

STRANGE NEGOTIATIONS

A film by Brandon Vedder



2019 / USA / 91 minutes / DCP / Dolby Digital 5.1

www.bazanfilm.com

WORLD PREMIERE

Fri 3/15, 3pm @ The Paramount Theater

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PUBLICITY

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LOG LINE

A documentary exploring the spiritual, artistic, and personal turmoil of musician David Bazan (from the band Pedro the Lion), set against America's own crisis of faith highlighted by the 2016 presidential election.

SYNOPSIS

After renouncing his long-held Christian beliefs and walking away from his critically-acclaimed band, Pedro the Lion, musician David Bazan retreated into a solitary life of touring solo, struggling to rebuild his worldview and career from the ground-up, and to support his family of four. *Strange Negotiations* finds David a decade into his journey, during which he has become a sort of reluctant prophet to Americans reeling from their country's own crisis of faith highlighted during the 2016 presidential election.



DIRECTORS STATEMENT

The first few years of having a camera in my hands, came while shooting live music and touring with bands. This permanently baked music and sound into the way I thought about framing, movement and film as a medium. As I continued to shoot, I began to understand the incredible power in immersing an audience into the tone and feeling of a place or happening. Editing those early projects helped me understand how powerful the documentary format can be when trying to unpack ideas or themes stuck in otherwise impossible nuance and complexity. Over the past 15 years, each film I've made has helped me understand this potential of not only putting the viewer in the subject's shoes but also inside their heads.

In a recent profile Matt Warren from Film Independent asked, *“Moving through La Source, A Certain Kind of Light and In Pursuit of Silence the themes at the core of your films seem to be getting progressively more spiritual rather than political—is that intentional?”* I hadn't made that connection at that point but he was absolutely right and my new film **Strange Negotiations** solidifies that movement in an undeniable way. When the idea of this film came to me it seemed and has proven to be a film I am uniquely qualified to make.

Strange Negotiations finds a good part of its motivation and timing in the much overlooked influence modern organized religion has on today's pressing social issues in America. Much of David's music and fan interactions are centered around creating meaningful conversations about faith systems, bringing attention to the importance of interrogating world views and staying ever open to the data our world and interactions offer. Even in its steady decline, he understands the incredibly powerful place the evangelical community holds in the political and social sphere of this country and it's massive impact on many of the most pressing social justice issues we face in this country.

With half a lifetime on the inside of mainstream christian religious institutions and a bible college education, David has a very rare voice in this conversation. Given his history as one of the most well respected Christian songwriters in mainstream culture, his voice still figures large within the evangelical community. Mainstream media called Bazan's **Curse Your Branches** his breakup letter to God but somehow it was still voted into Christianity Today's top records of the year. As the cultural hold of being a so-called “Christian nation” loosens, the ability to individually reassess one's deepest beliefs presents itself as a new cultural norm for the first time in generations as seen in the millions of religiously homeless engaging in America's #Exvangelical movement.

The way Dave has used his songwriting to thoughtfully deconstruct and negotiate through his entire worldview was the thing that got me. The more I dove into his 20 year body of work, the more confident I became that a film was the right way to tell this complex but increasingly relevant story in a helpful way. I



had no idea that the years of shooting ahead of Dave and I would fittingly coincide with the most dramatic swings of his life. Sharing many of Dave's existential misgivings personally while also struggling to support a family as an artist, making this film has been exhaustingly close to home but also endlessly helpful. Now I am just so honored to be able to share this piece of Dave and my life with you.

ABOUT DAVID BAZAN

David Bazan has never had the answers. His records almost exclusively live inside questions. Questions of politics, of relationships, of addiction, and of God. For anyone looking to art to remove doubt, Bazan is not that refuge. With a catalogue that orbits the darkest corners of the human experience, his songs are the tiny pinprick of light, the first breath coming up for air, the rest stop on a trip with no destination.

Under the name Pedro the Lion, starting in the late 1990s, Bazan released a series of highly praised records that documented with stark honesty the path from struggling believer to restless unbeliever.

With Pedro, Bazan followed a traditional record release path – new album every two years, relentless touring, club show blurring into club show with an ever shifting line up of brilliant hired guns, showcasing his



pendant for hard hitting rock and roll, his ability to imbue vulnerable melodies with guts and muscle. But it took a toll – financially, emotionally, and musically. By 2005, it was time to not just treat the symptoms, but attempt to regenerate entirely. Bazan shed the band name and set out under his own, down the long, obscure path toward some semblance of sustainability; no cure-all, no quick answer, just years of trial and error, and the patience to follow through.

In 2009 during preparation for the release of *Curse Your Branches*, Bazan took further steps to reorder his life on the road: he pioneered a new model for touring – living room shows. Embarking on tour after tour in the US and abroad, he alternated between these solo house shows for a few dozen people at a time and 300-500 capacity rock clubs with his band. Despite many believing it to be an unwise gamble, the house show format was a quiet triumph. Continuing to work both formats, Bazan managed to keep the rock band plate spinning through multiple club tours in 2011 for *Strange Negotiations* and the *Control* 10 year anniversary tour in 2012. As a result, Bazan became the #1 most touring artist on Billions Corp's enormous roster, accumulating well over a thousand shows since 2009, an achievement that brought pride, but one that left him bone tired, depleted, and unable to write.

Driven to figure it out, Bazan gave up the band and focused more on house shows. It was a natural expression of his lyrical vulnerability – take away distraction, sing some raw shit, and see who stays. Not only did people stay, more people came, and on top of the tours being successful, it rehabilitated Bazan's desire for the road, making way for the next experiment.

Having spent half of the last decade on tour, away from home, Bazan's new songs reflect the wandering life of a traveling troubadour. It's what, and whom, he leaves at home that drives David's new work. His writing now reflects the duality that had blocked him from writing before – what it means to have a home, and have to constantly leave it to make ends meet.

ABOUT THE FILMMAKER

Brandon Vedder is an award winning documentary filmmaker. Brandon's career began touring with and making films about musicians. His early days had him shooting for concert films like **Pearl Jam: Live at the Garden**. In 2013, alongside Transcendental Media, Brandon produced, edited and shot the acclaimed documentary **La Source**, narrated by Academy Award nominated actor, Don Cheadle. The award winning film had its World Premiere at AFI Docs and went on to play theatrically in NYC & LA. In 2015 Brandon directed, shot & edited **A Certain Kind of Light**, a documentary short that received six best short documentary awards and aired on PBS in 2017. Brandon's most recent release as a producer & co-cinematographer is **In Pursuit of Silence**, which had its US premiere at SXSW in 2016. The film had its international theatrical release in late 2016 where it became a favorite of critics, boasting a 91% on Rotten Tomatoes. Brandon is headed back to SXSW in early 2019 for the World Premiere of his new feature documentary **Strange Negotiations**.



PRODUCTION NOTES

- Brandon showed up at David's Seattle home in August of 2015 to begin shooting after having just met once.
- The first tour captured was routed through the Bible Belt and stopped in Lynchburg, VA which is the home to the largest Christian College in the country. Trump visited the campus on his campaign just months before.
- Filmed over 3 years. 35 American cities. 44 Concerts.
- Brandon & David traveled over 7500 miles together.
- To achieve the intimacy desired and fit seamlessly into each setting a majority of the film was made without any crew, just Brandon & David.
- The film raised just under \$90k from 1500 backers with a [kickstarter campaign](#).

POST PRODUCTION NOTES

- The Edit began Feb 2017 and locked picture in Jan 2019.

- The 3 years of 4k filming yielded 48 tb of data
- Brandon met almost every one of his post collaborators through the films kickstarter campaign
- Brandon spent a week in San Francisco working through the edit with celebrated experimental filmmaker Nathaniel Dorsky.

•Brandon accepted archival submissions from over 50 fans with media ranging from super 8mm film, VHS-C, BETA all the way up to 8K digital files.

•A significant part of the film’s score was created using a [custom percussion instrument](#) made off the frame of a bicycle. Percussionist Sean Lane created and performed.

CREDITS

DIRECTED, EDITED & CINEMATOGRAPHY

Brandon Vedder

PRODUCERS

Nick Mocerì
Brandon Vedder

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS

Alison Massey
Ty Morse
Stephen Bailey

CONTRIBUTING PRODUCERS

Patrick Shen
Bob Davidson
Steven Heller
Bob Andrews

MUSIC

David Bazan
Sean Galloway
Andy Othling
Sean Lane

MUSIC SUPERVISION

Kevin Moyer

ADDITIONAL CINEMATOGRAPHY

Andy Fitts
Steven Heller
Colin Mika
Justin Potter

COLORIST

Adolfo Martinelli

SOUND FX EDITOR

Jeff King

RERECORDING MIXER

Tony Vilaflor

DIALOGUE EDITOR

Joel Raabe

EDITING CONSULTANT

Nathaniel Dorsky
Patrick Shen

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DOWNLOADS

[Production Stills](#)

[Director Headshot](#)