

THE LAST YZTARI

A documentary about the fiction we need to survive.



DIRECTED BY TIM O'DONNELL & SAM OLDMEADOW
PRODUCED BY TIM O'DONNELL, JON MERCER,
MARY DAGUE, JAMES CRIBBETT,
JEFF SCHMIDT & VINCENT VARGAS

PIXELA FILMS

PRESS KIT



WORLD PREMIERE • SOLD OUT



WEST COAST PREMIERE



SEPTEMBER 2026

A FILM BY
TIM O'DONNELL
& **SAM OLDMEADOW**

FEATURE DOCUMENTARY
USA • 2026 • 76 MIN

thelastyztari.com

PRESS CONTACT

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THE FILM

A world built to hold the truth.

Mary Dague lost both arms defusing bombs in Iraq. She tried for years to write her story and couldn't. Eighteen years later, she's building a world where that trauma belongs to someone else — narrated by DANI, the artificial consciousness she created to watch over her fictional selves.

SYNOPSIS

After 9/11, Mary Dague finished high school and joined the Army as an Explosive Ordnance Disposal technician — one of the soldiers who walks toward the bomb. In 2007, in Iraq, an IED took both of her arms below the elbow. What followed was eighteen years of rebuilding: surgeries, a divorce, a cancer diagnosis, the loss of brothers-in-arms — and a story she kept trying, and failing, to tell. The memoir she attempted, she despised. Therapy, medication, exercise: none of it could hold the whole truth.

So she built a world that could. Written in secret over seven years — revealed only to her husband and the filmmakers — her epic gives the weight she carries to the Yztari, an order of warrior protectors, and to DANI, the artificial consciousness she created to watch over her fictional selves.

The Last Yztari meets Mary now: a beloved figure in her gaming community who plays with her feet, a military wife facing her husband's next deployment, a writer deciding whether to let her world be seen. Blending vérité documentary with imagery generated from Mary's own writing, the film moves between her living room and her universe — and asks what happens when the only way to tell the truth is through fiction.

FORMAT	Feature Documentary
RUNTIME	76 minutes
COUNTRY	USA
YEAR	2026
LANGUAGE	English
ASPECT	1.78 : 1
EXHIBITION	2K DCP (SMPTE)
PRODUCTION	Pixela Films

“Harrowing and triumphant.”

PETER KEOUGH — THE ARTS FUSE

Mary & James

In the eighteen years since she shielded her team from the IED that took her arms, Mary Dague has rebuilt a life on her own terms — through years of surgeries, a divorce, a cancer diagnosis, and the deaths of friends from her EOD family. What conventional treatment couldn't reach, storytelling could: she began giving her hardest memories to invented characters — first quietly, then obsessively — until a planned trilogy and an entire fictional universe had grown around them.

Today Mary is a writer, gamer, and advocate whose adaptive setup — she plays with her feet — has made her a beloved figure in the gaming community. Her story has been featured nationally by Vice and NPR's StoryCorps, and embraced by the veteran community through the American Legion, the Gary Sinise Foundation, and podcasts including *Team Never Quit* with Marcus Luttrell and *Hazard Ground*. She lives with her husband, an active-duty soldier, and produced the film alongside telling her story in it.

AND JAMES

Beside Mary is her husband, James — an active-duty soldier and the film's other subject. A computer builder and lifelong gamer, he helped construct the film's adaptive setups and generative system, and the couple's marriage — bracing for another deployment — gives the film its second heartbeat.

MARY IN THE NATIONAL SPOTLIGHT

Vice · NPR StoryCorps · Team Never Quit · American Legion · Gary Sinise Foundation · Hazard Ground



MARY GAMES USING ADAPTIVE FOOT CONTROLS



EOD TECHNICIAN DAGUE ON DEPLOYMENT — ARCHIVAL



MARY AND JAMES

A story of war, love, and the worlds we create to survive.



INSIDE THE FICTION

The world she built – and the machine that lets us see it.

THE WORLD

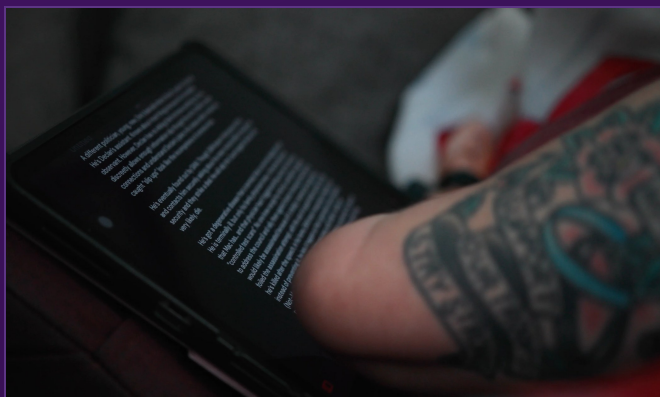
At the heart of Mary's universe stand the Yztari — warrior protectors built to carry what their creator could not. Watching over them is DANI, an artificial consciousness Mary wrote into being to guard her fictional selves. Across a planned trilogy, war, love, loss, and recovery play out at one remove from memory: close enough to be true, far enough to be bearable.

THE FORM

To bring that world to the screen, the filmmakers built an original generative video system with Mary and James — directed by Mary's own writing and imagery rather than public-facing AI generators. The result is a hybrid documentary in which observational vérité sits beside visions only Mary has ever seen. The film's trailer earned a Silver at the 2025 Broderson Awards and a Merit Award at Boston's 2025 Hatch Awards.



THE WORLD, RENDERED FROM MARY'S PAGES



SEVEN YEARS OF SECRET PAGES

For Mary, the fiction became “a safer cathartic outlet” — a world where the weight could rest with someone else until she was ready to carry it.

Directors' statement

Documentary usually asks people to relive the worst thing that ever happened to them, on camera, in their own voice. Mary offered us something different: a world she had spent seven years building precisely so she wouldn't have to. When she finally shared the writing she had kept secret — from nearly everyone in her life — we understood that the film couldn't simply describe her novel. It had to let her world testify on her behalf.

So we built the machine to see it with her: a generative system made from Mary's pages and directed by her hand, so that nothing imagined in this film exists outside her own words. We come from observational filmmaking, and we held the fantasy to the same standard as the vérité — it had to earn its place beside the kitchen counter, the adaptive controller, and a marriage bracing for another deployment. What we found wasn't escapism. It was engineering: a survivor building a structure strong enough to hold the truth.

TIM O'DONNELL & SAM OLDMEADOW – DIRECTORS



MARY DAGUE
SUBJECT ·
PRODUCER



JAMES CRIBBETT
SUBJECT ·
PRODUCER



TIM O'DONNELL
DIRECTOR



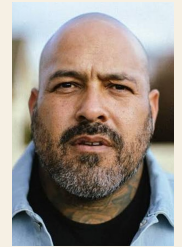
SAM
OLDMEADOW
DIRECTOR



JON MERCER
PRODUCER



JEFF SCHMIDT
PRODUCER



VINCENT VARGAS
PRODUCER

Tim O'Donnell

DIRECTOR · PRODUCER · CINEMATOGRAPHER

Tim O'Donnell is an Emmy-nominated documentary filmmaker whose work has appeared on ESPN, NBC, PBS, Hulu, and CNN Films. His feature *Not a War Story* debuted at the top of the iTunes documentary chart and premiered at the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences; *Life Without Basketball* opened at DOC NYC; and *The House We Lived In* won Best Documentary at the 2022 New Hampshire Film Festival before airing on PBS and Apple TV. He is the co-founder of Pixela Films.

Sam Oldmeadow

DIRECTOR · EDITOR · AI SYSTEMS

Sam Oldmeadow is an Oxford-based filmmaker and a graduate of the MA Directing Documentary program at the National Film and Television School. Twice nominated for the UK's Grierson Awards (*The Adventures of an Aspiring Rockstar*, *Made of Steel*), his debut feature *SISU* — executive produced by Casey Affleck — was acquired by Gravitas Ventures. A specialist in narrative-driven observational storytelling, he served as the film's editor and designed its generative imagery system.

BASED ON

The writing of Mary Dague

PRODUCED BY

Tim O'Donnell, Jon Mercer, Mary Dague, James Cribbitt, Jeff Schmidt & Vincent Vargas

SOUND EDITOR & MIX

Zach McNees

CONSULTANTS

Casey Affleck & Eric Metzgar

PRODUCTION CO.

Pixela Films — real stories, told with heart, from New England to everywhere.

A film already finding its audience.

FESTIVAL RUN

SEP 2025	Camden International Film Festival WORK-IN-PROGRESS
SEP 2025	Newburyport Documentary Film Festival WORK-IN-PROGRESS
MAR 2026	Producers' Circle preview — West Newton Cinema, MA
APR 2026	Independent Film Festival Boston WORLD PREMIERE SOLD OUT
MAY 2026	SF DocFest, San Francisco WEST COAST PREMIERE
SEP 2026	Newburyport Documentary Film Festival OFFICIAL SELECTION

TRAILER HONORS

Silver — 2025 Broderson Awards (Maine Ad + Design) · Merit Award — 2025 Hatch Awards, Boston

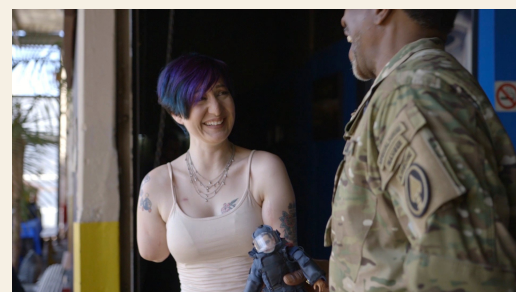
WHAT PRESS IS SAYING

*“A touching documentary ...
how AI can be used as a tool
for good.”*

PETER WONG — BEYOND CHRON

AS COVERED BY

The Arts Fuse · Beyond Chron · Boston Hassle · The Town Common · Making Media Now



MARY WITH FELLOW VETERANS



FROM THE FILM

SUPPORTED TO DATE BY

National Endowment for the Arts · Massachusetts Cultural Council · Liberty Mutual Foundation · City of Boston Arts & Culture · Hersey Foundation

Fiscally sponsored by Filmmakers Collaborative Inc., a 501(c)(3) nonprofit — donations are tax-deductible.

Resources, access, and availability.

SCREENERS

A private screener of the 76-minute feature is available to accredited press and festival programmers on request.

STILLS & KEY ART

High-resolution production stills, poster art, and the award-winning trailer are available for editorial use with credit.

INTERVIEWS

Mary Dague and directors Tim O'Donnell & Sam Oldmeadow are available for interviews by arrangement.

SEE THE FILM

- **Newburyport Documentary Film Festival** — Official Selection, September 26, 2026 · Mary & James expected in attendance
- Additional festival dates and theatrical engagements are announced at thelastyztari.com
- Programmers: exhibition formats include 2K DCP (SMPTE) and file-based delivery

DIRECT LINKS

- Film info — thelastyztari.com
- Watch the trailer — vimeo.com/1140413966
- Downloads — [high-res stills & key art](#) · [trailer file](#)
- Mary on **Team Never Quit** with Marcus Luttrell
- Mary on **Hazard Ground** (Ep. 127)
- Mary on **StoryCorps** with Max Voelz
- American Legion profile & video — legion.org
- The filmmakers on **Making Media Now**

PRESS CONTACT

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STORY ANGLES

- Veteran trauma and creative recovery — healing beyond the clinic
- Adaptive gaming and disability reframed around ingenuity
- A consent-first AI collaboration built from one woman's writing

PIXELA FILMS PRESENTS

THE LAST YZTARI

DIRECTED BY **TIM O'DONNELL & SAM OLDMEADOW** · BASED ON THE WRITING OF **MARY DAGUE** · FEATURING **MARY DAGUE**

PRODUCED BY **TIM O'DONNELL · JON MERCER · MARY DAGUE · JAMES CRIBBETT · JEFF SCHMIDT · VINCENT VARGAS**

SOUND EDITOR & RE-RECORDING MIXER **ZACH MCNEES** · CONSULTANTS **CASEY AFFLECK · ERIC METZGAR**

FEATURE DOCUMENTARY · USA · 2026 · ENGLISH · 76 MIN · 1.78:1 · 2K DCP