

# Watch This!

Filmmaking duo Marc Bauer and Matthew Tribble discuss their local news thriller, *Remote*.

Words: James Harvey

**A**merican journalism is hardly wanting for outlets on the big screen. From *All The President's Men* and *She Said* to *Nightstalker* and *Broadcast News*, the furious passion and bustle of a newsroom lends itself well to feature-length drama.

Local news, of course, is less well-documented than national. Less visible again are the folks for whom getting a scoop is little more than a way to pay the rent.

"We always felt like outsiders in the newsroom," *Remote*'s co-writer, editor and producer Marc Bauer, who spent years working as a news photographer before making the film, tells Film Stories. "Because neither of us went to journalism school... This wasn't our passion. We wanted to show that to a lot of journalists, it is, at the end of the day, a job."

That job turned out to be ripe fodder for Bauer and director Matt Tribble's first feature, which pairs up an ambitious young reporter with a disillusioned camerawoman to investigate a drug-related death in a sleepy rural town.

"I'm trying to think of how many years we'd been in the news world at that point... four or five, maybe?" Tribble says. "So you do see a lot of different

reporters, a lot of different characters, a lot of different types of people, and you see kind of how the machine runs."

Working in the heart of a newsroom means more story inspiration is never far away – and gave the duo the chance to key into an aspect of rural life which often flies under the radar.

"Working at the station, we were still hearing a lot about the opioid epidemic, and how it's really rampant in rural areas," Bauer says. "And so I think when we decided to make [the film] more about how the body was found and how it was related to drugs, then it was like, 'Okay, now, I think we've got something.'"



■ Marc Bauer ■

## Breaking news

2024 is a fraught time to make a film about a journalist. Alex Garland's *Civil War* stoked controversy, not just in its portrayal of a titular conflict between un-ideological factions, but in daring to cast reporters at the head of what is ostensibly an action movie. In an election year where the role of the media seems likely to play an outsized part once again, the profession has rarely seemed so important – or less trusted.

Polling ahead of the last presidential election found that just 46% of Americans had

confidence in the news media, while 80% believed the news they received was coloured by corporate and financial interests. These are themes that *Remote* is all too aware of in its portrayal of the trade.

“I’ve seen it first-hand,” Bauer says. “You go into certain communities, and they immediately assume, ‘okay, you’re here to twist a story, you’re here to make us all look stupid or make our community look bad.’ I think we want to explore that, what it realistically looks like, because I think sometimes you can get

into stereotypes and cartoonish hillbilly types. But what you end up seeing is more of a quiet judgement.”

That distrust between a local station and the people it represents forms the heart of *Remote*. It’s not just those with something to hide that rebuff our intrepid reporters’ questions. Even the locals giving information willingly do so with an arched eyebrow and more than a whiff of suspicion.

“We wanted to delve into the relationship that news media has with rural communities,” Tribble says. “Because a lot of the time, you know, you only have so many journalists, and reporters can only go to so many stories. So more rural settings feel left out, and I think there’s a subconscious... not exactly dislike, but there’s an ‘Oh, you’re not one of us’ type of feeling.”

As if deliberately trying to counteract the landscape they find themselves in, though, Bauer and Tribble have taken care to keep *Remote* as nuanced as possible.

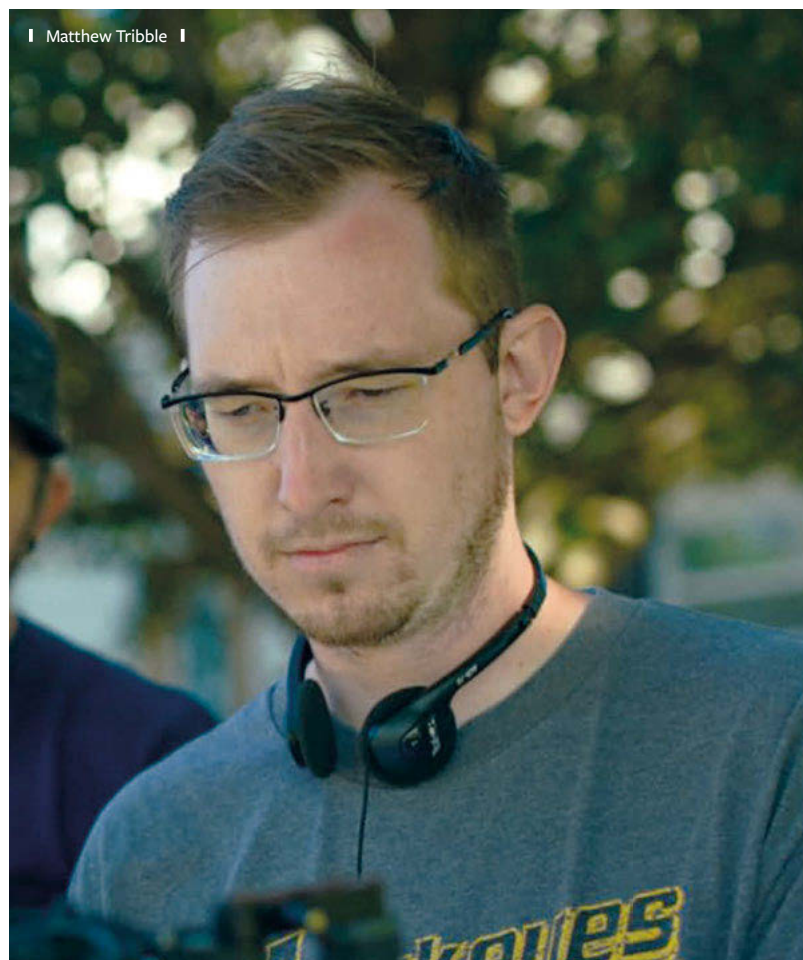
“I really like blurring the morals of different perspectives,” Tribble says. “Everybody has their own agenda and their own way of approaching things.”

“I don’t think anyone goes into [journalism] saying, ‘I have this agenda’, or ‘I’m gonna do some gotcha journalism today’, Bauer adds. “Hopefully, you’re passionate about this, and you like storytelling and meeting people in the community. But then there are people that are upset, even if you’re trying to do that. ‘You’ve completely left out our community’, ‘You’re not telling this story, though’. And I think that’s hard to grasp, and hard to tackle even today.” <sup>18</sup>

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Matthew Tribble

***Remote* played at the Manchester Lift-Off Festival in March. More festival dates are (hopefully) coming soon.**