



Directed by Shaunak Sen

94 mins, India / USA / UK

A Kiterabbit Films and Rise Films production
In collaboration with HHMI Tangled Bank Studios

COMING TO HBO & HBO MAX ON FEBRUARY 7TH

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AWARDS

** 2022 Sundance Film Festival World Cinema Grand Jury Prize for Documentary **

** 2022 Cannes Film Festival Prize for Best Documentary (L'Œil d'Or) **

** 2022 BFI London Film Festival Grierson Award for Best Documentary **

** 2022 Hong Kong International Film Festival Golden Firebird Award in Documentary Competition **

** 2022 IDA Documentary Awards for Best Feature Documentary, Best Director, Best Editing, and Pare Lorentz Award**

** 2022 Cinema Eye Honors Awards for Outstanding Nonfiction Feature, and Outstanding Cinematography **

** 2022 Gotham Award for Best Documentary Feature **

** 2022 Asia Pacific Screen Award for Best Documentary Film **

LOGLINE

As legions of birds fall from New Delhi's darkening skies, and the city smolders with social unrest, two brothers race to save a casualty of the turbulent times: the black kite, a majestic bird of prey essential to their city's ecosystem.

SHORT SYNOPSIS

In one of the world's most populated cities, two brothers — Nadeem and Saud — devote their lives to the quixotic effort of protecting the black kite, a majestic bird of prey essential to the ecosystem of New Delhi that has been falling from the sky at alarming rates. Amid environmental toxicity and social unrest, the 'kite brothers' spend day and night caring for the creatures in their makeshift avian basement hospital. Director Shaunak Sen (*Cities of Sleep*) explores the connection between the kites and the Muslim brothers who help them return to the skies, offering a mesmerizing chronicle of inter-species coexistence.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

My first feature-length documentary, *Cities of Sleep*, explored New Delhi through the lens of sleep. By focusing on the 'sleep mafia' of Delhi (these are people who control who sleeps where, for how long and what quality of sleep – for the homeless), I leveraged sleep as a political, philosophical and aesthetic prism through which to consider the city. As a method, I am deeply interested in looking at everyday banal phenomena that usually occupy the fringes of our vision, as objects of rigorous study. Through this film, I want to harness the enchantment of the sky. I want audiences to leave theatres and instinctively look up – to think of the sky and the birds in it as novel, wonderfully alien things.

At the most nascent level, my interest in the 'more-than-human' (as it is called in geography terminology) began during a fellowship in Cambridge University in 2018, under a research project called 'Urban Ecologies.' I began developing a deep interest in the behavioral and evolutionary changes in animals in Delhi prompted by air pollution. Coupled with this was a sense of unease many of us felt towards the escalating social tension in India. Focusing closely on the figure of the black kite opened up not just the environmental but also the most pressing socio-political dramas of our times.

I am not interested in making either conventional 'nature-based' programming or a 'wildlife' documentary. My focus is neither limited to the life of the human protagonists nor the avian ones. The city itself – replete with the many human-animal ensembles in it – features in the film as a character.

In recent months, Nadeem and Saud have felt under siege from factors other than Delhi's ongoing environmental catastrophe. The family grapples with the seismic ecological and political changes taking place around them and their relationship with their work comes under severe stress.

The film experiences many of these macro-level changes through intimate details, as the family processes and deals with them. Sometimes through trepidation, sometimes through instinctive fear, sometimes with wry humour, occasionally with ugly in-fighting, but mostly – with quiet courage.

– Shaunak Sen

FEATURING

NADEEM SHEHZAD AND MOHAMMAD SAUD

Former bodybuilders from the Chawri Bazar area of New Delhi, Nadeem Shehzad and his younger brother Mohammad Saud started treating black kites in 2003. Since then, they have together treated more than 20,000 injured birds. Nadeem was recently appointed as an Honorary Wildlife Warden of Delhi, and in 2021 spent three months in the U.S. for training with bird rescue organizations. Today, Nadeem and Saud continue to work tirelessly to treat black kites and other birds of prey through the organization they set up in 2010: Wildlife Rescue.

SALIK REHMAN

Salik Rehman joined Wildlife Rescue in January 2017. He has been an active volunteer at Wildlife Rescue since 2010 and has become an integral part of the organization in its many rescue and rehabilitation activities.

FILM TEAM

SHAUNAK SEN - DIRECTOR

Shaunak Sen is a filmmaker and film scholar based in New Delhi, India. *Cities of Sleep* (2016), his first feature-length documentary, was shown at various major international film festivals (including DOK Leipzig, DMZ Docs and the Taiwan International Documentary Festival, among others) and won 6 international awards. Shaunak received the IDFA Bertha Fund (2019), the Sundance Documentary Grant (2019), the Catapult Film Fund (2020), the Charles Wallace Grant, the Sarai CSDS Digital Media fellowship (2014), and the Films Division of India fellowship (2013). He was also a visiting scholar at Cambridge University (2018) and has published academic articles in Bioscope, Widescreen and other journals.

AMAN MANN – PRODUCER

Aman Mann is a filmmaker and media researcher based in New Delhi, India. Aman was the associate director of *Cities of Sleep* (2016), which was screened in various international festivals and won 6 international documentary awards. Aman has produced various ad films, short documentaries and video installations. He is currently enrolled as a PhD candidate in Cinema Studies in Jawahar Lal Nehru University, New Delhi.

TEDDY LEIFER – PRODUCER

Teddy Leifer founded Rise Films in 2006. A five-time Emmy® winner, his credits include *The Invisible War* (Oscar® nominee and Emmy® winner), *The Interrupters* (Emmy® winner), *Icarus* (Oscar® winner), *Knuckle* (Sundance world premiere), *Dreamcatcher* (Sundance winner), *We Are Together* (Tribeca winner), *Rough Aunties* (Sundance winner), *The Human Factor* (Telluride world premiere), *Mayor* (Emmy® winner) and *The Art of Political Murder* (executive produced by George Clooney).

Teddy's latest feature, *All That Breathes* directed by Shaunak Sen is the only film ever to have won both the Grand Jury Prize at the Sundance Film Festival and Best Documentary at the Cannes Film Festival – where the film premiered in 2022.

His other recent productions include *George Carlin's American Dream*, a two-parter for HBO directed by Judd Apatow and Michael Bonfiglio which won the 2022 Emmy® for Outstanding Documentary and *Once Upon A Time In Londongrad*, a timely political thriller about 14 mysterious UK deaths with alleged Russia links for Sky Documentaries, Peacock and NBC Universal.

He just wrapped production on a feature length finale of the multi award-winning *Plebs*, following a five-season run as the most-watched comedy in ITV2's history.

Teddy was recently listed in the "100 most innovative and influential people in British creative and media industries" by the Guardian newspaper. He is a member of the Producers Guild of America and BAFTA.

FLORRIE PRIEST – CO-PRODUCER

Florrie joined Rise Films in 2018 after graduating with a degree in History from Cambridge University. Since then she has worked on productions including: *The Art of Political Murder* (HBO); *The Human Factor* (Sony Pictures Classics); David Osit's multi-award winning *Mayor*; and Shaunak Sen's *All That Breathes* – the only film ever to have won both the Grand Jury Prize at the Sundance Film Festival and Best Documentary at the Cannes Film Festival – where the film premiered in 2022.

Other recent productions include *George Carlin's American Dream*, a two-part documentary for HBO directed by Judd Apatow and Michael Bonfiglio, which won the 2022 Emmy® for Outstanding Documentary and *Once Upon A Time In Londongrad*, a timely political thriller about 14 mysterious UK deaths with alleged Russia links for Sky Documentaries, Peacock and NBC Universal.

She is now working in development and production on a number of documentary and scripted projects, including *Thank You & Goodbye*, a drama series on the News International phone hacking scandal, written by Adam Patterson and Declan Lawn and directed by Saul Dibb.

DAVID GUY ELISCO – EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

David Elisco manages the development and production of a portfolio of films for HHMI Tangled Bank Studios, focusing on feature-length documentaries. In his work, he is drawn to dramatic stories that touch the heart, inspire wonder, and provide insight into life on Earth. Most recently, Elisco served as executive producer on the Peabody Award-winning film *Inventing Tomorrow*, the Emmy Award-winning film *The Serengeti Rules*, and the critically acclaimed film *Oliver Sacks: His Own Life*. His current slate includes *Super Bugs* with Amos Pictures for HBO and the BBC and *Wilding* with Passion Pictures.

SEAN B. CARROLL – EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

As Head of Studio, Sean B. Carroll directs HHMI Tangled Bank Studios' mission, strategy, and editorial focus, and oversees both the documentary and dramatic film slates. An internationally recognized scientist, award-winning author, and Emmy Award-winning executive producer, Sean is the architect of HHMI's filmmaking initiative to bring great stories about science and scientists to broad audiences. He

has served as executive producer on a wide variety of feature documentary, IMAX, and short films. As leader of HHMI's Department of Science Education, he also oversees the largest portfolio of privately supported science education activities in the United States.

BEN BERNHARD – CINEMATOGRAPHER

Ben Bernhard graduated as a Bachelor of Arts (Camera) at the BHT Berlin before he started to study cinematography at the Deutsche Film-und Fernsehakademie Berlin (dffb). Since then he has worked on various short and feature-length fiction and documentary films as Director of Photography. In 2014 he received a scholarship at the California Institute of the Arts in Los Angeles.

Since 2009, Ben has been working with well-known director Victor Kossakovsky. Their film *Aquarela* had its world premiere as an official selection of the 2018 Venice Film Festival, the U.S. premiere at the 2019 Sundance Film Festival, won the Golden Star at the El Gouna International Film Festival, and was shortlisted for the 2020 Oscars.

Ben was nominated for Germany's main cinematography award, Deutscher Kamerapreis, in 2019 for his work on *Lost Reactor*. The project also won Best Cinematography at the Achtung Berlin Film Festival. He also received an award for his work on the film *Homework* (director: Annika Pinske) which won the German Short Film LOLA Award in 2016.

CHARLOTTE MUNCH BENGTSSEN – EDITOR

Charlotte Munch Bengtsen was a dancer and photographer before studying for a masters in film editing at NFTS, UK. She has edited several award-winning feature documentaries, including Joshua Oppenheimer's *The Act of Killing*, Christy Garland's *The Bastard Sings the Sweetest Song*, Ada Søbys's *American Losers*, Boris Bertram's *War Photographer* Lasse Lau's *The Raven & The Seagull* and Dweck & Kershaw's 2021 Oscar shortlisted *The Truffle Hunters*, for which she received a Critics Choice Award nomination for best editing. Charlotte's latest credits in 2021 are Robin Petre's *From the Wild Sea* and Ai Weiwei's *Rohingya*. Charlotte served as a juror for the IDA Documentary Awards 2021.

ROGER GOULA – COMPOSER

Roger Goula is a London-based composer and multi-instrumentalist whose range of original works spans across albums, film scores, music for dance, TV, theatre, and art installation.

Roger has scored numerous award-winning films which have been presented at international festivals such as Venice Film Festival, Toronto, Sundance, Tribeca and BFI, amongst many others, and was featured in the prestigious ASCAP Composers Spotlight at the 2018 Sundance Film Festival.

His scores for renowned feature documentaries include the BIFA-nominated *Versus: The Life and Films of Ken Loach*; the BAFTA-nominated feature *The Hard Stop* from director George Amponsah; and the BIFA Winner *Next Goal Wins*. Roger's original scores for television include the BAFTA-winning BBC drama *Killed by My Debt*; the BAFTA-nominated BBC drama *Against the Law*, starring Daniel Mays; BAFTA-winning BBC docudrama *The Left Behind*, and the ITV/Netflix flagship series *The Ripper*.

RISE FILMS

Rise Films is an Oscar® and Emmy® winning production company, producing films and television programmes for global audiences. Its productions include *The Invisible War* (Oscar® nominee and Emmy® winner), *The Interrupters* (Emmy® winner), *Icarus* (Oscar® winner), *Knuckle* (Sundance world premiere), *Dreamcatcher* (Sundance winner), *We Are Together* (Tribeca winner), *Rough Aunties* (Sundance winner), *The Human Factor* (Telluride world premiere), *Mayor* (Emmy® winner) and *The Art of Political Murder* (executive produced by George Clooney).

Roman comedy, *Plebs*, became ITV2's highest rating comedy ever. The show has run for five seasons and won multiple awards including a Broadcast Award, a Royal Television Award, and received three BAFTA nominations. The series ends with a feature length finale, which was recently completed.

Its latest feature, *All That Breathes*, directed by Shaunak Sen, is the only film ever to have won both the Grand Jury Prize at the Sundance Film Festival and Best Documentary at the Cannes Film Festival - where the film premiered in 2022.

Other recent productions include *George Carlin's American Dream*, a two-parter for HBO directed by Judd Apatow and Michael Bonfiglio, which won the 2022 Emmy® for Outstanding Documentary and *Once Upon A Time In Londongrad*, a timely political thriller for Sky Documentaries, Peacock and NBCUniversal about 14 mysterious UK deaths with alleged Russia links.

HHMI TANGLED BANK STUDIOS

HHMI Tangled Bank Studios is a mission-driven production company that crafts exceptional films about science and scientists for broadcast, theatrical and digital distribution. The studio, a vision of evolutionary biologist and acclaimed author Sean B. Carroll, was launched in 2011. As storytellers within the world class science organization HHMI, the studio is uniquely positioned to shine a light on some of the most significant scientific breakthroughs of our time – and explain why they matter. Recent films include Emmy-nominated *Nature's Fear Factor*, CNN/BBC's *Race for the Vaccine*, which followed leading scientists developing the Covid vaccine during the pandemic; *The Farthest – Voyager In Space*, which won an Emmy for best science documentary; *The Serengeti Rules*, which won an Emmy for outstanding nature documentary; Peabody Award-winning *Inventing Tomorrow*, which premiered at Sundance and aired on PBS/POV; and Ric Burns' *Oliver Sacks: His Own Life*, a New York Times 'Critic's Pick' which premiered at the Telluride Film Festival and aired on American Masters/PBS. For more information, please visit www.tangledbankstudios.org

CREDITS

Directed by
Shaunak Sen

Produced by
Shaunak Sen
Aman Mann
Teddy Leifer

Executive Producers
David Guy Elisco
Sean B. Carroll

Co-Producer
Florrie Priest

Associate Producers
Sam Stanley
Guy Horlock

Consulting Producer
Joshua Oppenheimer

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Co-Editor
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Director of Photography
Ben Bernhard

Director of Photography 2
Riju Das

Cinematography
Saumyananda Sahi

Associate Director
Rohan Ranganathan

Sound Recording
Niladri Shekhar Roy
Moinak Bose

Music

Roger Goula

Chief Assistant Director

Siraj Sharma

Associate Cinematography

Sundarram Arjun

Rohan Ranganathan