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The Truth vs. Alex Jones

[Brian Tallerico](#) March 25, 2024

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One of the most disturbing moments in a documentary filled with disturbing moments comes when it's revealed at the height of the defamation suit against the loathsome [Alex Jones](#) that over one in five people didn't, at the time, believe that there had been a massacre at Sandy Hook Elementary School. It can be tempting to write Jones off as a blowhard idiot who's just trying to profit off the stupidity of his listeners for profit, but that number reveals the impact of his ignominious reach. And it's not hard to extrapolate that kind of poisonous thinking to other damaging conspiracy theories that have gone viral over the last decade, crushing reasonable discourse in this country. Even if you don't want to discuss the proliferation of bullshit that can be at least partly attributed to people like Jones, the specifics of this case are horrifying and enraging. Most importantly, they're brought to life in [Dan Reed's](#) "The Truth vs. Alex Jones" in a way that's sharply edited, sensitively constructed, and expertly crafted. Premiering on HBO and Max tomorrow, Tuesday, March 26th, this is one of the better documentaries of this kind in a long time.

One of the reasons for that is the remarkable access obtained by Reed ("[Leaving Neverland](#)") and his team, who fill the second half of their film with footage of the two trials that sought to hold Alex Jones responsible for the pain he caused the surviving family members of Sandy Hook. Of course, "The Truth vs. Alex Jones" has to start with the details of that day in December 2012 when 20 children and six adults were killed in Newtown, CT. Without ever saying the name of the monster who shattered reality that day, Reed and his team allow family members to tell the story. It culminates in a detailed recounting of what happened, encounter by encounter, that includes every name of the deceased said with careful enunciation. They deserve their names to be heard. It's a smart move by the filmmakers, taking an issue that people have tried to turn into a broad political one and going back to the human cost of that day.

It's a cost that grew more painful when Alex Jones, before the bodies had fully been counted, suggested that Sandy Hook was a false flag operation to support one side of the gun control debate. Jones and his cadre of vile lunatics began a campaign of non-stop harassment, such as when they took a grieving father's nerves in front of a microphone as evidence he was acting, turning a moment of expression about the daughter he would never see again into a weapon of abuse. The full extent of the aggression directed at parents of the children of Sandy Hook is shameful, including interview subjects in the film who still demand answers to questions that have been answered or demand some imagined proof, after which they will move the goalposts again. The woman who insists that bodies must be exhumed or it didn't happen is the perfect example of the kind of moronic privilege that drives so much of these conspiracy theories, never pausing to ask why her inconsistent questioning should mean anything to anyone. Not every stupid, insensitive question deserves an answer.

One of Reed's master strokes is to include several of these people galvanized by Jones, some of whom still don't believe Sandy Hook happened—for the record, despite what he said on air, Jones finally admitted it "100% happened" in 2022, furthering the fact that he's little more than a con man, selling something he doesn't even believe. Centering the family members first and then the listeners & InfoWars employees second pours the foundation for the trial footage that dominates the last third of the film because we know what's at stake. We know whose pain has been exacerbated and the people who have poured the salt into those wounds, making the testimonies in the trial so much more powerful.

Anyone who has followed this case at all knows how the trial went, but it's still startling to see the heartfelt testimony of grieving parents offset against the slimy denials of Jones and his team. The big moments, such as when Jones learned that his attorney had sent the prosecution his entire text message history by accident, are embedded into footage that at least I hadn't seen before, including some phenomenal interactions with a righteously annoyed Judge Maya Guerra Gamble and an amazing scene in which Jones tries to actually deny some of his responsibility to the parents away from the stand. And it's all so expertly assembled, telling what's a very big story with a lot of players with just the right pacing for a cable documentary. It's a reminder of how to tell this story well in a documentary film instead of dragging it out for the common docuseries trend.

The trials ended in a combined \$1.5 billion of penalties against Alex Jones. Given the damage he's done to the national discourse and the level of basic empathetic humanity in this country, "The Truth vs. Alex Jones" will make you wonder if that's enough.

On HBO and Max tomorrow night, March 26th, at 9pm EST.

[Documentary](#)



[Brian Tallerico](#)

Brian Tallerico is the Managing Editor of RogerEbert.com, and also covers television, film, Blu-ray, and video games. He is also a writer for Vulture, The Playlist, The New York Times, and GQ, and the President of the Chicago Film Critics Association.

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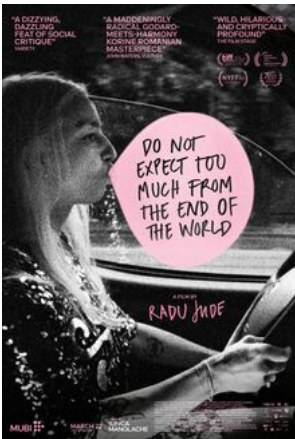
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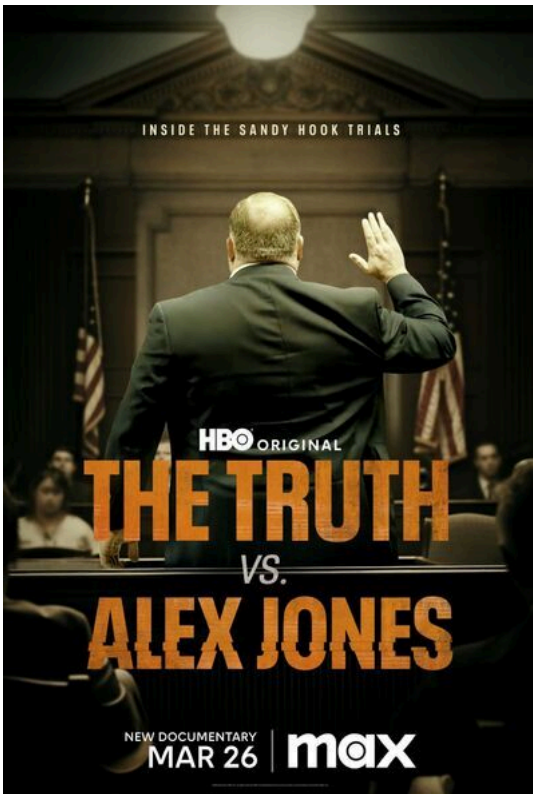
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Film Credits



The Truth vs. Alex Jones (2024)

115 minutes

Cast

[Alex Jones](#) as *Self*

Director

- [Dan Reed](#)

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