



**Tribeca Film in association with America Express presents**

**A DICKHOUSE Production**

**In association with TRANSITION PRODUCTIONS**

**A Film by JULIEN NITZBERG**

# **THE WILD AND WONDERFUL WHITES OF WEST VIRGINIA**

**Premiering on Video on Demand April 21- June 16, 2010  
Day and Date with the Tribeca Film Festival**

**Limited Release in New York at the Tribeca Cinemas:**

Wednesday, May 5<sup>th</sup> at 9:30 pm; Thursday, May 6<sup>th</sup> at 9:30pm; Friday, May 7<sup>th</sup> at 9:30pm;  
Saturday, May 8<sup>th</sup> at 9:30pm; Sunday, May 9<sup>th</sup> at 9:30pm; Monday, May 10<sup>th</sup> at 3:30pm;  
Tuesday, May 11<sup>th</sup> at 10pm

## **PRESS CONTACTS**

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## Credits

Tribeca Film in association with America Express presents  A DICKHOUSE Production
In association with  TRANSITION PRODUCTIONS
A Film By  JULIEN NITZBERG
  THE WILD AND WONDERFUL WHITES OF WEST VIRGINIA
Music By  DEKE DICKERSON
Edited By  BEN DAUGHTREY
Executive Producers  JOHNNY KNOXVILLE  JEFF TREMAINE  PRIYA SWAMINATHAN
Executive Producer  JEFF YAPP
Co-Producer  KATIE DOERING
Produced By

STORM TAYLOR
Directed By JULIEN NITZBERG

Produced By	JULIEN NITZBERG
Assistant Director	STORM TAYLOR
Associate Producer	PAIGE HESS-HILL
Consulting Editor	SETH CASRIEL
Associate Editors	KATIE DOERING BRIAN WESSEL
Assistant Editors	EUGENE GORDON LACEY REILLY SHARIDAN SOTELLO-WILLIAMS
Post Production Assistants	MIKE HELLER LAWRENCE McGINLEY STEPHANIE OCHOA SCOTT PEARLMAN
Family Tree Artwork By	TIM BOBECK WAYNE BJERKE
Graphic Design By	ROB TRAVIS
Motion Graphics By	PHILIP WILHELM ROBERT WOMACK JEFF WUNDERLICH
Camera	DAVID BIRD DOMINIC GIORDANO MICHAEL KENNETH SYDENSTRICKER II
Additional Camera	PAUL CAIN FORTUNATO PROCOPIO GEORGE SCOULAS STORM TAYLOR
Sound Recordist	P. SCOTT MINOR

	GEORGE SCOULAS
Additional Sound	CHRISTOPHER GURNEY
Music Supervisors	LAUREL STEARNS SAM JAMES VELDE
Music & Media Licensing	LIANN HAGY CONNIE M. HOWELL
Still Photography	JACK PARKER
Production Assistants	DARLA JEAN PATTERSON SHELLY WILLIAMS
Production Intern	JOSHUA RUSSELL
Color By	MODERN VIDEOFILM, INC.
Colorist	RUSSELL LYNCH
On-Line Editors	RICHARD RUSSELL BRYAN CANTRALL
Post-Production Sound Services	PUGET SOUND, INC.
Supervising Sound Editor & Sound Re-Recording Mixer	JOE MILNER
Sound Editor	PAUL TIMOTHY CARDEN
Avid Rental / Office Space	FOTOKEM
Business and Legal Affairs	ANDREW HAN

<p>“Simple Gifts” Written by Elder Joseph Brackett Arranged by Greg Herzenach &amp; Al Wolovitch</p>
<p>“D-Ray White” Written &amp; Performed by Hank III Courtesy of Sidewalk Records</p>
<p>“Jessico” Written by Richard Young, Fred K. Young, Doug Phelps, Greg Martin, Anthony Kenney Performed by The Kentucky Headhunters</p>

By Arrangement With Bug Music
“Mama” Written & Performed by Deke Dickerson Courtesy of Ecco-Fonic International
“Train to Nowhere” Written & Performed by Deke Dickerson Courtesy of Ecco-Fonic International
“Cha Cha Cha-Ching!” Written & Performed by Phil W. Gough Courtesy of Tiki King Music
“Oh Dem Pills” Written & Performed by Deke Dickerson Courtesy of Ecco-Fonic International
“Straight to Hell” Written & Performed by Hank III Courtesy of Sidewalk Records
“Theme of Violence” Written & Performed by Deke Dickerson Courtesy of Ecco-Fonic International
“Party at My Pad” Written & Performed by Deke Dickerson Courtesy of Ecco-Fonic International
“Happy Birthday” Performed by Jesco & Mamie White Written by Patty Hill, Mildred Hill Courtesy of Warner Chapell Music
“Lightning When I Need” Written by Eric Oblander, Steve Smith, Brad Coffin Performed by Five Horse Johnson Courtesy of Small Stone Records
“No Rules” Written & Performed by GG Allin Courtesy of Seidboard World Enterprises

<p>“Whose Baby Are You, Baby?” Written &amp; Performed by Deke Dickerson Courtesy of Ecco-Fonic International</p>
<p>“Sorrow And Pain [Acoustic Mix]” Written &amp; Performed by Deke Dickerson Courtesy of Ecco-Fonic International</p>
<p>“West Virginia White Boy” Written &amp; Performed by Deke Dickerson Courtesy of Ecco-Fonic International</p>
<p>“Diggin’ It” Written &amp; Performed by Deke Dickerson Courtesy of Ecco-Fonic International</p>
<p>“I Love My Job” Written &amp; Performed by Deke Dickerson Courtesy of Ecco-Fonic International</p>
<p>“Mountain Lullaby” Written &amp; Performed by Benedikt Brydern By Arrangement With Con Sordino Music Publishing</p>
<p>“Vinum Sabbathi” Written &amp; Performed by Electric Wizard Courtesy of Ricall Limited</p>
<p>“Pine Tree” Performed by Ponty’s Camper Traditional</p>
<p>“Long Day” Written by Jason “Jay” Hill Performed by Jay Hill and The Dirty Coal River Band Courtesy of Jason “Jay” Hill</p>
<p>“Hook and Line” Performed by Ponty’s Camper Traditional</p>
<p>“Darkness Breeds Contempt” Written &amp; Performed by Deke Dickerson</p>

Courtesy of Ecco-Fonic International
<p>“Fortified Wine”</p> <p>Written &amp; Performed by Deke Dickerson</p> <p>Courtesy of Ecco-Fonic International</p>
<p>“Big Fat Woman Blues”</p> <p>Written by Wallace Gore</p> <p>Performed by Voodoo Whiskey</p> <p>Courtesy of Wallace Gore</p>
<p>“Asphalt Aisle”</p> <p>Written &amp; Performed by Deke Dickerson</p> <p>Courtesy of Ecco-Fonic International</p>
<p>“Double Dealin’ Man”</p> <p>Written by Phil W. Gough and Julien Nitzberg</p> <p>Performed by Heather Marie Marsden and Phil W. Gough</p> <p>Courtesy of Tiki King Music and Sounds of Satyriasis Music</p>
<p>“P.F.F”</p> <p>Written &amp; Performed by Hank III</p> <p>Courtesy of Sidewalk Records</p>
<p>“Wedding March”</p> <p>Written by Richard Wagner</p> <p>Arranged by Richard Hardelstein</p> <p>Courtesy Of Opus 1 Music</p>
<p>“Wedding March Recessional”</p> <p>Written by Felix Mendelssohn</p> <p>Courtesy of Partners In Rhyme</p>
<p>“Plague of Angels”</p> <p>Written &amp; Performed by Earth</p> <p>Courtesy of Southern Lord Recordings</p>
<p>“William Morgan”</p> <p>Performed by John Haywood</p> <p>Traditional</p>
<p>“Coal Miner’s Daughter”</p> <p>Written by Loretta Lynn</p>

Performed by Mamie White By Arrangement With Sure Fire Music
“Coda Maestoso in F” Written & Performed by Earth Courtesy of Southern Lord Recordings
“Wild Wild Party” Performed by Charlie Feathers Written by Charlie Feathers & Jerry Huffman Performed by Charlie Feathers Courtesy of Royalty Tracking Music
“Sick, Sober and Sorry” Written Tex Atchison & Eddie Hazelwood Performed by Lefty Frizzell with Johnny Bond Courtesy of Columbia Nashville By arrangement with Sony Music Entertainment
“Fugue for Two Guitars and Spoons” Written & Performed by Deke Dickerson Courtesy of Ecco-Fonic International
“Moss on the Trees” Written & Performed by Deke Dickerson Courtesy of Ecco-Fonic International
“Lonely Holler” Written & Performed by Deke Dickerson Courtesy of Ecco-Fonic International
“Sorrow and Light” Written & Performed by Deke Dickerson Courtesy of Ecco-Fonic International
“Mama [Instrumental Reprise]” Written & Performed by Deke Dickerson Courtesy of Ecco-Fonic International
“Big Ass Happy Family” Written & Performed by Roger Alan Wade Courtesy of Roger Alan Wade



## **Archival Footage And Photographs Courtesy Of**

Brad Wheeler

Jack Parker

Jacob Young

Jeffery K Holbrook

Koch Entertainment

Mae Dean Ellington Smith

Ralph Rinzler Folklife Archive and Collections

Storm Taylor

Trent Hall

Warner Bros Records

West Virginia Archives

WSAZ-Huntington Charleston

The White Family

Footage of "Candy Candy" by D. Ray White

From the DVD entitled "Talking Feet," SF 48007

Provided courtesy of Smithsonian Folkways Recordings

## **The Filmmakers Wish to Thank**

Aaron & the Staff at The Broadway

Kenny Alphin

Howard Altman

Kathy Armentrout

Zach Bassham

Leslie Belzberg

Sallie Bingham

Mykel Board

Boone County Sheriff's Department

Danny Boyd  
Joe Buck  
Cathy Carapella  
Casey Chambers  
CAMC  
Chapmanville Bowling Alley  
The Corner Pocket  
Curry Brothers Monuments  
Cuz'N Wildweed  
Andra Dalto  
Dennis  
Warren Dern  
Tony Etz  
Dick Fauss  
Jeff Feuerzeig  
FMRS Health Systems  
Jennie Frankel  
Derek Freda  
Mike Galasso  
Ms. Greene at Southwest Regional Jail  
John Haywood and Ponty's Camper  
Jeffery Hilbert  
Jay Hill and The Dirty Coal River Band  
Jodi at Bob's & Bea's  
Volney Howard  
Hudson's Bar  
Beth Husnik  
Chris Iovenko  
Lone Wolf Tattoo  
Duncan MacDonald  
Mother Program  
Michael Mees  
Dennis Meyer

Joanie Newman and the Coal Valley News  
Naomi Nelson  
Chris Offutt  
Paradise Film Institute  
The Park Avenue Motel  
Anthony Piedmonte  
Lacey Reilly  
Christopher "Crash" Richard  
Frank Rodriguez  
Jim Rubenstein, WV Division of Corrections  
Scott Saxton, WSAZ  
Caitlin Scanlon  
Gina Scheerer  
Debbie Schulz  
Mike Seeger  
Lisa Silfen  
Mitch Solomon  
Sue Stone  
Amy Trent  
Laura Tremaine  
Joy Underwood  
Roger Alan Wade  
West Coast Post  
West Virginia State University  
Jason White  
Hank Williams Jr.  
Hank III  
Greg "Wolfie" Wolf  
WVBandscene.com  
Jacob Young  
Richard Young and the Kentucky HeadHunters  
Shanna Zablow  
Bill Zotti

<b>A Very Special Thanks To</b>
The White Family
The People of Boone County, West Virginia

## **Synopsis**

Shoot-outs, robberies, gas-huffing, drug dealing, pill popping, murders, and tap dancing. From executive producers Johnny Knoxville and Jeff Tremaine (*Jackass*) comes a shocking and outlandish year-in-the-life documentary about the White Family of Boone County, West Virginia's most notorious and surly family. Nestled deep in the Appalachian Mountains, the White family lives an existence more like something from the Wild West than modern day suburbified America. The legendary family is as known for their wild, excessive criminal ways as they are for their famous mountain dancing members, including Jesco White, the star of the cult classic documentary *Dancing Outlaw*. Over the course of one tumultuous year, the Whites deal with a stabbing, criminal sentencing, attempted murder, death and birth. THE WILD AND WONDERFUL WHITES OF WEST VIRGINIA is directed by Julien Nitzberg (producer of *Dancing Outlaw*).

## Long Synopsis

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Shoot-outs, robberies, gas-huffing , drug dealing, pill popping, murders, and tap dancing - -- what do these all have in common? These are just a few of the parts of being a member of the Wild and Wonderful White Family.

Nestled deep in the Appalachian Mountains, the White family lives an existence more like something from the Wild West than modern day suburbified America. The legendary family is as known for their wild, excessive criminal ways as they are for their famous mountain dancing members, including Jesco White, the star of the cult classic documentary Dancing Outlaw.

Exploring both the comic and tragic sides of life on the other side of the law, this stylish, fast-paced family portrait exposes the powerful forces of corruption, poverty, and West Virginia's environmentally and culturally devastating coal mining culture that helped shape the White family, a dying breed of outlaws preserving a dying form of dance.

Over the course of one tumultuous year, the Whites deal with a stabbing, criminal sentencing, attempted murder, death and birth. On top of all this, Jesco, the family's dancing muse, comments on the family through his performances accompanied by legendary country singer Hank Williams III.

We see an older generation of the White family come to terms with the lives they have lived while the younger generation struggles to decide whether they will join their outlaw forefathers or break from the family's criminal traditions.

## Director's Statement

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### JULIEN NITZBERG

Ever since I first visited Boone County, West Virginia in 1989 to film my first documentary, I've been obsessed with this amazing county. It is a county filled with some of the smartest and funniest people I've ever met, but it also has an obsession with outlaw culture that leads to amazing levels of self-destructive behavior and fatalism. I wanted to investigate how these different traits developed in one family.

This film has an unfortunate timeliness because of the recent mining disaster that just killed 29 coal miners in Boone County. There are, of course, a variety of factors that have led the Whites to being who they are, but coal culture has to be placed foremost. The fickle imminence of death hangs over anyone who's had family work in the mines, leading too often to a life lived without any thoughts of long term planning. The corruption that the coal companies bring to politics can be easily seen in the frequency with which the operator of these mines, Massey Energy has flouted vital safety regulations with minor penalties at best because Don Blankenship, the head of Massey, is well known to have financed political campaigns in return for laws and court rulings that favor his company. This blatant corruption of the law fuels the outlaw culture in the region, justifying many others in the community to feel that they need to find ways to also exploit the system in their own small ways. The Whites, as masters of this, end up being celebrated in West Virginia by some like other outlaws before them (Jesse James, Bonnie and Clyde, etc.) who rebelled against corporate and state crimes by leading lives of crime themselves.

The Whites represent a part of America the media avidly avoids. Poor and with no ability to buy into the American dream (or interest in buying into mainstream values), they are the part of our country that is too often demonized or stereotyped. They live in a world of rural poverty that has bred a cycle of dependency and criminality. These are people with no options at all but who have taken this lack of hope and stood up to it in the only way they saw as possible- creating a badass outlaw persona that thrives on

romanticized self-destructive behavior.

There is this concept in America, that anyone can succeed if they wanted to, but I think the film is a refutation of that. There are cycles that almost never end once people are trapped in them. When you grow up a White and constantly hear romanticized stories of criminality or how great it was when your mother stabbed Dennis, you are going to grow up excited to stab someone and get family cred by going to prison. Finding a new moral center is going to be hard, if not impossible. And even if you have a moral center, but a shitty education, the possibilities for improving your life in a region with only one major and very dangerous industry (coal) are still pretty dim. The movie ends with the kids going in circles and yelling “fuck you” because that is what the family is doing, going in circles and yelling “fuck you” at the world.

I didn't want this to be a social issue documentary but a multi-layered family portrait allowing people to observe and explore this family that exists in America but is never shown with a sympathetic eye. Too often portraits of people from this region are incredibly simplistic. Either the families are portrayed tragically or they get drawn as living a bucolic existence from another time with mysterious old country wisdom. Yet the Whites are very complex people with very deep thoughts about life and death. They see the limits society has placed in their way and instead of being depressed, they give life (and death) the middle finger while they “party their balls off.” I tried to be non-judgmental and honest, showing their resilience, humor and the way their life abruptly switched from moment to moment from tragic to comic to tragic again with dizzying speed. This complexity is what I hope resonates with viewers who see the film.

## About the Crew

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**JULIEN NITZBERG/ DIRECTOR** – Like Grandmaster Flash, Stanley Kubrick and David Berkowitz, Julien Nitzberg was raised in the Bronx. At age 16, he became a founding member of the notorious and much despised Lower East Side hardcore punk band **Artless**. After college, Nitzberg moved to the Appalachian Mountains, where he directed **The Wild World of Hasil Adkins, One Man Band And Inventor of the Hunch** a documentary about Boone County’s infamous punk progenitor and rockabilly pioneer. This film featured the first footage of Mamie White who broke up a three-way catfight between female fans of Hasil Adkins during a concert sequence. This auspicious meeting led to Nitzberg’s friendship with the White family and his shooting the first video footage of Jesco White in 1989. This footage became the basis for **Dancing Outlaw** on which he served as Associate Producer.

After moving to California, Nitzberg directed the feature film **Bury Me in Kern County**. As a screenwriter, Nitzberg has written for HBO, SHOWTIME, TNT, VH1 and NBC. In 2006, Nitzberg wrote and directed the controversial operetta **The Beastly Bombing or A Terrible Tale of Terrorists Tamed by the Tangles of True Love**, which won the LA Weekly Theater Critics’ Musical of the Year Award and was dubbed by the Huffington Post- “the first great work of comedy to emerge from the post-9/11 little planet of horrors.” After playing for over a year in Los Angeles, **The Beastly Bombing** went on to be staged in New York, Chicago and Amsterdam. He is currently writing a script for HBO Films based on the strange life of the civil rights activist and professional wrestler Sputnik Monroe.

**JOHNNY KNOXVILLE/ EXECUTIVE PRODUCER** - Born and raised in Knoxville, Tennessee, executive producer Johnny Knoxville moved to California to pursue his acting career. He supported himself by writing for magazines such as *Blunt*, *Bikini*, and *Big Brother*. In 1997, Knoxville pitched his idea for *Jackass* to Jeff Tremaine, who was then the editor of *Big Brother*. After creating and starring in MTV’s controversial *Jackass* series, Knoxville starred and produced *Jackass* and *Jackass 2*. He went on to



star in The Farrelly Brothers' *The Ringer* and Warner Brothers' *Dukes of Hazard*, and co-star in Catherine Hardwicke's *Lords of Dogtown*, John Waters' *A Dirty Shame*, *Walking Tall*, and Barry Sonnenfeld's *Men in Black 2*.

Currently, Knoxville and his cousin Roger Alan Wade host a Sirius Radio Show on Channel 65 called "Me and Rog." He is producing a new series for MTV, *The Dudesons*, and is in production on *Jackass 3D*

**JEFF TREMAINE / EXECUTIVE PRODUCER** - The story of executive producer Jeff Tremaine is sort of similar to that of Cinderella, that haggard little wench come celebrated toast of the town, but not really. Born a poor white military brat, Jeff was hustled from state to state until finally settling in the area of Rockville, Maryland. There he defied his parents on a regular basis, got into all sorts of ne'er-do-well activities such as skateboarding, BMX, reggae music, and art, and made the acquaintance of Adam Spiegel, a hyperactive little pipsqueak that puberty had somehow skipped over and left with an extremely high voice for an extremely long time.

After graduating from Washington University, Tremaine met up with his friend Adam, now more popularly known as Spike, who was working as a photographer for the BMX magazine *Freestylin'*. After a stint at for *Freestylin'*, Tremaine landed a job as the art/editorial director for *Big Brother*, a fledgling skateboard rag. His leadership took *Big Brother* to new and exciting levels of distribution, notoriety, and an all-encompassing sense of stupidity not normally tolerated in any industry (except Hollywood).

It's no big secret what happened past this point in the life of Jeffrey James Tremaine. In addition to helming the *Jackass* franchise, Tremaine has served as Executive Producer and Co-Creator of MTV's hit series' *Nitro Circus*, *Rob Dyrdek's Fantasy Factory*, *Wildboyz*, *Rob & Big*, and the upcoming show *The Dudesons*. He has directed music videos for Turbonegro, Andrew WK, and The Sahara Hot Nights. He recently directed *The Birth of Big Air*, a documentary about BMX bike legend Mat Hoffman for ESPN's *30 For 30* series, which airs in July 2010. He is currently in production on *Jackass 3D*.

**PRIYA SWAMINATHAN/ EXECUTIVE PRODUCER** – Priya Swaminathan has been producing documentaries since 2002 that have taken her from mental institutions in America to the homes of former child soldiers in Colombia. In 2008, she produced and co-directed *Very Young Girls*, a documentary examining the sexual exploitation of children in America that premiered on SHOWTIME. Recently, she produced *The Birth of Big Air* with Jeff Tremaine, Johnny Knoxville, and Spike Jonze. Swaminathan currently works as the Director of Development at Dickhouse Productions.

**STORM TAYLOR/ PRODUCER** - Born and raised in a small Tennessee town at the base of the Great Smoky Mountains, producer Storm Taylor adheres to the small town code that hard work and handshakes still mean something. After field producing domestically and internationally on MTV's *Jackass* and *Wildboyz* series', Taylor created Turner South's Emmy Award winning reality show *Yokel*. He went on to create *The Dirt Poor Comedy Tour*, the most anticipated redneck showcase since "The Marshall Tucker Band" toured with Lynyrd Skynyrd.

## About the Whites

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Worshipped by some, hated by others, the legend of the White family started growing after the release of the cult documentary *The Dancing Outlaw*, which put the spotlight on eldest son Jesco and his love of mountain dancing, Elvis and huffing gasoline. The rest of the family remained in the shadows until *The Wild and Wonderful Whites* focused on the less celebrated members of the clan. Though the rest never learned the art of mountain dancing, they all share his talent to be alternately poetic, funny, and insanely self-destructive.

The film follows four generations of the family:

85-year-old **Bertie Mae White**, the matriarch of the family and widow of famed mountain dancer D. Ray White, gave birth to and adopted more children than she can recall. A good Christian woman, Bertie somehow managed to raise a whole generation of outlaws.

Bertie Mae's Children:

**Mamie, Jesco, Bo, Poney** and **Sue Bob** grew up living life as it had been in the hills for hundreds of years - they drew water from a well, raised their own animals and lived without indoor plumbing. Faced with few choices besides a life of poverty or in the coal mines, they rebelled against the area's lack of opportunity by choosing a life of challenging the law and "partying their balls off." Only Poney left Boone County to find legitimate work as a house painter in Minnesota.

Bertie Mae's Grandchildren:

Mamie's daughter **Mousie**, Bo's children **Kirk** and **Derek**, and Sue Bob's son **Brandon** – are even more extreme in their wild ways. Whereas their parents mostly engaged in smaller crimes, the third generation became more openly violent and addicted to the suddenly readily available prescription drugs.

Bertie Mae's Great-grandchildren-:

Mousie's daughter **Cheyann**, Derek's young son **Derek Jr.** and Kirk's children **Tylor** and baby **Monica** are the future of the White clan. What the future holds for this generation is one of the interesting questions audiences leave the screening debating.

## Director's Q&A – Julien Nitzberg

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**How would you describe this film and the Whites in a snapshot for someone who may not know anything about it/ them?**

This is the portrait of a family of outlaws who live outside society's rules and their struggles with the consequences of such a life. It follows four generations over almost a year and a half as they deal with births, deaths, attempted murders, being released from prison and drug dependency.

The Whites are also the last people preserving their particular version of the tradition of mountain dancing that stems from early Irish cloggers moving to America. Their moral code dates back a hundred years to the mountain version of frontier justice when the law was either too corrupt to bother with, or, too far away to affect you. People did what they wanted and lived in clans. If someone crossed you, you simply got a gun and enforced your own idea of justice (no matter how misguided). This ethos resulted in much bloodshed and feuds like the Hatfields and the McCoys.

**What was the genesis of the project? What inspired you to make this film?**

This project can be said to have started in 1989 when I first met Mamie White while filming my documentary *The Wild World of Hasil Adkins*, One Man Band and Inventor of the Hunch, about Boone County's infamous rockabilly pioneer and punk progenitor, Hasil Adkins. Adkins was a close friend of the White family, having frequently performed with Jesco's father D. Ray White.

Mamie was at a concert of Hasil's I was shooting at a Boone County roadhouse. She excitedly kept telling me that she was on acid. Later in the night she broke up a three-woman catfight. A week later I ran into her again. Sitting in her pick-up, she eagerly informed me she was on acid again She then invited me to her birthday party because she

was going to have a cake “with tits and a pussy on it.” Never one to say no to cake, I took her up on the offer.

The next day, on the way over, I stopped to ask directions to Mamie White’s trailer (where Jesco was living at the time). Pulling over to ask a random pick-up truck parked on the side of the road, I was told: “You’re looking for Mamie White? I hope you get VD and your cock and balls fall off.” This gave me a sense of how some people in the community felt about the Whites.

Eventually I found the trailer and met Jesco. Immediately, I was fascinated by him and his family. A week later I went back and filmed the first video footage of Jesco. This footage later helped raise the interest and money for *Dancing Outlaw*.

Over the years, I always wanted to do something with that original footage. Then out of the blue, I got a call from a friend telling me that Johnny Knoxville was a big fan of my documentaries and wanted to know if he could call me. I agreed and we went out to lunch and bonded over our love for obscure and offensive country music. I ended up showing him my original footage and he became obsessed with trying to figure out what we could do with the “secret Jesco footage.” I didn’t feel like that the original footage was strong enough to put out on its own. They were more like the lost demo tapes of a great band. Then I remembered how I’d found everyone in the family to be as wild and interesting as Jesco. Knoxville suggested that I go back to Boone County to see if there was a story to be told about the rest of the family and the younger generation of Whites. We decided to follow multiple generations of the family to see if I could figure out whether certain White family tendencies (including their love of sex, drugs, and crime) were learned or genetically imprinted. Johnny Knoxville and Jeff Tremaine paid for the first shoot out of their own pockets. We shot for four days and came back with what would become the basis of the film. The original Jesco tapes didn’t end up in the film but will be available as a bonus feature on the DVD.

**Are there any films that served as inspirations or influences for you when it came to making this film?**

I told my crew that our mission was “to shoot like the Maysles and edit like Scorsese.” The Maysles Brothers’ *Salesman* influenced my decision to roll the dice and take a mostly cinema verite approach to the film. It could have been an interview-based documentary but I decided to shoot a verite documentary, risking the possibility that if nothing majorly dramatic happened in the year we shot it, I’d be fucked.

In the editing, my big influence was *Goodfellas*. Like that movie, we were documenting a crime family. I wanted to have the majestic scope of that movie and show the fun that being part of an underground life could be. We used lots of music in a way influenced by that movie. When choosing music for scenes, I would ask myself what music is the character hearing in their head and provide the appropriate soundtrack score. Like *Goodfellas*, I knew that after showing the exciting part of the criminal life, I wanted to address the real consequences of that life and how it can go dark. In *Goodfellas*, the audience realize when Joe Pesci shoots Spider that what at first seemed fun is actually not at all attractive. We tried to have Kirk’s time in the hospital serve the same thematic purpose and structured it in the film similarly to serve as an act break denoting the film’s darkening.

The other movie that really influenced me was Lindsay Anderson’s *O Lucky Man*. This is a more obscure movie that I’ve been obsessed with since high school. In it, Malcolm McDowell’s story is narrated by songs sung in a studio by former “Animals” keyboard player, Alan Price. The songs then continue into scenes in a way similar to Cat Stevens’ songs in *Harold and Maude*. Hank Williams III’s songs seemed to be a natural soundtrack to the family’s life. He had even written one already about Jesco’s father. I decided to film Hank III singing these with Jesco dancing to them. Thus, they became almost like a Greek tap dancing chorus narrating the movie’s key events.

### **What was the most difficult scene to shoot?**

Most of it was difficult to shoot. Because of the precarious situations where we were often observing illegal/ and or questionably moral activities a lot of the shoot was done surreptitiously. The family, of course, knew, but we usually got permission from

locations/other people in scenes later.

There were also frequent death threats from different members of the family. In total, we received at least 8 death threats. One half-sister of the Whites told us she was coming down with her rifle “Josey Wales,” and was going to kill me. A few weeks later she kept insisting that I come to her house for an interview and that everything was alright. I’d heard stories that she’d recently held up a bar and also knew she’d imprisoned Les White against his will. I chose not to pursue that interview even though I knew that the Whites are quick with a death threat, but also quick to become friends. As Billy Hastings learned, some death threats from the family can be very real.

Nothing went the way it was supposed to ever. When we were supposed to shoot with Mousey and her husband Charles Green, he could not be found. Instead we filmed her search for him. When we were trying to film the interview with Kirk at the beginning of the film, her son Tylor kept interrupting. Once again, I went against the normal instincts of a documentarian trying to control an interview situation and let the chaos happen- to what I think was a good effect.

Family members were jealous of who got the most time with the crew and would then refuse to be filmed. So it was a constant state of winning people back over. Stories were spread by different family members that we were doing crack with other family members, sleeping with them, had bought one a Hummer and even that Kirk had put a hex on me to spend more time filming only her. Sue Bob’s boyfriend Rick got jealous that he wasn’t on a shoot. They got in a fight about it and she refused to go home. He called the police and claimed I’d kidnapped her when she went to spend the night with Kirk. In the middle of the night, a state trooper showed up at my room.

Many scenes were emotionally hard to shoot. Obviously this included destructive drug use. During the funeral, it felt very intrusive to be there, but it was also such an important emotional moment, we knew we had to get it.

We also had a number of local law officials who didn’t like the family and would try and prevent us from shooting.



**What do you hope people will get out of seeing the film?**

I hope people get a feeling for the complexity of the family. They are incredibly poetic, funny and beautifully profane. I hope people can love them the way I do and not focus only on the sad or destructive parts of their lives. They are incredibly fun people to be around who live life how they want to live, aware of the consequences, never caring what anyone thinks of them.

In some ways I think they embody one neglected aspect of the original pioneer spirit- the settlers who left Europe not for opportunity but just to be left alone to cause as much trouble as they could. This is a portrait of the double edged sword of an American outlaw culture that has probably been with us since our country's founding and probably will stay with us until the end.