

Scottish
Documentary
Institute



THE THIN SPACE BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH

I AM BREATHING


A FILM BY EMMA DAVIE AND MORAG MCKINNON

"Intimate documentary examining a normal-but-remarkable man and wife's handling of his fatal disease ranks among the year's most moving films."

THE HOLLYWOOD REPORTER

"It's amazing how adaptable we are when we have to be. It's what separates and defines us as human beings."

NEIL PLATT

 @breathingfilm

www.iambreathing.com

WITH NEIL PLATT & FAMILY DIRECTORS EMMA DAVIE & MORAG MCKINNON PRODUCER SONJA HENRICI CO-PRODUCER SIGRID DYKJÆR PRODUCED BY NOE MENDELLE PRODUCED BY JUSTIN EDGAR & ALEX USBORNE
EDITOR PETER WINTHERR SCREENPLAY BY JANUS BILLESKOV JANSEN MUSIC BY FOUR TET COMPOSERS KIERAN HEDDEN & JIM SUTHERLAND PRODUCED BY SDI PRODUCTIONS EDITOR DANISH DOCUMENTARY PRODUCTION
DEVELOPED AND SUPPORTED BY CREATIVE SCOTLAND PRODUCED BY LESLIE FINLAY & BECKY LLOYD PRODUCED BY LINDA MCCLURE PRODUCED BY DANISH FILM INSTITUTE PRODUCED BY KLARA GRUNNING-HARRIS | CHANNEL 4 | WELLCOME TRUST
MND ASSOCIATION | DR PRODUCED BY METTE HOFFMAN MEYER | YLE PRODUCED BY JENNY WESTERGÅRD | UK FILM COUNCIL

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DR

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UK FILM COUNCIL
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THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH
EDINBURGH COLLEGE OF ART



DANISH DOCUMENTARY

I AM BREATHING

★★★★★ The Times
★★★★★ The Sunday Times
★★★★★ Mail on Sunday
★★★★★ The Guardian
★★★★★ The Herald
★★★★★ Empire
★★★★★ Financial Times
★★★★★ The Daily Express
★★★★★ View London
★★★★★ The Mirror
★★★★★ The Metro
★★★★★ About
★★★★★ RTE
★★★★★ The Sun
★★★★★ Female First
★★★★★ Fancarpet
★★★★★ Celluloid Heroes
★★★★★ The Skinny
★★★★★ Mail on Sunday
★★★★★ Britflicks
★★★★★ Screen Invasion
★★★★★ Radio Times
★★★★★ The Upcoming
★★★★★ The FT weekend
★★★★★ Independent Radar Magazine

Directed by Emma Davie & Morag McKinnon
Produced by Sonja Henrici
Executive Produced by Noé Mendelle

©2012 SDI Productions Ltd. in co-production with Danish Documentary Production ApS

Supported by Creative Scotland and Danish Film Institute
In association with Channel 4, Wellcome Trust, MNDA, DR, YLE

73min, colour, available with English and Danish subtitles.
Screening copies on DCP 24fps 5.1 Surround Sound, HDCAM SR 5.1, HDCAM StereoMix, Digibeta Stereo Mix,
BlueRay 5.1 Surround, DVD

SYNOPSIS

Tag line

I AM BREATHING reminds us what it is to be alive - a tale of one man's humor and humility during his unimaginable final months

Short

Within one year, Neil Platt goes from being a regular, funny, 30-something British bloke to becoming someone much more extraordinary. Completely paralyzed from the neck down, he is forced to ask questions most of us never have to face.

Neil puts together a letter and memory box for his baby son Oscar and communicates his experience and thoughts about life in a blog - and in this film, which he was determined to make.

I AM BREATHING reminds us what it is to be alive, or as Neil, with his unique sense of humor and humility put it, "a tale of fun and laughs with a smattering of upset and devastation."

Medium

I AM BREATHING is a film about a man who, when faced with the unimaginable shares his own story in what he called, "a tale of fun and laughs with a smattering of upset and devastation."

Within a year, Neil Platt goes from being a healthy 30-something British bloke, with a great sense of humor, to becoming completely paralyzed from the neck down, thanks to the devastating illness he has inherited, ALS. As his body gets weaker, his perspective on life changes. His humor remains, and a new wisdom emerges:

"It's amazing how adaptable we are when we have to be. It's what separates us and defines us as human beings." Neil Platt

Knowing he only has a few months left to live, and while he still has the ability to speak, Neil puts together a letter and memory box for his baby son Oscar and communicates his experience and thoughts about life in a blog - and in this film, which he was determined to make. The directness of his communication mingles with images of the sensory details of a life well lived, and makes us revalue the ordinary.

His blog posts form the film's narration as he tells his own story through memories and impressions of his life - the sheer joy of falling in love, of partying with his mates, of fast motorbike rides. Through his determination to share his final journey, Neil makes us ask questions about our own lives.

PREVIOUS SCREENINGS

Global Screening Day

On June 21 I AM BREATHING screened in over 200 venues, reaching more than 35 countries in a single day. Worldwide volunteers organized their own screenings in aid of Global MND/ALS awareness day. Screenings took place in community halls, pubs, cinemas, living rooms, outdoor courtyards and even one in a taxi! Since Global Day, we continue to receive screening requests from individuals around the world as well as health institutions, cinemas and film festivals.



We are launching our US theatrical release on September 6 with a week long run at the IFC Center in New York followed by a week in the Laemmle Music Hall in Los Angeles on September 13. We are also scheduling theatrical releases in the UK, India, Australia, Brazil and Russia. Individual community screenings are continuing around the world since the global screening day on June 21 for global ALS/MND awareness day.

Festival Screenings

Open City Docs Fest, London, UK, 2013
Edinburgh International Film Festival, Edinburgh, UK, 2013
Docs Barcelona, Barcelona, Spain, 2013
Dok.Fest, Munich, Germany, 2013
HotDocs, Toronto, Canada, 2013
FidaDoc, Agadir, Morocco, 2013
River Run, Winston-Salem, USA, 2013
Cleveland International Film Festival, Cleveland, USA, 2013
Documentary Edge, Auckland, New Zealand, 2013
True/False, Columbia, USA, 2013
Tempo Film Festival, Stockholm, Sweden, 2013
ZagrebDox, Zagreb, Croatia, 2013
DocPoint, Helsinki, Finland, 2013
ART DocFest, Moscow, Russia, 2012
IDFA, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, 2012

I AM BREATHING



"Touching, humbling, and inspirational."

Empire ★★★★★

"Outstanding."

The Upcoming ★★★★★

"A Doc to Watch in 2013"

Indiewire

"Very strong film. The video-diary material is incredibly touching in itself, especially how they never lose their sense of humour in the face of their circumstances."

Sight and Sound

DIRECTORS' STATEMENT

Sometimes films just demand to be made, even if they are difficult. This was one of them. The film was prompted by Neil himself. He wanted to communicate about his experience with ALS/MND in the last months of his life. He already had an ever-increasing audience for a blog he was keeping and wanted to reach out further. This in itself was not reason to make the film. Who he became in these last months is what seemed to demand to be communicated.

Filming this stage of life is full of ethical dilemmas and questions. We let these questions and interrogations help guide us and shape the structure of the time. It became clearer how to form it when we used Neil's own words from his blog to tell the story, not just of his body – which was failing – but of his mind and imagination which was limitless, witty and compassionate. We set ourselves the task of asking how the film could get under his skin whilst still respecting the “unknowable” nature of his experience.

We hope that Neil – a good friend and collaborator in this process – would have approved of this film. He wanted his story to get out there.

Emma Davie & Morag McKinnon

QUOTES FROM NEIL PLATT

“I do spend a lot of time thinking about Oscar and the questions he may one day have wanted to ask me. How do I anticipate things he would find useful to know about me in a life 15, 20 years from now?”

“Being diagnosed with ALS/MND is like being given a life sentence.”

“If I am to turn this mild spring breeze of a campaign into the wind that uprooted trees and demolished houses, I am really going to need your help.”

“It's amazing how adaptable we are when we have to be. It's what separates us and defines us as human beings.”

“My re-acquaintance with the when of things has confirmed how right I was to have an awareness of and value my time. You could all do me a favor – don't let yours slip by unnoticed.”

Neil Platt

NEIL'S DISEASE

Neil Platt was diagnosed with Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS) also known as MND or Lou Gehrig's disease in 2008. Sadly, he lost his own personal battle with the disease a year later, but through his family, friends and this documentary he wanted to continue to raise awareness around this devastating illness.

Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis has been described as the last truly incurable disease of the modern day. ALS/MND is a rapidly progressive and fatal disease. It can affect any adult at any time and attacks the motor neurons that send messages from the brain to the muscles, leaving people unable to walk, talk or feed themselves.

The French neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot first described ALS/MND in 1874. The term Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis describes a group of related diseases, affecting the motor nerves or neurons in the brain and spinal cord which pass messages to the muscles telling them what to do. The cause of the disease is unknown and there is no known cure.

Neil Platt was among the small proportion (5-10%) of people with ALS/MND who have a family history of the disease, caused by genetic mistakes that can be passed from one generation to the next.

In the past year, researchers have identified a repeated six-letter expanse of genetic code (called a hexanucleotide repeat expansion) in a gene called C9ORF72 that can cause 40% of cases of familial ALS/MND. This game-changing discovery means that we now know the genetic cause of approximately 70% of cases of familial ALS/MND, which includes 12 genetic causes.



THE TEAM

Emma Davie – Director

Emma is a documentary filmmaker and Program Director of Film & TV at Edinburgh College of Art, University of Edinburgh.

Previous work includes *What Age Can You Start Being An Artist?* for Channel 4 (2004, nominated for Grierson Award); *Gigha: Buying Our Island* (2002), a one-hour film for BBC/Scottish Screen; and *Flight*, a BBC/Canadian co-production (2000).

Emma's background in experimental theatre and performance gave her a love of collaborative practice. She worked with, amongst others, Robert LePage on *Tectonic Plates* but also ran her own company Clanjamfrie which did huge large-scale site-specific performances. She was on the board of the European Documentary Network (EDN) and writes for DOX magazine. She has worked as tutor or consultant with EDN, European Film College, Storydoc, Discovery Campus, East European Forum, Docs Barcelona, and many others.



Morag McKinnon – Director

Morag McKinnon is a fiction director whose most recent film *Donkeys* won a Scottish BAFTA in 2011 for Best Feature. It was the second part in the Scottish/ Danish co-production with Lars von Trier's company the follow up to *Red Road*.

Prior to that she had directed award-winning series and shorts including the BAFTA-winning series *Buried* (2004) and the short film *Home* which also won a BAFTA for Best Short and 16 international awards including the Fox Searchlight New Talent Award. Her other award-winning short, *Birthday* (2001) won the Silver Bear at the Chicago Film Festival. Morag is a graduate of Edinburgh College of Art.



Sonja Henrici – Producer

Sonja Henrici is co-founder and co-director of SDI Productions Ltd; and Head of Development at Scottish Documentary Institute - an internationally recognised research centre for documentary at Edinburgh College of Art /University of Edinburgh. She has been part of the core SDI team since its beginning in 2004 and developed SDI with growing success.



She produced the feature doc *Future My Love* (93'), a co-pro with Sweden/Lisbet Gabriellsson Film/SVT - launched at the Edinburgh International Film Festival 2012, nominated for the Michael Powell Award for Best British Feature. International premiere: Copenhagen (Nov 2012). She also exec-produced *Pablo's Winter*, 76' by Chico Pereira, which premiered in competition at DokLeipzig (Oct 2012).

She has produced and exec-produced more than 25 short docs, which have regularly screened in over 40 countries world-wide, including Sundance, IDFA, Tribeca, SxSW. Many are part of SDI's annual Bridging the Gap series, now in its 10th year, which she finances through Creative Scotland funding and other sources. She has also published short stories and poetry, and her last screenplay *Rewind* had its world premiere in Los Angeles (2009).

She has been on a number of international film juries, as well as BAFTA Scotland.

www.scottishdocinstitute.com

Sigrid Dyekjær – Co-Producer

Sigrid is one of the leading international documentary producers of her generation. She is co-director of Danish Documentary Production, which she founded together with four award-winning Danish documentary directors: Phie Ambo, Eva Mulvad, Mikala Krogh and Pernille Rose Grønkvær. She is based in Copenhagen.

Selected productions: *Free the Mind* (2012), *Love Addict* (2011), *Cities on Speed – Cairo / Garbage* (2009), *Mechanical Love* (2007), *The Monastery* (2006), *Beth's Diary* (2006), *Gambler* (2005)



www.danishdocumentary.com

Prof. Chris Shaw – Scientific Consultant

Christopher Shaw is the scientific consultant on the film. He is a Professor of Neurology and Neurogenetics at the Institute of Psychiatry, King's College London. He is also an Honorary Consultant Neurologist at King's College Hospital and Neurogeneticist at Guy's and St Thomas' Hospitals. His early training in General Medicine and Neurology was conducted in New Zealand. He came to Cambridge in 1992 on a Wellcome Trust Fellowship to study Neurobiology.



In 1995 he moved to the Institute of Psychiatry. His major area of clinical and research interest is in the genetic and molecular basis of ALS/MND. He runs a clinic for patients with ALS/MND at King's College Hospital and for other inherited neurological disorders at Guy's Hospital.

Louise Oswald - Neil's widow

Louise Oswald was married to Neil Platt from 2004 until his death in 2009. Since Neil's death, Louise continues to fulfill her final promise to Neil by continuing to raise awareness of ALS/MND. Louise is working closely with the filmmaking team on the outreach campaign, providing interviews for national press and making many personal appearances to speak at screenings.

Since 2009 Louise has been writing a book about her experience of caring for her family in the eighteen months between the birth of her son and the death of her husband. Neil's words join her in the latter part of the book as she adds comments to each entry of the Plattitude, which is the blog-based diary that first sparked the interest of the filmmakers of I AM BREATHING.

Louise currently lives in a small village near St. Andrews in Scotland with Oscar and her new husband Robin, where she continues to write.



Emma Davie, Morag McKinnon and Louise Oswald at the UK premiere of I AM BREATHING at Edinburgh International Film Festival on June 20 2013.

MUSIC BY FOUR TET

Kieran Hebden – Composer

Kieran Hebden (born 1978, Putney, London), best known by the stage name Four Tet, is a post-rock and electronic musician. Hebden first came to prominence as a member of the band Fridge before establishing himself as a solo artist. Hebden's music originally eschewed the traditional pop song format in favor of a more abstract approach—his sound and melodies incorporate elements of hip hop, electronica, techno, jazz, and folk music with live instrumentation. His newer works are heavily inspired by house music.

Alongside recording his own material, Hebden has also performed remixes for a number of artists including Aphex Twin, Anti-Pop Consortium, Bonobo, Beth Orton, Born Ruffians, Explosions in the Sky, Super Furry Animals, Radiohead, Manic Street Preachers, Matthew Dear, Sia, Nathan Fake, Bloc Party, Andrew Bird, Kings of Convenience, Battles, Juana Molina, Madvillain, The xx, Foals, and Black Sabbath, as well as producing two albums by psychedelic improvisational group Sunburned Hand of the Man. Hebden's recent output includes a number of improvisational works with the late jazz drummer Steve Reid and collaborations with both Burial and Thom Yorke.

www.fourtet.net

Jim Sutherland – Composer

Jim Sutherland is composer and music producer who works across genres and cultures. He is an experienced creative director. His company La Banda Ltd continues to manage large scale music projects like the True North Orchestra and La Banda Europa. He is a multi-instrumentalist with a particular love for percussion. He is a specialist advisor in music and collaboration for the Cultural Enterprise office. Most recently he produced two songs for the score of Pixar's *Brave* and one song for the score of Lasse Hallström's *Salmon Fishing in the Yemen*.

www.jimsutherland.uk.com

ABOUT SDI PRODUCTIONS

SDI Productions Ltd. is one of the leading companies for creative documentary in Scotland. It was set up in 2007 as a production platform for the Scottish Documentary Institute based at Edinburgh College of Art. SDI Productions has two Managing Directors, Noe Mendelle and Sonja Henrici. Between them, they combine more than 30 years of experience in broadcast production and documentary film, backed by Creative Scotland (formerly Scottish Screen), Skillset, BBC, Channel 4, and many international broadcasters including STV, RTP, POV, SBS, VPRO, Arte, RAI, RTBF, CFI, TV5, and France 3.

We are in development with Amy Hardie's next film *The Singing Hospice* and preparing two further features by award-winning new talents: *David Millar Project* by Finlay Pretsell and *Donkeyote* by Chico Pereira.

***I Am Breathing*, 73' (2012)**

A documentary reminding us what it is to be alive - a tale of one man's humor and humility during his unimaginable final months by Emma Davie & Morag McKinnon. Co-production with Danish Documentary Production. Creative Scotland, Danish Film Institute Channel 4, DR, YLE, Wellcome Trust, MNDA.

***Pablo's Winter*, 76' (2012)**

A feature by Chico Pereira, exec produced by SDI's Sonja Henrici and Finlay Pretsell. Distributed by SDI. Winner IDFA Best Student Award, DokLeipzig EU-Osho Award, Full Frame President's Medal, MoMA Documentary Fortnight Opening Film 2012

***Future My Love*, 93' (2012)**

Economy is a human relationship. A film by Maja Borg. Creative Scotland, Swedish Film Institute, SVT.

***Bridging the Gap* (annual since 2003)**

Now in its tenth year, we produce new talent in SDI's award-winning annual Bridging the Gap series of short documentaries, backed by BBC Scotland and Creative Scotland.

***The Edge of Dreaming*, 76' (2010)**

SDI housed and supported the production of Amy Hardie's acclaimed documentary.

***The New Ten Commandments* 105' (2008)**

Directors include Mark Cousins, Tilda Swinton, Douglas Gordon, Irvine Welsh, Kenny Glenaan. In The Guardian's Top Ten Films of EIFF 2008. A co-production with Lansdowne Productions.

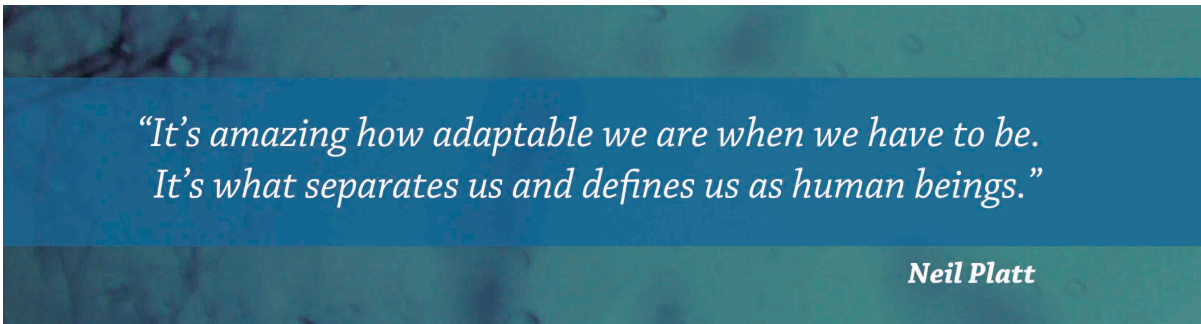
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Neil Platt

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in memory of

Neil Platt (1974 - 2009)

made in collaboration with

the Platt family special thanks to
Louise, Oscar, Lynne, Matthew

words from Neil's blog

www.plattitude.co.uk

directed by

Emma Davie & Morag McKinnon

Producer: Sonja Henrici

Co-Producer: Sigrid Dyekjær

Executive Producer: Noé Mendelle

Associate Producers: Justin Edgar & Alex Usborne for 104 Films

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Senior Editing Consultant: Janus Billeskov Jansen

with music by

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supported by

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Danish Film Institute Film Commissioner: Klara Grunning-Harris

Channel 4 Wellcome Trust

Motor Neurone Disease Association

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UK Film Council

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