

ARGOT PICTURES

SEVEN SONGS FOR A LONG LIFE



A film by Amy Hardie

with DORENE ASHER, TOSH O'DONNELL, NIKKI & JASON MCINALLY, IAIN & MOYRA MILNE, ALICIA PHILLIPS, JULIE & KARYS REID, JIM BROWN & MANDY MALCOLMSON. DIRECTOR: AMY HARDIE. PRODUCERS: SONIA HENRICI & AMY HARDIE. EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS: LORI CHEATLE & NOE MENDELLE. FILMED BY: AMY HARDIE & JULIAN SCHWANITZ. EDITING: COLIN MONIE & NICK GIBBON. COMPOSER: MARK ORTON. ADDITIONAL ARRANGEMENTS: THE FOUNDRY. MUSIC FACILITIES: HILARY BROOKS. SOUND DESIGN: DOUGLAS MACDOUGALL. SOUND MIX: JOHN COBBAN. 422. TV ASSISTANT DIRECTOR: RACHEL HENDRY. BBC SCOTLAND COMMISSIONING EDITOR: EWAN ANGUS. SUPPORTED BY CREATIVE SCOTLAND. PRODUCTION EXECUTIVE: LESLIE FINLAY. BUSINESS AFFAIRS: MARK WILSON. BERTHA FOUNDATION AND REBECCA LICHTENFELD, YLE. COMMISSIONING EDITOR: JENNY WESTERGARD. IN COLLABORATION WITH STRATHCARRON HOSPICE.



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SYNOPSIS

Synopsis Short

1 liner

The intimate story behind our changing relationship with death – with great songs!

50 words

The intimate story behind our changing relationship with death. A terminal diagnosis used to mean death within months. Modern medicine allows patients to live on for years. A passionate and touching film about uncertainty, about the future that faces all of us, following five patients who choose to sing their way through life. With a score by Mark Orton.

100 Words

How did it happen? A movie about six hospice patients which you just want to keep watching! Funny, touching and passionate in their enjoyment of life, this film surprises with its use of song. A great score by Mark Orton leads us through one of the key issues of our age: medicine has recently changed our relationship with fatal disease: we can now live for years, rather than months, after a terminal diagnosis. Sometimes. How do we cope with this uncertainty? The documentary cast are quirky, wry front-runners in a journey that we will all face.

200 words

From the moment Tosh refuses to fill in his assessment form and serenades us with a remarkably good Sinatra song, this documentary grabs life through song. Six hospice patients allow us into tender, vulnerable and funny moments of their lives. Singing unlocks the patients' pasts, guides their dreams and their futures. Encouraged by one nurse who loves to sing, and a collaborative filming process, they wrestle with the new insecurity facing us all: recent advances in biomedicine mean we can now live for years rather than months after a terminal diagnosis. Sometimes. But not every time. How do we cope with this uncertainty?

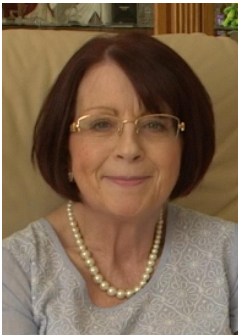
Strathcarron's patients are quirky, wry front-runners in a journey that we will all face. Each patient deals with enormous change during the three years of filming. As they go through the little and big dramas of trying to make a will, medicating pain, finding a guardian for a child and moving house, we see the growing relationship between staff and patient, patient and patient. Just as it takes a village to raise a child, it takes a community to help face your own mortality, making the process of dying itself safe, individual, and as gentle as possible.

CAST BIOGRAPHIES



Tosh O'Donnell (1946 - 2012, died age 66)

Tosh doesn't believe in talking about death. He doesn't believe in filling in forms, even if it will net him an extra £100 per week under the 'special conditions' of having less than six months to live. Tosh believes in singing. He charms the social worker, serenades the hairdresser, and persuades 94-year-old Betty to duet with him. "That's the best thing that ever happened to me," he says, "a medal for singing, when I was 13."



Dorene Ascher (50s)

Dorene went into the hospice in such pain that the nurses could not touch her. Intensive specialist care and a cocktail of pain relief allowed her to return home. Although she gave up singing after her diagnosis of bone cancer, she could not resist once she met Mandy. A previous star of amateur operatics, she sings her favourite song during a physiotherapy session. She goes on to sing some of the most beautiful moments in the film.



Julie Reid (30s)

Julie's cancer arrived when she was twenty three, and returned when her daughter Karys was four years old. When it spread to her lungs the doctors told her the chemotherapy was not working and she should enjoy the time she had left. She went home to care for her daughter, and joined the Church at the end of her road. Six years on she is alive and well, and surprises everyone by falling in love with a fellow Church attender, having a baby and getting married.



Iain Milne (50s)

Iain was born to race. A cycle champion by age 14, he moved onto speedway and joined Linlithgow Lightning, winning medals and trophies. When his legs started to fail, he was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. He tried to fight it, every day, until he realized he was making it worse. Friends disappeared. His wife, Moyra remained a constant, and glamorous, support. Iain struggled with increasing daily pain for 8 years before the hospice helped him discover effective pain relief.



Alicia Phillips (1932 - 2014, died age 82)

Alicia has had a full life and enjoyed every moment, Trained as a midwife, she worked in the poorest areas of Liverpool before settling back in Scotland. Long retired, she is a self-confessed tv shopping addict, but then resells the jewels for donations to the hospice. Her cancer causes her no pain, and she is ready to rejoin her husband, who died several years previously.



Nicola McInally (1975 - 2014, died age 39)

Nicola is the busiest woman on the planet. Four children, dog, husband, a hairdresser who wants to move into garden design, optimistic and practical, her cancer's return after five years has slowed her down, but only just. Her priority is her family. She is determined that the cancer takes second place to their fun times, and she embraces home-movie making, singing and baking. She is tested and tested again by the cancer as it eats through her body, and the strength she gains from her family is mind-blowing.

STAFF



Mandy Malcomson (40s)

Mandy wanted to be a nurse in intensive care, and very quickly realized she was interested in the people more than the machines. She found her home in palliative care where her skills of listening, pain management and sense of humour shine. She loves singing, and her ability to draw the patients out through music is one of the inspirations for this film. As well raising a family and working full time, she is part of a local choir that just played their debut at T in the Park to great acclaim.



Jim Brown (40s)

A former cruise-ship jeweler, Jim also played piano on the Cunard line, before discovering his calling to help keep Strathcarron Hospice afloat financially. It's a big ask – with running costs over 6 million, and NHS grants of £2.4, he and the fund-raising team have to raise 3.9 million pounds every year in this predominantly working class area. They do it because they love to look after their community of patients with great food, beautiful surroundings, a staff to patient ratio that means everyone has time to talk, to listen, and to create the memories that make Strathcarron special.

QUOTES & REVIEWS

Amy Hardie (Director)

“Just as it takes a village to raise a child, it takes a community to help face your own mortality, making the process of dying itself safe, individual, and as gentle as possible.”

Heather Richardson (CEO of St Christopher’s Hospice)

"This film offers fresh insights into the experience and challenges of living with a life threatening condition and the support that hospices can offer in response. It is beautifully made, and captures aspects of hospice care that often fail to be acknowledged in public literature or information about hospice services. Drawing viewers into the inner worlds of a group of people who are coming to the end of their lives, the film provokes an extraordinary range and depth of emotions in those who witness their progress and ultimately their demise. It will be of interest to anyone curious about death and loss – including the public, health and social care professionals and commissioners and will benefit from a public viewing with the opportunity to discuss what it evokes at its end...this could be the best Hospice Care Week initiative thus far.”

Barbara Munroe (Chair of Palliative Care Leadership Collaborative)

" This sensitive and thoughtful film conveys powerfully through its interwoven personal stories that we do not have to go through the journey to death alone. It is an invitation to us all to come together to share sadness, hurt and loss but also moments of simple pleasure and great happiness."

Erlend Clouston (Guardian Journalist)

"Invests a potentially downbeat subject with exhilarating *joie de vivre*."

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT
~AMY HARDIE~

I came to Strathcarron with strict instructions: hang around. Being an artist in a medical establishment you get good at hanging around. Feeling useless becomes your evolving art form. Finally the patients took pity on me. Maybe they were feeling a bit useless too. Disease can do that. Then they started singing to the camera. I loved it. Myself, I was banned from the singing circle right at nursery. But the songs that came from the patients at Strathcarron were so full of passion, dreams, anger, regret, acceptance...I felt it was their whole lives tunnelling into the camera microphone. We started making little music films together, 3 minutes, 5 minutes, interspersing the song with observational footage of their time in the hospice and at home. The requests came in thick and fast and I learnt an interesting thing: when you've been told you have a disease that is going to kill you, you don't waste time. And you want pleasure. To receive it and to give it.

Time is one of the greatest gifts someone can give you. When you sit with someone you are giving them your time. I spent four years filming in Strathcarron, listening, watching, taking up time from the patients and the staff. Sometimes there was a sense of urgency – if someone is in pain then each second of pain is a second too long. Sometimes time looped back on itself and we were transported by the songs back into someone's childhood, or their first love, or the moment they lost their spouse. Julie, one of the patients who had been told she had months to live, lived firmly in the moment. As the moments stretched into months, and then years, she had a rethink. She dyed her hair blonde and went back to work, fell in love, got married. Is she scared of dying? Not anymore, she is ready. How long is a good marriage? How long is a long life? As Dorene says after her successful stem cell treatment: "This stem cell treatment has given me five years – and five years is a long time."

I brought in a music facilitator for the last year of filming. It created a fantastic buzz as the patients and staff heard themselves reach new levels of power in their songs. It was Hilary Brook's first time in a hospice, and like me, she was apprehensive before she arrived. Once she had met the patients and staff, however, we embarked on a shared journey that included laughter, tears, cake and comedy. The patients grew to have absolute trust that Hilary would help them find their best voice. I love it that Nicola changed the last word of the last chorus in the film – it is a confident expression of who she is, and what is happening to her: she ends the film with an invitation to the audience to "dream a little dream for me." It makes me cry.

These are extraordinary moments, or maybe they are ordinary moments. Ordinary every day heroes. That's as true for the staff as for the patients. It was a privilege to be allowed to 'hang out' for four years. There is a lovely story told that I think sums up the interplay of observational life and song in this film: Fionn Mac Cumhail, the legendary Irish chieftan asked his warriors to tell him what sound they thought was the best music. They came up with many examples but he kept shaking his head – then he told them: "*The music of what happens: that is the sweetest music in the world.*"

**THE HOSPICE
~STRATHCARRON~**

Strathcarron Hospice's vision is to provide specialist palliative care services for the people of Forth Valley and Lanarkshire to promote the delivery of palliative care across this area.

Their aim is to sustain, develop and deliver a full range of quality services - in-patient, day hospice, community, bereavement, pastoral care, lymphoedema, reasearch and education. In order to achieve this, they need to carry out activities in four clearly defined but inter- linked areas. The focus of all their activity will be the patient, families and carers.

website: www.strathcarronhospice.net

Irene McKie, the Chief Executive, is responsible for the day-to-day running of the Hospice together with Billy Andrew, Director of Operations, and Marjory Mackay, Director of Nursing, as well as a team of highly dedicated staff. The Hospice requires a large team to provide the high levels of service expected by our patients.

To provide support to patients and families at such an important time in their lives, we have a multi-professional team that focuses not only on the physical needs of patients but also on the social, spiritual and emotional aspects of experiencing illness.

We are also well supported by a team of non-clinical staff to keep Strathcarron running smoothly. Our Education team helps to develop our own staff, share knowledge with other organisations, medical students and those involved with research in palliative care.

The team at Strathcarron includes Doctors, Nurses, Social Workers, Chaplains, Bereavement Support Workers, Complementary Therapists, Physiotherapist, Occupational Therapist, Art & Craft Therapists, Pharmacist, Lymphoedema Staff, Education & Research Staff, Catering and Domestic Staff, Administrative & Secretarial Staff, Maintenance Staff, Volunteers and Fundraising.

THE FILMMAKERS

Director: Amy Hardie @amyhardiefilm



Dr Amy Hardie is a documentary filmmaker with several international awards. Her documentary feature *The Edge of Dreaming*, was the first Scottish feature documentary to be selected for competition at IDFA in 2009 and was awarded the Grand Jury Prize, Kiev International Film Festival. She graduated from the National Film and Television School in 1990 with the BP Expo prize for best student documentary (*Kafi's Story*). Dr Hardie's research interests include close collaborative work with research scientists and health professionals. She directed and produced six films with the Centre for Regenerative Medicine, including *Stem Cell Revolutions* (Tam Dalyell medal, and Best Documentary Milan). She spent a year as filmmaker in residence in Strathcarron Hospice, before developing the film into a feature documentary with UK and international financing. Although her research is primarily through practice, she is currently editing a book on the creative arts and medicine. She has contributed journal articles on audience engagement throughout distribution and production phases of filmmaking. Her work is frequently screened in the rapidly growing field of Medical Humanities. She headlined the annual Brainwave event at the Rubin Museum in New York in 2011 amongst artists and thinkers such as Debra Winger and Robert Stickgold, leading workshops developed from *The Edge of Dreaming*. These workshops and lectures toured 18 US cities (including the Carla Kuhn lecture in Columbia, New York) and Film and Jungian conferences, where scholars explored the film's contribution to debates around neuroscience and the symbolism of the unconscious.

Producer: Sonja Henrici @sonjahenrici



Sonja joined Scottish Documentary Institute in 2004 at its inception and has developed SDI ever since, becoming co-exec producer of Bridging the Gap and many award-winning short documentaries, running the Interdoc programme, producing feature documentaries (*Future My Love, I Am Breathing, Pablo's Winter*), and investigating new business models and outreach campaigns through our Virtuous Circle initiative (2011-14). She is an active member of IPS (independent producers scotland) and keen to improve opportunities and funds for filmmakers. She's producing new international projects, including *David Millar Project* by Finlay Pretsell, *Donkeyote* by Chico Pereira and execing new Scottish feature talents. She has written fiction (*Rewind*, 2009) and started her career in the administration of Edinburgh International Film Festival 1999-2003, where she was permanent member of staff for three years.

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About SDI Productions Ltd - UK

SDI Productions Ltd was set up by Noe Mendelle and Sonja Henrici in 2007 to provide the production platform for Scottish Documentary Institute for all our international feature documentaries. Noe and Sonja combine over 40 years' experience in film. Our films have played at major film festivals, such as Sundance, Cannes, Hotdocs, Tribeca, Full Frame, IDFA, Cinéma du Reel, Vision du Réel, and Leipzig, and have picked up major awards and nominations.

SDI Productions is all about supporting innovative combinations of visual and sound into new forms of storytelling. We look at Drama or Documentary as tools for storytelling not genres and give equal importance to content and form.

Recent productions include:

'Norfolk' by Martin Radich (2015, iFeatures, Creative England, BBC, BFI), 'I Am Breathing' (UK, C4 & Denmark, DR 2013) by Emma Davie & Morag McKinnon, IDFA competition & BAFTA winner for Best Directing, 'Future My Love' (UK/Sweden; SVT) by Maja Borg (2012 - EIFF, CPH Dox, Ambulante, Hotdocs), nominated for the Michael Powell Award for Best British Film. 'Pablo's Winter' by Chico Pereira, 2012) 'The New Ten Commandments' (2008, BBC; EIFF / Guardian's Top Ten); 'State of the World' (Various, 2008, Portugal/UK), an omnibus film directed by prolific directors such as Apichatpong Weerasethakul, Chantal Chantal Akerman and Wang Bing. (Cannes Directors' Fortnight).

www.scottishdocinstitute.com @scottishdocinst

Executive Producer: Lori Cheadle - Hard Working Movies - USA

Lori Cheadle founded Hard Working Movies, an independent production company in Brooklyn, NY, to produce director-driven feature films that tell great stories and appeal to wide audiences. Subjects range from personal documentaries to pop culture to social issues. Lori's award-winning films have screened in theaters, museums and in top film festivals as well as on HBO, PBS, Showtime, The Sundance Channel, Channel 4 UK, the BBC, ZDF/Arte, NHK, Canal+, and have been seen in over 60 countries. Films she's produced include three documentaries directed by Doug Block - the critically acclaimed 112 Weddings, 51 Birch Street and The Kids Grow Up; Amy Hardie's The Edge of Dreaming, This Land Is Your Land (Whitney Biennial), Dashiell Hammett. Detective Writer, and many others. In 2014 she launched the feature documentary Captivated The Trials of Pamela Smart (HBO, Sky Atlantic) directed by Jeremiah Zagar at Sundance.

www.hardworkingmovies.com @hrdwrkngmovies

Editor: Colin Monie @colinmonie

Colin Monie, having worked across film, television and documentary, has developed a career much to be admired. His feature work includes the BAFTA-winning *The Unloved*, directed by Samantha Morton; Peter Mullen's award-winning *The Magdalene Sisters*; Deepa Mehta's Oscar-nominated *Water*, and her adaptation of Salman Rushdie's eponymous novel *Midnight's Children*. Amongst his documentary credits is the critically acclaimed *Jig* by Sue Bourne, *Future My Love* by Maja Borg, *From Scotland with Love* by Virginia Heath.

Editor: Nick Gibbon

Nick edited the widely admired feature debut *Pablo's Winter* by Chico Pereira, and has worked on a number of award-winning Scottish fiction and documentary shorts. A graduate from Edinburgh Napier University, Nick's own films have screened internationally. Recently he has worked with contemporary dancers for Arts Council England, multi-media artists, and directed / edited the film of fine artist Craig Coulthard's *Forest Pitch* project, part of the London Olympics 2012 Culture Festival. He is currently working on *Pablo's Winter* follow up with Chico Pereira: *Donkeyote*.

Composer: Mark Orton @markorton42

Mark Orton is a composer working in the mediums of film scoring, concert music, and radio drama. He is a multi-instrumentalist, performing on all manner of guitars, keyboards, and percussion. He is the co-founder of *Tin Hat*, a San Francisco Bay Area based composer/improviser collective with five critically acclaimed albums. He has written scores for dozens of films – documentary, feature, and fine art – and has composed music for modern dance, theater, experimental radio, video/art installation, the circus, and the concert hall. Feature films include: *Nebraska*, *The Good Girl*, *Everything is Illuminated*.

<http://markortonmusic.com/>

Music Facilitator: Hilary Brooks

Hilary Brooks is a multi-award winning Musical Director, Arranger & Composer & Pianist. Currently Musical Director for *Doris*, *Dolly* & *The Dressing Room Divas*, the Fringe sellout show. Co-founder of *PianoPiano* with Karen MacIver www.pianopiano.co, which is part of the *Made In Scotland 2015* curated showcase. Later this year Hilary will be returning to Pitlochry Festival Theatre with the award-winning production of Irving Berlin's *White Christmas*. Currently commissioned by ATG/Citizens Theatre with Clive King for the new large-scale musical based on Powell & Pressburger's 1946 iconic movie *A Matter Of Life & Death*. Premiering Autumn 2016.

ABBREVIATED CREDITS

(Please ask for full credits)

With thanks to the patients and staff at Strathcarron Hospice for their courage, generosity and humour.

with: Dorene Asher, Tosh O'Donnell, Nicola & Jason McNally, Iain & Moyra Milne, Alicia Phillips, Julie & Karys Reid, Jim Brown and Mandy Malcomson

and

Sharron Love, April McKinney, Jean Gow, Laura Tierney, Hazel Fraser, Jenny Gilbert

~ ~ ~

Directed by Amy Hardie

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Amy Hardie

Executive Producer
Lori Cheadle

Executive Producer
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HDCAM Dolby E & Stereo Mix.
BluRay

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