

We are Northern Lights .com



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SCOTLAND'S FIRST EVER CROWDSOURCED DOCUMENTARY CHOSEN TO PREVIEW AT SCOTLAND-TARTAN WEEK, NEW YORK

Following a phenomenally successful premiere at Glasgow Film Festival, and a tour of the Scottish regions, the mass participation, feature length documentary ***We Are Northern Lights*** has been chosen to be screened at two exclusive previews in the US as part of New York's Scotland- Tartan Week 2013 in April.

The result of the first ever crowdsourced film project in this country, *We Are Northern Lights* shows Scots and Scotland refracted through a myriad of different lenses – those of the Scots themselves.

Audience reception in Scotland was overwhelmingly positive. Responses included “uplifting”, “inspiring”, “poetic”, “representative” and “wow” with many admitting to moments when they had tears in their eyes.

Now with the support of Creative Scotland and the University of Edinburgh in association with the American-Scottish Foundation®, American audiences will get the chance to see what the Scots think of their own country. Both screenings will take place on April 11th at the landmark Bryant Park Hotel in Manhattan and will be followed by Q&A sessions with WANL Creative Director and Edinburgh University senior lecturer, Dr Nick Higgins, who will be talking about the journey from idea to realisation, reception and beyond.

We Are Northern Lights is the culmination of a process that began during the Year of Creative Scotland, which asked the people of Scotland to capture their unique perspectives on film and submit them for selection. To ensure that the project was accessible to all, 55 workshops took place up and down the country, with entertaining, ‘how-to’ online video tutorials provided by Scottish Asian comedian, writer and actor Sanjeev Kohli. The resulting film is a unique, kaleidoscopic documentary portrait of Scotland in 2012.

Scottish Government Culture Secretary, Fiona Hyslop, said: “*We Are Northern Lights* presents a fantastic insight into modern day Scotland. It shows what can be achieved when the individual creative impulses of people from across Scotland are brought together.

“To me, it has set a standard for cultural projects - it's reached out to our diverse communities and inspired them to think about how they can use culture and creativity - not only to promote their local identity but to enhance community engagement. I am sure that everyone involved is very proud.”

Over 1500 submissions were received. The resulting 300 hours of footage took five months to edit into a 95-minute feature, with Nick working alongside the highly experienced film editor Colin Monie (*Midnight's Children, Neds*).

The final film features footage from 121 ‘co-directors’ from all over the country and from all walks of life. The musical score was mostly created with selections from 200 original music submissions, also crowdsourced from members of the public.

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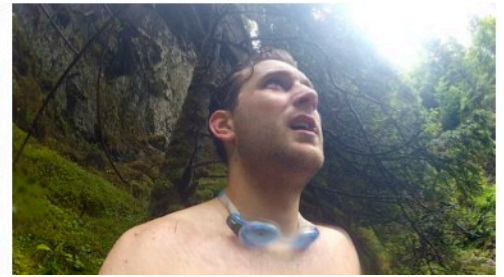


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The result is a sweeping, compelling, multi-faceted self-portrait that arrives at a decisive period in the country's history. From midges to multi-storeys, Tweed to T in the Park, Skara Brae to wind turbines via the Dalai Lama and Donald Trump, this is Scotland's story by the Scots. The challenges of living in Scotland are not ignored but the finished film is notable for its dry wit. More cheery than chippy, concerned with issues rather than image, this is the combined response of a people that take huge delight in their country.

The Northern Lights Project comes at a time when Scotland stands poised to take the most momentous decision in its history. At a time when the country is asking: "who are we?" the film seeks to answer that question by letting the Scots speak for themselves.

Filmmaker and academic Dr Nick Higgins originated, produced and directed the year-long project. He said: "We wanted to make the Project as accessible as possible, so we encouraged people to submit footage from their camera phones or even their home computers. And if they didn't have a camera we would lend them one. We ran workshops with people from communities not normally included in projects of this nature, from Govanhill in Glasgow to the Isle of Luing, and if they couldn't make it to a workshop we posted all our resources online.

"The result was incredible and at times overwhelming, with over 50,000 people visiting our website, resulting in over 300 hours of video footage."

Iain Munro, Director of Creative Development, Creative Scotland, said: "*We Are Northern Lights* is the culmination of an exciting project supported by Creative Scotland as part of the Year of Creative Scotland. People across the country have risen to the opportunity to present their own stories and views and the final film is a funny, moving, unique portrait of Scotland. Congratulations to the 121 co-directors whose work makes up the film."

Nick commented: "It was a hugely gratifying experience to receive so many submissions of such great quality. Whilst individually the videos might not be considered of national importance, collectively they combine to create something truly original and inspiring.

"We're delighted to be able to share it with our American cousins - it's an authentic, updated and upbeat version of Scotland that is at the same time both new and instantly recognisable."

ENDS

Notes to Editors:

Creative Director Dr Nick Higgins is available for interview.

For interviews, information and images please contact Alison Young, Press & Media Coordinator at Alison@wearenorthernlights.com
M. (+44) 7891 038 053

Teaser trailer: <http://wearenorthernlights.com/we-are-northern-lights-teaser/>
Audience reaction: <http://wearenorthernlights.com/glasgow-film-festival-premiere/>

Website: www.wearenorthernlights.com
Twitter: www.twitter.com/weRnLights
Facebook: [www.facebook.com/ WeAreNorthernLights](http://www.facebook.com/WeAreNorthernLights)
YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/user/WeRnLights>

LISTINGS

***We Are Northern Lights* plus Q&A with Director Nick Higgins, Thursday 11th April, 5.30pm & 8pm, The Bryant Park Hotel, 40 West 40th Street, New York, NY10018. UK, 2013, 98mins, 12A, English and Gaelic with subtitles. Directors: Nick Higgins and 121 others.**
To book tickets please go to: <http://www.americanscottishfoundation.com/events/northernlights.html>

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Credits:

Produced by Nick Higgins
Directed by Nick Higgins and 121 others
Edited by Colin Monie

Director/Producer Nick Higgins' biography:

Dr Nick Higgins is an award winning documentary filmmaker and senior lecturer in Visual and Cultural Studies at the University of Edinburgh.

Initially pursuing an academic career in cultural politics, Nick spent much time with the indigenous Maya of Mexico. When his research led to interviewing the survivors of a massacre in Acteal in Southern Mexico in which 45 people, mostly women and children, had been killed, Nick's growing frustration at the inadequacy of academic writing motivated him to begin filmmaking. Five years in the making, in 2007 Nick completed **A Massacre Foretold**, which premiered at the Edinburgh International Film Festival and won the WACC-SIGNIS award for Best Human Rights Documentary. His documentaries **Women In Black**, (2004), **Hidden Gifts: The Mystery of Angus MacPhee**, (2005) and **Mentiras**, (2006) have been broadcast on many international television channels as well as picking up awards and nominations at film festivals.

In 2008 Nick originated and co-produced the multi-directorial feature documentary, **The New Ten Commandments**, working alongside artists and filmmakers such as Tilda Swinton, Irvine Welsh and Turner Prize winner Douglas Gordon. The film was first broadcast by the BBC in 2008, premiered at the Edinburgh International Film Festival and continues to screen at film festivals internationally.

See: <http://bit.ly/OVJuuJ> / <http://imdb.to/GUOkDW> / www.landsdowneproductions.co.uk

Editor Colin Monie's biography:

One of the Scotland's most highly regarded editors, Glasgow born Colin has twenty years' experience in both film and television, always working on high quality productions but noticeably favouring home-grown Scottish projects. Early in his career he edited actor and filmmaker Peter Mullan's pivotal short film **Fridge**; the beginning of a working relationship that subsequently saw him editing **Orphans**, **The Magdalene Sisters** and **Neds**.

Colin's film credits also include director David Mackenzie's **Young Adam** and **Hallam Foe**, while his documentary editing work includes **Future My Love** and **Jig**. With his work on Salman Rushdie's film adaptation of **Midnight's Children** recently completed, he's currently editing BBC Scotland's second series of drama **The Field of Blood**.

See: <http://imdb.to/10uB9GF>

The American-Scottish Foundation®, the pre-eminent, national, US-based, not-for-profit organization, is dedicated to strengthening ties between individuals, institutions and businesses of Scotland and the United States through the pursuit of contemporary social, cultural, educational, philanthropic, scientific and economic interests and activities - a bridge between the two great countries:

www.americanscottishfoundation.org

Creative Scotland is the Scottish national development agency for the arts, screen and creative industries: www.creativescotland.com

The University of Edinburgh: www.ed.ac.uk

The American-Scottish Foundation®: www.americanscottishfoundation.org

New York Tartan Week: www.tartanweek.com

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