



april 2026 newsletter



- the biggest little farm -

Nature Documentary (PG) 2018 1hr31

Directed: John Chester

Written: Mark Monroe / John Chester

Starring: John Chester / Molly Chester / Todd



ACOFS
Australian Council of Film Societies

TATURA FILM SOCIETY

P O Box 390, Tatura, 3616
Email: Peter Hall (petebarb180@gmail.com)
Web: tatura.filmsociety.org.au

MEETING: MONDAYS 7.45PM
(3RD MONDAY MONTHLY)
7.30PM complimentary tea/coffee

MECHANICS INSTITUTE,
75 HOGAN STREET, TATURA

FROM OUR LAST FILM -
Screened: 16 March

THE BALLAD OF WALLIS ISLAND

4.1

★★★★★	14
★★★★	15
★★★	8
★★	1
★	-

President:	Peter Hall
Treasurer:	Barb Muller
Secretary:	Will McKie
Projectionist:	Will McKie/Ross Musolino
Star Box:	Lynda O'Shannesy
Hall Keys/Chair Set Up:	Richard Graves
DVD Library Management:	Rhonda McKie
Name Badges/Website:	Jenny Sanders
Catering:	Marilyn Grimme, Suzanne Jager, Lynda O'Shannesy
Newsletter:	Barbs Hall

2026 SEASON

We aim to present an annual program of cinema to members which is selected from a wide range of countries and genres that would otherwise not readily be accessible in this area.

It is hoped that the Tatura Film Society members find the ten screenings per year to be not only entertaining but thought-provoking and engaging community events.

MEMBERSHIP | PAYMENT \$50 p/person

If making membership payment:

National Australia Bank BSB **083-876**

Account Number **734734716**

Account name: **Tatura Film Society**

If you are paying by Bank Transfer, please ensure your **surname and initials** are in the deposit description/payee field.

Reminder that members are invited to bring **one guest** per year who might be interested in joining.

OUR DVD LIBRARY

contains a significant repertoire of films **available for borrowing** by members.

An updated list was emailed to all members (3 July 2025). We only put out a handful of DVDs each viewing night due to space and time so if you would like to borrow any film on the list please let us know and we can find it in our collection.

OLD DVDs



TFS is selling our old DVDs for \$5. See front desk.

Proud members of :



Your Image is Our Focus

THE BIGGEST LITTLE FARM

On The Screen Review by: Con Nats

January 16, 2020

SOMETIMES WHAT CAN SOUND like a twee documentary about a couple making a sea change can be as illuminating as it is moving, and as visually engaging as any big budget effort. All it takes is a bit of heart.

John Chester and his bubbly wife Molly were a couple of city slickers who bought a dog, Todd, who barked a lot. After being evicted they realised if they wanted to keep Todd, they had to live on a farm. The problem was, California was in the middle of the longest drought in 1,200 years and the farm they found had ground as hard as rock. It was a giant dirt patch.

This inspirational documentary was shot by John over a decade, and showed how John and Molly turned this dustbowl into a natural and sustainable farm. This meant they used no pesticides and diversified their output, using nature's ways to provide a balance that sustained it.

While this is a documentary, it has all the ingredients of a drama, with the farm as the central character. It did have the advantage of a deep well to provide the water, but it needed a lot of love and care. They enlisted a mentor, Alan, who helped rebuild it from the bottom up, focusing on ways to rejuvenate the soil, and building a pond, before introducing animals.

Their approach avoided taking shortcuts and focused on long-term planning. Short-term problems often needed nothing more than stepping back to find the solutions. These two were so sincere in their approach, they take you right into the trials and tribulations of farming. We're soon stressing over Emma the pig, the snail epidemic and wondering how to stop the chicken massacre. But nature has its ways and you'll learn how even pests play their role in nature's rich tapestry.



At around the seven-year mark, the cycle and structure seems to come together for them. It's a great parable for many businesses and industries. Plan from the ground up. Build a sustainable model. Respect the environment. Mother Nature has all the solutions you need.

What is also amazing is a lot of the photography. The close-ups, the images, and the animals take you into the heart of the challenges of farming, and how we need to respect nature a great deal more. John Chester somehow found the time to film all this himself while running this farm. It's an epic effort and one with a lot of heart and soul in every frame.

You might find yours is moved along the way. Mine was. This is a beautiful effort.

<https://www.onthetown.net.au/on-the-screen-review-biggest-little-farm/>



review

random cinématique

ART OF THE CUT IS PROUD TO PRESENT AN INTERVIEW BY STEVE HULLFISH WITH DOCUMENTARY FILM EDITOR, AMY OVERBECK.

Amy is the editor of a wonderful documentary that I just fell in love with, called *The Biggest Little Farm*, and I had to track her down for an interview. She has edited numerous documentary films including *Lost in Woonsocket*, *Rock Prophecies*, and *Perfect Valor*. She's also worked on TV series *Nightmare Next Door*, *Stolen Voices* *Buried Secrets*, and *Random 1*.

HULLFISH: The opening narration at first sounds like a soundbite from an interview but ends up being voiceover that runs through the documentary from John Chester, the filmmaker himself, who was also one of the subjects of the film. Can we talk about narration and how it was written?

OVERBECK: The voiceover (VO) we approached to be conversational. So it's almost like an inner monologue kind of thing going on. He definitely was aiming for it to be conversational but it wasn't recorded in an interview format so we would write those lines.

HULLFISH: And were you writing those lines as you went like, "I need a bridge here" or was it more thought out ahead of time than that?

OVERBECK: It was very much in-the-moment when we were working on it. We were working completely unscripted. But the way these scenes are is that it's verite or a particular animal interaction. The scene is what it is. And so I would cut together the scene from the footage and then I would see, "What more do we need to explain here for the audience?" Or "what kind of bridge do we need to get to the next subject?"

I would put a title card on the screen with a suggestion about the direction for the VO. And then John would come in and we would talk it through and we would riff and write the lines right there in the moment. Then he would hop in the VO booth next to me and record it and I'd put it in the cut and then we'd see if it was working. Sometimes on paper it works better than when you actually see it in the cut. And we'd fiddle with it — he'd record some more takes and we'd work on it that way. So on a given day we might record maybe 5 different VOs or 10 or nothing. It was all dependent on what the scene we were working on at the time needed.

HULLFISH: What was the schedule like? The film takes place over several years — multiple years. What was your schedule like as an editor?

OVERBECK: They got the farm in 2011 and I didn't come in until 2017 and so I was there for about a year and a half and then I would say another maybe six months of remote editing when I moved back home — doing the end credits scenes or some very final tweaks. So it was about two years in total.

But I was able to keep a pretty regular schedule of 9 or 10 hour days, five days a week. I had to work around John's farm schedule as well since he was trying to be a farmer and a filmmaker at the same time.



Todd,
who started it all

HULLFISH: And he'd been gathering information for those couple of years from 11 to 17 or when you started?

OVERBECK: When he started as a farmer, leaving his filmmaking career behind, he had no idea that he was going to continue making films at all. He knew that it was an interesting subject but when they were in the thick of having a really barren farm that they had to bring back to life, I think it was a little too daunting to think that he would try to make a film at the same time.

But as he went along he got to know the characters of the farm and so he did smaller shorts for Oprah's Super Soul Sunday. So he did Emma the pig and Greasy. He did one about Emma's sickness and a few other ones and he won Emmys for them and they were well received. So that gave him the confidence that he could really make a film out of this. So around year five is when he really started documenting the farm with the intention of making a whole film about the entire farm.

HULLFISH: Talk to me about the storytelling of it. Structurally, you start at the end — you start with the fire. For anybody that hasn't seen the film, there were horrible fires in California that threaten this farm. And so we start with that then you jump back and then you jump back further? I can't remember what the exact structure was. How did you determine how you were going to tell the story?

OVERBECK: We knew that in order to get into the back story of how they got to the farm you need an idea of where this is going, and curiosity for how they got to this point in the first place.

If we just start off with them in L.A. (the farm is just north of Los Angeles) it might feel like, Why should we care about these people? Who are they? You maybe don't have enough to go on to really care about anything.



California wildfires surrounded the farm.

So we wanted to tease-out where this was going. Our original plan was to start off the whole film with this utopian farm dream kind of scene of this magical amazing farm and then go into the backstory. But then when the fires came, I was editing the film.

It was the Thomas fire and then two other fires coming at us. John thought that the barn where I worked could burn down. It was a really dramatic time.

To be at a point where they had built that farm from nothing and it was this flourishing ecosystem and then one day a fire could just completely take that away was really pretty shocking. So we thought that it was a really dynamic way of getting that point across pretty quickly that they are going to get to this point where they've built something amazing but it could all be taken away in a second, and to have an appreciation for that.

So it felt like a good place to start — to create that curiosity and then move forward. Then, since they weren't planning on documenting their journey, our backstory just had so much iPhone footage but we wanted people to know that this was going to be a beautiful film and not just somebody's home videos, so that was part of it too.

There were a lot of different reasons that went into that.

HULLFISH: So at the same time that Molly's trying to throw all her stuff into a car and gather up her son to escape the fires you're also trying to evacuate with your edit system and media?

OVERBECK: Yeah. He had me take my computer home with me and I didn't even know where I was going with it! We couldn't take our server home but luckily we had LTO backups all over the place. But it was scary.

I think I had a drive of some proxy files. It was pretty scary there for a minute and it was really unique in that way too because I was living the experience that I'm also telling in the film.

You feel that story so much more. In some ways you feel like you're telling your own story. So it was really important to have that understanding of all of it, I think.



Amy in her editing studio in the barn.

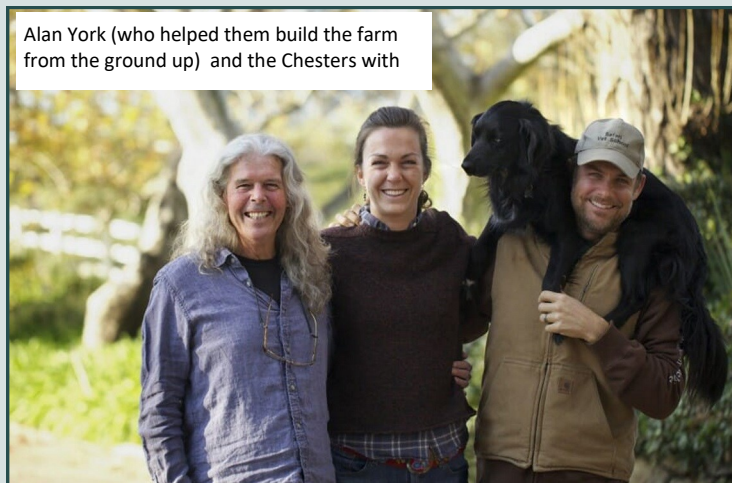
HULLFISH: As you mentioned, some of the cinematography is just gorgeous. And then there's a lot of cell phone footage. Was there any concern about cutting between those and the transitions between cell phone and whatever he used to shoot the rest of it that looks so beautiful?

OVERBECK: There was. Our backstory had a lot of older iPhone footage where it was like four by three (aspect ratio). It was pretty rough, but it was a necessity. How are we going to tell the story of Todd (the Chester's dog, who features prominently in the story) if we aren't going to go for it and use that iPhone footage that they shot of him, because they weren't planning on documenting otherwise?

So it was just what we had to do to stay true to the story. And as we went along — once they got to the farm, some things don't happen when you have the (Arri) Amira set up on hand. When John's walking around at night and finds a dead chicken he has his phone and that's all he has.

I think that's what really makes it real in a lot of ways for people — that that's the new home video. I think people are clued into that maybe even subconsciously where when you see something that's obvious that it's iPhone maybe that emphasizes that this really happened in the moment.

It's just the way it happens sometimes. When you're documenting reality you don't always have a huge camera on your shoulder.



Alan York (who helped them build the farm from the ground up) and the Chesters with

This fairly lengthy interview covers a range of topics that an editor considers putting a documentary together.

A nature documentary is entirely different from a film with actors. If the process interests you check out the interview online which is also in podcast form.

<https://www.provideocoalition.com/aotc-biggest-little-farm/>

NEW MEMBERS WELCOME! ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP \$50PP



2026 program

The Ballad of Wallis Island

(PG) Comedy/drama



16 MARCH

The Biggest Little Farm

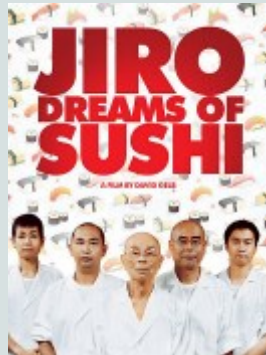
(PG) Doco



20 APRIL

Jiro Dreams of Sushi

(PG) Melodrama/action



18 MAY

The Old Oak

(MA15+) Drama



15 JUNE

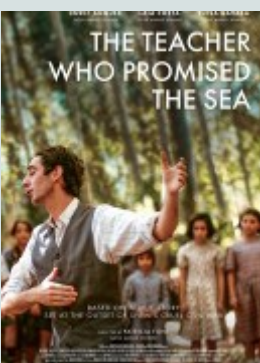
Black Bag

(M) Thriller



20 JULY

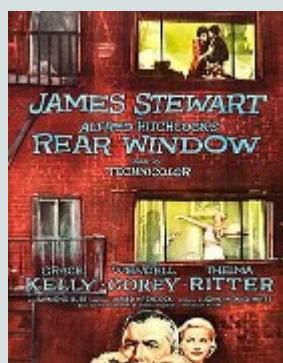
The Teacher who Promised the Sea



17 AUGUST

Rear Window

(M) Thriller



21 SEPTEMBER

The Father

(M) Drama



19 OCTOBER

Lunana: A Yak in the Classroom

(PG) Drama



16 NOVEMBER

The Penguin Lessons

(M) Comedy/drama



15 FEBRUARY 2027



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