

CODE BLACK

A DOCUMENTARY FILM



PRESS KIT

Official Selection – Los Angeles Film Festival 2013

WINNER - Best Documentary - LAFF 2013

What happens when the will to heal and serve meet head-on the realities of American health care today?

LOGLINE

CODE BLACK is about the **idealistic and adrenaline-seeking ER residents** at the Los Angeles County Hospital, the birthplace of emergency room medicine.

Ryan McGarry, a first time filmmaker, who is also a doctor at the hospital, directs the film. He **provides a personal account** of the residents who train and work at LA County Hospital as they are **forced to confront the unexpected realities** of life and death in a safety net, and a **healthcare system** at the brink of **overload**.

SYNOPSIS

When do ideals die? When do our **hopes fade** into the **realities** of the system?

For most everyone, we give up at least some of our naïve dreams in the steady march of our daily grind. But what of **doctors**, the people entrusted to help save our lives and protect our health? What happens when the **will to heal and serve meets the frustrating realities** of American health care?

CODE BLACK follows a group of bright, energetic **young doctors** as they grapple with the divide between their **idealistic expectations and the realities of practicing medicine** amidst a complex and overburdened system while in training at "C-Booth," the notorious trauma bay at the Los Angeles County Hospital known as the "hurt locker of American medicine."

It's 2008. The physicians are medical students, and we ride with them on their first heart-pounding interactions with the infamous ER. The students watch with awe as the senior training doctors master the chaos; their hearts soar as lives are saved from otherwise guaranteed death. It's loud. It's pumping. It's heroic. It's sexy.

But in a moment, everything changes.

C-Booth permanently closes and a new ER facility opens. The move sends the young doctors into an identity crisis. The new facility forces the team to grapple with the realities of modern medicine: bureaucracy, money, policy and the front-line burdens of our nation's most complex socio-economic problem.

They begin to wonder if it is **possible to practice medicine with their ideals** in tact.

“...A deeply unfiltered look at the reality of health care in America...”

It's 2012. The awe-struck students we initially met are now the senior training doctors at the new County hospital.

Passion seems to be lost into a new world of computer screens, paperwork, and endless bureaucracy. It seems the core of the doctor and patient relationship is damaged by the same regulations and policies they intended to protect. And if that weren't enough, the doctors are

surprised to find that litigation defense—not patient well-being—drives many of the decisions involved in care.

But these are small hurdles compared to what awaits them beyond the waiting room door.

More than 500 ER patients are in line. **Wait times regularly reach 12 to 18 hours.** Many of the 500 have been rejected by other local hospitals because, as the under- or uninsured, some specialists perceive them as “unprofitable.”

Wanting desperately to improve the ER patients' experiences, the young doctors **try something rogue**: they break down as much of the doctor-patient barrier as possible, invading the waiting room. They create a new patient intake system, skipping the forms, the triage, the multiple check-ins and the bullshit. Their goal is to provide medical care for people who need it.

It works.

Wait times are reduced by half, and at the busiest ER in the nation, victory comes with doing less, spending less, using less. Spirits rise. Ideals are found again. We feel the rush.

And then, just as quickly, **it all collapses.**

The County Hospital is short on nurses and staff because it can't afford to operate at full capacity. Entire rows of beds close. The young doctors' new plan is defeated. The thing that remains unchanged is the volume of patients flooding the waiting room.

The young doctors will soon graduate. But will they be able to change the system they are about to enter? Will they be able to live up to the expectations they have of themselves as doctors?

CODE BLACK is an uncomfortable, unfiltered look at the reality of health care in America, posing these questions amidst the life and death drama of an emergency room - and national system - **in the midst of crisis.**

CODE BLACK
A DOCUMENTARY FILM

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JOSHUA ALTMAN

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CREATIVE TEAM BIOS

DIRECTOR - RYAN MCGARRY



Ryan McGarry is an emergency medicine physician in Los Angeles and director of the feature length documentary CODE BLACK. The film is a first-person reflection of McGarry's own training at the Los Angeles County General Hospital, the birthplace of emergency room medicine. Via unprecedented access, the film follows McGarry and his colleagues as they are forced to confront the unexpected realities of life and death in a safety-net healthcare system at the brink of overload. McGarry spent four years in production on CODE BLACK while simultaneously working the 24/7 schedule of a young doctor in training—an especially sleepless approach to first-time filmmaking! McGarry studied English at The Pennsylvania State University and received his medical degree at The University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine.

PRODUCER - LINDA GOLDSTEIN KNOWLTON



Linda Goldstein Knowlton directed and produced the 2012 documentary, SOMEWHERE BETWEEN, which chronicles the coming-of-age stories of four teenaged girls in the US, all of who were adopted from China as babies. It premiered in Toronto at the 2011 Hot Docs Film Festival, where it garnered the Sundance Channel Audience Award and went on to screen at the LA Film Festival, and many festivals including Aspen, Vancouver, Boulder, Portland, and Milwaukee where it won the Best Documentary Award. The film screened at numerous festivals, and was released theatrically in over 80 cities across the US and was also selected for the 2012 Sundance Film Forward: Advancing Cultural Dialogue program, screening in India, Morocco, China, and Columbia.

Goldstein Knowlton also co-directed and co-produced the documentary, THE WORLD ACCORDING TO SESAME STREET. It examines Sesame Street's international co-productions, made primarily in some of the world's political hotspots, including Kosovo, Bangladesh, and South Africa. It made its World Premiere in competition at the 2006 Sundance Film Festival. Previously, Goldstein Knowlton produced the New Zealand film WHALE RIDER (2002), directed by Niki Caro, which was the winner of the Audience Awards at Toronto, Sundance, Rotterdam, Seattle, San Francisco, and Maui film festivals. She produced the 2001 film, THE SHIPPING NEWS, directed by Lasse Hallstrom. In 1999 she produced both MUMFORD, written and directed by Lawrence Kasdan, and CRAZY IN ALABAMA, directed by Antonio Banderas.



EXECUTIVE PRODUCER - MARK JONATHAN HARRIS

Mark Jonathan Harris is an Academy Award-winning documentary filmmaker and Distinguished Professor in the School of Cinematic Arts at the University of Southern California, where he heads documentary production. Among the many documentaries he has written, produced and/or directed are *The Redwoods*, a documentary made for the Sierra Club to help establish a redwood national park that won an Oscar for Best Short Documentary (1968); *The Long Way Home*, which won the Academy Award for Best Feature Length Documentary (1997); and *Into the Arms of Strangers: Stories of the Kindertransport*, produced for Warner Bros. that also won an Academy Award for Best Feature Length Documentary (2000). *Unchained Memories: Readings from the Slave Narratives*, a documentary that he wrote on slavery in America, premiered at Sundance and aired on HBO in February 2003. It was nominated for an Emmy for a Nonfiction Special and Harris was nominated for Outstanding Writing for Nonfiction Programming. *Darfur Now*, a feature documentary he produced with Cathy Schulman and Don Cheadle, premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival in September 2007 and was nominated as best documentary of the year by the National Board of Review and the Broadcast Film Critics Association and won an NAACP Image Award. *Living in Emergency: Stories of Doctors Without Borders*, a film, which he executive-produced, was shortlisted for an Oscar for Best Documentary Feature in 2009. The International Documentary Association recently awarded him the Preservation and Scholarship Award.



EXECUTIVE PRODUCER - MARTI NOXON

A versatile writer/producer who works fluidly through genres and mediums, Marti launched into the feature world with her debut *I Am Number Four*. She followed this with *Fright Night*, a reimagining of the classic cult horror film, starring Anton Yelchin and Colin Farrell. Additionally, Noxon is currently developing *The Glass Castle*, based on the best-selling memoir, for Lionsgate. Noxon has written and Executive Produced for many critically-acclaimed shows including *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *Grey's Anatomy*, *Private Practice*, *Brothers & Sisters*, *Point Pleasant*, and *Still Life*. She has also acted as consulting producer for *Mad Men*, *Prison Break*, *Angel*, and *Glee*. Other current projects include *Proof*, a pilot for SyFy developed with M. Night Shyamalan (*The Sixth Sense*) that she will also Executive Produce. She is also writing and producing a dramedy called *Guide To Divorce* for Bravo. A graduate of UC Santa Cruz, Noxon currently lives in Hollywood with her two children.

EDITOR - JOSHUA ALTMAN



Joshua Altman graduated from The Pennsylvania State University with a degree in Film & Video and is currently an editor based in Venice, CA. He's edited six feature length documentaries, three of which premiered at Sundance. From that list, *We Live In Public* took home the Grand Jury Prize at Sundance in 2009, *The Tillman Story* was on the 2011 Oscar short list for the "Best Documentary" award, and *Bones Brigade: An Autobiography* went on to become the number #1 documentary on iTunes upon its release. That same year, another film he edited, *No Room for Rockstars*, also took the #1 documentary slot on iTunes. Additionally, Joshua's work on *We Live In Public* garnered a nomination by The Cinema Eye Honors for 'Outstanding Achievement in Editing.' He has also edited numerous non-scripted television shows for CBS, NBC, FOX, Discovery, VH1, and Bravo.

COMPOSER - JAMES LAVINO



Lavino's film music includes scores for the Oscar-nominated documentary *God is the Bigger Elvis*, the Oscar-nominated, Emmy-winning HBO film *Which Way Home*, and Henry Singer's acclaimed BBC film *Last Orders*. Other film work includes *Rubberneck*, directed by Alex Karpovsky (*Girls*), the Gabriel-Byrne-produced *Tent City USA*, and the forthcoming *Something Whispered*, starring Cuba Gooding, Jr, and William Sadler. Lavino's score for Karpovsky's film *Woodpecker* features performances by Colin Greenwood of Radiohead, and Lee & Tyler Sargent of Clap Your Hands Say Yeah, and was hailed by *The Guardian* as "a stunning film soundtrack...warm...gorgeous." Lavino's music for television includes HBO's *Kevorkian*, the eight-part series "Sissinghurst" for BBC television, and songs for the groundbreaking Disney animated show *The Book of Pooh*.

LINE PRODUCER - PATRICIA BISCHETTI



In a career spanning more than 20 years with projects filmed nation-wide and around the world, Patricia has produced and supervised projects for PBS, cable and television networks including WNET, Discovery, TBS, TNT, TCM, CNN, American Masters, Lifetime, Starz Encore and Showtime. She has overseen major productions including Discovery's Peabody Award-winning *Black Sky: The Race for Space* on Richard Branson and Burt Rutan's SpaceshipOne and the XPrize, *Extraordinary Moms*, a feature length documentary starring Julia Roberts. For OWN, the PBS primetime series *Tavis Smiley Reports*, *The World According to Sesame Street* featured at the Sundance Film Festival, Peabody Award-winning and Emmy-nominated series *Craft in America* for PBS, *The Cutting Edge* for the American Cinema Editors, *The Warner Bros. Story*, a four hour documentary series on the history of Warner Bros., TCM's Emmy nominated *Cary Grant: A Class Apart*, CNN's Emmy nominated *Dying to Tell the Story*, exploring the world of war photojournalists, CNN's *Soldiers of Peace: A Children's Crusade*, recognized internationally for its celebration of Colombia's Children's Peace Movement, and many highly acclaimed American Masters documentaries including *Mel Brooks*, *Gene Kelly*, *George Cukor* and *Bob Newhart*.