

A silhouette of a horse's head and neck is shown in profile, facing right, against a bright blue sky with some light clouds. In the lower-left background, the silhouette of a woman's head and shoulders is visible, looking towards the right. The overall mood is contemplative and dramatic.

THE EDGE OF DREAMING

A woman dreams her horse is dying.
She wakes to find him dead.
Then she dreams this year will be her last.

VPRO, More 4, ZDF/Arte and POV present

An **Amy Hardie Productions**, **Passion Pictures**
and **Hard Working Movies** co-production

THE EDGE OF DREAMING

by **AMY HARDIE**

Duration: 73mins

www.edgeofdreaming.co.uk

Contacts

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Synopsis

This is the story of a rational, sceptical woman, a mother and wife, who does not remember her dreams. Except once, when she dreamt her horse was dying. She woke so scared she went outside in the night. She found him dead. The next dream told her she would die herself, when she was 48.

The Edge of Dreaming charts every step of that year. The film explores life and death in the context of a warm and loving family, whose happiness is increasingly threatened as the dream seems to be proving true. From the kids reaction to their horses' death (they taught the dog a new trick - called 'dead dog'), the film mixes humour, science and married life as Amy attempts to understand what is happening to her.

Everyone wrestles with the concept of their own mortality, but few so directly explore and confront the subject. When Amy fell seriously ill, as her dream predicted, she went on a search to change that dream, leading her to eminent neuroscientist Mark Solms, and to new understanding of the complexity of our brains. The final confrontation takes us back into her dream with the help of a shaman, revealing a surprising twist to the tale.

This woman seems to have it all - the handsome husband, beautiful children, the picturesque house in the Scottish countryside. As a sceptic and a hedonist, when she dreams of her horse's death, and wakes up to discover him dead, she tries to ignore it. But when she dreams of her own death, within the year, she begins to explore every avenue to avoid this dream becoming to fruition.

"I'm a mum with three kids, overstretched, loving it. The kids are integrated into this story - it's wound through taking them to school, checking heads for lice, cuddles in bed and tantrums in the kitchen. The animals and the landscape also play a big part. I live up in the Scottish mountains, with huge views and no neighbours. We get lots of stars.

I was very shocked by my dreams. I make science films for a living and I don't normally remember my dreams, unlike my psychoanalyst husband. He writes his dreams every morning, and says, comfortingly, that they are not to be taken literally. Except that my dream of my horse's death was literally true. And this was followed by two more dreams, warning me that I would die this year, and then showing me how I would die.

I began filming my children after my lungs collapsed. I wanted to get the whole year in record. I didn't tell my two girls, because I didn't want them scared. Nevertheless my youngest daughter came home and read my palm, announcing cheerily that my life line was short and that I would "have a happy life, but a short one".

I met with neuroscientist Mark Solms, who has come to pre-eminence for his original scientific research into the sleeping brain states. He took me through what happens in the dreaming brain, and what he thought could be happening to me.

I realised, with only a month to go, I was really in danger - and that I had to get back inside my dream in order to change the dream."

Amy Hardie, Director



Production Notes

Amy Hardie, Director



This film began nine years ago. Like many of my generation, I had never sat at a deathbed. Then my mother dies unexpectedly, of myelodysplasia. It seemed a huge bodily and a mental process.

I knew I needed to learn about death. As a documentary film-maker specialising in science docs, I began investigating death. I needed time to take on such a huge topic, at once personal and of course, universal. Edinburgh College of Art gave me a studentship for its first PhD by practice in film and I immersed myself into the history, biology and social mores of death.

I committed myself to filming every aspect of my investigation. I began to work in a hospice, and joined trainings about death and dying aimed at nurses and counsellors. Death seemed to come very close: the father of oldest child died. Later, I had a dream that my horse was dying, and woke to find him dead. Fortunately I was not superstitious. Then I had a second dream, a warning that I was going to die myself that year. I was shaken. I thought I had been spending too much time thinking about death, and that it had taken an unhealthy hold of my imagination. It also presented itself as a good set up to test a hypothesis: either there were spirits, and I would be dead within a year, or there were not, and I would be fine.

The year rocked my scientific reductionism, and expanded my sense of what science really is. I filmed almost everything that happened to me.

Because of the three dreams, the material offered itself as a gripping narrative. To confound this tendency, I began by making a silent 30 minutes movie. This encouraged a purely visual exploration, which helped to create the meditative film space needed to recreate emotional states and insights from research.

I was always filming, so Ian Dodds, a long time collaborator with a great eye on camera came in and filmed a day in the life, and some wonderful footage of the horse. To go inside the dreams, I worked with Cameron Duguid, whose animations had illuminated previous science films. We printed out frames from the home movies and he painted and inked them, refilming to allow images to recreate my interior worlds.

My family are the stars in this film, and were also key to helping develop it. Peter Kravitz, my husband, has a vast knowledge of Jung, as well as a sophisticated theoretical framework to understand and to unpick the relationship between dreams and reality. I relied on his discursive wisdom to get me through the year. Our children, Lotte, Eli and Nell were my sternest critics, outraged by any attempt to recreate or as they saw it, over-dramatise what was happening. Their eagle-eyed approval, and their incredible cakes, ensured the film remained down to earth and accurate.

I knew choice of editor was crucial, especially in such a personal story, and with a main character as reluctant as myself. I met Ling Lee, a student at the College of Art, who helped me transfer some footage. As she watched the short sequences I had put together of my family, she said " It is as though you are already dead." I found this funny, and compelling, and told her the whole story. We began working together, managing to keep going when she got a place at the National Film School. Two other editors became available when Ling was making her own film - the feature editor Colin Monie who brought out the poetry in the images. A final two weeks was spent with US editor Mike Culyba who intensified the emotional story.

By this time I had three enormously experienced producers, George Chignell, Doug Block and Lori Cheatle, who patiently watched cut after cut as I gave myself the liberty to explore exactly what the content of this film would be. Funders came on board, Doris Hepp from ZDF/Arte, Tabitha Jackson from True Stories, More 4, Barbara Truyen from VPRO and Robbie Allen from Scottish Screen. Being based in the Scottish Documentary Institute allowed me constant access to perceptive and educated responses to the various cuts. The notes from these people who love documentaries, and are staggeringly knowledgeable, and the feedback sessions we held in the FilmGuild cinema in Edinburgh, and in my living room at home, made a huge difference to the film. This testing and retesting of my intentions and ideas against audience feedback was crucial. Over time, I whittled down what could be expressed (versus what I wanted to express) to its most intense and concentrated form.

A documentary director/producer with several international awards, Amy Hardie graduated from the National Film and Television School with the BP Expo award for best UK graduation film. She set up the Scottish Documentary Institute in 2004 with Noe Mendelle, and Docspace, dedicated to increasing an audience for serious documentaries. Recent work has focussed on collaborations with leading scientists to explore stem cell technology. The Edge of Dreaming is her first personal film.

Ling Lee, Editor



<http://www.underkonstrukt.com>

When we started working together in July 2007, it soon became apparent how sensitive a subject this film was for Amy.

I have never had to deal with such a personal story before. It was clear that in order to give the audience a full understanding of Amy's, the director, emotional journey, the film had to be at least an hour long. Not only did I have to find out on a personal level about Amy's emotional journey, but equally important, I needed to differentiate Amy, the director from Amy, the main protagonist.

Amy has been documenting her life since she started at the National Film and Television school about 20 years ago so we had lots of archive footage to work with. The challenge was to get close to her intimate stories to get as close to the truth as possible. Sometimes it was difficult for Amy to reveal certain details to me but as time went on and with very careful questioning and encouragement, she gradually uncovered all the secrets that had been bottled up.

There was no major time limits on this project. This meant we didn't have any pressure to force a quick story out of the footage which would have been to the detriment of the finished film.

Amy was always very open and I really enjoyed the freedom I had in the editing. We talked a lot and after a while, I knew she had a lot of confidence in me. We never talked about the style of the film but Amy and I quickly found common ground and this led to a productive working relationship.

I learnt so much about story telling - that structure is the most crucial part of a 70 minute film, and how much difference changing or moving one scene can make to the balance of the film.

Working on this film raised several challenges that every editor may face, such as how to describe fear and anxiety so that the audience finds the story credible? How can the development of human emotions be portrayed on film? How do we mix scientific fact into a story without distracting from the emotional impact of the story?

During the filmmaking journey, I felt I learned the answers to these questions and I will take this forward to my future work.

When I started working on the film I had never had to deal directly with death myself. I have learnt so much by talking to Amy about it. I think that editing this film for Amy will help me to deal with death more openly in the future.

I think in our society death is still a big taboo but after working on this film, death is something that I can be more open in dealing with in my life. I would like to dedicate my contribution to the film to my friend Libby, who died in January 2009.

Cameron Duguid, Animator

The section on Neural pathways was really satisfying. It is a really interesting subject and a challenge to animate, especially making it work in context with the rest of the film.

I think trying to find an animation style that would connect with Amy's experiences, finding ways of treating the live action to give a dreamlike quality was the most interesting challenge for me. The whole process of collaboration made me think about the way I interpret my dreams, and question how much they relate with day to day life. I started to think of death as being returned to the elements. It is an awe-inspiring thing, but very beautiful in many ways, as is dreaming for that matter.

George Chignell, Producer (Passion Pictures)

What has pleased me the most is having the finished film as close to Amy's vision as we could make it and having so many people wanting to see it. The film uniquely allows us all to consider our own mortality alongside our place in the world. What would you do with a death sentence dream?

It was tough working with Amy in Scotland, myself in London and Doug and Lori in New York and our financiers in a multitude of locations and countries, but we made it in the end and the occasional frustrations were worth it!

Doug Block and Lorie Cheatle, Producers (Hard Working Movies)

Personal documentaries are possibly the very toughest genre of filmmaking to take on, so to have Amy rise to the challenge so brilliantly was hugely rewarding to see. It's very tough trying to produce transatlantically, not having proper face-to-face time. I make personal documentaries myself, so to follow another filmmaker's journey through the same process was fascinating and enlightening. Death and dreams are two tough subjects to make a film about. It requires mighty big guts to take them on, and whopping huge talent to pull it off.

Doug Block



Contributors



Professor Mark Solms is a neuropsychologist and a psychoanalyst. He is best known for his pioneering research into the brain mechanisms of dreaming. He has won many scientific and scholarly awards, namely the International Psychiatrist award of the American Psychiatric Association, the George Sarton Medal of the Reiksuniversiteit Gent, and the President's Award of the National Research Foundation.

"It's well established the first awareness people can have that there's something the matter with a particular part of their bodies can come to them in a dream. Dieing is a very extreme physiological event and as it's about to happen you would pick up something really extraordinary is going on. These things are registered, they matter to us, we push them out of mind, either because we don't want to think about them or because we don't realise how much they matter with our frontal lobe driven preoccupations during waking life. Frontal lobes go offline at night, the feelings come to the fore, and things that we subliminally know or things that we unconsciously know and don't want to know, we know in our dreams."

London 2008

Claudia Goncalves came from Brazil to work in Edinburgh, setting up the Shamanic centre with her partner Mark Halliday. A mother of two children age 10 and 13 yrs old, Claudia is also passionate about working with young people. She was a catalyst in supporting Youth Vision Project.
<http://www.shamaniccentre.com>

"When there is a change or shift in consciousness, time and space, matter and mind, body and soul take on different characteristics. Anyone has the ability to shift consciousness, move beyond the physical world and access parallel worlds. Native people and shamans have known this truth and worked this way for thousands of years benefiting their community. Consciousness, not matter, is the fundamental reality of the universe. Consciousness determines the manifestation of a reality thus the importance of making conscious choices in our world today and the brain-mind are one of the vehicles for those conscious choices."

Phyllida Anam-Aire trained as a nun, a Montessori teacher and with Elizabeth Kubler Ross in her UK and US Conscious Living Conscious Dying workshop. She is currently based in Germany researching and running workshops on Celtic knowledge of death and dying.

"There are six bardos in the Celtic knowledge. These are the stages we go through towards death. Dying is a part of life, and something each of us will face. It is a big experience, and it can be prepared for. Perhaps it is time to relearn these forgotten insights."

Drs. Amy and Arny Mindell are in private therapeutic practice in Portland, Oregon and teach in many countries in the world. Dr. Arny Mindell is known for his development of the "dreambody" and "process work" (process oriented psychology). He is the author of 19 books in 21 languages.

www.aamindell.net

"We are always dreaming, not just at night. When we are in reduced states of consciousness, dreaming becomes more apparent, as it is when we are ill, or in near death situations. The dreams often show the "way", that is the greater path and meaning of our lives."

Full Credits

Camera

AMY HARDIE
IAN DODDS
HARDIE FAMILY

Animator

CAMERON DUGUID

Aerial Photography

JIM HARDIE AEROLAB

Music and Sound Design

GUNNAR OSKARSSON

Production assistants

KATIA HERVY
LILI SANDELIN
AMY ROSE

Archive

COLIN ANDREWS
GREENPEACE
MARIAN STOICA

Film Editor

LING LEE

Additional and Supervising Editors

COLIN MONIE
MICHAEL CULYBA

Digital Colourist

ROB MAY

Dubbing Mixer

PAUL MCFADDEN

Online Editors

MYFANWY HARRIS
JAMES BALLARD

Composer

JIM SUTHERLAND

Music

Intro

Eli Hardie Howes

Little Bitty Pretty Things

Thurston Harris
EMI Music publishing

Ice Breaker

Last Song
Gunnar Oskarsson

Ali Baba

Treasure Isle

Digital Intermediate

DRAGON DI

Sound Post Facility

BANG POST PRODUCTION

Final Postproduction

ENVY and METRO ECOSSE

Producers

AMY HARDIE
GEORGE CHIGNELL
DOUG BLOCK
LORI CHEATLE

Filmed and Directed by

AMY HARDIE

Executive Producer for Channel Four

TABITHA JACKSON

Executive Producer for VPRO

BARBARA TRUYEN

Executive Producer for Scottish Screen

ROBBIE ALLEN

Business Affairs for Scottish Screen

LINDA MCCLURE

Executive Producer for ZDF/Arte

DORIS HEPP

Executive Producer for POV

SIMON KILMURRY

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Professor Irving Weissman
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Dr Watts
Fiona Clark
Dr Simpson
Dr Hirani
Dr Mark Solms
Claudia Goncalves
Dr Arnie Mindell
Phyllida Anamaira
Professor Adam Zeman
Peter Kravitz
Lotte Kravitz
Nell Kravitz
Eli Hardie Howes
Arthur Howes
Gwen Hardie

Jim Hardie

Ann Thorpe

Audre Guerrero Espin (Arthur's dream voice)

Jane Butler-Cole

Marjorie Stevenson

Laura Irvine

Colin Hall

Hazel Baillie

Lou McLoughlan

Glenis and Miles Postlethwaite

Heather and Pete Ritchie

Stuart and Catriona Delves

Kitti and Maarten Van

Ramshorst

Craig Hutcheson

Pat Whitcombe

Ronnie Gray

Joss James

Sally Charlton

Jackie Fisher

Barrie Thorpe

Jeremy Leathart

Leonie Alexander

Gerda Stevenson

Yulie Mahr

Jane Balfour

Sandra Whipham

Lou McLoughlan

Brian Harvey

Maja Borg

Graeme Rogers

Emma Davie

Clare Blackburn

Scott Murray (snake handler)

Bryan Tweddle (snake sculptor)

Tracey Fearnough

Fiona Reid

Noe Mendelle

Brent McGregor

In Memory of my mother

Ann Hardie 1938 - 1999

An Amy Hardie/Passion Pictures/Hardworking Movies Co-production with VPRO, More 4, ZDF/Arte and POV

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International Sales Outlook Films

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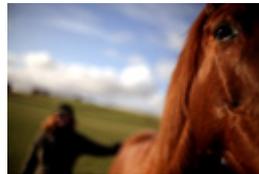
Stills

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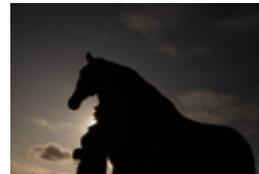
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amy&horse.jpg

Photographer: Ian Dodds



romantic.jpg

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Screenings

IDFA, Amsterdam International Documentary Film Festival, The Netherlands (November 2009)

Docs Barcelona, Panorama, Spain (February 2010)

ZagrebDox International Film Festival, Croatia (March 2010)

International Nicosia Documentary Festival "Views of the world", Cyprus (March 2010)

Thessaloniki Documentary Festival, Greece (March 2010)

Full Frame Documentary Film Festival, NEW DOCS program, USA (April 2010)

Bafici, Buenos Aires International Independent Film Festival, Argentina (April 2010)

DocAviv, International Documentary Film Festival, Israel, (May 2010)

EDOC, International Documentary Festival of Ecuador, Ecuador, (May 2010)

Kiev International Film Festival, Ukraine, (May 2010)

MakeDox, Macedonia, (June 2010)

Guth Gafa International Documentary Festival, Ireland, (June 2010)

Edinburgh International Film Festival, United Kingdom, (June 2010)

The Edge of Dreaming has been selected for the prestigious POV strand and is airing on August 24th 2010 on US television.

THE EDGE OF DREAMING

www.edgeofdreaming.co.uk