

# AMERICAN

## *Wine Story*



THREE CROWS PRODUCTIONS PRESENTS "AMERICAN WINE STORY"  
DICK ERATH DREW BLEDSOE JANIE BROOKS HEUCK ALAN BAKER SERENA LOURIE  
MICHAEL AMIGONI MIKE OFFICER PASCAL BROOKS TAD SEESTEDT SCOTT WRIGHT AND KATHERINE COLE  
WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY DAVID BAKER PHOTOGRAPHY TRUEN PENCE KEGAN SIMS AND JUSTIN SMITH  
MUSIC BY DOUGLAS J. WEISS AND GLENN E. ALEXANDER  
DESIGN SANTIAGO UCEDA AND OLIVER DAY

**Three Crows Productions**

Presents

# **AMERICAN** *Wine Story*

Documentary

80 minutes

**SELECTED FESTIVALS and EVENTS:**

2014 River Bend Film Festival (special preview)

2014 Newport Beach Film Festival (premiere)

2014 Mendocino Film Festival

2014 International Pinot Noir Celebration

2014 Prescott Film Festival

2014 La Costa Film Festival

BENDFilm 2014

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## **SYNOPSIS**

After an upstart winemaker's untimely death, his sister steps in to try to save his fledgling winery for his eight-year-old son. American Wine Story blends this with other tales of risk and reinvention for those who are born again into the wine industry.

# DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT – DAVID BAKER

Behind every bottle, there is a story. Wine writer Jancis Robinson famously said, “wine is geography in a bottle.” It’s that and so much more. Every vintage is a time capsule that tells the tale of a year’s worth of weather. Winemakers will mark vintages: the year their children were born, the year it hailed before harvest, the year they lost someone they loved.

When Jimi Brooks passed away just weeks before the 2004 harvest, only 38 years of age and just at the point his business was beginning to look like it might turn a profit and begin his goal of creating a legacy for his eight-year-old son, something amazing happened on the heels of tragedy. His story didn’t end with his death. Instead, he was rediscovered by his own little sister, Janie, and in the process she also rediscovered herself as she came to meet the other winemakers whose lives he touched. This film tells Jimi’s and Janie’s stories and weaves them with dozens of others in the wine industry who started their lives over in wine.

This project has its roots in curiosity. After hundreds of visits to wineries and a few stints in vineyards on the commercial side of the business, I was starting to understand that people who live by the seasons are amazing storytellers. When Truen Pence and I were kicking around ideas for a new documentary project over lunch one afternoon in 2010, not quite understanding what we were getting ourselves into, we thought: hey, winemakers are fascinating and vineyards are beautiful, so let’s get started.

So we assembled a team of filmmakers who were up for anything and hit the road. More than four years, seven states, seventy interviews and three crashed RC helicopter camera platforms later, we finally found the heart of our story on a country road outside Amity, Oregon not far from where we began our quest to learn what makes American winemakers tick.

And behind that bottle, there’s often the tale of the other life: the career left behind. So many people in the business, especially in newer and emerging wine regions, came from somewhere else before discovering wine. And that became the common thread of our story.

In **American Wine Story**, we’ve tried to scrape the surface of this treasure trove of narrative, lacing the tales with the stirring landscapes (vines, like people, love the most beautiful vistas) and a look behind the scenes of how sunlight is captured in bottle form, and eventually uncorked as the fuel for a thousand new stories around tables lit with conversation and laughter.



# ABOUT AMERICAN WINE STORY

Americans believe in reinvention. It's in our blood. From the hunters who crossed the frozen sea in previous millennia to waves of immigrants imagining more fruitful lives in a promised land, the drive to redefine who we are is imprinted on our DNA.

Today's American winemakers and winegrowers carry this spirit of reinvention. They come from all walks of life, many of them born again into an industry that reconnects them to the land and our entrepreneurial spirit. The American Dream is alive and well in the wine industry.

American Wine Story is an 80-minute documentary that tells the inspiring tale of those who followed their dreams and passions into the world of wine, and the challenges they faced along the way. With interviews of winemakers, writers, collectors and aficionados from seven states and all walks of life, this film pulls at the threads woven into the national fabric of American wine.

Mike Officer was a cautious computer programmer who suddenly became terrified of a life spent in front of a monitor and keyboard. He and his wife cashed in 401Ks and maxed out their credit cards to follow Mike's passion for home winemaking into the professional arena. But the path was longer than either of them expected.

Dick Erath was an electrical engineer before becoming one of the founders of the modern Oregon wine industry, and he defied the odds as he helped turn the rainy Willamette Valley into a world-class region for pinot noir, despite the skeptics.

Drew Bledsoe was an NFL quarterback who set records and mentored a young Tom Brady before facing the prospect of retirement at age thirty-five. Searching for a business that could fill the void left by the end of a thrilling career, he found it in wine and his home valley of Walla Walla, which grew from a high desert backwater to a major wine region.

Jimi Brooks' life as a bohemian wanderer couldn't have been more different from his sister, a pragmatic accounting major who always did things by the book. But when he died of a heart attack at the age of thirty-eight, she rushed to the scene and walked into a world that she had no idea existed. Her vagabond brother had become one of the most respected winemakers in a dynamic young wine region. And as she struggled to decide whether she could step in to help save the winery for Jimi's eight-year-old son, Paco, she began to reconsider everything she'd once believed about her own life.

**American Wine Story** is about wine. But more than that, it's about the transformative power of a humble beverage to fuel passion and reshape lives. All of these people were called into a new profession. We follow dozens of these winemakers and aficionados from all across the country to learn what drives them, and also trace some American wine history in the process, and in the end we hope to leave all audiences with a dash of inspiration to follow their own American Dreams, or at least pause and consider the story behind the bottle the next time they pull a cork.

# ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

## **Director – David Baker**

American Wine Story is David Baker's directorial debut. He has written award-winning screenplays and fiction and holds a Master of Fine Arts from Columbia College Chicago. His novel VINTAGE will be published by Simon & Schuster's Touchstone Books imprint in September of 2015. He has worked in commercial vineyards and makes some pretty good pinot noir in his garage.

## **Producer, Cinematographer – Truen Pence**

Truen Pence is a Portland, Oregon-based graphic artist and multimedia producer for the interactive agency Instrument where he heads the experimental and film unit. He directed a number of commercial projects, including the award-winning interactive films **This Place** and **The Build**.

## **Producer, Cinematographer – Justin Smith**

Justin Smith attended film school at the University of Utah and shot and directed the award-winning short documentaries **Kel Wer** and **Relentless**. Before receiving his MBA from Oregon State University, he worked for a number of years in the film industry in roles on the production and agency side. He's also co-owner of Slipstream Cinema, a company specializing in aerial cinematography from RC helicopters.

## **Producer, Editor, Cinematographer – Kegan Sims**

Kegan Sims is a web developer and video producer working at Oregon State University, where he graduated with a degree in marketing. He worked as assistant director on **A Country Wedding** and has worked both sides of the camera on a number of commercial and web video projects.

## **Motion and Design – Oliver Day and Santiago Uceda**

Oliver Day is a British-born artist, illustrator and motion graphics specialist who has worked in vineyards in New Zealand and Oregon, and draws inspiration from his homemade beer and wine. Artist Santiago Uceda comes to Oregon by way of Peru and Southern California, and his folk-art and muralist-inspired work has appeared on posters, animations and magazines across the country. He directed the animated music video **The Wind Kept**.

## **Executive Producer – Tiago Vieira**

Tiago Vieira grew up in Portugal where many families made wine from their backyard vines. Now he works in Information Technology in Angola and Mozambique, occasionally sipping South African wines along the way.

## **About Three Crows Productions**

Three Crows Productions is an Oregon-based independent filmmaking collective that assembled to create the short film A Country Wedding in 2010, and has since completed the short film and music video The Wind Kept and the feature documentary American Wine Story. With several other films in various stages in development, Three Crows Productions aims to blend craft, visual style and the spectacular landscapes of the Northwest with great storytelling to create collaboratively produced, ego-free, audience-driven content.

# CREDITS

Director	David Baker
Cinematography	Truen Pence, Justin Smith, Kegan Sims
Editors	David Baker and Kegan Sims
Producers	David Baker, Truen Pence, Justin Smith, Kegan Sims
Executive Producer	Tiago Vieira
Design and Motion	Santiago Uceda and Oliver Day
Music	Douglas J. Weiss, Chris Zabriskie, Glenn E. Alexander, Peter Mulvey, Luke Redfield, Kevin Elmore
Digital & Broadcast Distribution	FilmBuff, LLC 1 212.463.6403 555 West 25th Street 4th Floor New York, NY 10001



# CONTRIBUTORS

Drew Bledsoe – Doubleback Wines, WA  
Dick Erath – Prince Hill Vineyards, OR  
Janie Brooks Heuck – Brooks Wines, OR  
David Heuck – Pebble Beach, CA  
Pascal Brooks – Brooks Wines, OR  
Chris Williams – Brooks Wines, OR  
Lee Medoff – Bull Run Distillery, OR  
Tad Seestedt – Ransom Wines and Spirits, OR  
Sam Tannahill – A to Z, Rex Hill, Francis Tannahill, OR  
Harry Peterson-Nedry, Chahalem Winery, OR  
Mike Officer – Carlisle Winery, CA  
Kendal Officer – Carlisle Winery, CA  
Scott Paul Wright – Scott Paul Wines, OR  
Alan Baker – Cartograph Wines, CA  
Serena Lourie – Cartograph Wines, CA  
Katherine Cole – Writer, Author, OR  
Jay Selman – Grape Radio, CA  
Mary Olson – Airlie Winery, OR  
Todd and Kelly Bostock – Dos Cabezas WineWorks, AZ  
Jim Day – Panache Cellars, OR  
Luca Pascina – Barborsville Vineyards, VA  
Gabrielle Rausse – Monticello Vineyards, VA  
Al and Cindy Schornberg – Keswick Vineyards, VA  
Michael Amigoni – Amigoni Urban Winery, MO  
Stewart and Athena Boedecker – Boedecker Cellars, OR

