



PRESS CONTACT

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SXSW

WORLD PREMIERE: Friday, March 8 at 5:45pm, Alamo Ritz 1

Tuesday, March 12th at 8:45pm, Alamo Lamar E

LOG LINE

The dump in Yellowknife, and its massive, unrestricted salvage area, has long played a central role in this remote city's civic and social life. Can a colorful group of thrifty locals save it from city bureaucrats determined to close it down?

SYNOPSIS

With a massive, unrestricted salvage area, the Yellowknife dump is one of the last and largest open dumps in North America. People from all walks of life go there, to search for everything from tools to clothes to home décor. Salvage follows a group of passionate salvagers over five years as the dump evolves and eventually succumbs to the inexorable efforts of city bureaucrats to subject it to sensible regulations and controls. As the dump loses its central place in the town's civic and social life, the salvagers become increasingly irrelevant. This loss has seismic implications, both for this community of residents, and the identity of Yellowknife itself.



FILMMAKER'S STATEMENT

In documenting the relationship Yellowknifers have with their town dump, *Salvage* examines larger issues of consumption, materialism and the value of things. Those who salvage there do so for many different reasons - some make a living from it, some out of a sense of morality or concern for the environment, some just find it fun. But all believe it is important, even meaningful, to rescue items that others have discarded. The salvagers are a vibrant community, rooted in thrift. The dump is their meetinghouse – literally and culturally. Without it, they become marginalized as their beliefs fall out of step with changing social mores.

The film also explores how a community's values are reflected in its institutions, and how subtle changes in those values become institutionalized over time. The battle for the identity of Yellowknife – frontier town or modern capitol – is the conflict at the heart of *Salvage*, and it is fought by citizen groups and elected officials, participants on both sides who understand that more is at stake than an open dump. *Salvage* offers new insights into the importance of civic identity in shaping our lives and values.



The salvagers find it enraging that this liberty is being taken from them by the government, especially in this remote place where so many are used to doing for themselves. But the issue is nuanced. The dump, as is, actually is dangerous. And the end result of the more organized, regulated landfill is a more efficient facility overall. There are obvious benefits to Yellowknife as a whole that come with modernization and oversight.

So perhaps the salvagers can be dismissed as quaint and outdated. But their thrift offers an enticing alternative to the emptiness and disconnectedness of limitless consumerism. That appeal is reflected in the growing focus on sustainability as a personal and civic priority, the emergence of the sharing economy and the existence of freeganism as a contemporary expression of radical protest. In this time of extreme wealth and consumption and inequality, in a culture choked with stuff, obsessed with it, the idea of thrift as a necessary societal virtue may yet make a comeback. Whether there is any viable replacement for an institution like the dump in Yellowknife or anywhere else in modern Western society, remains to be seen.

CREW

Amy C. Elliott, Director/Shooter

Amy C. Elliott is a photographer and documentary filmmaker based in New York City. She has been shooting motion and still editorial assignments for 20 years, with a particular focus on regional American culture. She directed and shot the feature documentaries *Wicker Kittens* (2014) and *World's Largest* (2010), both of which premiered at SXSW. She was awarded the American Society of Media Photographer's Best of 2012 honors for *The War Within*, a major multimedia project for The American Legion, focusing on post-traumatic stress disorder in veterans. Other clients include The New York Times, American Road and The Public Art Fund. She is a graduate of Princeton University.



Elizabeth Donius, Producer

Elizabeth Donius has been working with childhood friend Amy C. Elliott on film and video projects for years. Collaborations include the 2010 documentary *World's Largest*, numerous segments for the IFC show *Split Screen*, and *Headless*, their first film, in which they starred as thinly-veiled versions of their 20-year-old selves. From 2004-2008, Elizabeth served as the executive director of IFP Chicago. Recently, she produced the 2017 short film *Imagine Kalle 37*, about an adventure park in Berlin, Germany. Elizabeth lives in New Haven, CT, where she is the executive director of the Westville Village Renaissance Alliance.

Sabrina Zanella-Foresi, Editor

Sabrina Zanella-Foresi is a feature-length documentary editor/producer whose editing credits include: *Irish Catskills: Dancing at the Crossroads* (APT, 2016); *The Rise and Fall of Penn Station* (2014) and *Henry Ford* (2013) both for PBS' American Experience; *Photographic Memory* by Ross McElwee (2011); *Animas Perdidas: Lost Souls* (PBS Independent Lens, 2009); *The Truth About Cancer* (2008); *Shadow of the House: Photographer Abelardo Morell*, directed by Allie Humenuk (2007); *Twisted* (PBS Independent Lens, 2007); *A Jew Among the Germans* (PBS Frontline, 2005).

Bill Staines, Composer

Legendary folk musician Bill Staines has been performing and recording for over 40 years. The quintessential folk troubadour plays over 200 dates and travels 65,000 miles annually. Bill's music is a slice of Americana, reflecting with the same ease his feelings about the prairie people of the Midwest or the adventurers of the Yukon, the on-the-road truckers, or the everyday workers that make up this land. He has recorded 26 albums and his songs have been recorded by many artists such as Peter, Paul and Mary, The Highwaymen, Jerry Jeff Walker, Nanci Griffith and Glen Yarborough. His film music credits include *The Return of the Secaucus Seven* (John Sayles, 1979).

CAST

Walt Humphries, Velma Sterenberg, Tony Whitford, Al Shearing, Gordon Van Tighem, Dwayne Wohlgemuth, Dave Kellett, Diane Baldwin, Bruce Underhay

CREDITS

Directed and Shot by Amy C. Elliott
Produced by Elizabeth Donius
Edited by Amy C. Elliott & Sabrina Zanella-Foresi
Music by Bill Staines
Co-Producer: Mike Scholtz
Associate Producer: Michele Meek
Graphics: Jonny Hamilton
Additional Camera: Dave Kellett
Archival Footage/Images Courtesy of: The National Film Board of Canada, CBC, Walt Humphries, Nigel Fearon
Colorist: Chad Smith, Massive Clouds
Supervising Sound Editor/Re-Recording: Mixer Coll Anderson
Sound Effects Editor: Matthew Snedecor
Dialogue Editor: Duncan Clark

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