

STILL ROLLING PRODUCTIONS PRESENTS

# STRAY DOG

A DOCUMENTARY BY DEBRA GRANIK



Unrated 105 minutes

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## SYNOPSIS

Ron "Stray Dog" Hall lives in Southern Missouri where he owns and operates the At Ease RV Park. After seven years of living with four small dogs as his only companions, he is adjusting to life with his wife, Alicia, who is newly arrived from Mexico. Anchored by his small dogs and big bikes, Stray Dog seeks to strike a balance between his commitment to his family, neighbors, biker brotherhood, and fellow veterans. As part of the legacy of fighting in the Vietnam War, he wrestles with the everlasting puzzle of conscience, remorse, and forgiveness.

With Stray Dog as our guide, we experience the restlessness of ex-warriors as he tries to make peace with what he can't change and weathers the incomprehension of those who have never been to war. Every year, Stray Dog joins thousands of bikers on a cross-country ride to the Vietnam Memorial in Washington DC for a series of veteran rituals. He hurtles down America's highways, staving off specters of post-traumatic stress and haunting memories while forging deep bonds along the way. From the back of his bike, Alicia tries to decipher a totally unfamiliar biker culture. Their intimacy is pushed to new limits as Alicia and Stray Dog share the pleasures and tensions of life on the road.

Back at home, Stray Dog navigates the pressures of everyday life including the economic survival of his grandchildren and the increasing poverty of his community. The arrival of Alicia's twin sons from Mexico throws into harsh relief the current state of opportunity that newcomers seek and that America can or cannot offer. Stray Dog continues to tally the cost of war, bearing witness to the soldiers coming home from Iraq and Afghanistan: both the dead and the living. The two families become more entwined and find lyrical ways of coexisting. The questions of contemporary American life loom larger and thornier, leaving us to wonder what is next for Stray Dog and his blended, multi-ethnic family.

## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

This project began with a chance encounter: while scouting and casting my film *Winter's Bone*, I sat next to Ron "Stray Dog" Hall in the Biker Church of Branson. He agreed to play the part of Thump Milton in the film. Stray Dog brought his life experiences to the role, and he brought some of his friends and neighbors to help populate one of the scenes with locals.

When shooting wrapped, we reconnected with Stray Dog to enlist his help in obtaining some audio recordings for the sound designer. We found him at home in a little RV surrounded by three small dogs. As we talked that night, we got a glimpse of his broad web of family, friends and affiliations. His vivid descriptions and his questions piqued our interest, and we decided to come back and record some conversations with him and moments of his daily life. When we returned, Ron had just been to Mexico and was describing his developing attachment to a woman he met there. We wondered where this would lead. Could Stray Dog come out of his solitary existence with his dog companions and venture into the volatile terrain of mutual expectations and domestication? Did his narrative have room for a love story? With this new connection across the border, Ron's ties and obligations proliferated. How would he handle the conflicting demands on his resources and energy?

Early on, Stray Dog would refer to his Harley as his shrink. He shared his thoughts about what he and other vets seek from biker culture. Over his lifetime, Ron has sought ways to channel his post-combat need for high adrenalin levels and his natural restlessness into benign channels that are compatible with civilian survival. He searches for missions, for ways to be helpful, which often involve trying to solve a problem for a family member, a neighbor or a friend, or just understanding when someone can't pay their rent because of a non-livable wage.

The rituals of motorcycle culture are rich material for visual anthropology. Biker life has evolved from its outlaw origins, and many of today's older bikers, like Stray Dog, are deeply embedded in the social institutions of their communities. Everything in this world seems photogenic—beards, bodies, leather, chains, chrome, velocity, embraces, protocols, and procedures. Bikers swap chili recipes and do charity toy runs with Santa on a Harley. Add to this the solemn pageantry of Veteran's ceremonies, with their sadness and transcendent beauty.

Stray Dog's story is also about a Midwestern workingman negotiating the convulsions of our times – gun culture, unemployment and underemployment in recession-era America. Why does a relative or a neighbor join a militia group? How do you advise a grandchild who can't make ends meet working two full-time jobs? When does boredom, frustration or lack of opportunities lead to changing the receivables on an AK-47?

As the Vietnam generation grows older, its history is being re-written, and is at risk of being whitewashed. Stray Dog is a warrior who sees the links between his struggles and those of today's soldiers. He and some of his fellow vets can show us what PTSD is like many years later, long after the headlines fade. Now we have a name for the way it changes the brains of soldiers. We know that it's one of the costs of war, and we know this mainly because people like Ron have taken the risk to tell us about it.

As a filmmaker, my roots are in documentary observation. I like to work with non-professional actors in authentic settings in my narrative fictions, to impart an underlying sense of realism. For me, narrative is an attempt to look closer, to slow down and distill real life experiences. But documentary is different, and it's a humbling process. Documenting daily life cannot be scheduled and bossed around. You can't capture everything that you want. You can't demand re-takes. Yet you can go far beyond the limits of your imagination. Instead of characters coming from the written page, they come, sometimes in droves, directly into your "who knew?" consciousness, with their unanticipated particularity. Shooting and editing a documentary film is often a wayward and confounding journey of finding the narrative in a teeming mass of available material. It's another way to approach the dynamic between the narrative and quotidian aspects of storytelling, which continues to motivate my work.

Director Debra Granik

## CREW BIOS

### **DEBRA GRANIK**

#### **Director**

Debra Granik is the Academy Award nominated director and co-writer of Winter's Bone, which was nominated for four Oscars, including Best Picture, and won the Grand Jury Prize at the 2010 Sundance Film Festival. Granik and co-writer Anne Rosellini were Oscar nominated for Best Adapted Screenplay. Her first feature film, Down to the Bone, won Granik the Best Director prize at the 2004 Sundance Film Festival.

### **ANNE ROSELLINI**

#### **Producer**

Anne Rosellini is the Academy Award nominated producer and co-writer of Winter's Bone, which was nominated for four Oscars, including Best Picture, and won the Grand Jury Prize at the 2010 Sundance Film Festival. Rosellini and co-writer Debra Granik were Oscar nominated for Best Adapted Screenplay. Rosellini produced Granik's first feature film, Down to the Bone, which won Granik the Best Director prize at the 2004 Sundance Film Festival.

### **VICTORIA STEWART**

#### **Co-Producer/Editor**

Tory Stewart is a film editor based in New York via Berlin via San Francisco, with experience spanning Production and Art Department as well as Post. Her work includes narrative and documentary film and television projects for HBO, Columbia Pictures and Warner Bros.

### **ERIC PHILLIPS-HORST**

#### **Cinematographer**

Eric is a director, producer and cinematographer based in New York. Some of his featured work includes broadcast television (PBS, Biography Channel, MTV, Nickelodeon, Arte France), documentary and independent festival circuits (CPH:DOX, Rooftop Films, HBO NY and LA Latino) and numerous online publications (The Atlantic Monthly, Huffington Post, TED Talks, Indiepix). He teaches production and digital arts at The Documentary Center, and is a founding member of three filmmaking collectives: Brooklyn Filmmakers, Meerkat Media, The Goddamn Cobras.

## **CREDITS**

### FEATURING

Ron "Stray Dog" Hall  
Alicia Soriano Hall  
Felipe Angel Padilla Soriano  
Felipe de Jesús Padilla Soriano  
Cristy Thomas  
Robin Smith  
Cynthia Smith  
Theodore Smith  
Evelyn Maylath Hall  
Al Maylath

### FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS

Alec Ponder  
Annie Washington  
April Boggs  
Bert  
Bob Bronson  
Bob Womack  
Bobby Pittinger  
Dave  
Debra Beattie  
Don Fosse  
Freddy Strickland  
Jim Jackson  
Joey Holiday  
John Williams  
Leroy Bishop  
Milo Garcia  
Norman "Geezer" Beattie  
Ray  
Ron "Turtle" Ponder  
Snake  
Whitey

### CREW

Director: Debra Granik  
Producer: Anne Rosellini  
Co-Producer: Victoria Stewart  
Executive Producer: Johnathan Scheuer  
Cinematographer: Eric Phillips-Horst  
Additional Camera: David Fleming, Ryan Piotrowski, Al Pierce, Jeremy Borg and Bryan Manning  
Sound Recording: Derek Haff and David Fleming

### MEXICO CREW

Camera: Deborah Bonello and Alba Mora Roca  
Sound Recording: Pablo Diez Casajuana  
Fixer: Jesus Alcazar

### POST-PRODUCTION

Editor: Victoria Stewart  
Consulting Editors: Affonso Gonçalves and Enat Sidi

Story Consultant: Boris Frumin

Post-Production Assistants: Andres Vergara, Becky Laks and John-Carlo Monti

Additional Editing by the Edit Center:

Jeanne Applegate

EG Bailey

Ondrea Barbe

Hilary Birmingham

Kristin Bye

Leah Byrne

Nina Chernik

Rob Donaghy

Paula Eiselt

Amelia Golden

Marco Gozzo

Amy Grossman

Josh Harron

Mateo Jimenez-Latorre

Julie Kahn

Akira Kamitaki

Belle Keynes

Cherine Khoury

Jennifer Lee

John-Carlo Monti

Doug Nechodom

Shane O'Neill

Sally Rowe

Iturri Sosa

Andres Vergara

Federico Visalberghi

Paul Wepprecht

Music Supervisor: Marideth Sisco

Music Producer: David Wilson

Music Consultant: Steve Peters

Recording Engineer: Jeff Smith

Blackberry Winter Band: Bo Brown, Dennis Crider, Linda Stoffel, Marideth Sisco, Tedi May and Van Colbert

Session Musicians: Bo Buffington and Jesse Wilson

Original Music Recording: Studio 2100, Springfield MO

Supervising Sound Editor: Peter Levin

Dialogue Editor: Barbara Parks

Sound Effects Editor: Will Hsieh

Re-recording Mixer: Peter Levin

Audio Post Facility: Splash Studios, NYC

Post-Production Services by: Technicolor Postworks NYC

Executive Producer: Barbara Jean Kearney

Project Manager: Jeff Huston

Colorist: Sam Daley

Editor: Pat Kelleher

Spanish Translation: Anna Rimoch and Andres Vergara

Transcription: Becky Laks and Stephanie McCarthy

Accounting Services: Douglas Burack Lutz & Carr

Production Insurance: Chad Cohen Reiff & Associates

Production Legal: Marc Simon, Cowan DeBaets Abrahams & Sheppard, LLP

MUSIC

"Another Homeless Soldier"

Written and Performed by Joey Holiday

Courtesy of Truck It Records

www.joeyholiday.com

truckitrecords@aol.com

"Black Land Dust"

Written and Performed by Donald R. Killion

Music by Black Land Dust

Courtesy of Donald R. Killion

"Country Boogie"

Written and Performed by David Wilson

Courtesy of Perfect Hand Music, BMI

"Country Paradise"

Written and Performed by David Wilson

Courtesy of Perfect Hand Music, BMI

"Cupid Shuffle"

Performed By Cupid

Courtesy Of Atlantic Recording Corp. By arrangement with Warner Music Group Film & TV Licensing.

Published by The Only Cupid Publishing Company administered by Razor & Tie Music Publishing, LLC

"Indita Mia"

Written by Carlos Periguez

Courtesy of APM Music

"Little Girl"

Written by Bobby Pittinger

Performed by Bobby Pittinger

"Love's Definition"

Written and Performed by Donald R. Killion

Music by Black Land Dust Band

Courtesy Of Donald R. Killion

"Military Taps in B Flat"

Arranged by Robert J. Walsh

(BMI)/James Ekblom Moore (BMI)

Published by Chicago Digital Music (BMI)

Music courtesy of Chicago Music Library, LLC.

"My, My, My"

Written and Composed by Robin Frederick & Marideth Sisco

Performed by Marideth Sisco, Robin Frederick, Linda Stoffel, and David Wilson

Courtesy of Songs on the Wing Publishing

"O Come All Ye Faithful"

Traditional  
Performed By Myndi Blizzard  
songbirdofbranson@yahoo.com  
Music By David Wilson

"O Holy Night"  
Traditional  
Performed By Myndi Blizzard  
songbirdofbranson@yahoo.com  
Music By David Wilson

"Soldier Boy"  
Music Traditional  
Lyrics by Marideth Sisco  
Performed by Van Colbert and Blackberry Winter

"Star Spangled Banner"  
Traditional  
Performed by Jamie Hitt

"Today I Started Loving You"  
Written by Merle Haggard and Bonnie Owens.  
Published by Sony/ATV Tree Publishing (BMI).  
Copyright 1968 Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC.  
All rights administered by Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC, 8 Music Square West, Nashville, TN  
37203.  
All rights reserved.  
Used by permission.  
Performed by Bobby Pittinger

"Wings"  
Written and Composed by Margaret Teresa Trull  
Performed by Blackberry Winter

Scrolling credits created with AUTOGLYPH ENDCRAWL®

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