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INDEPENDENT FILMMAKERS

THE FRONT MAN

By Paul Devlin

PRESS KIT WRITTEN MATERIAL

**For publicity stills and additional information, please visit:
<http://www.thefrontmanmovie.com>**

English, USA, Romantic Musicomedy, 73 minutes.

LOGLINE

Disillusioned by the broken promise of Rock 'n' Roll, but still plagued by dreams of stardom, a charismatic musician goes on a 27-year journey in search of the meaning of success.

Director/Editor/Cinematographer

Paul Devlin

Producers

Claire Missanelli

Paul Devlin

Music

Loaded Poets (Jim Wood, Dan Snyder, John Kayne)

Cast

Jim Wood

Christie Wood

Dan Snyder

John Kayne

Glen Burtnik

Graham Maby



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SYNOPSIS

With his 5th feature documentary, five-time Emmy winner and Independent Spirit nominee Paul Devlin has created a rare non-fiction romantic comedy. ***The Front Man*** is an intimate portrait that evolves into a 27-year journey about a man so busy chasing his dreams that he risks missing what success really means.

Jim Wood is an everyman middle-class musician burdened by the desire for stardom. Dynamic and abrasively funny, he reveals surprising insight and intelligence as he grapples with the broken promise of Rock 'n' Roll. Jim must reconcile his joy creating music and his wife Christie's desire for a child with a culture in which anything short of celebrity is failure.

Jim and Christie's quest for fame takes a windy path through the homes of acclaimed musicians, a legendary recording studio, the set of a cult horror movie, and onto American national television. These adventures counterpoint their very personal, but also hilariously candid debates about whether or not to have children.

Jim and Christie's pursuit of celebrity becomes a rite of passage, transforming them in surprising ways as we watch them grow up. Perhaps success isn't what we expected it would be.



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DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

I have come to realize that *The Front Man* completes a trilogy of sorts. My films *Power Trip*, *BLAST!* and *The Front Man* are all about men I grew up with who just happen to be fascinating people. But *The Front Man* emerges as my most personal film yet. It is the story of my best friend, but it is also my story.

Thirteen years ago, I tried to create a fictional character for a screenplay based on my buddy Jim Wood. I've known Jim since kindergarten and he's always been the most charismatic, clever, humorous person in the room. All of us have known someone like Jim growing up – that guy who will definitely be famous someday.

But my attempt to convey his character in fictional form fell short. So I decided to start shooting him on video every time we got together. That made more sense anyway, given my background as a documentary filmmaker. Of course Jim loved the idea, though we had no specific goal in mind beyond laughing a lot and capturing some great moments.

While I continued making other films, I kept returning to the *The Front Man*. Soon, I got deeper into the lives of Jim and his wife Christie, as well as Jim's bandmates John Kayne and Dan Snyder. Story threads emerged that we could never have anticipated. I added archival footage to the mix and this haphazard project gradually took on epic proportions as I essentially captured Jim's entire adulthood over a 27-year period. *The Front Man* supports the idea that any well-documented life can provide material for a compelling story.



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Even more gratifying were the profound thematic undercurrents that emerged by following Jim for decades. *The Front Man* raises compelling questions about how any artist measures success. Is the purpose of creative endeavor personal satisfaction or to communicate to the widest audience possible? Can an artist balance his or her work with a family and well-paying day job, or do these represent dangerous distractions from the primary goal of attaining riches and immortality through artistic achievement? What if the success you seek is not the success you achieve? If you're not famous, have you failed?

The Front Man tackles these timeless but elusive questions head-on. It does so not by interviewing expert talking heads, nor by surveying dozens of artists. Instead, by following one man over the course of most of his adult life, *The Front Man* takes a more ambitious, in-depth approach. Through this singular personal story, *The Front Man* discovers universal insights.

Editing *The Front Man* has been one of my most difficult challenges ever. I struggled for years to construct a coherent narrative out of this random, seemingly endless material. Gradually I realized that I was facing some of the same artistic quandaries as Jim. Is the creative process not enough? Why do I insist on being recognized for this work? As Jim's character's understanding of success transforms through the narrative, I discovered that only through transforming my own understanding of success could I tell his story.

Jim's struggle is my struggle. In fact dear reader, it occurs to me that perhaps Jim's struggle is *YOUR* struggle as well. Each of us is The Front Man (or Woman) of our own lives.



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Paul Devlin - Bio

A five-time Emmy winner for his work on NBC's Olympics and CBS's Tour de France, Paul Devlin began making films at age 12 with a Super 8 camera his father bought for him.

Since then, Paul has created numerous independent projects including 4 feature-length, theatrically-released, nonfiction narrative films: *SlamNation Power Trip*, *Freestyle: The Art of Rhyme*, and *BLAST!*. These critically-acclaimed films have screened for millions of viewers in over 120 countries, have won over a dozen international film festival awards and earned an Independent Spirit Award nomination.

Paul's latest project, *The Front Man*, is a rare documentary romantic comedy about a charismatic musician, disillusioned by the broken promise of Rock 'n Roll, but still plagued by dreams of stardom, who goes on a 27-year journey in search of the meaning of success.

As an editor, Paul's extensive credits include commercials, music videos (Elvis Costello, Cyndi Lauper, Kenny G), television shows and major sports broadcasts, including CBS's Super Bowls and ABC/ESPN's World Cup Soccer.

As a writer, Paul has contributed to *The New York Times*, *Filmmaker Magazine*, *The International Herald Tribune*, *The Independent*, and *Cineaste*, among others.

Paul's first documentary *Rockin' Brunswick* was made while earning his degree in English Literature at the University of Michigan. As a student, Paul assisted Robert Altman on his film *Secret Honor* and participated in a screenwriting seminar led by Lawrence Kasden (*The Big Chill*). Paul has visited over 40 countries and has exhibited photographs of his travels.

Paul is on the Board of Directors of Nila, Inc., which designs and manufactures environmentally sustainable LED lighting for the motion picture and television industries.



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DIRECTOR'S FILMOGRAPHY

BLAST! (2008) – Producer/Director/Editor

Feature-length adventure story about the surprising real life of scientists, following a tenacious team of astrophysicists as they journey from the Arctic to the Antarctic to launch a revolutionary telescope on a NASA high altitude balloon. Produced in association with BBC, Discovery Canada, SVT/Sweden, YLE/Finland and recipient of the 2008 New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA) Individual Artist Grant. Featured on The Colbert Report, NPR's Science Friday, and broadcast on PBS, across Europe, Japan and globally on BBC World News. (www.blastthemovie.com).

Power Trip (2003) – Producer/Director/Editor

A rare, feature-length case study of the monumental transition from communism to capitalism, following an American company trying to solve the energy crisis in Tbilisi, capital of the former Soviet Republic of Georgia, amidst street rioting, institutional corruption, political assassination. Winner of 10 US & international film festival awards, nominated for Independent Spirit Award. Screened in 60 countries and 50 US cities and broadcast on PBS's Independent Lens. (www.powertriphemovie.com)

Freestyle: The Art of Rhyme (2002) – Producing Editor (Preditor)

Documentary on rappers who can improvise their rhymes, exploring the roots, community, spiritual values, as well as the competitive edge of contemporary hip hop. Special Jury Award for Documentary Filmmaking at the Florida Film Festival. Broadcast on VH1 and distributed theatrically and on DVD by Palm Pictures.



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SlamNation (1998) – Producer/Director/Editor

Award-winning feature length nonfiction narrative film about competitive, Olympic-style poetry, focusing on the 1996 National Poetry Slam. ***The genre's answer to "Monterey Pop" – The New York Times.*** Premiered at SXSW Film Festival and opened theatrically in New York City at Film Forum. Distributed nationally in theaters and broadcast on HBO/Cinemax & Starz/Encore.
(www.slamnation.com)

Slammin' (1995) – Producer/Director/Editor

Television pilot, presenting a Nuyorican Poet's Cafe semi-final poetry slam in New York City as a sporting event. Broadcast on WNET's Reel New York & Chicago's Image Union. On DVD through New Video/Docurama. **Nominated for 2 New York Emmy Awards.**

The Eyes of St. Anthony (1992) – Producer/Director/Editor

Fiction film, winner of several film festival awards and distributed internationally by Tapestry International.