

THE ANNE FRANK GIFT SHOP

PRESS NOTES



“Featuring darkly funny and ultimately moving turns by a strong cast including Ari Graynor and Chris Perfetti and comedian Mary Beth Barone as a stone-faced Gen Z influencer, *The Anne Frank Gift Shop* provides a poignant meta-commentary on our continually robust Anne Frank discourse.”—GQ

***Shortlisted for the 2024 ACADEMY AWARD in Best Live Action Short**

*Winner Best Short 43rd Annual San Francisco Jewish Film Festival

*Winner 2023 Jewish Film Institute Completion Grant

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Is there a wrong way to talk about the Holocaust?

That's the question at the heart of *THE ANNE FRANK GIFT SHOP*, a dark comedy about anti-Semitism that packs a vital and unfortunately timely message. Here's the logline: When a high-end design firm presents its plans to reimagine the gift shop at The Anne Frank House, the company's overt appeal to Generation Z sparks a debate about collective trauma, the Holocaust and tote bags.

The premise for my debut short is comedic—and there are plenty of jokes—but this film grew out of a very real challenge.

According to a recent study by the Conference on Jewish Material Claims, two-thirds of young adults in the U.S. couldn't tell you that six million Jews died in the Holocaust. Some 11 percent of respondents somehow believed "Jews caused the Holocaust." The Guardian summarized the results citing "shocking levels of ignorance about the greatest crime of the 20th century." It wasn't just happening in the States either; the Claims Conference uncovered similar results in Canada, France, and Austria.

How do you reach a generation that has access to tragedy in their pockets? Should the Anne Frank House have its own Instagrammable moment? What's even appropriate anymore?

We're living in dark times. Anti-Semitic incidents are on the rise and fascism is somehow making a comeback. *THE ANNE FRANK GIFT SHOP* takes aim at a very real problem—a generation with little awareness of the Holocaust—and attempts to solve it with humor this audience understands. This irreverent short plays like an episode of "Succession" meets a breakout room at McKinsey Consulting. But the laughs soon give way to the film's essential message. As one of the characters says, "We need to tell this story again and again and again—every which way we can—or it will happen again."

There has never been a more necessary time for the Holocaust story to be told with a fresh perspective. *THE ANNE FRANK GIFT SHOP* stars an incredible cast including Ari Graynor (HBO's *WINNING TIME*), Chris Perfetti (so funny on *ABBOTT ELEMENTARY* every week), Kate Burton (*GREY'S ANATOMY*, a Tony nominee for *HEDDA GABLER*), Jason Butler Harner (*OZARK*), the comedian Mary Beth Barone, and Josh Meyers (*MADTV*). It is produced by Jane Sinisi (the granddaughter of Holocaust survivors) and Reboot Studios. This film uses dark humor and conscious reflection to meet this next generation where they live. We're so proud to share it with you.

—Mickey Rapkin, writer/director

SYNOPSIS

Co-workers AMY and BEN are talking in the break room of the high-end Manhattan design firm where they both work. Amy (early 30s, a graphic designer) reveals she has a crush on their boss JACK, who is recently separated from his wife. Ben (30s, an environment designer) meanwhile has his own issue: his widowed father is visiting and their already-strained relationship is further complicated by his father's inability to work the Roku.

Their boss Jack joins them in the break room and he's got his hands full. Yes, he's concerned about MADISON, the Influencer he's hired (who is running late for this morning's important meeting). But there's more to it. Their client, the Anne Frank House, is on their way in. Jack and his team must pitch them on ways to update the museum's gift shop to appeal to young people. And though Jack hasn't explained why, he reveals this meeting is personal.

In the conference room, two representatives from the Anne Frank House explain the stakes. ILSE (visiting from Amsterdam) and her co-worker Deidrerik report on the troubling statistics that brought them to this firm today. According to a recent study, two-thirds of young adults in the U.S. can't tell you that six million Jews were killed in the Holocaust. Even worse, some 11 percent somehow believe Jews "caused the Holocaust." The museum is also concerned about their online reviews.

Jack leads the group in a brainstorming session. What *should* the gift shop be selling to get young people excited to learn about the Holocaust? Madison questions the House's social media strategy, wondering aloud: Why isn't Anne Frank on TikTok yet? ("Because she's dead," Ben says.) And a larger debate emerges about whether Anne Frank is a brand.

After a surprise guest—and repeated calls from his father—Ben is pushed to the limit, arguing that young people know about the Holocaust. How else to explain the t-shirt sold at Zara? The one that looks exactly like the uniforms Jews were forced to wear in the death camps? And what about how Umbro needed to apologize for naming one of their sneakers the Zyklon? (Which is the name of the gas used in the chambers.)

Tensions in the room are rising. Ben suggests the reason people love Anne Frank is because—if they knew about every Anne Frank—their heads would explode.

After a brief pause, Ilse brings us back to the initial question, acknowledging she doesn't know how to reach young people. "But the cost of doing nothing? That much I do know. We need to tell this story again and again and again — in every way we can — or it will happen again."

In the emotional conclusion, Amy makes a surprising suggestion that honors not just Anne Frank but anyone whose light was lost too soon. This moment catches Ben off guard and forces him to make a phone call he's been avoiding for years.

BIOGRAPHIES//CAST & CREW

MICKEY RAPKIN (writer/director)

Mickey Rapkin is a screenwriter and journalist. *THE ANNE FRANK GIFT SHOP* marks his directorial debut. Rapkin's first book, *PITCH PERFECT*—about the world of competitive a cappella singing groups—inspired the film franchise of the same name. A spin-off TV series, *BUMPER IN BERLIN*, aired on Peacock in 2022. Rapkin has a feature in development at TriStar inspired by The Chainsmokers's global hit song *PARIS* and produced by the band's company Kick the Habit and Entertainment 360. Elsewhere, his original thriller *KILLER CHOIR* is in development at MRC. On the TV side, Rapkin sold a pilot to Apple with John Wells and Warner Bros. based on Stephen McCauley's bestselling novel *MY EX-LIFE*. Previously a senior editor at GQ, he has written for the New York Times, WSJ, Town & Country, and Esquire. His 2016 ELLE magazine article, *SUPERMODEL SNOWPOCALYPSE*, was optioned by Paramount and Paul Feig. Rapkin lives in Los Angeles.

ARI GRAYNOR (Amy)

Ari Graynor can be currently be seen playing Honey Kaplan in HBO's hit Adam McKay series *WINNING TIME*. Her additional television credits include thee Apple TV+ series *SURFACE*, the FX limited series *MRS. AMERICA*, Showtime's *I'M DYING UP HERE* and *THE SOPRANOS*. Among her extensive work in film are roles in *THE FRONT RUNNER*, *THE DISASTER ARTIST*, *FOR A GOOD TIME CALL*, *CELESTE AND JESSE FOREVER*, *THE SITTER*, *WHATS YOUR NUMBER* and *NICK AND NORAH'S INFINITE PLAYLIST*. Graynor is a veteran of the stage seen on and off-Broadway in *BROOKLYN BOY* (Clarence Derwent award), *THE LITTLE DOG LAUGHED*, *RELATIVELY SPEAKING*, *THE PERFORMERS*, *DOG SEES GOD*, *TRUST* and, *YEN* for which she received a Lucille Lortel Award nomination.

CHRIS PERFETTI (Ben)

Chris Perfetti stars as Jacob Hill on the Emmy-winning ABC comedy series *ABBOTT ELEMENTARY* (SAG Award; Critics Choice nomination). He originated the role of Matt in Rajiv Joseph's *KING JAMES* at the Steppenwolf in Chicago (Jeff Award nomination), and later at Center Theatre Group in Los Angeles and Manhattan Theatre Club in NY. Additional NY Theater: *MOSCOW x6* (Outer Critics Circle Award; Drama Desk and Drama League nominations), *SONS OF THE PROPHET* (Theater World Award), *THE LOW ROAD* (The Public), *EVERYBODY* (Signature Theater), *THE TEMPEST* (Delacorte Theater); *THE TUTORS* (Second Stage); *CLOUD NINE* (Atlantic Theater Company) and Broadway revivals of *SIX DEGREES OF SEPARATION* and *PICNIC*. Select TV/Film: *THE NIGHT OF*, *IN THE DARK*, *WHAT WE DO IN THE SHADOWS*, *CROSSBONES*, *LOOKING*, *THE VIRTUOSO*, *MINYAN* and Hulu's *THE SURROGATE*.

KATE BURTON (Ilse)

Kate Burton is thrilled to be a part of the heavenly cast of *THE ANNE FRANK GIFT SHOP* written and directed by the wonderful Mickey Rapkin. She can also be seen this season in Tribeca Film Festival's *OUR SON* directed by Bill Oliver and starring Luke Evans and Billy Porter and Toronto Film Festival's *DUMB MONEY* directed by Craig Gillespie in which she plays the mother of Paul Dano and Pete Davidson. Three time Tony nominee and Emmy

Nominee, she is best known for her work on GREY'S ANATOMY and SCANDAL and has recently appeared in THE DROPOUT, INVENTING ANNA, BOSCH LEGACY, THE FIRST LADY, and ECHO LONGBOARD. Her films include BIG TROUBLE IN LITTLE CHINA, UNFAITHFUL, CELEBRITY. 127 HOURS, 2 DAYS IN NY, LIBERAL ARTS and WHERE'D YOU GO, BERNADATTE. She lives in NY and LA.

JASON BUTLER HARNER (Jack)

Jason Butler Harner played Agent Roy Petty on the celebrated Netflix series OZARK. His major film debut came as Gordon Northcott Jr. in Clint Eastwood's Oscar-nominated CHANGELING with Angelina Jolie. He last appeared on Broadway in Theresa Rebeck's BERNHARDT/HAMLET opposite Janet McTeer. Previous Broadway credits include Ivo van Hove's revival of THE CRUCIBLE and the Tony Award-winning trilogy THE COAST OF UTOPIA by Tom Stoppard. He appeared in the West End at the Donmar Warehouse in Lanford Wilson's SERENADING LOUIS. Other film work includes BLACKHAT, NON-STOP, and THE TAKING OF PELHAM 1 2 3. He next appears in the Apple original series SUGAR with Colin Farrell and FX's THE STERLING AFFAIRS.

MARY BETH BARONE (Madison)

Mary Beth Barone is a comedian, writer, and actor based in New York City. She made her late-night television debut on THE TONIGHT SHOW STARRING JIMMY FALLON. Mary Beth has headlined sold out shows at New York Comedy Fest, Netflix Comedy Festival, and the Edinburgh Fringe. Her feature script YOU'RE MY BEST FRIEND was featured on 2022's The Black List. She is also starring and EP'ing GOOD GIRL, an indie erotic thriller which wrapped filming in the spring. She can be seen in the latest season of Netflix's critically acclaimed show BLACK MIRROR. She is the co-host of the popular podcast RIDE with Benito Skinner for Dear Media, which debuted in the top 10 on Spotify. She is also the creator and host of "Drag His Ass: A F*ckboy Treatment Program," which can be seen regularly live in New York, Los Angeles, and at London's Soho Theatre.

JOSH MEYERS (Diederik)

Josh Meyers is an actor and writer best known for his work on MADTV, THAT 70S SHOW, and the Amazon original series RED OAKS. He appeared in HBO's BEHIND THE CANDELABRA, BRUNO, and THE PEE-WEE HERMAN SHOW on Broadway. Currently you can hear Josh on the podcast FAMILY TRIPS WITH THE MEYERS BROTHERS which he does with his big brother Seth.

NOAM DROMI (Producer)

Noam Dromi is the Managing Director and Executive Producer of Reboot Studios, the content arm of the arts-and-culture nonprofit Reboot. He is an Emmy® Award-winning veteran writer/producer, marketing executive and digital strategist, specializing in creative content, media production and brand development for entertainment companies, consumer brands and non-profits. The co-creator of the award winning DOLPHIN TALE franchise for Warner Bros/Alcon Entertainment, he won the first Primetime Emmy® for VR in 2015 for his work as Producer of the SLEEPY HOLLOW VIRTUAL REALITY EXPERIENCE with the Fox Broadcasting Company. He was nominated again in 2018 for his work as Executive Producer of the AMC digital series THE WALKING DEAD: RED MACHETE.

CHLOE WEAVER (Director of photography)

Chloe Weaver is a California native currently living in Los Angeles. After attending film school, Chloe found immediate success shooting documentaries. She was afforded great opportunities to travel while making Netflix's CHEF'S TABLE for which she won a James Beard Award for visual excellence in 2019. Subsequent work led Chloe into narrative and commercial spaces, having shot three feature length films and spots for Starbucks, Microsoft, State Farm, and many more. Chloe's cinematography can be seen in other notable series such as: FX's THE BEAR, THE FRIENDS REUNION, Netflix's AMERICAN VANDAL, Disney+ SKETCHBOOK and the unique Peacock Original PAUL T. GOLDMAN.

STACEY BATTAT (Costume designer)

Stacey Battat designed the costumes for Sofia Coppola's upcoming film PRISCILLA, after working together on the films THE BEGUILLED, ON THE ROCKS, THE BLING RING, and SOMEWHERE. Battat previously designed the costumes for Ned Benson's THE DISAPPEARANCE OF ELEANOR RIGBY with Jessica Chastain, Isabelle Hupert and James McAvoy, and Sebastian Lelio's GLORIA BELL starring Julianne Moore. Early in her career, Battat worked for designer Marc Jacobs. She segued to working as a full-time fashion stylist, working with such illustrious photographers as Dusan Reljin, Annie Leibovitz and Brigitte Lacombe, and contributing to magazines like *Vanity Fair*, *GQ* and *W*. She attended the Fashion Institute of Technology, and is a graduate of the Hunter College School of Social Work.

FACT SHEET

THE ANNE FRANK GIFT SHOP was filmed in Los Angeles in December 2022. Post-production began in 2023 and the film was completed on May 1, 2023.

The running time is 15 minutes. The film was shortlisted for the 2024 Academy Award in Best Live Action Short. The film won the Film Movement Award for Best Narrative Short at the 43rd SF Jewish Film Festival in July of 2023. The film also received a 2023 Completion Grant from the Jewish Film Institute.

CREDITS

Phippen and Reboot Studios present A NAVY COURT production
THE ANNE FRANK GIFT SHOP

WRITER/DIRECTOR

Mickey Rapkin

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS

David Katznelson

Jane Sinisi

Mickey Rapkin

PRODUCERS

Noam Dromi

Greg Zekowski

ASSOCIATE PRODUCER

Jason Butler Harner

CAST

Ari Graynor (Amy)

Chris Perfetti (Ben)

Kate Burton (Ilse)

Jason Butler Harner (Jack)

Mary Beth Barone (Madison)

Josh Meyers (Diederik)

Helen Trott (elderly woman)

CINEMATOGRAPHER

Chloe Weaver

PRODUCTION DESIGNER

Beth Van Dam

RE-RECORDING MIXER

Michael Feldman

COLORIST

James Honaker

ORIGINAL MUSIC

Peter Seibert

EDITOR

Tim Nackashi

ASSISTANT EDITOR

Cai Yuhe

COSTUME DESIGNER

Stacey Battat

ASSOCIATE COSTUME DESIGNER

Greta Langenberg

ON-SET COSTUMER

Angelique Rousset Johnson

CAMERA OPERATOR

Nate Cornett

1st ASSISTANT CAMERA

Joe McNairy

Loie Russell-Templeton

2nd ASSISTANT CAMERA

Leigh Steipel

Liam Miller

SOUND MIXER

Sam Mutch

BOOM OPERATOR

Chris Gamba

GAFFER

Isaak Van Der Muelen

BEST BOY ELECTRIC

John Fisher

KEY GRIP
John Morgan

BEST BOY GRIP
Yohan Herman

GRIP
Spencer Mang

TECHNICIAN/DRIVER
Zach Emick

OFFICE ASSISTANT
Madelyne Heyman

CATERER
Mondays

CONTACT INFORMATION
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THE ANNE FRANK GIFT SHOP



A REALLY DARK COMEDY

PHIPHEN AND REBOOT STUDIOS PRESENT A NAVY COURT PRODUCTION "THE ANNE FRANK GIFT SHOP"
ARI GRAYNOR CHRIS PERFETTI KATE BURTON JASON BUTLER HARNER MARY BETH BARONE JOSH MEYERS
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY CHLOE WEAVER EDITOR TIM NACKASHI EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS DAVID KATZNELSON JANE OSTER SINSI MICKEY RAPKIN
PRODUCED BY NOAM DROMI GREG ZEKOWSKI WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY MICKEY RAPKIN



TEASER/TRAILER



How Do You Market Anne Frank to Gen Z?

By [Sarah Seltzer](#) June 27, 2023

That's the provocative question posed in *The Anne Frank Gift Shop*, a new short film from writer-director Mickey Rapkin. "The jokes will not be for everybody, but even that will spark conversation," he tells GQ.



Photograph by Getty Images

Anne Frank is (once again) having a moment, with the debut of the Hulu series [A Small Light](#), about the Dutch friends who tried to save the Frank family; [My Friend Anne Frank](#), a new memoir from Anne's childhood neighbor; and, in a recent episode of the raunchy comedy *Dave* (also on Hulu), a hallucinatory sequence featuring the show's star encountering the teenage diarist, the most famous victim of Hitler's genocidal regime.

If you think Anne being portrayed on a sitcom—or simply being described as “having a moment”—is shocking or inappropriate, the writer and filmmaker Mickey Rapkin wants you to reexamine your reaction. In his directorial debut, a short film called *The Anne Frank Gift Shop*, a group of characters attend a pitch meeting for the Anne Frank House in which they discuss how to get Anne’s story through to the youth of today. They debate, hilariously, whether to market Anne’s memory via a true crime podcast, TikTok, an Instagram cat, or even a Holocaust survivor hanging out in the gift shop. People always say she’s got this bestselling book, one character notes, but she’d probably rather be alive.

Featuring darkly funny and ultimately moving turns by a strong cast including Ari Graynor and Chris Perfetti and comedian Mary Beth Barone as a stone-faced Gen Z influencer, *The Anne Frank Gift Shop* provides a poignant meta-commentary on our continually robust Anne Frank discourse. It’s a film that, per Sarah Paulson on Instagram, “makes you laugh your face off AND FEEL things.”

By the end of the filmmaking process, Rapkin told GQ on the phone, he had a new attitude towards Anne Frank as a symbol of the lives destroyed by the Nazis. “Put her face on everything, on a mug, a tote bag,” he said. “I don’t care as long as people continue to tell the story.”

GQ: Tell me the origin story for the film.

Mickey Rapkin: The title came to me years ago, actually, when I went to visit the Anne Frank House. I had this emotional experience, this reverence. I’m alone, quiet, I don’t want to make a sound. And then it’s like, *exit through the gift shop*. It’s jarring.

There’s a cheese museum across the street!

Right. It's Amsterdam, so someone is like, *Come here and buy a waffle and have french fries*. Anyway, for years since then, I've had this title in mind. And then this Jewish organization called Reboot launched [Reboot Studios](#) to produce interesting, irreverent, thoughtful Jewish projects and I just started noodling on it.

The title makes me think about how Jews, when we travel—we drink wine and take pictures. But we feel compelled to stop by these tragic sites.

Exactly. I'm going to Venice, Italy next week, and I have only a day and a half, but I have to stop in the Jewish Ghetto. It's just in your DNA.



And now we're in a weird moment in time where antisemitism is on the rise, fascism is on the rise. There was this study from the Claims Conference, the first full [50-state study on Holocaust knowledge](#) of American Millennials and Generation Z, [and] The results were that two-thirds of young adults can't tell you that six million Jews were murdered in the Holocaust. And 11 percent who responded thought Jews caused the Holocaust!

There were international headlines—the Guardian said it showed *shocking levels of ignorance*. I started to think—how do you talk to young people? What's the comedic voice that would Trojan Horse this generation into thinking

about these things?

Each of the people around the table in your film have specific relationships to Anne's story. Did you start writing them with those relationships in mind?

I started with who would be in this room. I wanted the comedy to come from a language that people would understand, that they were used to seeing on a show like *Succession*: a boardroom meeting, or people you'd know in the office. Yes, that one has a crush on this one, they would be hungover, and they would bring in an influencer. I wanted their opinions to change over the course of the meeting, and have them present ideas that people might actually suggest.

I like how everyone brings in their own personal facts about Anne Frank.

Everyone in the film knows something about Anne. For many people, for better or worse, she's the way into the Holocaust. She was young, she was hopeful—she makes you think, that could have been you, your sister, your neighbor. She is a symbol, because she is only one story. And there are six million stories just like hers, and like the character Ben says in the film, if people knew the story of every single Anne Frank, their heads would explode.

One suggestion thrown out in the film that all these feminist icons like Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Maya Angelou be displayed next to Anne in the gift shop. I laughed out loud, but it also fits in a way.

"One of the many questions that have often bothered me is why women have been, and still are, thought to be so inferior to men." Anne wrote that on June 13, 1944. She was so ahead of her time. She was also funny. She wrote, "Sometimes I think my face is going to sag with all this sorrow, my mouth is going to droop at all the corners." I feel like that's a Lena Dunham line.

One of the many depressing, horrible things about this story is ... she was three years younger than Mel Brooks. Mel Brooks is still making comedy, he's still relevant. She could have been here, now. Her childhood friend just had a book published.

And yet because we're in this overwhelming digital age, we are struggling to make the Holocaust feel present.

There's this idea that young people have access to too much tragedy. They have their phones and they're constantly being bombarded with horrible things happening in the world. Scientists legitimately have a name for this phenomenon—empathy fatigue—that organizations have to deal with.

We have a whole bit in the film about TikTok. Actually, the Anne Frank House is on TikTok. The content is educational, not people doing a dance in front of the Secret Annex but they are there—they have to go where young people are.

Dark humor is the heart of this film, and there's a Jewish tradition of making comedy out of our tragedies. I was thinking immediately of Mel Brooks and Larry David.

And a couple of years ago we had Taika Waititi's *JoJo Rabbit*, this movie about a German boy whose imaginary friend is Hitler. You can't get much darker than that. He won an Oscar. It showed how you can take a sacred subject and treat it with humor.

Plus *Dave*, which really went there this year with Anne Frank specifically.

In that episode of *Dave*, there's a rumor that Little Dicky is dead. His manager is psyched because of the publicity. He hides in this hotel room, and compares himself to Anne Frank, and ends up hallucinating that he's talking to Anne. He reveals to her that her diary became a global hit, and she freaks out because

the world knows her innermost thoughts. And Dave is trying to reassure her: *No one came out of the Holocaust looking better than you.*

It was really funny but also not historically accurate. Anne wanted her book to be published. In March 1944 she heard this radio broadcast where a member of the Dutch government in exile said they wanted records of the Dutch experience under occupation. So Anne started to edit her diary for publication.

Are you bracing yourself for pushback on the humor?

As I was writing these bad jokes, I was like *Is that too much?* One of the producers, her name is Jane Sinisi, she's the granddaughter of Holocaust survivors. I sent it to her and I was like, this is the moment of truth. I was so relieved when she called to say she thought it was funny and a story that needs to be told.

Because often, real life is way more absurd than whatever jokes you come up with. Like, they did a public contest to name a new train in Germany. The winner of the contest was Anne Frank. And then people said, no, no, we can't have a *train* named Anne Frank. Trains took Jews to the death camps.

Recently, *Rolling Stone* examined strange [TikTok fan videos about Anne](#). And there's actually Yelp reviews of the Anne Frank house. Really. 665 people decided, the world needs to hear my opinion of the Anne Frank house.

And [Auschwitz selfies](#)!

Whatever I can come up with, there's something more offensive out there. Umbro named a pair of [shoes the Zyklon](#) which is the gas that was used in the chambers. That's *offensive*, so if you want to be offended at my jokes, that's fine.

The film has a poignant non-Holocaust thread woven through it, as the

character Ben keeps getting calls from his dad and ignoring them, until the end.

Ben is played by Chris Perfetti, who is so great every week in *Abbot Elementary*. I was so lucky to have him in the movie. This character is sort of like me. I had a great relationship with my dad, but when he died I found a Jewish book of questions, with a post-it note on the page about Jews and homosexuality. He was nothing but supportive of my being gay. But apparently at some point he wanted to know what Jewish scholars thought, so he went to a bookstore to buy this book.

We all see ourselves in the Anne Frank story in different ways. Ben explains that his mom died and his dad keeps calling and it's driving him insane. He's in this meeting, and his dad keeps calling. During the meeting, Ben explodes and reveals a fact about Anne, that her father read her diary and said he really didn't know anything about her. At the end, Ben's dad calls and he abruptly leaves the meeting to answer. Because you have to connect with people while you have the chance. It's a trite thing to say, but it's true.

How are you planning to reach audiences this summer?

We have this festival run this summer, and I hope in a perfect world, someone buys it, because I want it to be seen. I want people to leave and talk about it. The jokes will not be for everybody, but even that will spark conversation.

The Anne Frank Giftshop *is streaming this summer at the [San Francisco Jewish Film Festival](#) and [LA Shorts](#).*



Since the 50s, World War II has been the subject of much cinematic storytelling, such as the film adaptation of *The Diary of Anne Frank*.

COMEDIC RELIEF

Hollywood's Conundrum

What will happen to the new World War II films as war rages in the Middle East?



BY MICKEY RAPKIN

On the day that war broke out in the Middle East, a box of 70 tote bags arrived at my house, each adorned with Anne Frank's face.

This was not a hate crime. The totes were meant to be gift bags at an upcoming screening of my short film, a dark comedy that imagines a meeting between the Anne Frank House and the New York design firm they've hired to help them renovate the gift shop to appeal to young people. "The Anne Frank Gift Shop"—which stars Ari Graynor of HBO's *Winning Time* and *Abbott Elementary*'s Chris Perfetti—asks the question: Is there a wrong way to talk about the Holocaust? I'd argue no. But is there a wrong time?

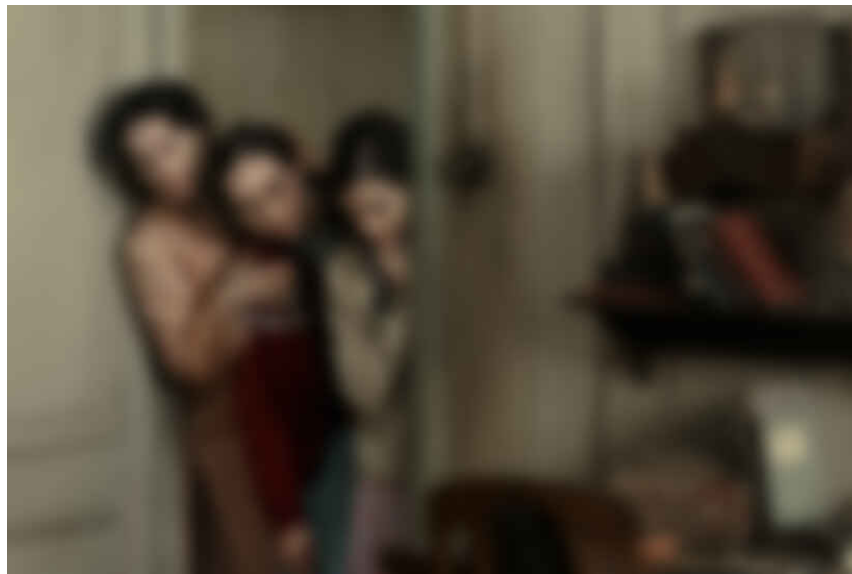


"The Anne Frank Gift Shop" is a dark comedy that imagines the Anne Frank House's attempt to appeal to young people.

It's a strange moment everywhere, including Hollywood, as a slew of filmmakers (myself included) try to figure out how to talk about their Holocaust projects amid a devastating war that's only reminded the world what's at stake. Jonathan Glazer's *The Zone of Interest* (opening December 15 after a six-minute standing ovation at Cannes) concerns the mundane life of an S.S. officer and his wife who live next door to Auschwitz. Steve McQueen's *Occupied City* is a deliberately paced, four-hour

documentary about Amsterdam in World War II. (It opens on Christmas Day.)

Elsewhere, the creators of the National Geographic limited series *A Small Light*, about Miep Gies—who helped conceal Otto Frank and his family in the “Secret Annex” of an Amsterdam office building for two years—are on the campaign trail, hoping to land SAG and Golden Globe nominations. (The series was just nominated for a Gotham Award, as was its star, Bel Powley.) “We’re promoting the show, and we’re being asked about the timeliness of it and how we feel,” says co-creator Joan Rater. “We feel terrible. We feel *sick*.”



The National Geographic mini-series *A Small Light* tells the story of Miep Gies, who helped conceal Otto Frank and his family.

It’s a bizarre question to ask an artist. Does a film about the Holocaust really need a news peg? After winning the top prize at the San Francisco Jewish Film Festival in June, “The Anne Frank Gift Shop” is streaming for Oscar voters on the Academy Web site. I recently flew to Savannah for a screening and Q&A at the SCAD Savannah Film Festival, where I happened to catch *The Zone of Interest*, followed by a talkback with the German actor Christian Friedel.

Is there a wrong way to talk about the Holocaust? I'd argue no. But is there a wrong time?

Seated on a handsome stool, Friedel talked about the emotional toll that comes with playing an S.S. officer, saying he was “still processing” the character’s darkness “out of my body and my soul.” Which is surely true. But all I could think about was his sharp, black suit and gray turtleneck. Or, more specifically, how he and a stylist had likely met to plan a series of press-tour looks for a film that includes a garden party in earshot of a crematorium. Hopefully the suit wasn’t Hugo Boss.



Jonathan Glazer's *The Zone of Interest* follows an S.S. officer and his wife who live next door to Auschwitz.

Boss is a German brand. And if you laughed at that you might enjoy “The Anne Frank Gift Shop.” In the midst of a heated pitch meeting at the design firm’s office, one character refers to Miep Gies as “the original Uber Eats.” Another—a Gen Z influencer—reveals she’d recently visited the infamous attic and reports it’s “huge.” The film is produced in part by Jane Sinisi, the granddaughter of Holocaust survivors, and the first person to tell me it was O.K. to put an escape-room joke in a

movie about Anne Frank. How else do we process horror?

My film was inspired by a landmark 2020 study by the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany, which revealed that a majority of young Americans did not know basic facts about the Holocaust. Two-thirds of those surveyed apparently could not tell you that six million Jews were murdered; 11 percent somehow believe Jews “caused” it.



Steve McQueen's four-hour documentary, *Occupied City*, explores the goings-on in Amsterdam during World War II.

How was that message getting lost? This was not ancient history. If Anne Frank were alive today, she'd be three years younger than Mel Brooks. And he had a show on Hulu last year. Anne Frank could have watched *The Wizard of Oz* on her 11th birthday, and it's streaming on the Delta in-flight-entertainment app. We've always said, “Never again.” But here we were. Or as the comedian Alex Edelman half-joked on Instagram this week: “Everybody should be coming up with a gentile name” in case “things get really bad.”

“This is going to feel weird,” says Rater, who co-created *A Small Light* with Tony Phelan. “But we wanted to make the story ... ‘entertaining’ is the wrong word. Let's go with *compelling*. Miép's relationship with Jan”—their meet-cute—“makes the

story human and relatable. You *want* to watch it. And in watching it you're also learning shit." She added, "Holocaust education is proven to reduce anti-Semitism. It's only mandated in, I think, 27 states." It's actually 23. But who's counting?

I'd thought about canceling that event in Los Angeles—the one I'd ordered all of those Anne Frank tote bags for. But canceling felt performative. Like reposting some 12-slide thread from the third lead on *Riverdale*.



The Diary of Anne Frank film was based on the Pulitzer Prize-winning play of the same name.

“The Anne Frank Gift Shop” aims to meet Gen Z where they live, disarming them with a comedic language they speak before hitting them with the film’s essential appeal—which is something I said a dozen times on a press line in Savannah while a publicist held my phone (so as not to wrinkle my pants in photos). As one character says, “We have to keep telling this story again and again and again—every which way we can—or it will happen again.” Which doesn’t fit on a tote bag but is unfortunately true.

By the way, I eventually sent the film to the team at the actual Anne Frank House in Amsterdam, who'd read about it online and were "intrigued." Three days of silence followed. Finally, an e-mail arrived. The head of communications wrote to say the film "ticks all the right boxes," acknowledging our shared purpose: "It is also a challenge for us to reach Gen Z."

She did, however, have one suggestion. The film, she said, should be properly subtitled. The automatically generated captions were apparently poor in places. Which I guess means she and her staff wanted to properly hear each Holocaust joke. As for what they did make out, she said, "We had a good laugh."

Mickey Rapkin is a journalist and screenwriter whose first book, [Pitch Perfect](#), inspired the film series about a cappella singing. Previously a senior editor at GQ, The Anne Frank Gift Shop marks his directorial debut

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Hello, Governor! After suffering a disastrous awards show day, John Mulaney brought the funny — and girlfriend Olivia Hahn — to the Governors Awards Tuesday.

incident two years ago that, it's claimed in legal papers, left a man disfigured. Per court documents obtained by TMZ, **Justin Poplawski** claims West punched him repeatedly after he asked for an autograph. The alleged victim claimed that at 3 a.m. on Jan. 13, 2022, he approached Ye on a street in

Poplawski claims West then struck him several times, "severely injuring him." Reps for West didn't get back to us. The Los Angeles City Attorney already declined to try the matter as a criminal case in August 2022, which West's attorney claims is proof his "client did nothing wrong."

Blair a fan of Frank satire

MICKEY Rapkin — the journo who penned the tome "Pitch Perfect," which the hit movie franchise is based on — wrote and directed "The Anne Frank Gift Shop," a short film that's on the Oscars shortlist. **Selma Blair**, who has a shout-out in the film, hosted a screening of the dark comedy, about a high-end design firm trying to rebrand the gift shop at the Anne Frank House for Gen Z types. Rapkin explained, "If you've seen the [film], you know there's a reference to Selma Blair in the movie . . . Selma famously recorded the audiobook for Anne Frank's 'The Diary of a Young Girl' and was nominated for a Grammy for her work." He added of the screening, held at the Museum of Tolerance in LA, "When one character mentions the audiobook and how Selma Blair is a gay icon, the audience broke out into spontaneous applause. Selma let out a big, honking laugh. And I cried. Real tears." The film's produced by **Jane Oster Sinisi**. **Rita Basulto's** "Humo" screened at the same event, with a video intro by **Guillermo del Toro**.

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