

STREEL FILMS PRESENTS
A FILM BY MICHELLE LATIMER



PRESS KIT

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INDIECAN ENTERTAINMENT

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STREEL FILMS

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ALIAS PRESS KIT

LOGLINE

Beyond the typical music video images of girls, guns, and gold, *ALIAS* follows aspiring rappers trying to escape the gangster life. *ALIAS* is an in-depth look into the world of street hip-hop and the hustle known as the rap-trap.

SHORT SYNOPSIS

In recent years, controversy surrounding rap music has been at the forefront of North American media. From the hype of the East Coast-West Coast rivalry that shadowed the murders of rappers Tupac Shakur and Notorious B.I.G., to the demonization of the music in the wake of a string of shootings at Toronto recording studios, it seems that political and media groups have been quick to place blame on rap for a seeming trend in youth violence. However, just as rap music is vilified, there is no denying that it has become the main form of expression signifying the voice of a growing Canadian underclass. Raw and uncompromising, *ALIAS* tells the story of aspiring rappers trying to escape the gangster life, while illuminating a side of urban Canada rarely seen before.

LONG SYNOPSIS

The feature documentary *ALIAS* takes us behind the scenes into the internal workings of a world where life and death are defined by the rules of the street.

Often associated with American cities, the presence of Canadian gangsta rap remains largely unreferenced. However, in Toronto's Regent Park, Don Mills, and Jane & Finch neighbourhoods, the rise of rap music has brought increasing focus to Canada. For many who grow up here, rap is the only viable way out – a means to an end.

The struggling artists inside *ALIAS* hope to defy the 'trap' with lyricism, and an in-your-face attitude, but the hard facts remain; they're living a life too close to the streets where shootings, criminal convictions and death are an everyday reality. Through *ALIAS*, we put a human face onto this phenomenon.

Raw and uncompromising, *ALIAS* reflects upon the prevailing social conditions of poverty, black-on-black violence and apathy in Toronto's most marginalized communities as aspiring artists struggle to rap their way out of the hood.

PRODUCTION NOTES

THEMES & IDEAS EXPLORED IN ALIAS

“Every generation needs to be stronger. Music, basketball, even hustling, these are all forms of hope that we can see something better. And that’s what we have, so that’s what we do.” ~ Alkatraz

□ *ALIAS* explores how marginalized groups can internalize social expectations (or lack of expectations), and how we function within our own perceptions of self or our ‘place’ in society. For example, lead character Alkatraz says repeatedly that you only have a few options to get out of the hood – sports, music, or drug dealing/hustling. Through the film, we want to see how each character tackles life based on their own perception of what their “options” are.

□ Every generation gains strength from the generation that has come before. I think this is best exemplified in how we see our characters striving to survive and break out through music so that they can provide for their children. However, they are working within limitations (financial, education, lack of familial support, police profiling, violence).

“Society needs crack-heads and junkies. You need the lower level. Without them, the top can’t survive. You need someone to step on to get up.” ~ Alkatraz

□ Alkatraz philosophizes that "society is built on the backs of addicts". His analogy is that corporate America is all about selling and serving a need, right down to the lowly crack addict who pays for his fix. If we break it down, all of us have desires that propel us forward through life and look to serve our individual needs. Furthermore, the commodification of rap is just another example of the prevalence of capitalism within modern society.

□ There is a duality that is explored in the idea of “alias”. We play on the word “alias” as each of our lead characters is introduced in the film through their street name. This represents the duality present in one’s public and private life, and suggests how each person constructs a persona based on their own dreams of who they want to be, even when that might conflict with who they actually are.

□ Political and media groups have been quick to place blame on rap for a seeming trend in youth violence. However, just as Rap music is vilified, there is no denying that it has become the main form of expression signifying the voice of a growing Canadian underclass.

□ Stories embodied in hip-hop lyrics perpetuate the infamous “rags-to-riches” myth, and have created a generation of young men with blind aspirations of hip-hop stardom.

□ Through the film we are interested in creating a true-life reflection of the themes, attitudes, and dreams that are mythologized in countless rap songs. Through the eyes of the artists we explore issues of poverty, violence, brotherhood and street affiliation in an attempt to shed light on the seduction of the great hip-hop myth.

Michelle Latimer – Filmography and Curriculum Vitae

Films include:

The Underground ('14) – Director, Writer, Producer
Short film based on Rawi Hage's bestselling novel "Cockroach".

Alias ('13) – Director, Writer, Producer
Feature documentary that follows five rap artists who are using music in an attempt to escape street violence and gang life.

I Can't Remember ('13) – Director/Concept Creation
Music video for artist Jayli Wolf. Produced by Big Soul Productions for APTN.

The End of Time ('12) – Editing Consultant
Feature documentary directed by Peter Mettler. Produced by Grimthorpe, Maximage & NFB.

Choke ('11) – Director/Writer/Producer/Cinematographer
Stop motion animated experimental short. An examination of the processes of cultural assimilation and the search for identity in First Nations populations.

This is My Time ('11) – Director/Writer
Music video for Inuit artist Saali. Produced by Big Soul Productions for APTN.

Surviving ('10) – Director/Writer/Producer
Mid-length outreach video educating on Hepatitis C and HIV infection with relation to needle exchange programs in Canada. Included 5 episodes for internet.

Sex and Religion – Marriage Episode ('10) – Director/Writer
Documentary television episode looking at religion and new marriage between an elderly couple in Newfoundland. Produced by Riddle Films for Vision Network.

Real Injun ('10) – Additional Directing
Feature documentary – Hollywood's representation of Indigenous cinema & the evolution of First Nations storytelling in contemporary media.

Jackpot ('09) – Producer/Writer
Feature documentary looking at poverty and urban isolation.

Encourage the Heart ('08) – Director/Writer/Producer
Documentary mid-length – Educational film about challenges faced by people living with HIV/AIDS. Commissioned by the Ontario AIDS Network.

Triage: Dr. James Orbinski's Humanitarian Dilemma ('07) – Researcher/Writer
Feature documentary examining medical efforts during the Rwandan genocide.

Tomorrow ('07) – Director/Producer/Writer
Experimental narrative short. An examination of transcendence and escape.

Selected Highlights:

- “The Underground” **Premiered Official Selection** Toronto Intl Film Festival
Showcased as part of Telefilm Canada’s Not Short On Talent Program – **Cannes 2014.**
- “Alias” **“Premiered in Competition”** at Hot Docs Intl Documentary Festival 2013.
“European Premiere” at Sweden’s Way Out West Festival
“Best Documentary Award” at Hamilton Intl Film Festival
“People’s Choice Award” at Bay Street Film Festival
- ‘Choke’ **“Honorable Mention”** at Sundance Film Festival 2011
“Genie Nomination” Canadian Academy of Film & Television – 2012
“Canada’s Top Ten” Toronto Intl Film Festival 2011
“Honorable Mention” LA Intl Film Festival 2011
- “This is My Time” **“Golden Sheaf Nomination: Best Direction in Performing”** Arts Yorkton Film Festival 2012
“Golden Sheaf Nomination: Best Aboriginal Production” Yorkton Film Festival 2012
- ‘Jackpot’ **“Gemini Nomination: Donald Britton Award for Best Social/Political Documentary”** – Canadian Academy of Film & Television - 2011
“Golden Sheaf Award; Best POV Documentary” – Yorkton Film Festival 2010
“Golden Sheaf Award: Outstanding Emerging Filmmaker” – Yorkton Film Festival 2010
“Best of the Fest Award” – Winnipeg Film Festival
- ‘Reel Injun’ **Peabody Award** – Outstanding Achievement in Electronic Media 2011
Gemini Award – Canada Award – Academy of Canadian Cinema 2010
Gemini Award – Best Direction in a Documentary – Academy of Canadian Cinema 2010
Gemini Award – Best Visual Research – Academy of Canadian Cinema 2010
- ‘Triage’ **Sundance Film Festival: Official Selection**
Top Ten Selection: International Documentary Festival Amsterdam
Deborah Fletcher Award of Excellence – Canadian International Development Agency
Special Jury Prize: Outstanding Canadian Documentary – Calgary Intl Film Festival 2008
Gold Medal Audience Choice Award – Vancouver Amnesty Film Festival

MICHELLE LATIMER – Writer/Director/Producer

A Métis/Algonquin filmmaker, actor, and curator, Michelle's goal is to use film & new media as a tool for social change. She is interested in exploring how sound and image can transform space to create a visceral experience that lends itself to greater cultural awareness and understanding. Her films have been described as "visual poems exploring humanity", and are often experiments of creative form expressed from a personal point of view. While her work is informed by her own Indigenous heritage, she is most concerned with how global communities express views of individual, collective and other, and how cultural identity is articulated through these evolving perceptions.

Most recently she directed and wrote the short film *The Underground* which was featured in Canada's Not Short On Talent Program at Cannes Festival 2014 and premiered at the Toronto Intl Film Festival 2014. Prior to this, produced and directed the feature documentary *ALIAS* which premiered at the Hot Docs International Film Festival, as well as directed/produced/wrote the short stop-motion animated film *Choke*. *Choke* premiered at the 2011 Sundance Film Festival and received the Special Jury Honorable Mention for Best International Short Film before going on to screen at such festivals as Cannes, Rotterdam, and Oberhausen. The film was named by Toronto Film Festival as one of Canada's Top Ten films of 2011 and was nominated for a 2012 Genie Award.

Michelle is the recipient of a 2013 CAFKA/Christie Digital Projectors Artist Residency where she will be applying her filmmaking knowledge towards developing installations in the form of live video mixing and improvisational performance.

Previously, Michelle produced the documentary *Jackpot* (2011 Gemini Nomination: Donald Britton Award for Best Social/Political Documentary), and is currently collaborating with acclaimed filmmaker Peter Mettler to develop a hybrid-genre feature film about Canada's only female dangerous offender. In 2009/10 she participated in the Toronto International Film Festival's Talent Lab where she mentored under filmmakers, Danny Boyle, Don McKellar and Miranda July. She is the recipient of a Yorkton Festival: *Golden Sheaf Award for Outstanding Emerging Filmmaker*, as well as the *2008 National Astral Media Award* presented by Women In Film & Television Canada. In September 2012, she was among 16 producer/filmmakers selected by the Toronto Film Festival to participate in the inaugural year-long professional program Tiff STUDIO.

As an actor Michelle specializes in contemporary movement and has performed in groundbreaking new works with companies such as: Crow's Theatre, Theatre Smith-Gilmour & Modern Times. In 2011 she starred in Theatrefront's theatrical repertory production *The Mill* that went on to win 4 Dora Awards, including one for Best Independent Production. Most recently Michelle is playing a recurring role on Season 2 of APTN's critically acclaimed drama *Blackstone*, and is an industry panelist for CBC's *Short Film Faceoff*, a nationally televised series celebrating innovations in short filmmaking.

As a curator, Michelle is the senior programmer for the ImagineNATIVE Film & Media Arts Festival. She has also programmed for the Hot Docs International Documentary Film Festival and is a programming advisor for Winnipeg Film Group's Cinematheque and Regent Park Film Festival. Her curatorial focus has been on Indigenous New Media & Cinema from a global perspective. She has curated special programs for the Taiwan Indigenous Festival, The Indigenous Film Archive of Nepal and ImagineNATIVE's Spotlight on South Africa's First People, the Khoi-San.

NIDA MARJI - Producer

Nida Marji is a Toronto based producer who is dedicated to working on projects that explore social, cultural, environmental and sometimes whimsical stories.

Her current producing credits include the documentary film ***Flying Solo*** (CBC) which is currently filming, the one-hour documentary, ***L'Adolimentation*** (TV5 Québec Canada) and seasons 1 through 4 of the series ***J'aime les mots***, a French word game shot around the world (TV5 Québec Canada).

She recently completed line producing her first narrative feature, ***KHOYA***, for writer/director Sami Khan.

Nida has also produced ***En vie***, a series of 24 vignettes (TV5 Québec Canada), the pilot episode ***In My Backyard*** (Omni TV) and ***Career Moves***, a series of thirteen half-hour shows (CLT and SCN).

In October 2010, Nida completed production in Uganda as Co-producer for the webisodes, ***AM I BEAUTIFUL?*** The webisodes were commissioned by World Vision Canada and directed by Simonee Chichester.

In addition to producing, Nida's company WONDER JAR provides business affairs services to filmmakers and production companies. Her services were contracted on the dramatic film ***Let Him Be*** and several documentaries including ***Jackpot, Radical Dreamer: The Passionate Journey of Graham Spry, Triage: Dr. James Orbinski's Humanitarian Dilemma, A Promise to the Dead: The Exile Journey of Ariel Dorfman*** and ***Lost Adventures of Childhood***.

Nida is also a board member and volunteer for Beit Zatoun, a cultural centre, gallery and community meeting space that promotes the interplay of art, culture and politics to explore issues of social justice and human rights, both locally and internationally.

KYE MEECHAN - Editor

Kye Meechan is an editor, originally from Vancouver and now based in Toronto.

An alumni of the Canadian Film Centre, he has edited a number of award-winning short films, including Lisa Jackson's ***PARKDALE*** and Ana Valine's ***HOW EUNICE GOT HER BABY***, which have screened at film festivals around the world as well as airing on CBC, Bravo! and the Sundance Channel.

Most recently, Kye worked with director James Genn on the feature film ***OLD STOCK***, starring Noah Reid (***Score: A Hockey Musical***) and Melanie Leishman (***Todd and the Book of Pure Evil***). ***OLD STOCK*** is distributed by E1 Entertainment and slated for theatrical release in 2013. Later this year, Kye will also be editing Maxime Desmons' debut feature film ***WHAT WE HAVE***.

WHAT THE CRITICS HAVE TO SAY:

“Remarkably personal and unflinching”

[http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2013/05/03/alias-hot-docs-toronto-
rap_n_3203115.html?utm_hp_ref=entertainment&ir=Entertainment&utm_source=feedbu
rner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+HP%2FEntertainment+%28Enterta
inment+on+The+Huffington+Post%29](http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2013/05/03/alias-hot-docs-toronto-
rap_n_3203115.html?utm_hp_ref=entertainment&ir=Entertainment&utm_source=feedbu
rner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+HP%2FEntertainment+%28Enterta
inment+on+The+Huffington+Post%29)

“A refreshingly honest and unromantic glimpse into the city’s poverty-stricken Hip Hop scene.”

[http://www.theepochtimes.com/n3/36853-an-even-handed-look-at-torontos-hip-hop-
culture/](http://www.theepochtimes.com/n3/36853-an-even-handed-look-at-torontos-hip-hop-
culture/)

[http://www.examiner.com/article/hot-docs-2013-alias-bares-reality-of-toronto-s-hip-hop-
culture](http://www.examiner.com/article/hot-docs-2013-alias-bares-reality-of-toronto-s-hip-hop-
culture)

“gritty and authentic”

<http://thefilmstage.com/reviews/hot-docs-review-alias/>

Global Morning Show Video Link

<http://globalnews.ca/video/513393/alias>

<http://globalnews.ca/news/513663/film-about-toronto-rappers-premieres-at-hot-docs/>

Four out of 5 stars.

“An observational and beautiful portrait of the subjects and our city.”

[http://torontoist.com/2013/04/hot-docs-daily-alias-chimeras-ncr-not-criminally-
responsible/](http://torontoist.com/2013/04/hot-docs-daily-alias-chimeras-ncr-not-criminally-
responsible/)

“Think of ALIAS as musical activism....”

[http://www.blogto.com/film/2013/04/toronto_hip_hop_scene_in_the_spotlight_at_hot_do
cs/](http://www.blogto.com/film/2013/04/toronto_hip_hop_scene_in_the_spotlight_at_hot_do
cs/)

[http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/toronto/the-toronto-rappers-who-really-started-
from-the-bottom/article11581851/](http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/toronto/the-toronto-rappers-who-really-started-
from-the-bottom/article11581851/)

“a tight, unflinching look at a musical movement”

<http://www.torontoscreenshots.com/2013/04/29/hot-docs-2013-alias/>

“definitely, absolutely, not one to miss...”

<http://househippo.org/2013/04/25/hot-docs-2013-five-must-see-film/>

“Michelle Latimer has gotten up-close and personal, showing a very human side to a group of ambitious Toronto dreamers.”

<http://spacing.ca/toronto/2013/04/25/hot-docs-alias/>

<http://timesofnews.co/2013/04/26/hot-docs-review-alias/>

“One of the most urgent documentaries for Toronto audiences at Hot Docs this year. Raw and realistic, *Alias* looks beyond the stereotypes and tells the truth.”

http://www.cinemablographer.com/2013/04/hot-docs-review-alias.html?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+cine-mablographer%2FtIXG+%28Cinemablographer%29

“What starts with the gritty scenes from a Toronto street rapper’s music video evolves into a vivid full-length documentary that uncovers the many trials and tribulations that go into being a hood emcee on the grind in the Screwface Capital.”

<http://urbanologymag.com/um/alias-tells-story-of-t-dot-rap-underdogs-at-hot-docs/>

“Latimer’s film cuts through the political jargon that populates talk radio and the nightly news and talks to those who are striving to make their hip hop dreams a reality.”

<http://www.bigthoughtsfromasmallmind.com/2013/04/hot-docs-review-alias.html>

<http://www.criticizethis.ca/2013/04/hot-docs-2013-preview-pt-3-the-manor-alias-and-the-devils-lair.html>

A great film takes you somewhere you might never otherwise get to go. For this reason alone, “[Alias](#),” is a great film!

<http://www.examiner.com/article/hot-docs-2013-alias-bares-reality-of-toronto-s-hip-hop-culture>

“Surreal and beautiful, *Alias* offers an insider look at a different urban space.”

<http://povmagazine.com/articles/view/hot-docs-2013-alias>

**** out of 5 stars!

“A gritty and captivating portrait of some of Toronto hip hop's true hustlers...illuminating and inspiring!”

<http://torontoist.com/2013/04/alias/>

“The buzziest, sexiest films screening at this year’s edition of the annual real-to-reel festival.”

<http://www.thegridto.com/culture/film/hot-docs-2013/>

ALIAS CREDITS

Dedicated to:
Jaheim Morgan
Jordyn Bellamy
Vincent Crew
Juelz Trench
Ikeena Singh
Shkaree Scott
Shkore Scott
and Noah

Directed, Written & Produced by Michelle Latimer

in collaboration with

Producer
Nida Marji

Edited By
Kye Meechan

Film Composer
Vikas Kohli

Cinematographer
Chris Romeike

Location Sound Recordist
Jason Milligan

Featuring
Alias Don Million
Alkatraz
Keon Love
Knia Singh
Trench

Additional Appearances by
Mr. Erbie
Banana Clip
Bella Banks
Bradley Tolliver
Eyes
J.B.
KTS
James Martin
Nemesis & Baby Gryme
Professor Boutros
Rich Kidd
Marlin Robin
Scrwg Scrilla
Abby Speng

Tommy Spitz
Strez One
The Kid
TnT
Tom Vujicic
Young Grova

Associate Producer
Tina Witham

Editorial Consultant
Peter Mettler

Production Coordinator
Mackenzie Muldoon

Production Assistance
Darren Hynes

Dolly Operator
Nicholas Fasullo

Additional Camera
Gregory Biskup
Tess Girard
John Tran

Additional Sound
Daniel Hewitt
Brian Horrell
Sanjay Mehta

Transcription
Darren Hynes

Editors
Kye Meechan
Graham Withers

Post Production Supervisor
Allan Schwartzberger

Online Post-Production Facility
Technicolor

Sales Representative
James Kwiatkowski

Colourist
Mike Dobroski

Online & Packaging Editor
Michael Key

Post Production Coordinator
Lisa Lanthier

Audio Post Production Facility
Jam Post

Re-recording Mixer
Orest Sushko

Dialogue Editor
Janice Ierulli

Sound Designer
Mark Shnuriwsky

Assistant Sound Editor
Gren-Erich Zwicker

Business Affairs
Nida Marji

Associate Producer Development
Alan Black

Production Accounting
Rong Liu, Kay & Warburton

Insurance
The CG&B Group, Unionville Insurance

Publicity
GAT Publicity
Ingrid Hamilton
Daniela Ponce
Jonny Bunning
Brian Geldin

Special Thanks
The Latimer Family
Peter Mettler
Darren Hynes
Beverly Krupa
Kevin Matthews

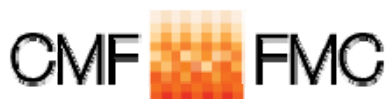
Thank you
Greg Baptiste
Lisa Baylin
Jennifer Donath-Black
Quinn Donath-Black
Carlos Bleeks
Anna Chatterton
Liz Chatterton
Shane Corkery
Sarafina DiFelice

Lynne Fernie
Flo
Marc Giardini
Gisele Gordon
Danis Goulet
Heather Harding
Robin Hood
Christine Kleckner
Kool Aid
Levi “Super L” Loblack
Paula Letang-Loblack
Paramita Nath
Julia Newell
“0”
Martin Scott-Pascal
Ken Puley
Alex Rogalski
Bajrang Singh
Andrea Singh
Snow
Sparky D
Moya Teklu
Otis Harding-Withers
Roslyn Woolridge
African Canadian Legal Clinic
Caribana Arts Group
ImagineNATIVE Film & Media Arts Festival
Reel Wolf Productions
CMP Studios
Wellesley Street Studios
The Opera House – Athena Towers
The University of Toronto, Elementary Coptic class
York University

Executive in charge of production for Shaw Media
Lynne Carter
Ben Rotterman

Produced by Streeel Films

With the participation of



The Canadian Film or Video Production Tax Credit



Canadian
Heritage

Patrimoine
canadien



And with the assistance of



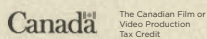
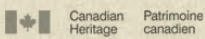
(Shaw Media Animated log – minimum 3.5 seconds)

ALIAS

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