



PRESS RELEASE

'Detroit: Ruin of a city'

Professor Michael Chanan (University of the West of England) and George Steinmetz (University of Michigan) have produced a unique documentary about Detroit and its ruination, which is being previewed in Bristol on 6 March and premiered at the University of Michigan two weeks later.

The film is a collaboration between Professor Chanan, who is a seasoned film-maker, and sociologist George Steinmetz, with music by the composer Michael Nyman, who is well known for his many film scores. All three of them will attend the special preview at the Watershed in Bristol on 6 March which is presented by Bristol Docs.

Known as the Motor City, home of Henry Ford and the giants of the US automobile industry, of 'the brown bomber' Joe Louis, of Motown and Eminem, Detroit is nowadays in seemingly terminal decline, and the most segregated major city in the USA.

With the participation of Detroit artist Tyree Guyton, French sociologist Loïc Wacquant, Detroit born writer Dan Georgakas, and a variety of local residents, the film traces the rise and fall of the social system known by sociologists as 'Fordism', the way the city was shaped by the automobile, and its decline following the deindustrialisation which began in the 1950s.

Much of the story is told through a rich variety of archive footage – of the Ford plants, mass protests of the Depression years, Diego Rivera painting his famous mural 'Detroit Industry', the struggle for trade union rights, the riots of 1943 and 1967 – through which the film charts the battle over the image of the city and its industry that began when the Ford Motor Company started making its own films back in 1914.

Speaking about the film, Professor Chanan says, "We've called it a documentary road movie because if you go to Detroit, you can only get around by car, which is true of many US cities but in Detroit it becomes symbolic because this is Motor City, so it seemed right that we should film in and from the cars we travelled round in."

"The intention of the film," he explains, "is to forge a new kind of collaboration between the documentarist and the academic inquirer, in which authorship is fully shared, and to demonstrate that because of digital video, you can do this within an academic setting at very low cost, and therefore make a kind of documentary which television has abandoned, and which will also contribute to academic debate."

The film will be premiered in Ann Arbor on 18 March, at a conference on 'The Ruins of Modernity'. It will then be screened in London at the SCMS (Society for Screen and Media Studies) conference at the end of the month, and will subsequently be made available on DVD through Bristol Docs.

The film was made with the assistance of the University of Michigan and the University of the West of England with funding from the AHRB (Arts and Humanities Research Board) and the ASA (American Sociological Association) / National Science Foundation Fund for Advancement of the Discipline.

Bristol Docs is a collaboration between UWE and the University of Bristol.

For full details of Michael Chanan's other film and academic work go to [www.mchanan.dial.pipex.com](http://www.mchanan.dial.pipex.com)

click here; for George Steinmetz go to [www.lsa.umich.edu/soc/directories/show-person.asp?PeopleID=40](http://www.lsa.umich.edu/soc/directories/show-person.asp?PeopleID=40)

For Michael Nyman, [www.michaelnyman.com](http://www.michaelnyman.com)

For Bristol Docs see <http://humanities.uwe.ac.uk/bristoldocs>