

## PRESS PACK



# BETWEEN TWO RIVERS

A film by  
Jacob Cartwright & Nick Jordan

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Filmed, edited and directed by: Jacob Cartwright and Nick Jordan

Additional camera: Daniel Overturf  
Production research: Gordon Pruett  
Original soundtrack score: Kurt Tietz  
Narration: Robert Streit

Category: Feature documentary  
Production year: 2012  
Running time: 96 mins  
Shooting format: HD Video  
Sound: Stereo  
Aspect ratio: 16:9 widescreen (1.78:1)

Filming location: Cairo, Illinois, USA

Screening formats: HDCAM  
Mini-dv HDV  
PAL DigiBeta  
PAL Beta SP  
PAL DVD  
Blu-ray  
Windows Media 1280x720  
MPEG-4 H.264 AVC 1280x720 25p  
Uncompressed HDV, 1920 x 1080i  
NTSC and other formats available on request

#### Screenings:

Big Muddy Film Festival 2012, Illinois USA (winner Best Film, Audience Choice Award)  
Memphis International Film Festival 2012, USA  
Zaragoza Environmental Film Festival 2012, Spain  
Kansas International Film Festival 2012, USA  
Long Island International Film Festival 2012, USA  
Louisville International Film Festival 2012, USA  
St Louis International Film Festival 2012, USA  
River's Edge International Film Festival 2012, USA

#### Sample reviews:

Between Two Rivers is a remarkable attempt to resuscitate Cairo; to unveil its dark past and shed light upon its uncertain present. ...Throws into sharp relief a powerful history, thanks only to the compelling wit, curiosity and insight of its makers. Visually mesmerizing.

★★★★★ Pulp

Captivating....identifies the history of racism in the area without being exploitative....The Southern Illinois landscape, strikingly captured by Cartwright and Jordan's cinematography....an adeptness at weaving the stories together at a crucial, historical pressure point, smack dab in the middle of America. ★★★★★ Ecstatic Film

The documentary succeeds admirably....The core visuals of the film are beautifully composed....A compelling watch that I would easily recommend due to its even handed approach, strong presentation and open, heartfelt interviews. ★★★★★ Blueprint

## Synopsis:

*Between Two Rivers* is a new documentary film about Cairo, Illinois, a historic town with a dark and troubled past, located at the confluence of the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, where the North meets the South in the heartland of America.

Filmed, edited and directed by artists Jacob Cartwright and Nick Jordan, *Between Two Rivers* offers a remarkable insight into a community struggling with severe economic, social and environmental pressures. The city's tumultuous past against the backdrop of the latest crisis to afflict the community: the record-breaking floods of spring 2011, when the rising Ohio and Mississippi rivers threatened to destroy the town.

With lyrical and striking contrasts between the past and present, the film explores the multiple factors that have led to city's rise and fall, from booming river-trade and juke-joints to mob-lynchings and race riots which tore apart the community. Once renowned for its wealth and fine architecture, Cairo today has countless derelict homes, abandoned businesses and empty lots, which nature is steadily encroaching upon and reclaiming.

Researched and filmed over a four-year period, the film combines original cinematography and candid interviews with archive footage, unseen for over forty years, capturing the town at the height of explosive racial tensions in the late 1960s. In 1969 Cairo witnessed the last pitched battles of the American civil-rights movement, at a defining moment in the nation's history. *Between Two Rivers* illustrates the long-term impact of the violent civil unrest, economic boycotts, curfews and martial law that so deeply divided the community.

From the vivid childhood recollections of a car salesman to the emotive music of a local soul guitarist, a broad range of individuals share their feelings, insights and experiences of life in Cairo, and their hopes for a better future. The residents' hope and resolve to keep their city alive is belied by a mix of nostalgia and fatalism, as Cairo's once-thriving downtown district is gradually demolished and the population steadily declines.

Filmed on the surrounding levees, rivers, lakes and woodlands the documentary explores Cairo's relationship to the unique environment that encircles the town. The tip of southern Illinois is a biological midpoint of the USA; a region of natural diversity where numerous species and terrains meet at the limits of their northern and southern range.

At a time when national governments are reeling from the effects of a global financial crisis, *Between Two Rivers* reveals the stark effects of economic inequalities, environmental disasters and social injustice, as experienced by the people of one beleaguered town caught between two mighty rivers.

“There's no place like Cairo.”

## Soundtrack Score

*Between Two Rivers* features an original music score composed & performed by multi-instrumentalist Kurt Tietz. Recorded at Sunrise Studios, in Cape Girardeau, Missouri (30 miles north of Cairo, IL) Tietz has created a compelling, lyrical and atmospheric score, utilizing cello, violin, double-bass, acoustic/slide guitar, piano, percussion and harmonica. Combining atonal sounds and more pronounced melodies, Tietz composed the score while viewing edited scenes from the film, as well as responding to specific suggestions or thematic ideas from the film-makers.

Kurt Tietz also performs with southern Illinois bluegrass band Old Santa Fe.

## Director's Statement:

"Cairo took us by surprise. We came across its abandoned downtown by chance and were astonished by its haunting beauty; the derelict stores and crumbling facades of this once thriving centre of river commerce are disconcerting but highly seductive. The town has both a dramatic and melancholic aura, which, as filmmakers, we were immediately drawn to.

"However, we soon discovered that it is far more than a ready-made film-set, and much less the deserted 'ghost-town' it is often described as. Cairo is a community, albeit one beset with many troubles and facing a precarious future.

"Cairo offers a striking example of the economic and social pressures facing many small-towns, but it is additionally burdened by the onerous weight of a troubled and dark past. We were privileged to meet many people who were willing to share their experiences and knowledge with us, revealing a complex and compelling story of boom and bust, wealth and poverty, fires and floods. The fallout from Cairo's hardship, conflicts and bad luck is all too evident, in this unique town wedged between the two rivers, at the *Confluence of America*."

- Jacob Cartwright and Nick Jordan

## Film-maker's Biography

Jacob Cartwright and Nick Jordan are artists and film-makers based in Manchester, UK. Their collaborative work explores the relationship between the natural world and our multifaceted cultural histories. *Between Two Rivers* is their first full-length documentary, after directing a number of award-winning shorts, including *American Water*, which was selected for the BFI London Film Festival, 2011.

They recently completed a trilogy of films centred on the writings of the 19th century artist-naturalist John James Audubon. Their documentary *The Reapers* was awarded best experimental film at the 2009 London Short Film Festival, and in 2010 the festival held a retrospective screening of their work. Other recent film festivals and group exhibitions include *Documenta*, Madrid; *Practical Truths*, Castlefield Gallery, Manchester; *Darwin's Eye*, Institut National d'Histoire de l'Art (INHA), Paris; *Lines of Desire*, Oriel Davies Gallery, Newtown; *Art, Science & the Origin of Species*, Ohio State University, Columbus, USA; *The New York Film Festival*; *3rd Beijing Independent Film Festival*, Songzhuang, China; *Voices From The Water*, Bangalore, India.

**A selection of people appearing in *Between Two Rivers*:**



**Glen Poshard** is president of Southern Illinois University and a former Illinois State Senator and U.S. Congressman. Poshard has spearheaded numerous social schemes and initiatives in Cairo, and talks about the town's significant and strategic role in the history of the USA, from the civil war to the civil rights struggle.



**Lee Carter** is a founder member of the Cairo band The Soul Phonics, whose abandoned basement studio is featured in the film. In his Cairo home, Lee plays guitar and performs a moving rendition of 'Keep Your Head to the Sky'. Lee's wife Wilma talks candidly about the past racial tensions in the town and the direct effect on her family.



**Nancy Novak Philipper** recently moved to Cairo after becoming homeless when her bank foreclosed on her Chicago apartment. While tending her front garden, Nancy speaks of her recent difficulties and how moving to Cairo has given her life new meaning.



**Rick Casper** is a car salesman from Cairo who leads us on a remarkable journey into the heart of the community. Casper is a colourful character with a wealth of stories and memories to draw upon, including the civil rights violence in the late 60's. Rick's humorous delivery and affable manner add an unexpected levity to proceedings.



**Reverend Larry Potts** appears as both a young Baptist preacher, interviewed in a 1969, and today's charismatic leader of his Cairo congregation at Mighty Rivers church. Rev Potts is a controversial figure. During the civil rights protests he was a figurehead for the white community and a supporter of the vigilante group The White Hats. The Rev Potts was implicated in the death of a black man but never charged.



**Pastor J L Posey** is the pastor of the First Praise Missionary Baptist Church, Cairo. Posey, a former blues musician, delivers his sermon through an electro-larynx and yet is still a powerful orator, accompanied by a passionate gospel choir. Posey also talks to camera about the troubles facing Cairo and the important role of faith in the community.

Between Two Rivers – stills



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