

DEAD WHEN I GOT HERE

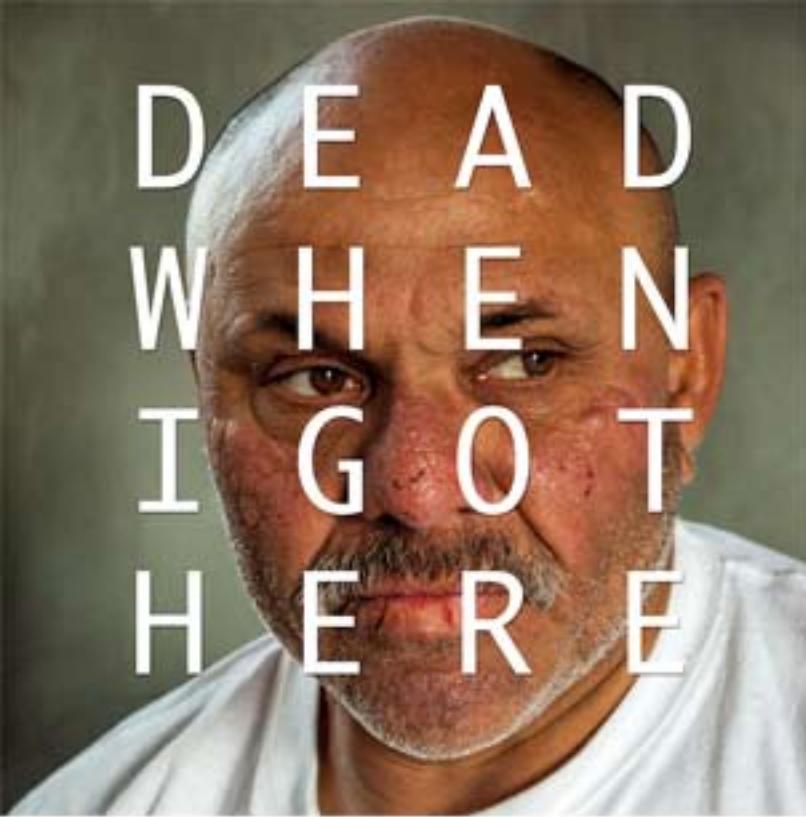
TACIT FILMS, IKON & YLE PRESENT
A FILM BY MARK AITKEN

One of the finest examples of documentary filmmaking I've ever seen. SMHAFF

A masterpiece, epic and intimate. THE OBSERVER

Gripping and tender. THE LANCET





Tacit Films, IKON & YLE present
DEAD WHEN I GOT HERE

Running time	72'/52'
Genre	Documentary
Rating	TBC
Year	2015
Language	Spanish/English
	English subtitles
Country	UK, Mexico

Press enquiries

mark@deadwhenigothere.org

Website

www.deadwhenigothere.org

Social Media

www.facebook.com/deadwhenigothere

Official Trailer

twitter.com/markaitkentweet

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QomaXjg24-I>

Compassion and redemption are discovered by a man as he manages a mental asylum run by its own patients in Juárez, Mexico. The seeds of hope profoundly brought to life by his daughter in LA who thought him dead, finding him during the making of this timeless film.

A masterpiece, epic and intimate.

The faces in this film are like a thousand Caravaggios - they are us and we are them. Ed Vulliamy, THE OBSERVER

...as beautiful as anything you will find in Bresson or Tarkovsky, it is one of the finest examples of documentary filmmaking I've ever seen. Scott Graham, SCOTTISH MENTAL HEALTH FILM FESTIVAL

Gripping and tender. THE LANCET

The film takes people to a place they did not know and did not expect to visit, the humanity of the insane.
Charles Bowden, WRITER

Festivals and screenings

One World Media Awards 2016 - NOMINEE
DokFest Munich 2016
LASA, New York, 2016
FAS, 2016, Latvia
Big Sky 2016, USA
Cork Film Festival 2015
Dok Leipzig 2015
APHA 2015, USA
Docs DF 2015, Mexico - SPECIAL MENTION
FAS 2015, Finland
Scottish Mental Health 2015 - WINNER
Plaza Classic 2015, USA
DocFest 2015, San Francisco
Medfest 2015, London

Other screenings:

Frontline Club, UK
Lorenzen Centre, USA
Mesilla Valley, USA
Vision & Accion, Mexico
Maudsley Foundation, UK

SYNOPSIS

Compassion is discovered by a man as he manages a mental asylum run by its own patients in Juárez, Mexico. Attempting to reconcile his broken history, Josué dreams of his estranged daughter in California – who he last saw 22 years ago. He asks the film maker to look for his daughter, who posts pictures on the internet in the hope that she will reach out. Josué and his daughter make contact and agree to meet. The itinerant father knows he cannot explain his absence, but perhaps forgiveness can lead to a new beginning.

CREDITS

Executive Producer..Charles Bowden
Director.....Mark Aitken
Producer.....Mark Aitken
Photography..... Mark Aitken
Editor.....Sibila Estruch
Sound.....Jonas A. Jensen
Music.....Mark Pilkington
David Knight

Director's Biography

Mark Aitken has been making films independently and teaching film practice for over 20 years. He's won awards at festivals and been nominated at IDFA for the film, Until When You Die. In 2010, his last film about fear in South Africa, Forest of Crocodiles was broadcast in over 100 countries on BBC World, with additional sales to Portugal, New Zealand, Sweden, The Netherlands, Spain, South Africa and New Zealand. For further information and more work see www.thedeeperiver.org

Director's statement

My previous film was about how fear inhibits and paralyses social cohesion in South Africa. I was drawn to Mexico and the area along its northern frontier. Was it possible that people there could transcend their fears when living under such extremes of violence and murder? The asylum I found in the desert offered striking and very uninhibited examples of people dealing with their fears, misfortunes and nightmares. It was a very different type of gated community and what had been described as an abstraction in the previous film was now a real experience writ large that I could document.

'Dead when I got here' is not so much a progression from the last film as an encounter with the nightmares alluded to previously.

Review in The Lancet, October 2015

Mexico is besieged by organised crime, drug cartels, corruption and violence. Juárez is a city on the Mexican border renowned for its disproportionately high murder rate, where deaths go unnoticed and there are no convictions for the crimes. It has all the makings of a futuristic horror film; a lawless city with no infrastructure to protect its citizens, but this is real and the time is now. Documentary maker Mark Aitken's film Dead When I Got Here is a gripping and tender account of Josué, a man who described himself as "already dead" when he was scraped off the streets and dumped at the asylum in Juárez.

But this is an asylum run by its own patients, with Josué, once a patient, now managing the place. He has no formal training, but he practises a type of psychiatric care that comprises compassion, empathy, and personal experience. As the police collect a body of a 23-year-old man (death is a common occurrence here), they comment on the arbitrary nature of such an institution, stating that it sheds a "bad light" on Mexico's public health programme, and Josué can only shrug. It certainly does, but as this film shows, there is no other place for these disenfranchised people. The asylum is their sanctuary; a refuge for those with mental health problems.

Jules Morgan, The Lancet Psychiatry

BOOK

ASYLUM FROM THE MADNESS -

THE MAKING OF THE FILM DEAD WHEN I GOT HERE BY MARK AITKEN

205 pp. book featuring a directors diary of the film production, stories about the people in the film and reflections on the experience of filming in a mental asylum run by its own patients. Includes colour photographs.

Available at [www.deadwhenigotthere.org](http://www.deadwhenigothere.org)