

A new documentary from Writer-director Fraser C. Heston and Agamemnon Films

The Search for Michael Rockefeller



A vanished heir.
A lost film.
A DARK SECRET.

AN AGAMEMNON FILMS PRODUCTION A FRASER C. HESTON FILM
MUSIC BY JON ALEXI NARRATED BY FRASER C. HESTON CO-PRODUCED BY HEATHER J. MCADAMS
EDITOR & CO-PRODUCER TED HUGHES EXECUTIVE PRODUCER ALEX BUTLER BASED ON THE BOOK & FILM FOOTAGE BY MILT MACHLIN
WRITTEN, PRODUCED & DIRECTED BY FRASER C. HESTON



Press Kit

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The Search for Michael Rockefeller

A missing scion. A lost film. A dark secret.



The disappearance of Michael Rockefeller is one of the enduring unsolved mysteries of the 20th Century. In 1961, Michael Rockefeller left on a voyage down the cannibal coast of New Guinea in a trading canoe. Several miles off shore, heavy seas swamped his craft. After a night adrift, Rockefeller set out to swim for the distant shore, leaving his companion with the fateful words: "I think I can make it..."

He was never seen again.

Or was he? Author and journalist Milt Machlin, on a wild lead, went to New Guinea in 1969 to find him. "If by the remotest flight of fancy Donahue's story should be true, Michael Rockefeller would have to be found. I was determined to be the one to do it."

To view a trailer and for more info please visit www.searchformichael.com



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PRODUCTION CREDITS:

Written, Directed and Produced by: **Fraser C. Heston**

Based on book by: **Milt Machlin**

Original New Guinea footage directed by: **Milt Machlin**

Executive Producer: **Alex Butler**

Co-Producers: **Heather J. McAdams, Ted Hughes**

Original Music by: **Jon Alexi**

Film Editing by: **Ted Hughes**

Narrated by: **Fraser C. Heston**

Cinematography: **Jim Anderson, Malcolm Kirk**

Additional Photography by: **Fraser C. Heston, Justin Levine**

Visual Effects: **Ted Hughes, Justin Levine**

Sound by: **Milt Machlin, Jim Anderson, Malcolm Kirk, and Ted Hughes**



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CAST:

Miron Ashkenazy	Rene Wassing (voice)
Laurent Bouzereau	Gerard Delloye (voice)
J.O. Brew	Himself
Malcolm Kirk	Himself
Neil Dickson	Peter Hastings, Anthony Van Kampen (voices)
Ken Dresser	Himself
Fraser C. Heston	Narrator
Jack Heston	Michael Rockefeller (voice)
Ted Hughes	Hal Steegar (voice)
F.R. J. Eibrink Jansen	Himself
Dennis Kruesler	Tim Ward, Bruce Lawes (voices)
Milt Machlin	Himself
Billy Malone	Milt Machlin (voice)
Heather J. McAdams	Barbara Machlin (voice)
Nelson Rockefeller	Himself
John Ryan	Himself
Michael Teh	John Donahue, Warren Hansen, Keith Willey (voices)
Anthony Van der Wouw	Himself
Corneles Van Kessel	Himself
Rene Wassing	Himself
Matthew Wolf	A. Boendermaker, Adrian Gerbrands (voices)
Gerard Zegwaard	Himself

Special thanks to Margaret Ryan Machlin.

Without her help and generosity, this film would never have been made.



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DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS

The disappearance of Michael Rockefeller is one of the enduring vanishings of the 20th century, rivaling Amelia Earhart or Colonel Fawcett. Finding Milt Machlin's lost 16mm footage and sound tapes was like getting a Mercedes in a box, only all mixed up and with no directions for assembly! The footage Milt shot on his expeditions to New Guinea in search of Michael, much of it unseen, is a goldmine, a visual feast for any film maker, and too much for me to resist. Milt's revelations, eye witness interviews and the extraordinary footage (some of it quite startling) shot on two expeditions to New Guinea of a vanishing way of life, shed entirely new light on Michael's disappearance. I simply had to drop everything and complete this film!



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Posted: Fri., May 9, 2012

Feature Film Seeks Answers to Disappearance of Michael Rockefeller

Agamemnon Films, founded by Fraser and Charlton Heston, will explore the mysterious 1960s death of a member of one of the most powerful families in American history.

By PAUL BOND

Fraser Heston and his Agamemnon Films have developed a feature film about **Michael Rockefeller**, a member of one of the most powerful families in U.S. history whose disappearance off the coast of New Guinea in 1961 triggered a media firestorm.

Heston, the son of film legend **Charlton Heston**, has been fascinated with the death of Rockefeller -- perhaps by drowning or maybe something far more sinister and primitive -- for several years and, in fact, has already produced a documentary on the subject.

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At left is Michael Rockefeller, presumed killed at sea in 1961. At right is an unidentified white man surrounded by New Guinea Asmats from the film, "The Search for Michael Rockefeller."



Rockefeller, the son of **Nelson Rockefeller**, the governor of New York at the time who later became U.S vice president, was a collector of rare artifacts who was visiting the Asmat tribe in what was then Netherlands New Guinea when his canoe overturned more than five decades ago.

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After the accident, two local guides successfully swam more than three miles to shore while 23-year-old Rockefeller and his companion, anthropologist **Rene Wassing**, remained with the capsized boat. Eventually, Rockefeller also attempted the swim but was never seen again, while Wassing was rescued the next day. After what some historians call the most intensive land-air search in the history of the South Pacific, it was presumed that Rockefeller either drowned or was eaten by sharks or saltwater crocodiles.

A banner headline in the *Los Angeles Times* on Nov. 20, 1961 read: “Gov. Rockefeller Son Lost In Guinea Wilds,” with the subhead, “Cannibals Reported Inhabiting Area; Father Flies There.”

While he was declared legally dead in 1964, suspicions about his disappearance lived on, fueled in part by journalist **Milt Machlin**, who set out for New Guinea to solve the mystery in 1969 and, upon his return, wrote the book, *The Search for Michael Rockefeller*, which contained evidence that the Harvard-educated adventurer completed the treacherous swim only to be eaten by cannibals.

Heston was researching the subject in 2008 when he learned that Machlin, now deceased, had some 15 reels of 16 mm film from his trip to New Guinea that was gathering dust in a vault.

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Heston's documentary, also called *The Search for Michael Rockefeller*, is based on the book and features some of the now-retrieved film that Machlin and his crew shot.

“We came across the shot of a naked white man paddling a canoe full of Asmat warriors in 1969 who looked suspiciously like Michael,” says Heston. “He might have chosen to forsake his life as a scion of one of the world’s wealthiest families to stay with his friends the Asmats. It sounds far-fetched, but that’s the stuff legends and great stories are made of.”

One theory about Rockefeller's fate is that he survived the swim but was very soon killed and eaten by Asmats, given they were ritualistic headhunters and cannibals living in a culture that required payback when attacked, no matter how long it might take. In Rockefeller's case, they may have sacrificed him because they needed a white victim to avenge some Asmats who were killed by a Dutch gunboat patrol in 1958. Another theory holds that after swimming ashore Rockefeller lived for several years with the Asmats, but that eventually they still ate him in order to avenge the gunboat episode.

Heston's feature film will be told from the perspective of Machlin and his search for the truth about Rockefeller's demise. Plans are for filming to begin in Australia next year with Queensland doubling for New Guinea, which is still too precarious a place for shooting a movie, says Heston,

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who co-wrote the script with his writing partner, **Heather McAdams**. Agamemnon has partnered with [Ploughed Field Prods.](#) in Australia and that company's executive producer, **Robin James**. A production budget is still being worked out.

"We want to make something with a little dark humor that has a solution to the mystery," Heston says. "We'll take pains to get the architecture of the villages correct, the canoes and especially the artwork, since Michael went there to collect art."

[Agamemnon Films](#) is an independent studio founded in 1981 by Fraser and Charlton Heston. The rights to much of its library, including *The Search for Michael Rockefeller*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Mother Lode*, *The Proud Men* and *Charlton Heston Presents the Bible*, was acquired this week by [Outsider Pictures](#) while Cinedigm holds the subscription VOD rights to the Rockefeller documentary.

Email: Paul.Bond@THR.com

Read the full article at:

<http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/feature-film-seeks-answers-disappearance-702824>



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Documentary confirms Michael Rockefeller was eaten by cannibals

By Richard Johnson

The public will finally get to see “The Search for Michael Rockefeller” Feb. 1 when Netflix releases the documentary on one of the most compelling unsolved mysteries of the 20th century.

The film confirms what The Post reported in 1968: [Cannibals devoured](#) the son of New York Gov. Nelson Rockefeller.



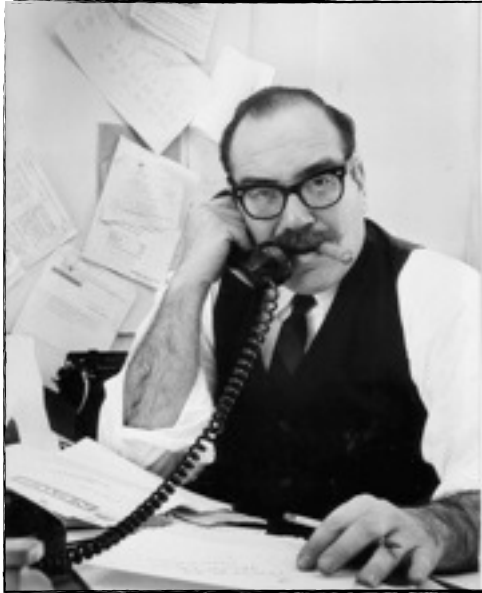
In 2007, filmmaker Fraser C. Heston (son of Charlton) discovered a lost cache of 16mm film shot by Milt Machlin, the editor of Argosy magazine who coined the phrases “Bermuda Triangle” and “the Abominable Snowman.”

The footage was taken during Machlin’s expedition to New Guinea in 1969 in search of the lost scion, inspired by an eyewitness report that Michael Rockefeller was alive and being held against his will by Stone Age savages.



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PRESS RELEASE: HESTON UNCOVERS LOST ROCKEFELLER FOOTAGE

Writer-director Fraser C. Heston has discovered a treasure trove of lost footage shot by adventure-author Milt Machlin during his expedition to the cannibal coast of New Guinea in 1969, in search of the lost scion, Michael Rockefeller, son of Governor Nelson Rockefeller. The film includes previously unseen footage and interviews, including some startling new never-before-released material, which sheds new light on the unsolved mystery of Michael's disappearance.

"The disappearance of Michael Clark Rockefeller is one of the enduring unsolved mysteries of the 20th Century," said helmer Heston, who is determined to turn Machlin's unfinished film footage into the definitive documentary on the disappearance of the Rockefeller heir, titled THE SEARCH FOR MICHAEL ROCKEFELLER. While researching a screenplay based on Machlin's book of the same title, Heston found "some fifteen-odd reels of raw and uncut film and sound tapes, which lay forgotten for forty years, gathering dust in a vault in New England," said Heston. "It was only through serendipity, a little detective work, and the kindness of Milt's widow, Margaret Machlin, that this film will see the light of day. In the tradition of Verner Herzog's GRIZZLY MAN, we will create an entirely new film from Milt's unfinished epic documentary, and bring it the kind of attention it deserves."



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Posted: Mon., Apr. 26, 2004

'Search' is on for Heston

Lensing for tale of ex-governor's son to be in Fiji, Oz

By ADDIE MORFOOT

HOLLYWOOD -- Helmer Fraser Heston has acquired rights to the late Milt Machlin's 1972 tome "The Search for Michael Rockefeller."

Book recounts the true story of the disappearance of 23-year-old Rockefeller, son of then-New York Gov. Nelson Rockefeller, in the jungles of New Guinea in 1961 and the search for him seven years later.

"It really intrigues me that a guy with everything chose to go to the one place in the world where his fame and fortune meant nothing in order to make it on his own," Heston said.

Heston and producer Alex Butler, who most recently collaborated on a screenplay based on Bram Stoker's "Jewel of the Seven Stars" for Castle Rock, will co-write the screenplay. Heston ("Alaska," "Needful Things") is set to direct the film, which will be in production by April.

Filming will take place primarily in Fiji and Australia on an independently financed budget. No cast has been announced.

Read the full article at: <http://www.variety.com/article/VR1117903855.html>

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SYNOPSIS

The disappearance of Michael Clark Rockefeller is one of the enduring unsolved mysteries of the 20th Century.

In 1961, the 23-year-old son of Gov. Nelson Rockefeller, led a small expedition along the treacherous Causarina Coast of New Guinea. Michael, along with Dutch anthropologist Rene Wassing, was collecting highly respected Asmat native art and carvings for the Rockefeller family's Museum of Primitive Art, in New York. Far from the spoiled dilettante some might assume of the young scion, Michael had proven himself on previous expeditions to New Guinea to be a sensitive anthropologist, with a deep appreciation for Asmat art (examples of which now hang in the Metropolitan Museum of Art) and an understanding of their complex and endangered culture. He was also an extraordinarily talented photographer, and had begun to edit a book of photographs from the Harvard Peabody expedition to the Baliem Valley the previous year, of which he had been a member.

On November 18, 1961, Rockefeller, Wassing, and two native boys left the village of Agats on a voyage down the coast for the Asmat villages of the interior, in a heavily laden double-hulled trading canoe, despite warnings about the dangerous tidal bore off the mouth of the Eilanden River. Indeed, several miles off shore, heavy seas swamped and capsized their top-heavy craft (driven by only a single under-powered outboard motor). After a night adrift in the Arafura Sea, clinging to the wreckage, Rockefeller set out to swim for the distant shore, leaving Wassing with the fateful words:

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"I think I can make it..."

He was never seen again. Ironically Wassing, who had clung to the wreckage of the boat, was rescued twelve hours later. Despite a massive air-sea search, headed by Governor Nelson Rockefeller and the Dutch and Australian navies, no trace of young Rockefeller was ever found.

Until October 29, 1968, when Milt Machlin, editor of Argosy Magazine, was approached in his Argosy offices by a nefarious Australian smuggler calling himself "John Donahue", with a startling question:

"What would you say if I told you I saw Michael Rockefeller alive, not ten weeks ago?"

Donahue spun for the hard-bitten editor a tale of mystery and adventure, which, if true, meant that Michael had somehow survived among the cannibals in the wilderness of New Guinea.

Donahue claimed that while on a trading venture in the Trobriand Islands, hundreds of miles from where Rockefeller disappeared, he visited a remote village on the island of "Kanapua", or "Kanabora", in about 150° E by 8° S. There, a white man with a long, sandy beard hobbled out of a small hut on two badly-healed broken legs, squinting through myopic eyes, and croaked these words:

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"I am Michael Rockefeller... Can you help me?"

It seemed remotely plausible, and Donahue's details were correct. Could it be that Rockefeller had somehow made it ashore, and was still alive, held captive by headhunting tribesmen? Before Machlin could press Donahue for more details, the Aussie smuggler slipped away into the night, without asking for reward or remuneration of any kind. But Machlin was convinced there might be more than a grain of truth to Donahue's story, and vowed:

"If by the remotest flight of fancy Donahue's story should actually be true, Michael Rockefeller would have to be found. And I was determined to be the one to do it."

With the cryptic clues given him by Donahue, his reporter's intuition, and the name of an island that wasn't even on the map, Milt set off for New Guinea to discover the truth for himself, and to find Michael Rockefeller, dead or alive. Although Milt approached the Rockefeller family with this new information, they respectfully replied that they "considered the matter to be closed". Milt's odyssey took him from the Trobriands to the Sepik and May rivers, the New Guinea highlands, the Asmat coast, and eventually as far as Holland, in his quest for the truth. While Milt did not find Michael Rockefeller, what he found instead was a great story, and helped to solve the mystery about one of the most unsettling vanishings ever to have obsessed the nation.

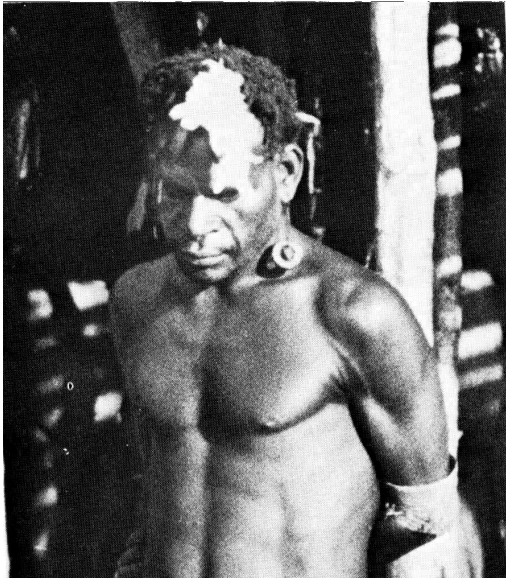


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Fortunately for us, Machlin took a cinematographer on his expedition, along with two 16mm cameras and several rolls of film and sound tape. For unknown reasons, this color 16mm footage has lain dormant for forty years, gathering dust in a vault in New England, until it was unearthed in 2008 by film-maker Fraser Heston, while researching a screenplay on Milt Machlin. Contained in more than 15 dusty film cans were hours of largely unseen footage taken on Milt's expedition.

Combined with 9 rolls of ¼ inch reel-to-reel sound tapes, which Heston found with the help of Milt's widow, Margaret Machlin, along with Milt's notes, diaries and photographs from the expedition, this previously unedited film footage constitutes a remarkable pictorial record, not only of Milt Machlin's expedition in search of Michael Rockefeller, but of the vanishing way of life of the cannibal-artists of New Guinea and in particular of the Asmats, for whom Michael had such an affinity.

Milt's expedition footage is complimented with previously unreleased on-camera and taped interviews, such as an in-depth interview with Father Cornelius Van Kessel, head of the Sacred Heart Mission in Agats in 1961, the last man to see Rockefeller alive before he left on his fateful voyage, who reveals what is perhaps the darkest and most closely held secret about Michael's disappearance. Father Van Kessel sums it up succinctly:

"The truth is evil. He reached the shore and he fell just into the hands of death."



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Filmmakers



Fraser Heston - Director, Writer, and Producer

FRASER C. HESTON began his film career in Hollywood in 1955, on the back lot at Paramount Studios playing the infant Moses in Cecil B. DeMille's TEN COMMANDMENTS. His father, star Charlton Heston, of course portrayed the adult Moses; though Fraser has not forgiven him for taking first billing.

Fraser studied English and writing at UCLA and wrote his first produced screenplay at age 21, THE MOUNTAIN MEN for Columbia pictures. Since then he has written, produced and/or directed numerous feature films, television movies, and documentaries, such as MOTHER LODGE, which brought about the founding of his production company, Agamemnon Films, in 1981; THE PROUD MEN for ABC; TREASURE ISLAND, A MAN FOR ALL SEASONS, CRUCIFER OF BLOOD (for Ted Turner's TNT); ALASKA, and NEEDFUL THINGS (for Castle Rock Entertainment), as well as the critically acclaimed CHARLTON HESTON PRESENTS THE BIBLE, for A&E.

Always an avid outdoorsman, Fraser's travels and adventures have included mountain climbing & white-water expeditions to Alaska, Canada, Africa, Scotland and Europe, photographic expeditions to the Amazon and Australia, a diving expedition to the Red Sea, an expedition to study humpback whales in Hawaii, and sailing in the North Sea, The Mediterranean, the Aegean, British Columbia, and the North Pacific and around Cape Horn. He continues to travel the world, in search of adventure - and a good story.

Fraser lives in Los Angeles with his wife Marilyn and son Jack, only a few miles from the back lot at Paramount.



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Alex Butler - Executive Producer

After ten years as a commodity broker trading coffee in the City of London, New York, East Africa (during which time he was once charged by wild gorillas in the Mountains of the Moon), and South America (where wild monkeys stole his sunglasses), ALEX BUTLER relocated to Los Angeles in January 1988 to join International Creative Management's International Motion Picture Packaging department where he worked with actor, director, writer and producer clients, putting together film projects and orchestrating screenplay sales.

In 1992, Butler was recruited by Japanese production and distribution company Kuzui Enterprises to run its Los Angeles office as Vice President of Production and Acquisitions. There he supervised the acquisition of independent movies for the Japanese market, including Luc Besson's ATLANTIS, the Coen Brothers' BARTON FINK and Bille August's BEST INTENTIONS. At Kuzui, Butler acquired and produced for Kuzui the feature film BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER, a Kuzui/Sandollar Production for 20th Century Fox. The film starred Kristy Swanson, Luke Perry, Rutger Hauer, Paul Reubens and Donald Sutherland. In 1999, Butler co-wrote and co-produced the CBS movie of the week SONG FROM THE HEART, starring Amy Grant, Keith Carradine and D.W. Moffett.

Butler joined Agamemnon Films in 1995 and is a member of the Writers Guild of America and the British Academy of Film and Television Arts, Los Angeles.



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Heather J. McAdams - Co-Producer

HEATHER J. THOMAS is originally from Pittsburgh, PA. She graduated from Duke University having majored in Public Policy, Philosophy, and Women's Studies. After studying acting in New York, she moved to Los Angeles and performs stand-up based on strange things that happen to her, like a homeless guy giving her a bag of clothes. She is a member of Tim Robbins' theater company, The Actors' Gang. Her last film, that she co-wrote, co-produced, and starred in called REALITY WORLD, ECHO PARK won the Silverlake Award at the Silverlake Film Festival. She is currently in post on two film projects SUNSHINE AND DREAMS and MANGEZ MERDE: THE ROCKUMENTARY. Heather is also the head of development at Agamemnon Films. She plays lots of soccer against very mean girls and is not above throwing a razor sharp elbow or two. She lives in Venice with her husband, son and three dogs (and yes, three is a pack).



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Ted Hughes - Editor, Co-Producer

TED HUGHES has worked in broadcast television production for over 20 years starting back in the early eighties at PBS affiliate WIPB in Muncie, Indiana where he worked on the long-running nationally syndicated half-hour PBS program The Joy of Painting with Bob Ross. He also co-produced many industrial projects including promotional content for Garfield comic strip creator Jim Davis.

Hughes then spent ten years as a video editor at The Disney Channel origination center in Burbank California where he worked on projects for directors such as George Stevens Jr, Mark Rydell, & Steven Spielberg. Additionally, He has worked as an editor for E! Entertainment Television, and the ABC Network News west coast bureau.

In 1999, Hughes founded The Edit Corporation in Los Angeles, which provides production and post-production services. In 2004, Hughes edited his third surfing film, the acclaimed surfing adventure, Second Thoughts, which won Surfer Magazine's 2004 Surfer Poll Award for Surfing Video of the Year. The December 2005 issue of Men's Journal calls Second Thoughts one of best surf adventure DVDs of the past 40 years. Ted is also collaborating with Fraser Heston on the documentary "MOTHER LODGE- Behind the Scenes with Fraser C. Heston".



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Jon Alexi - Composer

Adolfo Bringas AKA Jon Alexi, was born in Mexico City, Mexico. He studied the accordion and the piano with instructor Alberto Santinelli. By the age of 10, he had mastered the guitar. In 1977, Jon Alexi entered the Music School at the Musicians Union in Mexico City, and graduated in 1980 with a degree in orchestration, arranging, and classical piano.

He studied Jazz and Blues and Latin music with renowned Brazilian pianist Manfredo Fest. Jon Alexi blends alternative, pop/rock stylings with hot contemporary rhythms, creating a high definition musical experience. His performances are in constant demand for club dates and recording sessions alike. Jon Alexi also composes and produces music for TV, movies and sound libraries.



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MILT MACHLIN

There is more to Milt Machlin than meets the eye. Milt was a renaissance man and a man's man. Before the Dos Equis ads, Milt was "the world's most interesting man"... He studied at Brown University as well as the Sorbonne. He served in WWII in New Guinea and was a war correspondent in Vietnam. Milt sparred with Ernest Hemingway. He played piano and was a wine connoisseur. He rode in submarines and hot air balloons and went deep sea diving with Jacques Cousteau. He was an adventurer at heart and a journalist and an author by trade. His widow Margaret Ryan Machlin said his goal was either to work for Time or Argosy, for which he eventually became editor.

Milt's book of his adventures on his quest for the truth about the fate of Michael Rockefeller became the best-selling The Search for Michael Rockefeller, now a classic of adventure literature. Machlin also published several other books including Ninth Life, a biography about Caryl Chessman, the Red Light Bandit, and The Private Hell of Ernest Hemingway.



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Awards



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