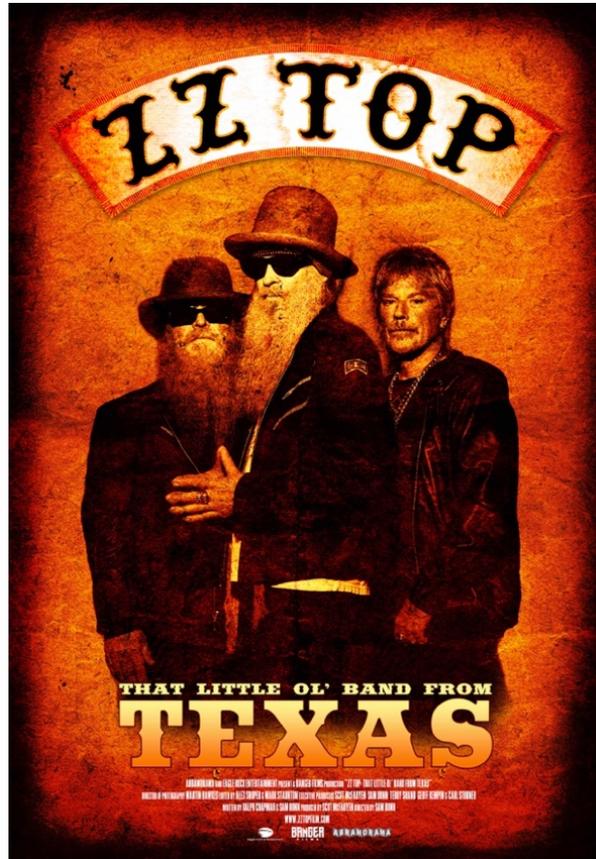


**ABRAMORAMA**



**BANDER**

Present



In Theaters This Summer

Directed by Sam Dunn

Written by Ralph Chapman & Sam Dunn

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

**Featuring**

Billy F Gibbons

Dusty Hill

Frank Beard

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## SYNOPSIS

*ZZ TOP: THAT LITTLE OL' BAND FROM TEXAS* tells the story of how three oddball teenage bluesmen - Billy Gibbons, Dusty Hill, and Frank Beard – became one of the biggest, most beloved bands on the planet, all while maintaining a surrealist mystique that continues to intrigue fans and entice onlookers 50 years after the band's inception.

Buoyed by candid band interviews, never-before-seen archive, animation, celebrity fan testimonials (Billy Bob Thornton, Joshua Homme and more), and an intimate performance at the legendary Gruene Hall shot exclusively for this documentary, "That Little Ol' Band" runs the gamut, from the absurd to the poignant, from squalid Texas bars to MTV heroics, all in celebration of this notoriously private, but larger than life, power trio. In the end, *ZZ TOP: THAT LITTLE OL' BAND FROM TEXAS* unravels the extraordinary tale of a band whose image we know, but whose story we don't.

Today's line-up of ZZ Top was codified a half century ago when guitarist Billy Gibbons, who had been part of The Moving Sidewalks, Houston's groundbreaking psychedelic band, joined forces with drummer Frank Beard. The band, conceived as a trio, needed a bass player and Beard suggested they see if Dusty Hill might be a good fit. Beard was more than familiar with Hill insofar as they had played together previously in The American Blues, a Dallas-based blues rock outfit known for dying their hair blue and incurring the ire of motel managers who had to deal with blue stained pillowcases the morning after the band checked out. Dusty immediately locked in with Billy and Frank and today's ZZ Top was born.

Rock and Roll history ensued with massive album sales, including the Platinum-certified (10 million sold) *Eliminator* album and international hit singles including "La Grange," "Tush," "Sharp Dressed Man," "Gimme All Your Lovin'," "Legs" and others. The group's career highlights include induction into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame by Keith Richards of the Rolling Stones and being named Official Heroes of the State of Texas. Over the years, their hallmark beards (on Dusty and Billy; Frank's is in name only) have become among rock's most recognized visual cues while generations have come to appreciate the musicianship, tenacity and humor that are all hallmarks of "That Little Ol' Band From Texas" who enduring presence has been encapsulated in the catch phrase: "the same three guys playing the same three chords."

## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

I was 9 years old when I first heard ZZ Top. It was 1983.

I saw the music videos for *Gimme All Your Lovin'*, *Legs* and *Sharp Dressed Man* on MuchMusic in Canada, and was mystified but what I saw: The band appeared as three oddball, coverall-clad dudes standing roadside with spinning fuzzy guitars and giant beards. They had a bizarre, ghost-like presence. It was like an alien rock band had landed in my living room. I wondered: *Who are these guys? Are they even a real band? What's with the beards?*

In my 30s, I became a documentary filmmaker and got the opportunity to interview some of the biggest names in rock music: Alice Cooper, Geddy Lee, Bruce Dickinson, Tony Iommi, Rob Halford, Lars Ulrich. These were my music idols, and I was able to develop a rapport with them through telling their stories on screen. But when it came to directing the first feature documentary on ZZ Top and establishing a connection with band leader/guitarist Billy Gibbons, bassist Dusty Hill, and drummer Frank Beard, it didn't come easy.

My initial encounters with ZZ Top were peculiar. The first meeting was on a frigid winter night in Orillia, Ontario, at Casino Rama, where the band was performing. Billy, Dusty and Frank sat around a large table in their green room. They were cordial and funny, but also a bit elusive when it came to talking about the film. I shared my thoughts on the process of finding "the ZZ Top story," referencing my experience making a documentary on another legendary power trio, Rush (which I co-directed with Scot McFadyen). Billy exclaimed "We're not Rush!" and described – in rather frank terms – how ZZ Top should not be compared with any other band. He didn't elaborate and I struggled to interpret what he meant. After the meeting, I left the room worried that I had somehow offended Billy. Building trust with ZZ Top would clearly take time.

My next meeting with Billy was in Lubbock, a mid-sized city on the high plains of West Texas, where the band was continuing their tour. This time he was less elusive, but no less quirky. On the afternoon of the show, Billy invited me and my writer Ralph Chapman to accompany him on a field trip to the Buddy Holly Museum, a performance and visual arts center dedicated to Lubbock's hometown music hero. Wearing silk pajamas, slippers, and his trademark Cameroonian beanie-hat, Billy gave us a comprehensive tour of the museum and talked enthusiastically about Buddy's legacy. Later, in the wee hours of the morning after the band's performance, Ralph and I hung out on his tour bus and watched him host a virtual who's-who of West Texan eccentrics: vintage car enthusiasts, bespoke jewelers, salsa chefs, local bluesmen. Although I didn't feel like I knew Billy yet,

it seemed like this was the beginning of establishing some kind of rapport. But I was still faced with a fundamental question: *What's the ZZ Top story?*

I began researching ZZ Top's background and discovered that there was very little documentation on the band besides the usual magazine articles, press releases, promo photographs etc. There wasn't much to build a story around. During this process, I realized that my perception of ZZ Top had remained unchanged since I saw the band's music videos as a 9 year old: I still viewed them as three strange rockers whose career was largely unremarkable until the hit songs from their Diamond-selling album *Eliminator* catapulted them (for a brief moment) into pop rock superstardom. To me, ZZ Top was a band without a meaningful history.

But as I started interviewing the band, pieces of the ZZ Top story emerged: As a young boy, Dusty was inspired to play music because Elvis frequented his mom's Memphis malt shop; Frank was a jock from Irving, Texas, whose life was transformed after seeing the Beatles perform on Ed Sullivan; Billy's pre-ZZ band, Moving Sidewalks, was a pioneer of Houston's underground psychedelic rock scene; ZZ Top's breakthrough moment was opening for The Rolling Stones in front of a hippie crowd in Honolulu; the band's Worldwide Texas Tour, a rodeo-meets-circus-meets-rock show extravaganza, was one of the most ambitious tours in music history, and a middle-finger to critics dismissing ZZ Top as a redneck-blues act; and the synth-driven, pop-tinged sound of the *Eliminator* album was inspired by Billy's field research on dance floors in clubs across America in the early 80s.

It felt like the story was starting to come together. Throughout their career, ZZ Top consistently found ways to morph their sound by drawing on diverse musical styles and storytelling traditions, thereby challenging preconceptions of what it meant to be an all-white Texas rock band. Was ZZ Top's music a subtle critique of the stereotype of Texas culture as a conservative, monolithic backwater? I'm not sure. But regardless, this narrative still felt too academic, too PBS. The film needed a hook, something that would pull it all together and elevate the story beyond a Wikipedia-page in documentary form.

The binding element of the ZZ Top story materialized late in the production, not from interviews with Billy, Dusty and Frank, but from long-time fans/friends of the band: Billy Bob Thornton, Joshua Homme, Steve Miller and others. Their stories of discovering ZZ Top – regardless of when or where they first heard their music or saw them perform – were eerily similar to mine: They too were puzzled by the bluesy pop-rock sound, the beards, the oddball personas. It became clear to me that what lay at the heart of the ZZ Top story was the very thing that had intrigued me as a pre-teen: their mystique.

At this moment I had a flashback to the ghost-like appearances in music videos, the elusive behavior in meetings, the bizarre encounters on the road, the quirky tales about

their past – I realized that ZZ Top actually lives their mystique, and it was right in front of me all along.

And, writing this in 2019, as ZZ Top celebrates their 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, making them the longest surviving original rock line-up of all-time, I wonder if it's their mystique that ultimately got them here.

But one thing's for sure, only ZZ Top will ever know the answer.

Sam Dunn  
Toronto  
June 13, 2019

## FILMMAKERS

### **SAM DUNN, Director / Co-Writer**

Sam Dunn is an award-winning documentary filmmaker and the co-founder of Banger Films. Sam's first documentary film, *Metal: A Headbanger's Journey*, won a Gemini Award for Best Writing in a Documentary. He co-directed and hosted the biggest-ever TV series on the history of heavy metal, *Metal Evolution*, was nominated for a Grammy for his film *Rush: Beyond the Lighted Stage* and won a 2016 Peabody Award & International Emmy for his work on the Netflix original series *Hip-Hop Evolution*.

### **SCOT MCFADYEN, Executive Producer / Producer**

Scot McFadyen is an award-winning director and producer and the co-founder of Banger Films. Building on the success of his first documentary, *Metal: A Headbanger's Journey*, Scot has grown Banger Films into one of the world's best-known music documentary operations. Scot was nominated for a Grammy for his film *Rush: Beyond the Lighted Stage* and won a 2016 Peabody Award & International Emmy for his work on the Netflix original series *Hip-Hop Evolution*.

### **RALPH CHAPMAN, Writer**

Ralph Chapman is a WGC and CSA nominated writer and producer. His creative relationship with Banger Films spans a decade, first working on the acclaimed film, *Rush: Beyond The Lighted Stage*, then writing the groundbreaking series on the history of heavy metal, *Metal Evolution*, as well as the series *Rock Icons*. His writing work on the ZZ Top documentary, *That Little Ol' Band From Texas* comes on the heels of working as Creative Producer (and writer) on *From The Vaults*, a six-part documentary series produced in collaboration with the CBC, and writing a documentary on Canada's

acclaimed power trio, Triumph. Outside of Banger, Ralph has worked with companies such as Shed Creative and Eagle Rock, while serving as Creative Producer on an upcoming documentary on Alessia Cara. He also co-created, and exec produced *The Jane Show*, a scripted half hour comedy show for Global Television and Shaftesbury Films. Ralph continues to develop material with his own production company, Wesbrage Productions, as well as with companies such as Insight Productions, whom he is currently developing a scripted series with.

### **MARTIN HAWKES, Director of Photography**

Martin Hawkes was born in Toronto, Canada. In 1993 he moved to Norway and in 2000 he started his own production company, Saft Film. As Director of Photography he has several award-winning documentaries to his name. These include *Global Metal* (2008), *Iron Maiden: Flight 666* (2009), and *Rush: Beyond the Lighted Stage* (2010), In 2011 he finished work on the extensive 11x60 series *Metal Evolution* for VH1 Classic which has been sold to TV stations around the world. He also shot *Hip Hop Evolution* which won a Peabody and an International Emmy Award in 2017.

CREDITS

**Directed by**

Sam Dunn

**Written by**

Ralph Chapman

Sam Dunn

**Produced by**

Scot McFadyen

**Executive Produced by**

Scot McFadyen

Sam Dunn

Geoff Kempin

Terry Shand

Carl Stubner

**Director of Photography**

Martin Hawkes

**Edited by**

Alex Shuper

Mark Staunton

**ZZ Top's 50th Anniversary Tour - www.ZZTOP.com**

- Aug 16 – Ridgefield, WA – Sunlight Supply Amphitheatre\*  
17 – Airway Heights, WA – Northern Quest Casino Theater  
18 – Vancouver, BC – PNE Amphitheater  
20 – Yakima, WA – Yakima Valley SunDome  
21 – Woodinville, WA – Chateau Ste. Michelle\*  
23 – Irvine, CA – FivePoint Amphitheatre\*\*  
24 – Concord, CA – Concord Pavilion\*\*  
25 – Paso Robles, CA – Vina Robles Amphitheatre\*  
27 – Santa Barbara, CA – Arlington Theater  
28 – San Diego, CA – Cal Coast Credit Union Open Air Theatre at SDSU\*  
29 – Phoenix, AZ – Comerica Theatre\*  
31 – Lewisville, TX – City of Lewisville
- Sept 01 – Kansas City, MO – Starlight Theatre\*  
02 – St. Paul, MN – Minnesota State Fairgrounds\*  
04 – Milwaukee, WI – BMO Harris Pavilion\*  
06 – Maryland Heights, MO – Hollywood Casino Amphitheatre\*  
07 – Tinley Park, IL – Hollywood Casino Amphitheatre\*  
08 – Sterling Heights, MI – Michigan Lottery Amphitheater at Freedom Hill\*  
10 – Huber Heights, OH – Rose Music Center at The Heights\*  
11 – Burgettstown, PA – KeyBank Pavilion\*  
13 – Ocean City, MD – Ocean City BikeFest  
14 – Gilford, NH – Bank of New Hampshire Pavilion\*  
15 – Camden, NJ – BB&T Pavilion\*  
17 – Syracuse, NY – Crouse-Hinds Theatre at John H. Mulroy Civic Center at Oncenter  
18 – Boston, MA – Rockland Trust Bank Pavilion\*  
19 – Wantagh, NY – Northwell Health at Jones Beach Theater\*  
21 – Cleveland, OH – Jacobs Pavilion at Nautica\*  
22 – Louisville, KY – Bourbon and Beyond Festival
- Oct 05 – Raleigh, NC – Coastal Credit Union Music Park at Walnut Creek Amphitheatre\*  
06 – Charlotte, NC – PNC Music Pavilion\*  
08 – Charleston, WV – Clay Center for Arts & Sciences  
09 – Charleston, SC – Volvo Cars Stadium\*  
11 – Cherokee, NC – Harrah's Cherokee – Event Center\*  
12 – Manchester, TN – Exit 111 Festival - Great Stage Park  
13 – Alpharetta, GA – Ameris Bank Amphitheatre  
15 – Augusta, GA – The James Brown Arena\*  
16 – Saint Augustine, FL – Saint Augustine Amphitheatre\*  
18 – Estero, FL – Hertz Arena\*  
19 – Tampa, FL – MidFlorida Credit Union Amphitheatre\*  
20 – West Palm Beach, FL – Coral Sky Amphitheatre\*  
22 – Melbourne, FL – King Center for the Performing Arts  
23 – Tallahassee, FL – Donald L. Tucker Center  
25 – Oxon Hill, MD – MGM National Harbor  
26 – Bethlehem, PA – Sands Bethlehem Event Center  
27 – Mashantucket, CT – Foxwoods Resort Casino  
29 – Erie, PA – Warner Theatre  
30 – Kalamazoo, MI – Wings Event Center

Nov 01 – Madison, WI – The Sylvee  
02 – Waukegan, IL – Genesee Theater  
03 – Peoria, IL – Civic Center Theater  
05 – Springfield, MD – Juanita K. Hammons Hall for the Performing Arts  
06 – Enid, OK – Stride Bank Center  
08 – Tulsa, OK – River Spirit Casino  
09 – Shreveport, LA – Shreveport Municipal Auditorium

\* with Cheap Trick

\*\*with Lynyrd Skynyrd

### **About Eagle Vision**

Eagle Vision is an imprint of Eagle Rock Entertainment, the world-leading producer and distributor of music-related audiovisual content. Founded in 1997, the multi-award-winning company completes over 50 productions a year including concerts, documentaries, scripted formats and specials representing over 2,000 hours of programming. The vast catalogue includes work by award-winning filmmakers such as Martin Scorsese, Brett Morgan, Paul Dugdale, Stanley Nelson and Bob Smeaton. Eagle Rock has worked alongside a variety of artists including the Rolling Stones, Madonna, Jay Z, Paul McCartney, Katy Perry, Frank Sinatra, Black Sabbath and Imagine Dragons. For more information visit [www.eagle-rock.com](http://www.eagle-rock.com)

### **About Banger Films**

Co-founded in 2004 by award-winning filmmakers Scot McFadyen and Sam Dunn, Banger Films is a global leader in music-based visual content. Banger has a trophied catalogue of feature documentaries, doc series, live concerts, kids programming, and VR experiences that has featured the biggest names in music and screened on all platforms worldwide. Banger's filmography includes *Metal: A Headbanger's Journey*, the Grammy-nominated *Rush: Beyond the Lighted Stage*, *Iron Maiden: Flight 666*, the doc-opera *Super Duper Alice Cooper*, and the Peabody & International Emmy award-winning Netflix original series *Hip-Hop Evolution*. [www.bangerfilms.com](http://www.bangerfilms.com)

### **About Abramorama**

Abramorama is the preeminent global theatrical distribution and rights management partner for documentary and music films today and is recognized for the consistent high quality of its work on award winning feature films. An innovator in the focused, personalized form of film distribution and event cinema, Abramorama provides invaluable alternatives to filmmakers and content owners. An industry leader in marketing, promotion, and distribution, Abramorama continues to trail-blaze exciting new pathways for filmmakers to find their audience.

Over the course of nearly 20 years, Abramorama has successfully distributed and marketed hundreds of films, including Ron Howard's Grammy Award®-winning *The Beatles: Eight Days A Week – The Touring Years*; The Beatles' *Yellow Submarine*; Amir Bar-Lev's *Long Strange Trip – The Untold Story of the Grateful Dead*; Tabbert Fiiller's *The Public Image Is Rotten*; Danny Clinch and Pearl Jam's *Let's Play Two*; Corbett Redford and Green Day's *Turn It Around: The Story of East Bay Punk*; John Scheinfeld's *Chasing Trane – The John Coltrane Documentary*; Roberta Grossman and Nancy Spielberg's *Who Will Write Our History*; Brett Bern's *BANG! The Bert Berns Story*; Brett Morgen and National Geographic's seminal *Jane*; Ashley

Bell's *Love & Bananas - An Elephant Story*; Charles Ferguson's *Time To Choose*; Asif Kapadia's *Senna*; Neil Young's *Greendale*; Cameron Crowe's *Pearl Jam Twenty*; Sacha Gervasi's *Anvil! The Story of Anvil*; Banksy's Academy Award® nominated *Exit Through the Gift Shop*; the surprise indie hit *Awake: The Life of Yogananda*; Laurie Anderson's astonishing New York Times critics' pick, *Heart of a Dog*; National Board of Review Winner *Listen to Me Marlon*; and 2016 Documentary Academy Award®-nominee and IDA Best Documentary Winner *The Look of Silence*. Abramorama is a founding partner of The Seventh Art Stand program, an act of cinematic solidarity against Islamophobia, that ran in more than 50 theaters across the United States in May of 2017. Abramorama recently launched its music-centric film fund focused on the global release of iconic music documentaries. For more information visit [www.abramorama.com](http://www.abramorama.com)