

On a 120-mile trek on foot from Los Angeles Airport to the heart of Hollywood, notorious writer, provocateur and obsessive walker, Will Self interrogates the meaning of walking in a globalised, industrialised world.

# OBSESSED

# WITH

# WALKING

PUBLICITY MATERIAL



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Executive Producer SHARYN PRENTICE

Writer, Editor, Director

ROSIE JONES

Producer LAVINIA RIACHI

26'30" PAL 16:9 FHA Stereo

## ONE LINE SYNOPSIS

On a 120-mile trek from Los Angeles Airport to the heart of Hollywood, the notorious writer, cultural provocateur and obsessive walker, Will Self interrogates the meaning of walking in a globalised, industrialised world... and points a finger at 'the enemy' William Wordsworth.

## ONE PARAGRAPH SYNOPSIS

On a 120-mile trek from Los Angeles Airport to the heart of Hollywood, the notorious writer, cultural provocateur and obsessive walker, Will Self interrogates the meaning of walking in a globalised, industrialised world.

As he traverses suburban LA, Self gathers research material for a new book and evokes the spirit of other walkers whose art has changed the way we think, see and hear, from the French Situationists to Percy Grainger via William Wordsworth, the enemy, who Will indicts as 'the patron saint of tourism'.

## EXTENDED SYNOPSIS

Los Angeles International Airport. A jumbo jet lunges onto the tarmac and taxis to the terminal. An unusually tall and very thin man with a melancholy face he describes as "looking like a bag full of genitals" strides out of the terminal onto Century Boulevard. It's Will Self, the novelist once notorious for his addictions and excesses but now known for his eccentric walking habits.

Will has already walked from his home in South London to Heathrow. Now he'll trek 120 miles across LA to Hollywood for a book he's writing about the impact of the environment on the human psyche.

Will chooses a route through the grittiest suburbs, the 'un-places' and the 'interzones', in search of a new kind of urban beauty. As he walks, he muses on the power of walking to connect us to place, time and memory and evokes the spirit of other walkers whose art has changed the way we think, see and hear.

Rebels like Guy Debord and the Situationists, a pack of hard-living French bohemians who tried to overturn the urban order in 1950s Paris with the 'dérive' - a walk without a route, destination or purpose. Amazingly, they almost succeeded when their ideas sparked the Paris riots of 1968.

And Will's enemy, the 18th century poet and walker, William Wordsworth, whose poetry inspired a craze for walking in the English Lake District and, Will believes, kick-started international tourism.

For Will, walking has become an obsession, as it was for the Australian composer, Percy Grainger, who prepared for performances by walking to the edge of exhaustion and pain.

Five days after he set out on foot, Will threads his way through the crowds on Hollywood Boulevard's Walk of Fame. But home again in London, he discovers that this walk has been a turning point in his personal journey.

Part lament and part travelogue, *Obsessed With Walking* explores both the outer journey and the inner journey made through walking - traversing the physical world and traversing the spirit and the imagination.

## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

by Rosie Jones

The idea for *Obsessed With Walking* began when I came across a fascinating book by the American writer, Rebecca Solnit that explored the development of walking as a leisure activity. Though I'd always been a keen walker, I'd never consciously thought about its history. I started voraciously reading and researching, all the while thinking about its potential as an unusual but very accessible documentary.

I was searching for a charismatic central character with a journey that could form the structure for a meditation on walking. I wanted the form of the film to reflect the form of a walk - fluid and diverging - but I needed a strong story with a solid narrative arc around which I could weave historical material.

When I discovered that the writer Will Self had become an avid walker after giving up serious drugs a few years ago, I was very excited. I'd always been a fan of his dark humour and edgy satires and now he was writing a regular column about walking, called *Psychogeography*, for UK daily newspaper *The Independent*.

As you'd expect, Will Self had some provocative ideas about walking. He'd also started doing an eccentric series of walks from international airports to the centre of major cities eg South London to Heathrow/JFK to Manhattan, which he then wrote about. When I heard he was planning to walk from Los Angeles Airport to Hollywood, I knew I had found the dynamic central narrative.

Los Angeles is famous for being car-centred, dangerous, choked with traffic and hostile to pedestrians. Not only would it be a challenging walk in its own right but it would provide the raw material for a new book Will was planning to publish in September 2010 – *Walking to Hollywood*. I approached Will and he agreed to be filmed.

## THE PRODUCTION

by Rosie Jones

As soon as Will's plane touched down at LAX, he headed off down Century Boulevard. Unlike most travellers, he carried virtually no luggage.

Will is well over six feet tall and a very fast walker, as our director of photography quickly discovered! Carrying a very heavy camera and running to keep up, he was pouring with sweat within an hour.

We had a small production team but quickly learned that we had to leap into the car and race ahead of Will or we'd be left with shots of his feet and back disappearing into the distance.

Will chose to navigate a mysterious, idiosyncratic route through LA. Though I questioned its logic, I never really understood how or why he selected it. It was intuitive and indirect, like the walks of the Situationist International, a pack of hard-living French radicals led by the charismatic Guy Debord, who inspired Will's interest in walking.

Gritty, earnest and very cool, the Situationists came up with subversive and inflammatory ideas while lounging about in cafes, drinking vast quantities of wine.

One of their revolutionary techniques was the 'dérive', a 'drift' on foot without a route, purpose or destination that was meant to challenge the goal-oriented walks of city commuters. The Situationists would absorb the urban ambience and use the information to produce new pedestrian-derived maps of the city. Though their ideas may sound absurd, their tracts against cars and their ideas for urban design still influence contemporary city planners.

In LA, we followed Will through suburbs where tourists would never venture, capturing the strong visual contrasts that make up the city – the miles of freeways, the manicured lawns of Baldwin Hills right next door to one of LA's earliest oil fields, the gritty suburb of South Central, infamous for deathly skirmishes between the Bloods and Crips gangs, the serene beauty of Echo Park and the chaos around the iconic Grauman's Chinese Theatre on Hollywood Boulevard.

On the 'Miracle Mile' of Wilshire Boulevard, the first street ever designed to be viewed through a car windscreen, Will muses on how technology has changed the way we see and interact with the world.

A construction site where The Ambassador Hotel once stood - site of the glamorous Coconut Grove nightclub, home of the Academy Awards in the 1930s and 1940s and the spot where Robert Kennedy was assassinated in 1968 - triggered a fascinating monologue about memory and the 'traces' that can be uncovered on foot in the search for a new kind of urban beauty.

Perversely, Will claims to find beauty in the industrial suburbs, in rubbish, in the ganglands of South Central... wherever the traveller seeking beautiful landscapes wouldn't go. His philosophical enemy is the 'patron saint' of tourism - 18th century Romantic poet and stout-legged walker, William Wordsworth, whose poetry inspired a craze for walking on the picturesque slopes of the English Lake District.

Part lament and part travelogue, Will's commentary is a potent mix of acute observations about movement, place and memories - his own unique brand of 'psychogeography'.

Will acknowledges that walking is an obsession for him, as it has been for others like the Australian composer, Percy Grainger, who walked himself to the edge of exhaustion and into a near-hysterical state before concerts to ensure he'd perform to his best ability.

Like many urban dwellers, Will felt profoundly dislocated from his environment before he started walking. Though his airport walks usually put him in touch with the city and himself, it was clear when I interviewed him at home in London some time later, that the LA walk had been a turning point.

Will had walked himself into a narrative cul-de-sac. The book he expected to write after the walk hadn't flowed easily. He'd gone through the 'heart of darkness' to produce a story that sounds like an extraordinary mix of fact and fiction. It is the first time he has written himself so clearly into a narrative.

It wasn't what I expected, but it certainly shows that walking can have a profound effect on the human psyche.

## CVs / BIOGRAPHIES

### WILL SELF



Will Self has written more than twenty books, including novels and short story collections, and been awarded the Geoffrey Faber, Agha Kahn and Bollinger Everyman Wodehouse prizes for his fiction.

Amongst his books are *Psychogeography*, (2007) a wry collection of his pedestrian adventures first published in *The Independent*. He followed this in 2008 with *Psycho Too*, a second collection of *Independent* columns about the effects of the geographical environment on our emotions and behaviour.

A regular broadcaster on UK television and radio, and columnist for numerous newspapers and magazines including *The Independent* and the *New Statesman*, he's a vital part of the great contemporary debate about cities and how we live in them.

His latest book, *Walking to Hollywood* will be published in September 2010.

### ROSIE JONES

Writer/Director/Editor

Since graduating from the Victorian College of the Arts Film School in 1985, Rosie Jones has established a reputation as an award-winning documentary writer, director and editor.

She has recently completed the documentaries *Obsessed with Walking*, an exploration of psychogeography with the writer Will Self for ABC TV and *Westall '66: A Suburban UFO Mystery*, an investigation of Australia's biggest mass UFO sighting, for the Sci Fi channel of Foxtel. Her other films include *Holy Rollers*, a wry look at Christian pilgrimage amid the tensions of Israel (Melbourne International Film Festival and SBS TV) and *Visions of Yankalilla*, about an apparition of the Virgin Mary that appeared on an Anglican church wall in South Australia (St John's International Women's Film Festival (Canada), Hot Springs Film Festival (USA), Mumbai International Film Festival and SBS TV).

Her editing credits include numerous single documentaries and series commissioned by Australian and international broadcasters. She is currently in production on a feature documentary about the battle between government, big business and community over the St Kilda Triangle development, *The Triangle Wars*.

## LAVINIA RIACHI

Producer

BBC trained, Lavinia has over 21 years experience in television film production. She has worked with a variety of British, American, Australian and European Broadcasters and Production Companies, on a wide range of productions: from reality and observational to docudramas and archive based historical documentaries.

Her experience ranges from budget to delivery and everything in between - staffing, scheduling, logistics, research, post production and her new expertise - the complex world of archive copyright clearances.

She does budget consultancy work for independent producers and works as a local fixer for overseas companies visiting Australia.

Lavinia moved from London to Australia in 2001 with her family and has been working as a freelancer in both Sydney and Melbourne ever since.

## SHARYN PRENTICE

Executive Producer

Sharyn is an independent producer who, through her company Flaming Star Films, has developed and produced award-winning documentaries and edgy half hour docs in Australia and internationally for over 20 years.

Most recently she has executive produced/produced *Obsessed with Walking* about the writer and controversial cultural provocateur, Will Self for ABC TV Artscape & also to be screened as part of the Melbourne Writers Festival, *A Thousand Encores: The Ballets Russes in Australia* (ABC TV) with The Australian Ballet, *Tasmanian Devil: the Fast and Furious Life of Errol Flynn* (ABC, BBC, ARTE etc) and co-productions including the feature documentary *See What Happens* about the legendary American filmmakers DA Pennebaker and Chris Hegedus (ARTE, BBC) and *Beyond the Royal Veil* about two Indian royal families ( SBSi, ARTE).

Other films with director Rosie Jones include *Holy Rollers* a wry look at Christian pilgrimage among the tensions in Israel (SBSi) and *Visions of Yankalilla* about an apparition of the Virgin on a church wall (SBSi).



## HEAD CREDITS

Card: Screen Australia

Card: Flaming Star Films

Card: and Film Victoria present

## END CREDITS

WRITER, EDITOR & DIRECTOR: Rosie Jones

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER: Sharyn Prentice

PRODUCER: Lavinia Riachi

SPECIAL THANKS TO : Will Self

NARRATOR: Fenella Kernebone

CAMERA: Allan Palmer, Micah Walker

SOUND: Jayme Roy

STILLS PHOTOGRAPHER: Suzy Wood

GRAPHICS: Kingdom of Ludd

ANIMATION DESIGN: Lee Whitmore

ANIMATION ASSISTANT: Jingjing Ma

ORIGINAL MUSIC: Jamie Saxe

SOUND DESIGN: Mark Street

FOLEY: Gerry Long

SOUND MIX: Soundwaves, Andrew McGrath

CHARACTER VOICES: Simon Watt, Nicol Ami, Stephan Charbonnier





THE SITUATIONISTS: Guy Debord - John Reid, Gil Wolman - Pier Carthew Translation - Ken Knabb

POST PRODUCTION FACILITIES: Digital Pictures, Melbourne

POST PRODUCTION PRODUCER: Carol Johnston

COLOURIST: Deidre McClelland

MASTERING: Chris Dea

ARCHIVAL CONVERSION: Leon Burgher, Promoscape

SCRIPT EDITOR (DEVELOPMENT): Bill Garner

ARCHIVE:

RKD, The Hague, Archive Constant, Austral Press for Topfoto, The Daily Mirror, F.I.L.M. Archives, Grainger Museum Collection, University of Melbourne, The Digital Deli Online, Producers Library, Screen Australia

POND 5 ARCHIVE:

Deborahmeyerson, Elmwood, Madenglishman, Mindsnare, Onemodelplace, Spotmatick

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT LA: Katie Strand

PRODUCTION ACCOUNTANT: Anthony Nagle & Associates, Rosalie Kidney

LEGALS: Marshalls & Dent Lawyers, Karen Standal

THANKS TO:

Documentary Australia Foundation, Lindsay Lipson, Claire Jager, Southpaw Bar, Monica Syrette, Peter Tapp

ABC TV COMMISSIONING EDITOR: Amanda Duthie

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Card: Developed and produced in association with The Australian Broadcasting Corporation (+ LOGO)

Card: Developed with the assistance of The Headlands Initiative (Film Vic Logo & Community Support Fund Logo)

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Will Self on Century Boulevard



Will Self heads down Century Boulevard



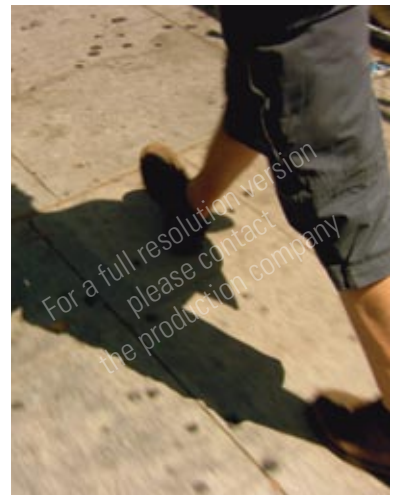
Will Self in the Baldwin Hills



Will Self traverses suburban LA



Will Self in South Central



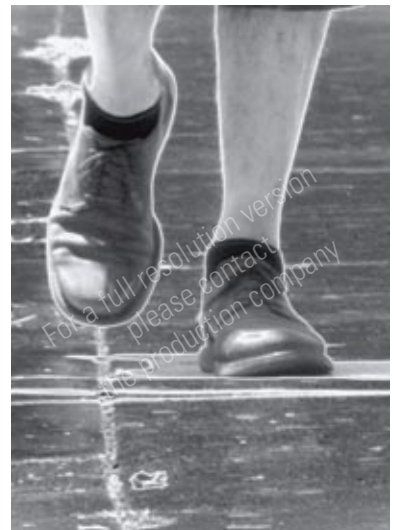
Will Self strides through South Central



Will Self in LA



Will Self heads for Downtown LA



Will Self walking



Will Self takes La Brea Av en route to Hollywood



Will Self on Hollywood Boulevard



Will Self in his London office



Will Self at his desk in London



The Situationist drift through a Parisian alley  
*(Recreation)*



The Situationist drift by a Parisian canal  
*(Recreation)*



The Situationist on a 'dérive' in Paris  
*(Recreation)*



The Situationist drift through Paris on a 'dérive'  
*(Recreation)*



The Situationist walk by a Parisian canal  
*(Recreation)*