

REWIND

By Sasha Joseph Neulinger



Tribeca Film Festival World Premiere

USA / English / 86 minutes

Primary Contact

Avela Grenier, 406 579 4401
avela@grizzlycreekfilms.com

Sales Agent: Submarine

Josh Braun, 917 687 3111
josh@submarine.com



LOGLINE

Digging through the vast collection of his father's home videos, a young man reconstructs the unthinkable story of his boyhood and exposes a dark secret passed through generations.

SYNOPSIS

In his candid personal memoir, Sasha Joseph Neulinger revisits his childhood and the events that tore apart his seemingly-perfect world. For as long as Neulinger can remember, his father was constantly filming— from birthday parties, to hockey games, to holidays. But his camera, trained on the frequent gatherings of a tight-knit family, was also documenting a hidden secret, the revelation of which would lead to a media firestorm, a high-stakes court battle, and a generational reckoning.

Drawing upon an incredibly revealing home video archive, Neulinger revisits these events 20 years later to piece together an unflinching story of the cycles and consequences of abuse, to examine what it means to heal, and to use those experiences to effect positive change in the world. *REWIND* probes the gap between image and reality and proves just how little, and how much, a camera can capture.



FILM FESTIVALS

- 2019 Tribeca Film Festival (WORLD PREMIERE - Special Jury Mention - Best Editing)
- 2019 Traverse City Film Festival (Audience Favorite, Non-Fiction)
- 2019 Lake County Film Festival (WINNER - Audience Award, WINNER - Jury Award for Best Documentary Feature)
- 2019 Mill Valley Film Festival
- 2019 Nashville Film Festival
- 2019 Flyway Film Festival 2019
- 2019 BFI London Film Festival (INTERNATIONAL PREMIERE)
- 2019 Heartland International Film Festival
- 2019 Ridgefield Independent Film Festival (WINNER - Best Documentary. WINNER - Best Emerging Filmmaker)
- 2019 International Rome Film Festival
- 2019 Denver Film Festival
- 2019 Rocky Mountain Women's Film Festival
- 2019 Just Film (MTÜ Pimedate Ööde Filmifestival)
- 2019 Hamptons Doc Fest
- 2019 Enfances Dans Le Monde
- 2020 Palm Springs International Film Festival
- 2020 Atlanta Jewish Film Festival (WINNER - Documentary Jury Award)
- 2020 Frames of Mind Film Series
- 2020 Big Sky Documentary Film Festival

PRESS COVERAGE

[100% on Rotten Tomatoes](#)

"He's chasing the ghosts that won't let go of him... A documentary like this one has the effect of a moral thriller."

- OWEN GLEIBERMAN, [VARIETY](#)

"Rewind," as indelibly as any film ever made, illustrates how the very process of investigating your own past can be a trauma unto itself. "

- DAVID EHRLICH, [INDIEWIRE](#)

"A deeply personal, revealing, and unforgettable piece of filmmaking... Neulinger's courageous documentary transcends his own specific story to become something greater about healing, cycles of abuse, and how closely we have to listen to our children and watch their behavior in order to protect them."

- BRIAN TALLERICO, [ROGEREBERT.COM](#)

"Somehow in documenting the family's unraveling, Neulinger comes to show the strength that certain members were able to give to another... there is tremendous power in seeing the filmmaker taking the bad to make some good out of it, capturing the best and worst that humans are capable of in one brave and truly exceptional film."

- STEPHEN SAITO, [THE MOVEABLE FEST](#)

"...we actually watch it unfold the way his parents did thanks to the library of home movies Sasha's father, Henry, kept over the years... It's a level of bravery that few of us can muster, but an inspiration to anyone who has ever faced the same challenges. Talk about a superhero."

- CHUCK FOSTER, [FILM THREAT](#)

"Neulinger's film, like any great documentary, maintains a steady drip of details whose importance are only revealed later... Rewind not only offers the story of a victim's ordeal, but a brave and resilient spirit."

- ROBERT DANIELS, [812 FILM REVIEWS](#)

"Sasha Joseph Neulinger's wrenching survival story is an astounding documentary on sexual abuse trauma... The utter honesty behind these scenes could only be captured in a documentary."

- ANDREW BUNDY, [THE PLAYLIST](#)

A CONVERSATION WITH SASHA JOSEPH NEULINGER

Could you talk a little bit why did you decided to make REWIND?

I was 23 years old and I was just finishing college. I was doing some assistant editing work for a National Geographic show and there was just this one night I was sitting in the office alone. I was sitting in this editing bay by myself and there were two things going through my mind. One was: Wow, after everything I've been through, I love where I live, I love my friends, I love my job, I love the work that I'm doing. I'm really loving this life I'm living. But the other conversation that was happening in my mind was negative. There was this self-deprecating voice inside of my mind that had followed me from my childhood, the victim voice that I think so many abuse victims share, which says: I'm not worthy. I'm not lovable. I'm not worthy of this incredible experience. I felt that if people knew about my past, and what had happened to me, they wouldn't want to associate with me. That what happened to me made me gross. I realized that my life was going in a beautiful direction but that I wouldn't be able to fully enjoy and embrace it unless I faced whatever it was inside of me that was still pulling me down. So, I called my dad and asked him for the tapes.

How much material was there to go through?

My dad had these huge boxes of videotapes and since he moved around a lot, I helped move them multiple times. I didn't know how much was there. He didn't know how much was there. But there were a bunch of different formats—U-Matic, hi-8, miniDV. I was finishing my last semester at college and I would sneak into the nonlinear editing bay at night with these super old dusty decks that nobody ever used. But I needed them to start looking at the footage. After watching the first six tapes, I realized that I needed to watch all of it. In total, we estimate that it was a bit over 200 hours of home video. Most of that spans from when I was around 11 days old all the way until I left for college.

Can you describe the experience of re-experiencing all these moments of your life through the tapes?

What was really kind of exciting and scary about the whole process of looking through these archival tapes is that a lot of them weren't labeled. So, I'd pop one in and, all of a sudden, I would see an incredibly beautiful moment from my childhood, a moment that I had completely forgotten about. In watching, I found the tapes could move from beautiful moments to really disturbing, jarring moments in the space of a cut. There were tapes that I saw that had very specific defined labels, but I really wanted for the first few tapes to just be complete mysteries. My dad filmed my life and preserved it in such a way that I could re-experience it, years after the dust had settled from the trauma. That for me was an incredible gift.

How did you make the leap from that process of watching through the material of your life and just sort of taking it all in to thinking about how to make a movie from that archive? And how do you separate out you, Sasha, the filmmaker, from the Sasha you needed to create in the context of that film?

It was the day before my 17th birthday when the last trial ended. So, from age four to seventeen, abuse was the primary focus of my existence. When I went to college, it was the first time in nearly 15 years where abuse wasn't central to my life. But I was left with a lot of unanswered questions that were affecting my ability to fully enjoy that life. Watching the footage answered so many of them, but it raised a plethora of new questions that I could ask today. Watching the footage was an important first step for me. With new context as an adult, and having watched the footage, I could go out with a camera ask these hard questions about my past to the people who were part of that childhood experience. Sasha the filmmaker and Sasha who you see onscreen are always going to be one and the same in certain regards but I knew that to tell the story well, I was going to need a trustworthy team that could supply some objectivity, and support me, both in the edit and to be fully present while filming.

How did you think about telling this story? Rewind is a film that doesn't show all of its cards at once and seems very strategic in when and how it delivers new pieces of information.

Avela Grenier, my editor, was hugely important to the structuring process. One of the biggest conversations we had was how soon in the film to reveal the idea of abuse. We had cuts where in the first twenty seconds we disclosed abuse and others where we waited over twenty minutes. Right now, we start letting the viewer know about fifteen minutes in. Ultimately, the team and I really felt that we needed to allow time for the audience to experience the main characters as people, to just get a sense of the family before we really dived into watching it completely fall apart. Abuse is never obvious. By the time people recognize or see signs that are suspicious to them, it's already way too late. Abuse, especially multigenerational child sexual abuse, thrives in silence. Often times it's hard to spot because it's happening in places and by people that would would never expect.

How do you strike a balance between creating a sense of shock at the events you experienced, which is necessary for the film, and perhaps going too far for the viewer?

I know that my emotional threshold and ability to talk about or be immersed in the context of child sexual abuse is different than it is for most people who didn't have the life I had. And so we were always really having deep conversations in the edit about how to handle this material. We knew that we never wanted to beat around the bush. We wanted the film to be pointed, and we never wanted to sugarcoat the topic. But we also needed to be careful that every detail we used was used for a very specific narrative reason that would help lead us to the next part of the story. And we also had to think about what the audience could bear. As the film came together we realized we needed to build in "breaks" for the viewer so that it didn't ultimately become too challenging to watch. We wanted to hit hard but also build in moments of breath.

So there was a moment when you called your father and asked for the tapes. But how did you talk about this project with your mother? Or how about your sister? I imagine that was a very delicate process.

It took a lot of conversations and a lot of back and forth with each of my family members. I wouldn't say that they were comfortable. I don't think they were ever fully comfortable, but they were able to trust me and trust that this film was ultimately going to be a good thing for our family. When I called my sister and I told her that I wanted to do this, she said that she thought I was being crazy. Why would I want to dig all this up? We just got over it. My argument to her was: I think we survived, but I don't know that we're living our best lives. My dad, he was really supportive right off the bat. I think for him this was an opportunity to see something potentially really good and healthy come out of this all, like giving me the tapes was something that he could give back to me after such a hard childhood. My mom, she was probably...she was almost immediately on board. She said was proud of me. She was excited. She thought it was a beautiful concept, but when the cameras arrived at the house she was a little nervous. [laughs] But she stuck with it. They all did.

I imagine your family has now seen the finished film. How do they feel about it?

I didn't watch the film with them all at once. I played it for my sister and played it for my dad, played it for my mom. We were all in tears throughout the screenings. But, the general consensus was that they were happy that the film doesn't beat around the bush. They felt like...like their essence was accurately captured and they felt comfortable about this story going on in the world. And I'm really happy we were able to get there for them because they risked a lot with being this open and vulnerable and the film wouldn't...we wouldn't be talking about it if they hadn't participated.

You just very eloquently explained how it affected them to see the film completed, but how about you?

The six years that it took to make this film were some of the hardest years of my life and also simultaneously the best. I would argue that they're the most important years I've had in terms of who I am today and the relationship I have with myself. It was definitely therapeutic to face all these unanswered questions about my childhood and to face my demons head on. And that totally kicked my ass. But seeing this film, seeing the story in the film, and to be able to hold that chapter of my life—by far the biggest chapter of my life—in my hand on a flash drive.... Now I can say this story is no longer mine to hold alone. Now this story belongs to the world, and it's an awesome feeling.

ABOUT THE TEAM

SASHA JOSEPH NEULINGER - DIRECTOR, PRODUCER

Sasha Joseph Neulinger is the co-founder and head of production at Step 1 Films where he produces content for commercial clients nationally. After finishing film school at Montana State University, he discovered the raw materials that would propel him to tell the story of his life. An autobiographical film years in the making, REWIND is his directorial debut. Sasha lives in Montana where he spends his free moments playing hockey, hiking in the mountains, and cooking.

THOMAS WINSTON - PRODUCER, EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

Tom is the founder and CEO of Grizzly Creek Films, a full-service production company that has created original series and specials for The National Geographic Channel, Smithsonian Channel, History Channel and PBS. His films have been winners and finalists at Wildscreen Festival, the Jackson Hole Wildlife Film Festival and the Banff Mountain Film Festival.

AVELA GRENIER - EDITOR, PRODUCER

Avela brings a background in design to her role as a producer and editor. Her editing work spans short form campaigns, national history filmmaking, and social documentary. She has produced original broadcast episodes for NatGeo Wild, History Channel, and Smithsonian Channel. Her most recent short films were finalists at the 2018 Jackson Hole Wildlife Film Festival, Telluride Mountainfilm, and the International Wildlife Film Festival.

ROBERT SCHNEEWEIS - PRODUCER

Robert Schneeweis is a Los Angeles based filmmaker with experience in documentary features and scripted television. He is in pre-production on THE DEVILS CUT, a look into the global race to cash in on the Kentucky bourbon craze. He currently works in post-production on the long running CBS drama CRIMINAL MINDS and has worked with Amazon and FX on SNOWFALL and SNEAKY PETE. Before moving to Los Angeles, he directed news for a CBS affiliate and was a coordinator for the PBS Emmy award winning show, 11th & Grant. He is a co-founder of Step 1 Films.

SHASTA GRENIER WINSTON - PRODUCER

Shasta is an award winning director, writer, and editor with a background in non-fiction film and literature. Her work has aired on PBS, the History Channel, and NatGeo Wild and appeared in the New York Times. She has directed and edited three feature documentaries. CLASS C debuted at the Big Sky Documentary festival where it won the Big Sky Award. The critically acclaimed NOT YET BEGUN TO FIGHxT appeared at festivals nationwide, winning the Audience Award at the Florida Film Festival and the San Diego Film Festival and the Moving Mountains Award at Telluride Mountainfilm.

CINDY MEEHL - EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

Cindy Meehl is the founder of Cedar Creek Productions. She directs and produces feature film documentaries. She recently directed her new film, THE DOG DOC which is premiering at Tribeca. She was the director and executive producer on BUCK. Meehl's other films she executive produced are THE RIVER AND THE WALL, TRAPPED, UNBRANDED, FOR THE BIRDS, and DOGS ON THE INSIDE.

JEFF DOUGHERTY - CINEMATOGRAPHER

Jeff Dougherty (B.A. in Film Production, Montana State University) has worked extensively in commercial, promotion, and documentary films. Jeff has operated cameras for Sportsman Channel's MEAT EATER and TLC's SISTER WIVES. He has produced and directed for Zero Point Zero West. He is currently a camera operator for Warm Springs Productions, and travels nationally as a broadcast television cinematographer.

RICK SMITH - CINEMATOGRAPHER

Rick's photographic skills have been honed by over a decade of field experience on a technically and stylistically diverse set of documentary productions. His body of work includes independent social docs for PBS's Independent Lens & American Experience, a prime-time reality series on NBC, and wildlife and adventure programming for BBC's Natural History Unit, National Geographic and Netflix.

T. GRIFFIN - COMPOSER

T. Griffin has composed scores for over 40 feature length films, and dozens of live and multimedia projects. Notable titles include the Academy-Award nominated LIFE, ANIMATED and multiple festival award winners QUEST, THE OVERNIGHTERS, and WELCOME TO LEITH as well as the Oscar Shortlisted ONE OF US. He composed the music for Showtime's 8-episode documentary series ACTIVE SHOOTER, and for two episodes of Netflix' DIRTY MONEY, produced by Alex Gibney. He has worked with Roger Ross-Williams, Dawn Porter and Rob Epstein and Jeffrey Friedman on hour long specials for Discovery Channel and for Netflix. He was a fellow at the Sundance Composers' Lab in 2008, and has twice been nominated for Cinema Eye Honors for Original Music Score. He is based in Brooklyn, New York.



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CREDITS

Director

Sasha Joseph Neulinger

Producers

Thomas Winston

Robert Schneeweis

Sasha Joseph Neulinger

Avela Grenier

Shasta Grenier Winston

Editor

Avela Grenier

Executive Producers

Cindy Meehl

Thomas Winston

Cinematography
Jeff Dougherty
Rick Smith

Original Music
T.Griffin

Sound Recordist
Mike Kasic

Production Manager
SaVenna Hanley Hughes

Associate Producer
Samantha Bates

Assistant Editor
Christi Cooper

Additional Editing
Ken Schretzmann

Additional Audio
Devon Riter
Robert Schneeweis

Technical Consultant
Scott Sterling

Consulting Producer
George Ohrin

Archival Cinematography
Henry Nevison
Sasha Joseph Neulinger

Archival Photography
John Solem

Title and Motion Design by
Blue Spill
Design Director
Allison Brownmoore
Flame Artist
Anthony Brownmoore
Designer
Joe Nowacki

Digital Intermediate Provided by
Final Frame
Digital Intermediate Colorist
Will Cox
Digital Intermediate Online Editor
Drew Kilgore
Digital Intermediate Producer
Caitlin Tartaro
Digital Intermediate Manager
Charlie Rokosny
Digital Intermediate Technical Supervisor
Sandy Patch
Digital Intermediate Executive Producer
Will Cox

Post-Production Sound Services by
Skywalker Sound
a Lucasfilm Ltd. Company
Marin County, California
Sound Designer & Re-Recording Mixer
Christopher Barnett
Sound Effects Editor
Richard Gould
Client Services
Eva Porter
General Manager
Josh Lowden
Head of Production
Jon Null

Legal Counsel
Bianca Grimshaw

Additional Legal Counsel
Elizabeth Corradino
Breting Engel
Wilder Knight

Clearance Counsel
Innes Smolansky

Distribution Services
Josh Braun
Submarine Entertainment

Publicity Services
Cinetic Marketing
Falco Ink.

Web Development
Headwall Digital

Assitant to Cindy Meehl
Brittany Batterton

Kickstarter Trailer Online Editor
Scott Sterling

Additional Photography
George Feder-Philadelphia
Getty Images

Production Assistants
Carl Hansen
Katie Jepson
Taylor Johnson
Patrick Larson
Matthew MaCoy
Patrick Tormey

Music
Violin, Viola
Gene Back
Woodwinds
Matt Bauder
All Other Instruments
T. Griffin

Composers' Assistant
Jake Sillen

Additional Mixing & Score Sound Design
Sanghee Moon

Orchestration & Score Mixing
Gavin Brivik

Orchestration & Score Mixing
Jordi Nus

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