

SUMMERCAMP!

Directed by
Bradley Beesley & Sarah Price

PRESS NOTES

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SUMMERCAMP!

2006, USA

85 minutes

SYNOPSIS

Summertime! follows the day-to-day drama of 90 kids let loose in the woods at Swift Nature Camp in northern Wisconsin. Camp is a place where kids can be kids, where their home and school lives momentarily fade into the background as they go through the highs and lows of adolescent rituals: sing-alongs, talent shows, homesickness, counselor mutiny--and first love. Amidst group activities, showy arguments, and secret conversations, filmmakers Bradley Beesley and Sarah Price submerge themselves into this curious camp subculture, capturing a diverse array of adolescents from all economic and social backgrounds. Through the non-calloused eyes of kids, Summertime! captures the raw emotional experiences that will endure with them for the rest of their lives.

Within Summertime! we meet:

Cameron - Struggling with popularity at camp, his anti-social antics push him and his counselors to the edge.

Spencer - Ultra-articulate and a self proclaimed "Leader, not follower." He can be found brooding and reading Tom Clancy by the lake.

Holly - A self-reflective loner who obsesses over chickadees and pocket able friends.

Boo - Bright and quick-witted, she revels in the plethora of friends she finds at camp; a stark contrast to the loneliness she feels at home.

Summertime! lends insight into the world of the modern American adolescent who, while preparing for adulthood at home, still clings to childhood frivolity and curiosity at camp. The film witnesses how three short weeks ultimately affect their personal identities and collective futures, while at once reminiscing on what it was like to sample the first taste of independence.

Festivals: Toronto International Film Festival, Chicago International Film Festival, Hamptons International Film Festival, SXSW Film Conference and Festival, Santa Barbara International Film Festival, Jacksonville Film Festival, Sarasota Film Festival, Milwaukee International Film Festival, The True False Film Festival,

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DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Bradley: Growing-up in Oklahoma, I went to a conservative southern Baptist church camp every summer. No shorts or dancing allowed. And although I wasn't a churchgoer, my Grandma Geneva was the cook so I got to attend for free. I always looked forward to summer camp, not because I enjoyed the face-melting heat or the marathon tabernacle sermons but because of the strong sense of community and purpose provided at camp. I'll admit that as a twelve-year-old I was more into air-hockey, girls and funnel cakes than building life skills, but I would later learn and appreciate how familiar yet profound these small life-affirming camp experiences really were.

The best part of making and even watching *Summertime!* was being transported back to my own childhood through the film's portrayal of those often-awkward childhood experiences, such as pursuing popularity or navigating first love. Ultimately it reminds me of a time unburdened by life's grown-up problems, when it's okay to spend an afternoon eating two boxes of pop-tarts, counting frogs and doling-out wedgies.

Sarah: I never had the pleasure of Bible camp but instead spent summers in Michigan where they rewarded campers throughout the day with cans of Mountain Dew. And then we had to sing the song "They call it that good 'ole Mountain Dew, Dew, Dew..." while we popped open the can and chugged it down. So when I was approached to make this film with Bradley, memories of my sugar-fueled time in the woods loomed large. However, the real reason I was interested wasn't to solely document the classic Meatballs-esque antics, but to capture a time and place of innocence where kids can be kids and candidly express their experiences, ultimately revealing how much or little has changed since I was a kid. There is certainly an element of nostalgia that every adult can relate to, but it's the discovery of how complex their worlds have become and how maturely they're handling their lives that impressed me the most.

Summertime! is a documentary told through the vivid and sometimes sage eyes of the children at Swift Nature Camp. This is not a highly competitive sports camp and these campers are not extraordinary people involved in some extraordinary conflict. So what makes *Summertime!* a worthy cinematic endeavor? The collective experiences of these campers present a coming of age dialogue that resonates far beyond social, racial, and economic boundaries. Hopefully, these universal themes of innocence and curiosity are omnipresent and provide some reflection for us all.

In a day when reality television is king and Fox News is our vernacular, sometimes it's nice to sit back and let stories unfold organically rather than being force-fed a conclusion. Our approach was based in verite filmmaking, following whatever story was happening in front of us without a larger agenda, in order to capture a candid slice of life story about how seemingly "average" modern-day kids react in a communal camp setting, free from distractions like i-pods, video games and internet.

As documentary storytellers, we both share the desire to create work that is honest and sincere, incorporating a narrative tone with pure moments of spontaneity. We both enjoy submerging ourselves in peculiar subcultures, not only relating with our subjects while filming but also interacting in a way that cultivates lasting relationships. Finally, we hope this film resonates with the viewer in a timeless and personal way.

FILMMAKER BIOGRAPHIES

BRADLEY BEESLEY

BRADLEY BEESLEY is an Austin-based award-winning filmmaker, named one of Filmmaker Magazine's "Top 25 Independent Filmmakers" of the year in 2002. His feature documentary work includes *The Creek Runs Red* (PBS 2007), *The Fearless Freaks*, featuring Warner Bros. recording artists, *The Flaming Lips* (Sundance Channel 2005), and *Okie Noodling* (PBS 2001). His long-term collaboration with the Flaming Lips includes co-directing ten of their music videos and acting as producer and DP on the sci-fi narrative *Christmas on Mars* (scheduled for release 2008). Additional work includes co-director of episodic documentary series "Roller Girls" (A&E Channel 2006) and director of reality series "Paranormal State" (A&E Channel 2007).

SARAH PRICE

SARAH PRICE is an award-winning filmmaker whose films include the feature documentaries *The Yes Men* (UA/MGM 2004), *Caesar's Park* (Sundance Channel 2003), and *American Movie* (Sony Pictures Classics 1999—Grand Jury Prize winner for Best Documentary- Sundance Film Festival 1999). Additional work includes a music video for Warner Bros. artist Har Mar Superstar, and artist David Robbins' TV variety show, *The Ice Cream Social* (the MOMA-Paris 2004). Other notable credits include co-editor of Chris Smith's *American Job* (Sundance Film Festival 1996) and sound on Michael Moore's *The Big One* (Miramax 1997).

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CREW LIST

Directors.....Bradley Beesley & Sarah Price

Producers..... Devorah DeVries, Bradley Beesley & Sarah Price

Editor.....JoLynn Garnes

Cinematography.....Bradley Beesley & Sarah Price

Sound.....Damon Cook

Co-Producer.....JoLynn Garnes

Associate Producer.....Jen Small, Damon Cook

Original Music by.....The Flaming Lips and Noisala

A Roadside Cinema Production in association with Orchard Pictures.

PRESS QUOTES

"Pure and heartbreaking, if you don't relate to this film you were never a kid."
-Chicago Tribune

"...it will go down as one of the most entertaining movies of the year."
-Filmthreat – Eric Campos

"You'll definitely leave with a smile on your face."
- Ain't it Cool News

"...a respectful, contemplative, and often blithe portrait of kids being kids"
-The Austin Chronicle

"Hilarious, touching and a hell of a lot of fun."
-Time Out Chicago