



Following sell-out World Premiere screenings at the 2014 New Zealand International Film Festival & its Australian Premiere at the 2014 Tasmanian Breath of Fresh Air Film Festival



**ACCLAIMED DOCUMENTARY
'THE INHERITANCE'**

**AVAILABLE ON
DVD / VOD
MONDAY 29 JUNE 2015**

Filmmakers Available for Interview

Filmmakers **Jeff McDonald** and **Bridget Lyon**, partners in life and work, have documented a confronting time in their lives in this intimate story of a courageous family, ultimately strengthened despite a dehumanising hereditary condition that takes no prisoners - **Huntington's Disease**. **'The Inheritance'** is their Australian-New Zealand film that takes us into the heart of a family whose love of life and each other is intensely moving to behold.

Bridget Lyon (right) with her mother Judy Lyon



"A tremendously affecting film." *Radio New Zealand*

"Truly one of the most moving and inspirational stories I have ever witnessed on the big screen." *The Dominion Post*

"An uplifting experience... Five stars." *Kapiti Independent*

"What is love when a person says they hate you?" *The Dominion Post*

"...an inspiring journey of a family living with a time bomb in their genes." *Cinema Aotearoa*

"Above all, it feels like a love story." *Dayna Goldfine, Emmy winning U.S. filmmaker*

"It is absolutely an incredible documentary, the type of which once you see it, you never forget it." *ABC RN*

“Discovering that I have not escaped the family inheritance - **a hereditary neurodegenerative disease** - I set out on a journey to honour my mother and find hope for my child,” says Bridget. “I uncover the horrors of dying from Huntington’s Disease and discover stories of those who have killed themselves as first symptoms appear, not wanting to deteriorate as they have seen parents or siblings do.”

“I discover a profound tale of unconditional love as I visit my Mum who fights silently every day with my Dad by her side. I struggle to face up to the reality of such an inevitable demise for so many of my family and the harrowing possibility that my son might have inherited it. But as my family strains under this impossible pressure we find that we are even stronger than we thought.”

Witness the everyday heroism of people facing up to this disease including **Charles Sabine, former NBC News journalist**, now international spokesperson for people living with Huntington’s Disease. Meet historians such as **Alice Wexler** from the **American Hereditary Disease Foundation** which was set-up by her family who were pioneers in the discovery of the Huntington’s gene, in particular her sister Nancy Wexler who located the gene; and foremost international scientists and medical experts racing to find a cure, including **Dr. Michael Hayden** and **Prof. Richard Faull**. With what they know now, will life be different for Bridget and other sufferers of Huntington’s Disease in their lifetime?

Professor Anthony Hannan, Head of Neural Plasticity at The Florey Institute of Neuroscience and Mental Health in Melbourne, the largest brain research group in the Southern Hemisphere, is interviewed in the film. “**Huntington’s is an extraordinary brain disease which can strike at the heart of everything it is to be human: movements, thoughts and emotions,**” says Hannan. “It is caused by a fatal ‘genetic stutter’ in a single gene and the only difference between Huntington’s sufferers and the rest of us who are not from Huntington’s families is just a handful of extra repeating letters of DNA, in genome consisting of over 3 billion DNA letters. In the face of this exceptionally fine ‘genetic line’ between life and death, I have seen tremendous courage and compassion amongst Huntington’s families, which provides even greater motivation to work hard towards a cure.”

The film’s Director **Jeff McDonald** says: "We all want to know what cancer is and what we can do. When it’s Huntington's people say, 'What's that?' and are less likely to be supportive. Tragedies are unfolding behind doors no-one knows about. People haven't shared stories because they're too busy falling apart."

Filmed across Australia and New Zealand from 2009-2014, with recreations in the United States; including interviews, archival photographs and voice-over narration by Bridget. With an original song, ‘The Gift’ by New Zealand singer-songwriter Ryan Edwards.

ABOUT HUNTINGTON’S DISEASE (HD): Huntington's is a hereditary degenerative brain disease, little-understood by the wider community even though it is a brutal combination of some of the symptoms of the higher-profile degenerative diseases Alzheimer's (the most common type of dementia), Parkinson's and motor neuron. Symptoms usually become noticeable between 35 and 45 years of age leading to jerky, random and uncontrollable movements called chorea, as well as psychiatric problems and cognitive decline. In Australia at least 1,600 people have HD, over 6,000 are at risk with many more impacted, including their family and carers, friends and communities. Worldwide, there are 5-10 cases of Huntington’s Disease per 100,000; it is more prevalent in Western countries at 7 cases per 100,000; and Tasmania is one of the few areas in the world with a higher concentration of about 12 cases per 100,000. The HD gene was isolated in 1993 but there is still no cure; although there are active clinical trials looking for drugs that will slow the disease or control symptoms.

DVD / VOD RELEASE DETAILS

'The Inheritance' Documentary (70 minutes) 2014 © Leapfrog Productions

Available from Monday 29 June 2015

DVD/VOD: \$30

theinheritancedocumentary.com

INTERVIEW OPPORTUNITIES

- Filmmakers Jeff McDonald (Director/Producer) & Bridget Lyon (Editor, Narrator & subject of the film) available for interview by phone or in person in Wellington.

For interviews, images and access to the full version of the film:

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