



the IMMORTALISTS

live forever ... or die trying

A STRUCTURE FILMS PRODUCTION IN ASSOCIATION WITH DOGPATCH FILMS "THE IMMORTALISTS"

MAIN TITLE DESIGNER	KINDA AKASH	ANIMATION	TOROS KOSE	EDITOR	ANNUKKA LILJA	CINEMATOGRAPHY BY	DAVID ALVARADO
PRODUCERS	KATE MCLEAN, TODD A. BOYD-TOPE, FRED & RICHARD HOY					ORIGINAL SCORE	ERIC ANDREW KUHN
SOUND DESIGNER	PETER ALBRECHTSEN, IMPSE	EXECUTIVE PRODUCER	CHUCK BRAVERMAN	DIRECTED BY	DAVID ALVARADO & JASON SUSSBERG		



INTRODUCTION:

In this critically acclaimed feature documentary, two eccentric scientists struggle to create eternal youth in a world they call “blind to the tragedy of old age.” Their scientific journeys ultimately become personal as they battle their own aging and suffer the losses of loved ones.

CLASSROOM USE:

After graduating film school with only a handful of short films in their repertoire, the directors immediately began working on their first feature documentary. It was a quantum leap going from the classroom environment of short film production to producing a full-length film without the necessary equipment, feature doc fundraising experience, or a realistic understanding of the wide array of challenges involved in directing a long-form documentary. What they learned during their three years of producing and directing is recounted in their classroom discussion. This is a guide for students who themselves will soon be launched into the world of independent film production. Invite the filmmakers out to your class for a lively and entertaining guest lecture and screening. Email us for more info at david@structurefilms.com.



PRESS QUOTES:

This sly documentary rises above its speculative hook by shifting to show the very human, and very mortal, sides of these would-be warriors of eternity.

— [New York Times](#)

The Immortalists is a brilliantly bizarre, endearingly quaint, and fascinating documentary about the eccentric scientific community trying to make life eternal.

— [Huffington Post](#)

An absorbing documentary... top ten most anticipated films at SXSW.

— [Indiewire](#)

A very well-mounted film, with outstanding contributions in Alvarado's cinematography and Eric Andrew Kuhn's subtly expressive score.

— [Roger Ebert.com](#)

Beautifully constructed... very reminiscent of Errol Morris' Fast, Cheap, and Out of Control. Yep, it's that good... The Immortalists is fascinating from start to finish.

— [Pretty Clever Films](#)

PROF QUOTES:

The Immortalists is an excellent teaching resource from two emerging filmmakers. David and Jason's real world experience of completing a feature-length film with just a two-person crew is an insightful education in and of itself.

— Jamie Meltzer,
Documentary Film and Video Production,
Stanford University

It was extremely educational for the doc students to hear first hand from someone who has just been in their shoes. The filmmakers' advice was extremely valuable to understand that making a film is as difficult as owning a small business.

— Dorottya Mathe,
Documentary School at the
New York Film Academy

How does the first documentary feature of two filmmakers, straight out of grad school, become a festival favorite and have an Academy qualifying release? In the case of THE IMMORTALISTS it's two filmmakers with the willingness to go on the crazy adventure of following an unfolding story coupled with the talent to craft that material into a work of art.

— Deirdre Fishel,
New School for Public Engagement



CONVERSATION GUIDE

PREPRODUCTION

A documentary is partially scripted and partially discovered, but how can you be sure you are making the best decisions and appropriately adjusting the idea as it develops during research and grant writing? There are many questions you must ask yourself while you take the first steps, but you must also be willing to move forward without having all the answers. With crushing student loan debt and minimal personal resources, David and Jason were still able to begin this expensive three year journey and come out with their heads above water. Most documentaries never get finished-- carefully vetting your idea and rigorous preproduction will set you on the right path.

Optional Conversations:

- Scripting, structure, film language and style
- Ideas, brainstorming
- Thinking critically about fundraising
- Failing often, but failing early
- Researching: read everything, watch other films, stock footage
- Writing proposals, not just for grants
- Budgeting
- Obtaining exclusive releases and agreements

PRODUCTION

Once you have your idea and have made your plan, you essentially have to build a small company. You have to purchase equipment, hire the right talent, raise and spend money appropriately, and take financial risks every time you shoot in the field. The Immortalists crew consisted of only the directors, using low cost equipment, while the filmmakers slept on couches during traveling production, and yet the film competed in festivals and theaters with Hollywood blockbusters.

There is no exact formula for success, but there are ways that you can make sure your film is working for you, while you are working for it. How do you know that you are following the right storylines with your characters? Dramatic moments unfolding in real time can be too evanescent to capture. But are there ways of knowing how to articulate (even to yourself) what you are looking for in your film without missing new opportunities?

Optional Conversations:

- Feature production
- Style and sensibility
- Interviews, action and sit down
- Rapport and relationship building with the characters
- Minimal gear/equipment
- Keeping costs down, making money while working on the film



CONVERSATION GUIDE

POSTPRODUCTION

Is the footage what you imaged during preproduction or something entirely different? How can you maintain critical distance while retaining directorial vision? The Immortalists originally had four main characters, and later the filmmakers reduced the subjects to two in a ruthless effort to allow the best footage and storylines to guide the film. Losing beloved shots and scenes became common place in order to preserve the story and character development, allowing the film become the best it could be.

The costs of color correction, sound design and scoring was a terrifying hailstorm of expenses and technical problems, which could only be weathered by careful decisions, foresight and some clever fundraising.

Optional Conversations:

- String out assembly (the ugly duckling)
- Building and editing scenes (micro)
- Planning a structure (macro)
- Pickup production during post-production
- Choosing style and language
- Sound design, mixing
- Animation, graphics

DISTRIBUTION AND EXHIBITION

Surprisingly, the most shocking revelation for David and Jason while creating their first feature out of film school was the costs and tactics necessary to take a fully finished film and get it into the world. It was was like closing a coffee shop and opening a meth lab. There were many surprises: the politics of film festivals, the absorbent costs of publicity and advertising, and the cut throat, sometimes dirty business of cutting your film's distribution rights to different distributors. What's the point of making mass media if it's not seen by the masses?! And how can you be content with handing your film to a distributor unless you know that you will see some money for all your hard work?

Optional Conversations:

- Festivals
- Theatrical
- Community screenings
- Piecemeal distribution contracts: VOD, theatrical, education, straight-to-consumer
- Publicity
- Social media

CONCLUSION

The entire three year experience of creating The Immortalists was totally eye-opening for David and Jason. Bring this entertaining and informative filmmaking duo to your classroom or community event to share their experience. Through lively discussion and entertaining stories from the battlefield, they hope to both inspire and instill realistic expectations to their fellow aspiring filmmakers. David and Jason are available in person and via skype. Contact david@structurefilms.com today to find out more.