

ROADSIDE ATTRACTIONS

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A Jim Clark Film

An Oceanic Preservation Society Production

The Cove



Directed by: Louie Psihoyos

Produced by: Paula DuPré Pesmen, Fisher Stevens

Written by: Mark Monroe

Executive Producer: Jim Clark

91 minutes * Rated PG 13 for Disturbing Content

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The Cove

“We need to get in there and film what happens . . . we need to know the truth.”

-- Ric O’Barry, *THE COVE*

In a sleepy lagoon off the coast of Japan lies a shocking secret that a few desperate men will stop at nothing to keep hidden from the world. At last, the truth of *THE COVE* comes to the fore in an act of covert filmmaking that turns a documentary into a gripping action-adventure thriller . . . and a heart-pounding call for help from the world’s oceans.

THE COVE begins in Taiji, Japan, where former dolphin trainer Ric O’Barry has come to set things right after a long search for redemption. In the 1960s, it was O’Barry who captured and trained the 5 dolphins who played the title character in the international television sensation “Flipper.” But his close relationship with those dolphins – the very dolphins who sparked a global fascination with trained sea mammals that continues to this day -- led O’Barry to a radical change of heart. One fateful day, a heartbroken Barry came to realize that these deeply sensitive, highly intelligent and self-aware creatures so beautifully adapted to life in the open ocean must never be subjected to human captivity again.

This mission has brought him to Taiji, a town that appears to be devoted to the wonders and mysteries of the sleek, playful dolphins and whales that swim off their coast. But in a remote, glistening cove, surrounded by barbed wire and “Keep Out” signs, lies a dark reality. It is here, under cover of night, that the fishermen of Taiji, driven by a multi-billion dollar dolphin entertainment industry and an underhanded market for mercury-tainted dolphin meat, engage in an unseen hunt. The nature of what they do is so chilling -- and the consequences are so dangerous to human health -- they will go to great lengths to halt anyone from seeing it.

Undeterred, O’Barry joins forces with filmmaker Louis Psihoyos and the Ocean Preservation Society to get to the truth of what’s really going on in the cove and why it matters to everyone in the world. With the local Chief of Police hot on their trail and strong-arm fishermen keeping tabs on them, they will recruit an “Oceans Eleven”-style team of underwater sound and camera experts, special effects artists, marine explorers, adrenaline junkies and world-class free divers who will carry out an undercover operation to photograph the off-limits cove, while playing a cloak-and-dagger game with those who would have them jailed.

The result is a provocative mix of investigative journalism, eco-adventure and arresting imagery that adds up to an urgent plea for hope.

THE COVE is directed by Louie Psihoyos and produced by Paula DuPre Pesmen and Fisher Stevens. The film is written by Mark Monroe. The executive producer is Jim Clark and the co-producer is Olivia Ahnemann.

THE RING LEADER:
FORMER DOLPHIN TRAINER RIC O'BARRY

The leader behind the covert mission undertaken in *THE COVE* is one of the most heroic -- and wanted -- men in the marine world: former dolphin trainer turned fervent activist Ric O'Barry. This man, who director Louie Psihoyos calls the most "committed, tenacious and passionate" person he knows, has flirted with law suits, trials, prison, surveillance, danger and personal anguish as he has attempted to fulfill an emotional promise he made long ago to free captive dolphins around the world, no matter what it takes.

Ironically, O'Barry himself was once one of the world's pre-eminent dolphin trainers. In the 1960s, he captured and trained the 5 wild dolphins who would play the role of "Flipper" in the beloved hit television series of the same name. This pop culture phenomenon would fuel widespread public adoration of dolphins and spark many children to dream of befriending one, but O'Barry came to see it as a curse not a blessing. Day after day, he witnessed the stunning intelligence and social savvy of the animals he was working -- he even watched in awe as they reacted to watching themselves on TV -- and he began to question what he was doing.

It was when one of the dolphins, a female named Kathy, committed a form of suicide in his arms, closing her blowhole voluntarily in order to drown, that O'Barry had a life-changing wake up call. With his heart shattered, suddenly he realized what he had been blinding himself to all along: that the dolphins wanted only to go home to the sea and their families. Days later, he found himself off the island of Bimini, attempting to cut a hole in the sea pen holding a captive dolphin. It was his first rescue attempt and his first arrest . . . and it would lead to many more.

O'Barry has worked tirelessly as an advocate on behalf of dolphins around the world ever since. He has watched in despair as the capture and sale of dolphins has, in the ensuing years, become a colossal form of big business. Incensed that this was going on without any public attention or the consent of the Japanese people, he began secretly filming what was happening in the cove and sending footage to news outlets, hoping to get the word out. It was one of these homemade DVDs that first drew the attention of Louie Psihoyos, who soon brought his own film crew to Taiji, and enlisted the creative input of producer Fisher Stevens. Once in action, the film couldn't help but focus on the colorful, larger-than-life personality of O'Barry, who is in such imminent danger in Taiji that he dons comic-book disguises and moves at night, never wavering from his ongoing mission.

Q: Were you surprised when Louie decided he was going to try to make a feature film documentary about what was happening in THE COVE?

A: I was shocked because I thought it might be too graphic. But the incredible thing that Louie and Fisher Stevens have done is to make this a great entertainment. They really pulled it off. Audiences laugh, they cry and then they leave the theatre saying "what can I do?" I'm excited because the more popular the movie is, the more unpopular the dolphin hunt will become in Japan and I really believe we are on the verge of stopping these hunts, and quite possibly, the whaling of all small cetaceans.

Q: You started as a dolphin trainer and now you oppose keeping dolphins captive. You talk in the film about what you went through when the dolphin Kathy died, but were there signs even before that which made you start to worry you were on shaky ethical ground?

A: Yes, I was already started to have a change of heart during the filming of "Flipper" but in our business we call it putting the blinders on. I was young, I had a glamorous job, I was driving a

Porsche and it was easy to do. After her death, I was heartbroken. Going to Bimini was the act of someone going crazy in a sense, but it was also an act of sheer passion.

Q: How do you feel about the dolphin trainers who come to places like Taiji to buy dolphins for shows and aquariums?

A: A lot of trainers justify that this is all for “research and education” but I really can’t answer how 30 trainers can stand in the water in Taiji with these traumatized animals and look them in the eye knowing what they are doing. I really don’t know. I get why the fishermen do it – for them, it’s a tradition and they really believe that dolphins are no different from a fish, even if they are ignoring that dolphin meat is toxic. But the trainers I am still in contact with have found ways to turn a blind eye. They want to talk about how to train new tricks, but they don’t want to talk about the captures or slaughter.

Q: A lot of people will be surprised to learn that it is legal to hunt dolphins in Japan. Why is that?

A: There is a so-called ban on whaling but it doesn’t apply to dolphins or other small whales. Of course size doesn’t matter – dolphins are whales and their suffering is the same. Unfortunately, the International Whaling Commission, as you see in the movie, are asleep at the wheel and under the influence of corrupt lawyers and very little happens at their meetings.

Q: You also emphasize that, beyond ethics, a serious human health issue is at stake because dolphin meat, which is still on the market in Japan, has been shown to be severely contaminated with mercury.

A: What we’ve found is that dolphin meat is actually poison. It has more mercury in it than the fish that sickened the town of Minimata in one of the worst incidents of mercury poisoning in modern history. Yet, the Japanese people are unaware of this. Hopefully, this movie will accomplish what Japanese newspapers and television broadcasters have failed to accomplish – get out the story that the Japanese people have been lied to for years. It is an actual crime because the Japanese constitution says that the Japanese people have a right to this information. No physicians have yet studied the effects of eating mercury-tainted dolphin meat but we have met people who say they have been losing their memory or hearing and it is very concerning.

Q: What has to happen for the dolphin hunts to stop?

A: First of all, the dolphin entertainment industry is a \$2 billion dollar industry in the U.S. alone and that is driving these hunts. The solution also has to come from inside Japan, from the Japanese people. Still, I have been advised that external pressure, what the Japanese call “gaiatsu,” can help.

Q: What kind of “gaiatsu” might work? Kathy

A: One thing that isn’t a good idea is to boycott Japan or Japanese products. This isn’t about Japan or Japanese culture. The majority of the Japanese people we’ve talked are opposed to dolphin hunting and they are completely unaware of the corruption in the government that has allowed mercury-tainted dolphin meat to continue to be sold.

On our website www.savejapandolphins.org, we suggest people call the Japanese embassy and ask them to stop the dolphin hunts. We also think the U.S., in particular President Obama, can put more pressure on the Japanese. All U.S. Presidents since Nixon have claimed to be against whaling but they have never done anything to stop it from continuing. They have let the status quo continue. Most politicians in the U.S. don’t know that the largest dolphin slaughter in the

world takes place every year in Japan, so we are hopeful that this movie will really be a wake up call.

Q: Will this movie make life even more dangerous for you when you return to Taiji?

A: There couldn't be any more danger than there is now. I have to go in there wearing a disguise – I've even been wearing a dress, lipstick and a wig to keep them off the track. Once you're arrested in Japan, you're out of the game forever, so it's vital that they don't find any reason to arrest me. That's also why you see the fishermen filming us – they're hoping to catch someone doing something the police can arrest them for. An even bigger danger is the Yakuza, who are very involved in whaling and fisheries in Japan. I spend a lot of my time in Taiji just trying to stay out of trouble. It's a whole spy vs. spy game that goes on.

Q: With all that you've been through – grief, jail, mortal danger – in trying to save dolphins, are you still optimistic?

A: I'll tell you it's very hard for me to watch THE COVE – not because of what the audience sees but because of what they don't see, which is the rest of my life – the births and death and jail cells and courtrooms that happened between the lines of what's there on the screen. But nothing could have been more exciting for me than to see this film get 8 standing ovations at Sundance and to have people literally jumping up and asking “what can be done?” The main thing I want to say is that there is real hope on the horizon. I think there's a good chance we can shut this cove down and if we can do that, it's going to be a big step towards stopping all whaling of any kind. If people want to help, they should visit www.savejapanesedolphins.org

THE FILMMAKER:
OCEAN PRESERVATION SOCIETY'S LOUIE PSIHOYOS

Louie Psihoyos, one of the world's most sought-after photographers and a co-founder of the Ocean Preservation Society (<http://www.opsociety.org/>), first encountered – or rather didn't encounter -- Ric O'Barry while attending a marine conference at which O'Barry was supposed to be a keynote speaker.

When O'Barry was banned at the last minute by the event's sponsor, Sea World, Psihoyos' curiosity was piqued. What he couldn't have known is that this curiosity would lead him to seek out O'Barry, and eventually compel him to undertake an incredible filmmaking adventure – as he and his crew used high-tech military grade equipment, movie special effects, bold free divers and a fearless sense of urgency to carry out a perilous underwater shoot that was entirely under cover.

He could not have foreseen that his crew would, in the process, expose not only the hidden truth about dolphin hunts but also a major human health hazard, government corruption, the declining state of our oceans and one man's emotional battle for redemption.

Q: What drew you to want to film Ric O'Barry and his work in Taiji?

A: I was curious at first about why he wasn't allowed to talk at this conference. Then, when I found him, he explained that he was going to talk about this secret cove in Japan where the dolphin traffickers select most of the dolphins for dolphinariums and parks. He told me they were killing the ones they didn't choose and using them for school lunch programs. I couldn't imagine any civilization killing dolphins and Richard invited me along the following week to see Taiji, the little town with this big secret.

Q: What was Taiji like?

A: The town was like out of a Steven King novel - outwardly the whole town was about the reverence and respect and love of dolphins and whales, but what was happening in the secret cove belied another story, one I was determined to get at.

The secret cove is a natural fortress, protected on three sides by steep cliffs. The entrance on one side is protected by a series of high spiked gates with barbed wire and razor ribbons, and there are two tunnel entrances protected by guards and dogs. After a tour of the town with Richard, I contacted the Taiji mayor's office and the dolphin hunters' union – I wanted to get their side of the story and I wanted to do the story legally. I had noticed that I had picked up a tail; I had 24-hour police surveillance while I was in town. But the town was not interested in cooperating – they were making too much money with the captive dolphin industry to jeopardize it by having a journalist milling about. The mayor told me that I could get hurt or killed by getting too close to the dolphin hunters or the secret cove.

The cove, oddly enough, is in the middle of a National Park right in the center of town, between city hall and the whale museum.

Richard told me that to penetrate the secret cove you would need to get a Navy Seal team, and that is pretty much what I did, but my team was more of an "Ocean's Eleven" team.

Q: It is a really eclectic group of characters. How did you put the team together?

A: I enlisted my friends Mandy Rae-Cruickshank and Kirk Krack to help us set underwater cameras and hydrophones. Mandy is an eight-time world champion freediver. She can hold her breath for 6 and a half minutes and dive down to almost to 300 feet and back on her own power. Her husband, Kirk, is also a freediver. A former photo assistant of mine went on to become the head mold maker at ILM, Industrial Light and Magic, Lucas' 3-D division and they helped us make fake rocks to hide high definition cameras and microphones. An electronics expert formerly with the Canadian Air Force helped us hot rod the hard drive cameras with larger drives powered by expedition batteries used for climbers on Mount Everest. He also helped us make unmanned drones so we had aerial support and video - a remote controlled helicopter with a gyro-stabilized high definition camera below it as well as a blimp with a remote controlled camera.

Some pirate friends from the islands helped me place the cameras and many nights we were in blinds in full camouflage and face paint. We foiled the guards and police many nights by the use of high-definition military grade thermal cameras to scan the hills for movement, and an assortment of other diversionary techniques.

Q: What were your biggest challenges during filming?

A: *THE COVE* was definitely not your normal film production. Most of our work happened in the middle of the night, under cover, and our biggest challenge of all was simply trying to avoid being killed or arrested and put in jail for months if we were caught.

There were other challenges, too. Early on in the formation of our non-profit film company, I met Steven Spielberg and he advised me from his work on *Jaws* to never work on boats or with animals because of the unpredictability and high cost. Well, we used a lot of boats in the making of *THE COVE* and we had to work with a lot of large uncooperative animals. It was a first-time director's nightmare.

Q: Did making THE COVE change you?

A: I have been a vegetarian, or rather a pescatarian, for 20 years. I eat fish but nothing that walks. Now, I don't eat any fish very high up on the food chain because I learned from the making of this movie that I have mercury poisoning - very high levels of mercury from eating apex predators, fish at the top of the food chain like tuna, marlin, striped bass and grouper.

My attitudes about animals have changed considerably since making this film. My sensitivity to all animal life has been heightened because once you have your eyes open to their plight it's difficult to close your heart up again. Dolphins have larger brains than us, there are more folds for neurons, they have an extra sense - sonar - and they are the only wild animals known to come to the rescue of humans. They have been legendary for extraordinary feats of compassion since man had the ability to write. They have always come to our rescue and I feel that it is about time somebody tried to rescue them.

Q: What is the most surprising thing you discovered while making this film?

A: There is a systematic cover-up of mercury and dolphin hunting issues in Japan. The Japanese trust their government. But the government does not want them to know basic information that would affect their health, especially that dolphin meat is many more times toxic than their own country's health standards allow. Corruption is rampant and people are profiting from misinformation.

Q: Have there been any new developments since you left Taiji?

A: Dolphin meat used to be part of school lunch programs there. That stopped this year. Ric O'Barry and our organization, the Oceanic Preservation Society, had a hand in that. Our work with a toxicity expert there eventually reached several Taiji town council members, who had their own children in the school system, and who did their own tests on dolphin meat. These confirmed our findings. School children across Wakamaya prefecture are no longer fed toxic dolphin meat for school lunch programs. As a result, the head of the fisheries, Hideki Moronuki, who had set the quotas for dolphins and porpoises and whales, has been fired. But the hunt for dolphins is still going on. We hope awareness will shut the dolphin drive down by next year, once the Japanese people learn about it.

Q: Can you tell us more about the Oceanic Preservation Society and how it was created?

A: The founder of the Oceanic Preservation Society is the inventor and venture capitalist Jim Clark, a modern day Zelig who built three groundbreaking industries from scratch. He worked himself out of poverty and in college he helped set up the computer systems that sent man to the moon. As a professor at Stanford, he invented the first 3-D graphics engine computer chip with Silicon Graphics, the first commercial internet browser with Netscape. After he discovered he had a rare blood disease, he created WebMd, a portal that connects doctors and patients with the most recent medical and health information. At the forefront of innovation his whole life, he has also been an avid diver and sailor, traveling to the world's best preserved reefs but also witnessing the collapse of the oceans in his lifetime. He founded OPS to create films and stills to raise awareness of the plight of the oceans, a demise that also jeopardizes humanity, as we derive 70% of our protein from seafood, a diminishing and increasingly and polluted resource.

Q: What do you hope audiences will take away from *THE COVE*?

A: First, I hope people stop taking their children to dolphin amusement parks and swim with dolphin programs – having intelligent sentient animals perform stupid tricks for our amusement is a form of bad education for our children. Secondly, I hope the Japanese people stop killing dolphins for food because, ethical reasons aside, all dolphin meat is toxic and not fit for human or animal consumption. Third, dolphins and whales are polluted mainly because of the dumping in the ocean of toxins from man's activities. The burning of fossil fuels, particularly coal, contributes to most of the build-up of mercury in the environment so getting us off coal is important in saving the oceans. So, at the OPS headquarters we have 117 solar panels that now generate 140% of our energy needs; and we have two electric cars that are totally powered from energy generated from the sun. Everybody can help in these ways.

WHAT'S REALLY HAPPENING IN THE COVE?

A QUICK INTRO TO DOLPHIN HUNTS

- The world outlawed commercial whaling in 1986. And yet, dolphin hunts remain legal because, although dolphins and whales are members of the same family and share similar traits of intelligence and self-awareness, so far the members of the International Whaling Commission have not agreed to protect so-called “small cetaceans”
- Approximately 23,000 dolphins are killed legally each year in Japan. The majority are killed at sea but thousands are killed in dolphin hunts along coastal lagoons and coves. Dolphin hunts also occur in coastal island areas of the South Pacific and North Atlantic
- Dolphin hunts take place both to capture live dolphins for marine parks and aquariums and to kill dolphins for their meat, despite the fact that the meat often contains toxins, including mercury and PCBs at unhealthy levels, and sells at a very low price
- A live dolphin captured for a marine park show can fetch up to \$150,000. A dolphin killed for meat draws about \$600
- In coastal areas, dolphins are hunted by “drive-fishing” techniques, in which the dolphins are herded and corralled into net cages by loud banging sounds that disrupt their sensitive sonar, causing them to panic. Once trapped in the nets, their fate is decided by veterinarians and animal trainers who choose which dolphins they will purchase
- Once a live dolphin is selected for a marine park, aquarium or swim-with-dolphins program, it is separated from its close-knit family unit, hoisted in trucks and planes and transported from the ocean to a far-away pool where it will face stiff odds of survival
- Over half of all captured dolphins will die within 2 years of their captivity. They must rapidly adjust to a new environment where they can no longer swim their customary 40 miles a day in open waters, engage with their social group or use their sonar properly
- Dolphins not selected for marine parks are then “sitting ducks” for local fishermen who kill them for the price their meat will fetch. They are typically killed at close quarters with spears, knives and hooks. In the open ocean, they are usually killed with harpoons.
- Dolphins killed in the Taiji hunts include bottlenosed, striped, spotted and Risso’s dolphins as well as false killer whales and short-finned pilot whales. Several of these species are considered environmentally threatened
- The primary economic driver of dolphin hunting is the multi-million dollar marine park business, which allows fishermen the resources to undertake additional slaughter for meat
- Most citizens in Japan are unaware of the dolphin hunts and unaware of the serious toxicity of dolphin meat. However, the Japanese government continues to support dolphin hunting and has successfully lobbied to keep the International Whaling Commission from acting on behalf of small cetaceans
- International attention and protest has helped to halt some dolphin hunts in the past but has not stopped the practice from continuing in the 21st Century

“THE HUMANS OF THE SEA”:
A BRIEF HISTORY OF DOLPHIN-HUMAN RELATIONS

***“To the dolphin alone, nature has given
that which the best philosophers seek:
Friendship for no advantage. Though it
has no need of help from any man,
it is a genial friend to all and
has helped mankind.”***

- Plutarch

At the heart of *THE COVE* is the mysterious, often affectionate and sometimes violent relationship between human beings and dolphins, which has moved on a spectrum from deep curiosity to awestruck worship to wholesale slaughter throughout history.

Dolphins have intrigued us ever since our species first took to the vast, unexplored expanses of the sea and encountered these sleek, skillful creatures who display signs of thinking, feeling and loving, seemingly possessing two of our favorite human qualities: compassion and joie de vivre. It is hard to ignore the many ways in which they are like us. Indeed, the very name *dolphin* comes from the Greek word for “womb,” referring to their human-like way of giving birth. Like humans, dolphins live in tight-knit social groups, or “pods,” and nurture their young with great care and investment of time. Each dolphin has a unique voice signature and they communicate through a sophisticated system of clicks and whistles that appears to function as a language. They are adept tool users, a skill once thought to be possessed by humans alone; and, in the very fabric of our bodies, scientists have discovered that humans and dolphins share a surprising number of genetic traits.

Given all these affinities, it is not surprising that dolphins have intrigued humans in a special way since early history. Stories abound of ancient mariners protected and guided by dolphins. Prehistoric carvings of dolphins have turned up in South Africa, while in India, Hindus have long revered the river dolphin as a deity. The Greeks greeted dolphins as a divine sign of good omens, while the philosopher Aristotle closely studied their behavior. Roman coins depicted a boy riding on the back of a dolphin; and the Maori of New Zealand called dolphins “the human beings of the sea.”

To this day, dolphins remain the only wild animal known to regularly rescue human beings. In 2000, European newspapers reported that a 14 year-old Italian boy was saved by a dolphin when he accidentally tumbled from his father’s boat into the Adriatic Sea. The dolphin helped to push the drowning boy to his father’s grasp. In 2007, a surfer who was attacked by a great white shark in Monterey Bay reported to NBC’s “Today Show” that he was then encircled by a pod of bottlenose dolphins who kept the shark at bay, allowing him to survive despite his wounds.

Yet, for as long as dolphins have been admired and respected by humans, they have also been hunted. Archeologists have demonstrated that a number of coastal pre-historic cultures around the world viewed dolphins primarily as a vital, readily available food source and used primitive boats and weaponry to kill them for their meat.

In modern times, dolphins have found themselves pursued largely for another reason – they are at the center of a multibillion-dollar entertainment industry, which uses dolphins as performers in marine parks and shows. So prized is their intelligence that they have also been “deployed” by militaries, with both the U.S. and Soviet navies having attempted to train dolphins to set mines and attack ships.

But are dolphins our willing partners in such enterprises -- or are they being subjected to what amounts to an ethically troubling imprisonment? The topic remains highly controversial.

In general, dolphins are not well suited to life in captivity. Physically, they are prone to death and disease from capture shock, pneumonia, ulcers and chlorine poisoning at much higher rates than other marine life in captivity. But the possible psychological toll is even more concerning.

While living in the wild, a dolphin will regularly swim 40 miles a day, dive to several hundred feet below the ocean and interact with hundreds of pod-mates while hunting and foraging for live food. But in captivity, they can only swim in circles, dive a few dozen feet before hitting concrete, interact with a few dolphins with whom they are not bonded, and are forced to eat dead fish, which they sometimes will refuse. In the ocean, dolphins live in a world rich with sound; yet the sonar that works so well in the vastness of the undersea world is a liability in a small tank where it literally bounces off the walls, potentially causing further psychological trauma.

Despite their smiling facades, many captive dolphins show signs of depression and confusion, leading some to wonder just how well we can get to know them in captivity. Jacques Cousteau once opined: “There is about as much educational benefit to be gained in studying dolphins in captivity as there would be studying mankind by only observing prisoners held in solitary confinement.”

Humans have also impacted wild dolphins in subtler ways. Their world has been forever altered by the noxious industrial pollution that has poured into the world’s waterways in modern times. As a result, biologists have observed die-offs, disease increases and reduced reproductive rates – and autopsies have shown that many dolphins carry unhealthy amounts of toxins, ranging from mercury to PCBs, internally. Other human threats to dolphins include fishing nets that can entangle them, massive fisheries that deplete local stores of the fish on which they feed, noise pollution from military and shipping equipment and habitat degradation from climate change.

The world continues to have a love affair with dolphins. This smart, social species can't help but amaze and delight us by reminding us of the best parts of our own humanity. But our effect on dolphins also raises many vital questions about the human relationship with the wild and our stewardship of the planet. After all, one thing no one can deny is that human and dolphin fates will always be intimately linked in one way: the future of both our complex species depends on the health and rich diversity of our shared planet's oceans.

DOLPHINS, MERCURY AND TOXIC SEAFOOD

One of the incendiary secrets uncovered in *THE COVE* is that dolphin meat carries human health risks so potentially extreme that the public needs to be clearly and honestly informed about it. Studies of dolphin meat samples have demonstrated noteworthy contamination with mercury, methylmercury, cadmium, DDT and PCBs – a result of the dolphin's position at the top of an increasingly toxic food chain. Here are some facts about dolphins, mercury and toxic seafood:

- A recent international study showed that, on average, dolphin meat contains 5 times the maximum allowable level of mercury.
- Some samples of dolphin meat have shown mercury at more than 1000 times the maximum allowable levels. However, there are no known cases of mercury poisoning from eating dolphin meat that have been medically documented.
- Scenes in *THE COVE* demonstrate that dolphin meat has been packaged and sold as whale meat, misleading consumer as to its source and toxicity
- In October 2008, following the filming of *THE COVE*, dolphin meat was finally taken off the school lunch menu in Taiji
- Dolphins found dead in Australia in 2008 were found to have suffered severe neurological damage from mercury poisoning
- Mercury poisoning can damage the brain, kidneys and central nervous system. Infants exposed to high doses of mercury while in the womb are prone to higher rates of brain damage and developmental disorders. Studies have also linked mercury with cardiovascular disease, infertility and high blood pressure
- 75% of human mercury exposure comes from seafood consumption
- One of the worst incidents of mercury poisoning in contemporary history occurred in the Japanese town of Minamata in the 1950s and 60s. The Chisso petrochemical factory dumped an estimated 27 tons of mercury compounds in the bay, poisoning the fish which the locals eat as the linchpin of their diet. The mysterious illnesses – including numb limbs, slurred speech, palsy and blindness – and birth defects that resulted became known as “Minamata Disease” but were all a result of toxic mercury.
- Mercury builds up in ocean life through a process called bioaccumulation, in which repeated exposure to low-level toxins builds up to problematic levels over a lifetime
- Oceans become polluted with mercury when atmospheric emissions from coal and industrial plants are transported into the sea. Groundwater contamination is also a source of oceanic mercury
- Water samples in a 2006 USGS study showed a 30% increase in ocean mercury levels from 1990s levels

- A United Nations study in 2003 states that through the burning of fossil fuels, like coal and cement plants, mercury is rising in the environment at the rate of 1.5 – 3% per year

DOLPHIN FACTS

- Dolphins, a member of the cetacean family that also includes whales, have been on earth for about 55 million years. The ancestors of dolphins once lived on land and returned to the sea
- There are 32 species of ocean dolphin and 4 species of river dolphin
- Dolphins are among the most social creatures on the planet, living in family units known as “pods.” Orcas, the largest species of dolphin, stay with their mothers for life (another reason why it is problematic to separate them from their families in captivity.) Scientists have observed bonds between individual dolphins that have lasted a lifetime
- In the wild, dolphins have been observed aiding sick or injured members of their pod
- Among all the wild animals on earth, only dolphins have been known to come to a human’s rescue. There are numerous stories of dolphins aiding surfers and sailors throughout history
- Dolphins have a larger brain than human beings. The average bottlenosed dolphin brain is about 1500-1700 cc’s, while a human brain is about 1300-1400 cc’s. Even more impressive, the dolphin brain is more convoluted than a human brain, featuring more “folds” of grey matter, which biologists consider the best evidence of high intelligence
- Scientists theorize that dolphins need very large brains to use their highly sophisticated sonar, which allows them to essentially “see” with sound. The sonar is so powerful it can detect subtle differences in different metal coins from large distances or even a pregnant woman
- Dolphins can hear and communicate in a far larger range than humans can. Dolphin hearing ranges from about 75 hertz to over 150 kilohertz but most humans can only hear a much smaller spectrum of sound, from about 20 Hertz to 20 kilohertz. (Navy testing of sonic devices has been known to cause damage to the brains of cetaceans miles away from test areas.)
- A dolphin can dive up to 330 feet, or about 100 meters, on one breath of air, due to their hemoglobin-rich blood which allows them to store more than 10 times more oxygen than most mammals. Compare that to world-champion free diver Mandy Rae Cruickshank, who, through lots of training, can dive to 88 meters.
- Captive dolphins typically can learn around 90 commands in American Sign Language
- Human beings do not understand dolphin language. A dolphin can use both clicks and whistles to communicate in the same breath. Clicks are thought to be used primarily for echolocation and whistles for communication. Each dolphin has his or her own “signature” whistle
- A dolphin’s skin is a lot like human skin: extremely delicate and easily injured. Also like humans, dolphins suffer severe health consequences from the effects of stress

- Dolphin observers have noted that they display a wide range of emotions, including humor and compassion
- The primary enemy of dolphins is humankind.

THE COVE
SOCIAL ACTION CAMPAIGN: THE SECRET IS OUT

The chilling and emotional story of *The Cove* is likely to leave audiences wondering what they can do to help protect the dolphins of Japan, stop the sale of toxic seafood and preserve the environmental health of our spectacular oceans, which sustain the lives of not just dolphins, but also humans.

After seeing *The Cove* at the Sundance Film Festival, executives from Participant Media, whose mission is entertainment that inspires and compels social change, were eager to be involved with this film. Since its inception in 2004, Participant has been associated with such films as *Good Night and Good Luck*, *Syriana*, *Darfur Now*, *The Visitor*, *Food, Inc.* and the Academy Award © winning *An Inconvenient Truth*. For each of its films, Participant creates customized social action campaigns designed to give a voice to issues that resonate in the films by teaming with non-governmental organizations to offer specific ways for audience members to get involved.

Working closely with Louie and Ric, Participant developed a campaign for *The Cove* that provides audiences with the tools to take action, and dive deeper into the issues of saving Japan's dolphins, dolphins in captivity and as entertainment, mercury in seafood, and the crisis facing our oceans.

People can explore these initiatives by going to TakePart.com/TheCove or texting DOLPHIN TO 44144.

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

Louie Psihoyos

Director

Louie Psihoyos (rhymes with Sequoias) has been widely regarded as one of the top photographers in the world. He was hired directly out of college to shoot for *National Geographic* and created images for the yellow-bordered magazine for 18 years. His ability to bring humanity and wit to complicated science stories carries over to his filmmaking. An ardent diver and dive photographer, he feels compelled to show the world the decline of our planet's crucial resource, water.

He has been on contract for *Fortune Magazine* and shot hundreds of covers for other magazines including *Smithsonian*, *Discover*, *GEO*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, *The New York Times Magazine*, *New York Magazine*, *Sports Illustrated* and *Rock and Ice*. His work has also been seen on the Discovery Channel, National Geographic Television and the History Channel. Museums and private collectors around the world have sought Psihoyos' photography.

With Jim Clark, he created The Oceanic Preservation Society (OPS), in 2005. The non-profit organization provides an exclusive lens for the public and media to observe the beauty as well as the destruction of the oceans, while motivating change.

Fisher Stevens

Producer

Fisher Stevens is an actor, director and a producer. He has appeared in over 40 stage productions including the Tony award winning *Torch Song Trilogy*, *Brighton Beach Memoirs* and *Carousel*.

He has appeared in over 50 movies and television programs. Films include: *The Flamingo Kid*, *Short Circuit*, *The Marrying Man*, *Hackers*, *Reversal of Fortune*, *Awake* and the upcoming *Gringos in Rio*. On television he was a regular on CBS's *Early Edition* and *Key West*, and also appeared on *Friends*, *Frasier* and *Law and Order*; he recently produced and starred in the upcoming pilot for NBC *The Grean Teem*.

Fisher co-founded Naked Angels Theater in New York City, where he served as director, producer, or performer on over 30 productions. The company is still producing plays after 20 years.

In 1996, along with John Penotti, Fisher founded GreeneStreet Films where he directed *Just a Kiss* with Marisa Tomei, Kyra Sedgwick and Taye Diggs. He produced or executive-produced over 15 films including 5-time Academy Award nominated *In The Bedroom*, *Swimfan*, *Uptown Girls*, *A Prairie Home Companion*, the upcoming *Tenderness* with Russell Crowe and the critically acclaimed documentary *Once in a Lifetime*. Last year he produced and co-directed, along with Dan Klores, the Independent Spirit Award winner for best documentary *Crazy Love*. He is currently finishing the documentary *The Cove* which is in competition at this year's Sundance film festival.

Paula DuPré Pesmen

Producer

Paula DuPré Pesmen has worked for more than 16 years as an Associate Producer for filmmaker Chris Columbus and 1492 Pictures. During that time, she was a part of many successful feature film projects. In 2005, Paula took a sabbatical from her film career to found a non-profit, There With Care, which supports families with critically ill children. During her time as the Associate Producer on the first three Harry Potter Films, she was inspired by over 65 families of critically ill children through a program she started with director Chris Columbus welcoming them to the Potter sets for their wish.

During her sabbatical, Paula also began working as a producer with Oceanic Preservation Society in her hometown of Boulder with director Louie Psihoyos to bring his vision to the screen through his moving and beautiful film project.

Paula's film credits include: *Rent, Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban, Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets, Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone, Monkeybone, Bicentennial Man, Stepmom, Jingle All The Way, Nine Months, Mrs. Doubtfire, Home Alone 2: Lost in New York.*

Olivia Ahnemann

Co-Producer

Olivia Ahnemann has been a documentary film and television producer for more than 11 years. Her television credits include programs for PBS, National Geographic, Discovery, The Outdoor Life Network and Travel Channel. Olivia has been part of several independent films including Nama Productions' *Enlighten Up!* which recently premiered at the 2008 Maui Film Festival, *Behind the Scenes of Warren Miller's Higher Ground* for Warren Miller Entertainment. Currently she is producing a feature length documentary for the Oceanic Preservation Society, which is due to premiere in January 2009.

Mark Monroe

Writer

Mark Monroe wrote the critically-acclaimed Miramax/ESPN documentary *Once in a Lifetime: The Extraordinary Story of the New York Cosmos*. Directed & edited by Paul Crowder (editor of *Dogtown & Z-Boys* and *Riding Giants*), the film was released worldwide in theaters July 2006 and garnered Mark a W.G.A. nomination for "Best Documentary Script", January 2007. Mark also wrote "Amazing Journey: The Story of the Who", produced by Spitfire Pictures and VH1 Films. This documentary premiered at the 2007 Toronto Film Festival and is distributed worldwide by Universal Pictures. Currently, Mark recently directed the feature documentary *Morning Light*, produced by Roy Disney and released theatrically by The Walt Disney Company October 17th, 2008.

Mark's first original narrative screenplay, *The Fourth Day of Christmas*, was chosen as a finalist at the Austin Film Festival and his short film, "Mutzie's Wedding", which he produced, directed and edited, won the Audience Award for Best Documentary Short at the Austin Film Festival.

Mark started out as a journalist writing the nightly news for CNN. He's produced more than 50 hours of documentary-style television, including programs for Discovery, The Learning Channel, Fox Sports Net, Lifetime & The Outdoor Life Network.

Geoffrey Richman

Editor

Geoffrey Richman is the award-winning editor of *Murderball* and *Sicko*, the 2006 and 2008

Academy Award® nominees for Best Feature Documentary. For his work on *Murderball*, Geoffrey won the first-ever Special Jury Prize for Editing at the Sundance Film Festival, where the film also won the Audience Award for Best Documentary. The following year, Geoffrey returned to Sundance with a film he edited, *God Grew Tired of Us*, which won both the Grand Jury Prize and the Audience Award. Other credits include *The Order of Myths*, *Peter and Vandy*, *If I Didn't Care*, *21 Up America*, and documentary and reality programming for a variety of networks including Showtime, Discovery Channel, TLC, Oxygen, The Food Network, and PBS.

J. Ralph

Composer

J. Ralph has no formal training and does not read or write a single note of music. Drawing no distinction between art and commerce he relies solely on intuition and experimentation to create his music. A self-taught composer, recording artist and producer from New York City, his professional career began at 22 with the signing to the prestigious Lava/Atlantic Records by label president Jason Flom. In what was one of the biggest record deals ever granted to a new artist. J. Ralph's first album MUSIC TO MAUZER BY took over a year to record and was released February 23rd 1999. A musical Rorschach test, it was sonic blender of rock, hip-hop, mariachi, electronic, blue eyed soul, funk, and classical. Music critic Charles M. Young considered the album "truly an important debut."

Weeks after the release, amidst critical acclaim and MTV billing him the next big thing, J. Ralph disappeared into a self-imposed exile. He took refuge in an abandoned vaudeville theater in lower Manhattan, where he constructed a sonic laboratory and carried out a full-scale excavation of what he calls "the orchestra's universal language." Five years later he emerged with, *the Illusionary Movement's of Geraldine and Nazu*; an orchestral memoir recorded with a 75-piece orchestra, featuring players from the New York and Czech Philharmonics. Master film composer Carter Burwell conducted and arranged the first two chapters *Untitled 17* and *Where the Day Takes You*. Released in an unprecedented artist direct deal with Barnes and Noble, the store sold every copy.

J. Ralph is the founder of the award winning music production company and scoring collective, The Rumor Mill. Intent on conquering corporate America 30 seconds at a time, they create scores, songs and musical identities for films, artists, and brands. The Rumor Mill is considered by the advertising industry an authority on tastemaker music and counts most of the fortune 500 companies as their clients. Internationally recognized, they have won every top honor and award. Their music has been featured in the biggest televisions advertising events in the world including The Olympics, The Academy Awards, The Grammys, The Emmys, The World Series and The Super Bowl.

Mr. Ralph believes the orchestra is the ultimate medium boundless in philosophy and universal in scope. His most recent film scoring credits include the Academy Award® winning Philippe Petit Documentary *Man On Wire*. He is the only composer ever to win two consecutive A.I.C.P. awards and his scores are included in the Museum of Modern Art's Permanent collection of film and video in New York City.

ABOUT THE TEAM

Richard O'Barry

Marine Mammal Specialist, Earth Island Institute

Richard O'Barry has worked both sides of the dolphin street, the first 10 years with the dolphin captivity industry, the past 38 against it.

Working back in the 1960s for Miami Seaquarium, O'Barry captured and trained dolphins, including the five dolphins who played the role of Flipper in the popular American TV-series of the same name. When Kathy, the dolphin who played Flipper most of the time, died in his arms, O'Barry realized that capturing dolphins and training them to perform silly tricks is simply wrong.

From that moment on, O'Barry knew what he must do with his life. On the first Earth Day, 1970, he founded the Dolphin Project, dedicated to freeing captive dolphins who were viable candidates and educating people throughout the world to the plight of dolphins in captivity. He launched a searing campaign against the multi-billion dollar dolphin captivity industry, telling the public what was really going on at dolphin shows and urging people not to buy tickets to see dolphins play the fool.

O'Barry has rescued and released more than 25 captive dolphins in Haiti, Colombia, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Brazil, the Bahamas Islands and the United States. His more than 45 years of experience with dolphins and his firsthand knowledge about the methods used to capture and train them has taken him all over the world to participate in lectures and conferences about the controversial dolphin captivity issue. As he knew it would, this created a lot of hostility toward him by those who stood to profit from the continued exploitation of dolphins.

"They're in this for money. Take it away, and they'll quit doing this," O'Barry says and adds: "Dolphins are free-ranging, intelligent, and complex wild animals, and they belong in the oceans, not playing the clown in our human schemes."

To recognize his contribution, in 1991 O'Barry received the 'Environmental Achievement Award' presented by the United States Committee for the United Nations Environmental Program (US/UNEP).

His book, [Behind the Dolphin Smile](#), was published in 1989. A second book, [To Free A Dolphin](#), was published in September 2000. Both of them are about his work and dedication.

O'Barry is a Fellow National in The Explorers Club, a multidisciplinary society that links together scientists and explorers from all over the world. Each member is an accomplished individual with at least one fascinating story to tell.

In January, 2007, O'Barry became the Marine Mammal Specialist for Earth Island Institute and Director of Save Japan Dolphins coalition: <http://www.savejapandolphins.org>

Simon Hutchins

Director of Expeditions

Simon Hutchins spent 7 years in the Canadian Air Force as an avionics technician eventually being posted from his home in Toronto to Vancouver Island. During the years spent on the Island he developed an interest in sailing and diving. After leaving the CAF in 1994 Simon pursued a career in yachting and diving.

Born in England in 1962, he emigrated to Canada in 1967. An avid athlete, he has played ice hockey and golf as well as racing his road bike in many of the premier cycling events in British Columbia. When not on an expedition, Simon still enjoys getting out on the golf course.

Qualified as a British Marine Coastguard Agency Master of Yachts, Simon is a qualified officer on the OPS flagship Athena. As an IANTD Dive Master, he also serves as Athena's dive expedition manager. He is qualified on an array of technical scuba equipment, including being a Rebreather Instructor, and member of the 2008 Canadian Freediving Team. The skills learned working on high tech aircraft systems, along with his sailing and diving qualifications create a unique set of abilities well suited to organize and maintain the expeditions. He currently lives on his 48 foot sailing yacht "Scaramouche II", an old German Frers designed racing yacht built by Palmer Johnson in 1977.

Mandy-Rae Cruickshank

FreeDiver

Mandy is a world renowned female athlete combining grit and grins. She holds numerous world records for freediving, holding her breath underwater for extended periods of time and diving to great depths. Her mermaid-like skills have brought her media much attention - she has been featured on the Discovery Channel, Good Morning America, Explore Magazine, Men's Health and Fitness, Outside Magazine among others. She was prominent during David Blaine's 2-hour ABC special, *Drowned Alive*, in May of 2006, when she rescued the endurance artist from his highly visible underwater stunt. She also appeared in *The Mermaid Chair* with Kim Basinger on The Lifetime Channel. She competes and trains others in freediving year round.

For OPS, she has served as a graceful underwater reminder of human presence in the sea, slipping effortlessly through reefs and sea canyons with ease. Her iconic open-arm gesture of receiving that she offered to the massive whales serves as visual reminder of her beauty and skill.

Kirk Crack

FreeDiver

Kirk Crack is a professional freediving educator, trainer, coach and entrepreneur. He is considered one of the world's foremost authorities on the professional aspects of freediving education, instruction and safety. Along with his wife Mandy Rae, he has assisted in capturing much of OPS' underwater footage.

His ability to spend extended time alongside sealife, without the use of distracting equipment makes him an asset to the team. He has worked for OPS in the Cocos Islands, the Dominican Republic, Hawaii, The Bahamas, the Cayman Islands and Tahiti. Also, in Japan, he and his wife bravely assisted setting underwater recording devices in the infamous killing cove, eluding guards and police.

David Rastovich

Freesurfer

As a traveling free surfer David is part of an aspect of the surfing world that embraces a wholistic attitude and maintains an intimate relationship with our environment.

Traveling through a multitude of cultures and seascapes, experiencing waves with whales and dolphins has lead him to an awareness of the interconnected nature of all life, and the delicate systems that allow this network of life to exist. It is this divine play of forces that has inspired him to co-create Surfers for Cetaceans in the hope of maintaining the balance within the oceans of this planet.

His hope also is to ignite human compassion for the Cetacean Nation and spread the joy that he feels every time he shares waves with the “people of the sea.”

Scott Baker

DNA Scientist

Scott Baker is Associate Director of the Marine Mammal Institute, Oregon State University, in Newport, Oregon, and adjunct Professor of Molecular Ecology and Evolution in the School of Biological Sciences at the University of Auckland, New Zealand.

Scott has been involved in the study of whales and dolphins for nearly 30 years, starting as an undergraduate student at New College, in Sarasota, Florida (graduated 1977) and continuing with his PhD at the University of Hawaii (completed 1985). He has acted as a delegate to the Scientific Committee of the International Whaling Commission for New Zealand or the US since 1994, and is a member of the Cetacean Specialist Group of IUCN - the World Conservation Union. He is also a member of the Society for Marine Mammal Sciences, the Royal Society of New Zealand and, since 2007, is editor-in-chief of the *Journal of Heredity*, which just celebrated publication of its 100th volume. Scott's research includes both molecular and individual-based approaches to the basic and applied investigation of evolutionary pattern and process in whales and dolphins, particularly their abundance, population structure, genetic diversity and systematic relationships. His interest in the conservation of whales and dolphins lead to the first molecular surveys of 'whalemeat' markets in Japan in 1993.

One of Scott's recent initiatives has been to establish a web-based program for molecular identification of whales, dolphins and porpoises, www.dna-surveillance.auckland.ac.nz. As a result of developing a comprehensive collection of DNA samples, he helped discover a new species of beaked whales, *Mesoplodon perrini*. Scott's current research includes: demographic and genetic impacts of whaling; molecular taxonomy and applied bioinformatics for species discovery and wildlife forensics; molecular monitoring of meat from protected whales sold in commercial markets of Japan and Korea; and population structure and genetic diversity of whales, dolphins, sea lions and fur seals, including the New Zealand endemic Hector's and Maui's dolphins and New Zealand sea lion.

The website for the Marine Mammal Institute, Hatfield Marine Science Center, is: <http://oregonstate.edu/groups/marinemammal/>

Brooke Aitken

Cinematographer

Aitken is a second generation director of photography. His major influence has been his father, Len, who shot multiple documentaries, including several Emmy winners. Brooke attended CU Film School and received a BFA in film production. He shoots mainly extreme sports, documentaries, music videos, and feature films. His clients include Nike, Jordan brand, Toyota, Warren miller films, National Geographic, and The Discovery Channel. He was a professional skier and kayaker. Aitken has shot in the jungles of Central America, the cliffs of Japan, and

mountain tops in Alaska. His photography has had him hanging from helicopters, dangling off waterfalls...Classic adrenalin junkie behavior.

Charles Hambleton

Clandestine Operations

Charles was born in Miami, Florida. His father worked for Pan American Airlines, so he grew up all over the world. He studied English at Roanoke College in Virginia and Environmental Microbiology at University of Vermont. He moved to Boulder, Colorado to play music and recorded and toured extensively. Leaving the music business in 1991, he moved to London, and then to Antigua, West Indies where he still resides. Charles has worked as a dive master, commercial diver, and sailor and with treasure hunter Scott Mitchen. Together they have discovered numerous wrecks around the Caribbean and began to salvage old growth hardwood from the Great Lakes. He is a re-breather diver, has a private pilots license, and a 200 ton Yacht Master ticket. Back in Antigua, he worked on many commercials & local film productions, and also with the Marine Department on location for the "Pirates of the Caribbean" movies. Charles also met Louie Psihoyos in Antigua, and for more than 10 years he has worked with Louie on many photography assignments. Now, with OPS, they continue work on their upcoming movie. In rare spare time he races his wooden sloop "Summer Cloud" throughout the Caribbean.

Joseph Chisholm

Unit Production Manager

As the overseer of all facets of production, Joe Chisholm's contribution to the OPS team is varied, yet critical. He looks after the gear and the guys. His 10-year stint overseeing large-scale events in the music and festival industry has made him indispensable in the studio, and on location. Whether it's managing a mountain of gear's transport, or securing a cameraman to a tree, he silently gives blood, sweat and tears, and then some. He is one of the men behind the magic who makes sense of the chaos. His many years of sailing in the Caribbean have established a love and respect for the oceans and the importance of their preservation. He is a certified open water and rebreather diver and EMT. He is an alumnus of the University of Colorado at Boulder, where he received a BA in philosophy and Native American religious studies.

Greg "Moondog" Mooney

Marine Technician

Greg brings a wealth of technical diving expertise to the Oceanic Preservation Society. Qualified as a NAUI scuba instructor, he is also an Advanced Nitrox Instructor, Nitrox Instructor Trainer, Hyperbaric Chamber Instructor, Gas Blending Instructor and Full Trimix Certified Diver. He has spent 16 years in the dive industry, including 12 years as a high pressure life support system designer and mixed gas blending technician. His roles include purchasing, organizing and maintaining the Society's dive gear and getting the film crews in and out of the water safely. Greg also acts as safety diver during expeditions.

During some of the more adventurous expeditions, Greg's advanced knowledge of diving is crucial in planning. A keen underwater videographer, 'Moondog' as he is commonly known, is always helpful in exploring new camera techniques with the director and helping the cameramen master the diving techniques necessary to create more interesting footage.

Born in Newport Beach, California, into a yachting family, Greg lived in California and throughout Europe in his youth. Greg's initial interest in diving was sparked by free diving sessions in Greece. Moving to Fort Lauderdale in 1975, Greg has grown up around the largest

yachting community in the United States and is an addition to the Athena crew when on expedition.

When not on an expedition, Greg runs a yacht dive equipment outfitting and support company in Fort Lauderdale, Florida called Moondog Dive Outfitters.

Participant Media

Social Action

Participant Media is responsible for developing and implementing the social action campaign for *The Cove*.

Participant Media is a Los Angeles-based entertainment company that focuses on socially relevant, commercially viable feature films, documentaries and television, as well as publishing and digital media. Participant Media is headed by CEO Jim Berk and was founded in 2004 by philanthropist Jeff Skoll, who serves as Chairman. Ricky Strauss is President.

Participant exists to tell compelling, entertaining stories that bring to the forefront real issues that shape our lives. For each of its projects, Participant creates extensive social action and advocacy programs which provide ideas and tools to transform the impact of the media experience into individual and community action. Participant's films include *The Kite Runner*, *Charlie Wilson's War*, *Darfur Now*, *An Inconvenient Truth*, *Good, Night and Good Luck.*, *Syriana*, *Standard Operating Procedure*, *The Visitor*, *The Soloist* and *Food, Inc.*