



OFFICIAL SELECTION 2018

sundance
film festival

A FILM BY MICHAEL DWECK
THE LAST RACE

BLUNDERBUST PRODUCTIONS PRESENTS "THE LAST RACE" DIRECTED BY MICHAEL DWECK EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS GREGORY KERSHAW
EDITING BY CHARLOTTE MUNCH BENGTSEN SOUND DESIGNER PETER ALBRECHTSEN MUSIC BY ROGER GOULA SARDA PRODUCED BY MICHAEL DWECK GREGORY KERSHAW
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS MICHAEL L. DWECK PRODUCED BY CECILIA LUPI CO-EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS HOWARD SCHULTZ AND SHERI SCHULTZ
TheLastRaceTheFilm.com



THE LAST RACE

PRESS KIT

PROJECT DETAILS

Title: THE LAST RACE

Genre: feature documentary

Filming location: USA

Production location: USA

Date of completion: May, 2017

Running time: 75 minutes

Format: color

Screening format/screen ratio: 1:1.78 (16:9)

Language: in English with English subtitles

OFFICIAL WEB SITE

www.thelastracethefilm.com

IMDB PAGE

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt3261114>

FACEBOOK

<https://www.facebook.com/TheLastRaceFilm/>

TWITTER

<https://twitter.com/TheLastRacefilm>

CREDITS

Director: Michael Dweck

Cinematographer: Gregory Kershaw

Editor: Charlotte Munch Bengtsen

Sound Design: Peter Albrechtsen

Produced by: Michael Dweck & Gregory Kershaw

LOGLINE

THE LAST RACE is the portrait of a small-town stock car racetrack and the tribe of blue-collar drivers that call it home, struggling to hold onto an American racing tradition as the world around them is transformed by globalization and commercialization.

SHORT SYNOPSIS

THE LAST RACE is a cinematic portrait of a Long Island stock car race track as its 87 year-old owners struggle to maintain an American racing tradition in the face of a real estate development boom. The film merges image and sound in a unique narrative form to bring the audience into the world of grassroots racing culture and explores a story that subtly grapples with questions of blue collar American identity that have taken on a profound relevance in the current political era.

LONG SYNOPSIS

THE LAST RACE is a cinematic portrait of a Long Island stock car race track as its 87 year-old owners struggle to maintain an American racing tradition in the face of a real estate development boom. The film merges image and sound in a unique narrative form to bring the audience into the world of grassroots racing culture and explores a story that subtly grapples with questions of blue collar American identity that have taken on a profound relevance in the current political era.

Long Island was the birthplace of American stock car racing. At its peak, there were over forty racetracks on Long Island, but today, only one remains: Riverhead Raceway. This quarter-mile track somehow managed to slip through the cracks as progress transformed Long Island from a stretch of sand with sleepy main streets and mom and pop farm stands, to a maze of highways connecting shopping malls to buy-in-bulk shopping centers. When it was built in 1949, the racetrack sat on the edge of a small country road surrounded on every side by miles of farmland. Years later, the country road expanded into a highway and eventually corporate retail discovered that the steady flow of traffic from the rest of the island made it a prime location to set up shop. First came an outlet mall, and as the outlet mall grew, the usual suspects of big retail followed. The surrounding farmland was gobbled up by box stores plastered with corporate logos, and today the Riverhead Raceway is the only piece of land on the commercial strip of Old Country Road that hasn't been developed.

The land the track sits on is valued at well over ten million dollars, while the money that it generates in ticket sales on summer weekends is barely enough to keep the lights on. The fact that the Riverhead Raceway remains open defies the laws of capitalism, and the only thing standing in the way of the bulldozers are 87-year-old Barbara and Jim Cromarty. Barbara and Jim bought the track in 1977 and they continue to run it even as multi-million dollar offers roll in, tempting them toward a well-deserved retirement. Barbara and Jim fight to keep it open because they understand that Riverhead carries the burden of being the last bastion of stock car racing on Long Island, and when Riverhead goes, it's all over.

Unlike the box stores that surround it, the Riverhead Raceway wasn't designed in a corporate boardroom for maximum efficiency and maximized profit margins. It grew out of a place and a community that loved to go fast. It started with old wrecks racing around a dirt oval in an empty field. After spectators started turning up for the races, someone decided to lay down asphalt, then stands, and eventually the Cromartys made a business out of it by charging admission and selling hot dogs and tee shirts. But what they sell is more than the spectacle of racing and empty calories; it's membership to a tribe of blue-collar workers who work with their hands to build racing machines out of metal and grease. They live for speed, the chaos of the race, and the drama of the pits. They are fighters and adrenaline junkies, whose identity is inexorably linked to a slice of land where blue-collar glory triumphs over white-collar profit.

Beauty at Riverhead takes its most primitive and visceral form. Like visiting a remote jungle tribe, a trip to Riverhead reveals the creations of a community that has passed down building techniques through the generations and crafted their vision of the world with the tools and materials at their disposal. The cars are their weapons, sculptures, flags and family crests rolled into one. They are built from pieces and parts that the drivers salvage like treasure hunters in junk yards; relics of another era, a time when cars were constructed with nuts, bolts, and welding torches, not silicon and plastic. The dents on their paneling and the scars on their bodies are the records of their past. The announcer is the narrator who tells the story of their battles to the audience of the Coliseum. The cries of the engines are their music, and the race is their triumphant dance that erupts every weekend in a violent swirl of color, sound, and emotion.

Barbara and Jim are old; their health is failing. It's not clear how long they will be able to continue running the track, and it's even less clear what their plan for succession is. Developers are waiting at the gate with million-dollar offers and leasing agreements. If Barbara and Jim give in, the laws of capitalism will have triumphed, and the chaos of

Riverhead will give way to cinder block construction, an orderly parking lot, and a sterile interior.

The racers and their fans know this. They see their universe slipping away from them, swallowed up by the same globalized system of commerce and culture that is replacing indigenous life around the world. It's easy to let that happen. When the track finally goes, corporate retail will be there to take its place. The land occupied by the Riverhead Raceway will become indistinguishable from the myriad commercial strips that cover the American landscape. Saturdays will be spent pushing shopping carts through the aisles of neatly packaged products. It won't smell like gasoline and burnt tires. The roar of engines will be replaced by the barely perceptible hum of pleasant music. There will be no speed, no thrills, no fights, no victories, no crashes, and no glory. There will be calm.

But that calm is deadly.

THE LAST RACE is the story of a place and people who have found a reason to live and a glimpse into their last gasp of passion before the bulldozers move in.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

I was three when my parents moved from Brooklyn to Bellmore in 1960, and some of my earliest memories are of watching the Bombers race at Freeport Stadium. The images of Wink Herold or Jerry "Red" Klaus scraping off the walls in turns two and four left their own scratches and paint on my childhood, as did the snarling sounds of cars I could hear from my bedroom window.

I began photographing at the Riverhead Raceway in 2007 as a way to reconnect with this simpler past – both mine and Long Island's: the long Tuesday and Saturday nights at Freeport with my dad and brothers; the smell of burnt rubber and clutches; the heat radiating off the cars as they drove through concession areas blocked off by sawhorses on their way back to the pits; the sight – sometimes seen from a hole in the fence, when I'd go without my father – of railroad ties rammed loose and lodged like spears in wheel wells, protruding like lances as cars circled the tar track, sparks flying.

I was at Freeport on the last day of racing, Sept 24, 1983 (two days before my 26th birthday) and watched Peter "Buzzie" Eriksen become the last track champion. I watched the cars exit for the last time, driving on flat tires, dragging bumpers, or being towed – oil leaking and engines smoking. Sadly, it seemed the perfect metaphor for Long Island – even more so when I watched construction crews tear the track down to make way for a giant strip mall that opened, and closed soon after. Another heap for the junkyard, I suppose.

Riverhead Raceway is the last track on the Island. It's only a matter of time before the bulldozers move in and Riverhead goes the way of other tracks before it, replaced by a shopping mall, or some other piece of disposable architecture. That's what people want, and that's okay. But when it goes, something will be lost.

THE LAST RACE is a celebration of a tribe of working class heroes and the track that has become the last bastion for their way of life. It's an attempt to reclaim and capture the memories of my childhood so that the mysterious beauty that I once witnessed might still be known after Riverhead is gone. Moreover, this film is my creative effort to provide its viewers with a singular aesthetic experience-- to become active participants-- and witnesses-- to the spirit of Riverhead, and explore questions of blue collar American identity that have taken on a profound relevance in the current political era.

PRODUCTION NOTES

In the late fall of 2012, I was approached by Michael Dweck with the idea of making a film about stock car racing. Michael had been shooting still photography at the Riverhead Raceway on Long Island, not far from a shuttered track that he frequented as a child. Over the previous five years, Michael had spent the summer race season capturing the sculptural forms of the cars through large format photography and sculpture. Through his process as a fine artist and his summer residences at the track, he discovered images and a narrative that was beyond what still photography alone could capture. He came to me with the challenge of filming the unfolding story at the track in a way that would push the boundaries of conventional documentary storytelling, express the intensity of the racing experience, show the strange beauty of life at the track, and document the culture of blue-collar American racing in previously unseen ways. Through this challenge, we embarked on the journey of creating THE LAST RACE.

Through the fall and winter leading up to the summer race season, we began viewing a wide variety of films that would eventually serve as our inspiration and guide. Errol Morris's early work such as GATES OF HEAVEN and VERNON, FLORIDA provided inspiration for capturing candid interviews with idiosyncratic characters and the distinct personality of a region. Louis Malle and René Vautier's film, A HUMAN CONDITION, was screened for the way it captured a location that was simultaneously intimate and alienating. KOYAANISQATSI was a model for capturing movement and the symphonic merging of music and images. Classic racing films like GRAND PRIX, LE MANS, DAYS OF THUNDER, as well as contemporary NASCAR broadcasts were also viewed as a context for how auto racing has been mythologized in popular culture and provided insight into how that mythology was reflected in the culture of the racetrack.

In the months leading up to production, the urgency of telling the story around the track became more apparent. Long Island was the birthplace of stock car racing, and since its inception during the prohibition era, there had been over 40 different auto racing tracks covering the island. Every one of those tracks except the Riverhead Raceway had closed, and an explosion of development around the track seemed to signal that Riverhead was headed in the same direction. Forests surrounding the track were cleared overnight, and backhoes were breaking ground for big box stores. As we started talking to real estate developers in the area, we realized how much pressure was on the owners to sell. The value of the land far exceeded the earning potential of the race track, and its octogenarian owners, Barbara and Jim Cromarty, were facing health problems that made overseeing the operations of the track increasingly difficult.

Although Barbara and Jim assured us that they planned to keep the track open, we continually heard rumors from developers about the increasingly outrageous sums that were enticing Barbara and Jim into a well-deserved retirement.

At the start of the summer race season, we realized that this could be our last chance to film racing on Long Island before the bulldozers wiped it off the map forever. Over the course of a long summer race season, we spent every weekend filming, and through the process, we became participants in the track's culture. We were assigned a parking space in the pits where we set up our gear and managed our media. Our work soon became folded into the rhythms and rituals of the track. Being accepted into the family of the track came with all the complexity of being brought into any family relationship. Entering into their lives meant we got access to some of the racers' highest highs but also meant we were fair game as recipients for their angry explosions when they lost a race, or when we caught them on a bad day.

Our continual presence at the track eventually enabled us to get beyond the performative personas that many of the drivers put on at the start of our filming process. Furthermore, for our non-interview footage, we attempted to film in wide frames, or with telephoto lenses that allowed us to maintain distance between us and our subjects. This, combined with a continually rolling camera inured our subjects to the filmmaking process. Likewise, the constant presence of our cameras in the cars during the races enabled us to capture some of the most emotionally raw footage of the film, such as the explosive anger of a fight brewing after a race, the unabashed thrill of a driver winning the championship, and the intimate rituals of preparation before the start of a race. During the summer weekdays when the racetrack was closed, we followed the drivers through their daily lives. The mundane drudgery of their work was often a sharp contrast to the chaos and excitement we filmed at the racetrack. However, as we filmed with the drivers off the track, we came to discover how the unique character of their lives on Long Island reflected their passion for racing.

The editing of the film was completed in Copenhagen, with Charlotte Munch Bengtsen. She was chosen to edit the film because of her background in unconventionally structured narratives, such as her work with Joshua Oppenheimer on *THE ACT OF KILLING*, but also because we were looking for someone who could bring an outsider's perspective to the subject matter. For her, entering into the uniquely American race culture of the Riverhead Raceway was both exotic and mysterious. Her perspective brought a new analysis of the material that unearthed new images and ideas that may have been taken for granted through our cultural familiarity.

The process of structuring the story merged techniques of photography editing with film editing. Screenshot of every shot recorded during production were printed as still images and laid out for viewing. These images could then be pulled and ordered to create a visual narrative that supported the underlying story. This process led to the evolution of a narrative based on unexpected visual connections and contrasts. Unlike many conventional documentaries, the images are not merely used as a visual facade to cover a structure built on information and narrative conveyed through audio; rather, images occupy a deliberate position and work as building blocks of the story itself.

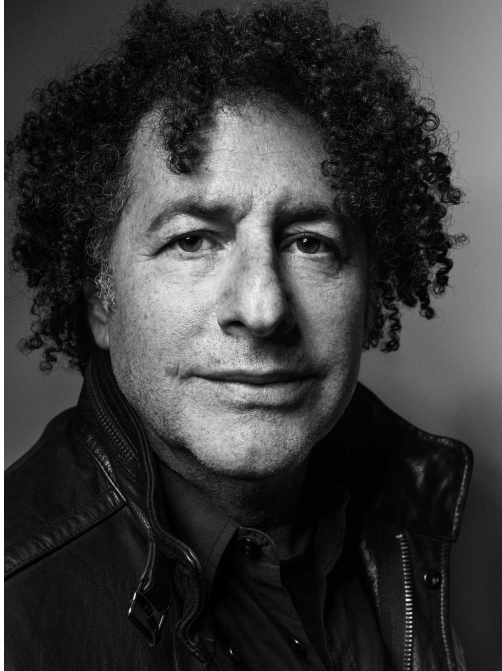
From the beginning of the filming process, we knew we wanted to capture the intensity of the car racing in a way that people had not seen or experienced before. To do this, we employed an array of small lightweight and inexpensive cameras that allowed us to frame shots in extremely vulnerable positions and explore new perspectives to capture the race. We experimented with a variety of mounting fixtures, including asking the drivers to weld mounts onto their cars. Eventually, we found that commercially available lightweight grip gear gave us the most options for camera placement and could provide robust, sturdy mounting points even in our extreme, high-impact filming conditions. Remarkably, not one camera was lost or even damaged throughout the entire filming process. For every race, cameras were placed around the track and on a variety of angles on the cars. One car could have as many as five different cameras capturing different perspectives in a single race. Through reviewing nearly a hundred hours of footage captured during the races we discovered unexpected moments of beauty and sometimes disaster.

The process of recording audio was equally expansive and experimental. During the production process, we built an audio library of the different sounds on the track. Certain sounds, such as the voice of the track announcer, were captured from numerous different recording positions to reflect the many perspectives that the audio could be perceived from locations in and around the track. Racing sounds and a variety of different car sounds were also recorded from various perspectives to provide the sound designer with a broad palette of sounds to pull from for the racing sequences. The intention was for every car and every race sequence in the film to have a unique personality expressed through the audio.

The audio we collected during production was used in the sound edit to achieve an impressionistic rendering of the subjective feeling of the race track, rather than a literal one. This allowed us to take the chains off of structure and format to create a blur of music and crowds, and transition the sound design from scene to scene in a dreamlike way, with sonic elements slipping and sliding in layers. We used perspective shifts,

audio pre-laps, extended transitions, abstract sound design, and both diegetic and non-diegetic sound, and non-diegetic music, often all in the same sequences, throughout the film.

BIOGRAPHIES



Michael Dweck (Director)

Michael Dweck is an American contemporary visual artist and award-winning filmmaker. Best recognized for his evocative narrative photography, Dweck artistically investigates the on-going struggles between identity and adaptation found within endangered societal enclaves. Dweck's works have been featured in solo and group exhibitions at museums and galleries worldwide including the Musée du Louvre in Paris and the Annenberg Space for Photography in Los Angeles, and are part of prestigious international art collections, including the archive of the Department of Film at The Museum of Modern Art in New York, where two of his long-form television pieces reside.

In his first feature-length film, *The Last Race* (2018), Dweck extends his exploratory repertoire by combining observational documentary, stylized imagery, and a symphonic merging of motion and sound. Experimenting with both form and subject matter, Dweck highlights the mysterious beauty and exuberant passion shared by the last custodians of a disappearing tradition. Aside from creating an artistic appraisal of class and American identity, Dweck's film allegorizes the broader, global epidemic wherein the sense of community and ritualistic traditions face extinction at the hands of mass conglomerate takeover.

Dweck's other notable series of works include: *The End: Montauk, N.Y.*, 2004, a paradisiacal photographic portrait of the famed fishing community and the beautiful denizens who comprise its surfing subculture; *Mermaids*, 2009, an impressionistic underwater dreamscape populated by storied "river children" in rural Florida; and *Habana Libre*, 2010, a prophetic narrative that contrasts the privileged lifestyles of Cuba's creative class with the crumbling backdrop of a "classless" society. With this latter body of work, exhibited at the Fotoceca Museum in Cuba, Dweck became the first living American artist to have a solo museum exhibition in the country. Dweck's latest project, *Blunderbust*, explores the multifarious angles of a small-stakes stock car racetrack through an ambitious mélange of sculpture, installation, abstract painting, photography, video art, and film.

Dweck holds a degree in Fine Art from the Pratt Institute in New York. During his earlier career as a highly regarded creative director, Dweck received over forty international

awards, including the coveted Gold Lion at the Cannes International Advertising Festival. Michael Dweck currently lives in New York City.



Greg Kershaw (Cinematographer)

Gregory Kershaw has worked on narrative and documentary film productions as a producer, cinematographer, and director. Most recently, he was a senior producer at Fusion television where he made environmental documentaries. His work explored the impact of climate change on indigenous populations throughout Latin America in a series of United Nations Foundation funded videos, as well as long form documentaries on the global species extinction crisis featuring environmental luminaries such as Jane Goodall and Sylvia Earle. Gregory is a graduate of Columbia University's MFA film program.



Charlotte Munch Bengtsen (Editor)

Coming from a background as a dancer and photographer Charlotte edited her first notable documentary AMERICAN LOSERS by Ada B. Søby in 2006. Charlotte soon realized she could bring all her tools together in this craft and decided to pursue solely the editing path. In 2009 she graduated from the National Film and Television School in England. Since then she has edited a number of award winning documentaries, including THE ACT OF KILLING (dir. Joshua Oppenheimer, 2012), TANKOGRAD (dir. Boris B. Bertram, 2010), COMPLAINTS CHOIR (dir. Ada B. Søby, 2009), THE BASTARD SINGS THE SWEETEST SONG (dir. Christy Garland, 2012), PETEY & GINGER (dir. Ada B. Søby, 2012), A WHITE MAN STORY & QUEEN OF THE GODS (dir. Linus Mørck, 2014 & 2015), next to numerous tv-series produced by DR (Danish National TV). Currently Charlotte is working on the documentary WAR

PHOTOGRAPHER (dir. Boris B. Bertram, 2016/17) and THE LAST RACE (dir. Michael Dweck, 2016/17).



Peter Albrechtsen (Sound Designer)

Peter Albrechtsen is a sound designer and music supervisor based in Copenhagen, Denmark. He graduated from The Danish Film School in 2001 and has since then worked on more than a 100 productions and done both feature films and documentaries, both domestically and internationally.

Among Peter Albrechtsen's recent credits are the multi award-winning *The QUEEN OF VERSAILLES* and festival favorites *PUTIN'S KISS*, *CANNED DREAMS* and *THE BASTARD SINGS THE SWEETEST SONG*. At CPH:DOX 2012,

Peter was awarded the 'Sonic Dox Award' for the sound design of *WHITE BLACK BOY*. At the same time, Peter has been working on a long list of fiction films, one of the latest being last year's Sundance winner *TEDDY BEAR* and previous work include sound effects editing on both *THE GIRL WITH THE DRAGON TATTOO* (2009) and Lars von Trier's *ANTICHRIST* (2009). Peter is a member of the US association of sound designers, MPSE.

Along with his work as sound designer and sound re-recording mixer, Peter Albrechtsen has worked as a music supervisor and among Peter's latest work in this regard are the festival favorites *I'M FICTION* and *DANCE FOR ME* and the feature film *YOU & ME FOREVER*, which earned him a Danish Academy Award Nomination for Best Sound Design. He has collaborated closely with globally acclaimed musicians such as Antony and the Johnsons, Jóhann Jóhannsson and Efterklang.

Peter has also written about music and movies for different Danish and international magazines and has been moderating seminars and teaching at The Danish Film School and the international Animation Workshop in Viborg.



Roger Goula (Music Composer)

Roger Goula is a London based composer and multi-instrumentalist. Coming from a contemporary classical background, Goula's work has developed into an experimental blend of classical chamber and orchestral music with electronics.

Inspired by renaissance and baroque music, as well as by minimalism, and looking at the language of electronic music, his compositions perform complexity through repetition of minimal elements and emotional transporting textures. Most recently his been commissioned by the acclaimed string quartet Experimental Funktion a 30min piece to be performed along side Steve Reich 'Different Trains'

and premiered at the CCCB of Barcelona in December 2013 as a closure concert of the BCNmp7 Music Festival.

Composing also across platforms including film and tv, dance, theatre and art installation, Roger has worked for a number of award winning films such as NEXT GOAL WINS, SHOCK HEAD SOUL, BRAND NEW-U and the ITV series THE FRANKENSTEIN CHRONICLES. At the moment he is scoring the latest film by Charlie Bellville featuring Tom Hardy as lead actor. This year his solo debut album Overview Effect will released by the new label Cognitive Shift in collaboration with One Little Indian, and includes collaborations with notable performers such as Peter Gregson, Thomas Gould, Lucy Railton, Stephen Upshaw and Claudio Girard.

Roger Goula studied classical guitar in Barcelona and graduated in music composition from the Goldsmiths College and in film music from National Film and Television School. He also studied composition with Michael Finnissy.

PRESS & REVIEWS

Kenneth Turan – LOS ANGELES TIMES

<http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/movies/la-et-mn-sundance-preview-20180117-story.html>

“The Last Race.’ beautiful and immersive examination of the dying world of stock car racing on Long Island, evocative enough to be a kind of stock car symphony all by itself.”

INDIEWIRE

<http://www.indiewire.com/2018/01/sundance-2018-best-film-critics-survey-1201922640/2/>

One of top-5 best documentaries at Sundance

Guy Lodge – VARIETY

<http://variety.com/2018/film/reviews/the-last-race-review-1202676161/>

“This graceful, ruminative fragment of scrap-metal Americana marks a distinguished foray into feature filmmaking for renowned narrative photographer Dweck.”

“Stoically composed, strangely mesmerizing film”

Sean P. Means – THE SALT LAKE TRIBUNE

<https://www.sltrib.com/artsliving/movies/2018/01/25/10-titles-earning-rave-reviews-as-the-sundance-film-festival-reaches-its-final-weekend/>

“Photographer Michael Dweck captures a vanishing piece of Americana.”

Joshua Rothkopf – TIME OUT NEW YORK

<https://twitter.com/joshrothkopf/status/955631630634205184>

“THE LAST RACE: Elegiac, stunningly shot ode to the dying weekend pastime of stockcar driving on Long Island. Strong GATES OF HEAVEN vibe; lots of character on and off the track. #Sundance”

Anthony Kaufman - INDIEWIRE

<http://www.indiewire.com/2018/01/documentaries-sundance-2018-theatrical-release-1201922387/>

“An operatic Gates of Heaven-inspired look at stock-car racing and its fading Long Island community.”



THE LAST RACE CONTACT INFO

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