

A STUDIO HOLDER RELEASE

OLD SUFFOLK BOY

PRESS KIT & NOTES

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SYNOPSIS



Veteran Illustrator and Bluegrass Musician John Holder returns to the village he grew up, Badwell Ash in Mid-Suffolk, England; reconnecting with family and friends from the past and encountering stories of growing up and growing old in Suffolk.

Having left the village to pursue a formal education at Cambridge School of Art at just 16, and begin a life and career that would see him travel all over the world, Old Suffolk Boy provides an insight into an area of Eastern England, as well as a man who is returning to the area - entrenched with pickup trucks, a dash of far-right politics and a deep-rooted love of country music, that will surely resonate with audiences.

Suffolk is often referred to as 'the English Tennessee' and one can draw numerous parallels between the former and the deep southern U.S state; even going as far as comparing the two distinctive dialects and ideologies being one and the same.

FILMMAKER'S NOTE



OLD SUFFOLK BOY was conceived at a difficult time in my personal life, for numerous reasons. It was also conceived kind of by chance, as I had been working on the shorter version - entitled *Old Suffolk Boys* - which, in retrospect, now serves as a sort-of precursor to the film you're about to watch. *Old Suffolk Boys* was one of my final major projects as a student at film school and ended up being the highest marked project I've contributed to on the course. I was deeply connected to this project right from the start; with sudden motivation coming in heaps to support my initial interests in pursuing the film. This was further supported by my boundless affection towards my grandfather for which I hope this documentary ultimately shows.

Continued OVERLEAF

FILMMAKER'S NOTE

Going back to those first two sentences, the idea of evolving the short documentary that I had to do (with great pleasure, obviously) for my course into a feature-length passion project occurred without much thought at the time, I must admit. The urge and desire to create a more detailed, layered and fully-bodied film that would characterize an entire life, and a life well-lived, was something I knew I would not be able to achieve in anything shorter than a feature-film.

To minimise confusion, the short documentary will henceforth be referred to as 'the shorter one' as one could get easily confused by misreading the inclusion or exclusion of the 's' in said projects' title. Having said that, I don't think I could have chosen a different title. Old Suffolk Boy for me, and other locals and familiars to John I've consulted, strikes the perfect tone. The fact of the matter is that this title doesn't bind itself to one person - anyone from Suffolk could indeed be an 'Old Suffolk Boy'. There are many. There are also many 'oldies' who are fond of their childhood, which supports the generally accepted biological notions that as one gets older, their sense of nostalgia and longing for their youth or early youth becomes more prevalent or heightened. I'm fascinated by this. The juxtaposition of these two words: 'Old' and 'Boy' create the symbiosis I was looking for. Whilst it describes the subject as literally being 'old', it also objectively defines the subject as a 'boy'. This perfectly describes John, and I don't think he has strayed too far from his roots, even after existing for 78 years.

The actual process of shooting documentary compared with fiction is quite different. In terms of the production (shooting) process, you must be ready to shoot at all times - capturing those moments you cannot ask for again as 'another take' like you can in fiction. Equally, you need to refrain yourself from capturing too much footage as you would not want to overwhelm yourself, and your editorial team, with mountains of media that might cloud your familiarity and subsequent willingness to do something with the film. Documentary unfortunately does not offer that luxury, except, it offers a different kind of luxury in the form of adrenaline and a sense that you're venturing into the unknown with what you're doing. This is how I felt whilst gathering hours upon hours of footage. Conversations and actions that one might otherwise consider mundane, now become exciting. There are potential uses for the final film in even the most fragmentary of moments.

John isn't your typical grandfather - he draws, restores, cycles, chops down trees, writes music, sings, plays music, build things, makes stuff... the list goes on. I'm sure I could list 78 things he's done. Probably with the help of his wife Gaye Lockwood who knows him better than anyone else. It is for all those atypical things that I think his story is worth telling.

FILMMAKER'S NOTE

A man wearing a red long-sleeved shirt and a dark beanie stands in front of a traditional building with a thatched roof. The building has several windows with white frames. The scene is dimly lit, suggesting dusk or dawn. The man is looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression.

Whilst I had every reason to create a film that would celebrate John's life and work, I also became increasingly aware of his own departure from the world. This was both a great source of motivation, frustration and upset - during shooting, but especially in post-production. Overcoming my own sense of frustration that whatever would culminate from the fruits of our labour wouldn't be nearly as perfect nor complete as I had hoped was in fact a blessing in disguise after all.

Knowing that John will still be here to (hopefully) appreciate the film I've created provides me with the greatest source of comfort. I guess there's perhaps elements of selfishness and self-preservation in these statements, however equally one would likely feel regretful if this were a project I'd have picked up after John had left from this world.

Though there are numerous documentaries about some of the world's late greats I admire - ranging from a beautiful mediation on Marlon Brando's life (narrated by Brando himself) in Listen to Me Marlon (2015) to Welles' infamous semi-autobiographical film stroke essayist film stroke pastiche on a changing Hollywood in The Other Side of the Wind - I couldn't help but think of each subject's surviving relatives, descendants and friends. Knowing that there's parts of their loss that have been buried but come back when a film about someone they knew or loved is getting made is just something I couldn't let myself get to. And besides, who better to comment on a finished documentary - than the subject(s) themselves. Sometimes this can arrive as an unexpected hindrance in the case of expository filmmaking, but in most cases - and especially with this project, the authorship is shared equally between subject and filmmaker. Film has an enduring power to immortalise the subjects within, far beyond their own lifetimes.

This was something I had hoped, and still hope, Old Suffolk Boy is able to achieve.

ABOUT THE SUBJECT



Hailing from Milton, Cambridgeshire and, originally before that, Badwell Ash in Suffolk where *Old Suffolk Boys* is set - John Holder is one of the most significant cross-disciplinary artists of our times. His strikingly personal style incorporates many years of robust classical training, of which Cambridge School of Art played a crucial part - in John's formative years as an Illustrator. There's a healthy and sometimes overt dose of proverbial British humour and satire laden in his work.

John's diverse interests come from his unwavering and almost boyish curiosity for life itself. Alongside a group of friends; he played a key part in importing Bluegrass music to the U.K and was at the very inception of the Cambridge Folk Festival over 50 years ago, and ever since has performed in numerous bands ranging from The Radio Cowboys and Holder's Heroes to John Holder & The Dead Cowboys with which he has recently released a new album to a close group of friends and family. Entitled 'Heroes', the album is a series of performances of quintessential Bluegrass songs from the many 'heroes' of the genre which started in the late 1930s and still continues to this day. It features songs by Earl Scruggs, Townes Van Zandt, Emmylou Harris and Bill Monroe just to name a few. John even got to play on stage with 'the father of Bluegrass music' Bill Monroe. As John once put it; Bluegrass itself is a music for the people, 'it's not far from the grass to the stage' compared to a Rock N Roll Festival.

ABOUT THE SUBJECT



THE MUSIC

Bluegrass Music, a form of American roots music hailing from the great southern States of America, was influenced by the music of Appalachia and various other styles, including gospel and jazz. Appalachian music itself has mixed roots in Irish, Scottish and English traditional music, which is where one might see the musical parallels inherent in the music played by old Suffolk boys.

SHEDISM

John Holder is an avid shed-man. He was a member of The Shed Club, a group of six friends who were founded on a collective promise - a creed, informally known as 'Shedism'. This mutual unspoken agreement was founded on the principle that money would never exchange hands - only the lending, exchanging and bartering of tools, skills and ideas. The group included close friends of John & Gaye Lockwood's (his wife) including fellow shed-man and radio producer Nick Barraclough and travelling showman Dick Bourne - another shed-man. A man's love of sheds is (and was) a big part of the national culture; particularly in East Anglia which comprises of Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire - one that still resonates today with John, in his own back garden where there lies a barn and shed - just a stone's throw away from the rear of the house, much like his studio is too.

A FINAL THOUGHT

In a career that has spanned over 60 years, John shows no sign of putting his drawing tools, nor his craft, to rest. His passion for creativity resonates across mediums, and is borderless by definition. He himself cares not for what comes next, but for the present; the now and living in the moment. John is like me when I was a child - and how I am now, only with much more life experience and the experience that it gives maturity.

CONTRIBUTORS & CREW

A WESTMINSTER FILM SCHOOL PRODUCTION

A STUDIO HOLDER RELEASE

With Contributions From

JOHN HOLDER, GAYE LOCKWOOD, DAVID SMITH B.L.R, NEVILLE ELLIS,
MICHAEL LARGENT, ALAN HALE, AUDREY SMITH, GEORGE ROSE,
ROBERT SPINK, STEPHEN McNALLY, BRENDA HALE, SUSAN J.L. McNALLY,
EDDIE BARCAN, NICK BARRACLOUGH, ROGER LAW, PETE SAYERS + MORE

Directed by

Producers

Production Sound

Cinematographer

Film Editors

Researcher

JOHN HOLDER & LOUIS HOLDER

LOUIS HOLDER & GAYE LOCKWOOD

LOUIS HOLDER

MARIO ANTONIO LIPTAJ

KRISTOF SZENASI & LOUIS HOLDER

LUAN LEER

Re-Recording Mixer

Archival Film Footage

AIDAN McCARTHY

BBC East

FILM SUFFOLK

EAST ANGLIAN FILM ARCHIVE

CAMBRIDGE FOLK FESTIVAL

BADWELL ASH HERITAGE

BADWELL ASH HISTORY SOCIETY

ITN (THAMES TELEVISION)

THE HOLDER & SMITH FAMILIES

D.I Support Technician

Digital Intermediate &

Post Production Facilities

Offline Editing

Online & Colour

HASAN MATAR

UNIVERSITY OF WESTMINSTER

AVID MEDIA COMPOSER

DaVINCI RESOLVE

Special Thanks

PETER HORT

SOPHIE HADLEY

HANNAH HOLDER

WESTMINSTER FILM SCHOOL

Executive Producer

ROB HARPER

ARCHIVE FORMATS: Super8, Standard 16mm, Super16, VHS, DV & HDCAM

FURTHER INFORMATION

ABOUT STUDIO HOLDER

Studio Holder acts as an incubator for a wide variety of film, art, collaborative media projects and other projects across Stage & Screen. The Studio, which has informally existed for a few years, was established in 2018. Studio Holder has established itself as a fast-growing, micro-independent production company & self-distribution platform in the UK, branching out into narrative content recently. Their films have screened at almost 50 film festivals including the BAFTA Qualifying LSFF and medium-tier festivals including Liverpool, Manchester and Wirral International Film Festivals.

Our Slate ranges from feature films to documentaries and short films, recently adding music videos and mixed-media projects to our development slate. Studio Holder is committed to working directly with any individual to help their project grow; our slate and industry relationships recognise that commitment by understanding our unique, and personal work ethic which derives from our dedication to showcasing great talent and their work.

Notable Awards & Achievements

Desire - Official Selection (London Short Film Festival, Hiive (Short of the Month), Vimeo (Staff Picks), Manchester International Film Festival, London Experimental Film Festival)

John Holder: Illustrator - Official Selection (Doc Sunback Film Festival Scout Film Festival, TrueDoc Documentary Festival, DocAdemia)

Visit Studio Holder on www.studioholder.weebly.com

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PRESS, SALES & DISTRIBUTION

FURTHER INFORMATION & CONTACT DETAILS

Press Enquiries contact.studioholder@gmail.com

Sales & Distribution distribution.studioholder@gmail.com

OLD SUFFOLK BOY is scheduled for completion in Spring 2020. After which, it will be submitted to the International Documentary Film Festival Circuit.

To book this film in your cinema, please request a Exhibitor Account, for more details go to studioholder.weebly.com

Booking Availability is expected to open in Winter 2020

FILM INFORMATION

Original Title	OLD SUFFOLK BOY	Production	WESTMINSTER FILM SCHOOL
Genre	BIOGRAPHICAL, DOC	Production Year	2019
Country of Production	UNITED KINGDOM	(Est.) Running Time	120 minutes
Language	ENGLISH	Screening Formats	DCP, ProRes, BR-DISC
Director	JOHN HOLDER & LOUIS HOLDER	Screen Ratio	1.85:1
Presented & Distributed by	STUDIO HOLDER	Sound Mix	5.1ch