

Mongrel Media Presents

# WHO KILLED THE ELECTRIC CAR?

A Documentary Film

Directed by Chris Paine

(USA, 2006, 91 minutes)

Distribution

**mongrel**  
**MEDIA**

1028 Queen Street West  
Toronto, Ontario, Canada, M6J 1H6  
Tel: 416-516-9775  
Fax: 416-516-0651  
E-mail: [info@mongrelmedia.com](mailto:info@mongrelmedia.com)  
[www.mongrelmedia.com](http://www.mongrelmedia.com)

Publicity

Bonne Smith  
Star PR  
Tel: 416-488-4436  
Fax: 416-488-8438  
E-mail: [starpr@sympatico.ca](mailto:starpr@sympatico.ca)

High res stills may be downloaded from <http://www.mongrelmedia.com/press.html>

## Synopsis

It was among the fastest, most efficient production car ever built. It ran on electricity, produced no emissions and catapulted American technology to the forefront of the automotive industry. The lucky few who drove it never wanted to give it up. So why did General Motors crush its fleet of EV-1 electric vehicles in the Arizona desert?

*WHO KILLED THE ELECTRIC CAR?* chronicles the life and mysterious death of the EV-1; examining the cultural and economic ripple effects caused by its conception and how they reverberated through the halls of government and big business.

The year is 1990. California is in a pollution crisis. The smog is so bad that the state is on the verge of returning to the haze days of the 1970's brown outs. Desperate for a solution, the California Air Resources Board (CARB) targets the source of its problem: Car exhaust. Inspired by a recent announcement from General Motors about an electric vehicle prototype, the Zero Emissions Mandate (ZEV) is born. It requires 2% of California's vehicles to be emission free by 1998, 10% by 2003. It is the most radical smog fighting mandate since the catalytic converter.

Eager to satisfy the largest car consuming market in the world, GM's EV-1 electric vehicle is launched in 1997 with great fanfare from California consumers. It was the first perfect car of the modern age, requiring no gas, no oil, no mufflers, and no brake changes (a billion dollar industry unto itself.) A typical maintenance checkup for the EV-1 consisted of replenishing the windshield washer fluid and a tire rotation.

Fast forward to 6 years later... The fleet is dead. EV charging stations dot the California landscape like tombstones, collecting dust and spider webs. How could this happen? Did anyone bother to examine the bodies? Yes, in fact, someone did. And it was murder.

The EV-1 threatened the status quo; the truth behind its murder closely resembling the climactic outcome of Agatha Christie's *Murder on the Orient Express*. Multiple suspects, each taking their turn with the knife. Automakers, legislators, engineers, consumers and car enthusiasts from Los Angeles to Detroit work through the motives, alibis and fallout to piece the complex puzzle together.

*WHO KILLED THE ELECTRIC CAR?* is not just about the EV-1. It's about how this allegory for today's oil prices and air quality can also be a shining symbol of society's desire to better itself and the world around it. For a brief moment in time, we were closer to that dream than we'd ever been before, and while that milestone may have been crushed, it has not been forgotten.

## Director's Statement

This project began for me in 1996 when, after many years of hearing rumors about an electric car (EV) coming to market, it happened. GM's EV-1.

It blew the doors off of any car I've ever driven. And it made you feel like the 21st century had arrived. I charged it at nights and I drove it almost exclusively. The EV-1 was super fast, quiet, tune-up free and fun. And it turned me into a car lover.

When GM cancelled the program, they refused to sell it or extend the leases. I thought about stealing it, but the contract made that a nightmare proposition. So when GM repossessed it and then reportedly destroyed it, there was only one thing left I could think to do: make a film.

Two years later and we've arrived here. The actual evidence in this story really shocked me. Some of the suspects were obvious. But the politics, entrenched interests, hand-outs and cynicism we discovered seemed like a microcosm of why America can't get out of its 20th century. On the flip side, the electric car introduced us to some of the most amazing designers, engineers, thinkers and leaders I've ever met.

With global warming, increasing smog issues, and oil wars as backdrop, I hope this film will shed some light on how we can break the oil habit and plug in to much better ideas.

This film was made thanks to Dean Devlin, whose father Don fought for electric cars in California. It is also a product of the incredible work of our team: Jessie, Michael, Tavin, Richard, Kathy, Thad, Natalie, Chris, Alex, Roger, Rachel and many others, especially Chelsea and the electric car drivers who jumped into the future.

- Chris Paine

## About The Filmmakers

### **CHRIS PAINE** **Director**

*Who Killed the Electric Car?* is Chris's first feature documentary as director. Previously he was an executive producer on *Faster* (2003), about MotoGP, the world's fastest motorcycle race (with narration by Ewan McGregor), and Mark Neale's *William Gibson: No Maps for These Territories* (featuring Bono). *No Maps* was named "Best Documentary" by the Los Angeles New Times in 2001. Chris has directed segments for the MTV/Initial television series BUZZ as well as the personal documentary *Return to the Philippines*. He assisted writer/producer Michael Tolkin on the feature films *The Player* (1992), and *The New Age* (1994) which Tolkin directed. Shorts producing experience includes *Mailman*, which premiered at the 1995 Sundance Festival.

### **JESSIE DEETER** **Producer**

Jessie produced, reported, directed and shot *No More War*, a 22-minute documentary that aired on PBS' FRONTLINE/World in May 2005. Reviewed positively in the New York Times, *No More War* has been submitted for a DuPont award by FRONTLINE. The hour-long version of that documentary, *Keeping the Peace*, is currently in post-production. Jessie field-produced *Afghanistan: Hell of a Nation*, a 45-minute documentary on Afghanistan's Loya Jirga that aired on PBS' Wide Angle in September, 2004. In 2003, Jessie traveled to five countries to field produce a documentary for the Asia Foundation's 50th anniversary. Prior to that, Jessie worked as an associate producer for FRONTLINE/World and FRONTLINE's *Modern Meat* and *Blackout* documentaries. Her half-hour documentary, *Some They Win*, on Mexican workers at the racetrack, screened in several festivals around the country. She has a Master's of journalism and International and Area Studies, Middle East focus, from UC Berkeley.

### **DEAN DEVLIN** **Executive Producer**

Dean Devlin is Chairman and C.E.O. of Electric Entertainment, the company he founded in May 2001 to produce

franchise-driven motion pictures and develop interactive, music and television projects.

Over the last 12 years, Dean Devlin has co-written and produced some of the most successful feature films of all time. Devlin co-wrote and produced *Stargate* and *Independence Day*, which has grossed over \$800 million worldwide. He co-wrote and produced *Godzilla*, and produced *The Patriot* starring Mel Gibson, which was nominated for three Academy Awards.

Devlin's first production under the "Electric" banner was *Eight Legged Freaks*, released in July 2002. Electric's next project, *Cellular* starred Kim Basinger and was released in Fall 2004. Devlin's most recent project *The Librarian* aired on TNT network in December 2004 and was the highest rated movie on cable that year.

Devlin is currently shooting the World War I epic *Flyboys*, starring James Franco, Martin Henderson and Jean Reno in the U.K. Concurrently, he is shooting the Sci Fi Channel's six-hour mini-series event *The Triangle* in South Africa. Devlin and Bryan Singer serve as executive producers on *The Triangle*. Production is about to begin in Africa for the sequel to *The Librarian* which is entitled *The Librarian: Return to King Solomon's Mines*, and is scheduled to air summer 2006 on TNT.

Dean Devlin is also recognized as a leader in the development of digital entertainment. Devlin is one of the first producers to use the state-of-the-art digital 35mm Genesis cameras for *Flyboys*. He was the guiding force behind the inception of an interactive division while a partner in Centropolis, to create an on-line gaming center and develop innovative entertaining/informational website and games to expand Centropolis' reach among the sci-fi community. Devlin created the first movie marketing website in connection with the theatrical release of *Stargate* in 1994 (with much of the successful opening weekend box-office attributed to the ground-breaking grass roots efforts with the site visitors); commissioned the development of a multi-player ID4 on-line game which was packaged with the film on DVD; developed the first webshow (in partnership with Intel) for the broadcast television series *The Visitor* (commissioned by Fox in 1997); and championed the release of the multi-player *Godzilla* on-line game, day-and-date with the release of the film (give-away via CD-ROM to 2,500 Taco Bell outlets, a first in the Interactive realm).

Dean Devlin developed [mothership.com](http://mothership.com), a favorite destination for sci-fi entertainment and news on the Web, featuring

genre-specific search engine capabilities, EON Magazine (weekly sci-fi webzine), an on-line Gaming Center, e-mail, message boards and community areas. USA Networks acquired the site in June 2000 and merged the content into scifi.com. Electric Entertainment continues to own a 50% interest in the Electric/Mythic on-line Gaming Center, which features ID4 Online, Spellbinder, Darkness Falls, Splatterball Plus and Dragon's Gate multiplayer games.

Dean Devlin co-founded Centropolis FX in 1996, a leading special effects company, responsible for award-winning work on *Independence Day*, *Godzilla*, *Flubber*, *Stuart Little*, *The Patriot*, *Scorpion King* and *Eight Legged Freaks*. Devlin supervised the growth from 10 artists to 50 animators and composers and actively remains on the Board of Directors since the merger of the company with European post-production powerhouse Das Werk in 2001.

**TAVIN MARIN TITUS**  
**Executive Producer**

Tavin's experience spans over twelve years in both independent and studio filmmaking. While known as a pioneer in the world of digital filmmaking, her work has spanned a broad variety of digital and analog formats, often melding the best of both to create cost effective, yet creatively compelling work.

Tavin's most recent feature films include *Mammoth* (part of Pliny's continuing long-term relationship with NBC Universal's Sci Fi Channel), which stars Tom Skerritt, Summer Glau and Vincent Ventresca and was shot in Baton Rouge in 2005; and the eco-documentary *Who Killed the Electric Car?* (her second Sundance premiere in 3 years.)

Previous to this, she co-produced *Alien Lockdown*, starring John Savage and Michelle Goh, which is currently on Sci Fi Channel. This film was shot in Bulgaria with Avi Lerner's Nu Image films. She and Plinyminor also produced all of the news broadcast and playback video footage featured in Roland Emmerich's *The Day After Tomorrow*. Prior to this, she produced several short subjects and features, including the independent feature *On\_Line*, which premiered at Sundance and Berlin Film Festivals and opened theatrically in the US from July to December of 2003. This film is currently airing on Starz and IFC, as well as worldwide on DVD and home video.

Other projects include the award-winning *Taking the Wheel*, an independent short film directed by David Ackerman and

starring John Cleese, and the HD 24P video pilot for Sci Fi Channel entitled *The Man with No Eyes*, written and directed by Tim Cox.

Tavin's nascent film career began with a variety of work in domestic and foreign productions including work as Assistant to the Producer on films directed by Blake Edwards, Norman Jewison and Taylor Hackford. In 1994 she moved to Los Angeles to help open the Los Angeles office of French production house Gaumont. There she helped develop international television series such as *La Femme Nikita* and *Tales of the South Seas*.

Tavin returned to film production in 1995 to join Dean Devlin and Roland Emmerich's Centropolis Entertainment as an assistant to writer/producer Dean Devlin. She worked on the films *Independence Day*, *Godzilla* (on which she also served as music coordinator for the award-winning soundtrack) and then as the production executive on *The Patriot*. She worked extensively with Dean Devlin and producer John Masius on the development and production of the Fox television series *The Visitor* and was instrumental in the initiation of the award-winning original content web series *THEVISITOR.COM*, sponsored by Intel. After five years, Tavin retired from Centropolis to devote her full energies to independent producing.

In addition to the above, Tavin is currently in development and pre-production on *Lie Box* with director David Van Eyssen, Pliny's next Sci Fi picture and several feature film and television properties. Her specific emphasis is international productions, where her command of three languages and her husband's international business experience become an added benefit of their partnership. Tavin is a graduate of the University of Virginia.

**RICHARD D. TITUS**  
**Executive Producer**

Richard's attention has consistently been focused on the crossroads of entertainment and technology. He has produced video games, films, television, cross and new media properties and even commercials. This broad platform background is demonstrated by his selection as the Vice Chairman of the Producers Guild, specifically overseeing the New Media Council in 2004. He regularly speaks as a futurist at conferences such as CES and SPAA as well as for corporations such as Time/Warner and media organizations such as *Wired* magazine.

His film career began at Brad Krevoy and Steve Stabler's Motion Picture Corporation of America, where he produced video games including *Blue Heat* and *Soldier Boyz* and several feature films, including *Corporate Ladder* starring Talisa Soto and Ben Cross. In 1997 Richard created and produced the pioneering parallel media webshow, THEVISITOR.COM, with Dean Devlin, producer of *Independence Day*, in conjunction with the Fox Network television series *The Visitor*.

In 1999 he, with his wife and producing partner, Tavin, founded Plinyminor. Together they have developed and produced a variety of film and television projects including the feature film *On\_Line*, which premiered in 2003 at the Sundance and Berlin Film Festivals and was released across the US theatrically that year. Other recent projects include the documentary *Who Killed the Electric Car?* whose premiere at 2006 Sundance Film Festival (Plinyminor's second premiere there in 3 years) will precede its theatrical release by Sony Pictures Classics in the summer of 2006. Also in 2005, Richard produced Plinyminor's most recent installment in their long-term relationship with NBC Universal's Sci Fi Channel, *Mammoth*, which was filmed in Louisiana and Bucharest, Romania.

In addition to his film work, Richard is a co-founder and remains the Vice Chairman of leading Los Angeles-based interactive agency Schematic; one of the largest and fastest growing interactive agencies in the US, whose clients include ABC/Disney, Cablevision, Comcast, Microsoft, Time Warner, Sony, Target and Yahoo.

A well known member of the early digerati, Richard was the co-founder and CEO of <tag> media (acquired by Razorfish in August 1998); Richard then served as the Managing Director of the Los Angeles office, which he built into a division employing 300 professionals with over \$30 million in revenues, upon which he was promoted to the corporate management team as VP of Strategic Investments until his 2001 departure.

Richard began his career as a sound engineer for The Beach Boys on *Summer In Paradise*, the first all-digital "tapeless" major label album. His music industry ventures include the reorganization and management of start-up sister record labels *City of Tribes* and *ZoëMagik Records* and concluded with a stint as an executive at *Moonshine Music*.

Richard was a founder and a committee chair of the Digital Coast Roundtable and serves on the board of the Producer's Guild of America New Media Council and several advisory

boards for AFI, ATAS and the ITA. Richard is a regular panelist and keynote speaker at Industry events such as E3, CES, NATPE, NAB, SPAA, MipTV, Cannes Film Festival, Sundance, and Digital Hollywood, as well as educational and corporate events. For the past three years, the Digital Coast Reporter Magazine has named Richard one of the 50 most influential people in the Digital Coast.

**KATHY WEISS**  
**Co-Producer**

Kathy's television experience includes producing and directing for USA Networks Before and Afternoon Movies and Fine Living Televisions Ten Perfect Summer Getaways. Kathy also served as writer/director/producer of On-Air Promotions for Comedy Central, working with such shows as The Daily Show with Jon Stewart and South Park. In addition to line-producing Mark Hamill's directorial debut *Comic Book: the Movie*, Kathy has produced national television and radio campaigns for clients including Mercedes-Benz, and Sun Microsystems.

**NATALIE ARTIN**  
**Associate Producer**

Natalie's interest in journalism and the entertainment industry began when she was the Editor-in-Chief of UC Santa Barbara's Arts, Entertainment and Student Life magazine, CampusPOINT. After completing her B.A. in 2003 with a major in Communications and a minor in English literature, Natalie held various production positions at E! Entertainment Networks for shows such as E! True Hollywood Story and Fashion Police. She also served as Script Coordinator for the Travel Channel's Amazing Vacation Homes.

**JEFF STEELE**  
**Associate Producer**

Jeff is a partner in the Los Angeles based production company, Plinyminor, where he facilitates and oversees the acquisition, finance and co-production of film and television projects. Most recently he was a Co-Producer on *Mammoth*, starring Tom Skerritt, Summer Glau and Vincent Ventresca, which will air in April on NBC Universal's Sci Fi Channel. Before joining Plinyminor, he worked as an

executive at FilmCrest Corp. and before that at Mike Medavoy's Phoenix Pictures.

Jeff is a co-founder and board member of the non-partisan, non-profit political and entertainment think-tank, The Hollywood Hill, and is editor of the film finance blog, FlikCents.com.

**MICHAEL KOVALENKO**  
**Editor**

Michael is a New York-based editor whose most recent project, *Liberia: an Uncivil War*, has won numerous awards in film festivals around the world and was nominated for two Emmys. The film is being distributed for television domestically on Discovery Times Channel and in the United Kingdom on the BBC. Prior documentary film projects include *Freaks Like Me*, *Last Two Seconds*, and *How to Eat Your Watermelon in White Company and Enjoy It*. Michael has a BA in graphic design and experience with motion graphics, 3D animation, web design and audio editing.

**CHRIS A. PETERSON**  
**Additional Editing**

Editor Chris A. Peterson is an experienced craftsman with a variety of original film and television projects including feature dramas, comedies and documentaries. Recognized as the rare creative multi-hyphenate (editor/storyteller/tech wiz), he is the founder of Red Editorial in Los Angeles, a boutique post production facility whose focus is independent film and documentary.

In 2004 Peterson edited *In Time*, an Official Sundance Selection that premiered on HBO this past November.

Peterson received his Masters and BA in Film from San Diego State University and University of California at San Diego.