

TITLE: THE NEON STRUGGLE, 38'

DIRECTOR: John C. Brown, Bert Simonis

WRITER: John C. Brown, Bert Simonis

PRODUCER: John C. Brown, Bert Simonis

OVERVIEW: A family fights to keep their neon sign business alive as the light of the industry fades away. The process of creating these delicate signs is beautifully photographed to capture the intricacy of this populist American art form. Interviews with neon historians and experts are interspersed with vintage neon signs from across the United States.

DIRECTOR BIOGRAPHY: **John C. Brown** began his career as a news intern with WMUR-TV in his home state of New Hampshire. He attended the University of NH and holds a B.A. in Television/Film Production from the Communications Department. While a student at UNH, he worked for NH Public TV, most notably as Associate Producer for Ciao Italia, a cooking series seen nationally on PBS. He continued with NHPTV as a producer/editor after graduation and his work on the locally broadcast NH Crossroads earned him two Telly Awards. This 'n That Films was born in 2002 after John moved to Los Angeles from New York. His first award-winning, feature length documentary The Last First Comic brought him back to New York. For 'Tis The Season, This 'n That's latest film, John returned once more to Los Angeles. He freelances as an editor, videographer and educator.

Bert Simonis: Bert told his first visual story chronicling a family vacation using his dad's Bell & Howell Super 8 camera. In high school his Audio/Visual class made an instructional student film and laid the groundwork for the classic Milpitas Monster movie. While working for United Airlines he wrote and directed an industrial training video and was thrilled to be behind the pilot during a rare in-cockpit shot of a DC-8 takeoff. He joined forces with This 'n That Films in 2011 to market The Last First Comic. Since that effort, he's enjoyed the collaborative effort of producing Mid-Century Moderns, Quiet Elegance, 88 Days in the Mother Lode and The Neon Struggle. As a story teller, researcher and published author, he's a big believer in John Lasseter's quote: "You cannot base a whole movie on imagery alone. It has to be the story and the characters."

DIRECTOR STATEMENT: When we saw a Jumbotron screen in Las Vegas projecting the image of a neon sign, something clicked. It was as though the image was adding insult to injury. As we dug into the history of making neon for commercial use, we discovered that there are a series of "Mom and Pop" shops around the country that make neon signs for the local businesses. Many of these shops are now going the way of the family farm, as large industries are providing LED and Jumbotron signs that can be instantly customized to display anything. When we found Rio Score III, working quietly in a small shop in the Inland Empire, we struck gold. Rio was taught the trade by his grandfather who started out in Los Angeles, and whose shop working on many studio films. As business slowed, Rio moved his family out of L.A. to fill a void in Riverside County. Now, as business is slowing again, he is examining the future of his trade, his family and the legacy of generations of "tube benders".

We hope you will enjoy meeting Rio, learning about his craft and will take a different look at the next neon sign that you see.

John C. Brown and Bert Simonis - **LANGUAGE:** English, PALM SPRINGS, USA, 2016

