



PRESENTS

“BEAUTIFUL SCARS”

A film by Shane Belcourt
87 minutes, Canada, 2022
Language: English

Official Selection:
2022 Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival – World Premiere



SYNOPSIS

***Beautiful Scars* is the remarkable point-of-view story of a rock star who, after a lifetime of searching, finally discovers his true identity. Famous for his bands *Junkhouse*, and *Blackie & the Rodeo Kings*, Tom Wilson takes us on his journey of discovery into his past, present, and future; from his mysterious upbringing, self-destructive music career, to his current quest to explore his true identity as a Mohawk man.**

After years of confusion, hard living, and rebellion, Tom learns his family's greatest secret – the one his parents took to their grave. He is adopted – and his birth family is Mohawk.

When Tom learned the truth, many parts of his history finally made sense, but to move forward, he needs to learn about his heritage, his birth family, and his place in the Mohawk community.

With the trappings of fame and notoriety, Tom is exploring his newfound roots and culture on a very public stage. Expressing himself through his concerts and art, Tom is discovering what it's like to be a Mohawk in this country - at the age of 60.

In the film, Tom takes us through his confused and isolating childhood with his adoptive parents Bunny and George. He'll explain how George's PTSD after WWII, and Bunny's constant eerie references to "secrets she'll take to her grave" haunted his youth, and made him lose all sense of belonging.

Through his music, we learn about the self-destructive years he spent as a full time rock-and-roller, as he tried to escape his demons. Even after he becomes a father, his deep unhappiness and substance abuse result in the breakdown of his own family. He hits rock bottom.

Tom re-tells the story about music industry colleague Mary Simon who accidentally reveals that he is adopted. The shock was compounded when he confronted the woman he had known for years as a cousin – Janie – who reveals she is his birth mom, and that he is Mohawk.

This revelation took Tom on a journey into his past, keen to learn more about his blood heritage, connect with his once-secret relatives, and become part of the Mohawk community. Along the way, he grapples with the memories of his life formed by these secrets, learns more about his adoptive family, and looks at them with new eyes enlightened by the truth.

We follow Tom as he visits the **Kanawahke reserve** – the home of his birth family and ancestors. As they reveal their own personal histories and experiences of living in Kanawahke, Tom learns more about why his birth mother gave him up, yet managed to stay in his life as a 'cousin,' and hear about his birth father.

Beautiful Scars features Tom's poetic songwriting and powerful music, while also highlighting his personality and gifts as a storyteller. This film gives the viewers an honest, and humorous look at his journey of self-discovery with a firsthand look at what it means to be Mohawk.

CREDITS

Written and Directed by

Shane Belcourt

Producer

Corey Russell

Line Producer

Francine DiBacoo

Executive Producer

Dan Cimoroni

Allen Moy

Executive Producer

David Brady

Kate Harrison Karman

Patrick Cameron

Executive Producer, TVO

Jane Jankovic

Independent Production Officer, TVO

Linda Fong

Director of Photography

Jon Elliot

Editor

Marc Ricciardelli

Taylor G McConnachie

Katie Flach

Original Music

Tom Wilson (Tehoh'ahake)

Music Supervisor

Allen Moy

Post Production Supervisor

Mitchell Brown

Assistant Editors

Brina Romanek

Lisa Cumming

Production Design

David Hannan

Archivists

Jennifer Dysart

Ari Castillo

Graphic Design

Max Piersig

Based on the book *Beautiful Scars*

by Tom Wilson

CAST LIST

Anna Ruddick - bass player in Tom's band, appears on stage with him in live concert footage (Calgary Folk Fest)

Bernie Finkelstein - Blackie and Rodeo Kings old manager

Colin Linden - Guitarist and songwriter in Blackie and Rodeo Kings, Tom's old friend

Daniel Lanois - singer, songwriter, producer

Denise Lisson - art gallery owner in Hamilton who coordinated a big event wherein Tom jammed with Daniel Lanois which resurrected his musical career at that time

Gary Furniss - Music producer, engineer, and Sony executive, recorded Junkhouse's first album

Graham Rockingham - Hamilton Spectator music reporter, Tom's folk history

Janie Lazare – Tom's mother/cousin

Jesse O'Brien - piano player with Tom, Calgary Folk Festival and Massey Hall

Lynn Beauvais - Tom's sister in Kahnawake

Madeline Wilson Shaw - Tom's daughter

Mike Roth - Music producer, engineer, and Sony executive during Junkhouse's first album, ran Sony Music Publishing and gave Tom his first publishing deal

Mike Trebilcock - musician in Hamilton, spoke about seeing Tom as a young man in folk scene

Ray Farrugia – drummer *Junkhouse* and *Lee Harvey Osmond*

Sharon Lazare - Tom's cousin, appears in Kahnawake visit footage

Skyler Williams - organizer of Landback Lane concert, you may see a glimpse of him in that quick montage end of film

Tracy Howard - Tom's sister in Kahnawake

BIOGRAPHIES

TOM WILSON

Tom Wilson is a Canadian music legend, famed storyteller and visual artist. Wilson's memoir, *Beautiful Scars* published by Penguin/Random House has become a national bestseller. In his memoir, Wilson reveals the impact of discovering his indigenous heritage. Musically, Wilson is best known for his work with Blackie & The Rodeo Kings and Lee Harvey Osmond, the latter receiving a 2020 Juno Award for the album "Mohawk."

In 1989 Wilson became the founder of the popular rock band Junkhouse. The band quickly grew in popularity and in 1993 signed a recording contract with Sony Music Canada. Lead by Wilson, Junkhouse skyrocketed in the 90's, producing three albums, *Strays*, *Birthday Boy* and *Fuzz*, before disbanding. The style and success of Junkhouse has been an inspiration to many young Hamilton artists. Wilson recorded his first solo album *Planet Love* (2001) for Sony Music. It was also during this time that Wilson started dedicating more of his time and energy to his second passion, painting, "I needed an outlet besides writing music and there is a great meditative bond I found between me and the canvas". His art show "*Beautiful Scars: Mohawk Warriors, Hunters and Chiefs*" premiered at the Art Gallery of Burlington and his work "*The Mystic Highway*" was commissioned by the Canadian Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences for a 30' x 30' reproduction legacy piece adorning John Street in Hamilton. The painting pays homage to the rich history of Hamilton musicians and performers from past.

In 1999, as a result of their shared love and admiration for one of Canada's great musical treasures, the late Willie P. Bennett, Wilson along with Stephen Fearing and Colin Linden formed what would soon become the highly acclaimed roots music supergroup Blackie and the Rodeo Kings.

The Rodeo Kings have produced ten albums and have toured throughout North America and Europe. While Wilson created solo albums, *Planet Love* and *Dog Years* (2006), it was with his collaboration with producer and Cowboys Junkies founder Michael Timmins that he found and settled into a new voice. The result is Wilson's genre defining, alter personae Lee Harvey Osmond. "*Acid folk*" was born in an old garage off Clinton Avenue in Toronto. With Timmins production and Wilson's baritone, LHO has become the soundtrack and the voice for the art of Tom Wilson.

In 2017 Wilson released his highly anticipated memoir through Penguin/Random House/Doubleday Publishing. In the memoir, Wilson offers a profoundly moving and humorous look at family, his hometown and identity after a chance encounter with a stranger caused him to question everything he had always known about his past.

SHANE BELCOURT - DIRECTOR

Shane Belcourt is a two-time CSA-nominated Director, with award-winning narrative and documentary works in both film and TV. His debut feature film **TKARONTO**, had a theatrical release, was sold to SuperChannel and Air Canada, and was showcased in both the TIFF Indigenous Cinema Retrospective and the UCLA Film & Television Archive traveling exhibition, "*Through Indian Eyes: Native American Cinema*". Shane also directed **CHANIE WENJACK** which Walrus Magazine noted as "the Heritage Minute Canada needs to see". His most recent feature film, **RED ROVER**, premiered at the Whistler Film Festival, opened the Canadian Film Festival, and was released in March 2020 to glowing reviews.

On the documentary side of things, Shane directed **KAHA:WI**, which features dancer and choreographer Santee Smith. It premiered at the imagineNATIVE Film + Media Arts Festival, aired on APTN and CBC Docs, and won a CSC award for Best Cinematography in 2016, along with a CSA Best Director nomination. Shane co-directed (with Lisa Jackson) the CBC one-hour **INDICTMENT** which won Best Doc at imagineNATIVE. In the Fall of 2020, **AMPLIFY**, aired on APTN, which Shane created and showran. He was a Consulting Producer (writing room story editor) on CBC's new drama series, **THE TRICKSTER**.

Currently, Shane is writing a feature narrative based around a family tale entitled **DUMBBELL**, which received development funding from Telefilm Canada. Season two of **AMPLIFY** is set to go into production in the Spring of 2022, along with the feature narrative film **WARRIOR STRONG**.

Shane is an alumna of the *TIFF Talent Lab* and NSI's *Totally Television* programs, member of the DGC.

COREY RUSSELL – PRODUCER

Corey Russell is an award-winning producer whose credits include the critically acclaimed feature documentary about 80s rock icons *The Go-Go's* directed by Alison Ellwood (*History of the Eagles*), which made its World Premiere at the Sundance Film Festival in 2020 and won the *Critics Choice Award* for Best Music Documentary. Also, *Rush: Time Stand Still*, about legendary rock band Rush, winner of a *2018 Canadian Screen Award*, narrated by Paul Rudd. Other productions include, *Names on the Cup*, a feature documentary about the history of the Stanley Cup, narrated by Kiefer Sutherland. In 2019, he produced *Killing Patient Zero*, about the true story of the AIDS crisis in America, which made its World Premiere at the 2019 Hot Docs International Documentary Festival.

In 2021, he produced the award-winning *Nike's Big Bet* about legendary track coach Alberto Salazar for CBC, Sky Arts and ZDF. He also produced *All or Nothing: Toronto Maple Leafs* for Amazon Studios and the NHL.

ABOUT CREAM FILMS:

A division of Cream Productions, Cream Films is managed by award-winning producer Corey Russell. In 2021, Cream Films co-produced, along with Paul Kemp, *Nike's Big Bet*, which had its World Premiere at the *Hot Docs Documentary Festival* and went on to win the **Canadian Screen Award** for *Best Sports Feature*. They also produced *All or Nothing: Toronto Maple Leafs* for Amazon Studios and the NHL, which was released in October 2021. They are currently in production on a new documentary series for CNN+ to be released in early 2023.

Cream Productions is a premier production company with clients that include streaming giants Netflix and Amazon as well as leading networks such as CNN, Discovery, History and more. In 2021, the company has produced the recently released Netflix series *Age of Samurai: Battle for Japan* as well as *History of the Sitcom* and *The Story of Late Night* for CNN