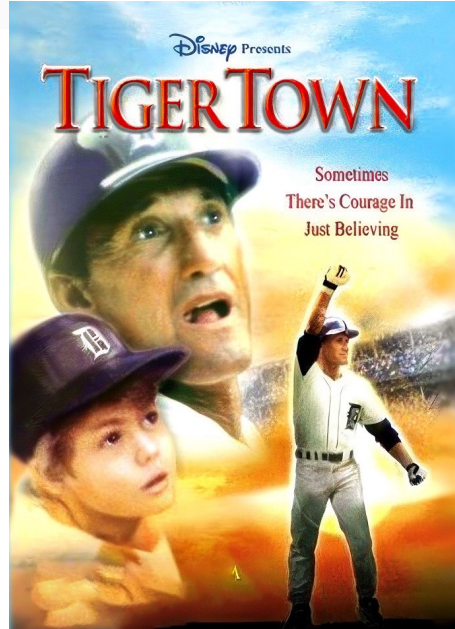


## REMEMBERING 'TIGER TOWN,' A WARM SLICE OF DETROIT NOSTALGIA OVERLOOKED BY DISNEY+

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**THE 1983 DISNEY CHANNEL ORIGINAL MOVIE ISN'T YET AVAILABLE ON DISNEY'S NEW STREAMING SERVICE, BUT ITS DETROIT-BORN WRITER-DIRECTOR IS HOLDING OUT HOPE**

When Disney+ debuted Tuesday it boasted hundreds of titles from Disney's vast library of archives, a veritable treasure trove of nostalgia for adults looking to stream their childhoods.

One production noticeably absent from the lineup - especially for Metro Detroiters of a certain age - is "Tiger Town," the 1983 Disney Channel original movie about a young boy who wills the down-and-out Detroit Tigers to the American League pennant.

The movie stars Roy Scheider as aging Tigers veteran Billy Young, who is slumping through his final season in the majors; Academy Award-nominee Justin Henry ("Kramer vs. Kramer") as Alex, a fan who believes in Young and his beloved Tigers; and perhaps most importantly, a still-in-its-prime Tiger Stadium, rendered so lovingly you can practically smell the peanuts in the stands and the freshly cut grass in the outfield.

Fans with fond memories of "Tiger Town" haven't had access to it in years, outside of worn-down VHS copies, which can be found on eBay for \$49.99, and a grainy version uploaded to YouTube several years ago. Shapiro says that plans for a DVD release stalled over a rights issue relating to "Go Get Em, Tigers," a song recorded by Artie Fields (with lyrics by famed Tigers broadcaster Ernie Harwell) for the Tigers' 1968 championship season that plays over a key montage in the film.



Shapiro has fond memories of making the film, which he shot in summer 1983 in and around Corktown and Tiger Stadium. Shapiro, who was 25 at the time, had an 18-day shooting schedule, a budget of \$900,000 and the full cooperation of the Tigers, who gave him free reign over the stadium.

"We could shoot wherever we wanted," says Shapiro, now 62. "They never said no to anything. We owned the place."

So why is it not on Disney+? It's not a simple case of someone forgetting to upload it: while Disney+ may seem to be home to every Disney movie ever, its catalog of 1980s Disney Channel original movies is, thus far, largely missing from the service. (Titles such as "The Blue Yonder" and "The Parent Trap II" are also nowhere to be found; an inquiry sent to Disney was not returned as of press time.)

"Tiger Town" writer, director and native Detroiter Alan Shapiro, who based the film on his own love of the Tigers - especially during their 1968 championship run - would love to see the film added to the Disney+ lineup.

"It's not going to make me rich or anything," Shapiro said Thursday from his home in Pasadena. "It would just be sweet to have it up there."



Shapiro and his crew filmed crowd shots during Tigers home games and shot on the field during away games, using up to 600 extras to fill in the stands. At the time, Tiger Stadium seemed immortal; at one point, Alex's father (played by Ron McLarty) says to his son, "this place will be here forever. You'll be taking your own kids before you know it."

"It was a baseball temple. Such a special place," says Shapiro. "('Tiger Town') is a great document of Tiger Stadium, showing all the quirks of the place."

Harwell and ex-Tigers skipper Sparky Anderson are among those who appear as themselves in the movie; former Detroit sportscaster Ray Lane and Mary Wilson of the Supremes also make appearances.

Outside of Corktown, Shapiro filmed in Eastern Market, Royal Oak and Ann Arbor, as well as at the Ford Michigan Assembly Plant. Shapiro shot several scenes at Pasteur Elementary School, which he attended as a child raised near Seven Mile and Livernois.



The movie was also seen as something of a good omen for the Tigers franchise; the following year, the team won the World Series, and Shapiro was gifted with tickets to every playoff and World Series game as a thank you from the Tigers organization.

Following 'Tiger Town,' Shapiro made another movie for Disney, 'The Christmas Star,' which actually is on Disney+. He went on to direct Alicia Silverstone in her 1993 screen debut 'The Crush.' which was based on a personal experience. He followed 'The Crush' with the commercially underperforming 'Flipper' In 1996, and Shapiro says he was sentenced to 'director's jail'.

He continued to write films - 'I did a lot of stuff that never got made, but I got paid,' he says - but his writing career allowed him to stay home and be 'Mr. Mom' to his two sons, who are now out of college.

'Tiger Town' still holds a special place in his heart, and he's hoping it can be seen again so audiences can relive the majesty of Tiger Stadium and new fans can discover a lost piece of Tigers nostalgia.

It's up to Disney, but Shapiro is still hopeful. "Like Mr. Berra says, it ain't over til it's over".

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