

JOE ON THE BUS

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Thesis Prepared for the Degree of

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS

December 2022

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McChane, Lia. "*Joe on the Bus.*" Master of Fine Arts (Documentary Production and Studies), December 2022, 51 pp., 2 appendices, references, 24 titles.

Joe Phillips, born in London to two American psychologists, worked for almost a decade as a solo motorcycle response unit in London before making the life-altering decision to change his path. Joe sold all of his belongings and purchased a traditional Red Routemaster double-decker bus to live and travel on in the United States. After the year-long bus journey, Joe chose to stay in the United States and purchased 22 acres of land in Coldspring, Texas where he is building his eco-paradise.

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PROSPECTUS

This is the proposal submitted and approved by the thesis committee on September 25, 2020.

TITLE: Joe on the Bus

MEDIUM: 4K Video

LENGTH: 20 Minutes

Introduction and Description

From the time we are children, we are posed with the question of what we want to be when we grow up. The answer throughout our lifetime changes and shifts based on internal and/or external factors that occur and take us down different paths. Oftentimes there is anxiety and worry about turning down a path where the end is too far to see. Therefore, many of us will not diverge from the comfort of the beaten path during our lifetime, but when the path becomes uncomfortable we are left with the decision of whether to make our own path or keep walking the direction we are. Joe Phillips made the decision in 2011 to diverge from the path he had been walking and make his own.

Joe Phillips, born August 8, 1980, in London, is the son of two American psychologists and grew up in Hampstead, England. Throughout his childhood, Joe went to a bunch of different schools, was never too fond of being made to learn, and ended up asking, against his parent's wishes, to go to boarding school. Socializing was always more important to him than academics but that did not come naturally for Joe either. After searching for a while, most of the boarding schools in England were as one would expect: school uniforms, strict policies, highly enforced rules and guidelines, and some will make students join extracurricular or athletic activities; but his family eventually found a unique school where there was no school uniform, teachers were

addressed by their first name, and meat was not allowed on the premises. Although the boarding school was not focused towards academic excellence, the environment was exactly what Joe needed to develop the social skills he needed. He was privileged to have a private education and was never left wanting more, but could not wait to get out of the house.

After graduation, Joe spent two years working as a temp, office admin, and several other jobs here and there to make ends meet before realizing that he needed to further himself and decided to enroll in higher education. Ever since High School, Joe had talked about traveling around the United States in a traditional London Routemaster bus and exploring his right to live and work in the United States. Thinking of the innumerable amount of obstacles that he faced, such as finding a Red London Routemaster Bus, learning construction, plumbing, and electricity, and bringing everything up to code for the United States, Joe placed the idea on hold and studied as a student at an American university for a year before, again, realizing the path of academia did not suit his interests. At some point throughout the years, taking the road trip across the United States in an old London Routemaster bus was added to the plan. At the end of Joe's time in University, what may have started out as a drink with his biology professors, ended up being a four hour conversation about the potential paths his interests could take him. The conclusions from this soul-bearing conversation materialized when Joe signed up for the first ever Foundation Degree in Paramedic Science in 2002 and graduated three years later. From there, he spent three years on an ambulance, two years on a solo rapid response car, and the last five years of his career on a solo motorcycle response unit. As a solo motorcycle response unit, Joe was responsible for being the first person to arrive at the scene to help anyone who sustained injuries, which was critical when living in London and navigating the narrow streets. Midway throughout his career, Joe was settled with a mortgage, life insurance, a car, and three motorcycles, however

he was unhappy in life. So one day Joe decided to start making his high school dream of traveling across the United State in a traditional Routemaster bus a reality.

While continuing work as a paramedic, Joe researched for a few years ways to overcome seemingly impossible obstacles, and found the bus he wanted online. Joe had no prior experience in electrical work, plumbing, or construction even, so in order to make his dreams a reality, he worked tirelessly to learn how to - theoretically - create a livable space. The original plan was to take a year off work, travel, and then ship the bus back to the UK. But shortly before deciding to take the one year sabbatical, Joe's employer decided to stop authorizing sabbaticals leaving him with the only option to quit and if he returned then he would need to reapply. While the bus was more expensive than he was anticipating, and located in Switzerland while he was in London, he was told it did have all the major structural conversions that he needed to take it to the United States; But Joe was not going to be able to see the bus until he picked it up in person. So in 2011, Joe Phillips put his flat up for sale and one year later found a buyer and closed. The same day that the flat was closed, Joe wired his life savings to a Swiss bank account to a man named Ralph, who was supposed to be selling him the London Routemaster bus. Two days after sending his life savings to an online man named Ralph, claiming to be selling an old London Routemaster, Joe nervously arrived at the Basel Airport where Ralph met him with the bus. Thankfully, Ralph was honest and from the airport Joe drove the double-decker bus back to the UK, where he spent the next two years modifying the bus to be livable. Unfortunately though, Joe learned that all the conversions that he made on the bus would make it impossible to use as a business in the UK due to excessive regulation. As a result, Joe began to think about the possibility of making the move permanent. Throughout his decade-long career as a paramedic, Joe, as well as his employers, failed to take care of his well being in a job where self-care is

crucial. As Joe finished up modifying the bus, he knew that once it was shipped, there was no going back.

After completing almost a whole year traveling the United States, Joe said good-bye to the bus in San Diego and flew home to London for a while. As the bus collected dust thousands of miles away from its owner, Joe narrowed down his places to live: Albuquerque, New Mexico or Houston, Texas. Thinking ahead, Joe decided to station the bus in Houston, Texas because if the bus was ever to become a business, which is still the plan for Doogle, there would be more opportunity and money in Texas.

Once making these decisions, Joe booked his plane ticket back to the United States and drove the bus to his cousin Brad's house where he stayed to figure out his next course of action. It was sitting around the fire where Joe and Brad came up with the idea of buying some land and building a little community. Brad's wife at the time researched land around the Houston area and found some up north in New Caney and Coldspring. After looking at land in both locations, the main deciding factor was that New Caney sat in a flood zone, which in hindsight was wise not to choose especially after Hurricane Harvey in 2017. Once deciding on the land in Coldspring, Joe and Brad sent in the paperwork and a few weeks later, bought the land with owner financing.

The documentary *Joe on the Bus* paints viewers a picture of Joe's life on the double-decker bus and the eco-paradise he is building off grid. The film discusses the events that occurred that culminated into the life-changing decision he made, in an effort to shed light on those that walk outside their comfort zone, those that pursue happiness instead of monetary gains, and those that live outside the norm. This documentary does not try to push an off grid agenda onto viewers, but more so presents a different lifestyle, while maybe not 'better' per say, that shows that it comes with a different set of challenges. *Joe on the Bus* sheds light on the

critical self-care and attention that employers, first-responders, paramedics, and more in the medical field should be aware of. This documentary hopefully inspires audiences to take the path less walked, to fight for their happiness, and live life to the fullest.

Style and Approach

Joe on the Bus is a character study of the atypical life that one person lives as well as uncovers how their lifestyle came to be. This documentary is told through observational footage following Joe around, archival footage and photos, and self-recorded footage by Joe. On occasion, the use of handheld is incorporated, such as inside the bus or inside the shed, if it is a small place. Joe's character incorporates a self-reflexive style, where he acknowledges the camera, and allows viewers to gain greater insight into his persona. Since Joe directly addresses and talks to the camera, archival montages are utilized when discussing topics like family, friends, trips, work, and more. *Joe on the Bus* utilizes the natural lighting that is present at the time of filming, as well as on camera lights. Stylistically, this documentary brings viewers into the life of one man who continues the pursuit of happiness, which can fall to the wayside in our hectic lives.

The approach to *Joe on the Bus* is the aesthetically pleasing cinematography paired with narration to learn about the subject. The goal of the portrait film is to present a person, their personality, and their experience. By using shallow depth of field, the visuals of the film poetically construct the clearing that the bus and shed sit on. Wide shots help show the calmness, emptiness, and organic nature of the setting, which is foreign to most people who live in the city or suburbs where concrete walls surround us and the only thing organic we have is sitting on the windowsill. Slow motion shots of the bus stickers, red chipped paint, and its rustic beauty mesmerizes viewers while Joe retells stories of his life before the bus. *Joe on the Bus* utilizes the

recorded footage, self-recorded footage by Joe, and archival to construct his drive to live a life of happiness, rather than how society believes happiness is achieved -- through material possessions and a materialistic life.

Intended Audience

The intended audience are American females and males of the typical working age range for adults around the world, interested in people that live different, odd, or abnormal lives. The filmmaker chose the ordinary age range of the working class because these are the people that walk the beaten path everyday. The filmmaker does hope that people outside the intended scope find meaning and hope in the documentary, such as young adults contemplating their future or older adults unhappy in their current situation. While Joe's story is truly one-of-a-kind, the emotions and desire that Joe felt is universal to humans in today's society, where a 5-day nine to five job is considered normal. Since this documentary is a vignette of a single person, it is the filmmaker's hopes that this project disseminate further than the intended audience and give meaning to more people than imagined.

Pre-Production Research

Feasibility

Given the current circumstances of the Coronavirus and the state of the world, the feasibility of this documentary is high due to having only one subject and one location. The production takes place on several acres of land in Coldspring, Texas, which allow for social distancing during production if necessary. Coldspring, Texas is located South-East of Dallas Ft. Worth approximately 3.5 to 4 hours from the home base of the production, Denton, Texas. Since the home base is Denton, Texas this allows me to drive a small crew and equipment to the

shooting location. I have known Joe for almost a decade and have been in contact with him to film his story.

As far as cost and logistics during the production, the main thing to consider is the process of transportation for the small crew that I bring on board and the crew expenses for the two weekends of production. I believe that I'll be able to get everyone, as well as the equipment, to and from Coldspring, Texas in my vehicle, but if the production grows beyond my car, I do plan on renting a vehicle for transportation.

Purpose

Joe on the Bus communicates effectively with audiences the happiness that Joe feels living an atypical life today. But this documentary also communicates the struggle, anxiety, and the pure unknown of taking a leap of faith into new territory through Joe reminiscing on why and how he came to live on Doogle. While this is a portrait of a single person, this documentary captures the emotions of the audience and reminds them that it is never too late to change the path they are walking on. This documentary uncovers the difficult events that led to Joe's permanent move to the United States, as well as the joy and happiness that comes with living untethered to society. *Joe on the Bus* is an inspirational film for the working class adults who follow the beaten path carved by society.

Research Summary

The general media surrounding the discourse of people who live atypical or off-the-grid lives talks mainly about the physical aspects of how they live, but sometimes discusses in short the person who has built their renewable energy home in nature. It is significant to include in this prospectus that scholarly work and documentaries have already been made on this topic and subject. The scientific, physical-focused documentaries have been made and seen by audiences

before and serve as a jumping off point for this documentary to be different. *Joe on the Bus* strives to capture and portray the happiness that comes from pursuing the life you are passionate about in a short twenty minute film about one man in Texas. In order to understand the subject of my film better, I have been reading about what is known as positive psychology, which is a subfield of psychology that deals specifically with studying the components that makes life worth living. Additionally, I have been listening to podcasts that contain some first person podcasts about living off grid, off grid DIY podcasts, and podcasts of outsiders documenting communities and families of people who are living off the grid. Through listening to these podcasts, I am able to have some prior knowledge of off-grid living before going to Joe's during production. The largest aspect of research I am engaging in is viewing documentaries already made, more specifically portrait documentaries. Through the analysis of these documentaries, I am more able to visualize my own film and incorporate techniques from the films I have seen that have made an impact on myself.

Books and Articles

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Brooks, David. *The Second Mountain*. Penguin Random House. 2019.

Carstensen, Laura. *The Influence of a Sense of Time on Human Development*. Science Magazine. 2006.

Films and Media

Life off Grid. Jonathan Taggart. 2016, Amazon Prime. A documentary following Canadians who choose to live with renewable energy.

Off the Grid. Alexander Oey. 2012. A documentary about what it takes to live off renewable energy sources as well as live alongside nature.

American Nomads. Gerry Troyna. 2011. An eight year long road trip across the Southwest in search of modern-day American Nomads.

Off the Grid: Life on the Mesa. Jeremy and Randy Stulberg. 2007. A documentary about a loose-knit community of radicals living in the desert.

Slab City. Danylo Hauk. 2019. A documentary about a community south of LA who choose to live off grid.

The Bosque Village. Omer Sehayek. 2013. A documentary following the founder of the Bosque village and his efforts to create a sustainable community.

Living without Money. Line Halvorsen. 2010. A documentary following a German woman who made the decision 14 years ago to live without money.

Garbage Warrior. Oliver Hodge. 2007. A documentary following architect Mike Reynolds and his “earthships”.

Off the Grid with Les Stroud. Les Stroud. 2006. A documentary about the Stroud families move to live off the grid in Northern Ontario.

What a Strange Way of Life. Pedro Serra. A documentary that takes viewers between two self sustaining communities in Spain and Portugal.

All the Time in the World. Suzanne Crocker. 2014. Filmmaker Suzanne Crocker leaves society to live with her family in the wilderness for nine months.

Happy People: A Year in the Taiga. Dmitry Vasyukov and Werner Herzog. 2010. A documentary following the indigenous people living on the Siberian Taiga.

Man Living Off-Grid in a Tent on an Island. Matt and Danielle of Exploring Alternatives. 2020. Jojo has been living off-grid for 18 months, 12 of which have been on an island in Sweden.

Free Solo. Jimmy Chin and Elizabeth Chouh. 2018. Professional rock climber Alex Honnold attempts to conquer the first free solo climb of famed El Capitan's 900-metre vertical rock face at Yosemite National Park.

Jane. Brett Morgen. 2017. Using a trove of never-before-seen footage, the film tells the story of Jane's early explorations and research in Tanzania, focusing on her groundbreaking field work, her relationship with her cameraman and husband Hugo van Lawick, and the chimpanzees that were the subject of her study.

RBG. Julie Cohen and Betsy West. 2018. An intimate portrait of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg.

Kusama Infinity. Heather Lenz. 2018. A portrait of the life of artist Yayoi Kusama.

Miss Americana. Lana Wilson. 2020. A documentary of the life of famous musician Taylor Swift.

Minimalism: A Documentary About The Important Things. Matt D'Avella. 2016. This documentary examines the many levels of minimalism by looking inside the lives of minimalists from various walks of life.

Podcasts

Modern Off Grid DIY, <https://anchor.fm/FreeYourMind>

The Off Grid Skoolie Podcast, <https://www.theoffgridskoolie.com/>

RNZ: Standing Room Only: Documenting the West Coasters Living Off the Grid, <https://www.rnz.co.nz/national/programmes/standing-room-only>

Living Off the Grid Radio, <https://www.blogtalkradio.com/livingoffthegridradio>

Interviewees

Joe Phillips
Container Store Employee - Closet installer
Coldspring, TX

Matt Phillips

Joe's Brother
Hampstead, England

Kenny Robinson
Joe's Friend
Kingwood, Texas

Brad Phillips
Joe's Cousin
Coldspring, Texas

Characters

Joe Phillips is a London-born immigrant living off the grid in Coldspring, Texas. He grew up under overprotective parents, with a tempestuous relationship with his mother and always had the yearning to leave home. After a few years of odd jobs, Joe spent years as a paramedic while researching his dream and the seemingly impossible obstacles of living and traveling the United States on a double decker Red London Routemaster. Once he purchased the bus from a man, he had never met, in Switzerland, the last two years of his career and time in the UK was spent modifying the bus to a livable standard. Joe has now spent the last six years living off the grid in Coldspring, Texas on his bus, and most recently has acquired a small shed next to the bus.

Ethics

As a documentarian, our job revolves around documenting reality and people's lives around us. Prior to starting in the industry, it is important to understand one's own limits and moral compass because ethical challenges are highly likely to arise in our profession. Simply put, there is no sure fire way to determine the outcome, response, and reach that this documentary has once released. But ethically the filmmaker should prepare the subject for the potential outcomes and backlash that could occur. I do not foresee this documentary being negatively received by

viewers due to the nature and themes of the film. The concerns from viewers that may arise could be issues of differing opinions about one's path towards happiness and how one should live. When capturing on film the life of Joe Phillips, it is imperative that, as the filmmaker, I am sensitive and aware of the emotions that discussing this topic may bring up in the subject.

Treatment

The sound of Joe's breathing can be heard while sweat drips off his face as he plunges the shovel deeper into the dirt. The sun moves slowly across the ground as the day goes on and a deer is spotted at the end of the trees. The trees sway in the wind and the rustle of leaves can be heard. Wide shots express the silence and solitude that Joe experiences living alone on his land. Joe wipes the dirt and sweat dripping off his face, admiring his work and the screen fades to black. The title "Joe on the Bus" fades onto the screen.

The sun rises and sheds light through the leaves in the trees and the sounds of Texas bugs fill the atmosphere. As the morning begins, Joe discusses his life and his upbringing while making his breakfast in his small home. Joe brews some coffee and begins to chat about the modifications he has made to his shed. While Bernie sleeps outside, Joe emerges from his home and begins to feed his animals and tend to the land. Greeting Bernie and his dogs, Joe gather's his supplies for the day and talks about his previous job and decision to come to the United States. Photos of Joe's life on the Bus and shots of the bus tour flicker on the screen showing viewers Joe's past adventures.

With supplies gathered for the day, Joe rechecks his plans for the plumbing hole before digging into the ground again. As Joe plunges the shovel deeper into the ground, he reveals the elements of his homestead that he has to physically install himself, while most of us who live in homes never have to think about laying foundation, digging their own hole for plumbing, or

running electrical wires just to have electricity. The decreasing amount of time Joe has to install his plumbing before winter becomes apparent as days pass and Joe is still digging. The sun rises above the trees as Joe is still digging into the dirt. The sound of breathing, metal striking the earth, and dirt hitting the ground fills the screen. Joe, exhausted and covered in sweat, drops his shovel and checks the measurements for his hole. Now that the hole is completely dug, Joe just has to connect his small home to the plumbing line. Upon completely connecting his plumbing, Joe brings us into his home and flushes his toilet for the first time. The satisfaction and happiness of the completion of his plumbing, before winter, is felt while Joe is admiring his work.

The shadows get longer as the day winds to an end and Joe builds a fire in his firepit and throws on some music. Now, relaxing by the fire with a cold drink, Joe describes the life he lives on the land and the happiness that has come from working towards one's own happiness. The sky turns orange as the sun falls below the trees, slowly giving way to darkness. Joe recounts the easy and not so easy things about his living situation, but ultimately ends on the happiness that he feels from being self-sustainable and out in nature. The fire crackles and roars, Bernie plops down next to Joe ready for some scratches. The screen fades to black and we're left with the sounds of nature before the credits roll.

Theoretical Perspective

Joe on the Bus incorporates different theoretical perspectives from film history, in order to produce the most researched and knowledgeable documentary on the subject and topic. This documentary applies Grierson's Principle of Documentary, which supports that footage 'taken from the raw' can be more authentic than the acted images, to *Joe on the Bus* through an observational self-reflexive filming style. The choice to film this topic, in this particular style, is due to the nature and themes of the film. As the director, I want for viewers to feel as though Joe

is directly addressing them, as well as capture the nonverbal language of Joe. Documentary modes are another aspect of theory that deals with the relative degrees of authority, objectivity, and reflexivity. Author Bill Nichols writes about the six modes of documentary - poetic, expository, observational, participatory, reflexive, and performative - and how these different styles of documentary film tell their stories. This documentary leans towards the observational and participatory documentary style in order to capture the personality and lifestyle of Joe Phillips. Within performative documentaries, the 'truth' is often captured in the unpredictable moments of interaction between subject and crew. Through this hybrid style of documentary filmmaking, *Joe on the Bus* brings to light the post-modern idea that reality takes many forms for each person and one idea of happiness may not be everyone's idea of happiness.

In this documentary, the camera is both on the tripod and hand-held in order to capture Joe's daily life and responsibilities, as well as portray the intimacy and emotion to the audience that Joe may feel. The mise-en-scene of this documentary aims to create a realistic view of Joe's challenges not only on the land, but internally. This construction of reality is portrayed through hand-held shots and tracking shots, which allow the audience to essentially follow the subject in his own environment. While in a perfect world, the subject would be able to completely ignore the camera in the room, that is not the world we live in. As humans, we tend to perform when we know we are being recorded, but this makes documentaries especially difficult when the filmmaker's pursuit is to capture the authenticity in people. At the bottom line, all attempts to record reality are affected as people act differently when they are on camera, which leads to performativity by the subject and a less-than-authentic documentary film at the end. *Joe on the Bus* falls into the performative category because of its emphasis on Joe's observations of the world, which contribute heavily to the narrative of the documentary. In the moments between

and during Joe's retelling of his past life, the film incorporates the approach to editing using the Soviet Montage Theory in order to visually portray the hardships and challenges that Joe faces on a daily basis. I plan to include these montages paired with Joe's narration to emphasize Joe's dedication, perseverance, and never-ending fight for happiness. Building one's own livable space is not an easy task, especially when one has no history of construction, plumbing, or electricity, but Joe continues to build onto what he has and enjoys the path while doing so.

Perhaps the most important part of the documentary process is the choice and treatment of the subject matter by the filmmaker. *Joe on the Bus* uses a mixed type of documentary style, which incorporates elements of the fully narrated documentary style and the fly on the wall documentary style. The choice to follow documentary conventions of the narrative style beginning, middle, and end, with a strong focus on conflict, and the integration of music or sound effects to create an emotional response all work to portray a human or subject matter to an audience. As a documentarian, it is important to consciously think about these many aspects of a documentary, but of utmost importance is being cautious of misrepresenting the subject. The self-reflexivity of acknowledging the camera, while not the goal of the documentary, probably turned out to be edited into the final documentary at some points. Representation, like misrepresentation, is a huge aspect of documentary filmmaking and is important to think about prior to going into film. How one chooses to represent a culture or people ultimately chooses how the audience views the culture or people on screen, which is why it is so critical for media creatives to be self aware of how they are choosing to represent a culture or people.

Financing

The location of the production being close to four hours away from Denton means that staying overnight one or two nights is guaranteed. Fortunately though, the shooting location is in

Texas meaning that ground transportation is feasible, which has kept the cost of production significantly down, but there are still costs to be factored in. In addition to the potential vehicle rental and lodging, the remaining costs of the film's production are gas, food, equipment insurance, and distribution. Due to the costs of travel, *Joe on the Bus* seeks funding through a Seed & Spark page which is created for the film to make up what was spent in production along with receiving funding for festivals and distribution. While most of the funding comes after the production process has begun, I plan on financing the film in the interim.

Budget

A complete budget can be found in Appendix B.

Distribution Possibilities

Joe on the Bus will be submitted to the following festivals:

- Noosa International Film Festival
- Doc.Berlin Documentary Film Festival
- Dallas International Film Festival
- Thin Line Film Festival
- Life Film Festival
- Oak Cliff Film Festival
- Dallas Independent Film Festival
- DOC L.A. Film Festival
- Open City Documentary Festival
- Close:Up Edinburgh Docufest
- DOC NYC
- Hot Springs Documentary Festival
- The Documentary Filmmaker Showcase
- Docs Without Borders Film Festival
- Chagrin Documentary Film Festival

- Bend Film Festival
- Atlanta Docufest
- Spotlight Documentary Film Awards
- Doc'n Roll Film Festival
- DOCUTAH International Film Festival
- NHDocs: The New Haven Documentary Film Festival
- American Documentary and Animation Film Festival and Film
- Better Cities Film Festival
- Hot Docs Canadian Film Festival

Social Media Timeline/Platforms/Goals

I. Platforms

A. Instagram

1. Create an account on Instagram.
2. This platform tends to cater to the younger generations who engage in social media.

B. Facebook

1. Create a Facebook Page.
2. While Instagram is great for the visuals, Facebook generates a lot more response from the community and the older populations of social media users.
3. Facebook is a family-friendly geared social media application, meaning that *Joe on the Bus* reaches audiences outside the youthful Instagram users.

II. Goals

- A. Create 15 - 30 second clips from footage to promote the film prior to the screening.
- B. Update the social media platforms as much as possible throughout the production and post-production process.
- C. Create a promotional video during the Winter break for the film and tease the story.
- D. Create a trailer prior to the Screening in April 2021.
- E. Choose stills from the film to create update posts for followers.

F. Post relevant news/information to the documentary topic.

III. Schedule

- August 2020: Create Instagram page and Facebook page
- September 2020: Begin to construct social media pages with information, photos, etc.
- October 2020: Post stills from the location
- November 2020: Post stills from the post-production process
- December 2020: Post stills of the crew with short bios
- January 2020: Create a 15 - 30 second video of the subject
- February 2020: Create a behind-the-scenes video
- March 2020: Post stills from the editing process
- April 2020: Create short montages of the bus, nature, etc.
- May 2020: Create a trailer

Schedule for Pre-Production, Production, and Post Production

Plans for Pre-Production

- Begin August 1, 2020
- Finish October 16, 2020
- Packet Materials
 1. Working Title
 2. Logline
 3. Synopsis
 4. Treatment
 5. Mood Board
 6. Location Permits
 7. Photo/Video Release Forms

Production

- Dates
 - October 16-18, 2020
 1. Sit Down Interview
 2. Observational Footage of Joe working on his plumbing
 - October 23-25
 1. Observational Footage of Joe around the firepit
 2. Evening relaxing on the bus
 - October 30 - November 1: Back-up weekend
 - Pick Up Dates: February 2021
- Crew
 - Director: Lia McChane

Lia McChane is a thesis-year Master of Fine Arts student at the University of North Texas. She grew up south of Dallas in the suburbs of North Houston and came to the University of North Texas to pursue a film degree. She received her Bachelor's Degree in Radio, Television, and Film and Integrative Studies at the University of North Texas in 2018 and decided to continue her education in graduate school. Her documentary work generally deals with the intersection of mental health and alternative medicines. Lia hopes to work in the documentary film industry as an assistant director, editor, or cinematographer.
 - Director of Photography and Editor: Rudy Cervantez

Rudy Cervantez grew up west of Dallas on the border of the United States and Mexico in Del Rio, Texas. He studied Radio, Television, and Film at the University of North Texas for his Bachelor's. As an avid filmmaker, Rudy looks to the news or the community for film ideas. He thinks sometimes the best stories are just down the street.
 - 1st AC: Tanner Matthews

Tanner Matthews is a 2019 University of North Texas Media Arts graduate in Radio, Television, and Film. Born in Forney, TX, Tanner works mostly on the narrative side of filmmaking, but sometimes joins documentary crews to assist. Tanner spends most of her time working on films as the Director of Photography or Assistant Camera Operator.

- Equipment
 - Video
 1. Grad EVA1
 2. EVA Tripod
 3. (4) Large EVA1 Batteries
 4. EVA Charger
 5. Grad Zoom Lense Kit
 6. Grad Prime Lense Kit
 7. (4) Angelbird SDXC Cards
 - Audio
 1. 633 Recorder
 2. (4) Sony NP Batteries
 3. 15' XLRs
 4. Lectrosonic Wireless Mic
 5. Set of 4 AA Rechargeable Batteries
 6. Rycote Wind Covers
 7. Deneke JB1
 8. Sound Harness
 - Lighting
 1. Kino Diva
 2. Kino Diva Rechargeable Batteries
 3. Kino Diva Battery Charger
 - Miscellaneous
 1. C-Stand
 2. Loose Knuckle

3. Arm and Knuckle

Post-Production

- December 2020 - January 2022
- Editing to Picture Lock
- Color Correction, Audio Mastering, Creating a DCP, etc.

RECONCEPTUALIZATION BEFORE PRODUCTION

Before moving into production, I knew that I wanted this documentary to express the human desire for happiness. The materialistic consumerism lifestyle Joe watched people walk towards was not what he realized he wanted out of life. After following societal conventions growing up and working as an EMT in London for several years, Joe chose to make the life changing decision to sell all of his belongings in London and make his dream of exploring the United States, on a London Double Decker bus, a reality. Now, seven years after his bus tour, Joe has settled on 22 acres of land in Coldspring, Texas.

Joe on the Bus explores Joe's life altering decision, eco-paradise, and the hopeful installation of his toilet before winter comes. Through the use of cinema verite footage, this documentary shows Joe installing his indoor bathroom toilet, and building the small septic system, which many of us only have to worry about finding when we are not home. The presentation of this type of hard work, which we typically do not have to do in our daily lives, along with the goal of finishing the bathroom toilet before winter functions as important plot points in the film's overall narrative. After the climax, the film leads into the next scene that portrays the pure bliss and happiness that Joe feels and experiences living a life that he has always wanted. Through small moments, such as shooting guns, practicing archery, and playing with a mini cannon, viewers further understand why someone, who seemed like they had it all, would turn down a different road just to be happy.

INTEGRATION OF THEORY AND ETHICS IN PRODUCTION

Cinema Verité

Through the study of previous films, we learn the language of filmmaking and how to communicate our thoughts and emotions through a screen more effectively. Prior to the Cinema Verite and Direct Cinema movements, documentary films were created with the intention to teach viewers, but filmmakers around the globe, with the help of technological advancements, pushed the boundaries of traditional filmmaking to create deeper intimacy between the subject and audience. While Cinema Verité and Direct Cinema may seem like the same movement in cinematic history, they are said to be in dialogue and present different perspectives on how to capture truth and reality behind a lens. On one side of the continent, the American Direct Cinema filmmakers chose to interfere with the subject as minimally as possible. Often being called the fly-on-the-wall approach, Direct Cinema essentially adheres strictly to being observational without the filmmaker participating (Voguel, 2005). On the other hand, the French Cinema Verité filmmakers chose to incorporate the participatory aspect in their filmmaking techniques and style, in addition to the observational element. In Cinema Verité films, there is the acknowledgement of the camera presence and filmmaker (Axmaker, 2015). As well, Cinema Verite, or 'truth cinema', worked to create more direct connections between the subject and audience (Hassard, 1998). These two similar movements did not coincidentally happen during the same decades; There were technological advances in cinema which allowed for filmmakers of the time to be more intimate with their subjects.

Prior to the late 1950s and early 1960s filmmaking equipment was large, heavy, and laborious to travel with, meaning that most films were filmed on a sound stage or in a studio. The

daunting and difficult task of moving and setting up the equipment on location, with the chance that something could go wrong, stopped many filmmakers, thus narrowing the style and aesthetics of films at the time. The technological advancements, which led to the French New Wave, included smaller and more portable 16mm camera equipment, as well as sound equipment, and faster film stocks, which allowed less light to be needed to capture an image. The portability of the camera and sound recording equipment, along with faster film stocks, meant that filmmakers could take the camera beyond the studio and begin to capture reality as they saw it. Cinema Verite and Direct Cinema were born from these technological advancements and allowed pioneers of the movement to respond to the traditional didactic convention of filmmaking. One could argue that the Cinema Verite and Direct Cinema movements are two of the most influential movements in documentary history, which led to what audiences are used to seeing on screen today.

While *Joe on the Bus* applies the modes and styles of Cinema Verite, my documentary follows the style of a character study, rather than the traditional Cinema Verite style documentary. The acknowledgement and presence of the camera in the subject's space is one element of Cinema Verite that I wanted to utilize within *Joe on the Bus* to demonstrate to viewers Joe's quirky, outspoken, and charismatic personality. During one scene in the film, Joe is struggling, in a medium shot, installing his toilet in his constructed bathroom and you hear me off camera ask him "and that's pulled forward?" The camera zooms into Joe's face as he replies with "um I don't really have much choice...just have to poop askew". In another scene, Joe is standing outside the bus, next to the driver's side door in a medium shot, looking at the place he called home for so many years. As Joe admires the faded Red Routemaster bus, reminiscing the

year long journey across the United States, the camera cuts to a close up as he states “if I was on a really dodgy hill route that I was worried my brakes might fail, I just kept the door open - if the brakes fail I just jump out” and then laughs. It is through moments like these, between the subject and filmmaker, where viewers can see a deeper side of Joe through the interpersonal communication between subject and filmmaker. By including the presence of the camera in my documentary, I wanted the audience to feel as though they were right there next to Joe on his land in order to increase the connection between the audience and my subject. While the intended purpose of the camera's presence being known is to show a deeper side of Joe, the reflexivity in documentaries often leads to filmmakers making themselves known and having some sort of exposition within the film. This can also lead to a sense of the subject as a performer and can result in less sincere filmmaking practices.

Neo-Verité

Neo-verité is a term used to describe a style of filmmaking which incorporates contemporary elements, in addition to the observational footage, such as archival footage, graphics, and formal interviews. First used by Professor John Corner, he describes and analyzes the neo-verité style as a mix of the “primarily verité approach with elements drawn from other areas of programming” (Corner, 1997). One of the main aspects of neo-verité, that separates itself from cinema verité and direct cinema, is the “knowing and open recognition by subjects of the filmmaker’s presence” (Beattie, 2004). Today, the television series and feature films audiences consume utilize the aesthetics and modes of the neo-verité form of documentary in order to present to viewers a more truthful perspective of reality.

In the neo-verité form, it can be said that the importance of where the filmmaker places the shots holds more weight than the chronological accuracy, while ultimately changing the audiences' perception of the material (Corner, 1997). The documentary *Cinema Verite: Defining the Movement* (1999) discusses the progressive changes that were happening in the film industry, during the late 1950s and 1960s, and the effects of these advancements that have led us into the neo-verité style of today. The film's opening scene begins with clips of archival footage from early documentaries and focuses on an interview where a news reporter asks, who appears to be the cinematographer, 'what is the difference between documentaries and feature films?' The opening credits roll, while a song played on bagpipes can be heard, and the narrator starts to piece together the narrative that is about to unfold. The narrator states, 'these are the titles that have given documentaries a bad name' and a clip from one of the earliest documentaries begins to play. Throughout the next 100 minutes, viewers are guided through the narrative supported by the visuals, which are placed into the film with intention by the filmmaker. This example further supports the importance of the filmmakers' decisions in post-production and how the narrative is translated on screen to the audience.

The structure of my character study is based on this neo-verité style because the story being told is not all set in the present day on Joe's land. *Joe on the Bus* utilizes the subject's dialogue, from observational footage and formal interviews, to create a structure and arc for the documentary. In a formal interview from inside the bus, Joe reveals his family roots and what eventually led him to his bus tour, the decision to stay in the United States, and create his own eco-paradise. While viewers listen to Joe describe life in London and his upbringings, we see archival photos of Joe as a kid, stock videos of cross-country driving, and photos from Joe on his

bus tour around the United States on his London Routemaster bus. In addition, These elements, in addition to the observational footage we shot on location, not only visually supports the scene but provides insight into Joe's memories. While this scene only offers a minute picture of how the film is constructed, the structure of this film is centered more on where the shot is placed rather than the chronological accuracy of each shot within the timeline. It should be noted that the use of Joe's dialogue, as voiceover narration, throughout the film could appear self-indulgent and performative by some viewers. The anxiety of Joe being perceived as self-indulgent by viewers could be due to the fact that Joe is unapologetically himself and is not afraid to say what he believes. The outspoken nature of Joe could be off-putting to some viewers and, as a friend to the subject, I was concerned about the public's perception of him. Not only as the director, but as a friend to the subject, I felt the responsibility that comes with having a subject-filmmaker relationship and this caused anxiety for myself as the filmmaker. I was fearful about revealing aspects of his personality that could deter some viewers or come off as aggressive. What I realized though is by removing the scenes of Joe's thoughts I would ultimately be covering a part of his character and a crucial part of his identity, therefore misrepresenting him.

Often in documentaries, viewers are taken through the narrative by the subject, but sometimes the filmmaker themselves are the one guiding the story. The concept of performativity within film history is a discourse centered around the authenticity of a subject in front of the lens. The belief that a subject is performing in front of the camera has and is a widely debated discourse within film history. When I chose to create this documentary about Joe, the effect of performativity within the film is a topic to be discussed, as well as the inherent bias that

comes from focusing a film entirely on one subject and the credibility of my subject for my audience.

While the performativity and authenticity of the subject is a worry for documentary filmmakers, there are ways in which filmmakers can offset this concern and bring out a genuine person in front of the lens. Parts of my documentary are set in Joe's small, and still being constructed, home where viewers watch him install a toilet in his work-in-progress bathroom. Framed in a medium shot, Joe carries the ceramic toilet and places it into the screws set in the floor to hold the toilet in place. After settling the toilet into place, Joe sits down, knees hitting his sink cabinet, and realizes that the toilet is too far back from the wall and exclaims "I guess I'll just have to poop askew...darn it" and then looks into the camera and smiles. This moment of Joe realizing his mistake, in front of the camera, illustrates not only the authenticity of the subject that can be achieved, but a technique that can be applied, by other filmmakers, to bring to the surface unadulterated comments, emotions, and personalities. As well, these moments show Joe's willingness as a subject to show himself as a less than perfect human. During the production process, I decided to put a wireless lavalier microphone on my subject and follow Joe around different areas of his land while he tells us about his land, memories of his childhood, and answers less thought provoking questions about himself. The reason I chose to record Joe, much longer than I needed, in these different settings through the observational style is to not only make the camera's presence less scary, but create intimacy for the audience. Viewers can see Joe around his property and hear him speak about his journey while in an intimate space with the subject. places that the general public isn't able to see. While the matter of performativity by the subject is a real concern, there are techniques, like the one I used in my film, that can be used by

the filmmaker to counteract the performativity, if needed, and create an even greater closeness between the subject and viewer.

Author Dagmar Brunow writes “film images are never objective but are always defined by a contemporary discourse that pervades aesthetic and stylistic decisions” (Brunow, 51). I wanted to include this quote because of the truth behind these words. As a filmmaker, the reality that what we film never fully is one hundred percent objective is a valid apprehension. In order to combat this concern, filmmakers can make stylistic and aesthetic decisions, such as the ones discussed previously, which further help counteract the performativity felt by the audience.

EMT Burnout

After Joe Phillip’s schooling in London, he chose to pursue a career in the medical field as an EMT in London. Joe spent close to a decade working tirelessly as a solo medical response unit throughout the streets of London before he chose to change the path he was walking. I chose to include this information about EMT Burnout because it is a real issue that affects a majority of people working in the medical field. EMT Burnout is so prevalent that it contributes to many employees' decisions to leave the medical field and pursue another career. Joe is one of those employees who radically changed their life after experiencing EMT Burnout and chose to pursue his own happiness.

The immense amount of stress, and conditions medical staff around the world are faced with everyday lead to less-than-ideal mental health conditions for the paramedics, EMTs, firefighters, and other first responders. It is to no surprise that those who work a full-time job caring for others and being the first responder to an accident, incident, or death eventually become hardened to the duties of their position. This hardening of first responders to their duties

and position is called 'burnout'. The term burnout refers to the symptoms of exhaustion, decreased productivity, and cynicism experienced by first responders around the world (Prior, 2019). The burnout that happens over time eventually takes a toll on the bodies and minds of these first responders. An article from the National Library of Medicine found that many paramedics, firefighters, and first responders in the United Kingdom experience some type of burnout and physical or mental health conditions (Miller, 2021). To add, in a study from Gallup, research shows the average career length for a first responder is five years (Gallup, 2022). The reality is first responders are often overworked and not properly taken care of as employees (Rosenberger, 2020). Eventually though, the stress and burnout from working such a demanding job leads to a larger degree of cynicism and exhaustion by those on the front line.

The effects of burnout in first responders are experienced first-hand, presented through copious amounts of research, by those who spend years in the industry and, sooner or later, leave. A 2021 study from the Journal of Paramedic Practice concluded "burnout poses a genuine threat to retention in the ambulance service" (Beldon & Garside, 2021). It is abundantly clear that the copious amount of pressure and strain that first responders are put under affects not only their physical health, but also their mental health.

Positive Psychology/Happiness

The innate need to satisfy one's personal happiness is always within us, but most of the time the feeling is pushed to the back burner due to our societal responsibilities that consume much of our day. Joe spent just shy of a decade in the emergency medical field as a solo motorcycle response unit, unhappy but with a flat, motorcycle, car, and career to support himself

in London. The decision that Joe made to change the path he is walking, and wander down a road led by his own happiness, is integral to this documentary and is the catalyst for my documentary film.

The exiting of a career for some, which all have studied rigorously for, is no easy feat, but there often comes a split in the road where one is pushed to decide whether to change the path they are walking down. Many factors in one's life can lead to this decision, such as one's career, lifestyle goals, or passions, but the question that one faces is: Am I happy? These three words can drastically change the course of one's life and, hopefully, bring one closer to a greater personal happiness and contentment. In an article from the Review of General Psychology, the authors summarize positive psychology as "the study of the conditions and processes that contribute to the flourishing or optimal functioning of people, groups, and institutions" (Gable & Haidt, 2005). Essentially, psychologists around the world study what enables and contributes to our happiness as humans. Often, throughout the years we walk this Earth, we are pulled in different directions due to outside factors in our lives, such as societal views, careers choices, or family. These directions we choose can either contribute or subtract from our own inner happiness but, while each of us may try to repress our authentic feelings, there are others who have taken hold of their reality and made it a place of inner comfort and contentment.

In the Spring of 2020, COVID-19 altered the ways of the world, as we knew it, and led many industry professionals to change the traditional systems of working. In the August 2021 job seeker survey by Bankrate, analysts found over fifty percent of Americans expect to search for a new job in the next twelve months. As well, these changes to so many people's lives are not made in haste, but with transformed minds and expectations about what they want in their

careers, in addition to the dissatisfaction and unhappiness in their current roles (Foster, 2021). This surge of workers, tired of the old-fashioned working system, is striving for a happier and more fulfilling career path.

The amount of perseverance and determination that people must adopt in order to walk the road towards one's personal happiness is winding and scary at times. While the uncertainty of walking a new path frightens some, studies show that our happiness has beneficial effects in other areas of our lives, such as relationships, health, and performance (Diener, King, & Lyubomirsky, 2005). As well, in a 2011 study, researchers found that happy people live longer and have better overall health versus those who are less happy (Diener & Chan, 2011). The research that's been done all point to positive long-term effects that happen when one lives in a way that fulfills their inner peace and contentment.

The Environment

The current state of Earth and the rising carbon dioxide levels are rapidly shifting our environment right before our eyes: Fires consume the West in the United States; ice caps are melting at an unprecedented rate; changes to the weather are felt each season. The copious amount of trash that is created on a daily basis, by humans, covers large spans of land and have even been found in the depths of the deepest oceans. After growing up and starting a career as most do, Joe witnessed the immense waste that humans produce, and feel the need to consume, and realized that he did not want to fully participate in the wasteful, consumeristic, destructive behaviors of society. The environment plays a role in Joe's reasons for living the way he does

and it is important for viewers to understand the severity and impact that current climate change has on someone from the general public.

The United Nations define climate change as “the long-term shifts in temperatures and weather patterns”. Throughout the past century, the technological advancements in human history have led to achievements far beyond what was imagined possible in the nineteenth century. While the last few generations of humans have experienced, quite possibly, the greatest change in lifestyle due to scientific innovations, the developments humans have created have not come without a cost. An article, published in the early 2000s, states “the main source of global climate change is human-induced changes in atmospheric composition” (Karl & Trenberth, 2003). This analysis still holds true to today’s main source of global climate change and it has only been getting worse over the years. In fact, the World Meteorological Organization named the last decade, 2011 to 2020, the warmest decade on record based on five datasets surveyed.

While the global 1.2-degree Celsius increase may not seem like a large difference compared to the pre-industrial levels, the effects of the current, and climbing, global warming crisis will have a catastrophic effect on the lifestyle and future of humanity as we know it (*2020 was one of three warmest years on record*, 2021). In a press release from February 2022, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Sixth Assessment Report urges governments, around the world, to make changes due to the already present “increased heat waves, droughts and floods [that] are already exceeding plants’ and animals’ tolerance thresholds, driving mass mortalities in species such as trees and corals” (*Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*, 2022). During the summer of 2022, Western Europe experienced arguably one of the worst heat waves in its history, leading to extreme drought and even threatening economic disaster

(Horowitz, 2022). Across the ocean, Pacific Northwest cities, such as Portland, Oregon, underwent record setting temperatures during the same period (Cappucci, 2022). In the world we live in today, humans already are seeing, and facing, the environmental changes that come with the increased warming of our planet.

Climate scientists around the globe are urging that “Human activities and their effects on the climate and environment cause unprecedented animal and plant extinctions, cause loss in biodiversity and endanger animal and plant life on Earth (Cavicchioli, 2019). It can be said that most humans, in first world countries, are far removed from the agricultural process that brings food to the table. This separation of humans and our food sources potentially leads to less connection between ourselves and the natural world of our nourishment outside our four walls. In the larger scheme of things, author William Nordhaus, in the American Economic Review journal, notes that combating global climate change can be improved through each nation “designing, implementing, and enforcing cooperative multinational policies” (Nordhaus, 2019). For most in the general public, the mountain that lies ahead to battle climate change globally seems grueling, intense, and too difficult for a single person to fight. Therefore, many citizens choose to make personal changes, within their own lives, to hopefully help change the course of humanity.

PRODUCTION

Overview

For the production of *Joe on the Bus*, my small crew and I are traveling to Coldspring, Texas over a period of two weekends in October. The main day of shooting both weekends are Saturdays, with a small amount of shooting happening on Sunday mornings. I plan on checking out the equipment and checking through it the Thursday before we leave each weekend. The first weekend we arrive on Friday and check in to our AirBnb before going to Joe's so everyone can get familiar and comfortable before filming begins. The first Saturday consisted of shooting Joe working on his bathroom toilet and small septic system, as well as capturing Joe walking around the trails on his land and establishing shots. The crew breaks for lunch and dinner between shooting scenes everyday. On Sunday, before driving back to Denton, we stop by Joe's and continue to shoot the layout of the land and the bus. The second weekend of filming we arrive at our AirBnb Friday night and get a good night's rest for the next day, as well as prepare the specific equipment we bring for filming the next day. The second Saturday consisted of shooting an updated look at the bathroom toilet and septic system and also traveling to Kingwood, Texas to have Joe sit down with his longtime friend Kenny Robinson. On the way back from Kingwood, we stop for dinner together and head back to Joe's to shoot another conversation between Joe and his cousin Brad Phillips. The last day of shooting was Joe's main interview to wrap up production and discuss the details of what we have shot.

Schedule

- Weekend 1: October 16-18, 2020
 - Establishing/land shots
 - Joe installing his bathroom toilet and septic system

- Bus Shots
- Weekend 2: October 23-25, 2020
 - Conversation with Kenny Robinson
 - Conversation with Brad Phillips
 - Main Interview

Crew

- Lia McChane - Director
- Rudy Cervantez - Cinematographer
- Tanner Matthews - AC

Equipment

- Video
 - (2) EVAs
 - (2) EVA Tripods
 - (8) EVA Batteries
 - (4) Angelbird SDXC Cards
 - Zeiss Prime Lense Kit
 - (2) Canon Zoom Lense Kit
 - Panasonic Charger
- Audio
 - Headphones
 - Boom Holder
 - XLR to 3.5MM
 - Grad Boom
 - (4) Sony NP Batteries

- 633 Sound Recorder
- (2) Lectrosonic Wireless Mics
- Rycote Undercover
- (2) 15' XLRs
- Lighting
 - Reflector & Stand
 - (2) Kino Batteries
 - Kino Battery Charger
 - Kino Diva Light
- Miscellaneous
 - Large Light Stand
 - Timecode Slate
 - (2) Large Utility Bags
 - (4) 5D Batteries
 - (2) Loose Knuckle
 - Arm & Knuckle
 - C-Stand
 - Canon LP Charger
 - 10 lb sandbag
 - 15 lb sandbag
 - (4) Set of 4 AA Batteries
 - Denecke JB-1 Sync

Releases, Copyright, and License Agreements

This documentary required only a handful of talent releases and location releases. The

subject releases are from Joe Phillips, Brad Phillips, and Kenny Robinson. The location releases are from Joe's land and the Robinson residence.

The music was composed by Victor Granados, a UNT MFA graduate. If we are unable to work out scheduling, royalty free music will be used.

Budget

The production budget for this documentary consisted of mostly lodging and food for the crew and myself. I received a lot of my budget through in-kind donations, from my crew to the equipment used. Through planning, I was able to minimize the amount of time needed to shoot and, thus, decrease the overall budget of the documentary.

POST-PRODUCTION

Overview

While writing my prospectus, I was a bit too overzealous about how much I would actually be able to accomplish during my winter break between semesters. Before diving into editing, my committee chair, Tania Khalaf, suggested bringing on assistant editors to break up the workload ahead. While this was something I had not thought of, I reached out to UNT Media Arts professor, James Martin, and he connected me with two assistant editors. After conducting introductions with each assistant editor, I tasked Makenzie and Cindy with sections of the film to edit. During post-production, I created a timeline for myself and the assistant editors to follow when editing the rough cuts and stringouts, which was discussed in detail with my thesis chair prior to presenting to the assistant editors. From there, I assigned sections of the film to the assistant editors, which were edited together in order to view a semi-complete rough cut with my thesis chair. As each section of the film is completed, they are added to the master sequence and exported to be viewed and critiqued.

Schedule

April 2021 - September 2022

Equipment

- Backup Hard Drives
- Laptop/Desktop Computer
- Adobe Creative Suite

Crew

1. Lia McChane - Director / Editor
2. Makenzie Berry - Assistant Editor

Makenzie Berry was born and raised in Dallas, Texas by two firefighters, proud to serve the community and family with their passionate knowledge of safety. Makenzie followed in their suits to be of service to the community and even had the friendly gesture from her dad to study Communications while choosing her major for college. But ironically, there was some miscommunication as to what he meant when Makenzie shared that she was studying Media Arts at The University of North Texas.. two semesters later. Still, with her parents trailblazing through the fire service– One the first black woman to become a deputy chief and the other a black man as a battalion chief, Makenzie wants to do the same in the post-production industry by widening the door for women of color as a black woman herself. This realization came as she sat in her professor's Avid Media Composer class with shaky hands trying to figure out how to sort bins for her project. The nervousness eventually became a passion for storytelling as an Editor, from tackling time limits for a trailer and making something out of nothing with terrible acting (and it was terrible). Now, Makenzie is ready for anything that comes her way when it comes to editing for its challenges and power to serve a moving story to the audience. I guess you can count that as part of her community service.

3. Cindy Sanchez - Assistant Editor

Cindy Sanchez is a video editor and aspiring filmmaker based in Dallas, TX. Born to Mexican immigrant parents with incredible life stories, Sanchez has known the value of storytelling from a young age. A hobby that began with an old camcorder blossomed throughout her teen years into a passion-driven creative outlet and by 2015, her short film 'BÚHO' was

showcased at the 9th annual Dallas International Film Festival. In 2020, Sanchez received her undergraduate degree in Radio, Television, and Film from the University of North Texas after becoming the first in her family to attend and graduate college.

Reconceptualization During Post-Production

The first rough assembly created for *Joe on the Bus* lacked integral elements to bring the character study together, but gave my committee chair, Tania Khalaf, and I a place to start rearranging themes and scenes into a more coherent story for viewers. At first, I worried about making Joe's character seem too preachy or angry towards the viewer and chose to minimize the strong beliefs that Joe presented on camera through editing. After dissecting the first rough cut with my committee chair, Tania Khalaf, I realized that by editing or removing Joe's innermost thoughts and beliefs about his lifestyle ultimately would be a disservice to Joe. Following this realization, I went back to the drawing board and decided to physically arrange the most poignant sound bites from Joe's interviews on paper by themes. Moving towards another edit, I had to leave my anxieties about how the audience would perceive Joe behind and embrace the ideologies, viewpoints, and attitude that make up Joe Phillips. Through starting fresh, I was able to more clearly visualize the progression of the narrative based on the sound bites and overarching themes, as well as see Joe's character as he truly is.

While working on several rough cuts, I realized that the supporting characters, who I believed during pre-production would bring more insight into Joe as a person, did not fit into the narrative coherently. As well, the intercutting of scenes back and forth by the end seemed to be more jarring than dynamic and so I ended up only splitting up one long scene into two shorter scenes. After choosing the best sound bites from Joe's interviews that captured who Joe is, I spent a great deal of time carving down the voice overs into a flowing, coherent narrative that

speaks the truth about Joe's reasons for his lifestyle and accompanies the visuals. The interview voice overs support the visuals by allowing the audience to have a deeper grasp and look into Joe's mindset, lifestyle, and eco-paradise. My committee chair, Tania Khalaf, and I spent several weeks meeting each week to discuss transcripts, structure, character development, and themes and how each of these elements I captured during production create an intimate portrait of my subject.

After several weeks of dissecting transcripts and creating new edits, my committee chair, Tania and I arranged Joe's interview sound bites into a coherent narrative for audiences to follow, which allowed me to then place accompanying visuals. In the final edits of the film, the themes of the documentary are ultimately what structure the film and move viewers from scene to scene. After constructing and deconstructing this film several times, I was able to see and create the story of *Joe on the Bus* for my target audience. During a few rough cuts, I did worry that I would not have enough footage, but I actually ended up having more than I needed, which is always better. It was through the guidance of my committee chair, Tania Khalaf, that I was able to truly step into the role of editor and see the documentary as a character study about one person's encounters with the world.

EVALUATION OF COMPLETED WORK

Pre-Production

The pre-production process for *Joe on the Bus* was successful in allowing me to thoroughly plan and think through all the elements that were needed to create this film. One of the biggest challenges to filming a documentary in a pandemic was finding a narrative that could be told with a small amount of in-person contact. I originally heard about Joe's Bus Tour, and met Joe, back in 2013 from my best friend's father, who's friends with Joe. Since then I have wanted to tell and preserve Joe's narrative, so when Joe agreed to be the subject of my thesis documentary film I was honored to be the one who gets to capture his story. The responsibility of telling Joe's story in a morally ethical and thoughtful way led to discussions of ethics and theory within documentary filmmaking. Prior to our scheduled filming weekends, I took the time to visit Joe and discuss with him my ideas for the documentary, as well as gather more information about Joe's life. After constructing a rough outline and treatment of how I imagined the film, I was then able to decide what scenes to film during production. Knowing I'd still be in college courses and in a pandemic when filming, I planned to shoot the entire film over the course of two weekends in October 2020. This allowed me to not only keep production costs down but minimize the amount of contact and travel for myself and my small crew. Overall, I felt as though the pre-production for my thesis film has been the most thorough and thought out of all my films, which only further highlights the importance of an extensive pre-production process. Even though the documentary may change during production, writing down a plan, budget, logistics, and more is integral to having a smoother production process.

Production

The production process, following a thorough pre-production, turned out to be successful

in capturing lots of usable footage for the documentary. The great crew members I chose to bring allowed me to focus on directing and less on what shots we were getting. As the director, I did all of the logistical planning, scheduling, and financing for the two weekends of filming. For both weekends, I chose for us to stay at AirBnb's because they were easier to find close to Joe's land in East Texas, rather than driving far for a hotel. Each Friday, I checked out equipment under my own name because if something went missing or broke I wanted the responsibility to fall on me and loaded the gear, along with my crew, into my car and we drove east to Coldspring, Texas. During production in Coldspring, both Rudy Cervantez and Tanner Matthews worked on gathering shots and manned each camera during interviews. If I could change anything about the production process for *Joe on the Bus* I would have brought a script supervisor to take notes of the footage we captured while filming. By taking notes of the footage shot on location, this would have allowed the editor to quickly grasp elements of each shot, such as usable and unusable footage or shots the director wants to be in the film. Even though I brought a limited crew, I am satisfied with how the two weekends of filming went and with the footage gathered.

Post-Production

Post-production has, by far, been the most difficult of the whole process. At first, I was anxious to start editing because there was so much footage to watch, but after bringing on assistant editors I was more motivated and excited to continue with editing. Post-production has taken much longer than I predicted, a year ago, but after working with my committee chair, Tania Khalaf, and assistant editors I was able to see the potential of what this documentary could be and find motivation to continue the editing process. One challenge I encountered, and had to overcome, was the anxiety about how Joe and his lifestyle would be perceived by viewers

watching this documentary. The lengthy post-production process is due to the fact that it took me a long time to realize my subject is unapologetically who he is and through cutting scenes where he expresses his thoughts and beliefs from the narrative in the editing room I would actually be misrepresenting him. It was Joe's personality, openness, and lack of fear that drew me to tell his story in the first place so it would be inauthentic of me to try and cover up these parts of him. Through this process, I realized that my thoughts and beliefs are different from the thoughts and beliefs that Joe prides himself on, which is why I struggled so much in the beginning stages of editing. It took my committee chair, Tania, and I several weeks to find and piece together interview clips that embodied Joe's thoughts and beliefs. While working through this phase, I learned what it meant to be a director and the hardship of having a subject-filmmaker relationship. I learned how to let go of my worries as a friend to the subject and edit my character as he is, flawed and all. As well, the idea of an objective documentary is something that is never really achievable because whether we want to acknowledge it or not everything that we do to construct a documentary is subjective to a degree. Even though I lacked production notes for the editing process, I do feel as though post-production went well and that a lot of the captured footage was usable in the final cut. The main challenges that came with post-production were combing through the pages of printed transcripts, creating the narrative arc through audio, and piecing together the visuals to accompany the audio. As the lead editor of this documentary, the most helpful thing that I've learned is the importance of starting the seemingly overwhelming editing process of a documentary, or any film for that matter, by editing small scenes of captured footage and printing out physical copies of transcripts to highlight and dissect. For me, I spent too long overpowered by the hours of footage sitting in my hard drive, which contributed to the added time it took to complete the post-production process.

APPENDIX A
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- What is your name and where are you from?
- What brought you to the US?
- How did you fund and find the Routemaster bus?
- What inspired the bus tour journey?
- What are you constructing in your home?
- What made you change the path you were going down in London as a first responder?
- Where did you grow up? What was that like?
- What was your job as a first responder like?
- Where did you get the bus? How did you get it to the US?
- Where did you learn construction?
- What made you settle in Coldspring, Texas?
- Why did you choose to stay in the US?
- How is life in the US different from in the UK?

APPENDIX B

BUDGET

Description	#	Unit	Rate	Cash	In Kind	Total
Pre-Production Research						
Director Research		Allow	\$100	\$100	\$0	\$100
Research Travel		Allow	\$50	\$50	\$0	\$50
Internet Access/Office Supplies		Allow	\$100	\$100	\$0	\$100
Subtotal Pre-Production Research				\$250	\$0	\$250
Production						
Director	6	Day	\$800	\$0	\$4,800	\$4,800
Director of Photography	6	Day	\$650	\$0	\$3,900	\$3,900
Sound Recordist	6	Day	\$500	\$0	\$3,000	\$3,000
EVA1 Camera Package(w/lens)	6	Day	\$300	\$0	\$1,800	\$1,800
Audio Package (Recorder and Mic)	6	Day	\$250	\$0	\$1,500	\$1,500
Lighting	6	Day	\$200	\$0	\$200	\$200
Expendables		Allow	\$100	\$100	\$0	\$100
Meals (3 Crew x 3 Meals/Day x 6 Days)	54	Meals	\$850	\$850	\$0	\$850
Car Rental	6	Day	\$50	\$300	\$0	\$300
Gas	6	Day	\$20	\$120	\$0	\$120
Subtotal Production				\$1,020	\$15,200	\$16,570
Post-Production						
Editor: Picture Sound	10	Week	\$600	\$0	\$6,000	\$6,000
Computer Graphics Titles		Flat	\$200	\$0	\$200	\$200
Original Music Composition Recording		Flat	\$500	\$0	\$500	\$500
Sound Mix	2	Day	\$650	\$0	\$1,300	\$1,300
Subtotal Post-Production				\$0	\$8,000	\$8,000
Outreach and Impact						
Festival Entry Fees	20	Festivals	\$25	\$500	\$0	\$500
Promotional Materials		Flat	\$300	\$300	\$0	\$300
Subtotal Outreach				\$800	\$0	\$800
Grand Total				\$2,070	\$23,200	\$25,620

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