

JACK MADE A PLAY



ABOUT JOHN

AN
ERIC
MICHAEL
KOCHMER
FILM

A FILM BY

*/elegant
grotesque/*

IN ASSOCIATION WITH



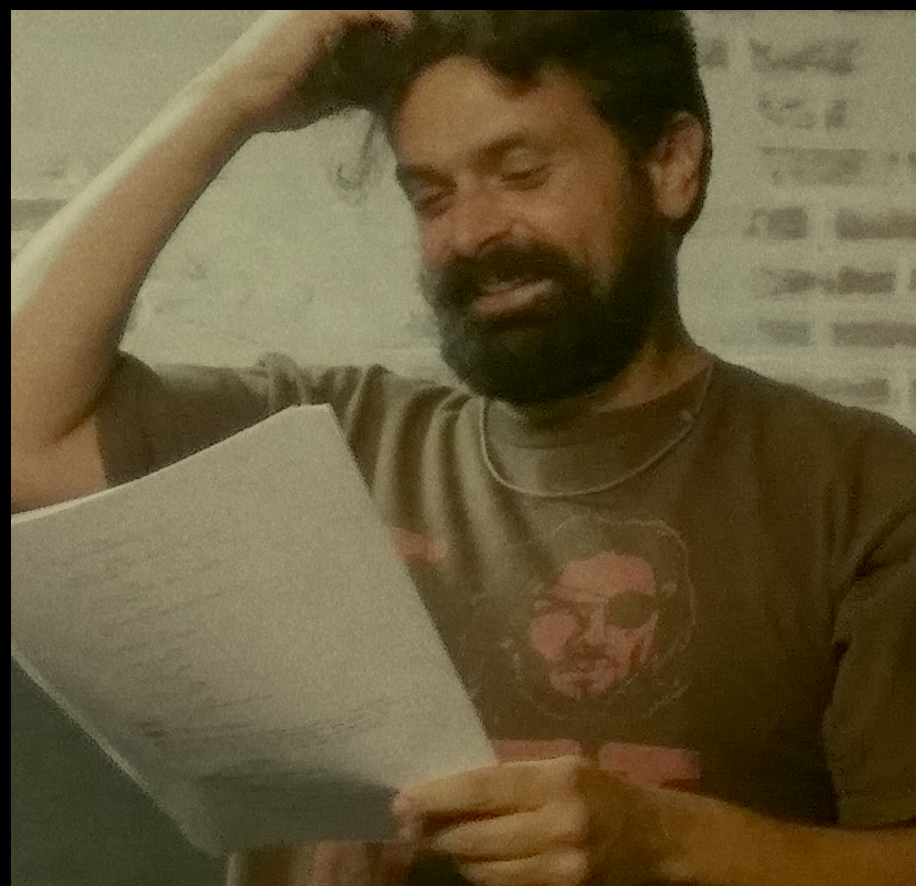
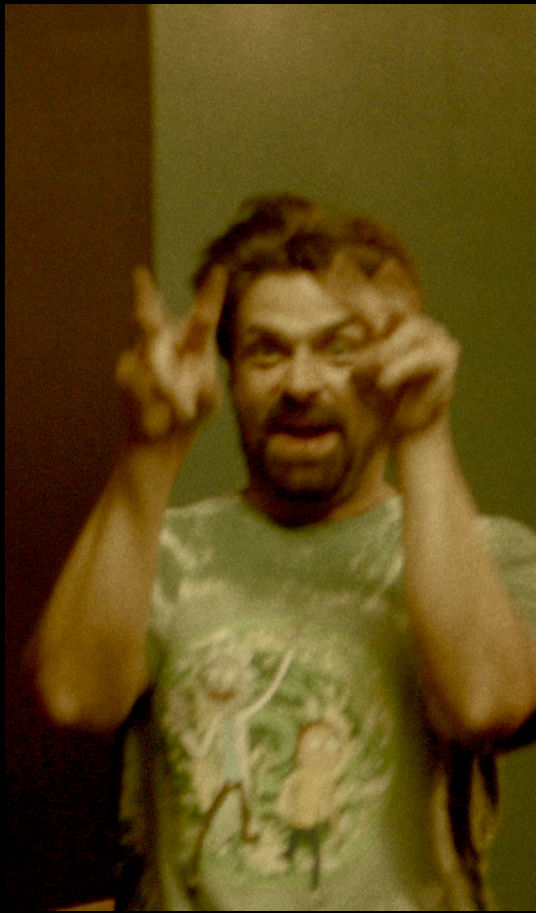


LOGLINE

The lines between idol and ego, life imitating art and art imitating life, and vision and delusion are blurred in this documentary that is part raw and earnest and part gritty mayhem. JACK MADE A PLAY ABOUT JOHN is a moving portrait of actor / writer / producer Jack Zullo's agonizing ambition to bring the life of John Belushi to the stage.

SYNOPSIS

Actor / writer / producer Jack Zullo is a consummate performer with promising talent in Hollywood. If only the industry would take notice. Exhausted by the hustle, he resolves to resurrect his play about one of his personal heroes, with hopes to attract the attention of the powers that be. We follow a pensive and capricious Jack as he trades coasts, suffers the drama behind the scenes, and endures his advancing existential crisis, all on his own dime. Tirelessly navigating a merry-go-round of equally absorbed and disoriented characters, Jack succumbs to the madness all around him. The mercurial film is reminiscent of THE MAN OF LA MANCHA, as we speculate if Jack is the paragon of an uncompromising artist, a professional zealot, a manic masochist, or an delightfully unfortunate cocktail of them all.



S P E C S

GENRE: Documentary

RUN TIME: 71 Minutes

ORIGIN: USA

FORMAT: 2K

ASPECT RATIO: 16:9

CAMERA: Blackmagic Pocket

SOUND: Stereo

LANGUAGE: English

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

It was 2016 and I was pretty down and out, crashing on my buddy Jack Zullo's couch. Every evening we would recount our day over libations, and it was during these evenings that Jack infused my senses with his energy about a play he was putting on in The Hollywood Fringe Festival called "Live From The Grave ... It's John Belushi". He raved about it being this great celebration of John's life, but the one catch was that he didn't have a director who understood his vision or shared the same passion for the story.

One of those nights I pointed out that I had directed theater a long time ago in NYC. Jack bluntly responded, "You're not directing my show, dude." The next night over a shared joint, I took a more straightforward approach and declared my interest and aptitude for directing the show because of my background in experimental theater, which was again met with a curt "No. Dude". Then one unexpected Saturday morning, Jack proposed I come to the rehearsal with him that day to "direct me directing the show." And that was how I ended up directing his show. It was exciting, and it was just enough of a distraction to get me out of my head and get my life back on track. I applied techniques and concepts from my experimental theater training, and had a dynamite time staging the show in a cabaret space, as well as having the actors play in and with the audience. We enjoyed a short but engaging run at The Fringe that year.



Cut to a few years later, Jack announces he wants to put the play together again, and asks me if I would like to be involved in some capacity. I pitch him on making a “behind the scenes” film of the process of him making the play. As someone who studied and worked extensively in experimental theater, worked as a film actor, and gradually became a producer and director of independent film and experimental media, I welcomed the challenge of telling a story through a documentarian’s lens. I only knew of two types of documentaries: the Ken Burns type (which is informative and almost academic), and the D.A. Pennebaker type (which is immersive). I already had an intimate relationship with the material and the subject, technical limitations (a zoom recorder and a Blackmagic pocket camera), and limited resources in terms of crew (the next play was to take place in NYC as opposed to LA), so I chose to go in the direction of D.A. Pennebaker.

In July of 2019, I started following Jack to and from rehearsals as he prepared to do a short run in Los Angeles, leading up to taking it to New York in the winter. The idea behind it was to follow Jack and really get inside of the process, get inside what kind of nerve it takes to even want to put together a play essentially by yourself. In a lot of ways it felt like I was making an independent drama. Once the show moved to New York in the Fall, it turned into non-stop days and nights.

I came back to Los Angeles in January 2020, with the daunting task of digging through 40 hours of footage to determine where the story was. A pandemic shifted the perspective of the meaning of life. I now had time and space in a new reality, to create the shape of the film, and what emerged was a glimpse inside the mind and soul of an artist and a story of the agony of ambition.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT





JACK'S STATEMENT

In 2006, on the streets of New York City, I moved to further my creative and professional pursuits. I was driven to research one of my childhood influences by a moment of inspiration: No one had ever made a tangible, scripted narrative about John Belushi. I researched and wrote for four years, crafting a screenplay. Realizing the long shot chance of an unknown actor and writer being tasked with bringing John's story to the silver screen, knuckles bloodied from banging on Hollywood's unanswered studio doors, and needing a job, I brought John's story to a black box theater in Hollywood of December 2010. This first version featured recreations of Saturday Night Live sketches as they had been performed by the original cast. I directed and fronted the piece, emceeding as John sharing stories from his life. After two successive, lackluster month long runs of the show, I closed it.

I wanted the work to be representative of not only John's life, but his heart and his soul. So I vowed to retool the play into an original multi-media work, a narrative of John's rise to stardom, complete with the music that had so enveloped John's career. I based the new, multimedia version of the play on the original screenplay I had written, and in 2012, premiered the reworked play for one night only at Mission Improvable's Westside Comedy Theater. The play was made complete and elevated by the original video clips

depicting scenes from John's life and the blues driven Crazy Tomes Band. On March 3rd, 2012, John's life was celebrated nearly 30 years to the day after his death. And with that one night, I thought my work was done.

Then, three years later, while performing in another production in the Hollywood Fringe Festival, I realized, "Live from the Grave...It's John Belushi" would crush that festival. So I set about to remount the play, once again, in the summer of 2016, calling upon the talents of the Crazy Tomes Band, for a six show run in the festival. The show was a hit. With John's name recognition, and the allure of a live blues band, word got around fast. So fast, in fact, that Jim Belushi, John's younger brother (and a star in his own right) came to see the preview performance. I was nominated for the prestigious "Most Unleashed Performance" award, and "Live from the Grave...It's John Belushi" was nominated for Best Cabaret, taking home the Producer's Award and winning a free multi-show extension.

And then it was done. No acclaim, no Hollywood agents knocking on the door. No contact from the family after the initial meeting with Jim. So once again, I thought the play had run its course, until the fall of 2018 when I started getting the itch again. Still no movie about John. Still no word from the family. So I decided to throw all my cards on the table and mount this fucking play - One. More. Time.

JACK'S STATEMENT



FILMMAKERS

ERIC MICHAEL KOCHMER

DIRECTOR / PRODUCER

Kochmer is a writer/director/producer with a background in experimental theater, mentored under Elizabeth Swados at LaMama Theatre after graduating from Marymount Manhattan College. Upon relocating to LA he produced and starred in avant garde filmmaker George Landow's film DIALOGUES (2009). Between 2006 and 2012, he appeared in over 30 feature and short films, including: I'M NOT HERE (Dances With Films), and VIRGINITY (The Boston International Film Festival), as well as starring in the crime thriller WHITE RABBIT (Cinequest, Vision Award Winner). Kochmer's directorial feature film debut WAY DOWN IN CHINATOWN (WMMFest) found distribution through 366WeirdMovies and Amazon. 2018 saw the release of his second feature film ABOUT STRANGERS: Road Series Volume I (Best Picture Award, Innuendo International Film Festival), as well as the first phase of the project I'VE SAID AND DONE THINGS THAT NO-ONE WILL EVER REMEMBER (over 100 episodes). He is currently in development on a live, multimedia version of the series, adapted for galleries and other art spaces. His third feature film, HER AND HIM, as well as his fourth feature, the documentary JACK MADE A PLAY ABOUT JOHN, are both slated to premiere in 2021. Kochmer also serves as the Chief of Production for the film collective and production company We Make Movies., as well as Co-Festival Director of WMMINTL.



JACK ZULLO

PRODUCER

Jack Zullo is an actor/writer/producer trained for the stage by Sondra Lee in New York City. He hustled through NYC's black box and street theatre scene before heading on tour with the regional theater, George Street Playhouse. Los Angeles saw him hone and further his improvisational skills at The Groundlings and Westside Comedy Theater while enriching his craft studying at The Actor's Gang. Faced with the obstacles involved in balancing the business of entertainment and artistic satisfaction, Jack chose to write and produce his own projects to further his craft and industry visibility. This has included short films, web content, and theater productions, including his multimedia full length stage play, WITH A LITTLE HELP...IT'S JOHN BELUSHI!, which made it's east coast premier, last December, in a run at New York City's famed East Village Theatre 80 St Marks. Jack Associate Produced the feature film, BELL CANYON and Executive Produced the documentary JACK MADE A PLAY ABOUT JOHN. Jack has been seen on JIMMY KIMMEL, LIVE, EPIC RAP BATTLES OF HISTORY (Wallace vs Washington), BRICK STONE NEWS (Golden Globes) and serves as Performance Coordinator for the film collective and production company, We Make Movies.





S O C I A L



C O N T A C T

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