



Assholes^{*}

**A Theory*

A FEATURE DOCUMENTARY FROM JOHN WALKER

Ever get the feeling that assholes are taking over the world?



▲ JOHN CLEESE, AUTHOR, COMEDIAN, SCREENWRITER

BAD behaviour is as old as human history, something we all encounter at some point—whether on the playground, in the workplace or in public life. But the phenomenon seems to be amplified in an age of venomous social media and resurgent authoritarian politics.

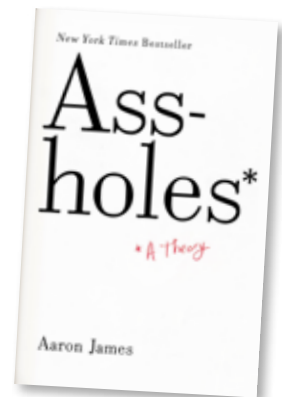
***Assholes: A Theory* investigates the breeding grounds of contemporary ‘asshole culture’ — and locates a few hopeful signs of civility in an otherwise rude-n-nasty universe.**

With rampant narcissism threatening to trash civilization as we know it, the time has come for *Assholes: A Theory*, an entertaining and oh-so-timely new doc from acclaimed director John Walker.

Built around a lively conversation with philosopher Aaron James, author of the *New York Times* bestseller of the same name, *Assholes: A Theory* investigates the breeding grounds of contemporary “asshole culture”—and locates a few hopeful signs of civility in an otherwise rude-’n-nasty universe.

Venturing into a predominantly male domain, Walker moves from the frat clubs of elite colleges to the bratty princedoms of Silicon Valley and bear pits of international finance. Why do entitled assholes thrive in certain environments? What explains their perverse appeal and success? And how do they keep getting elected!


Weighing in with pungent commentary are observers like actor John Cleese, referring sweetly to the hedge-fund trade as an “arsehole factory”—echoing law professor Saule Omarova’s tart appraisal of financial services as “a quintessential asshole industry.” While Leslie Miley, one of the few African-Americans to rise through Silicon Valley’s ranks, assesses the damage done by the move-fast-and-break-things mantra, and former police officer Sherry Lee Benson-Podolchuk shatters the clichéd image of the courteous Mountie with *Women Not Wanted*, her exposé of misogynistic assholery within the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.



▶ **AARON JAMES**, AUTHOR
ASSHOLES: A THEORY, PROFESSOR
OF PHILOSOPHY, UNIVERSITY OF
CALIFORNIA, IRVINE

About Aaron James, Author of *Assholes: A Theory*

Aaron James is Professor of Philosophy at the University of California, Irvine. He is the author of *Fairness In Practice: A Social Contract for a Global Economy*, *Assholes: a Theory*, *Assholes: a Theory of Donald Trump*, *Surfing with Sartre: An Aquatic Inquiry into a Life of Meaning*, and many articles in ethics and political philosophy.

He was an ACLS Burkhardt fellow at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences at Stanford University, a Visiting Professor of Philosophy at New York University, and a Visiting Scholar at Australia National University. 



Praise for the book
Assholes: A Theory...

“Convincing and often quite funny... James makes a rigorous case for why we should take the problem of the asshole seriously.”

LOS ANGELES
REVIEW OF BOOKS

Other featured interviews include policy consultant Robert Hockett, who worked for both Occupy Wall Street and the US Federal Reserve in the wake of the 2008 crash; banker Paul Purcell, who has pioneered a novel “no asshole rule” at his company; and Italian LGBTQ activist Vladimir Luxuria, a former parliamentarian who famously locked horns with Silvio Berlusconi, the p***y-grabbing prototype of the 21st-century demagogue.


Assholes: A Theory is a co-production between John Walker Productions Ltd. (Ann Bernier, John Walker, producers) and the National Film Board of Canada (Annette Clarke, producer). 

Short synopsis

With venomous social media, resurgent authoritarianism and rampant narcissism threatening to trash civilization as we know it, the time has come for *Assholes: A Theory* — an entertaining and oh so timely feature doc from acclaimed director John Walker.

Inspired by Aaron James’ *New York Times* bestseller of the same name, *Assholes* investigates the breeding grounds of contemporary ‘asshole culture’ — and locates signs of civility in an otherwise rude-n-nasty universe.

Venturing into predominantly male domain, Walker moves from Ivy League frat clubs to the bratty princedoms of Silicon Valley and bear pits of international finance. Why do assholes thrive in certain environments? What explains their perverse appeal? And how do they keep getting elected!

Lively commentary is provided by the likes of actor John Cleese, former RCMP officer Sherry Lee Benson-Podolchuk, and Italian LGBTQ activist Vladimir Luxuria who famously locked horns with Silvio Berlusconi, the p***y-grabbing prototype of the 21st century demagogue. 

JOHN WALKER'S films have been widely broadcast and have appeared at the major international film festivals in Toronto, Vancouver, New York, Los Angeles, Berlin, London and Tokyo.

He has received over 60 Canadian and international nominations and awards for his writing, directing, producing and cinematography. Of these, 22 are from Academy of Canadian Cinema & Television, including the coveted Donald Brittain Award for best social/political documentary



▲ JOHN WALKER

Utshimassits: Place Of The Boss; a Gemini for best documentary director *The Hand Of Stalin*; and a Genie for best feature documentary *Strand: Under The Dark Cloth*, a personal portrait of his mentor, the photographer/filmmaker Paul Strand. His film on the Cape Breton coal miners choir, *Men Of The Deeps*, won three Gemini awards including best performing arts, best documentary photography, best sound and a best director nomination. The film garnered three million viewers with its CTV broadcast.

His feature length films include *Assholes: A Theory*, *Quebec My Country Mon Pays*, *Arctic Defenders*, *A Drummers Dream*, *The Fairy Faith*, *Tough Assignment*, and the critically acclaimed feature drama *A Winter Tan* which received seven Genie nominations including Best Motion Picture, Best Director and won Best Actor for Jackie Burroughs.

He co-produced, wrote and directed the provocative feature film *Passage*, a fiction/documentary for BBC and History Television about the Sir John Franklin search for the fabled Northwest

Passage. Martin Knelman of *The Toronto Star* called it "One of the great triumphs in Canadian documentary film history." Winning numerous awards Walker was the first Canadian to receive the Organization of American Historians - Eric Barnouw Award.

Walker made several films for British television, tackling some of the foremost tragedies of the twentieth century. He directed and photographed the opening two films in the BBC/October Films trilogy *The Hand Of Stalin*, which addressed the devastating human suffering under Stalin's regime. The first film was called a masterpiece and the films were broadcast to general acclaim: "oral history at its most devastating," said London's *Daily Mail*; "words fail the enormity of what these films reveal," said *The Observer*. The British Press Guild, Royal Television Society, and the Academy of Canadian Cinema & Television nominated the trilogy for best series.

His directorial credits on Great Britain's Channel 4 include *Hidden Children*, about children who concealed their Jewish identity to survive the Holocaust. *Orphans Of Manchuria*, also nominated for the Donald Brittain Award, dealt with the plight of Japanese children orphaned in China at the end of WWII. His groundbreaking film *Distress Signals*, was the opening film on the Channel



► DIRECTOR JOHN WALKER, CINEMATOGRAPHER PAUL MCCURDY AND SOUND RECORDIST JIM RILLIE CAPTURING ROBERT HOCKETT AND AARON JAMES IN ZUCCOTTI PARK. SITE OF OCCUPY WALL STREET. (PHOTO BY JWP)




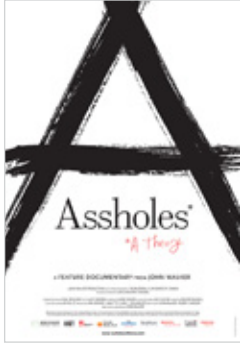
Short Biography

John Walker is one of Canada's most prolific and respected documentary filmmakers. His films have been widely broadcast and have appeared at major international film festivals in Toronto, Vancouver, New York, Los Angeles, Berlin, London and Tokyo. He has received 60 Canadian and international nominations and awards for his writing, directing, producing and cinematography, 22 of those from the Academy of Canadian Cinema & Television. In 2018, he was honoured with a Hot Docs Focus On Retrospective and a Canadian Society of Cinematographers Masters Award for Outstanding Contribution to the Art of Cinematography. 

4 series "Channels of Resistance: Global Television and Local Empowerment." The film received Walker's fourth nomination for a Donald Brittain Award for best social/political documentary.

With *Utshimassits: Place Of The Boss* he turned his attention to a tragedy on Canadian soil. Juxtaposing the powerful testimony of the Mushuau Innu of Davis Inlet with the vast Labrador landscape, Walker told the painful story of the nomadic Innu.

His passionate commitment to the documentary form led him to co-found the Documentary Organization of Canada. Walker has conducted master classes across the country and mentored numerous emerging filmmakers. He served as guest programmer for the Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival and served on the board from 2011 to 2017. In 2018, he was honoured with a Hot Docs Focus On Retrospective and a Canadian Society of Cinematographers Masters Award for Outstanding Contribution to the Art of Cinematography. 



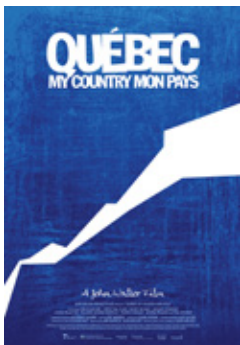
Assholes: A Theory

WRITER, DIRECTOR, NARRATOR, PRODUCER 2019

81 MIN · WWW.ASSHOLESATHEORY.COM

Inspired by the *NY Times* bestseller, *Assholes: A Theory*, filmmaker John Walker takes on an investigative journey to test the limits of its acceptance of assholes in contemporary society. With the global acceleration of asshole behavior, spurred on by social media, the film's participants seek to understand and push back against this rising tide of assholery.

- » World Premiere CPH: DOX – Copenhagen
- » North American Premiere Hot Docs – Toronto
- » Asia Pacific Premiere Doc Edge – New Zealand
- » Canadian Screen Award Nominations – Donald Brittain Award for Best Social/Political Documentary, Best Writing Documentary, Best Picture Editing Documentary
- » Directors Guild of Canada – Nomination Best Picture Editing – Documentary
- » Writers Guild of Canada – Best Documentary Script Nomination
- » Nova Scotia Screen Awards – Best Documentary Nomination



Québec My Country Mon Pays

WRITER, DIRECTOR, NARRATOR, PRODUCER 2016

89 MIN · WWW.QUEBECMYCOUNTRYMONPAYS.CA

The aftermath of Quebec's Quiet Revolution in the 1960s unleashed dramatic cultural and political changes that led to the separatist movement, the FLQ terrorist crisis and ultimately, the exodus of more than 500,000 English-speaking Quebecers. Montreal-born filmmaker John Walker reveals his own complicated relationship with the province in a film brimming with love and longing.

- » World Premiere Hot Docs 2016
- » Writers Guild of Canada – Best Documentary Script
- » Nova Scotia Screen Awards – Best Documentary
- » Vancouver International Film Festival – Jury Citation – Honourable Mention – Best Documentary 2016
- » FIPA – Special Screening – Biarritz, France
- » Directors Guild of Canada – Nomination – Allan King Award for Excellence in Documentary
- » Directors Guild of Canada – Nomination – Best Picture Editing – Documentary

On *Québec My Country Mons Pay..*

“Walker’s created a film anyone can call their own. Who has not been touched by a sense of place and at worst, forced to leave it and at best, always fearing what one might do if forced to leave it behind?”

GREG KLYMKIW, *THE FILM CORNER*



Arctic Defenders

WRITER, DIRECTOR, NARRATOR, CO-PRODUCER, CO-CINEMATOGRAPHY 2013
90 MIN · WWW.ARCTICDEFENDERS.CA

A radical political movement in the 1970's led to the largest land claim in western civilization, orchestrated by young visionary Inuit with a dream – the governance of their territory – the creation of Nunavut. The film reveals Canada's misguided attempts at sovereignty in the north and finds hope and inspiration from determined people who changed the rules of the game.

- » Best Feature Film – Atlantic Film Festival
- » Director's Guild of Canada – Allan King Award Nomination for Excellence in Documentary
- » Writer's Guild of Canada – Screenwriters Award Nomination – Best Documentary Script
- » Vancouver International Film Festival – Audience Top Ten Canadian Films
- » Focal International Awards – Nomination – Best Use of Footage in a Factual Production

On *A Drummer's Dream*...

"After watching this film, the viewer realizes that unlike playing a guitar or piano, the drummer is an acrobat who juggles drums and cymbals with both feet and both arms."

ALLAN TONG, EXCLAIM



A Drummer's Dream

WRITER, DIRECTOR, CO-PRODUCER 2010
85 MIN · WWW.ADRUMMERSDREAM.COM

A rare and unique assembly of some of the greatest drummers in the world. Explosive talent, passion, humour and irresistible personality come together in a magical setting when seven diverse drummers create a profound and unforgettable experience with forty students.

- » FIPA D'OR – Grand Prize Performing Arts – Biarritz, France
- » Hot Docs International Documentary Festival – Top Ten Audience Award

Buffy

WRITER, DIRECTOR 2010
6 MIN · WWW.NFB.CA

A short film on the passions of singer and songwriter Buffy Sainte-Marie.

John Walker **Selected Filmography**



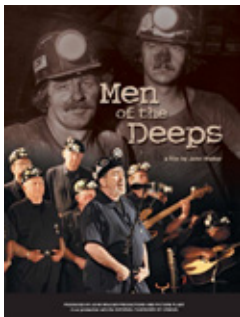
Passage

WRITER, DIRECTOR, NARRATOR, CO-PRODUCER 2008

108 MIN (NFB, PTV CO-PRODUCTION, BBC, HISTORY TELEVISION BROADCAST)

“History would be an excellent thing if only it were true,” claimed Tolstoy. Filmmaker John Walker takes us on an epic historical adventure that involves cannibalism, a vengeful woman and an historical cover-up by British authorities that credited the wrong man, Sir John Franklin, with the discovery of the Northwest Passage. It was in fact John Rae who found the last link in the Passage and was airbrushed out of history. Stunningly cinematic, the film follows a trail from London to the Orkney Islands to Nunavut, elegantly slipping between past and present, drama and documentary, and observational and self-reflexive cinema.

- » Banff World Television Festival – Best Canadian Production
- » Grierson British Documentary Awards – Shortlist – Best Historical Documentary
- » Canadian Film & Television Producers Association – Indie Award – Best Doc
- » Organization of American Historians – Erik Barnouw Award
- » Real 2 Reel International Film Festival for Youth – Best Picture
- » Atlantic Film Festival – Best Director – Best Cinematography
- » Writers Guild of Canada – Screenwriters Award – Best Documentary Script
- » Columbus International Film & Video Festival – Silver Chris Award
- » Vancouver International Film Festival – Audience Top Ten Canadian Films



Men Of The Deeps

WRITER, DIRECTOR, CINEMATOGRAPHER, CO-PRODUCER 2003

52 MIN (NFB, PICTURE PLANT CO-PRODUCTION)

A moving portrait of a group of coal miners gathered together because of their love of song. Through testimonials from both miners and their wives, evocative scenes underground and the hauntingly beautiful voices of the choir, we explore the last days of coal mining in Cape Breton. Featuring sixteen outstanding songs, which exemplify an oral tradition of almost 300 years, the film captures the grace and dignity of a group of men whose livelihood has been lost but their voices inspire and uplift.

- » Gemini Awards – Best Performing Arts Documentary, Best Documentary Photography, Best Documentary Sound
- » Gemini nomination – Best Documentary Director
- » Hot Docs Festival – Top Ten Audience Award
- » Canadian Society of Cinematographers – Best Documentary Photography
- » Atlantic Film Festival – Excellence in Sound Design
- » Tidal Wave Film Festival – Viewers Choice Award – Best Documentary

Years From Here

CO-WRITER, DIRECTOR, NARRATOR 2002

50 MIN (CBC BROADCAST ON THE NATURE OF THINGS)

The story of the Maisin, of Papua New Guinea, on their first trip to visit the indigenous Sto:lo of British Columbia. The film is a follow up to *Changing Ground* that documented the Sto:lo's journey the previous year to PNG. Through the observations of the Maisin and the experiences of the Sto:lo in Canada we come to understand the complexity and tragedy of adapting to a foreign way of life.

Changing Ground

CO-WRITER, DIRECTOR, NARRATOR 2001

50 MIN (CBC BROADCAST ON THE NATURE OF THINGS)

A documentary film shot in Papua New Guinea with the Maisin – the first tribe in PNG to say no to foreign logging in their territory. The film witnesses an extraordinary exchange between two indigenous communities: the Maisin of Collingwood Bay, PNG and the Sto:lo of the Fraser Valley in British Columbia who face the same dilemmas.



The Fairy Faith

WRITER, DIRECTOR, NARRATOR, CO-PRODUCER 2000

77 MIN (NFB CO-PRODUCTION. THEATRICAL RELEASE, CBC BROADCAST.)

Walker takes us on a personal journey into a world of myth and imagination that he learned from his grandmother. He travels from the Moors of Devon and the Highlands of Scotland to the brooding Celtic landscapes of Ireland and the intimate hills of Cape Breton, in his search of this potent “other-world” of the imagination.

- » Genie nomination – Best Feature Documentary

Further Filmography

Utshimassits: Place Of The Boss

WRITER, DIRECTOR, CO-PRODUCER 1996

- » Gemini – Donald Brittain Award – Best Social/Political Documentary
- » Gemini nomination – Best Documentary Director
- » Hot Docs nomination – Best Cultural Documentary
- » Yorkton Film Festival – Golden Sheaf Awards – Best Film of Festival, Best Documentary over 30min and Best Music
- » Atlantic Film Festival – Rex Tasker Award – Best Documentary

Tough Assignment

DIRECTOR, CINEMATOGRAPHER, CO-PRODUCER 1996

- » Hot Docs – Best Editing of Festival

The Champagne Safari

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER 1995

- » Genie Award – Best Feature Documentary
- » The New York Festivals – International Competition – Gold Medal

On *The Fairy Faith*...

“The Fairy Faith is a quirky and compelling quest... Walker finds convincing witnesses who relate their encounters with the little people.”

THE MAIL-STAR

On Strand – Under the
Dark Cloth...

**“A beautifully
crafted, thoroughly
researched and
intimately recounted
documentary.”**

VARIETY



Hidden Children

DIRECTOR, CINEMATOGRAPHER 1994

- » Chicago Film Festival – Golden Plaque Award
- » Gemini nomination – Donald Brittain Award – Best Social/Political Documentary
- » New York, San Francisco and Toronto Jewish Film Festivals

Orphans Of Manchuria

DIRECTOR, CO-CINEMATOGRAPHER 1993

- » Gemini nomination – Donald Brittain Award – Best Social/Political Documentary

God's Dominion: Shepherds to the Flock

1992

Distress Signals

DIRECTOR, PRODUCER 1991

- » Gemini nomination – Donald Brittain Award – Best Social/Political Documentary

The Hand Of Stalin

DIRECTOR, CINEMATOGRAPHER 1990

- » Gemini Award – Best Documentary Director
- » Earth Peace International Film Festival – Special Merit Award
- » Royal Television Society Nomination – Best Series
- » British Press Guild Nomination – Best Series
- » Academy of Canadian Cinema & Television Nomination – Best Series
- » Gemeaux nominations – Best Documentary, Best Director of Photography in all categories.

Strand – Under The Dark Cloth

DIRECTOR, CO-WRITER, CINEMATOGRAPHER, NARRATOR, PRODUCER 1989

- » Academy of Canadian Cinema & Television – Genie Award – Best Feature Documentary
- » Nyon International Documentary Festival – Public Jury Award
- » Festival International Du Film Sur L'Art – Best Biography

A Winter Tan

CO-DIRECTOR, CINEMATOGRAPHER, CO-PRODUCER 1987

- » Academy of Canadian Cinema & Television – Genie Award – Best Actor
- » Genie nominations – Best Picture and Best Director



Chambers - Tracks And Gestures

DIRECTOR, CINEMATOGRAPHER 1982

- » Canadian Film & Television Association Award - Best Documentary
- » Yorkton Film Festival - Golden Sheaf Awards - Best Film of Festival and Best Human Condition
- » American Film Festival - Blue Ribbon
- » Houston Film Festival - Bronze Award
- » Canadian Film Editors - Best Editing
- » Canadian Society of Cinematographers - Best Documentary Photography

Cinematography Awards

OVER 50 CINEMATOGRAPHY CREDITS

- » Canadian Society of Cinematographers – Masters Award for Contribution to the Art of Cinematography
- » ACCT Gemini – Best Documentary Photography – *Men of the Deeps, A Fragile Tree Has Roots*
- » Canadian Society of Cinematographers – Best Documentary Photography – *Chambers Tracks & Gestures, Blue Snake, Men of the Deeps, Winds of Heaven: Emily Carr & the Spirits of the Forest*
- » Yorkton Film Festival – Golden Sheaf Awards - Best Cinematography of Festival – *On To The Polar Sea, Leningradsкая – A Village in Southern Russia, Whalesong, Making Overtures* (Oscar nomination)
- » Gemini nominations – Best Documentary Cinematography – *Making Overtures*
- » Gemeaux nomination – Best Director of Photography in all Categories – *The Hand of Stalin*