

Blind Faith

A FILM BY ISABEL HILL



SYNOPSIS

Blind Faith is an hour-long documentary that follows David, a successful businessman who has in many ways defied his blindness, as he struggles to truly come to terms with his disability. It begins with his marriage to Isabel, which coincides with the loss of his last dim experiences of sight. Their partnership makes many of his needs to adapt to total blindness invisible to him. She is his passport back into the world of the sighted. Feeling confident and on track, David decides he wants to experience fatherhood and the couple adopt their daughter, Anna. Anna's adoption and their 14-year trajectory together as a family force David to confront his blindness in new and meaningful ways.

The bond between Anna and David is the highlight throughout--how it changes, how they change, what it is like to be a parent who is blind, what is it like to have a blind father. Isabel's voice adds a dimension to David's struggle as we come to better understand how independence and dependence play off each other in a marriage where one person has a disability. The documentary is about being different; it's about acceptance of that difference and all the pain and freedom that comes with it; and it's about trust that grows between a blind father and his daughter, between a blind man and his guide dog, and finally trust in oneself. Interviews with Anna and David as well as footage taken over this period show how they have navigated a sometimes distant, sometimes close bond that is ever transforming. In the end, David comes to a realization that he cannot escape the life-changing impact of his disability or hope that he will be exempt in some way from the ordinary trials of being human. Instead, his limitations provide him with an unexpected mandate to develop community and learn trust. David's journey reaches blind and visually impaired audiences with a recognizable portrayal of their own complicated reality. It takes a sighted audience into the unknown world of the blind and the trials and choices that accompany blindness--unfamiliar in many ways, yet poignantly visible to all of us.

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DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

The gift of making a film over a long period of time is a deepening of perspective— you come to understand people and events in a far more profound way. *Blind Faith* started as an observation of my daughter, Anna, and her father, David, and then unfolded, over a decade of production, into a complex examination of disability, marriage, and child rearing. Making this film has given me a keener awareness of the world of the blind, a greater appreciation for the nuanced and conditioned way children adapt to people and circumstances, and a richer look at marriage as a construct and communion.

Life has been filled with unsuspected twists and turns for David, Anna, and me, and I am amazed at what a helpful, healing process making this personal film has been. Deciding whether to stay strictly as observer or being observer and participant was a hard choice and striking that intimate balance of voice was perhaps the most difficult challenge for me as filmmaker, wife, and mother. Although our journey is particular, it is in many ways resonant and universal.

It is my intention and hope that *Blind Faith* will offer insight to those with disabilities and their families, as well as those unfamiliar with this terrain. I am grateful for the honesty, openness, and courage of Anna and David, and it is with the greatest respect, admiration, and love that I share our story.

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PRODUCTION TEAM

ISABEL HILL, Producer/Director

Isabel Hill is a New York-based documentary filmmaker, historian, urban planner and active member of New Day Films. *Made in Brooklyn*, her documentary debut, won numerous awards including the Elliot Willensky Award in the field of urban planning and Best of Category in the Birmingham International Film Festival, and was featured on public television stations nationwide. *Brooklyn Matters*, released in 2007, has served as an important community-organizing tool and has also been seen on public television. Hill's current film, *Blind Faith*, explores the complicated and evolving relationship between her daughter, Anna, and David, Anna's blind father.

DAVID DAWKINS, Editor

David Dawkins has worked as editor and sound recordist for the renowned documentary filmmakers, D. A. Pennebaker and Chris Hegedus on numerous films including *Jimi Plays Monterey*, *Delorean*, *Shake: Otis at Monterey*, and *Woodstock Diaries*. Other editing credits include *Ler's Get Frank*, a feature documentary about Barney Frank and *Power Struggle*, a feature documentary following struggles and successes of four communities in America, Africa, and Asia trying to implement renewable energy power resources. Dawkins' most recent film, *The Wedding Contract: A Balinese Love Story*, is both a personal narrative about his relationship with Ketut Mariyati and an insightful look into the culture and customs of Bali.

CHUCK CLIFTON, Director of Photography

Chuck Clifton is a founding partner of the Hudson River Film and Video Company, with whom he has won two Emmy awards. His extensive documentary experience includes *Jail Talk*, *Manhood and Violence: Fatal Peril*, *God's Country*, *Metro: Manhattan Chowder*, *Henry Hudson's River: A Biography*, and *Christina's World*, as well as *Made in Brooklyn* and *Brooklyn Matters*. His television credits include work for PBS, NBC Dateline, CNN NewsStand and ABC 20/20. Camera crew credits include work on the acclaimed feature films, *Witness* and *Roseland*.

MICHELLE CLIFTON, Sound Recordist

Michelle Clifton is also a founding partner of the Hudson River Film and Video Company for which she has served many roles including executive producer, production manager, art director, and sound recordist. Her credits include numerous documentaries shown on public television, including *Jail Talk*, *Manhood and Violence: Fatal Peril*, *Metro: Manhattan Chowder*, *Henry Hudson's River: A Biography* and *Christina's World*, as well as, *Made in Brooklyn* and *Brooklyn Matters*. Her television credits include PBS, NBC Dateline, CNN NewsStand, and ABC 20/20.

CLIFF HAHN, Sound Designer and Mixer

Cliff Hahn is a New York based Sound Designer, Rerecording Engineer/Mixer, Audio Producer/Director, and Binaural (3-D headphone) Recording Specialist. His recent work includes the binaural installation *Lunch Counter*, a collaboration with Creative Director George Wolff for the recently inaugurated Center for Civil Rights in Atlanta, narration recording for multiple Alex Gibney documentaries including *Going Clear* and *Sinatra: All or Nothing at All*; sound design and mix for *Refugee Kids* and *It's Better To Jump*; direction/mix of descriptive video for the documentaries *Little World*, *States of Grace*, and Morgan Spurlock's *Becoming Bulletproof*. His earlier work at WGBH-FM as a producer of spoken word radio programs received Armstrong, Ohio State and American Library Association awards and a Peabody nomination.

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CREDITS

Director/Producer
Isabel Hill

Editor
David Dawkins

Director of Photography
Chuck Clifton

Sound Recordist
Michelle Clifton

Audio Post Production and Mix
Cliff Hahn Sound

Story Consultants
Emma Bretschneider
Jane Brill
Laurel Chiten

Additional Editing
Ana Crenovich
Melissa Hacker

Additional Camera
Yervant de Parthogh

Additional Sound
David Dawkins

Music Clearances
Robin Hessman

Transcriptions
Purple Shark Transcriptions

Archival Footage and Photographs
Courtesy of Petrea and Michael Poler

Special Thanks
Kelly Anderson
Joanna Arnow
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Annie Berman
Brooklyn Botanic Garden
Jenny Douglas
Jill Eisenstadt
Rebecca Foster
Guiding Eyes for the Blind
Nancy Kennedy
Betsy Newman
Elizabeth Rodd
Stephanie Soroka
Springboard at the Brooklyn Cottage
Vivian Ubell
Sarah Nelson Wright
Anne Yao

"Only the Strong Survive"
Written by Freddie Perren
and Dino Fekaris
Performed by Anna Sweeny
and David Sweeny
Published by Universal Music Corp.
on behalf of USI A Music Publishing

"Round Midnight"
Written by Thelonious Monk,
Bernard Hanighen, and Cootie Williams
Published by Thelonious Music Corp.
administered by Warner-Tamerlane
Publishing Corp.

**"To Kill A Mockingbird-
Main Title"**
Written by Elmer Bernstein
Performed by Anna Sweeny
Published by Universal Music
Corp. on behalf of USI A Music
Publishing

**"Avant-dernieres pensees,
I. Idylle"**
Written by Erik Satie
Performed by Allyssa Lamb

"Pieces froides No. 4"
Written by Erik Satie
Performed by Allyssa Lamb

"Gnossienne No. 1"
Written by Erik Satie
Performed by Allyssa Lamb

"Gymnopedie No. 5"
Written by Erik Satie
Performed by Allyssa Lamb

"Je te veux"
Written by Erik Satie
Performed by Allyssa Lamb

"Gymnopedie No. 3"
Written by Erik Satie
Performed by Allyssa Lamb

Website Design
Catherine Hnatov