

The Atlantic PRESENTS

WHITE NOISE

INSIDE THE RACIST RIGHT

DIRECTED AND CO-PRODUCED BY DANIEL LOMBROSO
PRODUCED AND EXECUTIVE PRODUCED BY KASIA CIEPLAK-MAYR VON BALDEGG

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SYNOPSIS



The Atlantic's first feature documentary is the definitive inside story of the movement that has come to be known as the alt-right. With unprecedented access, *White Noise* tracks the rise of far-right nationalism by focusing on the lives of three of its main proponents: Mike Cernovich, a conspiracy theorist and sex blogger turned media entrepreneur; Lauren Southern, an anti-feminist, anti-immigration YouTube star; and Richard Spencer, a white-power ideologue.

Directed and shot by Daniel Lombroso in his directorial debut, this film takes the viewer into the terrifying heart of the movement—explosive protests, riotous parties, and the rooms where populist and racist ideologies are refined, weaponized, and injected into the mainstream.

Just as the alt-right comes to prominence, infighting tears the movement apart. Spencer and Cernovich clash over the role of white nationalism in conservative politics. Southern struggles to reconcile her leadership role with the sexism and misogyny of her peers. Lawsuits mount and internecine fights erupt, but even as the alt-right fractures, its once-marginalized ideas find a foothold in mainstream discourse; in Republican politics; in the establishment right-wing press, especially Fox News—and on the world's biggest social-media platforms.

As white-nationalist violence surges in America and across the world, *White Noise* represents an urgent warning about the power of extremism, and where it's going next.

THE FILMMAKERS



DANIEL LOMBROSO

(Director, Co-Producer, Cinematographer) is a director and journalist. For five years, he was a staff producer at *The Atlantic*, where he directed award-winning projects exploring Russian espionage, the Israeli settlement movement, far-right Christian media, and more. He has reported across the U.S., Europe, Russia, and the Middle East. Lombroso graduated from McGill University with a degree in political science and lives in New York City. *White Noise* is his feature film debut.



KASIA CIEPLAK-MAYR VON BALDEGG

(Producer and Executive Producer) founded and oversaw Atlantic Studios, *The Atlantic's* award-winning in-house documentary-production division. Under her leadership, Atlantic Studios won two Murrow Awards, two Headliner Awards, and an RTDNA Kaleidoscope Award, and was a three-time finalist for the National Magazine Award in Video. Atlantic Studios' short documentaries have premiered at SXSW, DOC NYC, AFI Docs, Mountainfilm, the American Documentary Film Festival, the LA Film Festival, and other festivals. Her short documentaries include *The Contract Buyers League* and *The Guardian of North Lawndale*, produced in collaboration with Ta-Nehisi Coates for his landmark cover story "The Case for Reparations." The films were finalists for the National Magazine Award in Video in 2015. She studied filmmaking at Harvard University.



CARLOS ROJAS FELICE

(Editor) is a documentary editor based in New York. He has edited *They Took Them Alive* (Full Frame 2017), *Tre Maison Dasan* (San Francisco Intl FF 2018), and *The Great Hack* (Sundance Film Festival 2019), and was additional editor of *Netizens* (Tribeca 2018, HotDocs 2018). Rojas was the recipient of the Karen Schmeer Award for Excellence in Documentary Editing at *IFFBoston* for his work on *Tre Maison Dasan*. He is originally from Peru by way of New Jersey; he studied Latin American Studies and economics at Wesleyan University and has an M.A. in media studies from the New School.



GIL TALMI

(Composer) is an Emmy Award-nominated film composer with a passion for socially conscious films. Blending his traditional orchestral background with tasteful modular electronics and eclectic world-music sensibilities, Talmi has created a signature sound that can be heard in many award-winning productions worldwide. Some of Gil's most recent work includes original music for *White Noise* (*The Atlantic*), *The Great Hack* (Netflix/Noujaim Films/Othrs Production), *Building the American Dream* (Panda Bear Films/PBS), *Man on Fire* (Fendelman Films/PBS), *Chavela* (Aubin Pictures) and *Tre Maison Dasan* (PBS).

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT



In 2016, I captured footage of Donald Trump supporters throwing Nazi salutes in celebration of his presidential victory. Ever since, I have been embedded in the alt-right as a journalist and documentarian. I saw far-right rhetoric surging on college campuses and in mainstream American politics, and white supremacists reaching millions online. What made white-power ideology so intoxicating?

As a Jewish American and the grandson of two Holocaust survivors, this question was deeply personal. Over three years, I traversed 12 states and five countries, and spent hundreds of hours with conspiracy theorists, far-right influencers, and politicians. I hoped that by gaining unprecedented access inside the movement, I could understand why so many in my generation were being radicalized by far-right ideas.

During a visit to Richard Spencer's apartment in Virginia, it began to click. Evan McLaren, an alt-right lawyer, wrote master plans on a whiteboard. A band of college kids poured whiskey for Spencer, adjusted his gold-rimmed Napoleon painting, and discussed the coming "identitarian" revolution. Spencer offered

a sense of historical purpose to his bored, middle-class followers. In his telling, they weren't just "white Americans," but descendants of the Greeks and Romans. "Myths are more powerful than rationality," Spencer told me. "We make life worth living."

White Noise explores the seductive power of extremism. *Hatred feels good.* But the fix is fleeting. As the film progresses, the subjects reveal the contradictions at the heart of their world. Lauren Southern advocates for traditional gender roles, but resents the misogyny and sexism of her peers. Mike Cernovich warns that "diversity is white genocide," but has an Iranian wife and biracial kids. Richard Spencer swears he'll lead the white-nationalist revolution – until it's more comfortable for him to move home to live with his wealthy mother in Montana.

Storytellers shouldn't amplify extremist movements. They have a duty to expose uncomfortable truths. The alt-right is an imminent danger to the future of this country. For so many who feel lost or alone, these avatars of hate offer a promise – follow us, and life will be better. *White Noise* shows how empty that promise is.

THE ATLANTIC'S STATEMENT



One week after the 2016 presidential election, white nationalists gathered in Washington, D.C., to celebrate. “Hail Trump! Hail our people!” Richard Spencer said from the podium to cheers and Nazi salutes. *The Atlantic’s* cameras captured exclusive footage of this moment, and the clip was shared widely, on news networks and social-media platforms around the world.

White Noise, *The Atlantic’s* first feature documentary, is the result of a four-year commitment to investigating and exposing the roots of rising white nationalism in the U.S. and abroad. The magazine has covered race in America for more than a century. “*The Atlantic* was founded by abolitionists in the 1850s to argue for justice and equality, and this documentary fits squarely within our core mission,” says Jeffrey Goldberg, editor in chief. *White Noise* brings the rigor of long-form magazine reporting to the big screen through immersive, cinematic storytelling. Director Daniel Lombroso and the Atlantic Studios

production team worked closely with *The Atlantic’s* newsroom, following the magazine’s standard practices for reporting, fact-checking, and reviewing countless edits.

The result is a deeply reported journey through the underbelly of the alt-right, bringing viewers an unfiltered, clear-eyed look at extremism that cuts through the artifice and hype. This film joins the magazine’s tradition of long-form reporting on racism, from Frederick Douglass’s 1866 “Reconstruction,” to Luke O’Brien’s 2017 “The Making of an American Nazi,” to Adam Serwer’s 2019 “White Nationalism’s Deep American Roots.” The past four years have shown that even as the alt-right fractures and reinvents itself, the ideas it has unleashed have succeeded in poisoning mainstream political discourse and shaping the direction of the country. *White Noise* is essential viewing for anyone who wants to understand and address this urgent reality.