

A Cinema Guild Release

MARWENCOL

A film by JEFF MALMBERG

83 minutes / 1:1.77 (hard matte) / Stereo / In English / Not Rated
Stills available at: www.cinemaguild.com/downloads

Opens October 8 in New York at the IFC Center and November 12 in LA at the Nuart.
More dates at www.marwencol.com/film

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“Spoiler” Note

One of the “surprise” subplots in Marwencol focuses on a sensitive aspect of Mark Hogancamp’s personal life.

The filmmakers respectfully request that any reviews or mentions of the film refrain from mentioning any details about this subplot. Revealing it is more than just a spoiler – it risks turning off audiences who are inclined to make snap judgments and who might benefit from seeing the film.

Hinting that the film contains a surprise or that Mark Hogancamp has a secret is absolutely fine.

(If you haven’t seen the film or are unclear about the “surprise,” please contact us.)

Synopsis

On April 8, 2000, Mark Hogancamp was attacked outside of a bar in Kingston, NY, by five men who beat him literally to death. Revived by paramedics, Mark had suffered brain damage and physical injuries so severe even his own mother didn't recognize him. After nine days in a coma and 40 days in the hospital, Mark was discharged with little memory of his previous life.

Unable to afford therapy, Mark decided to create his own. In his backyard, he built Marwencol, a 1/6th scale World War II-era town that he populated with dolls representing his friends, family and even his attackers. He used the small dolls and props to redevelop his hand-eye coordination, while he dealt with the psychic wounds from his attack through the town's many battles and dramas.

After a few years, Mark started documenting his miniature dramas with his camera. Through Mark's lens, these were no longer dolls – they were living, breathing characters in an epic WWII story full of violence, jealousy, longing and revenge. And he (or rather his alter ego, Captain Hogancamp) was the hero.

When Mark's stunningly realistic photos are discovered and published in an art magazine, his homemade therapy suddenly becomes "art," forcing Mark to make a choice between the safety of his fictional town and the real world he's avoided since his attack.

Shot over the course of four years, Jeff Malmberg's documentary intertwines the dual realities of Mark Hogancamp to tell the whole story of Marwencol – a surprising tale of love, secrets, pain, and adventure.

Director's Statement

When I first read about Marwencol in Esopus Magazine, I originally thought it would make a great short film. There was something really interesting going on in the photos that made me want to learn more. So I got in touch with Tod Lippy (editor of Esopus). He was incredibly protective of Mark, but he eventually put us in touch and I flew out to meet Mark.

At first glance, Mark could easily be judged as hermetic and creepy - he's a grown man who spends his days playing with dolls. I realized pretty quickly that although this could make a compelling short (as "This American Life" later proved), it would miss something important.

That was four years ago.

Since then, I've realized that my goal with the film is to turn that immediate snap judgment about Mark on its ear. I want to blur that clear line of rational thought and judgment within the audience ("he's creepy," "he's bizarre") by making the audience an active participant in Mark's recovery and journey. Who's to say that Mark's constructed reality is any less valid than most people's "real world?" In Marwencol, they may find more love, pain, morality and feeling than in their actual lives.

Mark is a living lesson in not judging people so quickly, and his story touches on issues that a lot of people deal with today in silence... alternative lifestyles, healthcare problems, post-traumatic stress.

With respect to his photographs, I tried to touch on the nature of art, and how some of the best art comes from conflict. It has an honesty that art from pure cleverness just doesn't. And that makes it beautiful, but at the same time, it makes it very private. A very private experience that all of us want to share in.

And finally, I wanted to get people thinking about the subjective nature of reality. Mark has two realities – Marwencol and the real world. Most of us would like him to live and succeed in the real world. I'm occasionally still guilty of hoping that Mark will "wake up" and realize what a huge opportunity his artwork is. But Mark loves his life in Marwencol and doesn't want to be an "artist." Some of us might see that as tragic, but is it? I think that central question will define whether a viewer sees the film as the tragic tale of a broken man or the uplifting resurrection of a gifted artist.

Crew Biographies

Jeff Malmberg, Director/Producer/Editor

"Marwencol" represents Jeff Malmberg's directorial debut. The film premiered at the SXSW Film Festival where it won the Grand Jury Award for Best Documentary. It has gone on to win Grand Jury awards at the Cleveland and Seattle International Film Festivals, Audience Top 10 awards at Hot Docs and Seattle, and a Special Jury prize at IFF Boston.

As director, Jeff was honored with the HBO Documentary Films Emerging Artist Award at Hot Docs, as well as the Cinematic Vision Award from Silverdocs. "Marwencol" is being released theatrically in the fall of 2010 by The Cinema Guild (US) and KINOSMITH (Canada), and will appear on the PBS series "Independent Lens" in the spring of 2011.

In 2006, Jeff produced and edited "Red White Black & Blue," a documentary that uncovers the Battle of Attu, the only land-based invasion of the United States since the War of 1812. "Red White Black & Blue" premiered at the Locarno Film Festival and was picked up for broadcast and home video distribution by PBS in 2007. Malmberg also produced and edited the Fox Searchlab short film "Broadcast 23," which premiered at the Sundance Film Festival in 2005.

As a film and television editor, Malmberg's credits include the critically acclaimed BET documentary series "American Gangster," TV One's "Unsung," A&E's "Biography," ESPN's "SportsCentury," and numerous shows for the History Channel. In the world of commercial editing, he has cut over 100 spots for directors such as George Lucas, Errol Morris, TRAKTOR and Harald Zwart, and brands such as Miller High Life, Nokia, Toyota, Polaroid, and "Star Wars." Jeff Malmberg is a graduate of USC's School of Cinematic Arts.

Tom Putnam, Producer

Tom Putnam's previous films have played over 300 film festivals. They include the documentary feature "Red White Black & Blue" for PBS/ITVS, which was the only American film chosen to be part of Critic's Week at the 2006 Locarno Film Festival. His short film "Broadcast 23" premiered at the 2005 Sundance Film Festival, and he also wrote, produced and directed the popular short film "Tom Hits His Head," one of the most widely seen short films of all time and the winner of 15 major awards, including the Spirit of Slamdance at the Slamdance Film Festival and the Grand Jury Prize at Aspen Shortsfest.

Matt Radecki, Producer

Matt Radecki co-directed and edited "TV Junkie," which won a Special Jury Award at the 2006 Sundance film festival and aired on HBO. He also served as producer and co-cinematographer on the PBS documentary "Red White Black & Blue." More recently,

Radecki edited "Who's Back," shot by DA Pennebaker, which appeared on the definitive Who DVD collection "Amazing Journey." Since graduating from USC's School of Cinematic Arts, Radecki has produced several narrative films including "Chasing 3000," "Zerophilia" and James Elroy's "Brown's Requiem," and is the co-founder of Different By Design, a Los Angeles-based production and post-production company.

Chris Shellen, Producer

"Marwencol" is Chris Shellen's first produced feature. Chris began her career as a Creative Executive at the Paramount Pictures-based Cort Madden Company, where she developed projects such as the Emmy-winning HBO movie "Something the Lord Made." In 1999, she moved into interactive entertainment and marketing, where she has designed and produced award-winning campaigns and content for every major film studio, as well as brands such as ABC, Barbie, Coca-Cola, GE, Oprah's Harpo, Henson and Target. Chris is a graduate of USC's School of Cinematic Arts. She is currently working on a book about Mark Hogancamp and Marwencol.

Kevin Walsh, Producer

Kevin Walsh has written for Warner Bros., National Lampoon, Boom Studios and others in media ranging from feature films to comic books. With Evil Genius Entertainment, he has written and produced numerous comedy shorts, including the 2008 George Lucas Award winner "Padmé." He has also worked as a consultant for Paramount Vantage, Castle Rock Pictures, Mandalay Pictures, and primarily DreamWorks, where he helped to develop several projects, including "Transformers," "The Lovely Bones," "Galaxy Quest," and "The Road to Perdition." Kevin is a graduate of the USC School of Cinematic Arts and "Marwencol" is his first produced feature.

Ash Black Buffalo, Original Music

Ash Black Buffalo is the musical project of Jay Clarke. A founding member of Portland-based bands the Standard and Dolorean, Jay has played with Grails, Loch Lomond, Eric Bachmann, Holy Sons, All Smiles, and many others. Together with Jeff Stuart Saltzman, Jay composed the award-winning score for the PBS documentary "Red White Black & Blue."

Credits

DIRECTED, PRODUCED, AND EDITED BY
Jeff Malmberg

PRODUCED BY
Tom Putnam

PRODUCED BY
Matt Radecki

PRODUCED BY
Chris Shellen

PRODUCED BY
Kevin Walsh

AN
Open Face
PRODUCTION

IN ASSOCIATION WITH
Different by Design

ORIGINAL MUSIC
Ash Black Buffalo

CAMERA
Jeff Malmberg
Tom Putnam
Matt Radecki
Kevin Walsh

SOUND DESIGN
Pete Kneser
VERY SPECIAL THANKS
Tod Lippy

SUPER 8 TRANSFERS
Spectra Film & Video

EQUIPMENT LOANS
Robert Williams
Lesley Langs

ADDITIONAL PHOTOGRAPHS
David Naugle

COLOR CORRECTION
Brian Hutchings

SOUND MIX

Pete Kneser

CUT WATCHERS

Kaz Brecher

Jay Clarke

Amy Himsel

Edwina Lantigua

Tod Lippy

Ann Malmberg

David Malmberg

Chris Mortensen

Kate O'Brien-Clarke

Dan O'Connor

Lori Putnam

Mark Rowland

Teri Shellen

Naomi Spiro

INTERVIEWS

Mark Hogancamp

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Mark Wikane

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Colleen Vargo

Ruthie Hotaling

David Naugle

Tod Lippy

SPECIAL THANKS

Special Thanks

JEFF BLAUVELT

DAVID COURIER

JOEL HELLER

JOAN LAMB

TOD LIPPY

DAVID AND ANN MALMBERG

NORA NOONAN

JANET PIERSON

A.J. SCHNACK

VILLAGE VOICE

WHITE COLUMNS GALLERY