

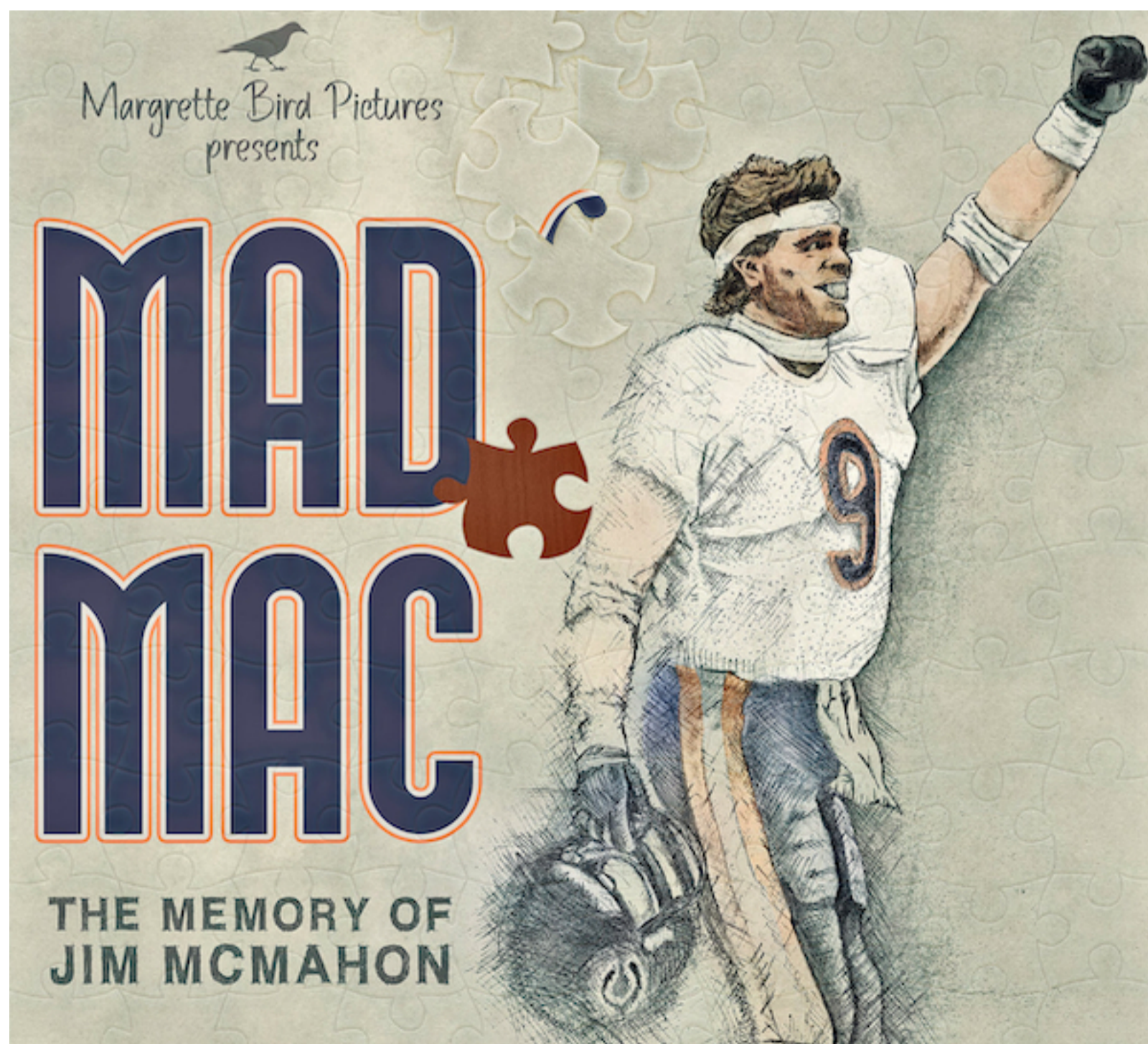
Interview: Jim McMahon, CJ Wallis on Upcoming Documentary

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on February 16, 2021 - 7:55pm

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CHICAGO – As a sports obsessed adolescent growing up in Chicago during the 1980s, nothing dominated the headlines more than the Chicago Bears. Leading the carnival of mayhem and madness was quarterback Jim McMahon. McMahon helped lead the Chicago Bears to a 15-1 record in 1985, and a dominant 46-10 win over New England in Super Bowl XX.

He played the quarterback position like a linebacker and his teammates and fans appreciated the way he attacked the game with reckless abandon, with little regard for his own personal health and safety. His tough and rebellious attitude combined with his sunglasses, headbands and punk haircuts encapsulated what the '80s were all about ... the team and QB left such a lasting impression on me that I named my son Jimmy.



Poster Art for 'Mad Mac: The Memory of Jim McMahon'

Photo credit: Magrette Bird Pictures & Upstream Flix

Yet, oftentimes we remember our sports heroes as they were on the field and don't take the time to consider what their life was like after their playing days are over. The upcoming and eagerly anticipated documentary (release scheduled for 2021) is "Mad Mac: The Memory of Jim McMahon," directed by CJ Wallis. The director, along with producer Mallory Kennedy, has previously created the films "The Fiddling Horse" (Best Picture, 2019 Golden Gate International Film Festival) and "Perfect Bid: The Contestant Who Knew Too Much," about a math teacher who outsmarted "The Price is Right."

"Mad Mac" will celebrate McMahon's football career while also chronicling his post NFL battles with CTE ... Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy ... the brain degeneration caused by repeated head trauma (such as repetitive NFL hits). McMahon – who is well known for not taking crap from anyone and playing by his own rules – is taking the same in-your-face mentality to his new battle with CTE, and to promote CTE awareness.

I recently talked to Jim McMahon and director CJ Wallis for HollywoodChicago.com.



Jim McMahon, Former Quarterback for the Chicago Bears

Jeff Doles for HollywoodChicago.com: You have used your platform as a legendary athlete – including this upcoming documentary – to advocate for CTE awareness. How has your defiant and outspoken attitude towards authority helped you be successful in your cause?

Jim McMahon: I don't know if it's my attitude towards authority ... I questioned authority sometimes. And you have to do so when you see it, you got to call out injustice and that's what I've tried to do. I'm not trying to put myself on a pedestal, but I'm trying to let people know these things aren't right, and that they need to be corrected. Hopefully, that will help out.



Jim McMahon Today: A Painting by CJ Wallis

Photo credit: FortyFPS.com

HollywoodChicago.com: Why do you think after 35 years there is still such an interest in the 1985 Bears and the players?

McMahon: Well, I think it's because people saw us without our helmets on. They saw guys doing commercials. They saw guys doing radio and TV shows. They were out in the public more and that's probably one of the first times that that's ever happened. And plus, we were not just good, we had a lot of great personalities on the team. That's why people enjoyed us.

HollywoodChicago.com: Do you see any current NFL quarterbacks that remind you of yourself during your playing days? If so, who and in what capacity?

McMahon: Well, I don't watch a lot of football now, but the only quarterback now that I would say I played like would be Patrick Mahomes ... you might laugh at that I'm sure. I certainly don't have the foot speed that Patrick's got, but I think as far as our creativity and our understanding of offenses we are similar. He also throws the ball from any angle and with either hand, and I did the same as well.

GO TO PAGE TWO for an interview with CJ Wallis, the director of "Mad Mac: The Memory of Jim McMahon."

★ **CJ Wallis, Director of the Upcoming Doc "Mad Mac: The Memory of Jim McMahon"**

Jeff Doles for HollywoodChicago.com: What drew you to Jim McMahon as a subject for a documentary?

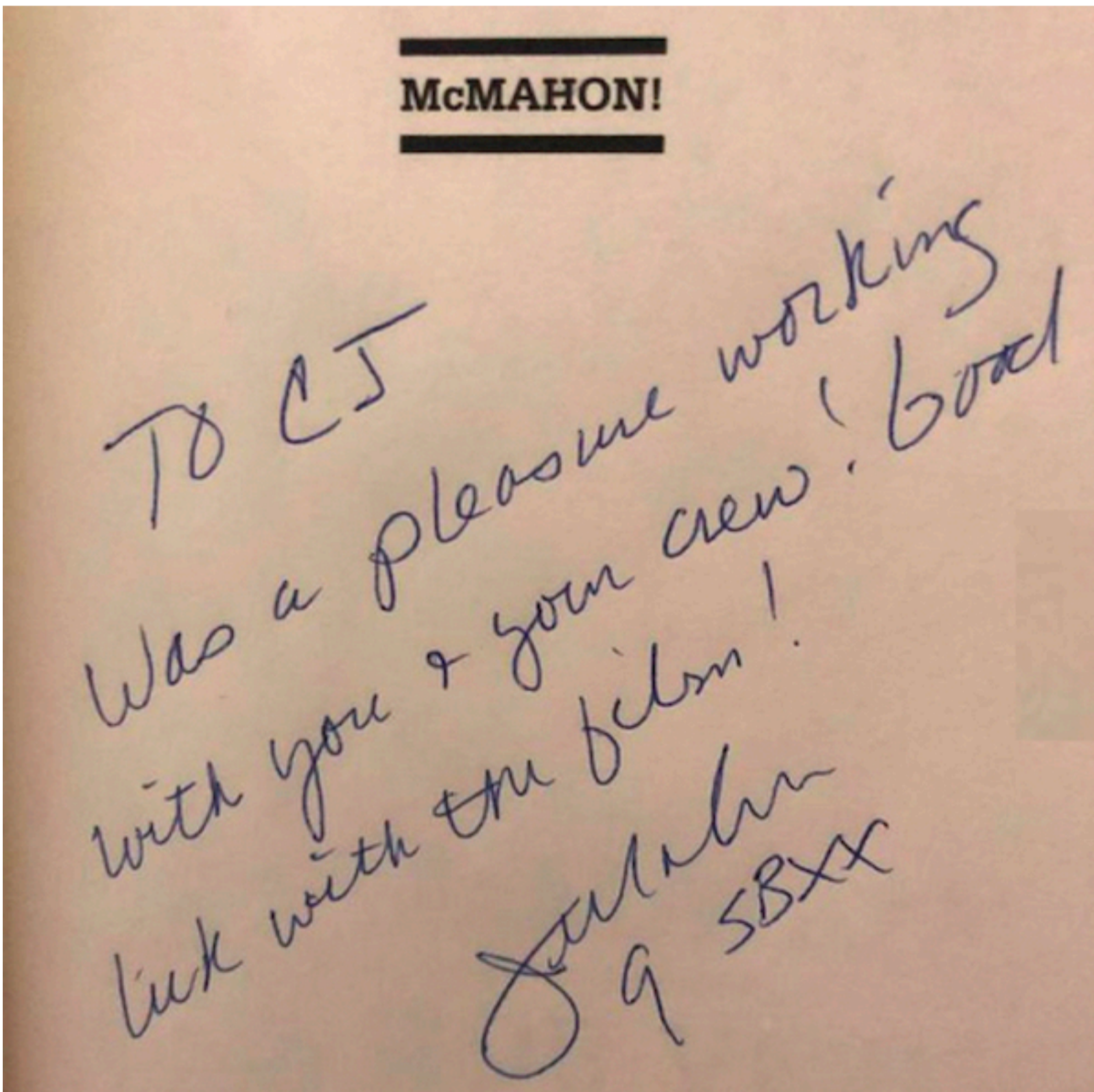
CJ Wallis: Jim has enough experiences, accomplishments and stories to make nine films, and they all dawned on me at the same time. I can't really work on a plane so I use flights as forced vacations. I was playing 'Super Tecmo Bowl II.' And Randall Cunningham's digital version got injured and – as in real life – Jim McMahon had to play QB for the Eagles. For the first time, all the little pieces of stories about him that I had read over time all aligned in my head. I couldn't wait to get off the plane to try and contact him.

HollywoodChicago.com: How did you pitch the documentary idea to Jim and how did the film come together?

Wallis: I wrote a three-line email pitching the idea and what I could do with the film. and the next day he asked what I'd need from him and when. That was it ... a month or so later we were in Arizona to start the process.

HollywoodChicago.com: Sports and the personal stories of athletes can be a powerful vehicle to raise awareness about injury issues, and make a positive impact on society. How does the film showcase Jim McMahon and his post-career advocacy promoting awareness of CTE and the impact it can have?

Wallis: One of the ways specific to the film was that Jim invited us come to New York and interview Dr Scott Rosa ... who performs a revolutionary chiropractic procedure that can change the lives of people who suffer from CTE. Dr. Rosa allowed us to film the entire process and walks us through how he was able to assist Jim over time. It's one of the more fascinating parts of the story.



Jim McMahon Endorses the Documentary

Photo credit: FortyFPS.com

HollywoodChicago.com: You have described the film as being broken into two parts – similar to director Stanley Kubrick’s ‘Full Metal Jacket.’ What do you mean by that reference?

Wallis: These are the sort of things you say in interviews before you start to shoot while you’re discussing the movie that you’ve vaguely assembled in your head. It gives you something to aim at while you’re making it.

I suppose the thought at the time was how the two parts of ‘Full Metal Jacket’ have such opposite tones, that Jim’s story could be told in a similar way. The character run ragged in the first half then shipped off to fight a battle in the second.

HollywoodChicago.com: Obviously in referencing Kubrick he is a director you admire. Do you intentionally or subconsciously use any of his techniques when you’re directing your own films?

Wallis: I don’t really try to mirror anything. Symmetrical compositions always look good and that’s probably what drew me to his work in the beginning. I don’t really watch the films much anymore but even the term ‘Kubrick’ has become more like a deity or a type of ‘film religion’ to follow. You can refill your creative gas tank reading what he taught or putting on a documentary about his films or the process. Kubrick should remind you to give a damn about every aspect of your filmmaking and to work until things are as perfect as possible.

The total budget for my first two fiction films total was less than what most productions would spend on a half-day of shooting. Even as that caused a few bumps and bruises along the way, those are the things that motivate you to go make sure the next film can be more Kubrick-like.

HollywoodChicago.com: While obviously completely different stories, in your mind you have connected the two documentaries ‘The Tiger King’ and ‘Mad Mac.’ How would you compare the similarities and differences of each documentary’s subjects?

Wallis: Jim’s story is larger-than-life and has several sensational elements to it that I think parallel what people connect to within these shows like ‘The Tiger King’ ... a story that manages to last awhile and can even take over culture. I know they both listen to a lot of country music and have flashy jackets but I think that’s where the similarities end. [laughs]

HollywoodChicago.com: When do you anticipate the documentary be released and on what platform will it be available?

Wallis: We’re setting up a handful of exclusive events around the country for the summer months, but the film’s release is in the very capable hands of Jhod Cardinal with Upstream Flix and will be available soon.

Stay informed on “Mad Mac: The Memory of Jim McMahon” ...

Website of CJ Wallis & FortyFPS Productions: [CLICK HERE](#) [20]

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Magrette Bird Pictures and Upstream Flix Present “Mad Mac: The Memory of Jim McMahon,” slated for a 2021 release. Directed by CJ Wallis.

*Interview by: **Jeff Doles***

*Published by: **Patrick McDonald**, Editor, HollywoodChicago.com*

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