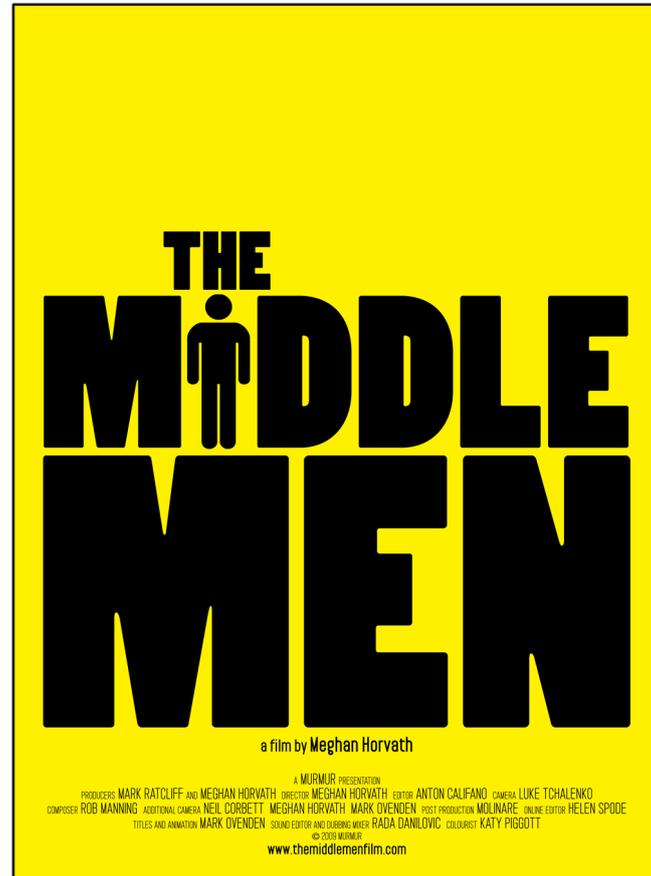


# PRESS KIT



*"Finally we have a documentary that looks at middle-aged men with insight and sincerity. Although figures suggest that men are particularly vulnerable to mental distress at middle age, the wider world has so far tended to treat this issue with derision. Films like 'The Middle Men' are beginning to redress the balance. For this reason, the documentary is of both cultural and political importance. I was gripped - you end up caring deeply about these men and their particular journeys. Watch this film!"*

-Mariam Kemple  
Policy & Campaigns Officer at *Mind* (UK)

# FILM INFORMATION

**RUNNING TIME:** 70 minutes

**GENRE:** Documentary

**YEAR:** 2009

**SUBJECTS:** Men, Middle Age, Addiction, Marriage, Divorce, Migration, Work, Sex, Love

**LOCATION:** UK

**LANGUAGE:** English

**SHOOTING FORMAT:** HDV

**SCREENING FORMATS:** Digi Beta (PAL/NTSC), HDCAM (PAL), DVD (PAL/NTSC)

**AWARDS:** *Best British Documentary* at the 2010 London Independent Film Festival

**WEBSITE:** [www.themiddlemenfilm.com](http://www.themiddlemenfilm.com)

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# SYNOPSIS

## LOGLINE

Eight English middle-aged men lay it on the line about life, love and the stereotype.

## VERY SHORT SYNOPSIS (50 words)

For men in particular there is a glut of stereotypes about what mid-life is supposed to look and feel like. Set against these social stereotypes *The Middle Men* reveals the emotional and material worlds of 8 English middle-aged men, and how each is confronting life's circumstances on their own terms.

## SHORT SYNOPSIS (100 words)

It's a well-worn story: the middle-aged man running on empty trades everything in for a second shot at life before it's too late.

For men in particular there is a glut of stereotypes (the mid-life crisis, for starters) about what middle age is supposed to look and feel like. But what lies beneath these caricatures - a newfound freedom or a struggle to cope?

Set against these social stereotypes and our cult of youth, *The Middle Men* reveals the emotional and material worlds of 8 middle-aged men living and working in England and confronting life's circumstances on their own terms.

## LONG SYNOPSIS (195 words)

For men in particular, there is a glut of stereotypes of what mid-life is supposed to look and feel like. There's the story of the crisis, for starters. And just recently *The Telegraph (UK)* reported that middle-aged men are 'least happy with life'.

But Carl Jung believed that transitions at middle age are a normal part of maturation and that with this period comes the greatest potential for self-realisation.

The concept of 'middle age' is also changing as recent generations are living longer and healthier lives. Men in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century are entering their 'second adulthoods' in radically different ways than their fathers. Yet new social changes – feminism, an uncertain economy, and a reported sense of 'confusion' among men and their roles in today's society – mean new challenges.

*The Middle Men* reveals the emotional and material worlds of 8 middle-aged men living and working in England, each confronting life on their own terms. There is a recovery from addiction, the search for a new career, a commitment to marriage, a recently broken home, a new

## SYNOPSIS (continued)

business venture, a recently found peace which had always seemed elusive, an episode of depression and a return to bachelorhood.

## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Usually the first question I get asked is 'Why men?' For me it is a very easy answer - we simply don't hear enough from them. And when we do men's experiences are very often couched in humour, making it difficult to unpick their real thoughts and concerns. Few stories about men get past the stereotypes and clichés that clutter the media, and for middle age men that often revolves around notions of 'crisis'.

During the process of making the film I was struck at how singular men in our society can seem, without the collective force of a movement like feminism, documenting generations of experience. For me *The Middle Men* was one small effort towards addressing this imbalance in giving men a voice.

I suppose the second most popular question I get asked is 'so when *does* middle age begin and end?' As a filmmaker it was my never intention to answer this question, only to explore men's perceptions around this stage of life that seems to be set by Western culture's social clock. Women's experience of ageing is well talked about, not just because each of us form a personal relationship with our bodies from an early age, but also because society responds to our bodies in a way I think just doesn't happen to men. For women middle age is usually synonymous with the menopause, that undeniable biological marker of the end of youth. Without that I wondered if the passing of time has the same emotional resonance for men as it does for women, and this was something I wanted to explore during the process.

*The Middle Men* is a film about men made by a woman and one that I hope will be of interest to both.

## **MEN & 'MIDDLE AGE'**

### **news, research & interesting facts**

- *The Daily Mail (UK)* reported on 8<sup>th</sup> July 2008 that men 'think they are 3 times as likely to suffer a midlife crisis than women – 76 per cent versus 24 percent.'
- A recent survey revealed that midlife crises are now the second most commonly quoted reason cited to divorce lawyers as the cause of marital breakdown, as reported by Kathryn Knight in her 6<sup>th</sup> April 2008 Sunday Times article.
- 'The experience of crisis at midlife is the collapse not of our essential selves, but of our assumptions,' from James Hollis in *The Middle Passage*.
- Economists Andrew Oswald from the University of Warwick in England and David Blanchflower from Dartmouth College in the United States found in a 2008 study that for both British men and women, the probability of depression peaks around 44 years of age. They also noted that signs of midlife depression are found in all kinds of people and not just those affected by divorce or changes in jobs or income.
- In 1895 at the age of 67, Leo Tolstoy learned to ride a bicycle.
- 'One theory about people in the Western world is that of a 'social clock'. Culturally they are brought up with a certain, fairly fixed notion of the stages of life. . . The crisis is programmed into the social clock in the mid-life period. Research in China suggests that this is not an accepted part of their culture.' (From *The Bluffer's Guide To Middle Age, 2006*).
- The British *Telegraph* in August 2007 published an article claiming that middle-age men are 'least happy with life'.
- 'Men are better educated, healthier and likely to live longer when they enter mid-life than at any time in the past. This can lead to a greater degree of reflection, and often, introspection, on what has happened during the first part of life and what the future holds,' as reported by Men's Health Forum.
- 'In a society which puts a particularly high value on youth, and sidelines older people, it's difficult for many people to move smoothly into their middle years. Men reaching mid-life may feel a loss of masculinity and confusion about their future role. Divorce, insecurity at work and the changing role of men add to the uncertainty many feel during this time of transition,' as reported by Men's Health Forum.
- 'In the 1950s, there was a clear idea [however flawed] of what a man was expected to do, how he should behave, and the way in which he should engage with the women in his life; now there is confusion.' Yvonne Roberts, *The Guardian* [UK], February 29, 2008.

## **MEN & 'MIDDLE AGE'**

### **news, research & interesting facts**

### **(continued)**

- 'During our twenties and early thirties, many of us strive to conform to a handed-down agenda for how we should live our lives, and follow a map that has largely been drawn up by others. This route involves passing exams, getting a job, having children. Of course, many people don't conform to this traditional pattern and have been more concerned with self-expression and with developing a less conventional way of life.' (From the mental health charity *Mind's (UK)* leaflet *How To Survive A Mid-Life Crisis*)
- In the 1950s Erik Erikson, the developmental psychologist and psychoanalyst delineated 8 stages of development, each ending in a crisis. Middle Age was the 7<sup>th</sup>. His widow added a 9<sup>th</sup> after his death to reflect increasing life expectancy in the West.

# BIOS

## DIRECTOR – MEGHAN HORVATH

Meghan Horvath is a filmmaker based in London, most interested in stories that live just beyond the lens of the mainstream media. *The Middle Men* is her first feature-length documentary.

In May 2010 she completed *A Dollar & A Dream*, a short documentary about a British political activist who travelled to America to campaign for the Democratic ticket in the 2008 election.

Her short *Anyway, Who Are You?* was broadcast in 2008 as part of Channel 4's Three Minute Wonder Strand. The film draws parallels in the emotional experiences of two refugees who arrive in London nearly fifty years apart.

Prior to this Meghan was an Associate Producer on Ken Burns's *The War* documentary series, which was broadcast on American public television and was an official selection at the 2007 Cannes Film Festival.

Meghan is currently in pre-production on her first fiction short, and is developing a feature-length documentary about a swimming pool in Romania.

## PRODUCER – MARK RATCLIFF

Mark Ratcliff is a researcher and strategist who works for ad agencies such as Leagas Delaney, Mother and Leo Burnett, and brands such as Timberland, Coca-Cola, 3 and Stella Artois. In his spare time, he records critically acclaimed dance music as one half of Unusual and Electric, and occasionally he dabbles in a bit of film production...in the last few years he has produced short films for the likes of Joe Wright and Ewan McGregor, as well as documentaries for the likes of Adam Smith and, now, Meghan.

## EDITOR – ANTON CALIFANO

Anton originally trained as an editor in 35mm cutting rooms and currently works as a director and editor. Anton has edited Channel 4's Three Minute Wonder "Britain Re-cut" Series and in 2007 the "Made In India" series. He has also supported new directors as editor on five short films produced as part of the Science on Film initiative, two of which films have won festival awards. He continues to support new filmmakers through being Executive Producer on the Eastern Edge Film Fund.

## **BIOS**

### **(continued)**

#### **CAMERA – LUKE TCHALENKO**

Luke Tchalenko worked as a photographer throughout the former Soviet Union and the Middle East for newspapers such as The Times of London, The Guardian, Sud Deutsche Zeitung and The New York Times. Since returning to London in 2006, Luke has been directing and shooting films. "North Circular Stories" was broadcast on Channel 4 and at the 2007 Sheffield documentary film festival. "The Writer and The Flautist" is Luke's first major documentary film project and "My Friend Bosa," an intimate portrait of renowned Russian photographer Boris Savelevs is currently in Post Production.

#### **COMPOSER – ROB MANNING**

Rob Manning is a freelance composer with more than 10 years' experience. He has written music for a range of advertising agencies, production companies, and television channels including MTV, Sony Playstation, Hat Trick, Optomen, Fresh One, Endemol, BBC, ITV, Channel 4, and Five.

His credits include commercials (EON/Powergen, HSBC, Johnnie Walker, Airbus, UTV); comedies (Fonejacker, Rush Hour, Funny Cuts); documentaries (Gordon Ramsay's Great Escape, Heston Blumenthal's Feasts, White Boy Black Nanny, Extraordinary People); and production music (Boost, Big Screen, MTV, Focus Music, Ricall, Lift).

Rob has a studio in North London with a valve desk, a diverse collection of instruments (including guitars, banjo, ukulele, mandolin, dulcimer, accordion, piano, lap steel, sitar, and a nose flute) alongside a large library of virtual instruments.

# CREDITS

**Director**

Meghan Horvath

**Producer**

Mark Ratcliff

**Co-Producer**

Meghan Horvath

**Editor**

Anton Califano

**Camera**

Luke Tchalenko

**Composer**

Rob Manning

**Additional Camera**

Neil Corbett

Meghan Horvath

Mark Ovenden

**Production Assistants**

Tracy Christmas

Camilla French

Nora Razian

Ester Straub

**Online Editor**

Helen Spode

**Titles & Animation**

Mark Ovenden

**Sound Editor**

Rada Danilovic

**Dubbing Mixer**

Rada Danilovic

**Colourist**

Katy Piggott

**Additional Music**

King of Funk

Mark Ratcliff and Adam Whitaker

# **CREDITS**

## **(continued)**

### **Additional Musicians**

Sophie Sirota (Viola)

Lucy Wilkins (Violin)

Sarah Wilson (Cello)

### **Cycle Footage**

Nick Guy of Meta Films

### **Post Production**

Molinare

**Music Mixed at Cowshed Studios by Joe Leach**

[www.cowshedstudio.com](http://www.cowshedstudio.com)