



# Billy & Molly

AN OTTER LOVE STORY

## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

"Billy & Molly" was the ultimate passion project for me. It was about an otter, and it was in Shetland. I have spent my life obsessed with otters and, in fact, moved to Shetland in 1993 when I was 19, visiting to film and photograph otters since I was 16. Shetland is Britain's most northern outpost, a barren archipelago in the North Atlantic. I lived in a remote cottage on a barren hillside. Weirdly, my nearest neighbors were Billy's parents, who lived in the house he'd grown up in. However, I didn't meet Billy until 2021, when I heard from a friend about a man who had an otter that was visiting his house daily. I decided to make the trip north from my home in Bristol, to meet him and the otter named Molly. After meeting Molly, I had a chat with Keith Scholey from Silverback Films, and we decided to try to make a documentary about the unusual pair. Keith brought Jeff Wilson in, and Jeff and I planned and styled a film; it was a charming and often funny relationship, and we wanted that to shine through.

I have to say, I have never worked on a project that was so much fun. Billy, his wife Susan and second camera Johnny Rolt have become family as we all lived together for months on location, and a cross word never came between us. In fact, that fun and warmth seeped through the whole of the production process.

I think for myself, Jeff and Sam Rogers, the editor, having the time and freedom to really be creative, to try things, take risks and make mistakes, along with Billy's natural and warm eccentricity, is what eventually combined to give the film its quirky aesthetic and narrative.

My biggest takeaway from the experience was the time I got to spend with Molly, walking along the beautiful Shetland coastline with a wild otter at my feet or swimming through spooky kelp beds while filming her as she fished was a lifetime of dreams come true. To be able to do that with wonderful people made it even more special.

– Charlie Hamilton James