

SCOTTY

--- AND THE ---

SECRET HISTORY OF HOLLYWOOD

Directed by Matt Tyrnauer



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SYNOPSIS:

Scotty and the Secret History of Hollywood is the deliciously scandalous story of Scotty Bowers, a handsome ex-Marine who landed in Hollywood after World War II and became confidante, aide-de-camp and lover to many of Hollywood's greatest male—and female—stars. In the 1940s and '50s, Scotty ran a gas station in the shadow of the studio lots where he would connect his friends with actors and actresses who had to hide their true sexual identities for fear of police raids at gay bars, societal shunning and career suicide. An unsung Hollywood legend, Bowers would cater to the sexual appetites of celebrities—straight and gay—for decades.

In 2012, he finally spilled his secrets in the New York Times best-selling memoir *Full Service: My Adventures in Hollywood and the Secret Sex Lives of the Stars*, which revealed a dramatic, pre-Stonewall alternate history of Hollywood. While the studio PR machines were promoting their stars as wholesome and monogamous, Bowers was fulfilling the true desires of many of them. This cinéma-vérité documentary by director Matt Tyrnauer (*Valentino: The Last Emperor*) tells his story, as well as presents eye-opening takes on icons from the Hollywood Golden Age including Cary Grant, Katharine Hepburn, Spencer Tracy, Lana Turner, Ava Gardner and many more.

[A CONVERSATION WITH DIRECTOR MATT TYRNAUER](#)

How did you come to meet Scotty Bowers?

I met Scotty through Gore Vidal, who was a close friend. I was Vidal's literary executor and frequently edited his work at *Vanity Fair*. He told me about this character he came to know in 1946 that wound up becoming his lifelong friend. They met at the gas station on Hollywood Boulevard where Scotty worked, and Vidal — great man of letters, iconic cultural figure — is just one example of the hundreds of immortal figures who were devoted friends, fans and clients of Scotty over the years.

Had you learned about Scotty before his memoir, *Full Service*, was released in 2012?

Vidal told me about him before I ever knew about the book, and while I knew about Scotty, I didn't know his name. I'd also heard about him from other Hollywood figures of that generation who I had interviewed for *Vanity Fair*, among them Merv Griffith and people who were either in the gay underworld or pillars of gay Hollywood culture. They all told me about this gas station on Hollywood Boulevard, describing how cars were backed up onto the street, and how it was such a popular place, implying that it wasn't simply a gas station. Other joyful activities were going on there. What Vidal and so many others told me about Scotty made me realize this was an interesting subject — but I knew it was a movie when I found out that Scotty was alive and well.

When did you officially meet Scotty Bowers?

Gore Vidal put me together with him in 2011 and I realized at that point he was working on his memoir, which Gore helped get published.

After you met Scotty, were you at all skeptical about his story, or were you more and more convinced he was the real deal?

Because of the Gore Vidal connection, I was convinced at the outset that Scotty and his stories were authentic, simply because Gore was not someone who trafficked in falsehood. If Gore told you something about a piece of history that had taken place, you could take it to the bank. I knew him well, and there was no reason for him to have anything to do with someone who was a fabulist.

What was your first impression of Scotty Bowers when you actually met him?

He was someone who was about to turn 90 years old but seemed 30 years younger. He was also of the most pleasant characters I'd ever come across — extremely socially adept, someone who knew how to make others feel comfortable in any situation. I found him to be extremely gracious, elegant, funny and convivial, and you could see immediately why so many great people wanted him in their lives. Far from a sinister figure, he's really one of

the more joyful people I've ever met, so comfortable and accepting, which is unusual for someone of his generation.

How would you describe Scotty's sexuality?

Kinsey sought him out and used him as a case study for his open mind, and he didn't fall into any specific sexual category. He's clearly off the charts in terms of the spectrum of his sexuality — if you could classify him as anything it would be pansexual. He's not interested in a particular sexual identity, so in this sense he's way ahead of his time. The Millennial Generation seems to be thinking in this no-labels way, and Scotty was thinking and living in this way several generations before.

Discuss the subtitle of your movie: The Secret History of Hollywood...

The title has several implications, one being the most obvious — the idea that Scotty is providing a counter-narrative to what the Golden Age of Hollywood presented itself to be. This was the post-World War II era, after the Production Code, and Hollywood was presenting an image of white-picket fences, families with two kids and a dog, and a new car in the garage, supposedly a manifestation of the American Dream. There was no room in that narrative for anything other than so-called normal heterosexual relationships — anything other than that was considered shameful or wrong. Scotty unmasks the true nature of Hollywood, which was just like the rest of the world; there were *all* types of people there living *all* kinds of lives. Because of the studio system, people were forced to live double lives, and there was some disconnect between the messages transmitted by Hollywood and the reality of the situation. With Scotty being a 94-year-old who was there for it all makes him a unique character because he was an eyewitness to it all — it wasn't like somebody told him all this. He experienced it for himself.

What are some other implications of your subtitle?

I'm a Los Angeles native and grew up in a Hollywood family (my father wrote and produced TV). Growing up around the workaday aspects of show business, I was always fascinated with the different layers of both the industry and the city — L.A. is a city of myths and a city of strange, forgotten histories, and the movie culture morphs with real life in surreal ways, whether it's seeing a major movie star at your local supermarket, or having your cousin suddenly land a big role in a movie. There's also an anti-glamour to the real Hollywood — making movies is actually hard, industrial work, it's not that glamorous. So living here you come to see the life behind the scrim, where there are these frayed edges. Scotty's story for me offered very interesting *cinema verité* insight into this other Hollywood. And he was a major part of the system in the old days, it just happened that he was a regular guy, perhaps better looking than most. But he was a gas-station attendant and he didn't want to be anything else. He and his fellow workers were cogs in the machinery of Hollywood in that day, and I thought it was exciting to show the inner workings underneath the surface, and show that all of this was put on by regular people who weren't studio heads or leading men. Scotty was part of this whole secret.

How did Scotty gain his foothold in this machine?

One of Scotty's great patrons was an out-of-work actor who came to L.A. and struck it rich in real estate and became a house-flipper — this is Beech Dickerson, who made sure Scotty was taken care of in the later years of his life. To me, this is such a wonderful narrative to show of Los Angeles, because so much of it is not about the glamour, it's about everyday life and making your way. Actors have real lives, and maybe are not successful as actors, but find other ways to succeed in LA, like building real estate fortunes, which was the case for Beech. We see that Scotty was helpful to his "clients" in many ways beyond fixing them up with men and women. This film gives you a full-spectrum portrait of the city and its residents, warts and all. I think if it as a vision of LA from an odd and unexpected angle--like the work of Ed Ruscha or David Hockney, who give glimpses of a Los Angeles most people don't think about or consider, until they look at it from the artist's perspective.

It's also a story about a network of people looking after one another, would you agree?

This is an aspect of the story that surprised me. Before embarking on the project, I was certain that anyone involved in the gas station would be dead, but it turned out that many of them were still alive. And Scotty, being a good friend, had kept in touch with everybody. You see this remarkable old network that hasn't been up and running for a while but was very much a part of the Hollywood underground, coming to the surface and unmasking itself. A lot of these guys didn't identify as gay at the time but were working as hustlers for a mostly gay male clientele, although there were women involved as well. And they're happy to talk about it. I think enough time has passed for them to look back and feel proud of it, to have been of service and to have met so many interesting, important and now immortal people. You never know who's going to survive the test of time.

How does Scotty feel about the practice of outing?

I think Scotty's answer to that is very elegant and speaks for itself, which is simply "What's wrong with being gay?"

Why is Scotty Bowers important?

This is a *cinema verité* work, not an archival clip show of revelations and gossip — the movie is Scotty, and Scotty is the movie. I think he's a unique and important figure because he was part of a secret society in an important place at an important time in history. It wasn't like he was doing this in Dubuque — he was doing it Hollywood at the height of the studio system, and Hollywood was a very important story of the 20th Century, with huge consequences because Hollywood is the dream and image factory of the world during this period. Scotty was an underground figure of that period that has lived to tell this story. And his own story is filled with pain and disappointment, including a lot of shattered dreams he confronts in the movie, which he hasn't confronted before — while he's a happy, well-adjusted person in general, I don't think he's an introspective type.

What do you think this movie says about human relations?

Scotty is currently married to Lois Bowers, his second wife, and this has been a 30-year relationship that endures, which makes him a complex figure for a lot of viewers. Many expect someone who was a hustler or a sex worker for a mainly gay clientele to identify as gay himself, but Scotty simply doesn't. Through him we get insight into a long-lasting and very loving relationship, but it's not your garden variety marriage — these aren't two pensioners living out their last years together watching rainbows form over the Los Angeles basin from their house with a view. For many people, this is a relationship they've never seen before.

Where do you think Scotty's indefatigable work ethic comes from?

I think he sees himself as a worker above all else, despite being such a multi-dimensional person. He was only ever interested in working. One of the keys to his success is the number of different jobs he performed over the years, including tree trimming, plumbing, concrete laying, bartending — there was no limit to what he could do and he combined a lot of these talents. For many of his clients he wasn't just a sex date — he became an indispensable part of their lives.

What do you hope audiences take away from this movie?

If I could boil it down to one word, I would say acceptance. I think Scotty is a paragon of loving acceptance for all types of people, and I think it's telling that he decides to raise and care for a family of skunks on his property at a certain point in the movie. This is a great metaphor for Scotty in general because most people fear and shun skunks. But Scotty doesn't judge. Family is family.

DIRECTOR / PRODUCER BIOS

MATT TYRNAUER (Director)

Matt Tyrnauer is a writer, director, producer, and award-winning journalist whose recent films include *Valentino: The Last Emperor*, which premiered at the Venice Film Festival and was short-listed for an Academy Award for best documentary feature; *Scotty and the Secret History of Hollywood*, about the secret history of sex in Hollywood in the pre-Stonewall era; *Citizen Jane: Battle for the City*, which premiered at the 2016 Toronto International Film Festival; and *Jean Nouvel: Reflections*, which premiered at the 2016 New York Film Festival.

Tyrnauer's upcoming projects include the HBO dramatic adaptation of his eponymous Vanity Fair article "Once Upon a Time in Beverly Hills"; *Studio 54*, about the famed New York City nightclub that became a cultural phenomenon; and *Don't Mess with Roy Cohn*, about the Svengali behind Joseph McCarthy and Donald Trump.

Tyrnauer is a partner at Altimeter Films, which he co-founded with Corey Reeser. Tyrnauer is also an award-winning journalist, who has written for *Vanity Fair*, where he has been editor-at-large, special correspondent and is now a contributing editor. His work has also appeared in other publications including *GQ*, *The New York Times*, *Architectural Digest*, *L'Uomo Vogue*, and *Numero*.

Tyrnauer is a native of Los Angeles.

COREY REESER (Producer)

Corey Reeser is a producer and director whose recent film projects include *Scotty and the Secret History of Hollywood*, about the secret history of sex in Hollywood in the pre-Stonewall era; *Citizen Jane: Battle for the City*, which premiered at the 2016 Toronto International Film Festival and *Jean Nouvel: Reflections*, which premiered at the 2016 New York Film Festival.

Reeser is a partner at Altimeter Films, which he co-founded with Matt Tyrnauer. His upcoming projects include *Studio 54*, about the famed New York City nightclub that became a cultural phenomenon; *Operation Pedro Pan*, about the 14,000 children who were "escaped" from Cuba to Miami in early days of the Castro regime; and *Don't Mess with Roy Cohn*, about the Svengali behind Joseph McCarthy and Donald Trump.

Reeser also has a long history of partnering with premiere brands, entertainment studios, and filmmakers to provide innovative branded content and marketing campaigns, including BMW, Apple, Under Armour, Microsoft, Universal Studios, Walt Disney Studios, Paramount Pictures, and Warner Bros.

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Based on the Book
"FULL SERVICE:
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With LIONEL FRIEDBERG

IN MEMORY OF GORE VIDAL

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