



BRAVE NEW WEST

Intended Running Time – 80 minutes

Expected Release – January 2007

Short Synopsis -

“Old West” meets “New West” in the work of writer, publisher, artist, and activist, Jim Stiles, whose independent paper boasts, “Hopelessly clinging to the past.”

Long Synopsis -

In 1989 Jim Stiles began publishing the politically-progressive “Canyon Country Zephyr” in the heart of conservative Mormon Utah. Now recognized as one of the best independent papers in the West, “The Zephyr” combines humor, history, honesty and artistry in its coverage of issues. Brave New West is a profile of Stiles and the land and people that are his passion.

About the Movie -

Brave New West is a story about the eccentric, humorous, and inspiring world of Jim Stiles, whose dedication and imagination has produced one of America’s truly original independent newspapers – “The Canyon Country Zephyr.” Working alone since 1989 in his small home in Moab, Utah, Stiles combines art, humor, and commentary with honest stories to create an extraordinary historical archive of the rapidly changing landscape and culture of the American West. “The Zephyr” is a captivating visual experience and a humorous and a candid confessional. Brave New West is an off-the-wall odyssey that tells the tale of how one man’s passion for the natural world fueled the creation of an enduring newspaper that has become an unlikely institution in the American West.

Critics have described “The Zephyr” as “irreverent”, “serious, but funny.” Stiles has been described as “cantankerous”, “an aggressive perpetrator of knowledge,” and “Salt Lake City Magazine” wrote that he “has a closed mind when it comes to progress”. With the motto, “Clinging Hopelessly to the Past”, this last quote may be an accurate reading of Stiles and his paper. While Stiles recognizes that the Old West of uranium mining and road-building had its share of problems, he cringes at the idea of the New West - a land of condos, paved roads, spandex-wearing bikers, and Olive Garden restaurants. Contributors have included Edward Abbey, who wrote an article that appeared in the first edition of “The Zephyr;” Ken Sleight, the inspiration for the character Seldom Seen Smith in Abbey’s *The Monkey Wrench Gang*; and Ned Mudd, an eccentric environmental attorney, musician, and sometimes-philosopher from Alabama. Mudd is scoring all music for Brave New West.

While “The Zephyr” is a serious record of the movement of culture, economics, and environment, it is also loaded with humorous stories and cartoons. “The Zephyr” comes alive with eye-catching photos, illustrations, and even advertisements. Stiles personally illustrates every advertisement in the paper. “Have you ever had to come up with a joke, month after month, for a plumbing business?” asks Stiles. “It’s not easy.”

Stiles in print is very much Stiles in person - witty, honest, and straightforward, but also slightly self-demoralizing and humble. He is no stranger to controversy, and he draws critics from all sides of a conflict because of his refusal to never shy away from his own personal opinions. When he sees his paper drawing more than its share of criticism, and meanwhile the situation around him continues to deteriorate with every new subdivision, Stiles begins to question his own commitment to his life-long work. Combine this with the death of friends that have inspired and sustained him over the years, and he begins to seriously contemplate shutting the paper down and beginning a new life elsewhere far from southern Utah.

Can Stiles continue amid great strife and loss, or is his vision of an independent paper that speaks truth to power just an antiquated quixotic delusion? This question and its answers will be examined and revealed in “Brave New West.”

One consistent theme in this story is the sense of loss that comes with rapid or unexpected change in personal, cultural, and literal landscapes. *Brave New West* will illustrate this sense of loss – and equally important, the reactions aroused by it -- through vivid autobiographical vignettes and Stiles' intense relationship with land and society. Beautiful, sometimes haunting imagery from archival and contemporary southwestern landscapes, quirky yet informative artwork, and a creative use of headlines and graphics from Stiles' "Canyon Country Zephyr" help to illustrate the themes of loss, hope, and the struggles encountered in the quest for personal resolution and redemption. This begins with Stiles' first clear memory as a child. His life was forever altered when bulldozers leveled the beautiful woodlot near his home, making way for a new subdivision. The moment is seared into Stiles' memory like a nightmare, and he uses it as motivation for his life that follows. Action and reaction -- illustrated in a series of vivid flashbacks, often illustrated by Stiles' own super-8 archival footage, audio recordings, VHS video diaries, photos, and personal audio recordings.

Stiles' early wanderings in southern Utah are beautifully illustrated by never-before seen color footage from the 1950s, shot by an accomplished hobbyist cinematographer. Additionally, the Old West comes alive through the stories and photographs of his departed friend, Herb Ringer, who lived for fifty years in an old trailer pulled behind his car. "While a tourist might take a picture of Grand Arch," says Stiles, "Herb would take a photo of the tourist taking the photo of Grand Arch. He was a true archivist of the changing West." Each issue of "The Zephyr" now features "Herb Ringer's American West." "Readers love learning about the history of this place," says Stiles. "What it was and what it looked like. And they can compare it to what it's become."

Brave New West is a story about changing landscapes -- both literal and figurative -- in the course of the life of Jim Stiles. The film relies heavily on the visuals in "The Zephyr" -- its rich and humorous illustrations and headlines, photographs from Herb Ringer, and amusing cartoons -- to tell their own story. The contrast between Old West and New West, as displayed in imagery and sound, will compel viewers to examine their own relationship with landscape and culture in an entertaining, quirky, humorous, and visually-stunning way.

Production Credits:

Producers

Doug Hawes-Davis

Drury Gunn Carr

Directors

Doug Hawes-Davis

Drury Gunn Carr

Editors

Drury Gunn Carr

Doug Hawes-Davis

Original Score

Ned Mudd

Additional Music

Aaron Parrett

Ivan Rosenberg

Camera & Sound

Drury Gunn Carr

Doug Hawes-Davis

Additional Camera

Henry Clark

Jim Stiles

Production Assistance

Valerie Krex

Directors Bio -

Drury Gunn Carr and Doug Hawes-Davis co-founded High Plains Films in 1992. Since then, the “do it all yourself” filmmakers have collaborated on more than a twenty documentaries. Their films have been screened around the world and won more than 40 awards. This spring, the filmmaking team was the first recipient of the True West Visionary Award, a career achievement award at the True/False West Film Festival. BRAVE NEW WEST is their fifth feature-length project, following VARMINTS (1998), KILLING COYOTE (2000), THIS IS NOWHERE (2002) and LIBBY, MONTANA (2004). Challenging in both form and content, their work is intended to provide insight into the relationship between human society and the natural world.

Director Filmography -

Caught in the Headlights, 53 minutes, 2006
Nigh Elements, 3 minutes, 2006
The Raven, 1 minute, 2006
Powder River Country, 34 minutes, 2005
Libby, Montana, 124 minutes, 2004
American Values, American Wilderness, 57 minutes, 2004
This is Nowhere, 87 minutes, 2002
The Naturalist, 32 minutes, 2001
El Caballo, 53 minutes, 2001
Wildland, 35 minutes, 2000
Killing Coyote, 83 minutes, 2000
End of the Road, 17 minutes, 2000
Wind River, 34 minutes, 1999
This Land is Your Land, 18 minutes, 1999
Varmints, 91 minutes, 1998
Mining Seven-Up Pete, 32 minutes, 1996
The Paper Colony, 27 minutes, 1996
Southbound, 48 minutes, 1995
Green Rolling Hills, 29 minutes, 1995
The Element of Doom, 32 minutes, 1992

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