

= Zero Patience =

Zero Patience is a 1993 Canadian musical film written and directed by John Greyson . The film examines and refutes the urban legend of the alleged introduction of HIV to North America by a single individual , Gaëtan Dugas . Dugas , better known as Patient Zero , was tagged in the popular imagination with the blame in large measure because of Randy Shilts 's history of the early days of the AIDS epidemic , And the Band Played On . The film tells its story against the backdrop of a romance between a time @-@ displaced Sir Richard Francis Burton and the ghost of " Zero " ( the character is not identified by Dugas ' name ) .

Produced in partnership with the Canadian Film Centre , the Canada Council , Telefilm Canada and the Ontario Film Development Corporation , Zero Patience opened to mixed reviews but went on to win a number of prestigious Canadian film awards . The film has been the subject of critical attention in the context of both film theory and queer theory and is considered part of the informal New Queer Cinema movement .

= = Plot summary = =

Victorian adventurer and sexologist Sir Richard Francis Burton ( John Robinson ) , following an " unfortunate encounter " with the Fountain of Youth in 1892 , is 170 years old and living in Toronto , Canada . Burton , now living and working as the chief taxidermist at a Museum of Natural History , is searching for a centerpiece display for an exhibit in his Hall of Contagion . He comes up with the idea of featuring AIDS and the Patient Zero hypothesis . Accepting the popular belief that Zero introduced the virus to North America , Burton sets out to collect video footage from those who knew Zero to support the hypothesis . When Zero 's doctor ( Brenda Kamino ) , mother ( Charlotte Boisjoli ) and former airline colleague Mary ( Dianne Heatherington ) , who is now with ACT UP , all refuse to demonize Zero , Burton manipulates the footage to make it appear as if they do and includes doctored photographs of Zero showing signs of Kaposi 's sarcoma . He presents this preliminary version to the press .

The ghost of Zero ( Normand Fauteux ) materializes at a local gay bathhouse . No one can see or hear him , until Zero runs into Burton while Burton is spying on Zero 's friend George . Zero realizes that Burton can see him , although Zero does not show up on Burton 's video camera . The two strike a deal ; Zero agrees to help Burton with his Patient Zero exhibit if Burton finds a way to make Zero appear .

The two return to the museum where Burton makes a ridiculous attempt to seduce Zero to ensure his participation . Rejecting his advances , Zero examines some of the other exhibits ( including displays on Typhoid Mary and the Tuskegee syphilis study ) before finding an African green monkey , another suspected early AIDS vector . The monkey ( Marla Lukofsky ) angrily denounces Zero for scapegoating her just as he has been scapegoated . Zero turns to Burton and they make love .

Under pressure from his director and the exhibit 's drug manufacturer sponsor , Burton steals Zero 's medical records in hopes of discovering new information . Zero and Burton examine an old blood sample of Zero 's under a microscope and discover Miss HIV ( Michael Callen ) , who points out that the original study that was used to label Patient Zero as the first person to bring HIV to North America did not prove any such thing , but instead helped prove that HIV was sexually transmitted , leading to the development of safer sex practices . Under this interpretation , Zero could be lauded as a hero for his candor in participating in that original study . As Burton ponders this , an unknown fluid squirts from the eye pieces of the microscope , drenching Zero and making him appear on video . He joyously declares his innocence on tape but the effect only lasts five minutes before he fades away again . Zero angrily accuses Burton of not caring for him at all and only wanting to use him for the exhibit , then storms out .

Burton fails to complete the revised Patient Zero exhibit before its scheduled opening date . The museum curator substitutes the original presentation instead over Burton 's protests , leading to a renewed rush of press scapegoating Zero . The night after the exhibit opens , Mary and other ACT UP members break into the Hall of Contagion and trash the exhibit . Zero returns and Burton

explains that he tried to stop the exhibit . Zero forgives Burton but says he wants to disappear again completely . Zero merges with his disfigured video image and , smoking a cigarette inside the video , sets off the fire alarm . The sprinklers destroy the video player and Zero vanishes .

A major subplot involves George ( Richardo Keens @-@ Douglas ) , a French teacher and former intimate of Zero 's . George is losing his sight to cytomegalovirus and is taking a drug that is manufactured by a company that , as a member of ACT UP , George is protesting . George struggles through the film to resolve his conflicted feelings over this , his guilt over abandoning Zero during the final days of his illness and his fear that the same thing will happen to him .

= = Cast = =

John Robinson as Sir Richard Burton

Normand Fauteux as Zero

Dianne Heatherington as Mary

Richardo Keens @-@ Douglas as George

Charlotte Boisjoli as Maman , Zero 's mother

Brenda Kamino as Dr. Cheng , Zero 's doctor

Michael Callen as Miss HIV

Marla Lukofsky as African Green Monkey

Von Flores as Ray ( ACT UP member )

Scott Hurst as Michael ( ACT UP member )

Duncan McIntosh as Ross ( ACT UP member )

Real @-@ life television journalist Ann Medina has a brief role as a television reporter . Co @-@ producer Louise Garfield makes a cameo appearance playing a virus , co @-@ producer Anna Stratton appears as a drug company executive and composer Glenn Schellenberg plays a bathhouse attendant .

= = Production = =

John Greyson became interested in offering a counterpoint to the Patient Zero story as early as 1987 , when the Patient Zero meme began entering the public consciousness following the publication of Randy Shilts 's book *And the Band Played On* . The book described the cluster study which led to the popular identification of flight attendant Gaëtan Dugas as the vector through which HIV was first brought to North America . It should be noted , however , that Shilts himself never claimed that Dugas was the first . In early 1991 Greyson was given a development grant for the script from the Canadian Film Centre , of which Greyson is an alumnus . Over the next year Greyson , in collaboration with Film Centre partners Louise Garfield and Anna Stratton , continued to develop the script , eventually presenting it with producer Alexandra Raffé in a workshop format . During the first half of 1992 , the production team secured additional development funding from the Canada Council , Telefilm Canada and the Ontario Film Development Corporation . By June of that year the script and the songs were completed and that autumn , with funds from the Telefilm Canada and OFDC grants along with revenue from the sale of British broadcast rights to Channel 4 , pre @-@ production and casting got underway . Principal photography began in November 1992 and wrapped after five weeks . Sneak previews took place at the Seattle International Film Festival and a number of LGBT film festivals across the United States before its official debut in September 1993 at Toronto 's Festival of Festivals .

In dedicating the film 's soundtrack album to performer and AIDS activist Michael Callen and other friends they had lost to the disease , Greyson , composer Glenn Schellenberg and producers Garfield and Stratton explained their reasons for making the film . " We wanted to explode the opportunistic myth of Patient Zero .... More importantly , we wanted to celebrate the courage and sass of an international AIDS activist movement that has tirelessly fought for the rights of people living with AIDS . "

= = Critical reception = =

Zero Patience garnered mixed critical reaction . The mainstream Austin Chronicle cited a " murky plot , frequently weak acting and often mediocre music " while still praising the film 's " spunk , humor , enthusiasm and wit . " The Washington Post compared Zero Patience unfavorably to Hollywood 's big @-@ budget , big @-@ star AIDS @-@ themed film , Philadelphia , claiming that the latter 's protagonist , Andrew Beckett , " looked sick , dealt with his illness and allowed the audience to sympathize , " unlike the " healthy hoofers " of the musical who , because they didn 't look sick enough , " [ seem ] to deny some of the grim realities " of the disease . In a contrary favorable opinion , London 's Time Out Film Guide praised the film for " slyly inverting popular wisdom " to " offer a sassy commentary on the epidemic of blame " and calling Zero Patience " a film which engages your mind as much as your heart , and leaves you laughing . " Similarly , The New York Times lauded the film 's " loopy buoyancy , " praising the songs as a " bouncy stylistic hybrid of Gilbert and Sullivan , Ringo Starr , The Kinks and the Pet Shop Boys . "

Zero Patience was honored as the Best Canadian Film and Best Ontario Feature at the 1993 Cinéfest and was awarded a Special Jury Citation as Best Canadian Feature Film at the 1993 Festival of Festivals . Greyson dedicated his award to the memory of Jay Scott , the influential film critic who had died of AIDS a few months earlier .

Director Greyson and composer Glenn Schellenberg were nominated for a 1993 Genie Award for Best Original Song for the film 's theme song , " Zero Patience . "

= = = Queer theory = = =

In examining the film from a queer theory perspective , author Michele Aaron cites Zero Patience as definitional of one of the New Queer Cinema 's central attitudes , the " def [ iance ] of cinematic convention in terms of form , content and genre . " Aaron goes on to cite the film 's musical format as " further subvert [ ing ] the ways we might expect to be ' entertained ' by such serious matters as AIDS , media representation , and the legacy of moralism and sexuality . " Feminist academic and AIDS video producer Alexandra Juhasz puts forth the film as " an effective critique of the silly sensationalism used in much reportage of AIDS science [ that ] fights melodrama and tabloid journalism -- with melodrama and tabloid journalism . " Not all such critical commentary has been positive , with openly gay film scholar Robin Wood ( who saw the film when someone very close to him was in the final stages of AIDS ) calling the film " misguided on the levels both of conception and execution . "

= = Soundtrack = =

The Zero Patience soundtrack was released in 1994 . Produced by John Switzer , it includes all of the songs and several pieces of incidental music , along with two remixes of the film 's title song .

= = = Track listing = = =

Zero Patience [ Moulton Lava Club Remix ]  
Arabian Nights - Instrumental  
Just Like Scheherazade - Zero  
Culture of Certainty - Richard Burton  
Pop @-@ A @-@ Boner - Bathhouse trio  
Control - Mary and ACT UP  
George 's Theme - Instrumental  
Pop @-@ A @-@ Boner [ Reprise # 1 ] - Bathhouse trio  
Butthole Duet - Richard Burton and Zero  
Positive - George and schoolchildren  
Drowning Sailors ' Theme - Instrumental

Love Theme - Instrumental  
Contagious - African Green Monkey  
Pop @-@ A @-@ Boner [ Reprise # 2 ] - Bathhouse trio  
Scheherazade ( Miss HIV ) - Miss HIV  
Six or Seven Things - Richard Burton and Zero  
Zero Patience - Principal cast  
Scheherazade ( Tell a Story ) - Principal cast  
Zero Patience [ Extended Burn Remix ]