

# “The Act” Synopsis

Backstage, the standup comedian, Rosy Marconi, prays. Onstage, Rosy blasts her ex-husband. Stan was a man who made “laziness a religion,” and she’s happy now that he’s gone. But Rosy’s tired of the post-divorce pity. Where was the sympathy when she had to deal with the moron every day? What’s the use of all the I-feel-sorry-for-you gift baskets now that her life is great?

But Rosy’s home life isn’t what she makes it out to be. We join Rosy on a rainy night as she plods through her dark house, past her dining room table covered in gift baskets, and into her lifeless kitchen. She smokes, drinks, and—though she tries to keep it together—breaks down into tears.

Rosy calms herself and opens the kitchen drawer to reveal: a ring in a dish and a photo underneath. She picks up the photo. It’s of Rosy and her ex-husband, Stan, together and happy. Rosy replaces the photo under the dish and picks up the ring—her wedding band. She slips it onto her finger.

Rosy closes the drawer. She opens another--and withdraws a hypodermic needle. And with that, “The Act” takes an unexpected turn that will leave you breathless.

# “The Act” Cast

Debra Jo Rupp.....Rosy Marconi

J. Michael Flynn.....Stan

James P. Connolly.....M.C.

# “The Act” Bios

## Susan Kraker Writer/Director

Susan Kraker, originally from New York, has written and produced two critically acclaimed one-woman shows, *NarciSusan* (New York City) and *Fall of '95* (Los Angeles). Susan graduated from New York University's Tisch School of the Arts and attended the counseling psychology Ph.D. program at the University of Southern California. She was also an original member of The New York Deaf Theater. She holds a BA in Theater, an MA in psychology, and has hosted KPFK's weekly radio show, "Feminist Magazine", on Pacifica Radio, Los Angeles.

Susan gained critical acclaim with her debut feature film, *Solitude*, which she wrote and directed with her husband, Pi Ware. Hailed as "ferociously eloquent" by the *LA Weekly*, *Solitude* premiered to sold-out crowds in New York and Los Angeles. Indican Pictures has recently acquired *Solitude* for distribution and plans to release it in January 2005.

Susan and Pi are currently in development on two feature-length projects, *Wait for the Laugh*, a drama that takes place during the stand-up comedy boom of the late 1980's, and *Utopia*, a dramedy about neo-hippie activists who open a communist restaurant.

## Pi Ware Writer/Director

Pi Ware is originally from Tempe, Arizona. He received degrees in both English and Spanish from the University of Virginia. After college, he moved to Madrid to work as a camera assistant on several Spanish films, including Pedro Almodóvar's *The Flower of My Secret*. He returned to the U.S. to study graduate filmmaking at Loyola Marymount University before dropping out to join the Los Angeles-based film collective, Filmmakers Alliance. Pi has worked on the production of dozens of films, including *Star Maps* and *L.A. Confidential*. He is a published fiction writer and the founder of the *Filmmakers Alliance Magazine*.

Pi wrote and directed his debut feature, *Solitude*, with his wife and partner, Susan Kraker. *Solitude*, a twisted drama about family secrets, went onto great success on the film festival circuit, garnering awards and critical acclaim. The film will be released in January 2005 by Indican Pictures.

"The Act" was made through Filmmakers Alliance and is Pi's fourth short film. His earlier work includes "Thieves Falling Out", "Johnsburg, Illinois" and "My Beautiful Me", a dark comedy that found distribution with Warner Brothers on the DVD, *SHORT Cinema Journal: Trust*.

# “The Act” Bios contd.

## Debra Jo Rupp

“Rosy Marconi”

Debra Jo Rupp plays Kitty Forman, the endearing mother of Eric on the Fox situation comedy, “That 70’s Show.” Rupp has been featured on numerous television shows including roles on NBC’s hit series “Friends” (recurring as Phoebe’s sister-in-law), “Seinfeld” (recurring as Jerry’s ditsy booking agent), and “ER.” Additionally, she appeared in the Emmy-nominated HBO series “From the Earth to the Moon.” Rupp also starred in such telefilms as “The Invaders,” “In The Line of Duty - Ambush in Waco” and “A Woman Scorned: The Betty Broderick Story.”

Her feature film credits include “Big,” “Death Becomes Her” and “Sergeant Bilko.” Her theatrical credits include the Broadway hit “Cat on a Hot Tin Roof” portraying Mae. Off-Broadway she has performed in “Frankie and Johnny” and “A Girl’s Guide to Chaos” which showcased her comic ingenuity and initially brought her to Los Angeles.

In the can is the independent comedy “Lucky Thirteen,” in which she plays the nagging mother of Zack Baker, who, due to his parents’ dysfunctional marriage, has never been able to sustain a romantic relationship. Rupp can also be heard as the voice of the teacher, Mrs. Helperman, in the new animated series “Teacher’s Pet,” which debuts on ABC as part of Disney’s “One Saturday Morning” lineup.

Rupp currently resides in Los Angeles.

## J. Michael Flynn

“Stan Marconi”

Michael Flynn’s numerous television appearances include “The West Wing”, “Six Feet Under”, “Boston Public”, “Charmed” and “L.A. Law”. Flynn is an avid cyclist and American Bulldog trainer. He is also the founder of Marine Unlimited, a school in Colgate, California dedicated to teaching underprivileged children marine biology and environmental conservation.

Flynn currently resides outside of Los Angeles with his wife and family.

# “The Act” Bios contd.

## Samuel Dowe-Sandes

Producer

Samuel Dowe-Sandes grew up in the small town of Williamsville, Vermont, and attended Wesleyan University and Marlboro College. Samuel worked for five years in Los Angeles as a development executive with famed producer, Robert Evans, at Paramount Studios. In addition to “The Act,” he has produced the short film “The Red Bow” for Esquire Magazine’s Celluloid Style film contest based on the short story by George Saunders. He is currently in post-production on a new film that he’s written and directed, “Out of the Woods”.

## Marco Fagnoli

Director of Photography

Marco Fagnoli began his career in Chicago’s independent film community, shooting low-budget features and music videos. Since relocating to Los Angeles, his features and short films have picked up awards at Houston Worldfest, BACA, Cinequest, and HBO’s Short Film Award. His work on the digital cinema benchmark film *The Dogwalker* recently won Best Cinematography at the Ashland Independent Film Festival. His TV Documentary work includes projects for NBC, FOX, the History Channel, and the Sundance Institute. Marco’s latest projects are the independent features *Time of Fear* and *Held Together*.

## Craig Siebels

Production Designer

Craig Siebels has designed for theatre and opera around the country, including work at the La Jolla Playhouse, the Pearl Theatre, Augusta Opera, Madison Repertory Theatre, Clarence Brown Theatre, the American Stage Company, and many others. In 2000 and 2001 Craig was the Head of Design for the Group at Strasberg at the Lee Strasberg Creative Center. While there, he designed the renovation of the Marilyn Monroe Theatre as well as the inaugural production that opened the new space. Recently, Craig has split his time between set design for theatre/opera and production design for film, and his films have been seen at film festivals around the country. Craig Siebels has an MFA in design from the University of California, San Diego, and a BFA from Southern Methodist University.

# “The Act” Bios contd.

## Andrew Gross

Composer

Since scoring his first movie, *Bio Dome*, at the age of 25, Andrew Gross has been busy scoring features and television shows, including *Overnight Delivery* (New Line), *8 Heads in a Duffel Bag* (Orion), and *The King of Queens* (CBS). Andrew also did the string arrangements for the debut album of Jack Black's band, Tenacious D. Last year Andrew's score for *Dead Simple* (Artisan) was released, and he looks forward to the release of two of his other film scores, *Buying the Cow* (Sony/Screen Gems) and *The Good Girl* (Myriad Films), starring Jennifer Aniston and directed by Miguel Arteta.

Andrew is currently scoring *My Dinner with Jimi* (Rhino Films), which chronicles the band, The Turtles', first trip to London in 1968.

## Janet Teller

Costume Designer

Janet Teller is a freelance costume designer for film, theatre, dance, you name it. After receiving her MFA from UC San Diego, Janet became an in-house designer for Trashy Lingerie in West Hollywood, CA. Some of her recent film credits include "The Vest", "East L.A. King", "Los Jornoleros", "Singularity", and "Breaking Up With Maggie Moore". Janet has designed costumes for "Faust" (Opera Santa Barbara), "The Importance of Being Earnest" (Cal Poly Pomona University) "Molly's Delicious", "A Bicycle Country" (Lee Strasberg Creative Center) and "Nora" (La Jolla Playhouse). Janet is currently the resident costume designer for Beverly Hills High School and a part time lecturer at Cal Poly Pomona University.

## Becca Coffman

Make-Up and Hairstyling

Becca is an East Coast transplant (PA) following her dream of becoming a Make-Up artist for Film and Theatre. She graduated in 2003 from The Make-Up Designory (MUD) located in Burbank with specialties in both Beauty and Special FX make-up as well as Hairstyling. She has worked on over 16 films and does private photo shoots on the side with a special interest in Avante Garde make-up. You can see her work at [www.face2facefx.com](http://www.face2facefx.com).

# “The Act”

## Directors’ Comments

Susan Kraker & Pi Ware

We have been working as a collaborative team for seven years. People are always curious how a husband and wife are able to share equally as writers and directors. It’s one part trust, one part faith, and another part luck. We try to be a single unit with a common vision. Of course, each of us has our own strengths—our own personal rapport with a certain actor, an instinctive gift for art direction, a knowledge of camera lenses, etc.—and we try to take advantage of our differences as well as what we have in common. But in the end, it is our joint commitment to the integrity of the film that allows us to overcome individual agendas and adhere to the heart of the piece. And a sense of humor helps, too.

We collaborated with cinematographer Marco Fargnoli and production designer Craig Siebels to create two distinct looks for “The Act”: one, the happy, golden glow of a comedy club, and, two, the cool, stark emptiness of Rosy Marconi’s house on a rainy night. This juxtaposition was important in order to highlight the dichotomy of the comedian’s life: the mocking, carefree persona of the onstage comic against the sad, pained persona of the performer at home.

(By the way, if you haven’t seen the film yet, read no further, as the next paragraph gives away the surprise ending.)

Mostly, though, we concentrated on the heart of the piece: the surprising lengths people go to when they love someone unconditionally. Rosy is a character who sublimates her grief and frustration. Through her comedy act—and in collusion with her husband—Rosy exorcises the anger and betrayal she feels at watching Stan slowly die. By exorcising these negative emotions she permits herself to care for him as selflessly as possible while she tends to his daily needs. There is always grief and frustration when a loved one is dying, and there will always be a sense of anger associated with illness. But our hope is that we can recognize these negative emotions and deal with them creatively, so that when our loved one needs us to be strong and fearless, we can do just that. Ultimately, “The Act” is about building a love that surpasses even death.

# “The Act”

## Production Notes

### “Where the Rain Meets the Roof”

Friends of the producer loaned their Venice, California house to “The Act” to double as Rosy Marconi’s lonely home. This may seem like a normal thing for friends to do, but it is *far* more generous than it appears. For the house belonged to writer/filmmaker, Danny Baron, who *knows* what *happens* to a house when a 35mm production crew enters it and shoots a movie. Property damage isn’t possible, it’s assured.

“The Act” was no different. To achieve the look the directors envisioned, Cinematographer Marco Fagnoli and Production Designer Craig Siebels created rain machines for both the kitchen (downstairs) and the bedroom (upstairs) scenes. Little did the crew realize, but the upstairs balcony had never been sealed off properly. When water began pouring out of the downstairs ceiling and out through cracks in the walls like some demented horror movie, production came to a screeching halt.

After many towels, a few adjustments to the rain machines, and \$700 worth of contractor work to the downstairs ceiling, the problem was sorted out. And the owners of the house, bless their generous hearts, took it all in stride.

# “The Act” Credits

Written and Directed by Susan Kraker and Pi Ware  
Produced by Samuel Dowe-Sandes  
Director of Photography Marco Fagnoli  
Production Designer Craig Siebels  
Music by Andrew Gross  
Casting by Matthew Lessall, C.S.A.  
Produced in Association with Filmmakers Alliance

Rosy Marconi Debra Jo Rupp  
Stan J. Michael Flynn  
MC James P. Connolly  
Adam Lipsky Jay Hewlett  
Married Couple Tiffany Cade  
John Cato  
Professional Women Suzanne Fagan  
Debbie Blossom  
Tanayi Seabrook  
Gwin Wheatley  
Bartender Patrick Belton  
Waitresses Diane Gaidry  
Caryn Shalita  
Gabriela Tollman  
Nadia Wit  
Comedians Robin Jones  
Lauren Kirschner  
Erik Passoja  
Kira Soltanovich  
John Viener

Costume Designer Janet Teller  
Associate Producer Andrew M. Somers  
1st Assistant Director Juan Feldman  
2nd Assistant Director Ariel Elazar  
Sound Mixer Brian Linder  
Boom Operator Cesar Benito  
Script Supervisor Leigh McCarthy  
Make-Up Artist Becca Coffman  
Prop Masters Tyler Patton  
Robert Anderson

|                            |                        |
|----------------------------|------------------------|
| Ist Camera Assistant       | Dean Gunderson         |
| 2nd Camera Assistant       | Doug Oh                |
| Gaffer                     | Owen Foy               |
| Best Girl                  | Joanna Maier           |
| Key Grip                   | "Sheriff" Bob Stillman |
| Dolly Grip                 | Bryan Theis            |
| Grip                       | Gina Levy              |
| Production Manager         | Carlos Castellanos     |
| Set Dressers               | Jonathan Lemond        |
|                            | Claudia Guerra         |
| Dresser/Painter            | Isabelle Trimbale      |
|                            | Christian Amougou      |
| Wardrobe Assistant         | Gena Gilcrease         |
| Craft Services             | Lara Hoefs             |
| Catering                   | Ultimate Catering      |
| Production Assistants      | John Accursi           |
|                            | Warren Davis           |
|                            | Keith Del Mar          |
|                            | Chandler Evans         |
|                            | David Goldman          |
|                            | Dave Kurtz             |
|                            | Daniel Kwak            |
|                            | Rupert Sandes          |
| Cat Wranglers              | Mike Halleen           |
|                            | Matt Stell             |
| 35mm Film Provided by      | Fujifilm               |
| Sound Consultant           | Mark Stoeckinger       |
| Mix Consultant             | Alan Rankin, M.P.S.E.  |
| Supervising Sound Editor   | Dean Hurley            |
| Sound Editor               | Ryan Rubin             |
| Foley Artist               | Nate Atkins            |
| Sound Technician           | Aaron Levy             |
| Still Photography          | Elizabeth Daniels      |
| Additional Photography     | Jeffrey Roberts        |
| Additional Ist AC          | Kelly Richard          |
| Comedy Support             | Barb North             |
| Initial Budget             | Jon Lawrence           |
| Medical Consultant         | George Veech           |
| Assistant to Debra Jo Rupp | Laura Raab             |
| Titles by                  | Title House            |
| Filmed at                  | Cafe Club Fais Do Do   |

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