

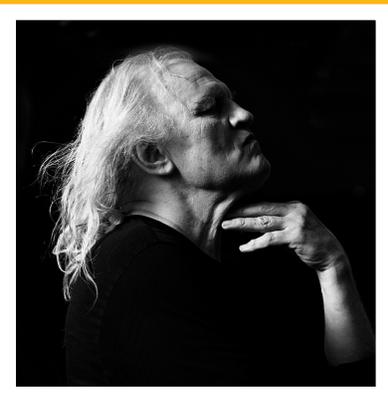


## VCU Brandcenter Friday Forum

Apr. 11 / 11am-12:30pm / VCU Brandcenter Lecture Hall / 103 S. Jefferson St.

# Joe Pytka

Director / PYTKA



Joe Pytka studied fine arts at what is now Carnegie Mellon University, then, briefly, Chemical Engineering at the University of Pittsburgh. After working at a small industrial film company and then briefly running a post production department for MGM Telestudios in New York, he returned to Pittsburgh to film a number of award-winning documentary and dramatic films for WOED.

He then partnered with Rift Fournier to form a production company, Fournier/Pytka, to produce documentaries independently with an occasional foray into commercials. Pytka's attention eventually turned more to commercials. At the same time, he experimented with an early music video format in his documentary, MAGGIE'S FARM, and a short film with Steve McQueen. The latter brought some notoriety and attention and his commercial career began to flourish. His work with the legendary McCabe and Riney won many international awards.

After breaking with Fournier, Pytka formed an association with Rick Levine and then went out on his own. His work with Riney included Blitz Weinhard Brewery, Gallo Winery's Bartles and Jaymes Wine Coolers, and Perrier. It is considered some of the greatest work in advertising history. His Pepsi work, especially, is also considered historic and garnered many awards, including the Grand Prix at the Cannes Film Festival. His work with Wieden and Kennedy for Nike has also been called groundbreaking, especially the work with Jim Riswold and Stacy Wall.

Pytka has become known for his work with celebrities and athletes, including The Beatles, Madonna, Michael Jordan, Tiger Woods, Tom Hanks, Marlon Brando, Wayne Gretsky, LeBron James, Dwayne Wade, and President Obama, among many others. In addition to commercials, Pytka has done two films, LET IT RIDE, a critical and commercial mess although it became a Siskel and Ebert 'guilty pleasure,' and SPACE JAM, a hugely profitable movie based on his commercials for Nike and McDonald's.

Pytka has won two Cannes Grands Prix and seven Palmes d'Or. He also was given two special Lions for best directing and best production for the first fifty years of Cannes.

He has been called a 'genius' (by Ad Age), and likened to Wolf Larson, the monstrous villain of Jack London's THE SEA WOLF (by Steve Hayden, the writer of Apple's 1984). Pytka scoffs at the genius observations and points out that he and Hayden have worked together for twenty five years. In that time their work for IBM took that brand from a negative worth of fifty million to a positive somewhere north of a hundred BILLION today, and isn't that what advertising is all about?