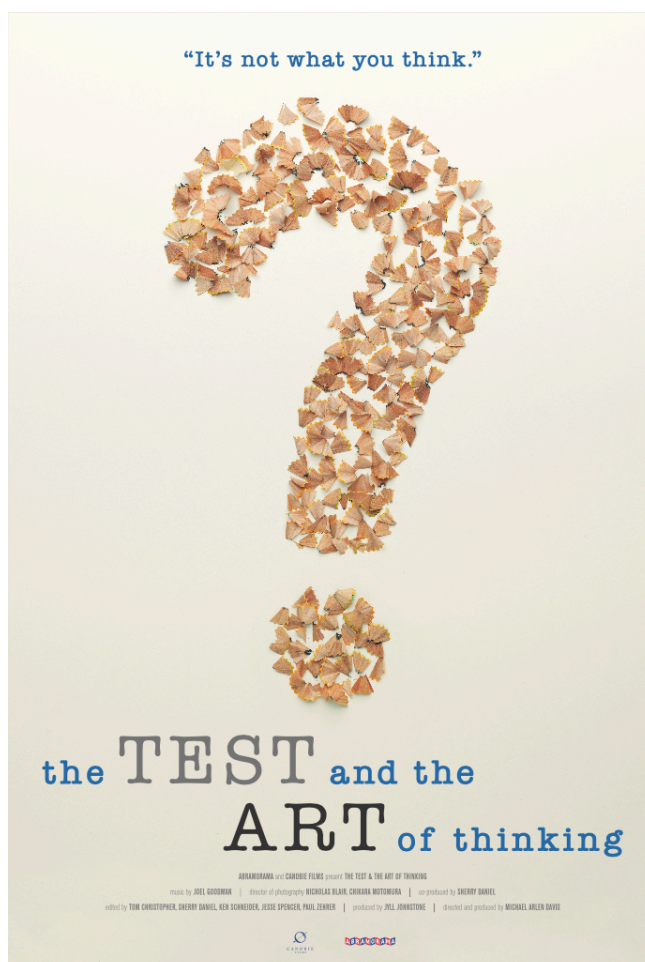


Abramorama and Canobie Films present

The Test & The Art of Thinking



2017 / USA / Color / Documentary

85 minutes / English

TheTestDoc.org

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LOGLINE

Each year more than 3 million high school students in the U.S. take an SAT or ACT college entrance exam. For decades there have been questions about what exactly these tests measure, how predictive they are of academic promise or success, and their role in admissions. Parents, students and academics reflect upon this uniquely American rite of passage, exposing fascinating issues that extend broadly within education.

SHORT SYNOPSIS

Each year more than 3 million high school students take the SAT or ACT, the college entrance exams required by most four-year colleges in the United States. For decades, however, there have been questions about exactly what these tests measure, what role they play in the admissions process and how predictive they are of academic success. The anxiety-provoking exams, and the multibillion-dollar test-prep industry that has grown up around them, have also become lightning rods in the ongoing national debate over equity in educational opportunity. In the new documentary feature ***The Test & the Art of Thinking***, filmmaker Michael Arlen Davis examines this controversy through interviews with students, parents, counselors, test-prep professionals and academics, to provide a fascinating look at this uniquely American rite of passage and how it reflects deeper issues in our educational system — and our society as a whole.

LONG SYNOPSIS

For American high-schoolers entering the pressure-cooker world of college admissions, the SAT and ACT exams (referred here interchangeably and collectively as “the test(s)”) are high-stakes crucibles with the potential to dramatically influence the trajectory of one’s academic or even professional life. Painfully aware that many highly ranked colleges rely on “the tests” in assessing applicants, students and their families feel compelled to spend often scarce time and money on test-prep services. But despite the emphasis placed on the exams, experts have long questioned

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their usefulness as a gauge of academic promise, or indeed what if anything they measure or uniquely bring to the college admissions table.

In the fascinating documentary feature ***The Test & the Art of Thinking***, filmmaker Michael Arlen Davis explores the debate over these exams from a wide array of perspectives. From students giving up their Sundays to learn arcane test-taking techniques to university administrators bemoaning the vicious cycle created by test scores and college rankings, Davis reveals the profound and mostly unseen impact the SAT and ACT have, deep into our educational system.

Pulling back the curtain of the ballooning test-prep industry, Davis introduces us to a variety of coaching stars. Among them is Greg Hanlon, a white-bearded SAT guru with an unorthodox if highly effective tutoring style and Steven Ma, CEO of ThinkTank Learning, a sharp entrepreneur whose clients pay up to a million dollars for a money-back guarantee of admission to the college of their choice. Serving as the film's Greek chorus is a roundtable of testing professionals who are well aware of the exams' shortcomings and seem as perplexed as anyone that their lucrative field continues to grow unabated.

Through interviews with dozens of students across a wide socio-economic spectrum as well as parents, teachers, and professionals, ***The Test & the Art of Thinking*** paints an engrossing picture of a distinctly American rite of passage. As viewers, we discover that "the tests," despite their well-documented flaws, now threaten to pull even more into their orbit the resources and direction of the standard high school curriculum. At the same time, their unspoken encouragement of a gamer's skill evokes a Wall Street ethos and its longstanding connection to the elite universities that introduced the SAT nearly a century ago.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

We were motivated to embark upon this project while watching our two daughters engage with the SAT/ACT college entrance exams.

Our eldest had been a diligent student throughout her high school career, but whose experience on this form of testing was quite unexpected.

When the time came for our youngest to start, we thought as parents we would attempt to prepare her ourselves.

We started taking practice SAT sections, and couldn't help but notice the unusual framework and tenor of "the test." This prompted conversations with neighbors, friends and local educational professionals. We began exploring the "testing" literature, which further confirmed that our curiosity had not been in vain, nor in isolation.

We found this to be a subject of curiosity, still somewhat unexplored in a documentary format, and there was information to be shared that would be useful to many. We began with interviews of local students, test prep professionals and high school guidance counselors, all with a keen sense of discovery. Our goal was to communicate context about the nature and purpose of these exams, from a wide point of view, so that anyone could understand that they were not alone in this process, in their perception or their experience.

As our information developed, testing experts, psychometricians, authors and college admissions officers became more open to interviews and participation.

Whereas the students, their parents and test prep tutors provide a real-time perspective on "the test," the academic professionals convey an overarching portrayal of a bigger picture, and viewed over a longer time frame.

We believe the film gives common voice to many of the issues that "the tests" engender, and we hope it facilitates broad and varied conversation.

Michael Arlen Davis
Director/Producer

ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

“Mathematics, science, being able to use the English language.
These tests don’t measure it and they don’t improve it. So why do they exist?”
— Leon Botstein, President, Bard College

Michael Arlen Davis first became interested in making a documentary about the SAT/ACT college entrance exams, after watching his two children go through the nerve-wracking process of practicing for and taking “the test.” His oldest daughter, a diligent and enthusiastic student, took “the test” several times, and had a not uncommon experience that fell well short of expectations.

Determined to do things differently with his younger child, Davis chose to attempt to prepare her himself. He began taking practice SATs, and was stunned to discover that the design and manner of “the test” bore little resemblance to a high-school curriculum. Its intentionally confusing questions seemed to reward a kind of competitive cleverness rather than the open, inquisitive nature he associated with scholarship. Curious to know what education experts had to say about “the test,” he dove into the academic literature and discovered he was not alone in his perception.

“It’s very tricky. Each question, just, you have to really think about
are they tricking me or are they asking me something that’s objective?”
— Bryson Rominger, student

Davis began work on ***The Test & the Art of Thinking*** in early 2014, spurred on by three significant events in the realm of college entrance exams. That year, the College Board announced its newest version of the SAT with much fanfare, including a *New York Times Magazine* front-page story featuring an interview with College Board President David Coleman. At the same time, former Bates College Dean of Financial Aid & Admissions Bill Hiss published an influential study indicating that higher entrance exam scores didn’t correlate to higher grades or graduation rates in college. That year also saw the publication of [The Perfect Score Project: Uncovering the Secrets of the SAT](#), a first-person account of single-mom Debbie Stier’s relentless quest to help her apathetic son beat the exam.

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Although he originally expected the documentary to focus on local students and counselors in his Northern California area, as Davis and his research team dug deeper, they found an increasing number of prominent national figures willing to speak with them on camera. Over more than a two-year period, Davis' team interviewed all manner of students, parents, testing experts and academics.

One of the odd turnabouts in the history of “the test” is that when it was introduced in the 1920s, the SAT was proposed as a way for elite universities to identify educationally disadvantaged students who would make promising scholarship candidates. That’s a far cry from its current status as a nearly ubiquitous exam for which affluent families pay thousands — and in some cases tens of thousands — in a metaphorical arms race — for classes and tutors to give their children any possible advantage, and understandably so.

“The test became a gatekeeper. And it was doing in effect the very opposite of what it had been intended to do.”

— Dr. Susan A. Cole, President, Montclair State University

The College Board, the not-for-profit corporation behind the SAT, claimed from its inception that “the test” could not be prepared for — that “you either had it or you didn’t,” as Bell Curves co-founder Akil Bello says in the film. It was supposed to see through environmental factors like an X-ray to capture an individual’s natural and unaltered ability, and level the playing field of educational opportunity. Over time, however, as private tutoring services like Kaplan and Princeton Review demonstrated that test-taking techniques could dramatically improve scores, the College Board backed away from its claim. And yet despite the preponderance of evidence and even self-acknowledgement that “the test” has not lived up to its intent, colleges continue to rely on them heavily in their admittance decisions.

SAT and ACT scores also play into a reverse competition, the one amongst colleges themselves for students. The proliferation of college rankings, most notably the annual list from *U.S. News & World Report*, put pressure on schools to improve their spot in the pecking order. Since the rankings are based in part on average entrance exams, colleges seek — and offer financial inducements for — students with the higher scores. For these reasons, parents and students pursue strategies to unlock “the tests,” to gain acceptance to the most favored schools and

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for scant scholarship aid, and the wide-ranging industries of coaching and prep have emerged, to serve as scaffolding for this cycle.

**“There were always questions about the usefulness, validity, fairness of the SAT, now we are going to increase its reach and its impact.”
— Akil Bello, Co-Founder and former CEO Bell Curves**

One of the film’s more troubling revelations comes from the College Board itself. The no man’s land occupied by “the tests” is laid bare in a speech given by its President, David Coleman, who, without fanfare, declaims, “it is time to admit that the ACT and SAT have become far too disconnected from the work of our high schools.”

And thus, the increasing emphasis on college entrance exams threatens to change the nature of high school education itself. Presciently forewarned in 2001 in an address to the American Council on Education, the President of the University of California, Dr. Richard C. Atkinson, noted that the prominence of the SAT/ACT has the country engaged in “the educational equivalent of a nuclear arms race”. Fourteen years later, author and essayist James Murphy sadly echoes that concern, “...if in the past they’ve said ‘we’re going to change “the test” so it looks more like the high school curriculum’ — my worry now is that what they’re going to do is change the high school curriculum so it looks more like “the test.” And to me that’s a disaster.”

In commencing upon this investigative journey, little could Davis have suspected how far reaching it might become, nor imagined that this odd and quirky exam, three to four hours long, could play such a pre-eminent role in what American students learn and how they are asked to think and perform.

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A BRIEF HISTORY OF “THE TEST”

The Scholastic Aptitude Test was first administered in 1926 to students who were applying to elite colleges in the northeast. Prior to its debut, colleges either administered their own admissions exams, made use of the demanding College Entrance Examination Board’s traditional tests (which were compositional in nature, covered nine subjects, and took five days to administer), or admitted students from accredited high schools under the “admission by certificate” system.

Created by Princeton University psychometrician Carl Brigham, the SAT was designed to assess raw intelligence and aptitude rather than subject mastery. Part of the idea was to allow Harvard and other prestigious universities to identify “diamonds in the rough” — students with innate academic ability but without access to college preparatory education.

The SAT was soon adopted as an admissions tool by members of the Ivy League, Seven Sisters, and other prestigious colleges and universities. Meanwhile, Brigham, whose 1923 study proclaiming the intellectual superiority of the “Nordic Race” was used to justify anti-immigrant legislation in the U.S., later repudiated the premise behind “intelligence testing.”

In the post-war era, as veterans began taking advantage of the G.I. Bill, college enrollments boomed. Soon the University of California and other large state universities around the U.S. began emulating the Ivy League by integrating the SAT into their admissions processes.

In 1959, University of Iowa Professor Everett Lindquist created the ACT (American College Testing) exam as a competitor to the SAT. In a remark that revealed both his perception as to the proper role of college testing and his misgivings about the SAT, Lindquist stated that the objective of the colleges using the ACT was not “skimming the cream off the top but deleting the least qualified from the bottom.”

By the 1980s, as higher education became increasingly essential for individual economic opportunity, the competition for admission into top schools intensified. Driven by the emergence of school rankings — notably the one published annually by *U.S. News & World Report*, which is

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based in part on the average SAT/ACT scores of admitted students — colleges began awarding merit-based aid to top scoring applicants. While a few schools such as Maine's Bates College (whose internal research showed that "the test" was narrowing its applicant pool) bucked the trend by dropping their test score requirement and adopting a test optional policy, the demand for test-prep classes and tutors soared, creating a vast industry by the 1990s.

In 2001, retiring University of California President Richard C. Atkinson, one of the foremost cognitive scientists and testing experts of his generation, attempted to break this vicious cycle with a speech that reminded some of President Eisenhower's 1960 farewell address warning Americans about the dangers of the growing military-industrial complex. Atkinson concluded that the emphasis placed on "the test" was "compromising our educational system", and that "no one is spared, not teachers, not students not parents, not admissions officers, not university presidents." Since this address, dozens of schools have chosen to defy the consensus and adopt a test optional policy.

In 2014, the College Board announced the latest in a series of SAT redesigns, to be rolled out in 2016. At the time, its President David Coleman pronounced: "No longer will the SAT only have disconnected problems...or tricky situations that students won't likely see again."

In 2015, the Every Student Succeeds Act (which replaced the Bush era No Child Left Behind Act) paved the way for the SAT and ACT to be used as the high-school level competency assessment for federal accountability, despite the fact that neither exam is designed as a curriculum test, nor has either been independently assessed for such a purpose. In fact, the original design was to measure innate ability or aptitude, not subject matter or mastery.

Today over 80% of graduating high school seniors in the United States take an SAT or ACT college admissions exam.

*Matt O'Connor
Researcher, Canobie Films*

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

MICHAEL ARLEN DAVIS, Director, Producer

Michael Arlen Davis has served as the vice president of Canobie Films since its formation in 1992. He was a producer on the company's 2008 documentary *Hats Off*, a profile of 93-year-old New York actress Mimi Weddell, which was released by Abramorama. He also served as assistant producer on 1994 Sundance Grand Jury Prize nominee *Martha & Ethel*, a portrait of the nannies who raised filmmakers Jyll Johnstone and Barbara Ettinger. The film was released by Sony Pictures Classics.

Davis has been involved with a variety of businesses in the world of food and fiber, including naturally colored cotton and natural food supplements derived from micro-algae.

JYLL JOHNSTONE, Co-Producer

Jyll Johnstone is president of Canobie Films, the banner under which she has been directing and producing documentaries since 1993. As a filmmaker, Johnstone focuses her attention on talented, passionate and driven women who pursue success despite improbable odds. Her documentaries *Martha & Ethel*, *Throwing Curves: Eva Zeisel*, and *Hats Off* have been featured at the Sundance, Telluride, Palm Springs, Toronto, San Francisco, Bologna, London and Hong Kong film festivals, as well as a variety of museums. *Martha & Ethel* received a nomination for the Grand Jury Prize at the 1994 Sundance Film Festival, and a nomination for the DGA Award for Outstanding Directorial Achievement in Documentary.

Johnstone is currently directing *Queen of Belvedere*, a documentary about an elderly El Salvadoran housekeeper laboring in the homes of an affluent San Francisco suburb. She is also directing "BeMused," a TV docu-series about the life, work and struggles of New York artist Libby Schoettle.

Born and raised in Manhattan, Johnstone has always been inspired by the stories of New Yorkers and most of her films have been shot in the New York City area. In addition to filmmaking, her interests include photography, healthy cooking, homeopathic medicine and studying Italian. Johnstone lives in Northern California.

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SHERRY DANIEL, Co-Producer

Sherry Daniel is an independent documentary filmmaker and producer based in San Francisco with more than 25 years' experience in film, television, commercials and new media. She began her film career working on documentaries for National Geographic, PBS, and Pearl Jam before transitioning to creative direction and brand development. Daniel is currently directing a new documentary about an innovative educator in the Boston metropolitan area. She holds a B.A. from Brown University.

JOEL GOODMAN, Composer

Joel Goodman is an Emmy-winning composer who creates music for narrative feature films, documentaries, television, album releases and other forms of collaborative media. His scores can regularly be heard in movie theaters and on television around the world. Goodman has scored more than 125 films and television programs that collectively have been honored with five Oscar nominations, 20 Emmy Awards and more than 30 Emmy nominations. For HBO alone he has scored more than 40 productions. He also composed the main theme for the long running and critically acclaimed PBS series "American Experience."

Goodman recently completed scores to: *Voyeur*, the story of iconic journalist Gay Talese's relationship with a motel owner who spied on his guests; *Hell on Earth*, which explores Syria's descent and the rise of the Islamic State; *Obit.*, an endearing and uplifting look into the secret world of *New York Times* obituary writers; and *Everything Is Copy*, a candid portrait of beloved author and screenwriter Nora Ephron.

A native New Yorker, Goodman now lives in Los Angeles, where he enjoys riding his bicycle and, of course, spending many hours writing music.

NICHOLAS BLAIR, Director of Photography

Nicholas Blair has shot a number of telefilms, documentaries and shorts. He also lensed 13 episodes of National Geographic Television's "Surviving West Point." Blair completed his first independently produced documentary in 1996, "America's Culture of Crash." Blair served as producer, director, editor and director of photography. It was shown nationwide on The Learning Channel. More recently (2007) he completed "Our Holocaust Vacation," another full-length documentary broadcast on PBS. His still photographs are in the collections of the Metropolitan

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Museum of Art, The International Center for Photography, The Brooklyn Museum, Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris and Houston's Museum of Fine Arts.

Blair grew up in New York City and began photographing as a teenager. He received his master's degree in fine art from the San Francisco Art Institute in 1981. Photography fellowships followed, from the National Endowment for the Arts in 1984 and the New York Foundation for the Arts in 1990. In 1999 he was awarded a Jerome Foundation grant.

Blair began his career as a director of photography in 1985. Since that time he has traveled to more than 40 countries in Africa, Asia, Europe and South America, working for a number of organizations including Peace Corps, UNICEF, the Asian Development Bank, CARE, National Geographic, PBS and HBO.

CHIKARA MOTOMURA, Director of Photography

Chikara Motomura has been a principal collaborator on 14 independent films with Rob Nilsson, a Berkeley-based filmmaker. Primarily a cinematographer and editor, Motomura has also worked as a producer and handled location sound. Since 2011 he has partnered with Paul Zehrer and PotentialSF, working as co-producer, cinematographer and co-editor on numerous award-winning projects such as "Why Waldorf?" "Preparing for Life: Waldorf School of the Peninsula" and "Being Seen."

A native of Japan, Motomura has spent more than 25 years in New York, Hawaii and San Francisco, working as a freelance director and cinematographer for various Japanese television networks such as NHK. In 1997 Motomura relocated to the Bay Area, where he worked as cinematographer and editor for Link TV on the Peabody Award-winning news show "MOSAIC: World News from the Middle East."

KEY PARTICIPANT BIOS

Chris Ajemian is the founder and CEO of CATES Tutoring & Educational Services, which offers test prep, tutoring, and college applications and admissions consulting.

Danielle S. Allen, an American classicist and political scientist, is the James Bryant Conant University Professor and the Director of the Edmond J. Safra Center for Ethics at Harvard University. Previously, she was UPS Foundation Professor at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, New Jersey. She has also served as a trustee of Amherst College and Princeton University, and as Chair of the Pulitzer Prize.

Martha Allman has been the Dean of Undergraduate Admissions for Wake Forest University since 2001, where she oversees the administration of Wake Forest's merit-based scholarship program. Martha led Wake Forest through the process of making college entrance exams, such as the SAT and ACT, optional for admission in 2008.

Dr. Richard C. Atkinson is the former president and regent of the University of California system, and the former Chancellor of UC San Diego. Dr. Atkinson has been a proponent of the long-term benefits of intellectual inquiry throughout his life and career.

Akil Bello is the former CEO and Co-founder of Bell Curves, a test-prep company dedicated to underserved and disadvantaged communities. He is currently the Director of Equity and Access for the Princeton Review.

Leon Botstein is the President of Bard College and Leon Levy Professor in the Arts and Humanities. He is also the Music Director and Principal Conductor of the American Symphony Orchestra.

Wayne Camara was Vice President, Research & Development at the College Board from 1994-2013. He is currently the Horace Mann Research Chair at ACT, Inc.

Anthony P. Carnevale, a research Professor and the Director of the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, is a former VP of Public Leadership at the Educational Testing Service. Dr. Carnevale was appointed by presidents Clinton and Reagan to national educational commissions.

Susan Cole has been the president of Montclair State University since 1998. The institution led by Dr. Cole is the second largest university in New Jersey, with 21,000 graduate and undergraduate students. Montclair adopted a test optional admissions policy in 2014.

William Fitzsimmons is the Dean of Admissions and Financial Aid at Harvard. He is a former trustee of the College Board and former chair on the Commission on the Use of Standardized Tests in Undergraduate Admissions.

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Howard Gardner is the John H. and Elisabeth A. Hobbs Professor of Cognition and Education at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. The author of twenty-nine books, Gardner is best known in educational circles for his theory of multiple intelligences.

Catherine Gewertz is an Associate editor at *Education Week*. Catherine focuses on educational assessment, and on pathways through middle and high school. She is the author of the blog “High School & Beyond”.

Greg Hanlon is a Test Prep Specialist and has tutored as many as 2500 students for the SAT.

Patrick Hayashi is a former associate vice chancellor for admissions and enrollment at the University of California at Berkeley. In 1999, he joined UC’s Office of the President where he served as associate president under President Richard Atkinson, and worked with Dr. Atkinson to devise a challenge to UC’s use of the SAT. As a trustee of the College Board, Dr. Hayashi pressed the organization to discontinue the use of the PSAT to determine National Merit Scholarship eligibility.

William Hiss is the co-author of “Defining Promise: Optional Standardized Testing Policies in American College and University Admissions.” Bill is Dean of Admissions Emeritus at Bates College.

Nicholas Lemann is Columbia Journalism School Joseph Pulitzer II and Edith Pulitzer Moore Professor of Journalism; Dean Emeritus. He has published in *The Atlantic*, *The New Yorker*, *The New York Times* and written several books including “The Big Test: The Secret History of the American Meritocracy.”

Steven Ma is the Co-founder, President and CEO of ThinkTank Learning, a college admissions consulting and tutoring firm. He is a member of the California Commission on Asian and Pacific Islander American Affairs.

Kory McBride is an independent college access consultant and workshop facilitator based in New York City.

Charles Murray is a political scientist, author, and Emeritus Scholar at the American Enterprise Institute.

Ted O’Neill was the Dean of College Admissions at the University of Chicago for 20 years. He is currently a lecturer in the Humanities Department at the University.

Steven Pinker is a Johnstone Family Professor in the Department of Psychology at Harvard University. He conducts research on language and cognition, writes for publications such as *The*

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New York Times, Time and The New Republic, and is the author of ten books, including "The Language Instinct," "How the Mind Works," "The Blank Slate," "The Stuff of Thought," "The Better Angels of Our Nature," and most recently, "The Sense of Style: The Thinking Person's Guide to Writing in the 21st Century."

Debbie Stier is the author of "The Perfect Score Project: One Mother's Journey to Uncover the Secrets of the SAT."

Kristin Tichenor is a Senior Vice President at Worcester Polytechnic Institute, overseeing the areas of enrollment management, institutional research, pre-collegiate outreach programs, and multicultural affairs.

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Q&A WITH DIRECTOR MICHAEL ARLEN DAVIS

Q: This film comes at a critical moment in the history of “the test.” One take away from your film is the notion that as more colleges like Wake Forest and Worcester Polytechnic Institute are making their admissions policies test optional, “the test,” itself, may soon, like many institutions, become irrelevant.

Because the stakes here are so high, it’s fair to ask how your personal experience with “the test” may or may not have informed your approach. What was your score? Do you have an axe to grind?

A: Good question. Fair question. Our impetus came from our experience with our own daughters, as they went through the process. And we took practice tests ourselves. It wasn’t obvious what “the test” was testing, in terms of academic achievement. To our eyes, it didn’t link to what was being asked in school, or even to learning. It was like an entirely different educational track, that our daughters needed to master. We understand that by necessity we are all asked to engage in activities that don’t, on their face, appear to be productive, but even so. And we wondered if there was any support for these observations, in a broader sense, and at a more professional level, amongst educators and testing professionals.

Q: How did your wife and daughters feel about you making this movie that was inspired by your family’s own relationship with “the test?” Were they immediately supportive or was it a conversation?

A: I don’t think at first anyone took this idea too seriously. It was a large task, and it would call on a good deal of serendipity as we solicited the experts in the field. It just happened one step at a time, until we felt we had a good enough and complete outline.

Q: How did a filmmaker from the Bay Area discover a family on the Upper West Side of Manhattan with a kid about to devote his Sundays to his charismatic coach Chris Ajemian and his downtown practice of “black magic”?

A: One thing leads to another. We did not know, literally, anyone in this field when we began. We scoured the literature, and in the major periodicals or newspapers, there is a fairly consistent group of professionals who are called upon when there is SAT/ACT news. A high school guidance counselor who was the co-author of a prominent book told us about Chris, and Chris was kind enough to share with us his time with Stefan.

Q: Was Chris at all concerned about giving away “the magic” as the film is released and grows its audience?

A: He hasn’t indicated a concern. He knew what he was offering, and he’s seen the film twice, and is quite articulate about how the overall story is told. Certainly a surprise for us was the world of “Test Prep,” and how interesting these folks are. In our view, they know

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“the test” better than anyone, and that includes the College Board or ACT. The good ones know exactly what is going on, what is called for, and the good ones are truly trying to help their students safely traverse this ravine. The problem is the cost, that skews who has access to this form of preparation.

Q: At points along the way you cut to what looks like a series of color drawings of human anatomy from which botanical moods appear to sprout. Who is the artist, and how did you intend them to advance the narratives in which they appear?

A: Those drawings were done by our eldest daughter when she was in high school. They juxtapose a different form of accomplishment or value, and toward the end, the prior narrative is from former UC Associate President Pat Hayashi, posing the idea that the time students spend training for the SAT/ACT could most likely be put to other interesting use.

Q: A single word used only once in the film, “ritual,” by a subject, Danielle Allen of the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton, to describe “the test” made me wonder: is “the test” not also a common rite of passage, if 80% of American high school students take it? Do you think having a common experience such as “the test” allows for the vast majority of college students to better socialize with each other when they first get there? And isn’t that a good thing?

A: Gee, that’s an interesting idea, but it depends on what that commonality encourages or engenders.

It has often been referred to as a rite of passage or a lingua franca, and 123,000,000 Americans have taken them. That’s a large number. But the question is, in that regard, to what end? What, culturally, is the message?

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PRODUCTION & DISTRIBUTION

ABRAMORAMA

Abramorama is the preeminent global rights management partner for music films today and is recognized for the consistent high quality of its work on award winning feature films. An innovator in the focused, personalized form of film distribution and event cinema, Abramorama provides invaluable alternatives to filmmakers and content owners. An industry leader in marketing, promotion, and global distribution, Abramorama continues to trail-blaze exciting new pathways for filmmakers to find their audience. Over the course of more than 15 years, Abramorama has successfully distributed and marketed hundreds of films, including Ron Howard's Grammy Award®-winning *The Beatles: Eight Days A Week – The Touring Years*; Danny Clinch and Pearl Jam's *Lets Play Two*; Amir Bar-Lev's *Long Strange Trip – The Untold Story of the Grateful Dead*; Paul Dugdale and Myles Desenberg's *Above & Beyond Acoustic - Giving Up The Day Job*; Corbett Redford and Green Day's *Turn It Around: The Story of East Bay Punk*, John Scheinfeld's *Chasing Trane – The John Coltrane Documentary*; Sam Pollard's *Two Trains Runnin'*; Brett Bern's *BANG! The Bert Berns Story*; Brett Morgen and National Geographic's seminal *Jane*; Tomer Heymann's *Mr. Gaga*; Charles Ferguson's *Time To Choose*; Asif Kapadia's *Senna*; Neil Young's *Greendale*; Cameron Crowe's *Pearl Jam Twenty*; Sacha Gervasi's *Anvil! The Story of Anvil*; Banksy's Academy Award® nominated *Exit Through the Gift Shop*; the surprise indie hit *Awake: The Life of Yogananda*; Laurie Anderson's astonishing New York Times critics' pick, *Heart of a Dog*, Showtime's National Board of Review Winner *Listen to Me Marlon* and Draft House Releasing's 2016 Documentary Academy Award®-nominee and IDA Best Documentary Winner *The Look of Silence*. Abramorama is a founding partner of *The Seventh Art Stand* program, an act of cinematic solidarity against Islamophobia, that ran in more than 50 theaters across the United States in May of 2017. For more information visit www.abramorama.com

FILM SPROUT

Film Sprout is a boutique distribution firm that helps filmmakers broaden the audience and social impact of their documentaries through high-impact public screening campaigns. The architect of national community and campus screening tours for dozens of independent documentaries and their makers, including the award-winning documentaries KING CORN, THE END OF THE LINE, PRAY THE DEVIL BACK TO HELL, A SMALL ACT, THE INVISIBLE WAR, UNFINISHED SPACES, DAMNATION, VESSEL and THE HUNTING GROUND, Film Sprout's campaigns bring powerful films beyond the traditional cinema and into grassroots institutions. Connecting social-issue films to the audiences best equipped to support and exhibit them in their local communities, Film Sprout's community screening tours aim to expand the audience for documentary; to connect high-quality documentary storytelling to those who are typically underserved by independent media (including low-income and rural communities and communities of color); to support independent filmmakers by tapping undiscovered sources of revenue; and to use the power of documentary film to foster citizen engagement, forward civic dialogue, encourage social equity and provide a forum for cultural and artistic discovery.

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CANOBIÉ FILMS

Canobie Films makes documentaries that mostly examine the less well known, both issues and persons, through a kaleidoscope of perspectives. Our films engage with art, education, and culture. Previous releases include MARTHA & ETHEL, THROWING CURVES: EVA ZEISEL, and HATS OFF which have been featured at the Sundance, Telluride, Palm Springs, Toronto, San Francisco, Bologna, London and Hong Kong film festivals, as well as a variety of museums. MARTHA & ETHEL received a nomination for the Grand Jury Prize at the 1994 Sundance Film Festival, and a nomination for the DGA Award for Outstanding Directorial Achievement in Documentary.

CREDITS

Director: Michael Arlen Davis

Producers: Michael Arlen Davis, Jyll Johnstone

Co-Producer: Sherry Daniel

Cinematography: Nick Blair, Chikara Motomura

Music By: Joel Goodman

Editors: Tom Christopher, Sherry Daniel, Ken Schneider, Jesse Spencer, Paul Zehrer

Consulting Producer: Paul Zehrer

Research: Matthew O'Connor

Graphics Design & Animation: Bay Area Film Company

Audio Post Production: Berkeley Sound Artists, Jim LeBrecht

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