

David E. Simpson
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David E. Simpson is a documentary filmmaker with over three decades of experience. Programs he has produced, directed or edited have garnered three national Emmys, a pair of Peabody awards, two DuPont-Columbia batons, an Oscar nomination and best in category at countless festivals. A veteran director / producer, David considers editing to be the core of documentary practice, and now spends the majority of his time in the cutting room crafting impactful works with talented collaborators.

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY:

• ***One Golden Summer***

Writer, Editor • 81 minutes, 2025

When an all-Black little league team from the South side of Chicago won the 2014 U.S. championship, it was the feel-good story of the year.... until it wasn't. The truth behind Jackie Robinson West's rise and fall reveals joy, heartbreak and many shades of gray.

World Premiere: Opening night film - Chicago International Film Festival

• ***The Rose: Come Back to Me***

Editor, Co-Screenwriter • 85 minutes, 2025

Each of the Rose's four members chafed at the conformity and lack of artistic control in the K-pop system, before self-exiling to form that rarest of things in Korean music: an indie rock band that controlled their own destiny. This intimate portrait chronicles the band's remarkable journey – from their humble origins on the streets of Seoul; through growth, strife and heartache; to their emergence as a global sensation.

Festival Premieres: Tribeca Film Festival

Busan International Film Festival, Korea

• ***The Luckiest Guy in the World***

Editor • Television Series for ESPN's 30 for 30: 231 minutes (4 episodes), 2023

The colorful (one might say psychedelic) story of Bill Walton – baller for the ages, cultural icon, divisive broadcaster and the world's biggest Grateful Dead fan. Tracing Walton's incredible highs and devastating lows, this is far more than a basketball story.

Audience Choice Award – SXSW Film Festival / TV Premieres

• ***Messwood***

Writer, Editor • 95 minutes, 2021

Situated a mile apart on the same street, two Milwaukee high schools – one predominantly black, the other largely white – join forces to field a football team. Against the backdrop of a nation's painful racial reckoning, Messwood players navigate minefields of class, race and boyhood as they try to win on and off the field.

World Premiere, Doc NYC

FilmSlam Student Choice Award- Best Feature Film: Cleveland International Film Festival

• ***City so Real***

Co-Editor • Television Series: 338 minutes, 2020

Academy Award®-nominated filmmaker Steve James' fascinating and complex portrait of

contemporary Chicago delivers a deep, multifaceted look into the soul of a quintessentially American city. From its history-making 2019 mayoral election, to the tumultuous 2020 summer of COVID-19 and social upheaval following George Floyd's death, *City So Real* distills the authentic beauty of the city that Nelson Algren compared to a lovely woman with a broken nose.

World Premiere, Sundance Film Festival

Outstanding Nonfiction Series award, Cinema Eye Honors

Nominated for eight Primetime Emmys, including *Outstanding Documentary or Nonfiction Series*

- ***America to Me***

Co-Editor • Television Series: 10 x 58 minutes, 2018

America to Me spends an academic year in one elite, public high school, allowing its students, families, faculty and administrators to tell stories of the pressures and challenges teens face today. This critically lauded series directed by Steve James (*Hoop Dreams*) examines racial inequity in contemporary American education.

World Premiere, Sundance Film Festival

Broadcast Premiere, STARZ, 2018

Outstanding Achievement in Nonfiction Series for Broadcast: Cinema Eye Honors

- ***Cooked***

Co-Editor • 79 mins, 2018

Peabody Award-winning filmmaker Judith Helfand uses her signature serious-yet-quirky connect-the-dots style to take audiences from the deadly 1995 Chicago heat wave – in which 739 mostly Black, elderly and poor Chicagoans died during the course of one week – deep into one of our nation's biggest growth industries: disaster preparedness. Along the way she forges inextricable links between extreme weather, extreme disparity and racism.

Freedom of Expression Award, Jewish Film Institute

Best Documentary Jury Prize, Columbus Indiana Yes Film Festival, 2019

Best Feature Film Jury Award: EarthxFilm, 2019

People's Choice Award: Environmental Film Festival at Yale, 2019

- ***Abacus: Small Enough to Jail***

Co-Editor • 88 minutes, 2017

Tiny, immigrant-owned Abacus Federal Savings Bank in New York's Chinatown was the only U.S. bank to face criminal charges in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis. But the authorities chose the wrong bank to pick on. *Abacus* tells the incredible saga of the Sung family's five-year battle to defend a bank's legacy and a community's reputation.

Oscar Nomination - Documentary Feature, Academy of Motion Pictures Arts & Sciences

Emmy for Outstanding Business and Economic Documentary, Emmy Awards

Best Political Documentary, Critics' Choice Awards

Audience Award for Best Documentary, Sarasota Film Festival

Best Documentary Editing, Ashland Film Festival

World Premiere, Toronto International Film Festival

- ***Maya Angelou: And Still I Rise***

Co-Editor • 114 minutes, 2016

The first feature documentary about the remarkable writer, poet, actress, activist Maya Angelou.

Peabody Award, University of Georgia

Audience Award - Feature Documentary, AFI Docs Festival
Audience Award for Best Documentary, Mill Valley Film Festival
Audience Award - Feature Film, Milwaukee Film Festival
Best Documentary, Black Film Festival Montreal
Best International Feature Documentary, Galway Film Fleadh

- ***Hard Earned***

Series Co-Director, Co-Editor • 6 x 48 minutes, 2015

In this landmark 6-part series on getting by in America, five families struggle to achieve the 21st century American dream while living on hourly wages between \$8 and \$15. Kartemquin Films for Al Jazeera America.

DuPont-Columbia Award for Excellence in Broadcast Journalism

Nomination - Best Limited Series, IDA Documentary Awards

- ***Life Itself***

Co-Editor • 120 minutes, 2014

Based on his memoir of the same name, this documentary recounts the surprising and entertaining life of world-renowned critic and social commentator Roger Ebert -- a story that's by turns personal, wistful, funny, painful, and transcendent.

Emmy for Outstanding Documentary Editing, Natl Academy of Television Arts & Sciences

Best Documentary Feature, Critics' Choice Awards

Best Documentary Feature, National Board of Review

Best Documentary, 13 different Critics Associations

Best Documentary, American Film Festival - Poland

Jury Award, Documentary Edge Festival

Founder's Prize, Traverse City Film Festival

Opening Night Film, Hamptons International Film Festival

Closing Night Film, AFI Docs

World Premiere, Sundance Film Festival

- ***Beneath the Blindfold***

Editor • 70 minutes, 2012

Their lives irrevocably changed by torture, four people share accounts of survival healing.

Best Political Documentary, Best of Chicago 2012 - Chicago Reader

- ***Head Games***

Editor • 95 minutes, 2012

Directed by Steve James (*Hoop Dreams*), this documentary follows football player turned pro-wrestler Chris Nowinski's quest to uncover the truth about the effects of concussions in sports.

Best Documentary, Boston Film Festival

Best Sports Movie of 2012, Sports Illustrated Magazine

- ***A Good Man***

Editor • 83 minutes, 2011

Controversial choreographer Bill T. Jones struggles to create a major dance-theater work about Abraham Lincoln on the bicentennial of his birth.

Featured on *Southern Film Circuit Tour, 2012*

National Broadcast, American Masters on PBS

- ***Milking the Rhino***

Director, Producer, Writer, Editor • 83 minutes, 2008

Emerging from a century of "white man conservation" that turned their lands into game reserves, members of the Himba and Maasai tribes in Africa vie for a piece of the wildlife-tourism pie.

Best Documentary - World Cinema Category, Phoenix Film Festival

Audience Award - World Cinema Category, Phoenix Film Festival

Best Documentary, Cottonwood Creek Environmental Film Festival

Director's Award: Best Documentary Feature, Pan-African Film Festival

Best Documentary Feature, San Luis Obispo International Film Festival

Opening Night Film, One World Film Festival

Best Documentary Feature, Yosemite Film Festival

Best Cinematography, United Nations Association Film Festival

Audience Award - Best Documentary, Kansas City International Film Fest

Opening Night Film, Best of DOXA Documentary Film Festival

Best Photography, World Mountain Discovery Fest of Qinghai, China

Silver Lei Award, Honolulu International Film Festival

Featured on *Southern Film Circuit Tour, 2009*

National Broadcast, Independent Lens on PBS

- ***Forgiving Dr. Mengele***

Co-Producer, Editor • 82 minutes, 2006

A portrait of an Auschwitz survivor's journey of forgiveness, the opposition of her fellow survivors, and the implications of the Forgiveness movement for peace in the Mid-East.

Special Jury Prize for Documentary, Slamdance Film Festival

- ***Terra Incognita: Mapping Stem Cell Research***

Editor • 52 minutes, 2004

Tells the story of Jack Kessler, an eminent stem cell researcher whose work takes on new urgency when his daughter Allison suffers a paralyzing ski accident.

Peabody Award, University of Georgia

Gold Hugo, Chicago International Film Festival

- ***The New Americans***

Co-Editor • Television series: 7 x 60 minutes, PBS premiere: 2004

A documentary series that follows the lives of six immigrant families over the course of four years. Kartemquin Educational Films for PBS.

Gold Hugo, Chicago International Television Competition

Chicago Award, Chicago International Television Competition

Best Limited Series, International Documentary Association

Special Screening, International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam

Special Screening, South By Southwest Film Festival

- ***Refrigerator Mothers***

Director, Co-Producer, Editor • 54 minutes, 2002

From the 1950s through the mid 70s, the medical establishment proclaimed that cold mothers caused autism. This film tells the story of the so-called "refrigerator mothers," who raised disabled children under the shroud of professionally-promoted mother blame.

Grand Jury Prize, Florida Film Festival

Best Documentary, Sedona International Film Festival
Best of Show, Indiana Film Society “Indyfest”
TASH Distinguished Media Award
Media Award, American Association on Mental Retardation
Excellence in Media Award, Autism Society of America
Achievement Award, Superfest 2003
Featured on *Southern Film Circuit Tour, 2004*
PBS national broadcast on POV

- ***5 Girls***

Co-Producer, Editor • 113 minutes, 2001

The world is full of resilient girls but we don't hear much about them. This documentary delves into the hearts and minds of five remarkable young women, offering powerful testimony to the complexity and strength of adolescent girls. Produced by Kartemquin Films.

Henry Hampton Award, Council on Foundations Film/Video Festival

Silver Plaque, Chicago International Film & Television Competition

Outstanding Achievement Award, Parents' Guide to Children's Media

PBS broadcast on POV, October, 2001

- ***Halsted Street, U.S.A.***

Producer, Director, Writer, Editor • 57 minutes, 1999

A kaleidoscopic tour of one vibrant, diverse thoroughfare, revealing the American melting pot at full boil. Produced by Panacea Pictures.

Gold Medal - Social Issue Documentary, Houston International Film Fest

Grand Jury Prize, Vis.com Film & Video Festival

Screened at MoMA's *New Documentaries Series*

Featured on *Southern Film Circuit Tour, 2000*

Featured at Robert Flaherty Film Seminar, 1999

- ***Vietnam—Long Time Coming***

Editor • 116 minutes, 1998

A group of Vietnamese and American veterans undertake a 1200 mile bicycle journey from Hanoi to Ho Chi Minh City. On the way, they struggle with cultural differences, and each with his own ghosts from the war.

Audience Award, Aspen Film Festival

Best Documentary, Directors' Guild of America

Emmy Award, National Academy of Television Arts & Sciences

Best Documentary, Temecula Valley International Film Festival

Best Documentary Nominee, National Society of Film Critics

Golden Eagle Award, CINE

- ***Living in Tall Trees***

Editor, Associate Producer • 29 minutes, 1997

A documentary about the conservation efforts of scientists who study tree-top canopies in old-growth forests. Produced by Marz Associates for WGBH and TV Asahi, Japan.

- ***Shtetl***

Editor, Associate Producer • 172 minutes, 1996

This documentary about the Polish village of Bransk — half Jewish before the Holocaust —

follows the emotionally charged homecoming of a number of Jewish ex-residents; and their interactions with a 29-year-old Polish historian, who struggles to do the right thing in the face of villagers who would rather forget. Produced by Marian Marzynski for PBS' *Frontline*.

Grand Prix, Cinéma du Réel, Paris
First Place, Jerusalem Film Festival

- ***Skin Deep***

Editor, Associate Producer • 52 minutes, 1996

An installment in the PBS/BBC series, "People's Century," this episode documents racial oppression in the 20th Century, focusing on Apartheid in South Africa and the struggle for civil rights in the American South.

- ***When Billy Broke His Head ... And Other Tales of Wonder***

Co-Producer, Director, Editor • 57 minutes, 1994

Following severe head injury, journalist Billy Golfus struggles for a new life in the face of pervasive discrimination and bureaucratic government systems. An irreverent road movie about disability, civil rights, and the search for intelligent life after brain damage.

Freedom of Expression Award, Sundance Film Festival
DuPont-Columbia Award for Excellence in Broadcast Journalism
Best Documentary, Atlanta Film Festival
First Place - Documentary, Central Florida Film & Video Festival
Gold Apple Award, National Educational Media Network
Jurors' Choice, Black Maria Film & Video Festival
Audience Award, Leipzig Int'l Documentary & Animation Festival
Best Journalistic Film, Leipzig Int'l Documentary & Animation Festival
Grand Prize, Para-Olympic Disability Film Festival
Silver Hugo, Chicago International Film Festival
Silver Medal, New York Expo of Short Film & Video
Screened at Museum of Modern Art's *New Documentaries Series*
Selected for *INPUT 1995*, San Sebastian, Spain
Broadcast nationally on PBS and in more than fifteen foreign countries

- ***NOVA: Mysterious Crash of Flight 201***

Editor, Associate Producer • 53 minutes, 1993

This NOVA program follows American investigators as they decipher clues to the cause of a Boeing 737 crash in dense Panamanian jungle.

National Emmy Award Nomination
Excellence in Media Award, National Aeronautics and Aviation Admin.
National PBS Broadcast

- ***Tom Chicago on Location***

Producer, Director, Cinematographer, Editor • 23 minutes, 1990

The *nom d'art* "Tommy Chicago" reflects independent filmmaker Tom Palazzolo's unique status within the Chicago film community. Since 1967, Palazzolo has filtered all aspects of the Windy City through his audacious lens. This documentary captures the artist at work and play on his latest film: we see him engage street urchins in the service of his vision, teach his son that you *can* buy love, and drive cast and crew to the brink of artistic chaos.

- **Dante's Dream**

Producer, Director, Cinematographer, Editor • 16mm film, 12 min, 1990

An experimental film that inverts Dante's cosmology -- revealing Paradiso as a place where nothing ever happens (to borrow from David Byrne), and the Inferno as an erotic fever-dream of water, fire, flesh, and animal instinct.

Grand Prize, Cinematic Arts Film & Video Festival

First Place-Experimental Film, Cinematic Arts Film & Video Festival

Jury Award, New York Exposition of Short Film & Video

1st Place-Experimental Film, Athens International Film / Video Festival

Directors Choice, Black Maria Film & Video Festival

Best Experimental Film, Festival of Illinois Film & Video Artists

Best Experimental Film, Humboldt International Film & Video Festival

Screened at *Musée du Louvre*, Paris

Screened at *Unknown Territories: American Independent Films*, Vienna

**TEACHING/
ADVISING**

- **Northwestern University** (Evanston, IL) 2019
Lecturer, MFA in Documentary Media program.
Advanced Documentary Editing
- **Diverse Voices in Docs** (Chicago, IL) 2015-17
Mentor to emerging filmmakers in an acclaimed program administered by Kartemquin Educational Films.
- **North Carolina School of the Arts** (Winston-Salem, NC) 2003-04
Served on the National Program Advisory Board, Thomas S. Kenan Institute for the Arts.
- **School of the Art Institute of Chicago** (Chicago, IL) 1996, 1990-91
Lecturer, Filmmaking Department:
Film Editing
Dream and Myth in Film
Graduate Advising
- **Chicago Filmmakers** (Chicago, IL) 1991
Instructor: *16mm Film Production*
- **University of Minnesota** (Minneapolis, MN) 1989-90
Lecturer, Department of Studio Arts:
Video I
Video II
Video III
Editing
Special Projects in the Media Arts
- **Film In The Cities** (St. Paul, MN) 1989-90
Instructor:
Elements of the Moving Image
16mm Film Production

EDUCATION

- **MFA - School of the Art Institute of Chicago** (Chicago, IL) 1987
Concentration in Filmmaking.
- **BA - St. John's College** (Santa Fe, NM) 1984
BA in Philosophy, Mathematics
- **The Evergreen State College** (Olympia, WA) 1977-79
Studies in Philosophy, Photography, Design.