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PRESENT

NO IMPACT MAN



OPENS AT THE ANGELIKA FILM CENTER, NEW YORK – SEPTEMBER 11th, 2009
NATIONAL EXPANSION SEPTEMBER 18TH



The Book *No Impact Man: The Adventures of a Guilty Liberal Who Attempts to Save the Planet, and the Discoveries He Makes About Himself and Our Way of Life in the Process*

is available in stores September 8th, 2009 thru FSG Books

Running Time: 90 minutes

Rating: Not Rated by MPAA

World Premiere: Sundance Film Festival 2009

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- SYNOPSIS

Author Colin Beavan, in research for his next book, began the No Impact Project in November 2006. A newly self-proclaimed environmentalist who could no longer avoid pointing the finger at himself, Colin leaves behind his liberal complacency with a vow to make as little environmental impact as possible for one year. No more automated transportation, no more electricity, no more non-local food, no more material consumption...no problem. That is, until his espresso-guzzling, retail-worshipping wife Michelle and their two-year-old daughter are dragged into the fray. Laura Gabbert and Justin Schein's film provides a front row seat into the experiment that became a national fascination and media sensation as well as an intriguing inside look at the familial strains and strengthened bonds that result from Colin and Michelle's struggle with their radical lifestyle change.

- DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

When the political and the personal collide there is a spark. As documentary filmmakers, we scan the horizon for such a spark. It brings to light stories beyond the headlines. It gives life to the issues that affect us all.

News of global warming, icecaps melting and CO2 emissions form a cacophony that surrounds us. We are very aware of its existence, but often feel paralyzed by how we can make a difference. The No Impact experiment was a flash of light that illuminated the intersection of these issues and our lives. The "high concept" nature of the project made it, at first glance, accessible and digestible.

Colin Beavan and his family set out to "live deliberately" for a year in order to understand their dependence on a system of consumption and waste in which we all participate. At first the project brought to mind the smaller questions that we struggle with every day when thinking about the environment— paper or plastic, local or organic, to flush or not to flush. Finally, we thought, we could have some answers. But by the end of the first day of shooting it was clear that this was not simply a film about environmental choices; it would be a film about relationships. In stark contrast to one another, Colin is an avid meditator, while Michelle is an avid shopper – these differences provide for humor, patience, love and drama. Together, with their two-year-old daughter Isabella, they were thrust into the public eye by a deluge of unexpected publicity.

From a directorial and editorial standpoint, NO IMPACT MAN is character-driven. Stylistically, our goal was for the film to feel like a dramatic feature in which the audience is drawn into a narrative; invested in what happens to the characters; and challenged to look at his or her own life in relation to the issues raised by the film. This is achieved several ways. We avoid talking-head interviews with our subjects or with environmental experts. The film does not have an omniscient point-of-view or include any formal narration. Instead, our hope is that the verité footage of the ups and downs of Michelle and Colin's lives drive the story forward. Colin and Michelle's voice-over connects observational scenes and draws the audience in to closely experience each of their respective points of view.

Michelle and Colin are not trained environmentalists. They are coping with managing their work and family while making radical changes in their day-to-day lives. We, as audience, will be learning, concomitant with Colin and Michelle, how to eat locally, how to create almost no garbage, how to compost and how to reduce our carbon emissions. These lessons are learned in everyday ways – we bump into hardship, fear, conflict and epiphany. This allows NO IMPACT MAN to be equal parts drama and comedy.

We see Colin shift and change; by the end of the year, he embraces political action without forgoing his individual action mantra. Michelle's change is more emotional; she is us, the audience, and has more to learn and has further to go. The experiment for her is initially about a "lifestyle redesign" but becomes something far more profound.

As much as this is an environmental documentary, it is also a study of two people struggling to make a marriage work. Michelle has agreed to the No Impact project in order to help Colin fulfill his dreams. But she does so without fully comprehending the high impact it will have on their relationship.

The structure of the film loosely follows the year-long experiment in chronological order. Our editing style, however, will be more lyrical, creating a counterpoint to the rigidity of the chronological structure. We hope that this more fluid editorial style will best allow viewers to make thematic connections and associations, as well as to focus on how our characters gradually evolve over the course of the No Impact Year.

Ultimately, NO IMPACT MAN is a meta-narrative about our consumer society. It is also a love story and a portrait of a contemporary marriage.

- LAURA GABBERT and JUSTIN SCHEIN, 1/09

- NOTES ON THE PRODUCTION

NO IMPACT MAN (NIM) is all about taking a new look at the way we impact our Environment. As individuals and as filmmakers we were confronted with these questions every day making the film.

But even before the No Impact project came along, my interest in moderating my footprint had been growing. I was an obsessive recycler, feeling that putting my mountain of plastic in the blue bin made it better. Then I did some research and found that much of that waste was being shipped to China only to be processed and shipped back. The key was to reduce, but everywhere I looked everything was plastic.

I started to examine other aspects of my life and found more and more conundrums. Keep my old gas guzzling car or buy a new one that got better mileage but was a ton of new metal and plastic? Do I switch to CFL lightbulbs and just throw away the old ones? It became maddening.

As a filmmaker I had been inspired by environmental documentaries such as SUPER SIZE ME and AN INCONVENIENT TRUTH. Thus, when I learned about Colin and Michelle's project, it seemed the perfect way to begin looking at these issues in my own work.

As a condition to agreeing to participate in the film, Colin, our subject, asked the filmmakers to commit to be environmentally conscious in our production. As it turned out, trying to keep in the spirit of the No Impact project came naturally.

Reduce/Reuse/Recycle: The first way in which the pledge to reduce our footprint impacted the production was in our decision not to buy a new camera for the filming. We got the green light to start filming as the NIM project was beginning, so we needed to act fast. Using the camera that was available to us (DVX100a) was cost effective, expedient and low impact.

Local Location: The very nature of the subject matter made the filming low impact. Colin and the No Impact family could not travel (except for rare occasions)... so we filmed locally.

Low Profile/Low Impact: That the film is an intimate, cinema verité portrait of the family helped reduce our impact. It was shot by one person, hand held, with a small DV camera and a wireless microphone. All the gear fit into a backpack, so all production transportation was on a bicycle or subway. Being a one-man crew has its challenges and benefits. On the positive side, it becomes much easier to assimilate into the family. The challenge is when there is no sound person to capture sound off camera because content (audio) takes precedent over visuals.

A Car-Free Shoot: Our No Impact family swore off carbon producing transportation from day one and slowly biking became a big part of their project. In an attempt to keep with the spirit of the film we decided to get all tracking shots of them biking from another bike rather than from a car. To do this we rented a rickshaw and shot from the back of that. Other times I simply shot from my own bicycle.

Natural Lighting: To maintain a natural style, to be less obtrusive and to be green, we decided to use only practical light, meaning either natural light or lighting that existed within the scene. This proved to be a challenge in terms of color temperature because all of the interior lights were compact fluorescents. About 6 months into their year, the NIM family turned off the electricity altogether. So when shooting in low light, we needed to make sure there were ample candles available. Technically, we slowed the shutter on the camera and used moderate gain. Thus the night interiors are quite grainy, but we hope that the aesthetic adds to the veracity of the film.

Recharge: One thing that has always been troubling about documentary production has been the number of batteries that filmmakers throw away. Several years ago I did research and found an organization that will recycle used household batteries (<http://www.inmetco.com>). When starting NIM I revisited the issue and found that the rechargeable Lithium Ion 9v technology had been greatly improved. So for the whole film we used 4 rechargeable 9v batteries, saving hundreds of batteries.

Using the Superhighway: NO IMPACT MAN was shot in NYC and edited in LA. The co-directors sent cuts of the film through yousendit and would meet regularly over the internet via skype. By dividing the work we reduced travel to a minimum.

Lastly and most importantly, spending time with Colin and thinking about the issues that the NIM project touched upon has had a profound effect on my life. Beginning with small things in my personal life, like not using plastic bags and not drinking bottled water and moving to more drastic things like line drying my laundry. On a political level, all of us on the filmmaking team started to engage - my family now volunteers for an environmental organization, and I write letters for the Natural Resources Defense Council. Once I started to think about the choices I was making and the effects they have on the environment, I could not go back

- JUSTIN SCHEIN, co-director

- NOTHING LOST, SOMETHING GAINED

Based on a typical Manhattanite's lifestyle, Colin and Michelle saved all this and more in their No Impact year:

- Take out tubs (based on ordering in one meal a day, 6 times per week, which includes 4 takeout containers):

1,248 fewer tubs in the landfill

- Paper and/or Plastic Cups (based on 3 beverages per day per person):

2190 fewer cups in the landfill

- Plastic Bags (based on 9 plastic bags per week including the food delivery bag):

572 fewer plastic bags in the landfill

- Gallons of Garbage:

4,380 gallons less garbage in the landfill

- Disposable Diapers (based on 6 diapers per day)

2184 fewer diapers in the landfill

- SUBJECT BIOS

Colin Beavan – Subject/Co-producer Author, Writer, Blogger, Consultant, Engaged Citizen

As the news stories go: “Colin Beavan is a liberal schlub who got tired of listening to himself complain about the world without ever actually doing anything about it...” Thus, in November, 2006, Beavan launched a year-long project in which he, his wife, his two-year-old daughter and his four-year-old dog went off the grid and attempted to live in the middle of New York City with as little environmental impact as possible.

The point of the project was to experiment with ways of living that might both improve quality of life and be less harmful to the planet. It also provided a narrative vehicle by which to attract broad public attention to the range of pressing environmental crises including: food system sustainability, climate change, water scarcity, and materials and energy resource depletion.

Beavan’s experiment in lifestyle redesign is the subject of his book (scheduled for publication in Spring 2008 by Farrar, Straus & Giroux) and a documentary by independent film producers Laura Gabbert and Eden Wurmfeld.

Beavan writes and administers the provocative environmental blog NoImpactMan.Com, which has become a meeting point for discussion of environmental issues from a “deep green” perspective. About 1.3 million people have visited the blog since he established it a year and a half ago.

Beavan was named one of MSN’s Ten Most Influential Men of 2007 and was named an Eco-Illuminator in Elle Magazine’s 2008 Green Awards. His blog NoImpactMan.com was named one of the world’s top 15 environmental websites by Time Magazine. He was named a 2008 Eco-Star by New York City’s Lower East Side Ecology Center.

The No Impact project has been the subject of stories in the New York Times, the Christian Science Monitor, and many other national and international news outlets. Beavan has appeared on The Colbert Report, Good Morning America, Nightline, The Montel Show, and all the major NPR shows. He speaks regularly to a wide variety of audiences, is frequently quoted in the press and consults to business on the intersection of sustainability and human quality of life.

Beavan is a PhD electronic engineer (University of Liverpool). He spent the late 80s and early 90s as a consultant to philanthropic organizations such as social housing providers, drug treatment agencies and hospitals, helping them to promote themselves in order to secure increasingly scarce, Thatcher-era funding.

In 1992 Beavan returned to the United States and wrote for magazines until Hyperion published his first book Fingerprints: The Origins of Crime Detection and the Murder Case that Launched Forensic Science (a popular history of criminology) in 2001. In 2006, Viking published his second book, Operation Jedburgh: D-Day and America’s First Shadow (about the operation that formed the precedent for U.S. anti-Soviet operations in Afghanistan).

He is a visiting scholar at NYU, an advisor to the University’s Sustainability Task Force, and sits on the board of directors of New York City’s Transportation Alternatives and on the advisory council of Just Food.

Michelle Conlin – Subject/Co-producer

Michelle Conlin is a senior writer at BusinessWeek, where she covers the Working Life, a beat that includes the culture of work, social issues, work-life trends, and the labor market. Cover stories include “The Economics Behind the Youth Vote,” “Working...And Poor,” “Get Healthy—Or Else,” “The Clockless Office,” “Religion in the Workplace,” “The Wild New Workforce,” “The New Gender Gap,” “Unmarried America,” “Is Your Office Killing You?” “Innovation Champions,” and two of BusinessWeek’s cover packages on philanthropy. Michelle has appeared on NBC’s Today Show, CBS’s Early Show, ABC’s Good Morning America, CNN, NPR’s All Things Considered, NPR’s Marketplace, CNBC’s Kudlow & Cramer, Fox News, and MSNBC. She has also been a regular panelist on PBS’ To the Contrary and CNNfn’s Business Unusual.

Michelle is a graduate of the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism, where she was the recipient of the Richard T. Baker prize for best print reporting and the Carlotta di Cagno and David di Cagno Hagen Prize for best investigative story on environmental protection.

- FILMMAKER BIOS

Laura Gabbert – Director/Producer

Laura Gabbert earned her MFA from UCLA's School of Film, Theater and Television. Her first documentary THE HEALERS OF 400 PARNASSUS aired on PBS in 1997. Gabbert then went on to produce the 1999 Sundance Competition feature film GETTING TO KNOW YOU, which had its European premiere at the Venice Film Festival. In 2003 she directed and produced the critically acclaimed ITVS documentary SUNSET STORY (Special Jury Prize, Tribeca Film Festival and Audience Award, Los Angeles Film Festival). With producer Eden Wurmfeld, Laura is currently co-writing and producing an adaptation of Joyce Carol Oates' novel STARR BRIGHT and producing an adaptation of HABEAS ON THE GATE, a feature film about the unlikely friendship between a Park Avenue lawyer and a Guantanamo detainee. In addition, she is developing two new documentaries. Laura was honored with the 2004 UCLA Distinguished Alumni Award. She frequently appears on film festival panels about the role of non-fiction films and social change/activism. She has also served on the ITVS documentary selection committee. Laura lives in Los Angeles with her husband and two daughters.

Justin Schein – Director/Cinematographer

Justin received his Masters in Documentary from Stanford University and has gone on to shoot over 50 documentary films. Presently Justin is in production on UPSIDE-DOWN AND BACKWARDS, a hybrid animated documentary about dyslexia with Academy Award winners Peggy Stern and John Canemaker. He is also shooting IMAGINING PEACE a film about Israeli and Palestinian teenage girls. Justin recently served as co-director of photography with Albert Maysles on THE FOUR SEASONS, a film about a group of Holocaust survivors' final year together in the Catskills. It will screen in theaters this fall. Justin co-founded Shadowbox Films in 1998. He lives in Brooklyn with his wife, filmmaker Eden Wurmfeld, and their son Micah.

Eden Wurmfeld - Producer

Eden produced the award-winning indie feature and box office hit, KISSING JESSICA STEIN (Fox Searchlight). She is currently producing Get Yer Butt Off The Couch! Cartoons, an animated video series rallying kids and teens to save the planet. Wurmfeld and Gabbert have two feature projects in the works: Habeas on the Gate, a feature film about the unlikely friendship between a Park Avenue lawyer and a Guantanamo detainee and Lisanne Skyler's Starr Bright, a thriller based on Joyce Carol Oates' novel Starr Bright Will Be With You Soon.

Wurmfeld worked as producer with director Doug Liman on SWINGERS, SEE JANE RUN, THE KILLING FLOOR, and MR. AND MRS. SMITH. She produced Adam Carolla's feature film debut, THE HAMMER, which is currently in distribution with The Weinstein Company.

Wurmfeld co-authored The IFP/Los Angeles Independent Filmmaker's Manual (Focal Press), a 'cookbook' on indie filmmaking, which is used in film studies courses across the country. The second edition is currently in bookstores. Wurmfeld earned her MFA from UCLA's Film School from which she received an alumni award. She was named one of Variety's "10 Producers to Watch for 2002" and was a finalist for the 2003 Indie Spirit Motorola Producers Award.

Impact Partners – Executive Producers

Impact Partners is a film investment services group for high-net worth individuals who seek to promote social change through film. IP pursues a dual-bottom line: we aim for both profit and the creation of films with significant social value.

Films that IP members have financed or co-financed include BORN INTO BROTHELS (winner of the 2005 Academy Award for Best Documentary Feature); FREEHELD (winner of the 2008 Academy Award for Best Documentary Short); GHOSTS OF ABU GHRAIB (winner of the 2007 Emmy for Best Documentary Special); VERY YOUNG GIRLS (world premier at the 2007 Toronto International Film Festival); and both SECRECY and THE RECRUITER (world premiers in the Documentary Competition of the 2008 Sundance Film Festival). IP has four films at the 2009 Sundance Film Festival: CHILDREN OF INVENTION, NO IMPACT MAN, SERGIO, and THE GLASS HOUSE.

IP is currently in production or development on eight films, including new projects by Rachel Boynton (OUR BRAND IS CRISIS), Jose Padilha (BUS 174), Jennifer Dworkin (LOVE & DIANE), Susan Motamed and Melanie Judd (ENRON: THE SMARTEST GUYS IN THE ROOM and DAY NIGHT DAY NIGHT), Ross Kaufman (BORN INTO BROTHELS) and Greg Barker (GHOSTS OF RWANDA). The Executive Director of Impact Partners is Dan Cogan. GERALYN DREYFOUS is the Director-at-Large.

- CREDITS

Co-Produced by Colin Beavan
Michelle Conlin

Executive Producers Julia Parker Benello for Chicken & Egg Pictures
Diana Barrett for The Fledgling Fund
Dan Cogan
Abigail Disney for Fork Films
Barbara Dobkin
Kevin & Donna Gruneich
David Menschel for Vital Projects Fund, Inc.
Adriana Mnuchin
Susan & Gib Myers
Sarah Johnson Redlich
Juliette Timsit & Caroleen Feeney

Music by Bobby Johnston

Edited by William Haugse, ACE
Matthew Martin

Director of Photography Justin Schein

Produced by Laura Gabbert
Eden Wurmfeld

Directed by Laura Gabbert
Justin Schein