

Sandbox Films presents  
in association with Seeker and Insignia Films

# RED HEAVEN

Directed by **Lauren DeFilippo and Katherine Gorringe**



**YEAR** 2020 | **COUNTRY** United States  
**RUN TIME** 84 mins | **LANGUAGE** English, German, French

[www.redheavenfilm.com](http://www.redheavenfilm.com)

**Facebook:** RedHeavenFilm | **Twitter:** @RedHeavenFilm | **Instagram:** @RedHeavenFilm

**CONTACT:**  
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## **RED HEAVEN**

**Directed by Lauren DeFilippo and Katherine Gorringer**

### **SYNOPSIS**

In preparation for the first human mission to Mars, six volunteers take part in the ultimate dress rehearsal, living inside a year-long NASA simulation to understand the effects of isolation on the human mind.

### **DIRECTORS STATEMENT**

We were finishing up graduate school at Stanford University, studying documentary film, in the heart of Silicon Valley at a time when space exploration and traveling to Mars had reemerged in the public consciousness. It was also the moment when climate change was becoming a more prominent threat to the future of humanity. We wanted to interrogate this new fascination with sending humans to Mars. What does this dream of living on Mars say about our culture, about human beings?

We both were contending with how to imagine the future at a time when the Earth is in crisis. We live in a present full of invention and progress but also facing environmental degradation and societal fracturing. In a way, RED HEAVEN was our mode of expressing an uncertainty about what the future holds.

We were interested in the complex, human side of the story – the intensity of living in a place that is totally inhospitable to us as a species all the while being completely isolated from everything you’ve ever known. We felt that was the most fascinating part, yet it was being repeatedly overlooked in the race to get to Mars.

We started to research possible stories that spoke to this question and we quickly learned about the Hawai’i Space Exploration Analogue and Simulation, where six people would soon be entering a small dome where they would live isolated from the rest of the world for an entire year as if they were on Mars. We immediately knew this was our story. These six crew members of HI-SEAS were actually going to act out living on Mars, and they would be actually living in this world for an entire year – that was irresistibly intriguing.

**– Lauren DeFilippo & Katherine Gorringer**

## INTERVIEW WITH LAUREN DEFILIPPO & KATHERINE GORRINGE

### **How did RED HEAVEN come about? How did the idea originate? What inspired you?**

We were coming out of graduate school at Stanford, studying documentary film, in the heart of Silicon Valley at a time when space exploration and traveling to Mars had reemerged in the public consciousness. It was also the moment when climate change was becoming a more prominent threat to the future of humanity. We wanted to interrogate this new fascination with sending humans to Mars. What does this dream of living on Mars say about our culture, about human beings?

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We had seen a lot of films that either looked at the technical challenges of getting humans to Mars, or simply glorified the idea. We were interested in the complex, human side of the story – the intensity of living in a place that is totally inhospitable to us as a species all the while being completely isolated from everything you've ever known. We felt that was the most fascinating part, yet it was being repeatedly overlooked in the race to get to Mars.

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We contacted the project's lead researchers, who told us right away that a documentary would be impossible and that many other producers and broadcasters had already tried to get access. The researchers made clear that this is a real science experiment, funded by NASA, where they are collecting data on the experience of living on Mars – we can't just show up and start shooting in the middle of it! But they agreed to let us come and shoot while the crew was spending their last days on Earth. We flew to Hawai'i and got to know the crew, where we came up with the idea to give them cameras to film their own experience. When the doors shut, the crew had our cameras and agreed to capture their experience, and we directed from afar, sending shot lists and interview questions during the mission.

**How long did it take to make the film? From concept to finish.**

It took about five years. We started mid-2015, right before the crew entered the dome at the end of August 2015. And we finished editing in early 2020.

**Share a story about filming; anything that you found interesting along the way with your filming journey.**

The production of RED HEAVEN was very unique because essentially what we made is a found footage-style film – but we didn't "find" it, we collaborated in the filming. So in the first few months of the mission, it was just one crew member who captured all the footage for us. She would dropbox clips for us from time to time, but we soon realized that as the discord amongst the crew started to build, we were seeing only footage of her and one other crewmate who she was closest to in the dome. We asked the others to start filming more of themselves, and that opened everything up. They began to use the cameras as a way of expressing the intense challenges they were going through in isolation. It became an emotional outlet for me them, and we soon started to see their distinct experiences.

**Did the film change from your original idea for the film as you were filming or in post?**

We really found RED HEAVEN in the edit. Our original idea was to incorporate outside interviews and archival footage that explored ideas about Mars exploration and human nature. The more we edited, however, the more we realized we had to focus in on the story of these six people in the dome and that their intimate experience spoke to everything we wanted the film to speak to. At one point in the edit we got some very good advice from an experienced editor who told us the best thing we could do was to impose limitations on ourselves. So we decided to do an experiment: restrict ourselves to only working with the footage that the crew had shot themselves – no outside shots or interviews – and that's when we really started to discover the film.

**What were the challenges in making RED HEAVEN?**

In a way, RED HEAVEN is a casting nightmare for a documentary. You need drama to make a film, and the people chosen for mock and real Mars missions are by definition low drama, because that's what you need to survive this stressful lifestyle. So we found ourselves trying to tell a story about the least dramatic people you can find. But as we got to know these six wonderful people, we realized that they contained a multitude of experience, emotion and thoughtful reflection.

**What were the particular successes that you had in making RED HEAVEN?**

Our biggest success was probably getting access to this story. The researchers and the crew were very committed to the science and not at all interested in compromising that to participate in a documentary. It took building relationships with each person involved and matching their commitment to the project to be able to make the film.

This was also the first time either of us have produced a film independently, so there have been many lessons learned about pitching, fundraising from scratch, and putting together the right team to create an environment for a successful film to be made.

**Was there something special technically that you utilized in making RED HEAVEN - for example: your cameras or sound or editing etc... and why were these important?**

RED HEAVEN was shot with every camera imaginable. Inside the dome they were shooting with point-and-shoot cameras, GoPros, DSLRS, phone cameras – you name it! And we shot the landscape photography in 4K with C300s and drones. So basically we run the gamut of technical approaches.

**You completed the film before the global pandemic and before quarantining became an everyday reality in our lives, so it would be interesting to hear your thoughts on the film through that lens.**

We had just put the finishing touches on RED HEAVEN when our original premiere at SXSW was cancelled due to Covid-19, and suddenly the film was cast in a very different light. As the world started to issue stay-at-home orders and the words “social distancing” became common parlance, we gained a new understanding for what our subjects went through – living together while separated from the rest of the world, everyday a struggle against the pressures of boredom and isolation. RED HEAVEN asks questions that we are all asking ourselves right now, about what we can live without and what we really need to survive and thrive. Making this documentary has taught us about the unique ability humans have to adapt. That’s a true power that, in this unprecedented moment, we all need to keep reminding each other we have.

**What do you want audiences to take away from RED HEAVEN?**

We hope that RED HEAVEN inspires audiences to look at their own fundamental needs as human beings, what they can and can’t live without, and that they come away with a question about why humans strive to explore and expand our boundaries. And when the credits come up, we hope everyone is infused with a love for Earth in all it’s natural glory that we so often take for granted.

## CHARACTER DESCRIPTIONS

### **Tristan Bassingthwaight**

Tristan is a grad student in the new and unusual field of space architecture, studying how to design habitats for future space-faring humans. HI-SEAS is his opportunity to get out of the classroom and into a real-life experience of living on Mars.

### **Sheyna Gifford**

Sheyna is a physician who has always dreamed of being an astronaut. She left her husband at home in St. Louis to be a part of this experiment.

### **Christiane Heinicke**

Christiane is a German geophysicist who is on simulated Mars to support scientific research. Her poetic journals from the mission provide insight into the crew's experience.

### **Carmel Johnston**

Carmel is a soil scientist from Montana. No stranger to the backwoods, she sees it as no challenge to be isolated for an entire year.

### **Andrzej Stewart**

Andrzej really wants to be a NASA astronaut. Since NASA is currently preparing for future long duration space missions, he thinks they are looking for astronauts who have experience being isolated for extended periods of time, and this is his chance.

### **Cyprien Verseux**

Cyprien is a brilliant Parisian astrobiologist, who studies how to sustain human life on planet Mars.

## FILMMAKER BIOS

### **Director/Producer: Lauren DeFilippo**

RED HEAVEN marks Lauren DeFilippo's feature-length directorial debut. She is currently in production on two upcoming feature documentaries: *Free Money* (director/producer), about the world's largest universal basic income experiment, and *Ailey* (producer) about visionary dance choreographer, Alvin Ailey.

### **Director/Producer/Editor: Katherine Gorringe**

Katherine Gorringe is a documentary director and editor whose work has been featured at numerous festivals worldwide including SXSW, CPH:DOX and Hot Docs. Her recent editing work includes the Emmy-nominated Netflix Original *Saving Capitalism*, which follows former Secretary of Labor Robert Reich. RED HEAVEN is her feature documentary directorial debut.

### **Director of Photography: David Alvarado**

David Alvarado is a director/cinematographer focusing exclusively on science, health, technology and nature. Together with Jason Sussberg, he directed *The Immortalists* about the so-called science of eternal youth; *Bill Nye: Science Guy* about a beloved science educator fighting anti-science in America; and *We are as Gods* about counterculture legend and environmental "heretic" Stewart Brand. David's personal interests in his career are aimed at building a better world with artistic, emotional storytelling about science.

### **Composer: William Ryan Fritch**

William Ryan Fritch is an award-winning composer, multi-instrumentalist and producer living in Petaluma, California. Since 2008, he has scored and/or contributed original music to over a hundred documentary and narrative films, many of which have been celebrated by festivals and organizations such as The Independent Spirit Award winning *The Waiting Room* and the 2016 Academy Award and Emmy nominated documentary *4.1 Miles*. His compositions and songs have been featured in films, shows and miniseries for Netflix, HBO, Amazon, AMC, National Geographic, NBC, Hulu, CBS, IFC, Showtime, Discovery and PBS. In addition to his commissioned film work, he has created music for dozens of national ad campaigns. As a recording artist and songwriter, he has released nearly 30 albums of his unique amalgam of folk, contemporary classical and experimental music through the respected independent record label Lost Tribe Sound.

**Executive Producer: Greg Boustead** - *Director & Executive Producer, Sandbox Films*

Greg founded Sandbox Films to tell more artful and inclusive stories about science. Greg oversees all aspects of the company.

Greg Boustead founded Sandbox Films to tell more artful and inclusive stories about science. Greg oversees all aspects of the company — from editorial direction and on-location production to general strategy and greenlighting new projects. He’s played key roles on over ten feature-length documentaries — including as executive producer for *The Most Unknown* (co-produced with VICE, and acquired by Netflix); *Human Nature* (which premiered at SXSW); and *Fireball*, a documentary directed by Werner Herzog. Greg has spent his career telling creative stories about science. Previously, he was editor of the magazine *SEED*, and producer for the World Science Festival. In 2019, Greg was named Finalist for the National Science Academy’s Communication Award.

**Executive Producer: Jessica Harrop** - *Head of Production, Sandbox Films*

Jessica runs development and production for Sandbox Films, sharing responsibility for all project decisions and company strategy.

Jessica is an Emmy-nominated documentary filmmaker who has dedicated her career to inspiring passion about science through film. She runs development and production for Sandbox Films, including sharing responsibility for all project decisions and company strategy and acting as an Executive Producer for Sandbox Films documentaries. Jessica has produced content for a variety of outlets including Netflix, Showtime, Discovery, National Geographic, and PBS. Her credits include the Netflix documentary series *Follow This*, James Cameron’s Emmy Award-winning series *Years of Living Dangerously*, *Bill Nye Saves the World*, and *First in Human*. She holds a degree in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology and a Certificate in Theater from Princeton University, where she has been co-teaching an undergraduate film course on communicating climate change.

**Sandbox Films**

**Sandbox Films** is a new documentary studio that illuminates the art and beauty of scientific inquiry. We support and collaborate with diverse production partners and visionary filmmakers around the world to tell stories that humanize science. More at [sandboxfilms.org](http://sandboxfilms.org).

**Seeker**

Seeker is the #1 science brand on mobile in the U.S. [Nielsen DCR, December 2019]. We empower the curious to understand the science shaping our world. We tell award winning stories about the natural forces and groundbreaking innovations that impact our



lives, our planet, and our universe. We encourage our viewers to question, dream and create. In December 2016, Seeker joined forces with Thrillist, The Dodo and NowThis to form Group Nine Media -- the #1 video publisher on mobile in the U.S. [Nielsen DCR, November 2019].

### **Naked Edge Films**

Jim Butterworth and Daniel J. Chalfen founded Naked Edge Films in 2009 to produce and executive produce documentary films. NEF films have premiered at the world's top film festivals and have been released globally including in the US by Amazon, DirecTV, Discovery, HBO, Kino Lorber, Netflix, Samuel Goldwyn Films, Showtime and PBS. NEF films have garnered an Oscar, a Peabody, a Critics Choice Award, two duPonts and multiple Emmy nominations. NEF now also focuses on scripted remakes of their non-fiction IP. Recent NEF films include the 2019 Sundance Film Festival award-winners *Always in Season* and *The Infiltrators*; as well as *United Skates* for HBO (executive produced by John Legend), *Call Her Ganda* and *The Feeling of Being Watched* (both for POV), which all premiered at the 2018 Tribeca Film Festival. Other recent credits include *Southwest of Salem*, *Silenced*, *The Mind of Mark DeFriest*, *The Revisionaries* and *War Don Don*.

### **Insignia Films**

Insignia films makes award-winning documentaries that consistently reach audiences across the political and cultural spectrum. Twenty years after its release, *The West* continues to resonate with audiences worldwide, and our six-hour doc-series *The Great War* was watched by over ten million viewers in the first week of its release. Insignia has produced over a dozen films for PBS's widely acclaimed series *American Experience* and most recently premiered *Into the Grand Canyon* on National Geographic.

## CREDITS

### **Directed and Produced by**

Lauren DeFilippo & Katherine Gorringe

### **Featuring**

Tristan Bassingthwaighte, Sheyna Gifford, Christiane Heinicke, Carmel Johnston, Andrzej Stewart, Cyprien Verseux

### **Editor**

Katherine Gorringe

### **Director of Photography**

David Alvarado

### **In-Habitat Cinematography and Sound Recording**

Tristan Bassingthwaighte, Sheyna Gifford, Christiane Heinicke, Carmel Johnston, Andrzej Stewart, Cyprien Verseux

### **Original Music by**

William Ryan Fritch

### **Executive Producers**

Greg Boustead, Jessica Harrop, Caroline Smith, Suzanne Kolb, Miriam Mintz, Daniel J. Chalfen, Jim Butterworth

### **Co-Executive Producer**

Lewis Heaster

### **Consulting Producer**

Jamie Meltzer

### **Associate Producers**

Anders Dillan

Charles & Miki Grant

Paul H. Rogers & Rosa Lasasosa

Vivienne Rohan

### **Written by**

Katherine Gorringe

**Sound Recordists**

Anders Dillan  
Vivienne Rohan

**Additional Cinematography**

Lauren DeFilippo  
Zachary Fink  
Katherine Gorringer  
Brendan Hall  
Paul Mossine  
Sebastian Lasasosa Rogers

**Drone Cinematography**

Brendan Hall

**Underwater Cinematography**

Juan Oliphant

**Additional Footage Provided by**

Sheyna Gifford  
<http://livefrommars.life>

**Title Design & Animation**

The String Theory Design NY

**Original Score Written, Performed, and Recorded by**

William Ryan Fritch

**Consulting Scientist**

Brian Shiro

**For Sandbox Films**

Doug Coblens  
Sarah Hume  
Sam Riviello  
Yolaine Seaton  
John Tracey

**Archival Footage & Photos**

avgeeks / Pond5

Scott Polar Research Institute

“South” Documentary (1919)

University of Hawai‘i

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