



CLOSE UP

LIFE TO STORY

Bend filmmaker Tim Cash crafted narrative from real lives for "Back to the Garden"

STORY BY KIM COOPER FINDLING

PHOTOGRAPHY BY PHIL WISE



“I debated over a number of more experienced editors at the time but had a trust and an intuitive feeling about Tim that turned out to be right.”

—Kevin Tomlinson

Tim Cash decided he wanted to be a filmmaker in Alaska. He was waiting tables on a train called the Midnight Sun Express. The beautiful scenery on the route between Anchorage and Fairbanks practically demanded to be filmed. Cash wanted to make a memento video for his coworkers on the train. He bought a camera and a laptop and started filming.

Eight years later, his company, Far From Earth Films, makes music videos, business promos, shorts and features. But the biggest endeavor Cash tackled since his film career launched was to edit hundreds of hours of footage shot by someone else. Kevin Tomlinson's film, “Back to the Garden,” edited by Cash, aired at the Bend Film Festival last fall.

Cash, 32, was no stranger to Bend Film—his short “Skipping Stones” aired at the 2006 festival. Nor was he a stranger to Tomlinson or the cast of his documentary. Cash's partner, Yuvia Storm, with whom he has two children, is in “Back to the Garden.” Storm's mother, One Pine, is one of the film's key characters.

The film begins with footage Tomlinson shot 20 years ago at a Healing Gathering in rural Washington. The audience meets a group of hippies who dropped out of society to live off the land and raise non-traditional families. Tomlinson returned to the site nearly two decades later to find these same folks and see what became of their utopian dreams.

Cash met Tomlinson at the Okanagan Family Fair, an annual event similar to the Gathering. The two began to talk film. “I debated over a number of more experienced editors at the time but had a trust and an intuitive feeling about Tim that turned out to be right,” says Tomlinson. “I can't underestimate his contribution.”

The film's power lies in retrospection. The idealism of youth is contrasted with the realities of growing up and the many choices we make in order to live the life we want. Tomlinson captured a zeitgeist, as many old hippy practices are now on their way to mainstream. What used to look crazy has morphed into the “new” green movement.

Editing footage of his family, Cash says, put him “in the middle” more than once. “As a documentarian, the urge is to get people to let their guard down, and to find the most compelling story,” he explains. “But it's hard to separate yourself from the subject.” Tomlinson found an

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Cash's work has taken him from Costa Rica to Maine.

asset in Cash's closeness to the topic. "His sensitivity to the subject matter, his love and respect for the characters and their dignity really shows."

Family wasn't Cash's primary editing challenge. The old and new footage added up to at least one hundred hours, in many formats. "I had no idea where to begin," Cash says. He spent the entire summer of 2007 in Seattle, where Tomlinson lives, finally managing to sort footage into vignettes by subject. "We had 30 mini-stories, which we began to rearrange." Cash and Tomlinson had a rough cut within a month.

"I've worked for over 30 years as a network news cameraman, producer/director and taught filmmaking for four years and I recognize talent very quickly," says Tomlinson. "Ultimately what counts aren't just creativity or talent but desire and tenacity to craft a story that an audience can relate to. Tim is the real deal."

By the time "Back to the Garden" reached Bend Film, Cash hadn't seen it in months. "I was really able to see scenes fresh, and to feel the vibe of the crowd," he says. "Just to see something you've done on a big screen is so cool." The film won no awards at Bend Film, but rumor has it that it was only two votes shy of the Audience Award. "Back to the Garden" took "Best Washington Film Award" at the Ellensburg Film Festival, and was still making film fest rounds at press time, as well as being edited for possible air on PBS.

Some of the satisfaction for Cash is One Pine's vindication. "As a hippy, she's spent so much of her life trying to justify her lifestyle. This film really shows the meaning in her life. No matter your politics, you can relate to these people in some way, whether family, or parenthood, or aging." Cash sees "Back to the Garden" as a culture piece—"100 years from now, when someone looks up 'hippy' in the library, this film will be there to show what that was all about."

Cash continues to make films of all sorts. "I am kind of in this reggae/rasta thing now," he says, referring to the fact that musicians of the genre have been seeking him out to create music videos. He's also been working for the Outdoor Channel, filming *Adventure Guides* with host Chuck Woolery, work that has taken him from Costa Rica to Maine. His next project is to make a film using a hydrogen fuel cell. "I want to shoot an entire film off the grid," he says. "I am always keeping myself busy and learning." **CO**

For more information see www.backtothegardenfilm.com and www.ffefilms.com.

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