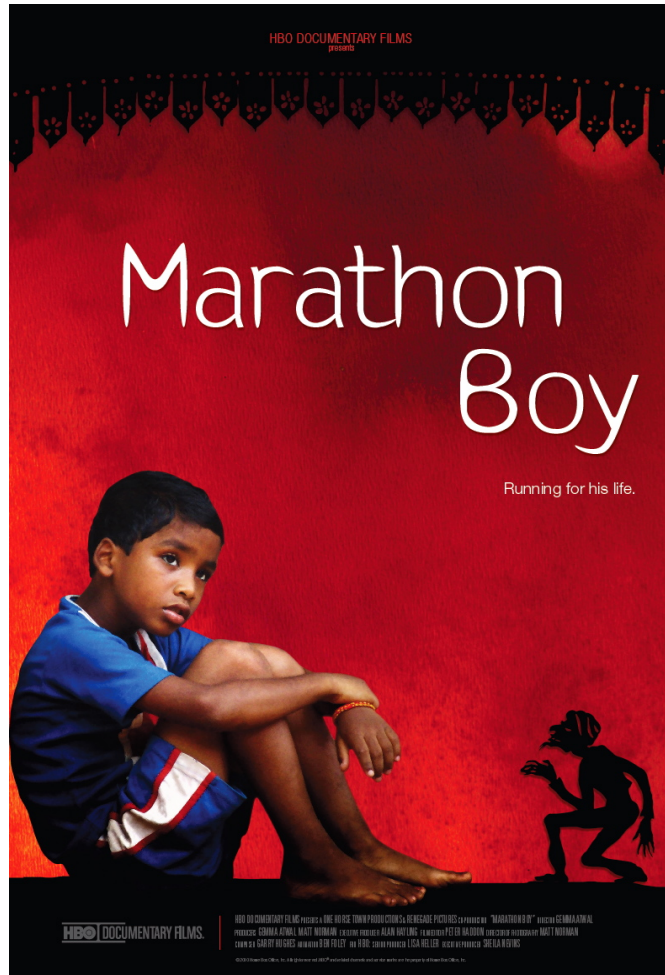


HBO DOCUMENTARY FILMS presents
A One Horse Town Productions & Renegade Pictures Co-Production

BBC STORYVILLE, ARTE and SWR
Supported by **GUCCI TRIBECA DOCUMENTARY FUND**
Supported by a grant from the **SUNDANCE INSTITUTE DOCUMENTARY FILM PROGRAM**
Supported by **WORLD VIEW BROADCAST MEDIA SCHEME**
In association with **TOUCH PRODUCTIONS**



Directed by **Gemma Atwal**
Produced by **Gemma Atwal & Matt Norman**
Executive Produced by **Alan Hayling**

Running Time: 98 minutes
Shot on HD
www.marathonboymovie.com

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TAGLINE

A coach and a slum boy united by a dream, divided by the world.

SHORT SYNOPSIS

MARATHON BOY is the story of a four-year-old boy who is plucked from the slums of India by his coach and trained to become India's greatest runner, but what starts as a real *Slumdog Millionaire* turns into the stuff of film noir: a tale of greed, envy and broken dreams.

“MARATHON BOY” – FILM SYNOPSIS



Budhia Singh's life reads like a Bollywood movie scripted by Dickens. Born in India, next to a railway track, abused and beaten by an alcoholic father, he is sold at the age of three by his impoverished mother to a street hawker. Destined to lead a desperate existence as a beggar, Budhia is then rescued by a concerned local judo coach, who runs an orphanage for slum children.

It doesn't take long for Budhia to reveal his remarkable talent for running. Biranchi seizes the opportunity to do something much more symbolic for India's poor, as he has done so many times for other slum children in the judo arena. He embarks on a mission to turn Budhia into a running phenomenon. Within six months, Budhia has run twenty half-marathons. Within a year, he has run 48 full marathons. *What makes this achievement even more remarkable is that Budhia is still only four years old.* He's become the darling of the masses, an Indian icon, and is mobbed everywhere he goes. Now Biranchi is convinced that he has the potential to

become India's greatest runner and first Olympic marathon champion.

But with the fame comes the controversies. At the end of his record-breaking 65 km run, he collapses. With the world's eyes on them and an international storm brewing, the Indian government decide to intervene, accusing the coach of cruelty, and threatening to take his newly-adopted son into care.

Is Biranchi effectively enslaving the boy for his own gain? Has Budhia merely traded slum squalor for sporting slavery? Or is Biranchi the man who saved Budhia from a desperate future, a man who loves Budhia as his own son?

Even though they still don't make trainers his size, an opportunistic tug of war is played-out by adults over Budhia's control. He is caught in the crossfire of lawyers and politicians. Biranchi openly mocks his detractors while inviting the state government to his judo hall to see the food and shelter he provides for Budhia. He gathers all the slum children to protest outside the Child Welfare Committee, holding banners saying "What about us?" Biranchi relishes being a spokesman for the poor, lambasting the Government for their hypocrisy. The Media are whipped into a frenzy - headline stories and publicity strategies in both camps fuel the controversy.

In the midst of this furore, the biological mother who sold her only son to a stranger for \$10, and who has for so long championed Biranchi as a saviour, dramatically changes tact. She accuses the coach of torturing her son. Biranchi is thrown into jail. Budhia is kidnapped by his mother; forced back into the slums as she demands her share of the spoils from her son's achievements. Budhia is effectively held ransom, unable to see the adoptive father he loves, the debate and intrigue entirely beyond his control.

Without his son, Biranchi is a broken man. For the first time he ponders whether to go on fighting or to abandon the struggle which has brought him to the brink of a nervous break-down. He pours scorn on the accusation of torture and the perception that he is gaining financially out of the boy. He claims that the Minister for Child Welfare bribed Budhia's mother to make the charge and that the government wants control over Budhia, and a piece of his reflected glory. Biranchi is acquitted of all charges. But before any solutions regarding the fate of Budhia can be found, a shocking event takes place. Biranchi is murdered by a gangster, shot with three bullets at point-blank range in a slum 'mafia' killing.

Budhia is woken-up in the middle of the night and is told the news by journalists. He falls silent, speaking only to tell the endless stream of reporters: "no more questions". His life has come full circle and, not for the first time, his survival hangs in the balance. For the world, Budhia has been spared his enslaver but for this small boy, he has lost his mentor and father-figure, the only loving advocate he ever had.

Who killed coach Biranchi Das - what precisely was the motive? And what becomes of Budhia Singh, India's 'wonder boy', the world's youngest marathon runner? As the investigation into the killing unfolds, Budhia is once again rescued from his humble beginnings and awarded a scholarship for sporting excellence from the very state government who claimed his running was tantamount to torture.

CRITICS

“Ripe for a fiction remake, "Marathon Boy" is the fantastical yet factual story of foul-mouthed Indian slum child-turned-marathon runner Budhia Singh. A tale that would have been a sordid curiosity in lesser hands than those of helmer Gemma Atwal, the docu transcends its tabloid origins to become something epic, artistic and even archetypal. HBO, in its not uncustomary wisdom, has secured broadcast rights, but the pic's cinematic virtues deserve a bigscreen, and its true-crime qualities could fill arthouse seats.

That Atwal tells the story in real time, with extraordinary access to all the principals, simply makes a good story better. Singh, 3 years old when his slum-dwelling mother sells him to an abusive peddler, is rescued by judo instructor Biranchi Das and brought to live at Das' self-styled sports center and orphanage, Judo House. There, with his wife, Gita, and their loose family of salvaged children and athletes, Das trains India's better judo competitors, scrambling to support his ever-expanding number of dependents.

As Singh himself explains, he was once ordered by Das to run as punishment for his filthy language. He started at 6 a.m., and when Das returned home at 1 p.m., Singh was still running. Knowing he had some kind of prodigy on his hands, Das began training the boy, and before Singh was 5, he had run 48 full marathons and become the toast of Orissa, the state whose authority would eventually come down on both their heads.

Is Das only in it for the money? One of the film's central questions is: what money? Although Singh is fast becoming a sensation, Das' profit motive is hard to locate; he seems to be in it for the glory that would come to both him and India, should he actually cultivate an Olympic marathon runner. The attention he and Singh attract includes that of child welfare officials in Orissa, who can't quite put their finger on what Das is doing wrong but accuse him of exploitation. Das reacts with vitriol, questioning their authority and defying their orders; Singh is banned from running, spurring Das to look for loopholes. Hostilities escalate, and the entire nation becomes engrossed in the adventures of the short long-distance runner.

With no narration and very few subtitles, Atwal lets the story mostly tell itself; the several animated sequences, done in Raj-era shadow-puppet style, are a charming adornment. With a few exceptions, the helmer also sticks to her own footage. The fact that she was in on the story so early not only gives the docu a sense of immediacy and drama, but also the proper journalistic bonafides: Singh's biological mother, who will later accuse Das of all manner of crimes against her son, testifies to the judo instructor's virtues and goodness early in the film -- something that will come back to indict her later, at least in the minds of viewers.

Atwal and her d.p./co-producer, Matt Norman, seem to get to everyone, from child-welfare bureaucrat R.S. Mishra (who seems far less outraged about Singh's well-being than about Das' defiance) to the slum cronies of Singh's mother. Singh himself seems like a trainwreck: While Das' motives may not be malicious, he's a gifted hustler of the media, and the boy is obviously parroting his trainer's words when he's being interviewed. This is nothing, however, compared to what others coerce Singh into saying, as "Marathon Boy" moves away from the worlds of sports and petty politics and crosses the line into top-level corruption, assassination and grief.

Production values are tops, including some glorious visuals by Norman.”

John Anderson – Variety

“The tale about an Indian boy with the gift of nearly superhuman athletic endurance, which British journalist Gemma Atwal chronicles over five years in this unforgettable documentary, rivals any dramatic thriller.

The story was an oddity, the kind of thing one reads in a “weird but true” news column: a 3-year-old boy in India’s eastern state of Orissa is discovered to have the gift of nearly superhuman athletic endurance.

Little Budhia Singh - born in a Bhubaneswar slum and sold by his mother to a street hawker -- is rescued by a local sports trainer and impresario who discovers that the boy can run. And run, and run. By age 4, Budhia has already completed in a stunning 48 full marathons, and he becomes the world’s youngest marathon runner when he makes the Limca Book of Records with a run of 40 miles in just over seven hours.

British journalist Gemma Atwal was transfixed when she spotted Budhia on a BBC news site in 2005. She decided to track down Budhia and the trainer who made it all possible, Biranchi Das. The tale she chronicles over the next five years in this unforgettable documentary rivals any dramatic thriller.

Marathon Boy is blessed with two unforgettable central characters, and exposes layers of political intrigue, greed and even a brutal murder, while raising questions about the nature of exploitation. Screened in documentary competition at the San Francisco International Film Festival, the film will air exclusively on HBO.

Although Marathon Boy is named after young Budhia, the real star that emerges is Das, a handsome, charismatic and P.R.-savvy judo trainer whose students have gone on to represent India in the Olympics. Das knew that Budhia had something special, and was ready to go to any length to push him to achieve his extreme feats. Das and his wife adopt the boy so that he can train him. Das feeds him, clothes him, sends him to school and offers him fame and the approval of millions. Budhia seems to thrive, but concerned Indian child welfare agencies and local government officials distrust his mentor’s motives, and throw up resistance and bureaucratic roadblocks.

Budhia’s supporters can’t see why the wrath of the law is focused on Das. “Kids from the slums are working in brick factories, dying in the streets, yet no one cares for them,” says one character in the film. But shocking images of the slim child, soaked in sweat and dangerously dehydrated after the record-breaking 40-mile run in 93-degree heat, tell another story. Atwal says she had a strict policy not to intervene, but she was so disturbed filming these scenes that she switched off the camera and, in tears, started screaming for help.

The film’s derivative soundtrack is its only weak link. But Atwal, a journalist making her feature documentary debut, has created a remarkable film that poses disturbing questions. Her clever use of shadow puppet animation between scenes lends the film the air of a grim fairy tale.

The Bottom Line:

Documentary about world’s youngest marathon runner tells a riveting and at times heartbreaking story about ambition, greed and resilience.”

Lisa Tsering - The Hollywood Reporter (San Francisco Int’l Film Festival)

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“A hero’s journey so ripe for the making of myth that Joseph Campbell would be proud, and culminates in tragedy so Shakespearian it’s hard to believe he didn’t write it. All the more astonishing given Marathon Boy is not fiction, but a documentary.

The fictional familiarities do not end there – born into a slum in the eastern Indian state of Orissa, Budhia Singh (the Marathon Boy of the title) eventually finds his way out through glory, adulation and potential riches (Slumdog Millionaire?) after being sold and resold until his athletic abilities and tenacity catch the eye of someone who knows how to apply them (Gladiator?) – Biranchi Das, a judo teacher who also runs an orphanage.

Boy and coach, or Wonder Kid and Guru as they describe themselves, train hard for a series of ever-increasing physical challenges (Rocky? The Karate Kid? every boxing or sports film ever made?!) until Budhia runs a staggering 42 miles in around seven hours and sparks debate – is Biranchi Das a provider of opportunity or an exploiter of children? – which attracts government and gangster involvement with tragic consequences.

That the shadow of so many archetypes, from such staples of modern fictional film, can be sensed hovering throughout Marathon Boy is a credit to the storytelling abilities and sheer enduring commitment of director Gemma Atwal (who perhaps deserves the moniker Marathon Girl). She forges an almost impenetrable story arc using footage gathered over several years (that begins with Budhia aged three, and ends when he’s aged eight) from subjects whose twists, turns, complexities and ultimate fates would have been impossible to predict at the outset, and perhaps even during the first few years of filming.

What elevates the film, and Atwal, to the fringes of mastery is a refusal to follow the more hyperbolic path through, and around, the events as they play out. Instead, the frisson surrounding the controversies at the centre of the film, and their obvious potential for high drama, is tempered with differing perspectives that introduce the concepts of unreliable narrator and objective versus subjective truth. This provides the necessary seeds of doubt to engage the audience whilst making room for a broader meditation on the power of the media (Budhia’s mother, at one point, proclaims “I saw it myself on TV!” as proof of her beliefs) and the dominance of celebrity.

Marathon Boy operates successfully on a number of levels – as myth vérité and high tragedy, as rags to riches morality tale and, of course, compelling documentary. If it did happen to be a superhero film, no doubt this would be the beginning of a fruitful franchise.”

Matt Strachan – Documentary Film-makers’ Group (DFG)

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“The film never moves into the space of a neatly packaged story. Instead it seeks to capture the ambiguity and complexity driving each characters’ desire to own and care for this exceptional young and talented boy.”

IDFA Special Jury who nominated the film into the “Top 3 Feature Documentaries 2010”

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“Stop right there. Don’t Google “Marathon Boy.” Don’t Google “Budhia Singh” and for Godssakes don’t even type “Biranchi Das” into your search bar lest you ruin one of the strangest, most provocative and debatable documentaries in recent memory.

Director Gemma Atwal spent five years following the complex relationship between Budhia, the Slumdog Prefontaine who became the most famous toddler in India by running six half-marathons by the age of four, and his foster father Biranchi, the trainer-turned-national controversy.

What begins as a heartwarmer of a story about a precocious boy plucked out of the slums to become a national icon takes a slow turn into troublesome territory as Budhia is pushed into performing increasingly radical runs in front of thousands of admirers lining the streets and hordes of media cameras, all lassoed in by Biranchi, a born PR wizard embraced by the people as an inspiration and labeled by the government’s child welfare agencies as a possible child exploiter.

Atwai does an admirable job of constructing a colorful think-piece out of complex questions about objective versus subjective truths, questionable intentions, media’s influence and the nature of poverty in the slums of India. More so, the director should be applauded for providing a removed, impartial take on the hotly-debated wonderboy, provoking questions and, thankfully, never once editorializing. The movie’s wild and the ending is a top-tier shocker. But the conversations after the lights come up are great.

Just stay away from Google.”

John Tarpley - Arkansas Times

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“This amazing story of a slumdog boy who inspires the Indian state of Orissa with his record-breaking marathon at the age of four is just plain riveting.

What happens after the running is what makes the tale so intriguing, and disturbing. With a corrupt state government and criminal slumlords all accusing his caregiver of profiteering, young Bhudia becomes the focal point of a heated dispute that leads to a shocking end.

One of the best docs I’ve seen this year.”

Tim Basham – Paste Magazine”

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Q&A WITH DIRECTOR GEMMA ATWAL

How did you first hear about Budhia Singh and why did you decide to make a film about him?

It was through the BBC News website, this was back in 2005. They ran a story on a small kid from the slums of India who was running huge distances on a daily basis. It was both astounding and unsettling. Given his background, thoughts of a boy running his way to a better future, or out of the slums, sprang to mind. There was a photograph of Budhia's mentor with him and their relationship instantly fascinated me - Biranchi Das seemed to occupy that potent dual role in Budhia's life of being both a foster father and a coach - and I wanted to understand more about the psychology of their relationship - why Budhia runs these distances for him and what would be the consequence of him stopping? I was also thinking about the spiritual significance of their relationship, for which we don't have an equivalent in the West: it's the bond between a guru and a disciple – more sacred than between a mother and a son.

I know from personal experience that it's much harder to stay objective when one of the people you are filming is a child. And you have mentioned that you were "driven by a commitment to tell the story of two poor people in an unimportant part of the world whom we came to care deeply for". I imagine it was very difficult for you as a filmmaker to stay objective while the controversy surrounding Budhia Singh and Biranchi was ripping them apart. Yet to me one of the most brilliant things about the documentary was never being able to sense the filmmakers' beliefs throughout all the twists and turns of the story... Can you talk about filming during those difficult times for Budhia Singh and Biranchi and your approach to telling the story.

Filming with such a young child meant that ethical considerations were paramount. I also became pregnant and gave birth to my own son while making "Marathon Boy", which definitely had a bearing on how protective I felt towards Budhia. Everything seemed to be in constant flux, from my emotional response to the story to the fact that as a film-maker you have to grow with your film to truly understand the interconnection of all your story elements. This knowledge only really came during rough-cut for me, when I was able to stand back and objectively look at the material to determine what makes the best film.

It may sound implausible, but for the first two years of filming, I wasn't sure who the subject of my film was. Was it Budhia, and if so, was it okay to have a small child at the heart of your story who essentially has no voice of his own for much of the film? But then I realised that the film is as much about Biranchi as it is about Budhia. Budhia is the vehicle into the story while Biranchi is the main driving force behind it. Once I understood this, things began to fall into place. The film for me is as much about this poor man living in a flawed society who's trying to make a difference and do good things. It's his search for meaning in a world that seems ruthless and chaotic. And so "Marathon Boy" became the story of a poor man and a slum boy – united by a dream but divided by the world. What adds to this richness, is that the dream is inherently flawed and problematic. And Biranchi Das is not our hero, he's the anti-hero – a deeply flawed lead character. The film then became very much about how other people and darker forces gradually begin to infect their shared dream and tear them apart.

You mentioned recently that: “For us, it’s a film about poverty, desperate poverty, but we didn’t want it to be issue-led or campaign driven.” There aren’t a lot of documentary filmmakers these days that take this approach to filmmaking. Why was that approach important for you and Matt?

We didn’t want to beat any drum with this film. American audiences are intelligent and savvy; they know when you’re deliberately trying to aim something at them. We didn’t want it to become a campaign documentary on child sporting slavery in India, or one with an emotive “how do we save this boy?” storyline or outcome, which could actually run the risk of revealing more about the filmmaker’s sense of misplaced idealism. We resisted because we felt it could be patronising to our contributors and result in an overly simplistic interpretation of events, just to pander to our western sensibility. You have to approach the story from an entirely different context. I would never condone Budhia running outlandish distances but I’m equally appalled by his other stark choices in life – there are no easy options for him.

So I wanted to make a film with inexact notions of good and evil. I wanted the viewer to feel conflicted towards Biranchi Das in the same way as I did. Another film we love is “Capturing The Friedmans” – the way in which you never quite know how to feel towards Arnold Friedman; how the film refuses to deal in black and white and instead ends up being this philosophical exploration on the nebulous nature of truth – it was remarkable. Similarly in “Marathon Boy”, it’s left to the viewer to decide who Biranchi Das is in life, aided only by my own sense of equivocation towards him. I really wanted to embrace this ambivalence and resist the urge to characterize any of the people in the film in simple terms. Instead, the film deals in subtly shifting shades of grey with no clear heroes or villains...the opposite of what is required for an issue-led or campaign-driven film, at least in the current climate. We need to know who is good and who is evil, partly so that our own belief system is bolstered and approved.

Last question is about Budhia Singh. I know people who see this film will want to know how his life turns out 5, 10, 20 years from now. How is he doing now and any thoughts or plans about continuing to follow his story?

Budhia seems to be doing well. The whole Marathon Boy team was extremely touched by his story and maintains regular contact with him, sending him packages whenever we can. The last time I saw him was in February this year at the government sports hostel where he now resides. He came running up to me and greeted me in English! He shares a room with another boy and they seem to get on really well. It’s difficult to know though how Budhia is processing the events in his life and the long-term impact. Time will tell. My main concern is that there doesn’t seem to be anyone to take care of his emotional well-being going forward. On a positive note, he goes to a terrific school now, mixing with the highest echelons of Orissa society, and I hope that education will be his way out.

Because we were filming over such a long period of time, you end up caring very deeply for those you film with and want to ensure that they can benefit in some way from the film. We have set up the Marathon Boy Trust Fund as a way to help not only Budhia but all the orphaned slum children whom Biranchi rescued from a life of great social misery and transformed into sporting champions. If we can find a way to safeguard their future and keep them all together, it would be incredible.

Matt and I have thought about continuing Budhia’s story but right now we’re so happy that he is being left alone to simply enjoy his childhood. No Indian media are allowed to interview him. His life is no longer this mini-Truman show. It should stay that way for a very long time to come!

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

Gemma Atwal – Producer & Director

Gemma has worked as a freelance director and producer on a variety of UK factual and observational documentaries. She has also spent three years working as a development producer for independent UK production houses, earning commissions in human interest, wildlife & adventure, and science programming.

Prior to documentary work, Gemma spent four years working as a journalist in Africa, South-East Asia and Europe for the NOA Media Group of Companies in Madrid. She also gained experience in radio broadcasting, initially training through the BBC and later working for Nigerian State Radio as an on-air reporter.

Gemma has an MSc (Distinction) in International Human Rights Law and a Double First Class Honours degree in Literature & Politics. Gemma is co-partner in One Horse Town Productions. This is her first feature documentary.

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Matt Norman – Producer & DOP

Over the last twenty years, Matt has filmed in all terrains and climates, from the jungles of the Congo and rainforests of Borneo to the Amazon and Arctic. Adept in hostile environments, he specializes in both human interest and adventure-wildlife documentary film-making, bringing a wealth of technical expertise to each project, including steadicam, jib and panther cranes, and underwater housing. Matt is co-partner of One Horse Town Productions and has received commissions and produced independent observational films for British television. In his spare time, he shoots music promos and commercial spots – clients include: Apple Europe, Def Jam, Island Records America & Ridley Scott Associates.

Documentary credits include: Planet Earth “Pole to Pole” - BBC (Winner Best Cinematography Non-Fiction: EMMY/ RTS / BAFTA/ Jackson Hole), Amazon with Bruce Parry - BBC/ Discovery (BAFTA nominated for best Factual Photography), “Going Tribal” - BBC (BAFTA nominated). Matt has recently been awarded a BAFTA: Best factual Photography for his documentary camerawork on BBC’s “Human Planet”, the landmark follow-up to “Planet Earth”.

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Alan Hayling – Executive Producer

Prior to forming Renegade Pictures, Alan Hayling was Head of Documentaries at the BBC. At the BBC, he was responsible for a wide range of factual programmes shown across all the BBC’s television channels including the multi-awarding winning documentary “Children of Beslan”. Previously Alan was Editorial Director at Mentorn, one of the UK’s largest producers of factual programmes. Alan has also spent ten years as a Commissioning Editor for Documentaries at Channel 4 where he was in charge of work by some of our leading filmmakers including Errol Morris’s “Dr Death”, Michael Moore’s series “The Awful Truth” and his hit film “Bowling for Columbine”.

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"MARATHON BOY" - FILM CREDITS & TECHNICAL INFO

Director	GEMMA ATWAL
Producers	GEMMA ATWAL MATT NORMAN
Executive Producer	ALAN HAYLING
Film Editor	PETER HADDON
Director of Photography	MATT NORMAN
Composer	GARRY HUGHES
Animation	BEN FOLEY
Additional Photography	TONY MILLER VIJAY BEDI ALPHONSE ROY MUKESH KUMAR JUGAL DEBATA
Production Sound	AJAY BEDI SUBRAMANIAN MANI
Online Editor	ALEXIS MOFFATT
Colorist	JAMES CAWTE
Dubbing Mixer	RICHARD LAMBERT
Dubbing Editors	IAN BOWN JAMES BURCHILL
Post Production Facility	FILMS AT 59
Film Archive	AAJ TAK ETV ANI NDTV OTV H & C PRODUCTIONS CNN-IBN (C) IBN18 BROADCAST LIMITED
News Archive	TIMES OF INDIA THE PIONEER EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
Translators	SATYA SHIV MISHRA JULU BHARADWAJ PANDA ASMITA SARANGI

Special Thanks to	PETER SYMES FERNANDA ROSSI
In Memory Of	KAMAL PAREEK MUKESH KUMAR
Head of Production, One Horse Town Productions	KAMAL PAREEK
Head of Production, Renegade Pictures	MARIA LIVESEY
Assistant Producer	PURUSOTTAM SINGH THAKUR
Production Manager	MIRANDA DURRANT
Production Accountant	NUALA MCLAUGHLIN
Co-Executive Producer, BBC Storyville	GREG SANDERSON
Co-Executive Producer, Gucci Tribeca Documentary Fund	RYAN HARRINGTON
Co-Executive Producer, Touch Productions	MALCOLM BRINKWORTH
Commissioning Editor, BBC Storyville	NICK FRASER
Commissioning Editor, SWR	MARTINA ZÖLLNER
For Home Box Office: Senior Producer	LISA HELLER
For Home Box Office: Executive Producer	SHEILA NEVINS

This film was supported by the **Sundance Institute Documentary Film Program**
A co-production with **ARTE in co-operation with SWR**
In association with **BBC Storyville**
In association with **Touch Productions**
Supported by **World View Broadcast Media Scheme**
Supported by **Tribeca Film Institute**
A One Horse Town Productions & Renegade Pictures Co-Production
Home Box Office

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Technical information: DVCPRO HD 1080i/25P, 16:9 / Camera: Panasonic HDX900

THE MARATHON BOY TRUST FUND

In Orissa State, India, there are an estimated 800,000 child workers. One man, Biranchi Das, was determined to make a difference to the lives of as many of these children as he could. His mission was to cultivate an environment in which destitute children could feel safe, discover their potential and grow in self-worth. Over the last 20 years, his Orphanage & Judo Hall has provided food, shelter, schooling, mentoring, discipline and camaraderie to hundreds of street children, slum children and disadvantaged kids from the tribal regions of Orissa. And this, despite the fact that Biranchi Das was a poor man himself, living on the edge of survival.

Since Biranchi's murder at the hands of hired hit-men, the future of the forty children who reside permanently at the orphanage is uncertain. Many are still traumatized from being key witnesses to the brutal death of their mentor and father-figure. The state government is now threatening to repossess the land that the orphanage is built on, which means that Biranchi's children face eviction from the only home many of them have ever known. They could be forced back onto the streets, into a life of scavenging, child labour or prostitution.

Alarmed by this prospect, the film's producers Gemma Atwal & Matt Norman, alongside executive producer Alan Hayling, decided to set up the MARATHON BOY TRUST, which we were delighted to launch at Tribeca Film Festival in April 2011.

The Marathon Boy Trust operates as a charity and is dedicated to providing a source of funds for the children who feature in our documentary film. There are two ways in which you can make a significant difference to their childhood. You can choose to support Budhia, through a fund dedicated to his welfare, or you can choose to support the children who reside at the Judo Hall & Orphanage. In an ideal world, we'd raise enough funds to secure their future, buy them a piece of land and continue the legacy of Biranchi Das.

For more information, please visit our website: marathonboymovie.com

