

Calling All Maudies and Movie Fans!



By Paris Poirier and Karen Kiss

Twenty-five years ago, the phone rang in our Venice Beach pad and our lives were permanently transformed. Jill Ramsey, who had been Karen's Camp (as in outhouse-in-the-woods-sing-along-around-the-fire) Counselor called with a top secret tip that Rikki Streicher was closing Maud's – the longest running lesbian bar in the world - forever. Back in the 1970s when both of us had “come out of the closet,” dyke bars were our only tried



and true meeting places, so Jill's news hit us hard.

For the record, we weren't “Maudies.” We were never regulars, and by this time, we lived hundreds of miles away from The Haight. It was clear to us, though, that Maud's special story needed to be told. Our memories of the little, old bar were tinged with a sense of the magical, the mystical (and not just because our very



first date came to a sweet close with a cheap nightcap there).

We'd never made a film before, so our first call was to Cheryl Rosenthal (a former student of Paris' at San Francisco State). Without a moment's hesitation, Cheryl rallied an army of professional production support for our project. Meanwhile, back in Los Angeles, we burned up The Boss's 800# phone lines (this was pre-Internet, pre-digital), calling lesbian luminaries to join bartenders and customers in saying goodbye to a San Francisco institution, and a long-standing way of life.

Our budget was tight, but Cheryl's remarkable talent as Director of Pho-



tography produced stunning visuals of Maud's as it was shutting down. And Karen's knack for hunting down incredibly rare archives over the next four years made our film a true eye-opener. (So much so, that *Last Call At Maud's* went on to play in over two hundred theaters around the world.)

At our 1993 premiere at The Castro Theatre, the cheers of the crowd told us that we had created a film that served a vital purpose for an underserved audience. With fifty thousand dollars of debt looming over our heads, we taught ourselves the distribution game. Setting up shop at our kitchen table, we called theater programmers everywhere with a simple pitch: Do you have any lesbians in your town? If so, then we have a movie for you.

Somewhat to our surprise, thousands upon thousands of women from across the country and around the world flocked to see this funky movie about a funky bar. From Berlin to Boise, Halifax to Helsinki, Sydney to Saskatoon, our screenings invited women to converge, connect and

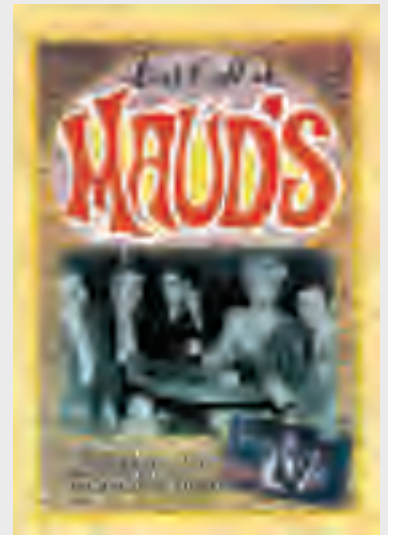
share a laugh (without the cocktail calories or happy hour hangovers).

On Saturday, June 29th, we feel privileged to gather again as a group at the Victoria Theatre. Some of us are fatter, some thinner, some richer, some poorer, but all of us are twenty years older.

Immediately after our screening we'll make our way to what was once Maud's and is now Finnegan's Wake on Cole Street. We'll raise our glasses and toast to those no longer with us and celebrate with all who are.

A heartfelt thank you goes out to Frameline, Mandy Carter and the Maud's Reunion Committee for making this once-in-a-lifetime event happen. For tickets and info go to: frameline.org. See you there!

Paris Poirier and Karen Kiss are the producers of the award-winning film “Last Call at Maud's,” which Poirier also directed.



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