



Back to the Garden

Flower power comes full circle



A Documentary Film by Kevin Tomlinson



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Heaven Scent Films | 2611-22nd Ave. West, #2
Seattle, WA 98199 | ktvc2001@aol.com
www.backtothegardenfilm.com | 206.334.0385

Director's Statement Kevin Tomlinson

Back to the Garden: Flower Power Comes Full Circle is a story that waited 20 years to be heard.

Back in 1988 I took a road trip that led me on a strange journey. By chance, I saw a funky poster advertising a Healing Gathering in rural Washington State. Curious to meet this community of backcountry hippies twenty years after Woodstock, I decided to go.

Upon arrival, I felt transported, finding myself among magic buses and tepees in a meadow filled with beaded flower children communing with nature. I shot hours of dancing, drumming, singing and celebration. I recorded extensive interviews with some of the most genuine, sincere beings I'd ever met.

With no plans for the material at the time and skeptical how it would be received during the Reagan/Bush years, the project was shelved. But it didn't sit quietly. The images wouldn't let go.

18 years later I asked myself, where have all the "flowers" gone?

So I began a new journey, a journey to find what had happened to all the dreams of getting back to the land, setting one's soul free and environmental utopia. How had they survived living off-grid and below the poverty level for years? Had anyone changed course and gone mainstream? What had become of their dreams of self-reliance, simplicity, and freedom? And how did their children (now in their twenties) feel about their own "Hippie Kid" upbringings?

Not so long ago, those "Hippie" communities and their values were considered way too radical and fringe by the mainstream. Today, the Green Movement, looking to protect the earth for future generations, is wholeheartedly embracing them.

Back to the Garden presents a time-lapse view—twenty years in the lives of a group of idealist baby boomers who rejected and dropped out of the mainstream, who went back to the land, overcoming many personal sacrifices in pursuit of their dreams. It's also a story about the personal consequences of those radical dreams and choices. Not only is this their story, but ours too, because the counterculture of the sixties affected all of us and forever changed our ideas about how we define love, wealth, spirituality and freedom.



Kevin Tomlinson
Healing Gathering (1988)



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Film Synopsis

Long Version - 160 words

Back to the Garden: Flower Power Comes Full Circle

In the sixties they were satirized and vilified for rejecting materialism and corporate culture, in the seventies they stopped the war, started communes, urged back to the land and environmental sustainability...but by the eighties they had virtually disappeared from everyday life.

So where did all the “flowers” go?

In 1988—nearly twenty years after Woodstock-Seattle filmmaker Kevin Tomlinson asked himself that question while interviewing a group of back-to-the-land hippies at a backcountry healing gathering in Washington State.

He found small embers of sixties dropouts were still intact and thriving contrary to popular belief and were raising families while refining their hippie idealism—independent of a mass culture that had marginalized and all but forgotten them.

Doubtful about how seriously this would be viewed in 1988, the footage sat untouched but not forgotten for almost 20 years.

In 2006, Tomlinson took another look. What these off-grid Hippies were talking about in 1988—sustainability, living simpler, sustainable lives, love for the earth, questioning authority, self-reliance, and community responsibility—seemed to be blossoming with incredible force and coming full circle 20 years later as the impact of climate change, an unpopular war, shopping-as-patriotism and the green movement took center stage in mainstream discussion.

He set out to find his original subjects again with new questions. Had their radical off-grid lifestyles and ideals survived? Had anyone gone mainstream? What about their children—how did they rebel against the rebel generation?

The adventure that followed offers profound, moving insights into one of the most iconic social movements of our time—and speaks to all of us who grew up then or were affected by sixties counterculture.

The non-conformist lifestyles of these aging back-to-the-landers and their now-thriving families, firmly insulated from global economic shocks, today looks ahead of its time and wiser than ever.



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Film Synopsis Medium Version

Back to the Garden: Flower Power Comes Full Circle

Where have all the flower children gone?

In 1988, Kevin Tomlinson asked himself that question. At a large “Healing Gathering” in rural Washington State, he interviewed a group of back-to-the-land Hippies who were thriving in the eighties—independent of the culture that had forgotten them.

Almost 20 years later, in 2006, Tomlinson sought out his subjects again to find out what had become of their off-grid, backcountry families, searching for environmental utopia while living out their sixties’ ideals.

Most of all, he wanted to find out whether their country dreams of a better life had held together—or did they return to the mainstream as many had in the nineties?

The adventure that followed speaks to all of us who were affected by the counterculture. These aging back-to-the-land hippies and their tribal families, firmly insulated from global economic shocks and living a lifestyle emphasizing sustainability, simplicity and community, heralded a resurrection of alternative values which presage today’s green movement, and now seems wiser than ever.



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Film Synopsis Short Version

Back to the Garden: Flower Power Comes Full Circle

In 1988, filmmaker Kevin Tomlinson filmed & interviewed a group of back-to-the-land "hippies"—living off-grid, insulated from mainstream culture.

In 2006 he tracked down his subjects again to find out what had become of their families' utopian plans and dreams.

The film captures a time-lapse view of these back-to-the-landers told with moving personal stories of dedicated tribal families—lots of freedom but little cash, unflinching grass-roots activism and hippie kids who today ask whether free love was really free.



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FAQS: A short interview with Kevin Tomlinson, Filmmaker

1. Even 20 years ago when you shot your first footage, the hippie era seemed to be long gone. What motivated you then?

Discovering this group of back-to-the-landers who were living out their dreams unseen from the mainstream and who were in search of environmental utopia raised so many questions. Mostly I wanted to know...was it working?

I was intrigued by their desire for community, simplicity and self-reliance. But that only became apparent to me recently. I didn't know then what I was trying to accomplish—I just felt that something about them needed to be preserved—that there was something of value and depth, that their stories of struggle and hope were as compelling as any search for the American dream.

I have a weakness for old photographs for probably the same reasons. I can't imagine anyone giving away family albums full of photographs that hold such wealth. It's ephemeral, yet the essence of a photograph gives us a glimpse into a lost moment in time that many of us have forgotten or never knew at all.

2. Why did the footage sit for so long?

In 1988, when I brought the footage back and screened it with some friends, it seemed clichéd, self-righteous and certainly at odds with the conservative leaning America of 1988. Remember this was 20 years after Woodstock, the height of the counterculture. Hippies were generally felt by society to have been a passing fashion, a phase that had already crested and washed away.

Feeling doubtful that it would be taken seriously at the time and not knowing what else to do, I hung onto it. It sat in my basement for almost 20 years, through four moves, sitting in cardboard boxes in the dark...slowly decomposing.

I can see now, looking back, the timing was premature. It just wasn't ready. We weren't ready. We weren't ready to listen. But I hope we are now.

3. What motivated you to try to find these people again?

In 2005, a producer friend and I were discussing the possibility of working together on a documentary project. All kinds of ideas were brought up. I had never forgotten these interviews trapped in a box all those years, and I mentioned that I'd shot these remarkable scenes from 20 years ago. She was very excited and asked me to send her some brief samples—probably to see if I was exaggerating or not.

While going through the notes and interviews, editing them to a timeline, it felt like a Maxfield Parrish painting, romanticized and idealistic, but also heartfelt and incredibly timely in the context of the current global climate and economic crisis.

In the midst of the Bush years, the Iraq war, global warming and "An Inconvenient Truth," the voices of these flower children sounded prophetic! AS if their voices were speaking to us from the past asking whether we really think we can sustain this level of global consumption of goods and fossil fuel? How do we define real wealth?

4. What challenges did you face in finding these people?

I called up the natural food store co-op manager in Tonasket. That was the same place I had seen the original flyer advertising the '88 healing gathering. I explained who I was and that I wanted to contact these people. She forwarded my message to Jerry Bartels who I had interviewed almost 20 years ago and had no idea what had happened to him since. Jerry responded and welcomed my idea to reconnect at the 2006 Barter Faire.

At the Barter Faire it was simple. Find the faces and show them the short demo footage I had put together from the '88 healing gathering. One of my warmest memories of that day



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FAQS Continued

Kevin Tomlinson, Filmmaker

was watching their reactions to the video...Maeyowa's face as she saw herself from 20 years ago and watching how her daughter was so engaged and loving watching it. This same was true with Onepine and her daughter Yuvia. Skeeter sang all the songs as he watched. They were reassured, I think—even strengthened to hear from their former selves, seeing that their former selves hadn't changed course much from their current selves as they watched the time machine.

5. What did you expect to find—and how was that different from what you did find?

I found strong, articulate, engaged community-minded men and women who defy the perceived mass media stereotype. I found grass roots activism. I found thriving families and an organized, cohesive, alternative community.

I felt a great responsibility to tell their stories fairly without sensationalism. Many of our characters are very private people who've struggled to keep themselves afloat while living below the American poverty level for years and who still have smiles on their faces.

6. What do these people have to offer that's relevant today?

They offer a reminder that there are other choices to the mainstream. They've shown that opting out of the dominant culture can succeed. They've walked their talk for over 30 some years and although many back-to-the-landers statistically became discouraged and left. This community of people I met somehow stuck it out, assimilated into their small, rural and conservative communities. They have become respected role models as organic farmers, teachers, community organizers, and political activists.

It's not perfect. Like all dreams, there are unexpected consequences. Like the disillusioned son who joined the Navy and is not interested in having regular contact or the daughter who lives in Norway works for an oil company who calls herself the "White Sheep of the family" Anyone who's raised children recognizes that scenario. Kids make their own choices.

As a group I found them to be role models for choosing to live by the strength of their convictions: self-reliant, fallible yet determined...striving to live with purpose. Their love and dedication to defend an imperiled Mother Earth should resonate with many of us given today's global challenges.

7. What are some of the key messages of your film?

Being true to yourself, making a difference in your community, living simply, practicing thrift and being self-reliant, growing your own food. Qualities touted in the sixties that still seem relevant today.

I got tired of the worn out hippie stereotypes. You know: stoner do-nothings out of some Cheech and Chong movie. I wanted to broaden the definition and show the reality of strong, responsible, dedicated, human beings who are giving back to their communities as teachers, farmers, political activists and stewards of the earth.

There's a thread about money and the notion that having wealth doesn't really mean just material wealth. Given our economic struggles I think having the conversation about living on less and still finding fulfillment while providing for our families will find an audience.



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Crew Biographies

Kevin Tomlinson - Director

Kevin has been an independent Seattle-based producer, director and cinematographer for over 25 years. He has earned numerous Emmys & Tellys for his network news camerawork with NBC (Winter Olympics, Dateline, Today show, Nightly News) ABC (20/20) CBS, (48 hours, 60 minutes) PBS (McNeil/Lehrer, Bill Nye the Science Guy) as well as Discovery, Nickelodeon, Japanese TV (NHK, TV Ashahi) German TV (ZDF, Pro Sieben), Italy (RAI), and more.

As a cinematographer, Tomlinson has shot documentaries and travel programs throughout Europe, Turkey, Morocco, Haiti, Peru, Sri Lanka, Siberia and India. Many shows have been broadcast nationally on the PBS series Rick Steves' Europe, winning a golden Cine Eagle award(2001).

He currently shoots documentary and corporate programs for Microsoft, The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and non-profit organizations Bridges to Understanding and Interplast.

Kevin has taught filmmaking at the Seattle Film Institute and 911 Media Arts teaching Digital Video and Documentary Production since 2004.

Tim Cash — Editor

Tim Cash is the founder and director with FARfromEARTH Films, an independent film company specializing in producing music videos, documentaries, and features films. Tim Cash also founded slamstock.com, the world's first \$1 stock footage website designed for grassroots filmmakers worldwide. His feature film "Skipping Stones" was an official selection in the 2007 Bend Film Festival.

Judy Meryl Kaplan — Producer

Since 1988, Judy has managed and produced programs for Heaven Scent Films and was the primary interviewer/production Manager/co-producer for "Back to the Garden." As a lifelong fine artist she has exhibited her paintings,(www.judymerylkaplan.com) created bronze sculpture for public installations, designs and produces recycled clothing and accessories through her company Frim Fram Design (www.frimframdesign.com) and received both private and public grants and commissions. She's also a RN and a cancer research consultant for the biotech industry.

In 1969, she hitchhiked to the Woodstock festival at 17 and remembers that it was 'very muddy.'