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A film by **Paul Blackthorne**

From the co-producer of HOW TO SURVIVE A PLAGUE and TROUBLE THE WATER and the executive producer of AMERICAN TEEN

THIS AMERICAN JOURNEY

Where to from here?



CINEMA LIBRE STUDIO PRESENTS A TW PRODUCTIONS FILM "THIS AMERICAN JOURNEY"
 WRITTEN BY MISTER BASQUALI PAUL BLACKTHORNE CAMERON FLETCHER MURPHY TODD WOODY RICHMAN ORIGINAL MUSIC BY JOHNATHON FESSENDEN EDITED BY TODD WOODY RICHMAN LANCE MUELLER CAMERA BY JOHN TANZER
 EXECUTIVE PRODUCER JOHN ARNEY CO-EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS MARK SWINBANK DAVID DALE DARLENE MARKOVICH PRODUCED BY CAMERON FLETCHER MURPHY ELISA PUGLIESE MISTER BASQUALI TODD WOODY RICHMAN PRODUCED AND DIRECTED BY PAUL BLACKTHORNE



THISAMERICANJOURNEY.COM



Synopsis

British actor Paul Blackthorne known for his roles in the television shows *Arrow*, *The River*, *24*, *Lipstick Jungle* and the Bollywood film *Lagaan*, releases his directorial debut this fall: *This American Journey*.

As children, British actor Paul Blackthorne and Australian photographer Mister Basquali both fell in love with America. Later they each fulfilled their dream to live here, but after two wars, a near economic collapse, and uncertainty about the country's direction, these two expats began to have doubts -- was America still the great place they once dreamed of?

They drive across America to find out, interviewing random people about issues that affect and confront us all. From the ghetto to the gun show, the courthouse to the cattle yard, they are touched by the wisdom and insight of the people they meet.

This American Journey is a cinematic postcard from the people to the people, teaching us that hearts can be healed at the most unexpected times and in the most unexpected places.

Publicity Contact:

MONA LORING, MLC PR
Office: 323.462.8080
Mobile: 805.341.3729
www.monaloring.com

Distribution Contact:

Beth Portello, VP, Marketing & Publicity
Cinema Libre Studio
Tel: 323.785.1585
www.cinematlibrestudio.com

Twitter @paulblackthorne



Biographies

TW Productions

In 1981 at age of 12, aspiring film producers Paul Blackthorne and John Arney first conceived TW Productions whilst sitting on the roof of John's house in a small town in Oxfordshire England. Happy to bide their time patiently waiting for the 'right' project they are now proud to present their first offering: *This American Journey*

Paul Blackthorne / Director, Producer

Paul Blackthorne has lived in America for 10 years. This is his first time directing a film, however as an accomplished actor he has featured in many American tv shows including, *The River*, *Lipstick Jungle*, *The Dresden Files*, *24*, *ER* and *Deadwood* along with the current hit show *Arrow*. He also featured in the Bollywood epic *Lagaan* and the Robert Zemeckis film *A Christmas Carol*.

Mister Basquali / Producer

Mister Basquali is a highly accomplished Australian photographer, he has exhibited his work all over the world. He too has lived in America for 10 years and is now residing in Brooklyn running his organic cafe Smooch. It was in this cafe that Blackthorne mentioned to Basquali he was thinking about driving across America and interviewing people. Basquali told Blackthorne he liked the idea and that he and his cameras would come along.

T Woody Richman / Editor, Producer

T Woody Richman has edited many documentaries including the Oscar nominated films *How to Survive a Plague*, *Trouble the Water*, *Fahrenheit 911* and also *Capitalism; A Love Story*. Having watched footage from the shoot he declared: "As an African American native American Jew I have to edit this film".

Elisa Pugliese / Producer

Elisa Pugliese has developed and produced a number of indie features including Nanette Burstein's award winning doc *American Teen* and *August* with Josh Hartnett, Adam Scott, Rip Torn and David Bowie (both of which had Sundance premieres in '08). She also produced *The Cake Eaters*; directed by Mary Masterson, starring Kristen Stewart and Bruce Dern, and worked with Doug Liman as a supervisor on his film *Fair Game* with Sean Penn and Naomi Watts.

Cameron Fletcher Murphy / Producer

Cameron Fletcher Murphy came from the record business and has produced many commercials. He is currently writing a TV pilot and a children's book along with writing and producing *This American Journey*

John Arney / Executive Producer

John Arney is the founder and managing partner of Arie Capital partners; a leading European investment firm. In between international business deals John also provided excellent tea and cakes for the production team.



FEEDBACK FROM PREVIEW SCREENINGS OF 'THIS AMERICAN JOURNEY'

"A beautiful insight into the real America."

Daryl Hannah

"I loved the film. I loved the voice and it had honesty and spirituality.

Also, it was political in a 'real people' way too. It's like Michael Moore with out the ugliness and with an openness and heart. Congrats."

Brooke Shields

"A film for post-Borat America, just what the country needs at this time."

Mikael Jorgenson, Wilco

"I love it!!! There is wisdom in at least one of those NRA guys, Lovely surprises!

I hope communities everywhere get to see the film and find the hope they may have lost recently.

Darlene Markovich, Founder of the Missing Peace, the work of His holiness the Dalai Lama

"It is the intimacy and depth of the interviews with the American people that carry the film and ultimately make it a successful appeal on behalf of national unity and change on both the personal and collective levels."

Artists Forum Review



Director's Statement

Acting is my day job, I enjoy characters and wondering what people think makes them happy. Along with that I love photographing people and I love getting lost in places I've never been to. In my experience that's when interesting things tend to happen.

I've lived in the states much of my adult life, having fallen in love with the place as a kid. A few years ago I'd just moved back to a Brooklyn neighborhood I hadn't lived in for 15 years and the American dream had well and truly hit the fan, this proud country was on its knees and it was struggling.

Around this time I was spending much of my time flying back and forth between my gentrified east coast, west coast bubbles peering out the plane window wondering what the hell was going on down there, how was the American heartland dealing with these tough times?

My old neighborhood had changed somewhat in 15 years; bullet proof delis had been replaced by fashionable eateries and quirky cafes. An Australian photographer called Mister Basquali owned one such place I had come to enjoy.

One day, I walked in and mentioned to him I was thinking about driving cross country speaking with people about how they felt about the state of America at which point he said he'd come along too.

I'd only known him 3 or 4 weeks, so it seemed a little soon to be spending a month on the road together, but we got on well and it turned out we were both a little disillusioned about the state of the country we'd both fallen in love with as kids, so I thought - well, why not? He said he'd bring his camera, and I'd seen his photos and they were damn good.

The only person I'd ever interviewed was, strangely enough, His Holiness the Dali Lama as part of somebody else's documentary in India earlier that year, a spectacular person to have on the resume, but even so, I knew nothing about interviewing.

As I googled 'How to interview people', Basquali dug out his knackered old film cameras and assured me that most of the time they worked just fine.

I called up a cameraman friend and asked another friend of mine if he could hold a boom mic and 2 weeks later the four of us were marching round New York looking for our first interviewees. Not the easiest place for our fledgling team to get going but eventually we got the hang of it, and before you could say:

"Excuse me we're doing a documentary about America, can we interview you please?" we were heading west.

With our Sony HD cam, hard drives, Canon G9, Nikon FM2, a \$200 super 8 camera, Basquali's old Canons and a few bags we stuffed ourselves in a van and landed up in Pittsburgh.

We didn't really have a route, we wanted to let it unfold as we went along, and from NY to LA that's pretty much what happened, prompted by the occasional recommendation we'd hear along the way.

By daylight we would travel country roads, stopping off to photograph whatever piqued our interest and by night we'd be on the freeway getting miles under our belt.

The interviews happened randomly: anywhere we happened to stop: gas stations, diners, and places we were photographing. At which point we'd invariably see someone interesting and ask them if they'd like to talk with us about America. Most people were open to the idea, and soon settled in for a chat in front of the camera.

Some of my favorite moments were waking up and seeing where we'd ended up having driven 300 miles the night before, looking out the motel window, seeing a giant cross in the middle of Texas or an NRA gun show in Arizona or arriving at another motel and meeting this unwanted little fluff ball soon to be called Bodhi. She now sits outside Basquali's cafe in Brooklyn wooing customers, and making me very happy whenever I see her.

Shooting the film was a great experience, the classic American road trip, four guys stuffed in a small van with rolls of film and seeing where the road took them... But the people! The American spirit!

It was so great experiencing that in the flesh, on the ground, much better than from that mile high airplane window. Now I could feel America, now I was getting to know the people.

As the journey progressed we found the discussions started moving away from the state of the country and more towards the state of our minds.

Speaking with people of different backgrounds and different faiths, the question of happiness and fulfillment would arise and how best to spend our brief time on this planet.

What makes us truly happy ?

The big house, the big car, pots of money or something else?

Listening to American people questioning the very tenets of the American dream: materialism and consumption, was fascinating to me. Especially considering the pursuit of that dream had pretty much brought the country to its knees. All this at a gas station, a diner, a gun show and a cattle auction.

And then we arrived at the Pacific Ocean and it was all over. I'd done a few of my favorite things: got lost in places I'd never been to, photographed people and chatted with them about life and what makes us happy.

What made ME happy at this point was that my love for this country had been renewed by this experience; it was like falling in love with America all over again, just as I'd done when I first visited as a 12 year old.

But from a filmmaking point of view it turned out that was the easy part: rolling film and chatting with people. Now we had to go through 96 hours of footage, raise more funds, find the right editor, submit to festivals, find distribution, etc etc.

This part of the process has been an extraordinary learning experience and without the support of so many people this film would just never have happened.

I know now why people recite lists as long as their arm at awards ceremonies, because these projects are just not completed without the extraordinary efforts of extraordinary people.

From people that lent us equipment, or gave us ridiculously generous deals, or simply gave us their time and energy for nothing I will be eternally grateful! But mostly of course, I am grateful to the people we met on our road trip who allowed us to interview them and taught us so much: this country may be going through tough times, but the American spirit WILL prevail, the human spirit CAN pull us through. Especially if we're there for each other and we're thankful for what we DO have!

In the immortal words of our Tennessee folk singer Jon Worley:

"There's a desperation about the country right now, but you know what man we survive, I guess that's the thing about America, we always gonna survive, no matter how tough shit gets Americas gonna be here man, if nothing else we'll just get some duct tape - get that shit down the road !!"

Amen to that

