


WORLD PREMIERE
**INTERNATIONAL
FILM FESTIVAL
ROTTERDAM**
2018


SELECTED FOR
SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL
2018


BIFAN


BEST MUSIC
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ARIZONA
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2019


MIDDLE
EAST NOW
Firenze-2018


Official Selection
WARSAW FILM FESTIVAL

ROCKABULL

YOUTH FREEDOM LIFE AFGHANISTAN





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FILM FACTS

TITLE: ROCKABUL

YEAR OF PRODUCTION: 2018

PRODUCTION COMPANY: RocKabul Pty Ltd
(in association with Argus, No Thing Productions, TigerNest Films and UpNorth)

INTERNATIONAL SALES: Monoduo Films

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LENGTH: 90 minutes

FORMAT: Feature documentary

COUNTRY: Australia

LANGUAGE: English, Dari, Pashtun and French with English subtitles
(other language subtitles available on request)

WEBSITE: www.rockabul.com

FACEBOOK: www.facebook.com/rockabulthefilm

INSTAGRAM: #rockabul

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CONTACTS:

Director / Producer

Travis Beard

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Producer

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SYNOPSSES

TAGLINE:

Youth Freedom Life Afghanistan

LOGLINE:

Inside a decimated nation witness the birth, rise and implosion of Afghan rock music.

ONE LINE SYNOPSIS:

Rockabul follows Afghanistan's first metal band District Unknown. The film features never before seen footage of underground expat party scene, at odds with an extremely conservative society. The band put themselves in the firing line to challenge conflict with culture.

SHORT SYNOPSIS:

Australian photojournalist Travis Beard's debut film documents Afghanistan's first metal band District Unknown and part of Afghan life that is rarely shown in Western media. The film features never before seen footage of the underground expat party scene, at odds with an extremely conservative society. The audience will witness the birth, rise and fall of this counter culture movement and see a raw first hand account of what the West's development funds were used for. The band put themselves and their followers in the firing line. They became targets because their music connected with Afghan youth, the expat community living in Afghanistan and international audiences. We watch as the five unassuming young men deal with identity and freedom in a place where both can get you killed.

LONG SYNOPSIS:

Rockabul chronicles a unique and brave story by Australian journalist / filmmaker Travis Beard about Afghan culture that is rarely represented in Western Media. Rockabul digs deeper than the news headlines about conflict in Afghanistan to look into the complex terrain of daily life. It details the clash between progressive and conservative or traditional culture, the difficulties of daily life in a war torn country and the risks behind creating a personal identity. It looks at the forces behind generational change. It is through music that Afghan youth find positivity, meaning and hope in a devastated nation. It follows the birth, rise and fall of Afghan Heavy Metal Music on the front-line of one of America's longest wars.

In 2008 Obama announced that the US was going to provide additional troops to support the war effort against the Taliban. During this time, Australian filmmaker Travis Beard was working as a journalist in the region and discovered a burgeoning underground expat music scene hidden away from the more conservative and traditional culture of Afghanistan. A musician himself and discontent with journalism, Travis decided he would turn his efforts to assist a group of local Afghans who would become the one metal band in Afghanistan, District Unknown. Qasem, Pedram, Qais, Lemar and eventually Yousef are members of DU and are full of optimism and teenage hubris much like any other ambitious group of young men from the West. The difference is, their nation is one at war and the difficulties that they face come with extra cost and risk.

The journey begins with the first shaky shots of the band discovering rock music with guidance from Travis. Rehearsals are a little different to those the bands in the West may experience as the power cuts out mid recording session and bombs go off around them. As their rock personas grow and their fan base moves from the hedonistic expat party scene to hordes of music-starved

SYNOPSSES *continued*

young Afghans, the band's confidence in their rebellious message comes into question. Gaining notoriety with an article in Rolling Stone magazine and interviews across other prestigious media platforms means that they become a target for the Taliban. They begin to wear masks in an attempt to hide their identity on stage but the attention starts to spook them as they realise that their lives are at risk. Lemar, the front man of the band seeks refugee status in Turkey with his soon to be wife. With help from their mentor Travis, the band regroup and finds another front man Yousef, who gives the band a much needed boost of fresh blood after the loss of their original vocalist.

It is with the new front man Yousef that we see District Unknown reach international status through performances at India's SAARC Festival. Elated, the boys feel that this band is really building into something bigger than their wildest dreams. We see, that Afghanistan is having a musical renaissance of sorts as numerous new bands start to sprout up. We see the positive effect this has on the entire community of Afghanistan, particularly the female community.

Once back in Afghanistan the band leaves the capital's safety bubble, (fondly known as the 'Kabubble') and to the wild eastern city of Mazar-e-Sharif. Travis organises their first ever concert 'beyond the wire' in a truck so that it is mobile enough to avoid attacks. The experiment is met with a mixture of reactions from the locals, police and religious authorities. Yousef is arrested and the band chooses to go underground, as their country's security declines to unprecedented levels.

Threats against the band increase, their flamboyant performances on stage are rapidly replaced with somber round-table discussions about their future and their safety. Meanwhile, Travis watches as his dream of using music as a language for building a bridge between the West and Afghanistan crumbles around him. The shaky ground of Afghanistan slowly but sure opens up to

reveal a vertiginous lack of foundation. The band members all seek ways to get out of Afghanistan as they feel that they are no longer safe. It is a year later that the festival performance venue the band played, the Institute France Afghanistan, is blown up by the Taliban for 'insulting Islamic values'.

The band members ultimately all end up being provided refugee status. Lemar is currently in Australia with his wife. After a twenty-month visa application Qais joined his wife in the US and is studying to be an actor. On his first visa application, Yousef was successfully accepted to study computer science in the UK. Pedram completed a Fullbright Scholarship in civil engineering, married an American girl and lives in the US. Qasem, who was the last member of the band to leave Afghanistan obtained a student visa on his third attempt to study interior design in the US.

The film features never before seen footage of Kabul and the underground party scene, at odds with an extremely conservative society. It shows how hope and optimism offered a genuine escape for some Afghans, at the peak of foreign intervention, but also reveals their frustrations, because in a country like Afghanistan, nothing is guaranteed. It is a unique insight for audiences into the real cost of war and demonstrates the similarities and the differences of young men across cultures and countries with hopes and dreams of rock stardom.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

From 2009, when I first met the band members of District Unknown, until the day they split up and subsequently left their home country Afghanistan, I was by their side. I was there not only to document the events, but also as a mentor and friend.

At the time, as a photojournalist, I was familiar with the fundamentals of visual story telling. I picked up a video-camera because I knew that I was privileged to observe a virgin microcosm, the naked evolution of a new species in the world we know – metal music under a strict state of Islam.

As the film evolved, so did the expectations of the characters that I followed. The band was cutting their teeth on a platform that had never been cut before and I believe that their reaction was extra visceral because of this. More and more they would ask me how the film was progressing. I felt the responsibility to them, to produce the best film possible, but at the same time, keep the story as close as possible to events as they unfolded.

As with most observational documentaries shot over a longer period of time, the narrative arc evolved through twists and turns as the events unfolded. It started simply, as a story about Rock 'n' Roll in an Islamic republic, as the band matured, the film gravitated towards the Western intervention that fueled the music scene they performed in and conservative culture that enveloped their every day existence.

What the film has become is a first-hand account of life in post-Taliban Afghanistan, through the eyes of five young Afghans. The audience joins these rockstar wannabees on a rollercoaster ride, but in addition to the highs and lows of band life, the audience is left asking: Was the risk worth it for them personally but also for their audience, why did they leave, where are they now, was it worth leaving and what did they leave behind?

For rock-enthusiasts, this film will highlight the torch bearing strength of music as a global language. For the politically inclined, this film reveals links between the civil-movement in a developing nation and super power foreign policies. For the conflict-junkie, they will experience the haphazardness reality outside the wire. For the inquisitive film-buff this film will open the eyes to a world beyond what they see in the daily news, breaking down misconceptions, barriers and prejudice. Most importantly for the Afghan audience they will be able to refer to this film, as it shows life as they knew it, in Kabul, Afghanistan.

— Travis Beard



BACKGROUND INFORMATION

A brief musical and cultural history of modern Afghanistan, by Travis Beard

Pre 2001, Afghanistan was governed by the Taliban, who chose to outlaw music, film, photography and any other visual representation of the human image. The only melodic references that were allowed were call to prayer and recital of the Koran.

If someone was caught with forbidden material, it would be destroyed and depending on the extent of the material, the perpetrator could be punished with lashings, or in some cases stoned to death. Pre-Taliban, in the times of the Mujahedin / civil war, music was not outlawed, but was frowned upon by the ruling religious leaders. President Rabbani's government brought in a series of socially repressive measures - musicians had to have a licence, which prohibited love songs, dance music and amplification.

Post 9/11, when the US 'liberated' Afghanistan, there was a time when music flowed as free as the bootleg and black market booze that flooded the country. The expat community frequently hosted gatherings at the cost of their tax payers dollar and behind compound walls the lucky few Afghans that could slip in under the radar were exposed to new music and alcohol that we in the West are all too familiar with. It was in this moment, to be exact 2007-2012, that the so called golden era existed and this nurtured a simmering music scene that was started by the expat community, but not before long was populated by Afghans both on and off the stage. The pinnacle of this moment in time was Sound Central Festival, when both Afghan and expat came together to dance and celebrate the only true global language - music.

By 2013 the hand over of security from the international forces to the Afghan police / military was well under way and with this came a sharp spike in attacks both within Kabul and the rest of the country. Ring of Steel check points were erected in an attempt to curb the violence, but the ever present corrupt government let the suicide bombers slip through again and again, creating more destabilization that effected all demographics. One byproduct of this mayhem was Diplomatic and NGO organisation tightened the movement and curfews of their staff. What this resulted in was a dramatic drop in audience attendance at music concerts and other art events. In order to stimulate an art scene you need an audience and it was here in 2014 that the music and art scene died. With the massive scale withdrawal of international troops, Afghan authorities could not stop the attacks, which for our community culminated in an attack at the home of our festival - Institute France Afghanistan. Today there is no music scene, there is no art scene and any Afghan who has found a way, has gotten out of the country.



BIOGRAPHIES



Travis Beard – DIRECTOR

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Travis Beard originally went to Afghanistan to volunteer as a journalist and to teach photojournalism. While there he got the 'Afghan Bug', stumbled upon a seed of a creative scene and decided to harvest it. In doing so, he provided hope to the Afghan youth through activities such as skateboarding, graffiti and alternative music. He co-founded the globally successful NGO Skateistan in 2007. In 2010, Travis co-founded Combat Communications, organising the Wallords graffiti workshop in Kabul, the first of its kind in the country. In the consecutive years of 2011, 2012 & 2013 Travis organised the country's first alternative arts festival: Sound Central. He saw potential in the band District Unknown (DU) and took the opportunity to manage Afghanistan's first heavy metal band. He also founded the film production company Argus Productions and his camera skills have been featured in films Frame by Frame and Motley's Law. He has shot for news agencies including – Al Jazeera, BBC, CNN, Fox, PBS, National Geographic, ABC, Canal Plus and The Economist. He has been filming and editing Rockabul for the past five years.



Brooke Silcox – PRODUCER

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Brooke Silcox recently won the Screenwest Emerging Producer Initiative of \$100,000 to go towards professional and production development. Brooke worked in the art and costume departments of the film industry for five years then became a Banking & Finance lawyer for international law firm Allens / Linklaters to return to film as a producer many years later. She founded the production company No Thing Productions and has produced a ten year in the making feature roc-doc called Meal Tickets (Best Australian Documentary, Melbourne Documentary Film Festival), a 6 x 5 minute series on artist Ian Strange (ABC, Screen Australia, Screenwest) a short documentary on political artist Abdul Abdullah (ABC, Screenwest), a short film called Judas Collar on the culling practice of camels in Australia (Screenwest) and recently associate produced the post production on the feature film Jirga directed by Benjamin Gilmour and produced by Felix Media. Brooke has three degrees: Fine Arts, Communication & Cultural Studies and Law which she studied at Curtin University (Western Australia), Oxford Brookes University (UK) and the University of Melbourne.

BIOGRAPHIES *continued*



Leslie Knott – EXECUTIVE PRODUCER (TigerNest Films)

Leslie is an award-winning filmmaker. Her first film, *Out of the Ashes*, won a 2011 Grierson Award. Her films have been broadcast on Netflix, BBC, ARTE, PBS, ITV, ABC, NBC, Channel 4 and CBC. In 2013 Leslie was nominated for an Academy Award for “Buzkashi Boys” which was co-produced by the Afghan Film Project, a non-profit NGO that Leslie co-founded in 2010 to help train Afghan filmmakers and foster Afghanistan’s film industry.



Clementine Malpas – EXECUTIVE PRODUCER (TigerNest Films)

Clementine is an award-winning documentary filmmaker with over 13 years’ experience in the developing world. Her most recent film about Nigerian girls trafficked to Italy for sex, won a SIMA award. Previous films have been nominated for awards from Royal Television Society and One World Media Awards. She was previously based in Kenya and Afghanistan. Her films have been broadcasted internationally on Channel 4, Al Jazeera, CNN, PBS and Netflix among others.



Christian Falch – CO-PRODUCER (Norway, Gammaglimt AS)

Christain founded the Norweigan Production Company Gammaglimt AS in 2003. He is currently prodcing documentaries for UpNorth Film. His past titles include *The Exorcist in the 21st Century* (2012), *Street of Dreams* (2013) and most recently the award-winning documentaries “Two Raging Grannies” (2014), *Blackhearts* (2016) and *Golden Dawn Girls* (2017).



Torstein Parelus – CO-PRODUCER (Norway)

Torstein is a producer and outreach producer for Gammaglimt and UpNorth Film. His most recent titles include *Golden Dawn Girls* (2017), *Blackhearts* (2016) and *The King And The Crook* (2015) as outreach producer, and *Braving The Waves* (Iran 2016) and *Boys Who Like Girls* (Finland 2018) as co-producer.



Bill Gould – EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

American musician and producer best known as the bassist of Faith No More. He is the founder of Koolarrow Records.



Jason Beard – COMPOSER

Jason Beard is a music producer who has composed soundtracks for films including *Juliana’s Story* (2011) which won an award for Best Short Film Soundtrack (LA Movie Awards), *Kabul at Work* (2012), *Melbourne Victory Football Team Anthem* (2012), *Michael Klim promotion* (2013), *Mischa Merz “The Sweetest Thing” (Boxer’s Memoir)* and the *Tarwin Valley Project* (2013).



Bridget Callow-Wright – PRODUCER (Midwinter Films)

Bridget is an award winning producer, her most recent film; *The Butterfly Tree* had its international premiere at 2017 Toronto International Film Festival and has since sold theatrically across the world including AU/NZ, US, UK, China and Russia. It won Best Picture and Best Actor at CIAFF, and was nominated for 3 AACTA Awards, 1 FCCA Award and 4 Oz Flix awards including Best Picture.

CREDITS

DIRECTED BY

Travis Beard

PRODUCED BY

Brooke Tia Silcox

Travis Beard

Bridget Callow-Wright

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS

Bill Gould

Travis Beard

Clementine Malpas

Leslie Knott

Ellie Kealey

EDITED BY

Travis Beard

Reginald Simek

Graig Goode

CO-PRODUCERS

Torstein Parelus

Christian Falch

STORY CONSULTANTS

Daniel Fermer

David Gill

Ellie Kealey

Pavel Lopez

CO-EDITORS

Travis Beard

Redzinald Simek

Craig Goode

ASSISTANT EDITORS

Simon Wright

Ed Noise

CAMERA OPERATORS

Travis Beard

Ellie Kealey

David Gill

Alex Footman

Jake Simkin

Asat Nurmatov

Rodrigo Diaz

Chris Rinke

Ruth Owen

Elissa Bogos

Mikhael Gualustov

COMPOSITION

Jason Beard aka. Major Delay

ARCHIVE PRODUCER

Lisa Savage

TRANSLATION

Zia Maliky

Naoual Moutai

Archie Gallet

POST PRODUCTION

The Post Lounge

POST PRODUCTION

SUPERVISOR

Ela Furdas

AUDIO POST PRODUCTION

Music & Effects

SOUND EDITOR &

RE-RECORDING MIXER

Doron Kipen

SOUND DESIGNER

Brendan Croxon



CREDITS *continued*

AUDIO POST PRODUCTION PRODUCER Dave Miller

SCREEN AUSTRALIA CEO Graeme Mason

INVESTMENT MANAGER Andrew Arbutnot

DOCUMENTARY COORDINATOR Jace Dent

CONTRACTS CO-ORDINATOR Pauline Foster

MARKETING Clio Ellis

LEGALS Beach Street Entertainment Law & Executive Production: Joan Peters Luci Silvestrin

Melanie Wilson
Kimberley Motley
Gavin Kealey

INSURANCE PSC McKenna Hampton Insurance Brokers Craig Shand

LINE PRODUCER - INDIA Misty Phukan

INTERVIEWS Ellie Kealey David Gill Archibald Gallet Zarlasht Sarmast Guilda Chahverdi Brian Neely Cliff Tender

MUSIC MENTORS Archibald Gallet Ruth Owen Andreas Steffanson

RESEARCHERS Samantha Steele Flora Begenal Bec Evans Sarah Caswell Blanca Blandon

TRAILER EDITOR Keiran Watson-Bonnice

SUBTITLES Misty Phukan Charmaine Murray

MUSIC

District Unknown

"2 Seconds After the Blast"
"Asleep with Eyes Open"
"Kill The Beast"
"Portraits"
"Struggle"
"My Nightmares"
"A Cancer by Design"
"Joy Versus Sorrow"
"My Dying Bride"
"Modern Nature"

From the album *"24 Hour Anatomy of a Lifetime"*.
All tracks written by District Unknown.
©© 2014 by Mobius Jack

Massa Cygnet

"Paranoid Building"
"Venus Moon"
"Espresso Maker"
"Lou's a Gambler"
"Synthetic Helicopter"
"Xross My Heart"
"Paranoid Building"
"Ambient Day"
"Kaluan Sunrise"
"The Recycler"

All tracks written by Jason Beard and Lou Woodward
Additional guitars by Travis Beard. ©© 2014

White City

"Honey Goliath"
"Silver Hyena"
"Pistol in the Hood"
"Breakbone Fever"
"Drive By Nandos"
"Belly Deep"
"PIVO"

All tracks from the album *"LandLocked"*, written by & ©© 2014 Ruth Owen, Andreas Steffansson & Travis Beard

Bill Gould & Jared Blum

All tracks from the album *"The Talking Book"*
©© 2011 Koolarrow Records

PPP

"Fly Filtered Whisky"
"We'd Rather Play What You Can't Play"
"You Don't Deserve Your Freedom"
"Language 6501"
"Genuine Owner Of The Blue Kit"
"Get Behind Me Satan, I'm About To Commit A Crime"

Written by Archibald Gallet, Andreas Steffansson, Travis Beard. ©© Archibald Gallet, Andreas Steffansson, Travis Beard

Archibald Gallet

"Anything But My Hook"

Written by Archibald Gallet
©© Archibald Gallet

Dubioza Kolektiv

"USA"
"Wake Up"
"Wild Wild East"

Written by Dubioza Kolektiv
© Lampshade Media
© 2006 Koolarrow Records

Nipple

"The Sketcher"

Written by & ©© 2015 Jason Beard, Craig Mason & Travis Beard

Flattbush

"Community Organizer"

From the album *"Seize the Time"*, written by Flattbush
©© 2006 Koolarrow Records

State of Negation

"District Unknown"

Written by & ©© State of Negation

Kyber Zoo

"Street Number Nothing"

Written by ©© Shane Cogan

Marilyn Manson

"Coma White"

Composed by Brian Warner, Jeordie White, Stephen Bier and Timothy Linton. © Dinger and Ollie Music, Songs of Golgotha, Blood Heavy Music, Violent Delight Music, DCLXVI Music, Emerald Forest Entertainment.
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MIDDLE
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RiFF
RIVER FILM FESTIVAL
OFFICIAL SELECTION 2018

INFERNO
METAL FESTIVAL NORWAY
2018

OFFICIAL SELECTION
Kosmorama
2018

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