

# MISSING PEOPLE



**A film by David Shapiro**

USA, color, 81 min, HD

[www.missingpeoplefilm.com](http://www.missingpeoplefilm.com)

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## LOGLINE

Missing People is a nonfiction mystery about Martina Batan, the director of a prominent New York gallery, who investigates her brother's long unsolved murder while obsessively collecting and researching the violent work and life of an outsider artist from New Orleans. As Martina struggles to process the information she has dug up, the inevitable collision of these parallel narratives leads to a chain of dramatic events.

## SYNOPSIS

Martina Batan is the director of the prominent Ronald Fineman Fine Arts gallery in New York. An eccentric, enigmatic Manhattanite, she is haunted by the brutal murder of her 14 year-old brother in 1978. Martina obsessively collects the work of Roy Ferdinand, a controversial outsider artist from New Orleans who died in 2004. His colorful, violent and sexually graphic art chronicles African-American cultural identity of pre-Katrina New Orleans. With the murder capital of 1990's America as a backdrop, Ferdinand drew what he saw and knew: people struggling for dignity and survival in a volatile world

of crime, drugs, poverty and violence. Believing Ferdinand is a great American artist, collecting his work has become Martina's focus. But Martina is still sorting out the underlying reasons for having reordered her life's priorities.

The film follows Martina (left, in 1980) on a fact-finding mission to New Orleans to meet people who knew Roy, and to revisit the neighborhoods, which Ferdinand documented in tender detail: the colorful but run-down houses, distinctive, dilapidated landscape, and the vibrant characters of a now, near-vanished world.

Martina meets Roy's sisters, Faye and Michele, who reveal that while Ferdinand led a hard-

scrapple life - at times homeless, involved in drugs and gangs - he also made up his biography and drew from second-hand sources, not personal experience. Although the sisters are distrustful of Martina's intentions, through unlikely symmetries, their shared experiences draw them closer. As Martina grapples with her own dark past, she learns how Roy's sisters came to peace with their brother's turbulent life. A chronic insomniac since the traumatic night her brother was murdered in 1978, Martina hires a private



detective to reopen the decades-old unsolved case. The film interweaves layered narratives with archives of a 1990's New Orleans ravaged well before Katrina, and a dangerous 1970's New York, the gritty landscape of Martina's childhood. Following Martina's investigations - into Ferdinand's forgotten world and into her own painful past - Martina's journey to make peace with her brother's murder unfolds in a shocking and unexpected way.



*Roy Ferdinand in 1995*

## CRITICAL PRAISE for *Missing People*

"The film's revelations, twists and intimacy move beyond portrait and into a collective meditation on memory, culminating in a shocking, unexpected ending... a film with accessible yet intelligent complexity."

**Donna K - FILMMAKER MAGAZINE**

"Sure to engross audiences ... this nonfiction character study/mystery adeptly weaves complex threads to build suspense and spring narrative surprises..... Expert assembly is particularly well served by a fine soundtrack. Should excite interest on the fest circuit, with tube, download and theatrical sale to follow."

**Dennis Harvey - VARIETY**

"...the film is rich with ideas about art, love, truth, and the quest for self-knowledge...a beautiful, devastating film."

**Stephen Maine - ARTILLERY MAGAZINE**

"*Missing People* is a work of humanistic complexities that delivers even more truth than its premise could have predicted."

**Carlos Aguilar - INDIEWIRE (Sydney's Buzz)**

"There's nothing obvious about David Shapiro's carefully crafted documentary that gradually reveals how two seemingly different lives intersect in unexpected ways."

**Linda Barnard - THE TORONTO STAR**

"Shapiro [...] has made art of [Martina Batan's] very personal investigation, through a chronicle that's intimate, gripping and sharply observed. Art-house potential is strong...for this open-ended inquiry into memory and loss."

**Sheri Linden - THE HOLLYWOOD REPORTER**

"A festival highlight ... by David Shapiro (director of *Keep the River on Your Right*). Beautifully shot by cinematographer Lisa Rinzler and produced by doc veteran Alan Oxman, "*Missing People*" is a powerful and subtly touching portrait of psychological trauma and loneliness."

**Anthony Kaufman - INDIEWIRE**

"Especially moving ... Shapiro nails the intimate moments with a quiet resonance, and we're ultimately reminded of how precious and fragile life is."

**Terrence Butcher - POP MATTERS**

"With a bridge of tragedy and humanity, these worlds become inextricably linked, to profound effect."

**Marsha Lederman - THE GLOBE AND MAIL**

"*Missing People* plays like *Searching for Sugar Man* meets *Gone Girl*, a suspenseful and bone-chilling reexamination of innocence lost."

**Joseph Braverman - AWARDS CIRCUIT**

## FILMMAKERS

*Director, writer and producer* David Shapiro

*Producers* Alan Oxman  
Michael Tubbs

*Director of Photography* Lisa Rinzler

*Edited by* Becky Laks  
Adam Kurnitz

*Assistant producer* Karin Roach  
Elisabeth Subrin

*Additional editor* Brendan Reed

*Music supervisor* Adam Oelsner

*Second camera* Liz Dory  
Martina Radwan  
David Shapiro

*Sound* John Zecca  
Tom Jordan

*Music* Stephen Russell  
Christopher North  
Michael Tubbs  
Justin Vollmar  
Nick Cregor  
Ashley Eriksson  
Eli Moore  
Evan Hashi  
Tom Filardo  
Stephen Steinbrink

*Starring* Martina Batan  
Roy Ferdinand  
Faye Harris  
Michele Ferdinand  
Conor Mccourt  
Sean Ellwood  
David Carrino  
Andy Antippas  
Regina Perry  
Bill Sasser  
Ronald Feldman  
Frayda Feldman

## ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

### **David Shapiro - director, writer, producer**

David Shapiro has been a prolific filmmaker and visual artist for over twenty years. He wrote, produced, and shares a film by credit for FINISHING HEAVEN (HBO, 2009), for which he was nominated for a 2010 Emmy as producer. The film premiered at the Los Angeles Film Festival in 2009. Shapiro co-directed, wrote and produced KEEP THE RIVER ON YOUR RIGHT (IFC, 2001). The film had its international premiere at the Toronto Film Festival in 2000. Based on Tobias Schneebaum's book, the film went on to play in over 37 international film festivals winning many major awards, including the Independent Spirit Award for Best New Director (2001), the Special Jury Award at IDFA (2000), Best Documentary Feature at the Hamptons Film festival (2000) and a Special Critics Award At LAFF (2000). It was shortlisted for an Academy Award. KEEP THE RIVER ON YOUR RIGHT played theatrically in over 65 American cities and on television in eleven different countries. The film has screened at venues as far ranging as the Museum of Modern Art and West Point's military academy.

Shapiro's visual art has been exhibited extensively in numerous solo and group exhibitions, including shows at MoMA, the Tate, the Norton and the Brooklyn Museum. His work is included in many prominent collections, including the Tate, the Whitney and the collection of Beth Rudin DeWoody. Shapiro's work has been profiled and reviewed on NPR, BBC, CNN, in the New York Times, The New Yorker, Art in America, Art Forum, Flash Art, Art News, Esquire, the Wall Street Journal, El Pais, Time Out, and New York Magazine, among numerous other publications.

Shapiro's latest film, MISSING PEOPLE (2015) has its world premiere as an official selection of the 2015 Hot Docs International Documentary Film Festival. David lives and works in Queens, New York.

### **Alan Oxman - producer**

Alan Oxman is a film editor and producer who has worked on a variety of narrative and documentary films. As a producer, Alan's recent credits include A MATTER OF TASTE which screened on HBO and was nominated for an Emmy Award and PAGE ONE: INSIDE THE NEW YORK TIMES which was distributed by Magnolia Films and was also nominated for an Emmy Award. He was a producer on Edet Belzberg's THE RECRUITER, which won the Peabody Award, as well as on Children Underground which won the Special Jury Prize at the Sundance Film Festival and was nominated for an Academy Award. Alan recently served as post-production supervisor on INSIDE JOB (Academy Award for Best Documentary, 2011) and producer on HOT COFFEE (Sundance 2011, HBO Summer Doc Series). He was the co-producer and supervising editor of the Al-Jazeera documentary CONTROL ROOM (Grand Jury Prize, Full Frame Film Festival). His editing credits include WELCOME TO THE DOLLHOUSE (Grand Jury Prize, Sundance Film Festival), HAPPINESS (International Critic's Award, Cannes Film Festival) and STORYTELLING (Cannes Film Festival), all for director Todd Solondz. He was a consulting editor on the Oscar-nominated NO END IN SIGHT, which also won the Special Jury Prize at the 2007 Sundance Film Festival. Alan co-edited UNZIPPED (Audience Award, Sundance Film Festival), which won the A.C.E. Award for Best Documentary Editing. He won two Emmy Awards for Outstanding Documentary Editing on the PBS series CITY LIFE.

### **Lisa Rinzler - director of photography**

As one of a handful of celebrated female directors of photography, over the last 25 years, Lisa Rinzler has worked on numerous award-winning narrative and documentary films. Her recent credits include



Martin Scorsese's 50-YEAR ARGUMENT (2014), Alex Gibney's MEA MAXIMA CULPA (2012), PARK AVENUE: MONEY, POWER AND THE AMERICAN DREAM (2012), and Martin Scorsese's NO DIRECTION HOME BOB DYLAN (American Masters, 2005). She is the director of photography on many now iconic films, such as the Hughes Brothers' DEAD PRESIDENTS (1995), MENACE II SOCIETY (1993), POLLOCK (2000), and Steve Buscemi's TREES LOUNGE (1996).

#### **Adam Kurnitz - editor**

Adam Kurnitz is a Brooklyn-based film editor. He cut the documentary feature narratives THIS IS HOW I ROLL and MISSING PEOPLE as well as the narrative shorts TOUCH and FOREVER ALLY. He also worked on the award-winning documentaries DESERT RUNNERS and DEATH METAL ANGOLA. Along with Affonso Goncalves (ONLY LOVERS LEFT ALIVE), he is currently editing a new feature length documentary by Jim Jarmusch.

#### **Becky Laks - editor**

Becky Laks is a film editor based in New York City. In addition to MISSING PEOPLE, her editorial credits include I BELIEVE IN UNICORNS (SXSW Film Festival, 2014), HOT GIRLS WANTED (Sundance, 2015), THE PUNK SINGER (IFC Films, 2013) and FAIRHAVEN (Tribeca Film Festival, 2013). Becky also edits music videos and teaches editing at The Edit Center in New York City.

#### **Adam Oelsner - music supervisor**

Adam Oelsner is an editor and musician who spent years touring with Pacific Northwest Indie rock bands including Karl Blau, LAKE, and other K Records groups. As an editor, recent credits include MEDORA (2013), BILLY ON THE STREET (Funny or Die/Fuse TV) and BLUEBIRD (2015). He also directs, edits and animates music videos, and is a frequent collaborator with Medicins Sans Frontiers/Doctors Without Borders. As music supervisor for Missing People, he worked with David Shapiro to create a "mixtape" score, sourcing cues from musicians in every corner of the United States.

## David Shapiro

**Missing People** (2015) writer, director, producer

**Finishing Heaven** (HBO, 2009) writer, producer

**Keep the River on Your Right** (IFC, 2001) writer, director, producer

### CRITICAL PRAISE for *Keep the River on Your Right*

"One of the most charming, enigmatic men ever captured on film"

**Elizabeth Einstein - ESQUIRE**

"This isn't about cannibalism... it's about the wisdom and acceptance that comes with age"

**Roger Ebert - CHICAGO SUN TIMES**

"Extraordinary!"

**Stephen Farber - MOVIELINE**

"A one-of-kind documentary."

**Owen Gleiberman - EW**

"Brilliant and beautifully evoked"

**Stephen Hunter - WASHINGTON POST**

"Colorful and engaging"

**Lawrence Van Gelder - NEW YORK TIMES**

"Involving"

**Kenneth Turan - LOS ANGELES TIMES**

"Highest Rating"

**Edward Guthman - SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE**

### AWARDS & GRANTS

- |      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2010 | Nominated for Emmy, Producer - Outstanding Arts & Cultural Programming - <i>Finishing Heaven</i> (HBO)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| 2002 | GLAAD Media Award, Nominated for Outstanding Documentary OFCS Award (nominated for Best Documentary), Online Film Critics Society Awards                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| 2001 | Independent Spirit Award, Best New Director - IFC Truer Than Fiction Award<br>Best Documentary, Special Jury Award, International Documentary Festival, Amsterdam<br>Best Documentary (Golden Starfish Award) Hamptons International Film Festival<br>Best Documentary, Special Critics Award, Los Angeles Film Festival<br>Best Documentary, Newport Beach Film Festival |