

SUBMARINE DELUXE

Presents

In association with Constance Marks Productions, Inc.

BEING ELMO

A PUPPETEER'S JOURNEY



A film by Constance Marks

RELEASE DATE: October 21, 2011 in New York at IFC Center and November 4, 2011 at Laemmle Royal Theatre in Los Angeles

RUN TIME: 76 minutes

RATING: Unrated

LANGUAGE: English

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SYNOPSIS

Every day, millions tune in to *Sesame Street* to see one of the world's most adored and recognizable characters—a furry red monster named Elmo. Yet, with all of Elmo's fame, the man behind the icon is able to walk down the street without being recognized.

Meet Kevin Clash.

As a teenager growing up in Baltimore in the 1970s, Kevin had very different aspirations from his classmates—he wanted to be a puppeteer. More specifically, he wanted to be part of Jim Henson's team, the creative force responsible for delivering the magic of *Sesame Street* on a daily basis. With a supportive family behind him, Kevin made his dreams come true.

Combining amazing archival footage with material from the present day, filmmaker Constance Marks explores Kevin's story in vivid detail and chronicles the meteoric rise of Jim Henson in the process. Narrated by Whoopi Goldberg and including interviews with Frank Oz, Rosie O'Donnell, Cheryl Henson, Joan Ganz Cooney and others, this insightful and personal documentary offers up a rare, behind-the-scenes look at Sesame Street and the Jim Henson Workshop. The film has won numerous awards at film festivals, including a Special Jury Prize at the 2011 Sundance Film Festival.

BEING ELMO: A PUPPETEER'S JOURNEY is the intimate, captivating and award-winning documentary directed by Constance Marks.

FILMMAKERS

Director CONSTANCE MARKS

Subject KEVIN CLASH

Narrator WHOOPI GOLDBERG

Producers CONSTANCE MARKS
 JAMES MILLER
 CORINNE LAPOOK

Director of Photography JAMES MILLER

Co-Director PHILIP SHANE

Editors PHILIP SHANE
 JUSTIN WEINSTEIN

Composer JOEL GOODMAN

Writers PHILIP SHANE
 JUSTIN WEINSTEIN

Assistant Editor ROGER MATTHEWS

Research CHRIS CLIADAKIS

Post Production Supervisor CONSTANTINE LIMPERIS

Music Supervisor MAXINE KOZLER KOVEN

Digital Arts and Animation MAGNETIC DREAMS ANIMATION

Post Production Coordinator STEVE KULLBACK

Audio STEVEN ROBINSON
 JEFF EDRICH

Production Equipment KEN DRUCKERMAN
 LEFT/RIGHT PRODUCTIONS

Post Editor EVAN ANTHONY
 FRAME: RUNNER

Audio Post Production Facilities SYNC SOUND, INC
 DIGITAL CINEMA, LLC

Re-Recording Mixer KEN HAHN

Supervising Sound Editor KEN HAHN

Sound Editor JAY FISHER

Additional Editing CONSTANTINE LIMPERIS
ANNE ALVERGUE
KRISTIN NUTILE

Mookie Puppet Built By ANIMAX DESIGNS

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SOPHIA MILLER

Production Interns NINA GOLDMAN
SAM PASTERNAK

FEATURING

KEVIN CLASH

WHOOPI GOLDBERG

FRANK OZ

CHERYL HENSON

ROSIE O'DONNELL

JOAN GANZ COONEY

CAROLL SPINNEY

FRAN BRILL

MARTIN P. ROBINSON

BILL BARRETTA

FESTIVALS & AWARDS

SUNDANCE FILM FESTIVAL 2011

WINNER Special Jury Prize

SXSW 2011

HOT DOCS INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL 2011

WINNER Top Ten Audience Favourite

FULL FRAME DOCUMENTARY FILM FESTIVAL 2011

AFI—DISCOVERY CHANNEL SILVERDOCS FESTIVAL 2011

SEATTLE INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL 2011

WINNER Best of Fest

WINNER Lena Sharpe Award for Persistence of Vision

NANTUCKET FILM FESTIVAL 2011

WINNER Audience Award

DALLAS INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL 2011

INDEPENDENT FILM FESTIVAL BOSTON 2011

ASPEN FILMFEST 2011

Audience Favorite Documentary

NEW HAMPSHIRE FILM FESTIVAL 2011

WINNER Audience Choice

TRAVERSE CITY FILM FESTIVAL 2011

WINNER Audience Award

WINNER Special Jury Prize: Most Life Affirming Documentary

MELBOURNE INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL 2011

NEW ZEALAND INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL 2011

FILMMAKER STATEMENT

WHY BEING ELMO?

Oddly, I never really decided to make BEING ELMO: A PUPPETEER'S JOURNEY. Nine years ago, my husband James Miller, who is a DP, was shooting at Sesame Street. Our daughter Sophia was about two years old and James brought a brag book to the set. When he returned that evening, he handed me a VHS tape and to my amazement Kevin Clash had agreed to make a tape for Sophia in which Elmo and James were looking at the pictures and addressing Sophia through the camera. Who *was* this man, I wondered, who took considerable time to make a tape for complete strangers? I had seen the furry red one on Sesame Street and always found him plucky and very appealing. I noticed the way the puppet was manipulated, this character was conveying a wide range of behaviors with tremendous subtlety. I was intrigued.

Years later, James called me from the set. He said "I'm at Sesame today and Kevin Clash is here." Impulsively, I blurted out: "You tell that man that your wife has a crush on him and wants to make a documentary about him." That night James came home with Kevin's assistant's phone number. That was it. No heavy deliberations or soul searching -- just an opportunity that I grabbed and thought: if he says yes, I'll figure out a way to make it work.

In an interview, Frank Oz explains that when anyone puts a puppet on their arm, they say things through the puppet they would not ordinarily say. This is true for Kevin, too. We were screening footage of Elmo and Tyra Banks—who were co-presenters at the Daytime Emmy Awards—and Tyra was wearing a very revealing dress. Elmo proclaimed "NICE DRESS... HUBBA HUBBA!!!" as his face scrunched up in excitement. It's hard to imagine Kevin saying that, but Elmo, no problem. As Kevin's mother says in the film, "Kevin comes alive through Elmo."

GETTING STARTED IN FILMS

When I was 13, I had a friend whose father was a filmmaker. They introduced me to the world of filmmaking. I always connected to images and music more easily than the written word. My father bought me a tiny splicer, some super-8 film for the family camera, and a tiny reel-to-reel viewer. I worked and played with those tools for hours on end. From a young age, I knew I wanted to find a way to work at this craft as a career.

The biggest break I got was when the legendary filmmaking team David and Albert Maysles hired me. I was first a production assistant and then became an assistant editor. Working with them was where I learned what skillful filmmaking looked like. Being surrounded by lots of films that were being cut in their many rental cutting rooms was an education.

When the Steenbeck was our editing means, I was syncing dailies for the Maysles. I was very young and inexperienced, so when a call came from Albert Maysles asking to speak to the assistant editor, I was astonished. He wants to talk to me? Why? Albert explained that I was the first one to see the footage and because they were far away, he needed feedback. He asked me which characters were most compelling; if the lighting was adequate; and if the story seemed interesting. I was learning from the best. This was an invaluable experience and opportunity that taught me the essentials of filmmaking.

—Constance Marks, Director

BIOGRAPHIES

KEVIN CLASH (Featured Subject)



Kevin Clash—whose characters include Elmo, Hoots the Owl and Baby Natasha—is Sesame Street’s Senior Puppet Coordinator and Muppet Captain, as well as Sesame Workshop’s Senior Creative Consultant.

He began building puppets at the age of ten and performed on Baltimore’s Harbor Front and local television as a teenager. Clash’s first television work was for the CBS affiliate in Baltimore. He came to Sesame Street after attracting the attention of Muppet designer Kermit Love.

Clash’s film credits include Jim Henson’s 1986 fantasy film LABYRINTH, TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES I and II, MUPPET TREASURE ISLAND, MUPPETS FROM SPACE and ELMO IN GROUCHLAND.

His television work includes *The Great Space Coaster*, *Captain Kangaroo*, *Dinosaurs*, and *Muppets Tonight*. He also was Co-Executive Producer for *Elmopalooza*, *CinderElmo*, and *Elmo’s World*; Co-Producer for *The Adventures of Elmo in Grouchland*; and also directs *Sesame Street* episodes and other projects. Clash directed and co-produced the DVD series *SESAME BEGINNINGS* for Sesame Workshop. Moreover, he directed and was Co-Producer for Sesame Workshop’s outreach DVD *TALK, LISTEN, CONNECT: DEPLOYMENTS, HOMECOMINGS AND CHANGES*.

His most recent work includes directing and appearing in *TALK, LISTEN, CONNECT: WHEN FAMILIES GRIEVE*. He also directed the Muppet segments of the PBS primetime special, *Families Stand Together: Feeling Secure in Tough Times*. Clash won Emmy Awards for Outstanding Performer in a Children’s Series for his work as Elmo in *Sesame Street* Seasons 21, 35-37, 39-41, and in 2001-2008 and 2010-2011 for his work as Co-Executive Producer for Outstanding Pre-School Children’s Series.

In September 2006, Clash released his autobiography, *My Life as a Furry Red Monster: What Elmo Has Taught Me About Life, Love, and Laughing Out Loud*.

CONSTANCE MARKS (Director, Producer)



Constance Marks is an award-winning independent documentary filmmaker. She is the founder and president of Constance Marks Productions, Inc., a documentary production company based in New York City. Marks began her filmmaking career over 30 years ago as an assistant editor for the renowned Cinema Verité pioneers, David and Albert Maysles.

Marks' critically acclaimed films have been shown theatrically, broadcast widely, and garnered numerous awards. Her productions include: *RETURN TO APPALACHIA*, which aired on PBS; *LET’S FALL IN LOVE*; *A SINGLES WEEKEND AT THE CONCORD HOTEL*, which was selected by the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences as one of the outstanding documentaries of the year; and *GREEN CHIMNEYS*, a full-length documentary feature film which premiered at the Sundance Film Festival and aired on HBO. Marks has also produced numerous films focusing on important social issues such as homelessness, the elderly, experimental charter schools, and substance abuse recovery residences.

JAMES J. MILLER (Director of Photography, Producer)

James Miller began his career as a Cameraman/Lighting Director in the late 1970s at a PBS affiliate and later started his freelance career in New York, where he joined the crew of *Sesame Street*. As a freelancer, Miller has traveled extensively around the globe as a Director of Photography and Cameraman. His passion for "having every frame tell the story" has earned him multiple Emmy Awards.

Miller's cinematography on the 1997 documentary GREEN CHIMNEYS won accolades. That film went on to win First Prize at Taos Talking Pictures, Best Film at the Bermuda International Film Festival, and Best Documentary at the Denver and San Jose Film Festivals.

Miller's diverse shooting style enables him to work in a wide variety of genres including single camera documentaries, multi-camera concerts and entertainment shows, sports, and theatre. His clients include the major networks, Discovery Channel, TLC, National Geographic, MTV, and VH1, as well as international networks such as the BBC, Channel 9 Australia, and Granada. More notably, Miller has covered the Eco-Challenge and seven Olympics. His current projects include documentaries, multi-camera entertainment and Broadway shows. Miller is an avid marathoner and triathlete. For more info, go to: www.ProCamNYC.com.

CORINNE LAPOOK (Producer)

Corinne LaPook started her career in the entertainment industry working for legendary graphic designer Lou Dorfsman at CBS. She joined the original team of MTV during the revolutionary birth of the network. After working in the music industry for several years, including positions in artist management and marketing, she became the Director of The American Film Institute's New York office. Corinne has reunited with her 8th grade film classmate Connie Marks to produce BEING ELMO: A PUPPETEER'S JOURNEY.

PHILIP SHANE (Co-Director, Editor, Writer)

Philip Shane has been making documentaries for more than 20 years. He was Bob Eisenhardt's co-editor on Constance Marks' GREEN CHIMNEYS (Sundance, 1997).

In addition to BEING ELMO, Shane has edited many documentaries about famous performers, including MAKING TROUBLE: THREE GENERATIONS OF FUNNY JEWISH WOMEN (Sundance Channel, 2007); Paul McCartney's WINGSPAN (2001, Dir. Alistair Donald); and THE LAST OF THE FIRST (2007, Dir. Anja Baron) about the legendary Harlem Blues and Jazz Band. He has also worked with Bruce Springsteen, Carly Simon, and The Boston Symphony.

At ABC News, with Senior Producer Richard Gerdau for more than ten years, Shane edited many long-form documentaries, including Ted Koppel's *Tip Of The Spear* (DuPont Columbia Award for Broadcast Journalism, 2004) and *Martin Luther King, Jr.: Searching For The Promised Land* (Emmy Award, 1999).

Prior to BEING ELMO, he produced and edited the two-hour special, *Einstein: The Real Story Of The Man Behind The Theory* (History Channel, 2008).

JUSTIN WEINSTEIN (Editor, Writer)

Justin Weinstein is a Brooklyn-based documentary filmmaker whose work over the past ten years has been a combination of long and short form documentary films on many subjects, most often those focused on scientific and environmental issues.

Most recently, Weinstein produced several documentaries on energy issues. He produced, shot, and edited a 20-minute documentary about mountaintop coal mining for Al Jazeera English called *Face-Off at Coal River Mountain*. For the Center for Investigative Reporting (CIR) he co-produced the feature documentary DIRTY BUSINESS: CLEAN COAL AND THE BATTLE FOR OUR ENERGY FUTURE.

During four years at ABC News and Peter Jennings Productions, Weinstein worked as a producer on numerous projects, including the prime-time ABC News two-hour documentary special *Last Days on Earth*.

JOEL GOODMAN (Composer)

Joel Goodman has scored over 100 films and television shows for an impressive array of distinguished directors and producers, including Wong Kar-wei, Barbara Kopple, Albert Maysles, Barak Goodman, Kevin Spacey, Irene Taylor Brodsky, Andrew Jarecki, Mark Zwonitzer, Marshall Curry, Oren Jacoby and Michael Epstein. Joel's new Main Theme for the top rated PBS series American Experience premiered in January 2011. His work includes many Oscar nominated films and Emmy award winning television productions. Joel is also an active record producer. For more information, please visit www.joelgoodman.com.

ABOUT SESAME STREET

In 1969, a little street filled with laughter, learning and promise launched a revolution in children's television. *Sesame Street* stands out as the most thoroughly developed and researched preschool television program and media offering, with a comprehensive curriculum that focuses on the development of the whole child. *Sesame Street* has introduced generations of children to information and experiences ranging from nutrition and space exploration to lessons about cooperation, friendship and diversity with the help of the beloved Muppets including Elmo, Big Bird and Cookie Monster. Honored with more Emmy® awards than any other television show in history, *Sesame Street* continues to set the gold standard for excellence in educational media, giving children the best head start in school and life.

Sesame Workshop, the non-profit educational organization, produces local *Sesame Street* programs that are seen in over 140 countries. Beyond television, *Sesame Street* content is created for multiple media platforms on a wide range of issues including literacy, health and military deployment. Initiatives meet specific needs to help young children and families develop critical skills, acquire healthy habits and build emotional strength to prepare them for lifelong learning. Learn more at www.sesamestreet.org.