



Pulling John

Directors: Vassiliki Khonsari & Sevan Matossian, USA, 2008, 73 minutes

A living legend in a sport he helped popularize, John Brzenk is consumed by one question. Brzenk has gone twenty-five years as the undefeated arm-wrestling world champion. Now, at forty, he is torn between retiring while still on top or succumbing to the inevitable should he continue: a loss to a new champion. Having traveled to over one hundred and twenty countries during his legendary twenty-five year career, John has unrelentingly pursued the best competitors the world over. And he's beat them all. One of the most likeable and peaceable men you could meet, John is at a crossroads.

Alexey Voevoda is a twenty-three year old from Sochi, Russia who respects the traditional Soviet traits of discipline and athletic prowess. Educated in the sport of arm-wrestling from a young age, Voevoda was always aware of the Cold War era victories of American John Brzenk. He has dedicated his life to toppling the legend. For Alexey, arm-wrestling is almost a religious experience.

Travis Begent is a twenty-six year old with an undaunted spirit, despite a lifetime of hardship. His father and mentor, 'Big Arm' Boyd passed on only two things to his son: arm-wrestling and the love of arm-wrestling legend John Brzenk. *Pulling John* follows Travis's personal journey as he rises through the ranks towards a battle between two adversaries that stand in his way to greatness: Alexey Voevoda and John Brzenk.

Pulling John, shot over four years, witnesses the mythical world of arm-wrestling where two titans battle it out. The physical training these men undergo is incredible to witness. Shot in Canada, Japan, the US, and the Ukraine, *Pulling John* is a sweat-drenched journey that steers you through the personal stories of three athletes, as well as the tension and suspense of the international competition where they all meet for the first time.

DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Vassiliki Khonsari has been making documentaries for over 10 years. She has worked as a producer, director and cinematographer for networks like VH1, TLS, Discovery, Style and ESPN. Her documentaries include *Harpoons and Heartache* which opened at the Sheffield Documentary Festival, *Bang the Machine* which premiered at SXSW, and *Our House* which won Best Documentary at over 20 film festivals. Her film *Pindemonium* aired on the Sundance Channel in 2008.

Sevan Matossian studied at the Film Studies Department of the University of California, Santa Barbara. During that time he directed and edited *IVTV*. He went on to direct, shoot and edit the award-winning feature length documentary *Our House*. Sevan has produced for TLC, Discovery, History Channel and ESPN.