

VOLCANO MAN

A FEATURE DOCUMENTARY

MELBOURNE INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL PREMIERE FUND presents
In association with VICSCREEN and COMMON VENTURES
a PIVOT STUDIOS and GOODTHING PRODUCTIONS film VOLCANO MAN
Camera Operator MATT CRESSWELL Featuring music by THE BLACK BELTS
Original Music and Sound Design by RUMBLE STUDIOS
Edited by STEVEN SANDER Cinematography by JAMIE GRAY
Executive Producers NICK BATZIAS & VIRGINIA WHITWELL
Produced by TIM RUSSELL & RHIAN SKIRVING
Written by JAMES CRAWLEY, TIM RUSSELL & STEVEN SANDER
Directed by JAMES CRAWLEY



VICSCREEN



good thing
productions



LOGLINE

When filmmaker James Crawley discovers his father's hidden video tapes, he sets out to reveal the real Richard Crawley, an eccentric photographer and documentarian who lives atop a dormant volcano and approach to life is utterly explosive.

ONE PARAGRAPH SYNOPSIS

Filmmaker James Crawley's life has been captured on camera by his father Richard, but when he discovers some of his Dad's hidden tapes, James decides to make a film of his own. Delving into a lifetime of home videos and new interviews with those closest to him, James pulls back the curtain and reveals the real Richard Crawley, an eccentric photographer and documentarian who lives atop a dormant volcano and approach to life is utterly explosive.

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What unfolds is the portrait of a larger-than-life creative, a man whose exploits have taken him from shooting iconic images of rock legends such as Mick Jagger & Tina Turner in their 1970s heyday to an obsessive documentarian and home filmmaker, capturing James' entire upbringing on camera. But underneath his charismatic public persona lies the real Richard Crawley, a man defined by a series of tragic events and unresolved traumas highlighted by the loss of his wife Carol.

When faced with grief, Richard's reaction is explosive - whether it's buying a red Ferrari to light up the countryside after the sudden death of his brother, or creating a first person documentary about grief he could never watch, or becoming the front man of a rock band aged seventy-two - everything he does is a massive middle finger to the sadness within.

But James sees through all the showmanship and bravado, and he's on a mission to change his father. By forcing Richard to re-examine his past and his attitude to the future, long held secrets will be exposed and a path to redemption will be laid out. Will Richard listen, or is it James who needs to learn how to accept his unconventional father?

VOLCANO MAN is an entertaining and deeply moving film about love, loss and family, ultimately challenging our perceptions of ageing, grief, masculinity, and what it means to seize the day.



☺ JAMES

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

The truth is, my dad's been making this film for the last 72 years, he just never knew it.

For his entire adult life, his camera was turned to whatever parts of the world derived him joy. From Mick Jagger to the maternity ward to the cutlery drawer in the kitchen - almost nothing escaped his lens. It wasn't until my mother died that he turned the camera on himself - suddenly becoming the main subject in this multi-decade production.

The decision to create a feature documentary solidified after my son Robert was born; I sat alone and watched the 30 hours of video diaries Dad filmed in the years after my mum's death. Yet, even in these harrowing and intimate moments, I watched him do multiple takes of the same "scene", at 3am, discussing the option of suicide. For most, grief and expression are turned inwards, for the eccentric man that is my father - it morphed into an ad-hoc film set.

It occurred to me that he has spent a lifetime shooting the scenes of his own life - simply wrestling with the meaning of it all.

Being a new father myself, I was not without my own struggles. Kids are a great instigator to ask the "big" questions - and this film is my way of edging closer to understanding what eccentric legacy my son is to inherit. Anyone that meets Richard thinks he's the most interesting, vibrant and energetic 72 year old they've met. And that's true but what they see is the film trailer - the hype reel - the bits an ad agency would cut up and use to get bums on seats. That's not what I see, I get the full picture, and now I'm going to share it with the world.

When my father looks me dead in the eye and tells me he's going to live to 110 - I'm scared. I'm scared that Dad's blindly optimistic plan for life won't go the way he wants it to. Why not take the easy route; meet someone his own age; get a normal job, drive a normal car and live somewhere in town? Why hinge your happiness on wanting to play Madison Square Garden? Why not be content just being a grandfather?

My memory of what's happened is just so warped with all the footage I've seen and watched - I feel like I know about 20 different versions of my dad. Making this film is my way of understanding who he truly is. If I can make it make sense in an edit, maybe it'll all magically make sense in my head.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

As a director, it is my job to sell an audience on a story. I spend my time envisioning how to position or communicate characters, crafting an alluring emotive direction, and bringing it to life with storytelling. When I direct TV commercials, the job is to sell people on a promise of what life could be like. However, in documentary, I strive to tell stories that reflect the light and shade of real life.

Well, maybe my dad should have been an ad man; he sells himself on an aspirational version of his own life on a daily basis. Positive affirmations. Living to 110. Playing Madison Square Garden. I feel the version of his life playing out in his head can be at odds with reality. It's the interplay between these two worlds I wish to emphasise and creatively explore, with heightened, surreal scenes.

It's clear to me there are two stories here - and their interplay is crucial. The larger and more universal concept of a son trying to understand his father and telling Richard's life story. Discovering this balance is key to understand who my father is; I need to investigate his past to wrap my head around our future relationship.

Richard's reaction to his wife dying was atypical. It was public, shirtless and utterly vulnerable. Most children rebel to some extent; I rebelled by taking my grief inwards. The last few years have seen us all deal with loss en masse. Be it a livelihood, a life or the ability to live normally - our yardstick for normal has shifted. Concepts that were once immovable now have flex. While we each may not desire to get shirtless on stage, become famous or live into immortality - Richard's fringe approach is an invitation to reassess how we each deal with ageing, loss and complete vulnerability.

VOLCANO MAN is many things: a celebration of growing older, a study in grief, an insight into an artist-misfit, and a meditation on the very nature of storytelling itself. But for me, at its core this is really about a kid grappling with grief and trying to work out what sort of man he should become. And, in a country that typically breeds blokes to drink a cup of concrete and harden the 'f up - that feels like an important conversation to have. And who better to teach me this lesson than the older, cooler, more chaotic version of myself?

Richard Crawley is a man of boundless energy and pure enthusiasm, ready to erupt at any moment and devolve into utter chaos. He is my dad, and he is Volcano Man.

James Crawley, writer & director



VOLCANO MAN

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PRODUCER'S STATEMENT

VOLCANO MAN is an entertaining and heartfelt documentary about life, love, loss, and ultimately the strength of the human spirit. From first time filmmaker James Crawley, his vision seamlessly combines genres and brings a truly unique vision to the screen that has never been seen before.

During these strange and uncertain times, VOLCANO MAN arrives at the perfect juncture. While dealing with serious themes such a death, grief and mental health, it is ultimately a redemptive, inspiring story, and it's something the world needs right now. Targeting an older audience (50+) and skewing gender neutral, this is a universal story about family, the journey of a father and son trying to find meaning and comfort during the most difficult of times, and it has global breakout potential.

As a writer and producer, I'm drawn to stories that deal with trauma, grief and overcoming adversity. Whether it's my long form documentary podcast THE ELEMENTS, hosted by Stuart Diver and audio produced by Gold Walkley winner Slade Gibson, which hit #4 on the Australian Apple Charts, or my short film HIGHWAY, which launched the TV career of director Vanessa Gazy (EDEN, ECHOES), I'm attracted to projects that tackle big themes in fresh and innovative ways, elevating material to gain an impact on audiences and create conversation.

VOLCANO MAN has all of these things in abundance: it's tragic but inspiring, sad but uplifting, and has something very important to say about the world. Taking inspiration from recent hybrid documentaries, this film is utterly unique and has the potential to make a real impact on audiences locally and around the world. And in our main participant Richard Crawley, we have an utterly captivating presence you simply can't take your eyes off. He would be a star in any film but when it's a multi decade production directed by his son James, everything takes on a whole new meaning, creating something bigger than the sum of its parts.

This is such a personal film for James and Richard, they are both very much exposed and on show, but their unflinching honesty, humility and vulnerability shines through - there's nothing invented or insincere here. James' frustrations with his father and his journey towards acceptance are both endearing and widely relatable; it's what makes this film universal. Ultimately this is a story about the power of the human spirit, the struggles and joys of ageing, and how to live in the moment; it's an important and timely message the world needs after such a challenging few years.

PRODUCER'S STATEMENT

As a first time filmmaker, James has a natural instinct for story and capturing genuine performances. He's proven this in advertising as an award winning commercial director and it's on show here with his debut feature. James is backed by an experienced team, headlined by award winning producer Rhian Skirving (OFF COUNTRY, MATILDA & ME) and AACTA Award winning executive producers Nick Batzias and Virigina Whitwell (NITRAM, THE AUSTRALIAN DREAM, 2040), and as well as Emmy Award winning writer and editor Steve Sander (ESPN's 30 for 30: OF MIRACLES AND MEN).

VOLCANO MAN is a truly unique project, an endlessly surprising and entertaining documentary that makes you laugh while packing a big emotional punch. James Crawley is undoubtedly a talent to watch, and this film will provide a launching pad for his career on the local and global stage.

Tim Russell, writer & producer



VOLCANO MAN

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BIOS

JAMES CRAWLEY

WRITER & DIRECTOR

Starting his professional life as an on-set grip, James Crawley is now a founder, owner and Creative Director of Common Ventures; an established creative agency based in Sydney and Los Angeles. James is a writer by trade and is obsessed with brilliant brand storytelling that evokes an emotional response. He's a past winner of 30under30, has been on GRUEN on the ABC and has won a tonne of ad awards. Most satisfyingly, he's made the jump back to the film side, now an award-winning commercial director, winning Mumbrella's TV Ad of the Year for the Australian Federal Police's Missing Persons Day in 2019. He recently completed his first documentary feature film VOLCANO MAN about his enigmatic father Richard Crawley.

TIM RUSSELL

WRITER & PRODUCER

Tim Russell is an award winning writer & producer in film, TV, advertising & podcast. In 2021, he released the documentary podcast THE ELEMENTS, hosted by Stuart Diver and audio produced by Gold Walkley winner Slade Gibson (THE TEACHER'S PET). THE ELEMENTS reached #4 on Apple's Australian Charts, cracked the Documentary Top 100 in the US & UK and is in development as a TV series. His short film HIGHWAY, directed by Vanessa Gazy (ECHOES, EDEN), sold to Amazon Prime and was nominated by the ADG for Best Direction in a short film 2018. Tim is serving as an EP on the feature adaptation from Goalpost Pictures (THE INVISIBLE MAN). Tim has a background in film development having worked for Academy Award winning River Road Entertainment (TWELVE YEARS A SLAVE, BROKEBACK MOUNTAIN), Porchlight Films (THE KING, ANIMAL KINGDOM), Cold Iron Pictures (THE AMAZING JOHNATHAN DOCUMENTARY, SWISS ARMY MAN) and Hopscotch Features (SAVING MR BANKS, THE WATER DIVINER).

BIOS

RHIAN SKIRVING PRODUCER

Rhian is an experienced writer, producer and director with a diverse body of work, first joining forces with GoodThing to create OFF COUNTRY, which followed the lives of Indigenous scholarship students through a year boarding at Geelong Grammar School. With Lizzette Atkins, Rhian produced MY MOTHER'S LOST CHILDREN for ABC and BBC Storyville and OUTBACK RABBIS for SBS's Untold Australia. Directing highlights include the AACTA nominated MATILDA AND ME for ABC, feature doc ROCK N ROLL NERD charting Tim Minchin's meteoric rise to comic superstar and THE KINDNESS OF STRANGERS exploring the science of altruism, winning the Eureka Prize for Science Journalism.

STEVEN SANDER WRITER & EDITOR

Steven is an Emmy Award-winning editor (30 for 30: OF MIRACLES AND MEN, 2016 Outstanding Long Sports Documentary) with twelve year's experience writing and cutting feature drama and documentary projects. His films have screened theatrically, on major television networks (Seven, NBC, BBC, Sky and Channel 4) and streaming services (Discovery+, Disney+). His debut feature, NEW TOWN KILLERS received three BAFTA Scotland Nominations (Best Film, Best Director, Best Actor) and more recently MY BEAUTIFUL STUTTER won five best documentary awards during its film festival run. In 2021, Steven edited the Australian feature documentary BEYOND THE WASTELAND released by Umbrella Entertainment. Steven also writes and directs and has won awards for his commercials and documentaries. He combines his work as a feature film editor with commercials directing.

BIOS

NICK BATZIAS EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

Nick Batzias has twenty years of experience in the film industry across acquisition, distribution and production. In 2018, he founded GoodThing Productions after 15 years at Madman Entertainment (MME) and Head of Madman Production Company (MPC). GoodThing focuses on Narrative and Factual projects for screens big and small. At MME he worked on the release of over three- hundred feature and documentary films across various rights exploitation. As a key part of his role, Nick has assessed hundreds of scripts, treatments and rough cuts with a view to acquiring the films for distribution in ANZ. At MPC, he produced a range of critically acclaimed and award-winning films, both narrative and documentary. Most recently, Nick has produced the award-winning feature documentaries 2040 with director Damon Gameau, AUSTRALIAN DREAM, (winner best feature documentary AACTA Award), the dark, comic feature narrative BELOW and NITRAM directed by Justin Kurzel, screened in Official Competition at Cannes, where it Won Best Actor, and comedy NUDE TUESDAY, which is an NZ co production.

VIRGINIA WHITWELL EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

Virginia Whitwell is a highly experienced film practitioner and producer having been in the industry for over twenty years. She is the Head of Production and Partner at GoodThing Productions after five years as Head of Production at Madman Production Company. She has co-produced and produced many scripted and factual projects including That Sugar Film, Save Your Legs!, A Month Of Sundays and All For One. Hailing from the UK, as a freelancer she worked on numerous productions all over the world. Her extensive production experience includes projects for Warner Bros, HBO, Lucasfilm, EON, 20th Century Fox and Universal.

MEDIA OPPORTUNITIES

FILM STILLS (x10)

TRAILER

POSTER

INTERVIEW WITH WRITER/DIRECTOR JAMES CRAWLEY

INTERVIEW WITH MAIN PARTICIPANT RICHARD CRAWLEY

INTERVIEW WITH WRITER/PRODUCER TIM RUSSELL



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TECHNICAL INFO

GENRE	FEATURE DOCUMENTARY
DURATION	85 mins 36 secs
SHOOT FORMAT	TAPE, FILM & DIGITAL
ASPECT RATIO	16:9
EXHIBITION FORMAT	DCP (4K Ultra HD 3840 x 2160)
FRAME RATE	25 fps
SOUND	5.1 + STEREO
LANGUAGE	ENGLISH
COUNTRY OF PRODUCTION	AUSTRALIA
COMPLETION DATE	1 ST OF JUNE 2022
PREMIERE STATUS	MELBOURNE INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL (World Premiere)

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