



"MY FRIEND OSCAR"

Pitch deck for a new documentary feature film from Rhode Trip Pictures*

Award-winning filmmaker James Andrew Walsh directs London West End star Oscar Conlon-Morrey as Oscar Wilde in a new documentary feature retracing in 2023 the author's little-known 1882 cross-country American lecture tour from New York City to Hollywood.

* includes excerpts from David M. Friedman's book, "Wilde in America"

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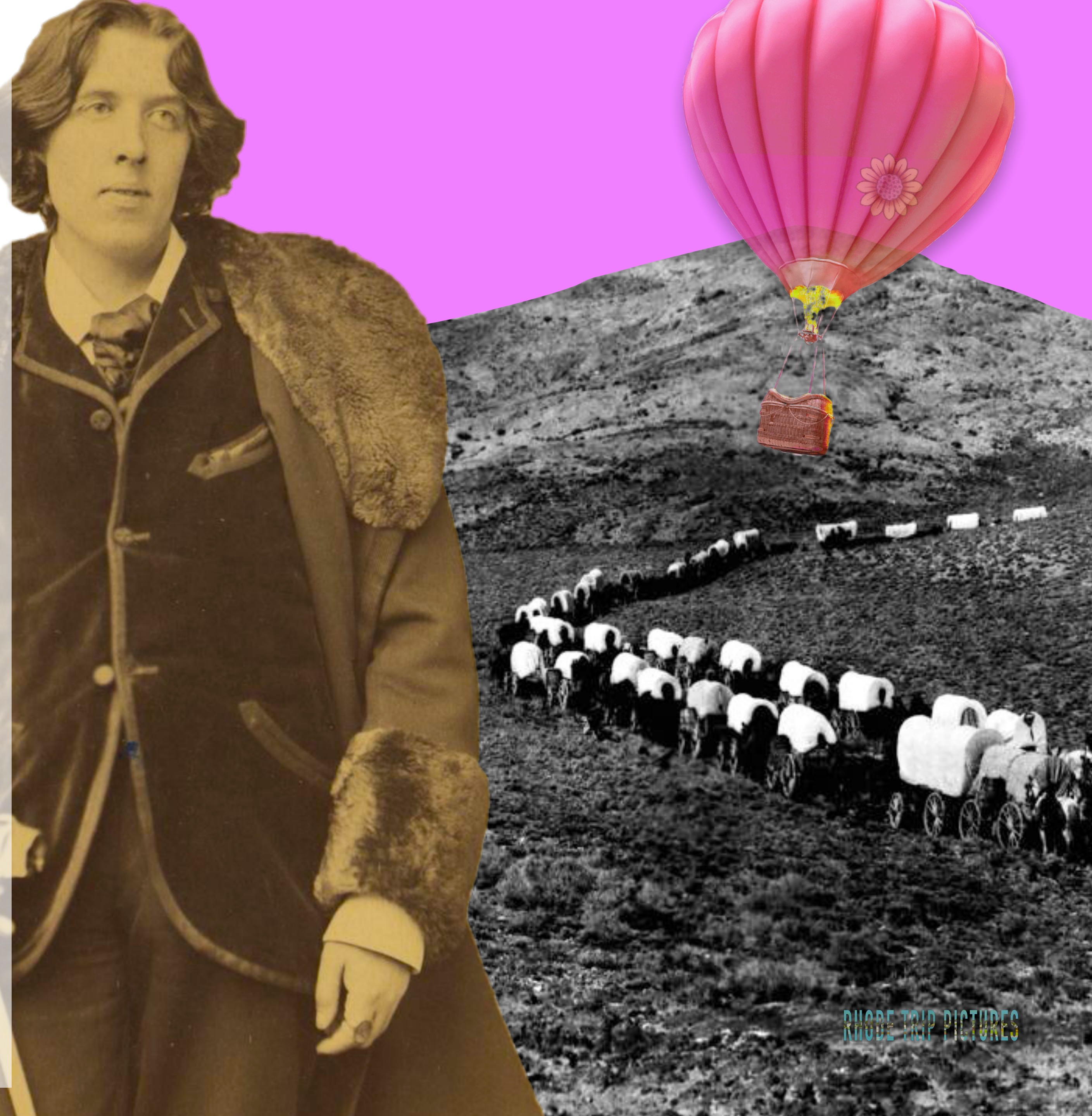
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On January 3, 1882, Oscar Wilde arrived in New York City aboard the British ocean liner, SS Arizona. The 27-year-old recent Oxford graduate, dressed in lavender pants, silk stockings and shiny black patent leather shoes, presented his baggage to the customs agent. When asked if he had anything to declare, Wilde flipped his purple calfskin gloves and said: *“Nothing... Nothing but my genius!”*

Over the next 300 days, the unpublished poet-writer saw more of North America than most modern day Presidential candidates. In his green wool coat trimmed at the collar and cuffs in seal fur, Wilde traipsed through the streets and fashionable salons of Eastern cities and crisscrossed the Western frontier from the Rocky Mountains to California’s Pacific shore. He traveled on horse back, by stage coach and covered wagon, by railroad, and by hot air balloon. Crowds who came to hear him lecture on The Decorative Arts or The English Renaissance gawked and stared (and sometimes ridiculed) the self-anointed "High Priest of Beauty".





Wilde hobnobbed with Whitman and Longfellow, Beecher, Holmes, and James, supped and slept with Colorado silver miners and society courtesans in Newport and New York, lunched with Ulysses S. Grant and Jefferson Davis, posed with P.T. Barnum's latest craze, Jumbo the Elephant, schmoozed with the low and high born, and outdrank America's burgeoning demimonde from coast to coast.


Wilde returned to London the following year a **celebrity**, but not just any **celebrity**: the very model for what we now call modern **celebrity**. Long before he had penned a single syllable of anything, Wilde had become world famous merely for being famous—with his humility-free approach to self-advertisement still employed today by several generations of social media aspirants.

Yet, despite his august literary achievements thereafter, Wilde's life ended in disaster. The rules of self-promotion and manipulating the media he had pioneered in America did not make him invincible; they did the opposite. The culture of celebrity he brought to life rose up to take his—because he believed his own hype.



“My Friend Oscar” chronicles the journey of a contemporary queer explorer in search of his own identity by retracing Wilde's footsteps in the place where his public persona was forged: America.

The film will document the people and places Oscar Conlon-Morrey meets and sees in a series of professional bookings and social appearances as Oscar Wilde. We will follow Conlon-Morrey’s two-week journey from the Northeast, to the Deep South, and across the Western frontier, as he performs in gay bars and theatres, private dinner parties, nightclubs, and rodeos, on horse back, stage coach and covered wagon, by railroad, and by hot air balloon, just like Oscar Wilde himself.



The central premise of "My Friend Oscar" poses the question: How would Oscar Wilde, the foppish high priest of Aestheticism go over in the America of 2023?

Like Sacha Baron Cohen's brilliant and hilarious quasi-documentary reflections on contemporary America in his "Borat" films, Conlon-Morrey's two-week performative journey as Oscar Wilde will be algorithmic; it will collect and process the camera's observations of American life in absurd, meaningful, entertaining ways.

The stakes in "My Friend Oscar" are the existential ones we see played out daily in the media: the version of America that survives our current political and constitutional crisis ultimately depends on whether we will include or we will rebuke and exclude Oscar Wilde.

**Director/Producer/Co-Creator
James Andrew Walsh**

is the 2019 Cannes Silver Lion Award winner for his co-creation and direction of the immersive theatre piece *"As Much As I Can"* at the Public Theater in New York City. Walsh wrote and directed the award-winning *"The Extinction of Fireflies"*, starring Michael Urie, Tracie Bennett, Kario Marcel, and Drew Droege. TV/stage veterans Gregory Harrison and Mary Beth Peil star in his latest film, *"Jimmy and Carolyn"*, which premiered on the 2022 global film festival circuit, where it won numerous awards, including Best Picture, Best Director, Best Supporting Actress and Best Original Screenplay.



**Performer/Co-Creator
Oscar Conlon-Morrey**

Is currently starring opposite Sir Ian McKellen in the West End smash *"Mother Goose"*. He will join Sir Ian in the Netflix film based on the same. Oscar was last seen in *Only Fools and Horses* (Theatre Royal Haymarket, West End), for which he was been nominated for Best Supporting Actor in a Musical at the 20th Annual What'sOnStage Awards. Oscar was the winner of the Julia McKenzie Prize for Comedy at the Stephen Sondheim Society Student Performer of the Year Award 2017

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

While our core audience is interested in queer history and culture, my aim is to make a contemporary, satirical film that viewers will find on Netflix or HBO, one that belongs in the urgent conversation about our modern world, LGBTQ or otherwise, one at the crossroads of liberalism versus extremism.

Planning how a film will reach its target audience begins the moment the film is first imagined and continues as the film's central premise is honed and refined, from story development and storyboarding through the completion of principal photography.

While an effective marketing campaign helps your audience find your film, as a filmmaker, I'm looking to target my audience in every frame of the film I'm making.

Creative control is shared by myself as director/co-creator with my co-creator, Oscar Conlon-Morrey, and Kimberly Chesser as executive producer on the film.

Please email me at james@rhodetrippictures.com for detailed investor information, including our shooting schedule and production budget for the film.

James Andrew Walsh

