

# Remake



# Remake

A film by Ross McElwee

116 MINUTES | DOCUMENTARY | ENGLISH | USA | 2026

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## LOGLINE

Filmmaker Ross McElwee retraces his late son Adrian's life through their shared footage while navigating a stalled Hollywood adaptation of his landmark 1986 documentary SHERMAN'S MARCH.

## SUMMARY

Filmmaker Ross McElwee has spent forty years recording himself and his family, creating documentaries that chronicle the shifting contours of American society through the lens of personal history. His son Adrian grew up inside those films, and eventually began experimenting with the camera himself. When a Hollywood producer acquires the rights to adapt McElwee's 1986 breakthrough SHERMAN'S MARCH into a work of fiction, twenty-year-old Adrian sees a chance for his father to finally reach a wider audience. As the adaptation stalls, Adrian gets swept into a deepening drug addiction and dies from a fentanyl overdose, leaving behind hours of personal video footage. Retracing Adrian's final years, McElwee reckons with what his camera captured and what remained hauntingly out of frame. As he reflects on a lifetime behind the camera, Ross's own effort to remix and remake the movie that Adrian never got to finish takes on new significance. An ever-expanding hall of mirrors built from decades of home movies, REMAKE is both McElwee's attempt to hold onto his son, and to let him go.

## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

It's been fourteen years since I completed my last film, *Photographic Memory*. What animated that film was the sense that I no longer understood my son, Adrian, the way I once thought I did. As a child, Adrian liked being filmed, and I liked filming him. It was a process that linked us. But as the years went by, things changed – for him and for me.

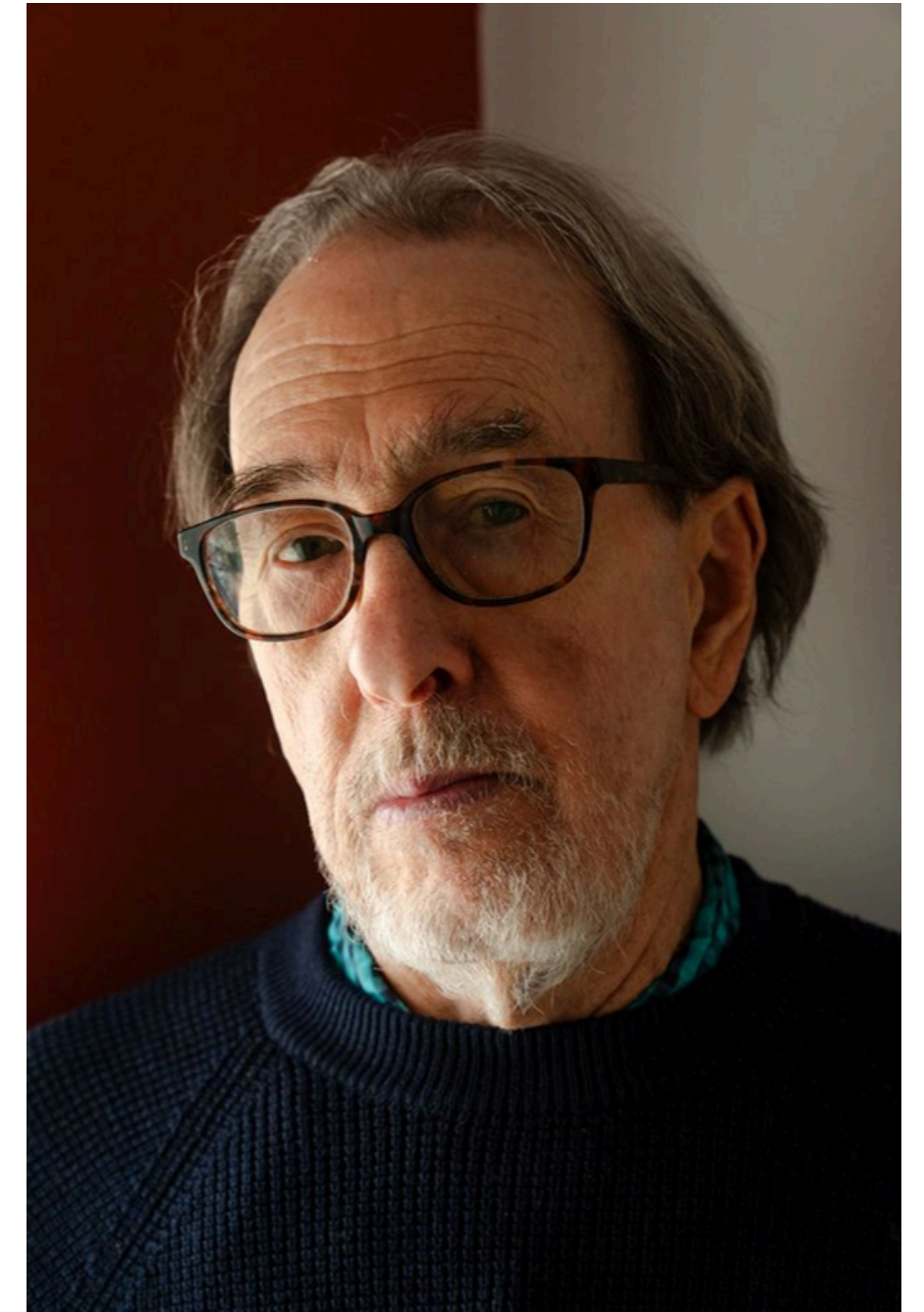
When Adrian died, suddenly and unexpectedly, in the winter of 2016, I wasn't sure I would make another film. Eventually I started going through my home movies again, all these accumulated moments with my son, who was now no longer here. And then I began to look at what he'd filmed too.

*Remake* is both my attempt to hold onto Adrian, and to let him go.

## DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Ross McElwee is an American documentary filmmaker whose work blends autobiography, cultural observation, and humor. His breakthrough film *Sherman's March* won the Sundance Grand Jury Prize. McElwee has made ten feature-length documentaries, which have premiered at such festivals as Berlin, Cannes, and Venice three times. He has received numerous career honors, including a Guggenheim Fellowship and the Pennebaker Award. In 2005, MoMA presented a full retrospective of his work, later shown in Paris, Seoul, Quito, Madrid, and Moscow.

Director's Filmography: 1980, *Charleen*; 1982, *Backyard*; 1986, *Sherman's March*; 1989, *Something to Do with the Wall*; 1991, *Time Indefinite*; 1996, *Six O'Clock News*; 2003, *Bright Leaves*; 2009, *In Paraguay*; 2011, *Photographic Memory*



# INTERVIEW WITH ROSS McELWEE: FINDING NEW MEANING IN OLD FOOTAGE

*REMAKE* incorporates footage from several of Ross McElwee's previous films, including *SHERMAN'S MARCH*, *TIME INDEFINITE*, and *PHOTOGRAPHIC MEMORY*. Upon the 2004 release of his documentary *BRIGHT LEAVES*, McElwee sat down with Lawrence F. Rhu for an interview in *CINEASTE* to discuss his growing archive of footage and his propensity for re-using footage from one film to the next.

**McElwee:** ...[T]hat's very much at the heart of the experience, my experience anyway, of making these documentary films. Shooting large amounts of footage, assembling it in an editing room years later, and then trying to restore some version of the life that you feel is due to it, that you feel relates to how you experienced it at that time. It's a little, in that way, like medicine. In some metaphorical way, you are trying to revive the patient...

**Cineaste:** And the form of the revival is narrative, isn't it? It's a story that makes sense, as you reassemble parts of the past. But sometimes you use the same parts again in different stories. For example, you put your dad teaching your brother to tie sutures in [*BRIGHT LEAVES*], and we've already seen that in *BACKYARD*. I don't know of other filmmakers who do that.

**McElwee:** I could be criticized for doing that if it's simply a way of recycling scenes that have already had their due. But if it works the way I hope it does, the viewer realizes that the second context is completely different from the first, partially because of the time that has passed. *BACKYARD* was made over twenty years ago, and now here is that footage again. If I've utilized the old footage correctly, it has a totally different meaning the second time for the viewer who's seen both films. I also have to accept the fact that there's a good chance that most people who see *BRIGHT LEAVES* have not seen *BACKYARD*. *BACKYARD* is forty minutes long and a rather obscure film. So in a way it's a question that may not come up for most people. But for me, it's important to experiment with the reuse of footage, because that reflects a very human experience: replaying scenes from your past in your mind and having a very different reaction to them as the years go on. Specific moments, interactions I have with people I'm close to, ripen in different ways as time goes on. They take on different meanings, and I'm interested in how film can explore and convey that process.

**Cineaste:** Film is kind of magical that way, isn't it? Don't we all feel like we might not remember things right? And there, twenty years later, is that same strip of film.

**McElwee:** I think it's going to be very interesting, by the way, to see what happens with this digital generation of parents who have recorded their kids' every footstep. People were shooting a fair amount of super-8 film in the Sixties and Seventies. But it was expensive and difficult to load, and editing it was extremely time-consuming. Most people didn't edit their footage; most footage was not viewed more than once. Digital video, or video in general, enables parents to keep a constant record of a family as it grows up. So that very question you raised — "Am I remembering this correctly?" — needn't be an issue. People can just go back to the data bank and see exactly how little Jimmy spooned his peas into his mouth at age four. There'll be a record of it. And how strange is that?

# PRODUCER'S BIOGRAPHY

Mark Meatto is a documentary producer and editor based in New York. He produced *Remake* alongside filmmaker Ross McElwee — a collaboration that began over two decades ago when Meatto co-edited McElwee's *Bright Leaves*. Together they co-founded Giant Squid Films and Little Field Films, the production and archive home for McElwee's work. Alongside *Remake*, Meatto is overseeing the debut of the newly restored *Sherman's March*, McElwee's landmark 1986 film, timed to *Remake*'s theatrical release. His other producing credits include *Super/Man: The Christopher Reeve Story* (Sundance, HBO) and the eight-part ESPN/Disney series *The Yankees Win*, both produced during four years as a creative executive at Words + Pictures.

# CREDITS

**Written and Directed by**  
Ross McElwee

**Produced by**  
Mark Meatto  
Ross McElwee

**Filmed by**  
Ross McElwee  
Adrian McElwee

**Edited by**  
Ross McElwee  
Joe Bini

**Executive Producers**  
Geralyn White Dreyfous  
Jenny Raskin  
Regina K. Skully  
Brynn Kelly  
Ian Darling  
Adam & Melony Lewis  
Mark Meatto  
Ross McElwee

# ABOUT MUSIC BOX FILMS

Music Box Films is the prestigious North American distributor of acclaimed international, independent, and documentary feature films. Recent releases include Cannes Directors' Fortnight baseball comedy *Eephus* by Carson Lund; Sarah Friedland's Venice prize-winning coming-of-old-age drama, *Familiar Touch*, starring Kathleen Chalfant; Angus MacLachlan's poignant family portrait, *A Little Prayer*, starring David Strathairn; and Charlie Shackleton's Sundance award-winning true-crime autocritique, *Zodiac Killer Project*. Upcoming releases include the Dardennes' Belgian Oscar Entry, *Young Mothers*; Amanda Kramer's Sundance body swapping comedy starring Juliette Lewis, *By Design*; and François Ozon's Albert Camus adaptation, *The Stranger*.

Music Box Films is independently owned and operated by the Southport Music Box Corporation, which also owns and operates the Music Box Theatre, Chicago's premier venue for independent and foreign films. For more information, visit [www.musicboxfilms.com](http://www.musicboxfilms.com).

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