

DEVIL PUT THE COAL IN THE GROUND

A unique oral history of West Virginia, and meditation on the suffering and devastation brought on by the coal industry and it's decline - a cautionary tale of unfettered corporate power and an elegy to a vanishing Appalachia.

AWARDS



[Trailer #1 \(Steve Earle\)](#) [Trailer #2 \(Iris DeMent\)](#)



OFFICIAL SELECTION:

Environmental Film Festival in the Nation's Capital
Ashland Independent Film Festival
Sarasota Film Festival
The Green Festival of San Francisco
Seoul Eco Film Fest
Finger Lakes Environmental Film Festival
Wildlife Vaasa Festival
California Capital Documentary Film Festival
Montauk Film Festival
Albuquerque music and film experience
The CineEco – Serra da Estrela International
Environmental Film Festival
Queen City Film Festival
Innsbruck Nature Festival



SYNOPSIS

When West Virginia broke away from Virginia in 1861 at the start of the American Civil War, its founders did not agree upon the Confederacy or the role of the state in the war. They were, however, united in their interests around the extraction and exploitation of the rich resources of the state – predominantly coal and timber – what would prove to be the dominant theme throughout the history of West Virginia.



"**Devil Put the Coal**" is holistic look at the impact of this legacy and the ravages of extractive industry and corporate power, as it has affected the people, communities and the environment of West Virginia. Consciously eschewing exploitive filmmaking around the opioid epidemic or poverty, the film focuses on its people – all linked by the love of their home state and desire to stay put against all odds.

Structured upon personal storytelling from native West Virginians, the film draws upon their rich experiences and diverse perspectives in order to create an informal “People’s History of West Virginia”. These individuals run the gamut – from recovering opioid addict, to environmental activist, to U.S. Congressional candidate, to town judge, to recovery center nurse, to corporate environmental lawyer, to struggling local business owner – all of whom, despite their differences, remain linked by the love of their home state and the challenges that threaten their survival, and way of life.



Uniquely paced and stylistically arresting, the film marries personal narrative with cinematic aerial footage, rare archival photography from DOCUMENTERICA luminary **Jack Corn**, bespoke animation and an original score that features the music of **Steve Earle & Iris Dement** – at once a meditation on the mystique of coal culture, a people’s resilience and deep connection to the land, and elegy to a vanishing Appalachia.

FESTIVAL & PRESS KUDOS

"Emotional. Required viewing for environmentalists." - Thursday Matinee

"★★★★" - Bill's Media Commentary

"A masterfully conceptualized, deeply moving documentary that fearlessly and empathically dives into the complex entanglements between extraction, coal mining, the opioid epidemic, corporate greed, poverty, public health, and environmental degradations.

Its web-like structure and gorgeous, carefully hewn cinematography rejects the voices of outside experts and instead makes space for the voices and resilience of everyday people living through these multiple crises, a searing history from below."

- Patricia Zimmermann, Director, Finger Lakes Environmental Film Festival



"A powerful movie that hit close to my home. I wish everyone could see this film... a story that NEEDS to be told. A perfect example of why documentary is so very important!"

- Mary Zunick, Hot Springs Film Festival (Sneak Peek Screening)

"The filmmakers do a great job of balancing the history of coal mining in West Virginia, the health problems faced by many miners and their families, and the opioid epidemic, which is

also linked to the crisis. In tying together these three pieces, Sabean and Hutchison are able to effectively show just how complicated this issue is. From workers' rights to public health to environmentalism to the opioid crisis, the directors ensure that these stories work together to create a cohesive narrative picture."

– Sydney Bollinger, Thursday Matinee

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

We're excited to share "Devil Put the Coal in the Ground" – an increasingly timely film about the largely unacknowledged "People's History" of the state of West Virginia – and a project that is very close to our heart.

A meditation on the struggles brought on by the coal industry and its decline, "Devil" is told through the personal storytelling of West Virginians – a project that has only grown more relevant with the rise in political prominence of US Senator Joe Manchin, and all that he symbolizes for the state of WV.

While we've seen powerful films that address mountain top removal, the opioid epidemic, environmental devastation, and the decline of the coal industry in West Virginia and American Appalachia – we'd yet to see a film that explores their interconnection.

We felt this holistic storytelling was vital for people to better-understand a state that's so often overlooked – particularly since it's become a bellwether for the rest of the nation in so many ways.

Peter Hutchison & Lucas Sabean
Big Tent Productions

FILMMAKING TEAM

LUCAS SABEAN – DIRECTOR/PRODUCER

Lucas Sabeen is an editor, producer and filmmaker, whose output includes independent narrative & documentary features, commercial video, and a large body of experimental work.

Co-founder of Eat the Moon Films & Big Tent Productions, he has produced & edited *Healing From Hate: Battle for the Soul of a Nation* (Freestyle Digital Media, Media Education

Foundation), directed & edited *Angry White Men: American Masculinity in the Age of*

Trump (Grasshopper Films) and directed, produced & edited *Devil Put The Coal in the Ground*.

He recently directed, produced & edited *The Man Card: White Male Identity Politics From Nixon to Trump* (2020, Media Education Foundation) and directed, produced & edited *You Throw Like A*

Girl: The Blindspot of Masculinity (2020, MEF). He was named to the "Filmmaker of Tomorrow"

program at the Telluride Film Festival for his short film *Relievo* (1999). His films include, *End of Era* (Underground Zero, 2003), and *The Last Stand* (Best Feature, Backseat Film Festival, 2008).

Choreographer Paul Taylor has called his experimental films "superb - like poems made visible."

He has an MFA from Boston University in Film Production..

PETER HUTCHISON – DIRECTOR/PRODUCER

Peter Hutchison is an award-winning filmmaker, NY Times Bestselling author, educator &

activist. His films include *Requiem for the American Dream: Noam Chomsky and the Principles of Concentration of Wealth and Power* (Netflix). The more recent *Healing From*

Hate: Battle for the Soul of a Nation (Journeyman/MEF) - an exploration of hate group activity as seen through the lens of masculinity - has been described as a "raw

masterpiece". *Devil Put the Coal in the Ground*, a holistic look at the ravages of extractive industry and corporate power in West Virginia, is slated for festival release in early 2022.

His longstanding commitment to issues around male identity has resulted in the films *You*

Throw Like A Girl: The Blind Spot of Masculinity (MEF), *Angry White Men: Masculinity in*

the Age of Trump (Grasshopper), and newly released, *The Man Card: White Male Identity Politics from Nixon to Trump* (MEF).

DAVID KUHN - PRODUCER

David has extensive experience in documentary film production, journalism and law. He recently produced “Life After Hate” which examines the root causes and conditions that foster racism and xenophobia among the radicalized Alt Right. He is currently producing “Visible Man” on elevating the black experience in America for boys and men of color, “Give or Take” a feature on one man’s journey to accept his father and change his life, and “Moodify” on the journey of people living with MS in America.

His producer credits include “The King” (Eugene Jarecki) on the life of Elvis Presley as a metaphor for the rise and fall of the American empire, as well the Cuban short “The Cyclist (Una Cyclista)” for “The New Yorker Presents...” series on Amazon (2016). His films have appeared at the Cannes, Sundance, DOC NYC, Big Sky Doc Film Festivals, among many others.



PRODUCTION CREDITS

FEATURING

Robert Billot

Greg Carpenter

Lisa Henderson

Bob Kincaid

James Nelson

Paula Swearingin

The Honorable William S. Thompson

Lois Vance

Bo Webb

PRODUCTION TEAM

Directed by Lucas Sabean & Peter Hutchison

Produced by David Kuhn, Peter Hutchison & Lucas Sabean

Edited by Lucas Sabean

Featuring the Music of Steve Earle & Iris Dement

Featuring the Photography of Jack Corn

Composed by Landon Knoblock

Graphics Design & Animation by Megan Toeynes

Cinematography by Mikey D'Amico & Justin Litton

Color Grade by Lucas Millard

Sound Mix & Design by Keith Robinson

Made with the generous support of the Rogovy Foundation

A Big Tent Production

WEBSITE & SOCIAL MEDIA

TRAILER #1 (Iris Dement): <https://vimeo.com/452308181>

TRAILER #2 (Steve Earle): <https://vimeo.com/465117768>

OFFICIAL FILM SITE

www.devilputthecoalintheground.com

FACEBOOK

www.facebook.com/DevilPutTheCoallnTheGround

TWITTER

[@DevilPutCoal](https://twitter.com/DevilPutCoal)

SUPPORT/DONATE: COAL RIVER MOUNTAIN WATCH

<https://secure.givelively.org/donate/coal-river-mountain-watch>

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