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FIFTY YEARS LATER, PATRICIA QUINN IS STILL ASTONISHED BY ROCKY HORROR

Patricia Quinn thought she understood *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*.

After all, she was there from the beginning. She originated the role of Magenta in Richard O'Brien's tiny stage production in London before reprising the character in the 1975 film that would eventually become one of the most beloved cult classics in cinema history.

Then she started touring.

"I thought I understood *Rocky Horror* like the back of my hand," Quinn told *The RAGE Monthly*. "I thought I understood the fandom ... I knew nothing."

On **Sunday, October 11**, Quinn will bring that decades-long relationship with audiences to San Diego's historic **Balboa Theatre** for a special screening of ***The Rocky Horror Picture Show*** complete with a live shadow cast, audience participation, a costume contest, and a post-film conversation with the actress who helped create one of the movie's most unforgettable characters.

For Quinn, the experience has become just as remarkable as the film itself.

"I thought I was doing little cinemas across the states," she said with a laugh. Instead, she found herself walking into ornate historical theaters packed with fans. "They're sold out every night. All of this has been amazing to me."

What continues to surprise her even more than the crowds is who makes up those audiences. "I have mothers, grandmothers, daughters and granddaughters all come and ask for autographs dressed as Magenta," she said. "Families, generations of them."

That generational devotion is something Quinn could never have imagined when *Rocky Horror* first began — not as a film, but as an experimental stage production in a tiny upstairs room at London's Royal Court Theatre in 1973.

"There was no stage, no curtain, nothing," she recalled. "Just 60 little wooden chairs." Yet within weeks, word of mouth had transformed the production into London's hottest ticket. "Mick Jagger was on the stairs queuing. It was the talk of London."

The film adaptation followed two years later, but its success was anything but immediate.

"They didn't know what to do with it," Quinn said, nodding at the initial box-office failure. It wasn't until a 20th Century Fox employee suggested midnight screenings on college campuses that everything changed. "But for that boy at 20th Century Fox, we wouldn't exist."

Soon came stories from New York's Eighth Street Playhouse about audiences talking back to the screen, dressing as the characters and performing alongside the movie.

"We thought, 'They're mad,'" Quinn said. "'What the hell are they talking about?'"

Today, those once-unthinkable traditions have become part of every stop on her tour. Before the film begins, audiences compete in costume contests. A host warms up the crowd. Quinn takes the stage for a live Q&A before a shadow cast performs the film on the screen.

"It's just a very joyous evening," she said. "It's beyond belief."

The phenomenon continues to surprise her in unexpected places.

"I've done very religious states where there's churches on every corner," she said. "I thought, 'I'll get stoned in this state. Who's going to come to this here?' It was sold out."

The travel, she notes, can be exhausting.

"It's grueling hard work," Quinn said. "But it's the adulation that keeps me going. The enthusiasm, the joy."

That joy has even become part of her family's story. Her son grew up accompanying her to conventions and appearances, while today it's her grandchildren who hear about Magenta from classmates.

Nearly 50 years after Magenta first stepped onto a tiny stage in London, Quinn still sounds a little bewildered by it all. Not by the film itself, but by the community that has grown around it that continues to sing, shout, dress up and celebrate together, generation after generation.

And if her reaction to every sold-out theater is any indication, Patricia Quinn is still enjoying the ride every bit as much as the audiences who come to see her.

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