

WIZARD MODE



Playing a mean pinball is just the beginning.

SYNOPSIS



A candid personal perspective on autism through the life of one of the world's greatest pinball players. Robert Gagno's real challenge lies outside the game on his journey to shed his youth and gain independence.

In the game of pinball, there is no greater reward than Wizard Mode – a hidden level that is only unlocked when a player completes a series of lightning-speed challenges. Robert Gagno has dedicated most of his life to mastering Wizard Mode, and is now one of the top pinball players in the world. He also happens to have autism.

As a young boy, his parents realized they could give him a quarter and he would play on a pinball machine for hours. Refusing to believe their son was locked into a limited future, his parents supported him as he practiced non-stop, developing an exceptional talent for the game. Robert spends much of his year on the road, traveling all over the world competing in high pressure pinball tournaments. But now Robert's real challenge lies outside the game on his journey to shed his youth and gain independence.

In between competitions, Robert attempts to reach milestones of adulthood, include looking for meaningful employment and learning how to drive. He consistently finds himself between two worlds, as he tries to maintain a successful pinball career and live a fulfilling life as a person on the autism spectrum.

Wizard Mode, Salazar Film's first feature documentary, follows Robert as he seeks to balance his quest to become a world pinball champion and his growing real world responsibilities, culminating at the largest pinball tournament in the world, Pinburgh, in Pittsburgh, PA.

FILMMAKER'S STATEMENT

Our goal from the beginning of *Wizard Mode* was to create a film that would be a positive portrayal of a person living on the autism spectrum. We found an overall lack of stories that focused on autism and in particular that focused on success stories. Considering there are tens of millions of people who live on the spectrum or are family, friends or loved ones of those who are, it seemed particularly important to focus on Robert's personal story of autism.

Our own journey during the making of the film deeply impacted the eventual tone that the film took. When we first met Robert we were immediately impressed by his genuine nature and quirky sense of humour. At the same time we had never developed a deep relationship with a person on the spectrum and thus were unsure exactly how to treat him. To be frank, we essentially skipped over the topic and instead focused on all the other aspects of his life. It wasn't until we took a 57 hour train ride from Seattle to Chicago that we truly delved deeply into Robert's experience of autism, asking him directly for the first time to share his perspective with us.

What we learned from Robert was more than anything he wanted people to engage with him as a unique individual first. He described how often when meeting a new person he felt as though their preconditioned ideas around autism would affect his ability to make a genuine first impression. "I don't want to just be autism forever" is a line that Robert has said to us numerous times during the filming of *Wizard Mode*. Our hope is that by sharing his life with a wider audience that Robert's experiences will help to change preconceived notions that exist around autism.



THE TEAM



SALAZAR FILM PRODUCTION COMPANY

SALAZAR Film is a production team concentrated on documentaries and commercials, with an emphasis on telling unique stories of individuals and their communities, capturing sublime landscapes, and experiencing filmmaking as an integrated part of life.

We've had the privilege to film world-renowned kinetic artist Theo Jansen on the beaches of Den Haag, travel the deep south shooting over 1500 portraits of LGBTQ Americans for the project 'Self Evident Truths' and tell the story of the only Muslim professional sumo wrestler living in Tokyo. Our documentary work with Warner Brothers recording artists Tegan and Sara garnered Grammy and Juno nominations in 2011.

JEFF PETRY DIRECTOR/PRODUCER

Jeff Petry was born and raised in rural Manitoba. After completing a pilot's licence he traveled to cooking school in Austria, then on to Vancouver to work as a photographer until

co-founding Salazar Film, a commercial and documentary production company based in Vancouver, B.C. He has co-directed, written and produced under the name SALAZAR since 2010.

NATHAN DRILLOT
DIRECTOR/PRODUCER

Nathan Drillot was born in the Appalachian Mountains of Tennessee in a house without electricity. He spent his childhood in a constant state of flux moving every few years. Story telling was an intricate part of his families identity and helped to create a sense of continuity in another wise turbulent life. Forsaking traditional post secondary education he instead focused on lived experience. in 2010 he started SALAZAR with Jeff Petry and Jesse Savath. Since then he's traveled the world experiencing filmmaking as an integrated part of life.

EDO VAN BREEMAN
COMPOSER/MUSIC SUPERVISOR

Edo is the lead singer, keyboard player and songwriter for the highly acclaimed Canadian indie-rock band Brasstronaut, as well as an accomplished composer. His scoring credits include the documentaries *The Backwards Class* (Audience Choice Winner, Hot Docs 2014), *Fractured Land* directed Fiona Rayher and Damien Gillis, and the narrative films *Afflicted* (winner best Best Canadian First Feature Film at TIFF) and *AIR* starring Norman Reedus and Djimon Hounsou.

GREG NG
EDITOR

A film editor from Vancouver, B.C., Greg is an alumnus of the UBC Film Program and the Canadian Film Centre. He has worked with directors Clif Prowse and Derek Lee on the film *AFFLICTED*, which won Best Picture at FantasticFest 2013 and Best Canadian First Feature Film at TIFF 2013. He also was an editor on *The Backwards Class*, the Hot Docs Audience Choice for Best Documentary in 2014. Most recently, Greg finished editing *Come and Find Me*, directed by Zack Whedon and starring Aaron Paul.

SARA WYLIE
ASSOCIATE PRODUCER

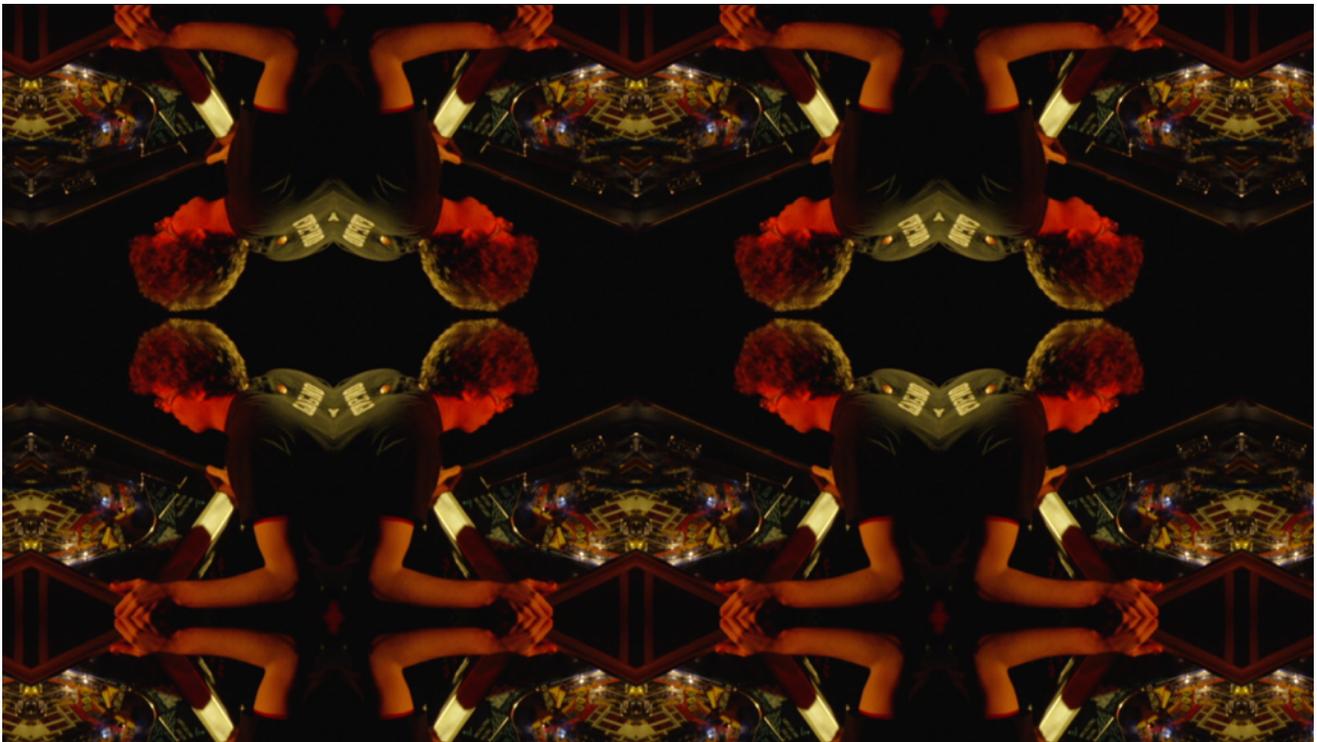
Sara has been researching and producing documentaries with Salazar for two years. She has previous experience working in community engagement with a range of social justice non-profit organizations in Vancouver, B.C. Last year, she was awarded a Telus Fellowship for upcoming filmmakers at the Banff Media Festival.

PRODUCTION & DISTRIBUTION

Wizard Mode is Vimeo's first ever Original feature film and documentary. It will be released on Vimeo On Demand in conjunction with its World Premiere at Hot Docs Film Festival in May 2016.

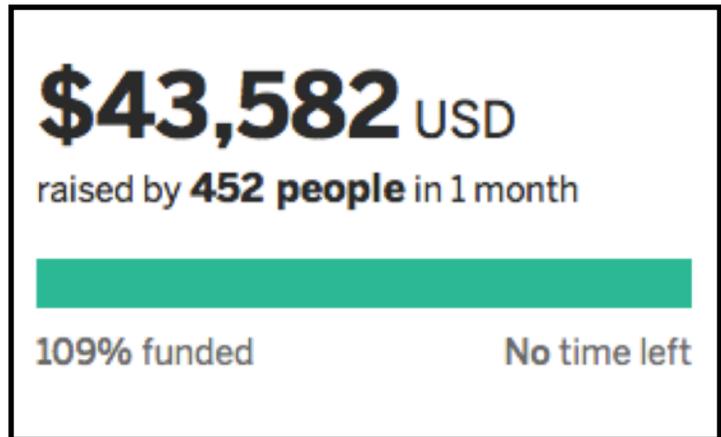
The film is produced in association with Blue Ice Docs and with the support of TELUS Optik Local.

We are currently seeking distribution outside of Canada. For sales inquiries contact Salazar Film: we@salazarfilm.com



WIZ FACTS

- The Wizard Mode short film was staff picked on Vimeo and received over 50,000 unique views and over 200,000 impressions.
- We raised over \$43,582 (USD) from over 452 backers on our crowdfunding campaign.
- The film was selected as "Project of the Day" and then voted "Project of the Week" on Indiewire.



- Popular indie music rocker and pinball enthusiast Mac Demarco is in the film and his music is featured on the soundtrack.

- Robert Gagno wrote a first person account of his life for the Daily Beast. The article was shared thousands of times across multiple social media platforms.

- The directors and Robert have been featured on Global TV and CTV across Canada.

- We had our own custom pinball made as a reward for our crowdfunding campaign.

CONTACT US



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