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FILMED OVER 25 YEARS, INTIMATE COMING-OF-AGE DOCUMENTARY “SAM NOW” TO PREMIERE ON PBS’S INDEPENDENT LENS MAY 8, 2023

January 11, 2023

Documentary Explores Generational Trauma, Relationships, and Healing Through the Story of Sam Harkness on His Journey from Age 11 to 36 after His Mother Suddenly Goes Missing

(San Francisco, CA) January 11, 2023 — From filmmaker Reed Harkness comes the new documentary “Sam Now,” a deeply personal story about two film-obsessed brothers and their quest to find their missing mom. In the film, Harkness captures his half brother Sam Harkness from age 11 through 36 as their once-average, middle-class Seattle family finds themselves heartbroken and unsure of what to do when his mother suddenly leaves them. The result is a mosaic of love, longing, and loss, as well as an attempt to overcome generational trauma.

“Sam Now” will make its television debut on PBS’s Emmy Award-winning documentary anthology series INDEPENDENT LENS on May 8, 2023, at 10:00 p.m. ET (check local listings). The film will also be available to stream on the PBS app.

Shooting on nearly every camera format imaginable—from Super 8, Super 16, VHS, MiniDV, HD, and 4K Arri Digital Cinema—Sam and Reed set out to make a film as they travel thousands of miles looking for their missing mom. But as time passes and their journey escalates, the fun-loving brothers begin to learn more about their family’s past and grapple with the effects of generational trauma. Solving the mystery of his mom’s disappearance is only the beginning of their story.

The documentary uses a hybrid narrative approach, drawing from Harkness’ vast archive of fictional films starring Sam, home videos, intimate family interviews and vérité scenes from over the span of 25 years. Reed blends

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sobering revelations with playful home movies, resulting in vibrant experimental filmmaking all while the brothers search for answers. Along the way, viewers see a young Sam come of age before their eyes, learn of Sam's mother Jois' complicated adoption history, and experience the ripple effects on the Harkness family, including Sam's brother Jared, father Randy, and grandma Doris.

"When I began filming Sam in 1997, as a teen myself, I had no idea what I was doing. I was feeling very raw about growing up. I wanted to do a project about coming-of-age that resonated with me, so I channeled that energy into making short films with my 11-year old brother, Sam," said filmmaker Reed Harkness. "'Sam Now' begins with us making films together and then dives deeper, as we grow up, into the greater story of grief, abandonment, and revelation. From playful and experimental fiction films to vérité footage to raw and honest interviews with our family, I wanted 'Sam Now' to be a portrait of life and growth—one that balances heavy themes and emotional reckonings with the lighthearted spirit of filmmaking that started us on this journey many years ago. The result is truly the film I always wanted to make. It's more or less a life's work. I hope that anyone who watches 'Sam Now' can find a piece of themselves in it. I am excited and proud to share my family story and my world with you."

Without judgment, the film also explores the complex reasons behind a mother leaving her family, and the fallout, questioning, and heartbreak for those who were left behind. "Sam Now" is a remarkable story of family, love, longing, loss, and trauma, told with the perspective and wisdom gained only through the passage of time.

The film has earned 10 total awards on the film festival circuit, including Best Documentary at the Zurich Film Festival, Bend Film Festival, Indie Memphis Film Festival, SCAD Savannah Film Festival, and Santa Cruz Film Festival. It was also nominated for Best Editing at the IDA Documentary Awards and is nominated by the Seattle Film Critics Society for their award for Achievement in Pacific Northwest Filmmaking.

"Sam Now" received Open Call funding from ITVS. Visit the "[Sam Now](#)" page on INDEPENDENT LENS to learn more about the film.

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS:**Reed Harkness (Director/Producer)**

Reed attended 'film school' in his backyard and garage. At age 18, he began making a series of short films starring his younger brother Sam. This was the beginning of a project two decades in the making: "Sam Now," a coming-of-age film that follows his brother from age 11 to 36. Reed also directed the award-winning 30-minute documentary "Forest On Fire" about the 2017 wildfire in the Columbia River Gorge, started by a teen who threw a lit firecracker off a hiking trail—stranding more than 150 hikers—and how, much like wildfire, a news story can spin out of control.

Jason Reid (Producer/Editor)

Jason Reid is an award-winning editor, producer, and director from Seattle. He directed and produced the Emmy Award-winning "Man Zou: Beijing to Shanghai" and the Webby Award-winning "Sonicsgate: Requiem for a Team." He recently produced and edited "Dirtbag: The Legend of Fred Beckey," which won 26 awards at film festivals around the world, alongside numerous other acclaimed documentary features and shorts over the past decade.

CREDITS

Director	Reed Harkness
Producer	Jason Reid
Executive Producer(s)	Sally Jo Fifer Lois Vossen

Visit the INDEPENDENT LENS [website](#) for more information.

ABOUT INDEPENDENT LENS

INDEPENDENT LENS is an Emmy® Award-winning weekly series, airing on PBS Monday nights at 10:00 p.m. ET. The acclaimed series, with Lois Vossen as executive producer, features documentaries united by the creative freedom, artistic achievement, and unflinching visions of independent filmmakers. Presented by ITVS, the series is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a private corporation funded by the American people, with additional funding from PBS, Action Family Giving, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Wyncote Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts. For more visit pbs.org/independentlens. Join the conversation on

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ABOUT ITVS

ITVS is a San Francisco-based nonprofit organization that has, for over 25 years, funded and partnered with a diverse range of documentary filmmakers to produce and distribute untold stories. ITVS incubates and co-produces these award-winning films, and then airs [them](#) for free on PBS via our weekly series, INDEPENDENT LENS, as well as on other PBS series, and through our digital platform, OVEE. ITVS is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, The National Endowment for the Humanities: American Rescue Plan, Acton Family Giving, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the Ford Foundation, and Wyncote Foundation. For more information, visit itvs.org.

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