

APPALOOSA PICTURES AND BALCONY RELEASING
PRESENT

TRUDELL



A film about legendary Native poet and activist John Trudell.

Directed by Heather Rae

Produced by Heather Rae and Elyse Katz

Running time 80 minutes

FOR BOOKINGS

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I am older than America.

--JT

TRUDELL

SYNOPSIS

TRUDELL follows the life work of Native American poet/activist John Trudell. Filmmaker Heather Rae has spent more than a decade chronicling his travels, spoken word and politics in a poetic and naturally stylized manner. The film combines archival, concert and interview footage with abstract imagery mirroring the coyote nature of Trudell himself.

Incorporating years of work, 16mm and Super 8 film, video, and archival footage, TRUDELL begins in the late sixties when John Trudell and a community group, Indians of All Tribes, occupied Alcatraz Island for 21 months creating international recognition of the American Indian cause and birthing the contemporary Indian people's movement. The film goes to Alcatraz, returning to what John refers to as his "birth." From Alcatraz we follow John's political journey as the National Spokesman of the American Indian Movement (AIM)--this work making him one of the most highly volatile political 'subversives' of the 1970's with one of the longest FBI files in history (over 17,000 pages.)

In 1979, while protesting the US government's policy on American Indians, John burned an American Flag on the steps of the FBI headquarters in Washington DC. Within a matter of hours his pregnant wife, three children and mother in law were killed in a suspicious arson fire on a Nevada reservation. This ended John's involvement in organizational politics. He spent the next four years driving America in a car given to him by his friend and fellow activist, Jackson Browne. It was during this period that John's voice as a poet began to surface. His gift as an orator carried him through his pain and he found a new way to represent his manifesto and cause.

In 1983 he began to put his words to music with the help of Kiowa guitar legend, the late Jesse Ed Davis, and Jackson Browne. Even his early recordings reflect an articulate sensibility and eloquence about the state of the world, moving him into the realm of social theorist and philosopher. John does not adhere to a dogma or school of thought but has created his own diatribe based in experience, having lived through and taken part in some of the most turbulent American political events of the past century. In an interview with Native actor, Gary Farmer (*Dead Man*), he referred to Trudell as "the Native people's prophet of these times, our Socrates."

Trudell's musical and film career have led him to work with the likes of Robert Redford (*Incident at Oglala*), Sam Shepard and Val Kilmer (*Thunderheart*), Kris Kristofferson, Bonnie Raitt, Jackson Browne, Amy Ray and more recently Angelina Jolie, who produced his current album, *Bone Days*. The film combines interviews with his allies from the entertainment community, the 'movement' days, and his friends and family with archival footage, concert footage from all over the world and abstract imagery. TRUDELL is intended to be a film that steps outside of traditional forms, even for Native films, and explores a figure of our contemporary history in a way that fairly represents the evocative nature of his work and significance.

I'm not looking to overthrow the American government, the corporate state already has.

--JT

He's extremely eloquent...therefore extremely dangerous.

--FBI memo

TRUDELL **Credits**

DIRECTED BY
Heather Rae

PRODUCED BY
Heather Rae
Elyse Katz

EDITORS
Gregory Bayne
Heather Rae

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS

B. Russell Friedenberg
Rob Ganger
Angelina Jolie
Marcheline Bertrand
Chief Harry B. Wallace
James Haven

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

Bonnie Raitt
Geraldyn Doyle
Ed Gelin
Morgan Shastal
Effective Records

CINEMATOGRAPHY

Gilbert Salas
Heather Rae

WRITER

Russell Friedenberg

CO-PRODUCER

Lara Hill Dempsey

ASSOCIATE PRODUCER

Faye Brown

SOUND DESIGN

Kent Sparling

SOUND TECHNICIAN

Toby Ricci
Gary Goddard

RESEARCHERS

Sheila Han
Russell Friedenberg
Jennifer Villalobos

ARCHIVIST

Elyse Katz

STILL PHOTOS

Larry Gus
Michelle Vignes
Dick Bancroft
Abe Pearlman

PROJECT ADVISORS

Wilma Mankiller
Merata Mita
Marc Levin

INTERVIEWEES

(In order of appearance)

Robert Redford
Wilma Mankiller
Jackson Browne
Fenicia Ordonez-Trudell
Dino Butler
Gary Farmer
Val Kilmer
Kris Kristofferson
Kelly Davis
Manning Family, Duck Valley, NV
Bonnie Raitt
Amy Ray
Sam Shepard
Rick Powers
Bad Dog band members, Quiltman, Mark Shark, and Ricky Eckstein

FUNDED IN PART BY

Native American Public Telecommunications
Corporation for Public Broadcasting

Selected for Broadcast by
INDEPENDENT LENS

JOHN TRUDELL **B**iography

"My goal is very simple: to communicate the human experience at a level that human beings can recognize and relate to. That may be a personal statement. It may be a political statement. But whatever it is, it all comes from the same point of reference: the experiences we share as peoples of this planet."

On the subject of his extraordinary and acclaimed work as a recording artist, poet and champion of indigenous issues, John Trudell is as direct and plain spoken as the words he puts to music. A people's poet in the truest sense of the term, John Trudell's potent imagery and passionate convictions have established his reputation as a spoken word artist whose international following reflects the universal language of his music...and his message. Simply put, John Trudell is the real deal.

Now, with *Bone Days*, his brilliant new collection of thirteen original compositions, independently released and available exclusively on the internet, John Trudell is poised to bring his stunning soundscapes to a whole new audience. Recorded with his longtime band, *Bad Dog*, and executive-produced by Angelina Jolie, Academy Award winning actress and Goodwill Ambassador to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *Bone Days* marks a new chapter in the creative saga of one of America's true originals, an artist Kris Kristofferson once called "a crazy lone wolf, poet, prophet, preacher, warrior full of pain and fun and laughter and love...He's a reality check. Justice is a fire that burns inside him. His spirit cries out for it. It makes him dangerous."

The dangerous poetry and visionary music of John Trudell was forged by an extraordinary life, lived out in heart of the land and its people. Born of mixed tribal blood, John grew up in and around the Santee Sioux reservation near his hometown of Omaha, Nebraska. The struggle against economic and cultural deprivation would, in time, become the raw material for his uncompromising artistic vision.

Trudell, a Vietnam Veteran, served in the U.S. Navy from 1963-1967, attended college for a while and then dropped out. In 1969, Trudell participated in the occupation of Alcatraz Island by Indians of All Tribes, becoming a spokesman for Indians of All Tribes. After the Indians of All Tribes occupation ended in 1971, Trudell worked with the American Indian Movement, becoming national Chairman of AIM in 1973. Trudell was chairman of AIM from 1973 until 1979. In February of 1979, Trudell's mother-in-law, wife and three children were killed in a fire of unknown origin.

It was through this horrific tragedy, that Trudell began to find his voice as an artist and poet, writing, in his words, "to stay connected to this reality." "The lines were my bombs," he continues, "my explosions, my tears."

In April of 1979, Trudell met Jackson Browne. This meeting led Trudell into the world of music. In 1982, with Jackson Browne's help, John Trudell recorded *Tribal Voice*, a fusion

of poetry and traditional Native music, which was released on cassette. In 1985, Trudell met legendary Kiowa guitarist and songwriter Jesse Ed Davis. Together, they recorded Trudell's debut album AKA Grafitti Man, with Trudell writing and performing the spoken word vocals and Jesse writing and performing the music. Released on cassette in 1986, it was dubbed "the best album" of that year by none other than Bob Dylan. AKA Grafitti Man served early notice of Trudell's singular ability to express fundamental truths through a unique mix of poetry, Native instrumentation and unfettered blues and rock.

Trudell recorded two more albums with Jesse Ed Davis before Davis' untimely death in 1988 and would continue the work the pair had pioneered, this time in partnership with Mark Shark, on such landmark early 90's releases as Fables and Other Realities and Child's Voice: Children Of The Earth. A touring stint with Australia's incendiary Midnight Oil and roles in the feature films Thunderheart and Smoke Signals and the documentary Incident At Oglala helped spread the word of the artist's multi-faceted talents, as did a 1992 rerecording of AKA Grafitti Man, this time produced by Jackson Browne. Released on Rykodisc, the album was dubbed by Rolling Stone Magazine "a moving, shape-shifting rock & roll treatise on the state of the world." Two years later, Trudell would return with Johnny Damas & Me and, in 1999, released the acclaimed Blue Indians, once again produced by Browne. The album, remarked Parke Puterbaugh, in Rolling Stone, "is an affecting marriage of tribal rhythms, traditional chanting, modern musical backdrops and Trudell's penetrating poetics."

With material that spans nearly the whole of his writing career, Bone Days is, indeed, a testament to the essential qualities that put Trudell's art in a category of one. "There are pieces I included here from way back in the early 80's, like 'Crazy Horse' and 'Nothing In Her Eyes.' Then there are pieces like 'Undercurrent' that we finished in the recording studio. I see it all as part of a continuing process. The words and the music all come from the same place. In my mind they exist in their own time."

The proof of Trudell's contention is on dazzling display with Bone Days, recorded over a two-week period earlier this year in Los Angeles. Stirring calls-to-arms such as "Crazy Horse," are contrasted to such deeply felt reflections as "Undercurrent." Which, in turn, yield to the scathing indictment of such key tracks as "Hanging From the Cross" and "Carry The Stone." Throughout, Trudell's alternately haunting, humorous and harrowing poetry is under girded by Bad Dog's apt and able musical settings. Bone Days is, indeed, an album of timely urgency and timeless beauty.

"Some people call me a poet," John Trudell concludes. "Others say I'm an activist. Some say my poetry and music is political. Others say it's about the spirit of my people." He laughs. "I don't buy into any of those labels. I may be a little bit of all those things, but I'm more than any of them. We all are. That's what makes us human."

In the case of John Trudell, it's also what makes him an artist.

TRUDELL Bios

PRODUCER & DIRECTOR

Heather Rae has worked in some producing capacity on more than a dozen documentaries and half dozen features through her fifteen years in the film industry. She began working on TRUDELL in 1992 and after twelve years the project is the creative culmination of years of work as a filmmaker and activist. For Six years Rae ran the Native Program at the Sundance Institute and was a programmer for the Sundance Film Festival. After leaving Sundance in 2001 she went on to work for Winter Films as Senior Vice President of Production. For the past three years she has worked independently including a recently produced feature film, AMERICAN MONSTER, starring Adam Beach, Gary Farmer and Udo Kier. She is also producing A THOUSAND GUNS, with Michael Robinson (TRANS, THE SLAUGHTER RULE) which Julian Goldberger (TRANS, THE HAWK IS DYING) will direct. Additionally she is producing THE SPACE BETWEEN ALL THINGS with Yvonne Russo (NATURALLY NATIVE, TRUE WHISPERS) and Randy Redroad (THE DOE BOY) directing. She co-produced BACKROADS, directed by Shirley Cheechoo, which premiered at Sundance in 2000. Prior to her years at Sundance, Rae produced on such documentary films as CBS's 500 NATIONS, Turner Broadcasting's THE NATIVE AMERICANS, and PBS' STORYTELLERS OF THE PACIFIC. She produced the behind-the-scenes making of SMOKE SIGNALS for the Sundance Channel and was an Associate Producer on SILENT TEARS, directed by Cheechoo. Rae is more recently an Adjunct Professor at Boise State University and sits on the Board of Directors for Treasure Valley Television, Boise's community TV affiliate, and Chairs the Board for the regional True West Cinema Festival. Rae is Cherokee and a mother of three. She and her family reside in Boise, Idaho.

PRODUCER

Elyse Katz comes to TRUDELL with over 15 years of film experience having worked on SINGLE WHITE FEMALE, PRETTY WOMAN, JOHNS and GOING ALL THE WAY. In 1997, after 10 years in feature films, Elyse's career path took a turn towards socially conscious filmmaking with the Academy Award winning feature documentary, THE LAST DAYS. Elyse then co-produced BELLYFRUIT, a gritty reality based film about teen pregnancy and in 2002 she produced THE FIRE WITHIN, an inspiring documentary about a long-term AIDS survivor. Elyse has worked in new media at the legendary Digital Entertainment Network and has produced music specials including CHRIS BOTTI LIVE , ALLMAN BROS LIVE and GOV'T MULE. Her work in promotional programming includes the companion special AMERICAN FIRST HORSE on the Hidalgo DVD and the recent SPIDERMAN II International TV Special. Her other independent film credits include: GOING ALL THE WAY, (Mark Pellington's first feature, starring Ben Affleck and Jeremy Davies which premiered at the 1997 Sundance Film Festival,) MOJAVE MOON (starring Angelina Jolie and Danny Aiello,) and JOHNS (a 1995 Sundance American Spectrum entry starring Lukas Haas and David Arquette.) She also worked on RING OF FIRE (directed by the Academy Award winner Xavier Koller and written by James Redford,) and DESTINY TURNS ON THE RADIO (developed at the Sundance Writers Lab starring Quentin Tarantino, Dylan McDermott and Nancy Travis.) Elyse's focus on documentary stories of faith and

courage, and her first hand knowledge of the power of the film medium, continues as she participates in the creation of true heartfelt stories.

SUBJECT

John Trudell (Sioux) A people's poet in the truest sense of the term, John Trudell's potent imagery and passionate convictions have established his reputation as a spoken word artist whose international following reflects the universal language of his music and his message. He has been an activist for more than three decades and a recording artist for more than two. He was the National Spokesman of the American Indian Movement from 1973-1979 and was there at the occupation of Alcatraz. He has been an actor (THUNDERHEART, SMOKE SIGNALS, ON DEADLY GROUND) and a public speaker (the 1996 Democratic Convention). Trudell sound and words have traversed the planet affecting people from all Nations and all creeds. He is a visionary and a leader, although not self-proclaimed. His work more recently with actress Angelina Jolie has produced his most recent and perhaps most poignant album, *Bone Days*. He is also developing a Native Cultural Center in Los Angeles with Jolie through their newly formed organization, The All Tribes Foundation. Trudell is a community pillar.

WRITER/EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

Russell Friedenberg is originally from New York city. He was one of the founders of the New York Performers Alliance, an Off-Broadway theatrical school and performance center. As well he was a founder of Blue Sphere Alliance, a Los Angeles based non-profit theatre company whose credits include nearly twenty regional theater awards. His first screenplay, A THOUSAND GUNS, was selected for the 1999 Sundance Screenwriting Lab and is being produced by Harvey Kietel, Michael Robinson and Heather Rae. He recently starred with Adam Beach and Udo Kier in a film he wrote titled AMERICAN MONSTER. Russell is the writer on TRUDELL and has been closely involved in the development, research and post-production.

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

Rob Ganger comes from the world of sports and music entertainment, specializing in unique mega-events made for television. He produced the Bryant Gumbel Walt Disney World Celebrity Golf Tournament (ESPN), netting more than \$6 million for the United Negro College Fund over a six-year period. He also produced the Cuervo Gold Beach Volleyball Tour (FOX), the largest of its kind in North America. His work experiences have taken him all over the planet, creating events in music (Fishbone and Los Lobos Beach Concerts) and sports, including polo (Aspen Snow Polo Tournament), soccer (World Cup Legends of Soccer Tour) and the Olympics (Traveling Olympic Museum).

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS

Angelina Jolie, Actor, United Nations ambassador
Marcheline Bertrand, Activist, Angelina's mother
James Haven, Actor, Angelina's brother
Chief Harry B. Wallace, Unkechaug Nation, New York

CINEMATOGRAPHER

Gilbert Salas Born on November 25, 1959 in El Paso, Texas, Gilbert, Mexican American of Tarahumara descent, was brought up on a steady diet of films and television. In 1986 he began working behind the scenes on feature films, commercials, music videos and documentaries. Gilbert went on to shoot various projects, such as TRUDELL, SACRED SITES, QUATAUWS and STORYTELLERS OF THE PACIFIC for PBS, which led him to direct SAILING THE MASTER HOME, a documentary about Polynesian navigator Mau Pialung. His work as a cinematographer/filmmaker has taken him all over the world and into many compelling and beautiful stories. Gilbert is based in Los Angeles where he works, surfs and sails.

EDITOR

Gregory Bayne has worked in every capacity in film and on the stage over the past 13 years. Since graduating from Vancouver Film School in 1992, Gregory has gone on to produce, write, direct and edit several short and feature length films including the award winning AN AMERICAN TRAGEDY, AUGUST, THE WICKED MEN, GAZILLION, and WAKING IN BANGLADESH. On the theatrical stage, Bayne has produced and directed successful runs of *Wait Until Dark*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Sam Shepard's *Seduced*, *Steel Magnolias*, *Rebecca* and *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Currently, Bayne works as a freelance director and editor for film, television and commercial productions, and is Artistic Director and co-founder of the True West Cinema Festival, a four-day film festival that celebrates independent filmmaking in the Western United States.

Rongotai Lomas (Maori) has edited and directed music videos, commercials, documentaries and narrative films internationally and in his homeland of New Zealand. An animator and a filmmaker, he is deeply rooted in the Polynesian Hip Hop scene and is close to completing a documentary about the acclaimed Che Fu. Most recently he edited, THE LAND HAS EYES, the first Native feature film from Fiji. Last year he edited, HOTERE, renowned filmmaker Merata Mita's documentary which premiered at Sundance 2002.

PRODUCTION ADVISORS

Marc Levin has directed and produced nearly twenty films of international acclaim. He is one of the creators and director on STREETTIME, the successful Showtime series. With his award-winning feature film, SLAM, he won the Grand Jury Prize at the 1998 Sundance Film Festival and the Camera D'Or at the Cannes Film Festival. For twenty five years he has been making controversial, provocative films such as: SOLDIERS IN THE ARMY OF GOD (premiered at the 2000 Toronto Film Festival and aired on HBO); TWILIGHT LOS ANGELES (Sundance 2000 & PBS); THUG LIFE IN DC (HBO--won 1999 Emmy); BROOKLYN BABYLON (starring the Grammy-winning group, The Roots. Released by Artisan Ent.); WHITE BOYS (released by Fox Searchlight); THE LAST PARTY (starring Robert Downey Jr.); and BLOWBACK.

Merata Mita (Maori) was born and raised in a small, traditional Maori community in New Zealand. She has been involved in film and video production for over 20 years, steadily forging realistic and contemporary portraits of the peoples of the South Pacific.

Her documentary films include PATU!, a powerful and poignant study of the violence surrounding the 1981 Springbrook rugby tour. MAORI, her dramatic feature investigates themes of birthright and racism in its story of a troubled man who returns to an isolated North Island settlement. Her film HOTERE premiered at the 2002 Sundance Film Festival. At Sundance 2001 she was invited as a prestigious documentary juror .

Wilma Mankiller, the former Chief of the Cherokee Nation, is an activist, speaker, and important cultural and political figure. In 1983, Mankiller was the first woman elected as Deputy Principal Chief of the Cherokee--the first woman to ever hold such an office in any Indian Tribe. She served as chief for nearly two decades gaining international recognition for her works in community service and public policy. She is currently an advisor to the United Nations and a Board of Trustees member for the Ford Foundation.

TRUDELL FESTIVAL RUN

2005/2006

Sundance Film Festival 2005, US Documentary Competition
Taos Picture Show 2005
Full Frame Documentary Film Festival 2005
Martha's Vineyard Film Festival 2005
East Lansing Film Festival 2005
Western Kentucky Film Festival 2005
Artivist Film Festival 2005, Opening Night
Awarded Jury Prize for Human Rights
Tribeca Film Festival 2005
Trenton Film Festival 2005, Closing Night
Maui Film Festival 2005
Newport Film Festival 2005
Seattle International Film Festival 2005
Awarded Special Jury Prize for Best Documentary
Message Sticks Film Festival 2005, Sydney, Australia
Woodford Film Festival 2005, Queensland, Australia
SilverDocs Film Festival 2005
Native Voices Film Festival 2005, Rapid City, South Dakota
Munich Film Festival 2005
Heard Museum Film Festival 2005
Bioneers Film Festival- Oct 2005
Mill Valley Film Festival- Closing Night, Valley of the Docs
Ojai Film Festival 2005- Oct 21st and 22nd
Imaginative Film Festival 2005, Closing Night
Global Visions Film Festival 2005, Opening Night
Cine-World Fest 2005
American Indian Film Fest 2005, Opening Night
Torun Film Festival 2005
Flimmer Film Festival 2005
Santa Fe Native Cinema Showcase 2005
San Diego Film Festival 2005
Film Festival New Haven 2005
Native American Film Festival 2005
Cannibus Cup Film Festival 2005, Amsterdam
Spudfest Film Festival 2005
Flatwater Film Festival 2005
ProtestFestival 2005, Norway
Cherokee International Film Festival 2005
Wild and Scenic Film Festival 2006
Global Peace Film Festival 2006
Mountain Top Film Festival 2006
Ashland Film Festival 2006