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I AM GRETA

A Hulu Original Documentary

World Premieres September 4, 2020
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Directed by Nathan Grossman
Produced by Cecilia Nessen and Fredrik Heinig



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LOGLINE

The story of teenage climate activist Greta Thunberg is told through compelling, never-before-seen footage in this documentary following her rise to prominence and her global impact as she sparks school strikes and protests around the world.

SHORT SYNOPSIS

The story of teenage climate activist Greta Thunberg is told through compelling, never-before-seen footage in this intimate documentary from Swedish director Nathan Grossman. Starting with her one-person school strike for climate action outside the Swedish Parliament, Grossman follows Greta—a shy student with Asperger's—in her rise to prominence and her galvanizing global impact as she sparks school strikes around the world. The film culminates with her extraordinary wind-powered voyage across the Atlantic Ocean to speak at the UN Climate Action Summit in New York City.

SYNOPSIS

In 2018, 15-year-old Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg held a school strike outside her country's Parliament building in Stockholm. At first she sat alone, handing out information and answering questions from passersby. Slowly, others began to join her—and within months she had sparked a worldwide movement.

Directed by **Nathan Grossman**, *I AM GRETA* offers a personal and inspiring glimpse inside Greta's path to becoming an internationally known environmental activist. Shot in the style of *cinéma vérité* and with support from the Thunberg family, cameras capture Greta's meetings with government leaders, headline-making public appearances, and global protests. But they also depict Greta's life outside of the moments visible on news channels worldwide: laughing at home with her family, writing impassioned speeches, and trying to handle the mounting stress of nonstop travel, public scrutiny and becoming the face of the climate change cause.

Greta, who has Asperger's Syndrome, impresses everyone from UN delegates, to Pope Francis, to Hollywood A-listers with her intricate knowledge of climate issues and unwavering dedication. However, as Greta's celebrity grows, so does her frustration with politicians who don't heed her warnings about climate change. As someone who thrives on routines and appreciates solitude, the unpredictable schedule and global visibility takes its toll. Greta's father, Svante, travels alongside his daughter and becomes deeply concerned by the hateful words—and even death threats—aimed at her by pundits, politicians and climate-change deniers.

The film culminates with Greta's arduous two-week journey by sailboat to the UN Climate Action Summit in New York City, where she's greeted by crowds chanting her name. (Greta stopped flying because of the high emissions caused by air travel.) Today, her #FridaysForFuture movement has organised climate strikes on every continent except Antarctica. As she tells the UN, "The world is waking up, and change is coming whether you like it or not."

A STATEMENT FROM GRETA THUNBERG

"I really like the film and I think it gives a realistic image of myself and my daily life. I hope anyone who watches the film can finally understand that we young people aren't school striking just for fun. We are protesting because we don't have a choice. A lot has of course happened since I started school striking, but sadly we are still stuck on square one. The changes and the level of awareness needed are nowhere to be seen today. All that we ask for is for our society to treat the climate crisis as a crisis, and give us a safe future. I think the film shows just how far that is from happening right now. It shows that the urgency of the scientific message isn't getting through."

- Greta Thunberg

A CONVERSATION WITH DIRECTOR NATHAN GROSSMAN

It's incredible to see Greta evolve from her one-person protests in Sweden into a global icon. How did you first hear about her?

A friend of mine had met the Thunberg family, and they had told him Greta was planning to do a sit-down strike to protest for the climate because she felt that no one was doing anything. The national election was coming up in Sweden and she wanted to show how important this issue was. We stayed in the background and thought we could shoot a day or two and see what happened.

I saw her sitting by herself with a sign and asked if I could put a mic on her and follow her for the day. I told her, "Look, we don't really know what to do with this. Maybe we can do a short (film), or maybe we can do a series on different child activists, and you can be one of them." And then things went so quickly: Just during that day, people started to stop by and ask questions, and she was very articulate.

After three weeks, she decided to continue past the election, striking every Friday. Suddenly, the movement was starting to spread to other parts of Sweden, then it was in Finland and Denmark. We had been filming for a month. I said I wanted to work with this full time and see if it could be a piece about this movement and about her. I was just so interested in her and her personal story.

Was it difficult to get such close access to Greta and her family?

I'm a documentary filmmaker and my background is in cinematography, and during that first week I was so mesmerized by her expressions that I just wanted to take that camera from the tripod and sit with her on the street. So we started doing that, and we had more discussions. She was very shy, but I could understand that as long as we were

discussing topics she was interested in, that was something that she wanted to do. I think she and her father figured that we had the same point of view and interest in climate change, and that was the beginning of our friendship. When they started to travel to other countries, I told them that I would like to come with them. I think they felt that I was a person who was easy to be with.

Did you have a crew with you, or were you by yourself?

The entire film is 99% shot by me, and I would say that the sound is 95% taken by me. I was just this one-man band. In the beginning there was no budget, and especially when I start a project, I try not to bring in too many people. This took off so quickly, and I decided to keep shooting alone, even though it was tough with so much going on and as the pace became quicker and quicker. It's hard to be the director, sound technician, and cinematographer.

What sort of challenges did you run into?

The first issue was trying to wrap my head around how I wanted to tell the story. In the beginning, it was so hard to know: Is Greta going to be a lead figure in this movement, or is this film going to be more *about* the movement? I solved that issue with the feeling that my camera was drawn towards Greta. She has this special perspective on the world. She wasn't interested in always framing things nicely and being polite.

Getting into these meetings with high-profile leaders was another challenge. And the entire thing was made practically without flying (back home from the US I eventually did - one sailing trip over the Atlantic was enough). It took so much time traveling with them by electric car and train, often not knowing if I was even going to get into any events in the end.

Incredibly, you also sail across the Atlantic with Greta to New York.

When she told me about her invitation to go to the U.S., I said that I'd love to go with her, because I felt like that would be an ultimate end to the story. We were so deep into the narrative, I wanted to have a camera on the boat. It wasn't an easy decision for me to go with her, because it takes a few weeks sailing over and I know it would be rough. But even though I was scared of going, I felt like that was what the story deserved.

Some moments aren't easy to watch, like when Greta is having a tough time toward the end of the boat trip or when she's reading hateful comments made about her on social media. Why did you think it was important to include those in the film?

I'm very impressed with Greta, but of course I needed to show the full spectrum of what her activism is, which is that there are bad days and there are good days. I felt like this is a really important part of the story, and I talked to Greta about that.

I said, "I need to be able to follow you guys when it's not comfortable. Of course you can say, 'We want you to stop shooting' or 'Leave the room.'" But I wanted to capture the fullness of how it feels being Greta and being an activist dealing with this very hard issue.

Has Greta seen the film?

Yes. I think her biggest reaction was she felt very weird seeing herself on screen, which I totally understand. She's not doing this to become a celebrity, she's doing it to tell the story of climate change and get her message out.

Greta said to me once that she was afraid she wouldn't recognize herself in the film, that I would make her into someone else. When she watched the film, she said she recognized herself. It was a pivotal moment hearing her say that. It felt like I had achieved what she hoped for, in the sense that the portrait of this crazy year was true to her.

What is it about Greta that you think has resonated so strongly with people around the world?

It's timing, in the sense that I think the world has waited for someone to express frustration on the topic of climate change for a long time now. Nothing has happened, this panic is rising. And as you see in the film, she has this way to express it that just syncs with where climate change is at the moment. The years of constructive, creative, happy thinking ... we've had those years, and we've had those figures. Now we're moving into a period when the situation doesn't look like that anymore. Also, there's her backstory and her Asperger's diagnosis. I think people can relate to her.

What else do you want viewers to know about GRETA?

This isn't as much a portrait of Greta, as it is a documentary about this crazy year that she had - it's a movie which brings you into the eye of the storm. The way the influence of Greta and the youth climate movement grew in just one year is really quite crazy, and historic I think. So I'm really happy to get to take the viewers with me on this journey, in the public and private sphere, in Sweden and in Europe, and on the Atlantic Ocean!

I had to hunch my back for two years shooting the film because I wanted to be on Greta's eye level. The point of view is hers, and it's her own words. I've made it from her perspective as much as I've been able to.

How do you think Covid-19 has affected Greta and the climate strike movement?

Of course the movement has been affected by not being able to strike, Greta and her peers are very keen on following the scientific advice and have thus not done physical demonstrations. However I believe that the long term effect of what we now see with the response to Covid is that young people will find that suddenly there is a crisis reaction and billions of euros and dollars available but for years they have been told that the climate crisis is too expensive and hard to deal with. Again the political system shows that it works short term and betrays future generations which can lead to even stronger reactions from activists in the future.

What do you hope viewers take away from this film?

This film is more about Greta than climate change. As you see in the movie, she's developed a lot during this year and opened up more. What Greta tells the world about change, I think, is that sometimes it's good to see the world in black and white, because that's how you can really see what's uncomfortable.

I really hope that, after seeing this movie, people get some extra respect for people that are different and people that have that style of saying what they think and pointing at problems instead of just shoving them under the carpet. We should embrace these people, because we need them to show what's wrong. It's so fantastic that Greta, with her Asperger's diagnosis and blunt way of expressing herself, can become this icon.

Also, the film highlights the growing gap between worsening climate impacts and warnings from scientists on the one hand, and the words and actions of world leaders on the other. Greta and other young people demand a safe future and that leaders listen to the science – instead they are met with empty words from politicians, and ridicule or even death threats from individuals. This is the source of so much of her frustration and I hope viewers will leave with a lot of that frustration as well.

FILMMAKER BIOS

Nathan Grossman - Director, Director of Photography

Nathan Grossman is a Swedish documentary filmmaker and photographer whose work often explores environmental issues. A graduate of the Stockholm Academy of Dramatic Arts, Grossman began his career as a photographer for Rolling Stone India before shifting his focus to film. Grossman gained global attention for his 2015 short film *THE TOASTER CHALLENGE*, which received over 15 million views. In 2017, he completed *KÖTTETS LUSTAR*, his first full-length TV series for public broadcaster SVT about the growing meat consumption in Sweden. The series was also nominated for a Kristallen television award for best factual program of the year.

Cecilia Nessen - Producer

Cecilia Nessen is a Stockholm-based documentary film producer at the production company BR•F. In 2018 she produced the documentary *BERGMAN - A YEAR IN A LIFE*, selected by Variety critics as one of the 12 best movies in Cannes and received an EFA award for best documentary. Also in 2018, the short film *VOX LIPOMA* was nominated for the Short Film Grand Jury Prize at Sundance Film Festival. A year later, Cecilia produced *HASSE & TAGE - A LOVE STORY* that was nominated for the Guldbagge Audience Award in 2019. In 2020, *MADDY THE MODEL*, about the first adult catwalk model with Down's syndrome, premiered at CPH:DOX. In 2021, the feature doc *LENA*, a raw and intimate portrait of Lena Nyman, will be released.

Fredrik Heinig - Producer

Fredrik Heinig is the CEO of B-Reel Films and one of the founding partners of the B-Reel Group. Heinig has produced drama for more than 15 years and produced over 20 movies and TV-series. B-Reel Films (BR•F) is Sweden's most renowned production company with offices in Stockholm and Los Angeles. Over the past 20 years BR•F has released ten feature films and several long-form documentaries with premieres at festivals from Cannes to Sundance, with Fredrik as producer, including *BERGMAN - A*

YEAR IN A LIFE and THE MAN WHO PLAYED WITH FIRE. BR•F also produced the American feature film MIDSOMMAR, with Fredrik as executive producer.

Hanna Lejonqvist - Editor, Story Consultant

Hanna Lejonqvist is an editor based in Stockholm, Sweden, and has worked on over 25 films in the past 15 years, several of these being award-winning films such as SCHEME BIRDS and I CALLED HIM MORGAN. For her work on the documentary BLACK POWER MIXTAPE 1967-1975, she won the Editing Award at Sundance Film Festival, as well as a Guldbagge for Best Editing in 2013. A year later she won another Guldbagge for Best Editing for her work on the feature documentary PALME. Later she was again nominated for Best Editing at the 2016 Guldbagge Awards for the feature film MY SKINNY SISTER. Hanna has also worked as dramatic advisor for the coming feature documentary LENA.

Charlotte Landelius - Editor

Charlotte Landelius is an editor and documentary director and cinematographer based in Stockholm, Sweden. In 2018 she edited the feature documentary SILVANA - VÄCK MIG NÄR NI VAKNAT that received a Guldbagge for Best Documentary. She also was the editor for feature documentary ALWAYS AMBER, which was nominated for the 2020 Berlinale Documentary Award as well as for a Golden Alexander at Thessaloniki Documentary Film Festival. Charlotte also worked as editor on the popular Swedish TV series FULL PATTE, produced by SVT. In 2014 she co-directed, shot and edited the documentary FOODIES - THE CULINARY JETSET.

Jon Petter Ekstrand - Composer

Jon Petter Ekstrand is a Swedish composer and film sound designer. As a composer, he has collaborated with film director Daniel Espinosa on several occasions, including EASY MONEY (2010) and the upcoming film CHILD 44 (2015). Since 1999, he has worked and contributed as a composer or a sound designer on several films, television films, TV series and short films, including music for four episodes the Swedish TV series SEBASTIAN BERGMAN. While studying at the Stockholm Film School, Ekstrand was a SKAP scholar. His first work as a composer was the Danish short film THE FIGHTER (2003) directed by Daniel Espinosa. Since then they have collaborated on several films, including BABYLON DISEASE (2004), OUTSIDE LOVE (2007), EASY MONEY (2010), and CHILD 44 (2015).

Rebekka Karijord - Composer

Rebekka Karijord is a composer, musician, and playwright originally from Sandnessjøen, Norway. Rebekka embarked on a creative career starting with acting and attended the prestigious Stockholm Academy of Dramatic Arts. She developed a unique voice by experimenting as a musician, actor, playwright and composer, working alongside directors including Joachim Trier, Margreth Olin and Nina Wester. In 2009 she decided to devote her time fully to composing and songwriting, releasing the album THE NOBLE ART OF LETTING GO. This led to extensive international touring and syncs with the likes of

ABC, BBC and Cirkus Cirkör's hugely successful traveling performance, WEAR IT LIKE A CROWN (which has been staged over 400 times around the globe, and is based upon and named after the track of The Noble Art of Letting Go). Over the course of her career, she has composed music for over 30 films, modern dance performances and theatrical pieces, as well as having penned numerous plays and short stories.

Per K. Kirkegaard - Story Consultant

Per K. Kirkegaard is a danish editor and dramatic advisor based in Copenhagen, and has worked on over 50 films since the beginning of his career in 1993. Most recently he edited the feature documentary THE CAVE, which was nominated for an Oscar for Best Documentary at the 2019 Academy Awards. He also edited the feature documentary THE KINGMAKER, which has been nominated for and won several awards at festivals all around the world, including Most Compelling Living Subject of a Documentary at the Critics's Choice Documentary Awards 2019. For his editing on award-winning feature BORG MCENROE (2017), Per K. Kirkegaard was nominated a Guldbagge for Best Editing together with Per Sandholdt. Per was also awarded an Emmy for best Editing at the 2012 News & Documentary Emmy Awards for the feature documentary ARMADILLO.

CREDITS

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Anna Dager
Vilhelm Bromander
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Jacob Snavelly
Rebekka Karijord
Jon Ekstrand

Composer's assistant & additional string
arranging

Kirsten Evans

Score Mix

Jason Larocca, at
LaRoccafella Center

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(B. MAY)

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MULTIPLE 12**

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