



Special Edition!

This month, we caught up with Emmy Award winning filmmaker and GBH Alum, Vincent Straggas, and asked some questions about his documentary, *Life on the Other Planet*, which highlights footage from the [GBH Archives](#) to tell the story of Boston, Massachusetts during the 1970s-1980s with a gritty focus on the music scene.

PRESENTS

A FILM BY VINCENT STRAGGAS



LIFE ON THE
OTHER
PLANET

FEATURING THE MUSIC OF:

WILLIE ALEXANDER, THE REAL KIDS, THE NERVOUS EATERS, THE NEIGHBORHOODS, RICK BERLIN,
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Interview with Vincent Straggas



"I can't emphasize enough how having these images from a wide variety of past GBH directors made this film unique."

How did the idea for *Life on the Other Planet* first come about?

It was during COVID. I was driving on route 128 listening to an old CD of early Boston punk music. It was a wonderful sensation hearing these songs again, but it was also very strange. I began thinking it wasn't just a long time ago that this music played on Boston radio; it was also a very different world.

Because you don't have a background in archival research, how was the process for finding archival footage and especially looking for such an obscure subject?

I was incredibly spoiled. A few things. I was a producer, director, and editor at GBH for over 20 years, so I knew they had exactly what I was looking for. Not just old news footage, but footage created by documentary filmmakers that viewed and recorded Boston with a unique vision. I was also fortunate to be friends with James Auclair, who immediately identified the moments in time that I was looking for. Plus, he would offer up images and ideas I would not have known existed.

With a plethora of content from the GBH Archives, what was the editing process like?

Great question. I've been an editor my whole career and this was the most difficult and rewarding project I've ever worked on. It took me a good six months to figure out the rhythm I wanted to cut to.

Once I decided it always had to come back to Boston as the focus, it was easier to find the groove. It wasn't a matter of what can I use, it was what do I want to choose from. Large appetite, larger menu.

Do you have a favorite piece of archival footage in the film?

The blizzard of '78. Here's a good example of the quality of footage I had to work with... We've all seen old news footage of the cars stranded on the Mass Pike and people digging out their driveways, but I had some unique personal moments to work with. People skiing on Beacon Hill, shoppers with sleds of groceries in Harvard Square, friends hanging out enjoying the snow. Those types of moments, that people could relate to, if you lived through it.

Do you have any advice for someone who wants to create a project around archival footage?

Have an open mind. It's easy to get fixated searching for specific images, but the best material I found, came to me when I suggested an idea and I got three more in return. The archivist knows what they have, you don't. There's an art form to it. You're looking for footage sure, but you're also trying to establish a mood. Call GBH Archives if you want the process to be easy and enjoyable and you want the best for your project.

In searching for archival footage for your film, were there any unusual locations you visited looking for content?

Well, I was very fortunate in making this film. I made that one initial call to GBH and that was it. The hard part was deciding what to use, there was a lot to choose from.

From the hundreds, if not thousands, of Boston bands from the 70s and 80s, how did you make your final selection of which ones to include in your film?

I knew if I were to tell the story the way I wanted to, I had to feel personally connected to the music. There were so many bands. In the end it came down to what inspired me at that time. The film really is about the mood of Boston during that period. I used the soundtrack of my teens and twenties.

How did archival footage help shape the tone and the pace of the film?

I could not have made this film without it. The music was the audio time travel, and the images were the visual. I can't emphasize enough how having these images from a wide variety of past GBH directors made this film unique. Very different from using news footage for b-roll. I was able to create story lines with this material.

You were immersed in the Boston music scene during your teenage years and your 20s. Did you find anything during your research that surprised you?

What surprised me was that growing up here, I didn't realize how much this music scene influenced so many musicians and groups around the country. It had a major impact.

What is next for *Life on the Other Planet*?

The film is currently showing throughout New England and will be on the festival circuit starting this summer. There is also a plan for distribution to theaters across the U.S. and then hopefully it will be broadcasted.

Any other projects on the horizon?

I'm producing and directing a dramatic comedy that will begin filming, Spring of 2027 in Gloucester. It is currently in pre-production. *Life on the Other Planet* is also launching its podcast in March, which will feature a variety of interesting conversations.

Want more *Life on the Other Planet*?

Visit [their website](#) for updates and their upcoming podcast and watch the trailer on [YouTube](#).

Cool Find Corner



[Click here to watch!](#)

Walter Marshall of the Necco Candy Factory talks about the history of the company (Cambridge was not their first location) and shows the entire product lineup. Learn fun facts about your favorite candy bar!

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