simon

Executive Producer:
Mark Urman

Associate Producers: Nathan Cornett John Paul Horstmann Alisha Takahashi

Edited by: John Paul Horstmann

Original Music by: Christopher Franke Edgar Rothermich

Director of Photography: Scott Miller

> Music Supervisor: Thomas Golubic

Assistant Editor: Nathan Cornett Sound Design: Sound Guru

Production Sound Recordist Irin Strauss Still Animation by Morgan Locke

Music Coordinator Yvette Metoyer

Production Accountant Joan DiPietro

Rights and Clearances Coordinator
Alisha Takahashi

Researcher
John Paul Horstmann

Additional Camera by
Adam Bardach
Andreas Burgess
Nathan Cornett
Langdon Doty
Rory King
George Reasner
Ray Flynn

Additional Sound by Morgan Locke

Additional Visual Effects Go Aoyama

> HD Up-Res Artist Brian Battles

Music Editing by Erik Desiderio

Additional Sound Editor Tom Boykin

Music Consultation by Opher Yisraeli, Songs To Your Eyes Ltd.

Post Production Sound Services by Wildfire Post Production Studios

Post Facilities Manager Zoë Bower

Re-Recording Mixer Chris David

ADR Recordist Wade Barnett

ADR Mixer Travis Mackay

Dolby Sound Consultant Bryan Pennington

Post Production Color Grading Services by Westwind Media

Colorist Michael Levy

Title Design by Deborah Ross Film Design

Title Animation and Montage Effects Rhino

Creative Director Anna Meister

Head of Production Karen Bianca Bisignano

> Digital Artist Marc Steinberg

Digital Artist Alex Davidson

Production Coordinator Jacqueline Pirolo

VP of Features Karin Levinson Legal Counsel
Michael C. Donaldson
Dean R. Cheley
Donaldson & Callif
Jonathan Gray
Gray Krauss Des Rochers LLP

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