



DAWNING URGENCY

The truth about global warming may be inconvenient, but the documentary **TRANSFORMING ENERGY** advances some viable solutions. **By Vicki Ecker**

In 1977, a few years after soaring gas prices began their assault on the nation's pocketbooks, then-President Jimmy Carter made a brief television address to rally support for alternative energy. Over 30 years later, instead of implemented solutions, the energy crisis has so escalated that it poses an imminent global threat.

While humanity teeters on this environmental precipice, Throughline Productions, a Boulder, Colorado-based independent production company, is determined to pull us back from the edge. Its one-hour documentary *Transforming Energy* opens with Carter proffering his earnest plea, followed by enlightening interviews and details on the potentially profitable solutions being explored by a select group of energy innovators.

The brainchild of artist-activist Joel Shapiro and filmmaker Chuck Davis, who heads up Throughline, the film is billed as “picking up where *An Inconvenient Truth* left off”—offering its own troubling examples of what long-term petrochemical dependency is doing to the planet and its inhabitants within a more response-driven format.

“Al Gore’s film deserves all the accolades it got,” Shapiro observes. “But even though the film offered some solutions, it didn’t make me really want to grab on to them. Chuck and I wanted to convince business people, who are normally very skeptical, that there are ways to be both on the positive side of business and on the positive side of the environment. It’s the only way we’re going to make a change.”



The whirling windmills of the San Geronio Pass (page top, right to left) provide a hopeful counterpoint to the foreboding grave markers of Shishmaref, Alaska—one of the first seaside villages soon to be relocated due to global warming. Turbines and solar-powered vehicles are among the energy alternatives explored by documentary writer/director Chuck Davis (below).

The documentary, which has been shown in the US at various film festivals and on PBS, showcases grassroots activists, environmental specialists and entrepreneurs sharing their insights and ideas. Among those featured are Jeremy Rifkin, noted author of 17 books on technological change, and architect William McDonough, whose work on sustainable development has earned him three Presidential Awards.

Davis and Shapiro, both physicians, apply their own grounded knowledge to environmental understanding. Shapiro is founder of the solar-powered Electric Lodge in Venice, California, where local artists and performers work out cultural concerns and engage in focused discussion on environmental issues. Davis seeks to emphasize sociological and spiritual aspects of society in his films, along with breakthroughs in environmentalism. His latest project, *The Nature of Cities*, will explore the regenerative potential of “smart” urban habitats.

“If you talk about healing humans,” notes Shapiro, shifting into doctorly mode, “the bigger and more pressing problem is healing the ecosystem.” Whether we succeed or fail, *Transforming Energy* shows why it is important that we try. ◀

For more, see www.transformingenergy.com and www.throughlineproductions.com.

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