

# AMERICAN PSYCHE

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
DIVIDED STATED OF MIND



**Producer/Director:**  
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Filmmaker Paul van den Boom is pleased to introduce his film AMERICAN PSYCHE. This film seeks to find the every-day American perspective on social and political life in the United States following the events of 9/11.

AMERICAN PSYCHE is an official selection of the 2008 It's All True - Interantional Documentary Film Festival in Brazil, where it has been selected in the festival's 'The State of Things' section.

## **Screening Dates for AMERICAN PSYCHE:**

Monday, March 31 at 6pm	SÃO PAULO RESERVA CULTURAL, Av. Paulista 900 – Cerqueira César
Friday, April 4 at 2pm	RIO DE JANEIRO INSTITUTO MOREIRA SALLES, Rua Marquês de São Vicente 476
Saturday, April 5 at 6pm	RIO DE JANEIRO INSTITUTO MOREIRA SALLES, Rua Marquês de São Vicente 476



## SYNOPSIS

AMERICAN PSYCHE seeks to find the every-day American perspective on social and political life in America following the events of 9/11.

Travelling from New York City to Los Angeles, two European filmmakers conduct a series of interviews with Americans of diverse race, gender, religion and socio-economic standing. As they travel across America, listening to the stories of every-day people, they explore the current climate of social and political life in the United States.

AMERICAN PSYCHE opens a dialogue on the shared concerns, interests and hopes for the future that Americans have for their society, moving beyond the black and white political portraits as presented through mass media.

## PRODUCTION DETAILS

Original Title	AMERICAN PSYCHE
Length	55 min.
Color/BW	Color
Audio	Stereo
Original Language	English
Available Subtitles	English, French, Portugese, aSpanish, Dutch
Screening format	DigiBeta

## PRODUCER / DIRECTOR

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## DIRECTOR STATEMENT

The events of 9/11 marked a fundamental shift in the way America saw itself in relation to the rest of the world. As the White House expanded its vocabulary in 'preemptive strikes' and 'homeland security', even the idea of 'America' changed. What being 'American' meant, was appropriated into the unilateral interests of the Bush administration, creating an 'us or them' mantra. Sound-bites and vox-pop quotes saturated news media outlets, polarizing the country and making complex issues a yes or no veto on terrorism. The Bush administration's actions were re-branded as the 'American way' and a divine demonstration of freedom and democracy. Internationalism and responsibility to the United Nations was abandoned in the name of 'self-determination.' Unilateral coalitions were used instead, framing the United States as an absolute force of decisive action. Democracy became an American product that could be exported to foreign countries through military intervention. Ironically, at the same time Democracy was being used to 'enlighten' foreign nations, domestic policies in democracy were being compromised by 'homeland security.' The 'war on terror' became an absolute rationale; an excuse for abandoning basic human rights and dismissing the sovereignty of foreign nations.

As these events continued to press on the international conscience, I began to question what the true social climate of the United States was, and whether the actions of the White House were really reflecting the interests and concerns of its people. As a European, living in Canada, I became increasingly frustrated by the media sound-bites available to me. Having worked and travelled in the United States, I had experienced first hand the generosity of its people. However I could not align those experiences, with the 'American way' outlined by news headlines and the White House podium. Consequently I, along with François Le Goarant, decided to seek out the voices of every-day Americans directly. We wanted to engage people first-hand, and ask them to reflect on their current social and political climate; ask them what they thought about the direction the country was taking and their hopes for the future. We wanted to give people an opportunity to speak for themselves, and not through the filters of panelists, and political specialists.

With this goal in mind 'American Psyche' was born. François and I began a cross country road-trip from New York to Los Angeles, interviewing close to 150 Americans, from a variety of social, political and religious backgrounds. In truth, only two interviews were planned ahead. All other interviewees were met by simply striking up a conversation with those around us: locals on the street, in restaurants, markets, or even live stock auctions. More often than not we were invited into their homes, to stay for dinner and sleep in their guest room. With the tight reign of 'homeland security' in place, we expected Americans to be more suspicious of interviews, and less welcoming to strangers. However, we were able to easily connect with local people, showing Americans in general to be a welcoming and generous people.

Throughout the filming process we worked from a loose framework of questions and topics as a way to start conversation. During our travels particular themes came into focus, revolving around 9/11, the invasion of Iraq and the Bush Administration: International relations and responsibility; national security & control; human rights and social responsibilities. Finally the tried and true topics of money, religion, 'democracy now' and the future of America emerged again and again. Through engaging in candid conversations, we found a rhythm of understanding within the every-day American landscape, that opened up a dialogue of healthy criticism and self-reflection.



Ultimately through the editing process, Paul Raphaël and I found a momentum that allowed the many layers and perspectives of this dialogue to intermingle. This was accomplished through interchanging the dialogue from multiple interviews according to their themes. By approaching the film in such a way, we hoped to encourage the audience to draw relationships between multiple perspectives of thought, rather than isolating each interviewee and their opinions, according to their identity, location and lifestyle. Ultimately we hoped to foreground the active interest Americans had for their national identity, and its role in the international arena. While providing no clear conclusions, we hoped to provoke further discussion in our audiences, through the questions posed and explored by the Americans in our film.

With the creation of *American Psyche*, I hoped to make a deeply relevant film that would speak to audiences on an international level. From the beginning, while this film held a political purpose, we did not want to make it overly polemic; a film which gave the viewer an opportunity to draw their own conclusions, and find a place for their own opinions within the varied responses of our interviews. While there remain issues and topics that inspire polemic stances, it is within the very human concerns and hopes for their future, that these people express the overlap of their American values.

Ultimately I hope to offer an alternative portrayal of the big 'A' American portrayed in mass media, and provide an insight onto the diverse people whose government was leading the so-called 'war on terror.' The film also calls into question many of the myths about Americans that have established themselves in both the journalistic and international consciousness. Through each participant's willingness to share and converse with our cameras, we found that potential for the true expression of freedom in Democracy: the ability to challenge and question the decisions of their own government and nation.

Paul van den Boom  
Producer and Director of *American Psyche*

## **SELECTED CHARACTER DESCRIPTIONS**

### *Ida Lewis*

Ida has been working in journalism for over 50 years. She has written for newspapers and periodicals like *Life Magazine*, *L'Express*, *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times*. In 1971 Ida became the first black woman in the U.S. to publish a magazine, with the founding and publication of "Encore: American & Worldwide News." She has worked as its publisher and editor-in-chief for 10 years. Currently Ida is a professor at Boston University within the Department of Journalism.

### *Peter Koper*

Peter has been a writer/producer in television and film for over two decades. Peter also teaches writing at Columbia University in New York State. We met Peter for an interview in his SoHo loft apartment in New York City. His observations on the United States are also informed by his background as a newspaper reporter and foreign correspondent.



## *Ray Hudson*

Ray started his career working in the insurance business. After a while he felt a need to give more meaning to his life. Ray went on to become a Reverend and now leads an active church community at the Real Life Methodist Church in Waterloo, Illinois.

## *Wally Brown*

Wally is a longtime Navajo educator & activist in Page, Arizona. Wally has built a Navajo Village Heritage Center, where visitors learn about the culture, traditions and spirit of Navajo Native Americans. Wally shared his wisdom with us, giving an insight into the different outlook Native Americans have on the world.

## *Mahnaz M. Shabbir*

Mahnaz is a first generation American Muslim woman, who has a successful career, in addition to raising her family in Stilwell, Kansas. Mahnaz and her parents emmigrated from India to the United States in the 1950s. Mahnaz is president of her own strategic management consulting company. She also lectures to organizations and the government who are interested in knowing more about Islam and diversity. Mahnaz is a leader amongst the Muslim community in the greater Kansas City area.

## *Steven E. Clutter*

We met Steven, his wife and their ten children at the open-air auction in Mount Hope, Ohio. Mount Hope is home to mostly Amish and Christian families. Steven and his family were singing religious songs "to share the love of Jesus and spread some seeds". Steven is a devoted Born Again Christian who works as an Internal Medicine Doctor.

## *Alfred G. Davis Jr.*

We met Alfred in front of the Salvation Army in North Las Vegas. After Alfred was released from a mental health hospital, he was separated from his wife, lost his house and his job, and subsequently ended up living on the street. Alfred discussed many of the challenges a person faces on the streets and his observations on American society.

## *Rene Doria*

Rene was born in the slums of Manila, in the Philippines. When Rene was 18 years old his family was visited by missionaries from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. His family converted to the Mormon religion. After Rene met his wife they moved to the United States. Rene received a degree in Statistics and works for an investment company in Salt Lake City. Rene has 7 children.

## *Billy Gale*

Billy had just parked his Cadillac Eldorado in front of a beach in Malibu, preparing to go surfing. Billy shared many stories involving his experiences while on the road. In pursuit of his two passions, music and surfing, he had seen much of America and laid out his insights with the measured skill of a songwriter.



## *Clare Martin*

Clare is a man in his eighties with a great interest in the world around him. We met him in a local coffee house in Berlin, Ohio. Before retirement Clare was a social studies teacher at the local high school. Clare is a self-taught intellectual, referred to in his home town as “the walking encyclopedia.”

## *Malachi Watkins*

Malachi, eighteen years old, had just returned to his home town of Prairie Village, Kansas, after a one-year road trip through the United States. While driving through the country and sleeping in his van, he met many Americans from all walks of life. Because of the poverty and injustice that he saw around him, Malachi now looks at his country in a different way.

## **KEY PERSONNEL & CREDITS**

### *PRODUCER / DIRECTOR Paul van den Boom*

Born in the Netherlands, Paul studied audio-visual Arts at the Erasmus University in Brussels, Belgium. In 1999 Paul moved to Montreal, Canada, where he developed his skills in film and television production, working in various positions such as Assistant Director on Canadian and U.S. productions. In 2004 Paul founded Boom Pictures, a production company that allowed him to follow his passion for producing and directing documentary films. To date, Paul has produced and directed documentary films that explore areas of political culture, current affairs, social history, art and discourse. *ACROSS THE ATLANTIC* (2004), Paul's documentary debut, is a film that traces the experiences of Dutch immigrants who came to Canada in post-World War II.

### *SALES AGENT / EXECUTIVE PRODUCER Jan Rölfekamp*

In 1982, Jan founded Films Transit International, which is one of the longest running, renowned and respected international sales agencies of quality documentaries in the world. With offices in Montreal, Amsterdam and New York, Films Transit International specializes in the worldwide release and marketing of high profile, theatrical and TV documentaries. Jan has also been involved as Executive Producer on various documentary projects.

### *CINEMATOGRAPHER / SOUND RECORDIST / ASSOCIATE PRODUCER*

#### *François Le Goarant*

Born in Switzerland, François studied History and Geopolitical Studies at the Sorbonne University in Paris. As a photographer, François has travelled extensively in Europe, Asia, the Middle-East, Africa, Central America and the United States. His photographs have been published in magazines such as *Géo France*, *National Geographic* and *Zoom*. François has also worked as cameraman on TV documentaries such as *ENTRE DEUX FRONTS*, *THE UKATAK RACE* and *MARRIAGE AFRIQUE*.



*EDITOR / ASSOCIATE PRODUCER Paul Raphaël*

Paul Raphaël is an Award winning director, editor and visual effects artist. He has worked on many films, documentaries, music videos and commercials, including clients such as Adidas and Vivendi-Universal. The video LES HUMAINS (2005), which he co-directed and animated, won the Grafika Awards for Best Digital Animation and Jury's Favorite. Paul is currently co-directing the live-action/animated short film TINGIJUQ, starring Inuit throat singer Tagaq.

*ORIGINAL MUSIC David Kristian*

David Kristian has been making music for over 20 years, composing everything from experimental music, IDM, Electro, and Synth pop to traditional scores for films, TV commercials, multimedia, and Anime. In 2006, David scored no less than six feature films, including Nacho Cerda's THE ABANDONED, Karim Hussain's LA BELLE BÊTE and Douglas Buck's remake of Brian DePalma's SISTERS. David is currently creating music and sound design on two animated series for Japanese Television and two feature film projects.

## **AMERICAN PSYCHE END CREDITS**

Characters (in order of appearance)

**Katherine J. Eakin**

**Mahnaz M. Shabbir**

**Rene Doria**

**Peter Koper**

**Bonnie Witzel**

**James McCormick**

**Ray Hudson**

**Edna Phillips**

**Allison Bechtel**

**Wally Brown**

**Clare Martin**

**Rick Thompson**

**Billy Gale**

**Robert S. Gratz**

**Jeffrey R. Babb**

**Ida Lewis**

**Mike Gossett**

**Glen Easter**

**Scott Douglas**

**Maril Crabtree**

**Tom Nimmo**

**Malachi Watkins**

**Rhonda La Grande**

**Steven E. Clutter**

**Joyce Moore**

**Lesla D. Allen**

**Perry L. Moore**

**Alfred G. Davis Jr.**

**Ed J. Kling Jr.**

**Silver Ortega**





Crew

Producer & Director  
**Paul van den Boom**

Executive Producer  
**Jan Röfekamp**

Associate Producers  
**François Le Goarant**  
**Paul Raphaël**

Cinematographer  
**François Le Goarant**

Editor  
**Paul Raphaël**

Sound Recordist  
**François Le Goarant**

Sound Editor & Sound Mixer  
**Bruno Pucella**

Original Music  
**David Kristian**

Production Manager New York City  
**Natasha M. Leroux**

Still Photographers  
**François Le Goarant**  
**Paul van den Boom**

Color Timer  
**Paul Raphaël**

Graphic Designer  
**Leslie Plumb**

MUSIC

*"The Upwards March"*  
Written & Performed by Bell Orchestre  
Published by Bell Orchestre  
Courtesy of Bell Orchestre Music  
[www.bellorchestre.com](http://www.bellorchestre.com)

*"Drifters"*  
Written & Performed by Watson/Kuster/Angell/Stein  
Published by Intrique Music/Janijam Music Courtesy  
of Secret City Records  
[www.patrickwatson.net](http://www.patrickwatson.net)

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