

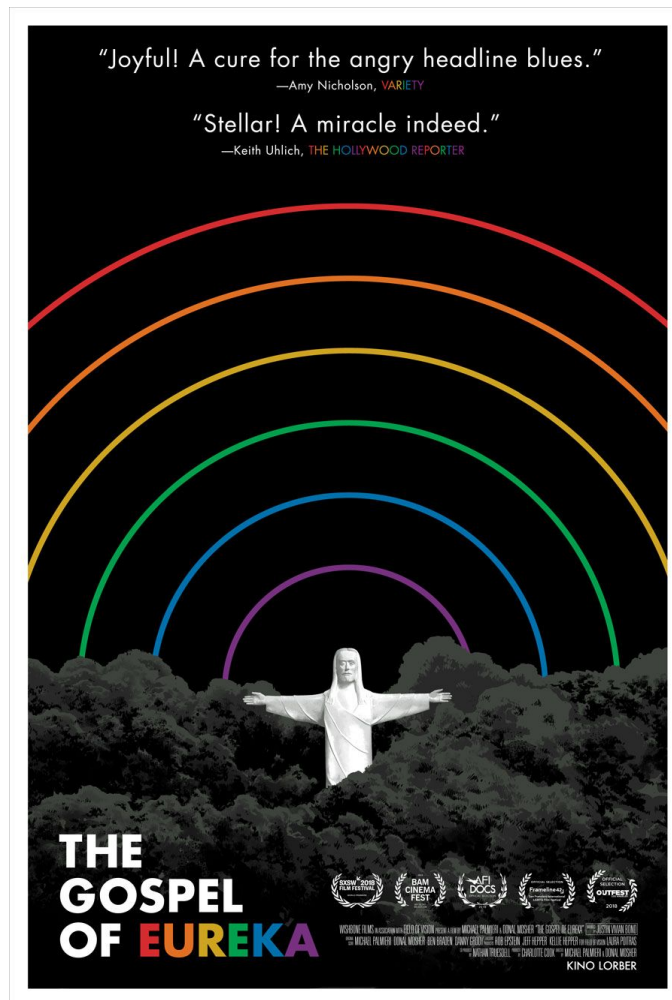
KINO LORBER

presents

THE GOSPEL OF EUREKA

A film by Michael Palmieri and Donal Mosher

Narrated by Mx Justin Vivian Bond



**** WINNER, SXSW EXCELLENCE IN POSTER DESIGN AWARD, MATT TAYLOR****

U.S. - COLOR - ASPECT RATIO: 1.85:1 - RUN TIME: 75 minutes

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SYNOPSIS

Welcome to Eureka Springs, Arkansas, a one-of-a-kind oasis in the Ozarks where Christian piety rubs shoulders with a thriving queer community. Narrated with homespun humor by Mx Justin Vivian Bond, this lushly photographed documentary spotlights the space where the town's seemingly contradictory factions intersect: Lee and Walter, out and proud husband-owners of a local gay bar they liken to a "hillbilly Studio 54," talk about their deep-seated faith; a Christian t-shirt designer describes his love for his gay father; and everything comes together in a show-stopping mash-up of a spectacular passion play and raucous drag show. The result is a joyously offbeat slice of Americana that breaks down the red-state-blue-state divide.

– *BAMcinemaFest*

DIRECTORS' STATEMENT

Cinema, like theater, can heighten our belief or make us believe the unbelievable. It can also disrupt and deconstruct our belief. Without condescension we hope to show that what is crass, campy, or even profane in the eyes of one group is sacred and full of communal significance in the eyes of another. We consider this project a continuation of the cinematic exploration of the links between class, commerce, and American ritual that is central to our work. In an era where fundamentalism in both faith and politics rule the national stage we hope to present a drama that explores the complex nature of belief and the fluid nature of faith but also provides personal windows into the issues and problems facing America as a whole.

-- *Michael Palmieri and Donal Mosher*

DIRECTORS -- MICHAEL PALMIERI & DONAL MOSHER

Michael Palmieri and Donal Mosher are a documentary directing team who have worked together for over a decade. Their films have exhibited at major festivals around the world including Sundance, Tribeca, NYFF, LAFF, True/False, Cannes, Locarno, and Leipzig. Their first film, *October Country*, was the winner of the Silverdocs Grand Jury Prize for Best Documentary Feature and was nominated for Best Documentary at the Independent Spirit awards in 2009, playing in festivals around the world winning numerous awards, including two Cinema Eyes. The filmmakers were recognized in 2010 by Filmmaker magazine as one of the 25 New Faces of Independent film. Their second feature, *Off Label*, was released by Oscilloscope films in 2012. Their short film work includes the award-winning *Rougarouing*, a film that explores the ritual of Mardi Gras in rural Louisiana, and the Field of Vision short film *Peace in the Valley*, exploring the conflict between evangelicals and the LGBT community in Eureka Springs, Arkansas. It was expanded into the documentary feature *Gospel of Eureka*, which premiered at SXSW in 2018.

PRODUCER -- CHARLOTTE COOK

Charlotte Cook is a producer, film curator, and writer. In September 2015, along with filmmakers Laura Poitras and AJ Schnack, Charlotte created and launched Field of Vision, a new film unit that commissions and assigns short form and episodic creative visual journalism. Prior to Field of Vision, she was the Director of Programming at Hot Docs, North America's largest documentary festival. In London, Charlotte was the Head of Film Programming and Training at The Frontline Club, an organisation dedicated to championing independent journalism and freedom of expression. She has also worked with BBC Storyville, the Channel 4 BritDoc Foundation's Puma Creative Catalyst Fund and the Edinburgh International Film Festival, where she curated the strand Conflict | Reportage. Charlotte holds a degree in Technological Science and has a Master's Degree in Documentary Filmmaking. She has written extensively for a number of different outlets and was the main photographic researcher for the launch of The Times Online (UK) archive project. In addition to Field of Vision, Charlotte is currently a programmer at CPH:DOX and is producing films for Michael Palmieri & Donal Mosher, Nathan Truesdell and with Intrepid Cinema for Mike Day.

INTERVIEW WITH CO-DIRECTORS DONAL MOSHER AND MICHAEL PALMIERI
BY JUSTIN VIVIAN BOND

Justin Vivian Bond: I want to start by asking...why did you pick *ME* to be the narrator of *Gospel of Eureka*.

Donal: Because we couldn't get Jessica Lange!

Michael: No, actually you were our first choice. When we thought about narrative voices, we were thinking of a classic Mark Twain-like voice. We threw a bunch of names around, but we kept thinking to ourselves, "God, it would be so amazing if Justin Vivian Bond could do this."

D: You were always on the list of potentials... you and I have known each other since we saw each other at Clubstutute back in the day. I've seen you progress as a performer - back when you were a San Francisco gal instead of a New York girl.

J: Right and I was like, the folksiest of the sick and twisted players.

D: To be honest, the sophistication with which you can deliver the lines from your own monologues is the heart of it. It can be something that is both ironic and with one eyebrow raised. Your voice carries a sincerity and a real gravity when you put your heart to it, so that's why we wanted you!

M: In the secret movie we were making in our minds, you were always the person reading the part. We were trying to use Donal's voice for a while and it wasn't working. And then we finally asked you and I honestly couldn't imagine anybody reading these very simple lines in the film with more care and complexity.

J: I wanted to find out what this film was. I remember you both sending me a fantastic teaser... the reel! I was so moved by it. I got a sense of the playfulness of it, but I also understood the underlying meaning and what it was really about. I am from a small town in Western Maryland, where there's an appreciation for - or I guess you would call it the subversive - power of camp. There's that fine line with how things that are campy can be viewed as dangerous because they take really pompous situations or people and laugh at it. What's that thing that they say? The worst thing you could do to a man is laugh at him. That's how it is with the patriarchy and with religious organizations that are in opposition to queerness. So the fact that you both as directors are walking this amazing fine line really got to me and made me understand what this film was about. I also appreciate the integrity of people's true spiritual beliefs. So that's what's so great about the movie, and made me understand what my mission was in being the narrator.

M: There was a point when we were talking about a Mark Twain-style voice and thinking, "Let's see if Hal Holbrook would possibly consider reading for this - who at the time was still alive. Then we looked at his later work and changed our minds because we didn't feel his voice was right. But we always loved his Hal Holbrook / Mark Twain voice. But do you remember what you told us after you read with us?"

J: Yes, that I was trying to channel him!

M: Yeah, a “gay Hal Holbrook”!

J: I remembered him as Mark Twain and I always liked his voice and his folksy joviality so I was trying to capture that quality.

M: That was crazy! Like we didn’t even say that at all - [The fact that] you picked it up is incredible.

J: Well having a Mark Twain-like voice for this film is interesting. I had done a Mark Twain thing years ago where Kate Bornstein did a short play about Huckleberry Finn after the Civil War working as a transgender prostitute in New Orleans [laughs] so I was prepared for it.

D: Ok, that’s our next film!

J: That’s now part of my milieu!

D: It’s funny though because I wrote that narration guided by my own interior voice, but I don’t anymore. I can’t remember what my voice sounded like in my head when I was writing it...I can only hear your voice.

J: I’m sure it must be very strange to see it over and over. Does seeing the film repeatedly cancel any memories of the parts that aren’t in the film?

M: For me it does. Kino Lorber asked us if we wanted to add any extras for the home video release. We looked back at some old footage and thought to ourselves, “Some of these scenes are great, but they don’t belong in the final film.” It’s like another movie exists on the side.

J: Do you feel like looking back now there’s anything you wish you had included and didn’t?

D: There’s stuff we wish we could’ve gotten that we didn’t. But we felt like we got the best material and that’s what made it into the film.

J: Well that’s good.

D: When you’re doing a show do you feel the same way? Do things get lost along the way as the show gets streamlined and on its legs? What’s your relation to the material that you cut out of the show?

J: I very rarely intentionally cut anything out because I just kind of go with the flow with each performance. But sometimes people will come up and remind me of things that I think to myself “Oh that’s so funny, I wish I had remembered that.” I try to stay in the moment and keep to what is interesting and sticks with me. Sometimes I’ll watch footage that people will shoot and I’ll think to myself, “Oh that was really funny.” I don’t usually write things down. It would just be

the death knell if I tried to remember or memorize something I've said before, I would never be able to be spontaneous.

M: I was just thinking about how there are certain things that I wish, with some of the people in the film, like with Randall for example, that I could have captured some of the moments that we had with him that were personal, off-the-camera moments. But you only get those moments *because* the camera is off and the person's performance while on camera can be more guarded, but also more complicated. We were looking for little cracks in the performance, and ways where that's intersecting. I think those things aren't in for a reason too.

J: Now that you guys have been living with the film for a while and it's about to be released theatrically to larger audiences, what have been the most surprising responses? Or maybe overwhelming even? If any.

D: I expected more resistance from the queer community to a film about religion. I'm always a little surprised that people take the film's optimism and run with it. I've expected more wrestling with that.

J: Oh so you both thought the queer community would be more critical?

D & M: (Both) Yeah.

D: Or more resistant

M: Because we're even affording the possibility of this conversation to happen. Because the evangelical community is historically not on our side. We were expected more criticism for giving that side the benefit of the doubt.

D: We still might get it, we don't know yet.

J: Well it's not like your film is giving them a pass.

M: No, no no no, not at all!

D: If we had done that and given them a pass, I would feel like we had done something wrong by even putting the film out in public...even betraying my own history.

M: Yeah it's immoral!

J: I think that's what makes the film great. It shows the complexity. In my opinion, if queer people were going to really take issue with it, it would be from a cynical place. I think most people have some loving experiences with somebody from that world, so they should be able to see that it's not a cut and dry issue. Even though we have been deeply oppressed by that mentality, I think a lot of people that are still a part of it suffer from it also and the film does show that.

D: I wish we could have expanded the film further to show more of both the positive and the negative aspects of the issue. But we got what we got.

M: I also don't know how much we talked about this but the one strange pushback that we did get was from Randall Christy, the Executive Director of *The Great Passion Play*. I think he was afraid that we were going to be another group of people making fun of him and his institution. I think we were being playful with it and the footage we shot and trying to put it in a different context. We had put out a trailer before the film came out and it had some frank opinions about God and sex and footage of some racy shots and he had a strong negative reaction to it. And if there's any regret that I have, it's that he hasn't allowed for the film to be a part of the dialogue in his community, which I hope changes, but I'm no longer in control of that. It's up to them and how they want to perceive the film.

J: Has he seen the whole film?

M: Not that we are aware of. It is kind of sad, because Kent for example (who plays the role of Jesus in the play) is awesome and he understands the film. We're still in contact with him. His boss is Randall who occupies a strange and complicated position in the community because he's essentially a political leader as well as a religious leader. So I think a lot of it is posturing on his part.

D: You nailed this earlier, because we understand the power of camp. We understand that camp is both sacred and profane at the same time. We're given that special viewpoint because of our life LGBTQ experiences and not being part of the mainstream sensibility. But when you're a typical evangelical Christian, they sometimes just don't get that. I just don't think Randall has the framework to see that we're not just mocking him or being profane.

J: Right, and either way he would have to approach it with humility and that's not one of their strong suits.

D: [laughs] No, no it's not!

J: They'd have to be honest and be open and be humble in order actually have any sort of meaningful conversation around it. I'm sure that humility and the honesty don't really go hand in hand with the power that they hope to wield.

M: Mhm. Well put.

J: There you go! Just breakin' it down for you!

D: I wanted to ask you about your shows because you include paganism and spirituality into your shows. How does that work for you?

J: Well it's fine for me because the only person I have to be responsible for is myself and my own perspective, but I also bring with it the conflict of being deeply and intimately involved with people I love very much who are Christian, and people I love very much who've been shunned

or hurt - myself included - or had our lives made less pleasant by the mentality that goes behind it. As a pagan I don't feel like being someone who honors the earth and our cycles and the sacredness of human life and interactions on this world. I don't think that is completely the truth. I don't think paganism and Christianity are mutually exclusive. I'm able to see that there are all these things that we have in common that are wonderful... that we can share. So I feel good about it actually and feel like I'm in a very fortunate position to be able to see so many sides of the issue, which is probably why I felt I was the right person to narrate this film. At the end of the day we're sent here to figure out how to love each other in the best and strongest possible way. All the other stuff - the religion, the dogma that goes behind it is really second or third to the number one thing...which is to figure out how to live together and love each other, while hurting each other as little as possible. So that's the bottom of it and what my shows are about. And I just tell funny stories and laugh and sing. That's why I love your movie because that's what I feel it's saying - that it's important to love each other and figure out how we can exist together in the way that harms each other the least.

M: That's awesome. It's such a better response than something like - "I was raised religious, but I wouldn't say I am religious, but it feels so obvious to me that all of the religions are essentially trying to say the same thing. They're all kind of saying the same thing, so we should all follow the general rules of what they're all saying."

J: Right because then we just get so hung up on the minutiae. It's because all of these religions came up from different tribes and they all had their specific things that I think also were added by people who wanted to keep their power, and keep people separated so they could maintain their power or their position, or their possessions. At the end of the day all that stuff doesn't matter.

FESTIVALS AND SCREENINGS

SXSW World Premiere, documentary competition
SHEFFIELD International Premiere, art documentary competition
BAM CINEMAFEST New York Premiere
ROOFTOP FILMS Summer Series
PROVINCETOWN documentary competition
AFI DOCS documentary competition
QDOC PORTLAND, closing night film
ASHLAND documentary competition
INDIE GRITS, opening night film
NASHVILLE, documentary competition

Directors:

Michael Palmieri and Donal Mosher

Producer:

Charlotte Cook

Co-Producer:

Nathan Truesdell

Executive Producer:

Rob Epstein

Executive Producers:

Jeff Hepper, Kellie Hepper

Director of Photography:

Michael Palmieri

Additional Cinematography:

Nathan Truesdell, Donal Mosher

Editor:

Michael Palmieri

Narration:

Performed by Mx Justin Vivian Bond

Narration written by:

Donal Mosher

Original Score:

Michael Palmieri, Donal Mosher, Ben Braden, Danny Grody

With...

Mx Justin Vivian Bond
Lee Keating
Walter Burrell
Kent Butler
Roxie Howard
Jayme Brandt
Randall Christie
Felicia Blackheart - Allen Haines
Ginger Styles - Daniel Carl Fose
Charnay Malletti Cassadine - Fred Young
Missy Klein - Jeff Elia
Blake Lasater
Emery Brandt
Ezra Brandt
Mya Brandt
Havah Brandt
Jacob Schultz
Britty Schultz
Stevie Malone
Terri Vanderford
Jerry Gage

...and the entire cast and crew of The Great Passion Play

“Ozark Waltz”

Michael Palmieri - Guitars
Donal Mosher - Banjo, Mandolin
Ben Braden - Slide Guitar, Bass

“Funeral”

Danny Grody - 12 String guitar

“Where We'll Never Grow Old”

(Traditional)

Michael Palmieri - Guitar
Donal Mosher - Banjo

“Skipping Devil”

Michael Palmieri - Guitars

“Miracle Whip”

Michael Palmieri - Guitars
Passion Play Score by
Phil Perkins
Performed by

The National Philharmonic Orchestra of London

Additional Recordings

“Peace In the Valley”

By Thomas A. Dorsey
Performed by Randall Christy

“Lick it Before You Stick It”

By Denise Lasalle
Courtesy Ordena Records

“You Can't Pray the Gay Away”

By Laura Bell Bundy
Courtesy Skitso Music

“My Church”

Maren Morris
Courtesy Hero Music

“Let Us Worship Him”

Yolanda Adams
Courtesy Verity Records

“Looking For A City”

By The Happy Goodmans
Courtesy Canaan Records

“Da Da Da”

By Secret Drum Band
Courtesy XRay Records

“Where We'll Never Grow Old”

(Traditional)
Performed by Sharon Van Etten
Courtesy Sharon Van Etten

Sound Design

James Lebrecht - Berkeley Sound Artists

Additional Recording Facilities

Seth Lorinczi - Two Track Mind
Joel Rackowski - CCA

Colorist

Robert Arnold

DCP

Cinematiq

Poster Design

Matt Taylor

Titles

Charlotte Cook

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David Bralow - First Look Media Works, Inc.

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For Field of Vision

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About Kino Lorber

With a library of over 2,800 titles, Kino Lorber Inc. has been a leader in independent art house distribution for 35 years, releasing 30 films per year theatrically under its Kino Lorber, Kino Classics, and Alive Mind Cinema banners, garnering six Academy Award® nominations in nine years, including 2017's documentary nominee *Fire at Sea*. Current and upcoming releases include Academy Award shortlisted *Of Fathers & Sons*, Berlinale Golden Bear winner *Touch Me Not*, and Cannes winner Jean-Luc Godard's *The Image Book*. In addition, the company brings over 350 titles yearly to the home entertainment and educational markets through physical and digital media releases. With an expanding family of distributed labels, Kino Lorber handles releases in ancillary media for Zeitgeist Films, Carlotta USA, Adopt Films, Raro Video, and others, placing physical titles through all wholesale, retail, and direct to consumer channels, as well as direct digital distribution through over 40 OTT services including all major TVOD and SVOD platforms.