

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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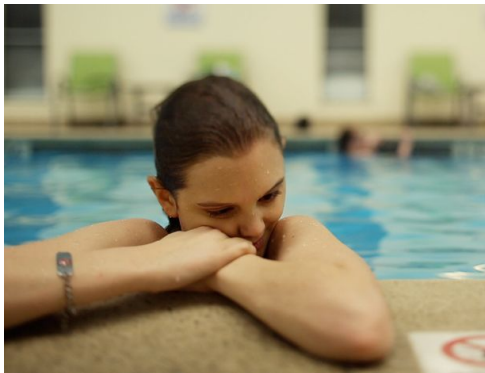
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## ***Best and Most Beautiful Things* Premieres on *Independent Lens* Monday, January 2, 2017 on PBS**

### **Online Streaming Begins January 3**

#### **A precocious young woman chases love, freedom and fulfillment in the most unexpected of places**

*"The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched. They must be felt with the heart."* - Helen Keller



Credit: Sarah Ginsburg

(San Francisco, CA) — In rural Maine, a quirky, charming, and determined young woman named Michelle Smith lives with her mother Julie. Legally blind and on the autism spectrum, Michelle has big dreams and proudly wears the badge of outcast. Searching for connection, Michelle explores love and empowerment outside the limits of “normal,” including a provocative sexual awakening. A surprising and joyful story of self-discovery, ***Best and Most Beautiful Things***, produced and directed by Garrett Zevgetis, premieres on *Independent Lens* Monday, January 2, 2017, 10:00-11:00 PM ET ([check local listings](#)) on PBS.

Zevgetis met Michelle while volunteering at the Perkins School for the Blind, a world-famous institution outside Boston which was attended by the young Helen Keller. On his last day there, he met a bubbly young student whose wise spirit, warmth, and humor impressed him enough to follow her life for six years. At the same time, Executive Producer Kevin S. Bright (*Friends*) was teaching a filmmaking class at Perkins and Michelle Smith was a student in his class. First-time filmmaker Zevgetis partnered with Bright, one of television’s most successful producers, along with an award-winning creative team, to tell Michelle’s story.

“Michelle’s indomitable and joyous spirit grabbed me right away, and I knew I could follow her journey anywhere, even into some darkness, because she would never fall into despair or let anyone pity her,” said Zevgetis. “The film is about our common humanity and beautiful diversity.”

After her extraordinary education at Perkins, the film finds Michelle isolated after graduation, spending hours and days alone in her room, struggling to envision her future. She attends an alumni weekend where a school administrator unexpectedly offers her the possibility of an



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animation internship in Los Angeles. While Michelle eagerly anticipates this dream opportunity, her family and teachers worry about real-world logistics and Michelle's readiness to live independently across the country.

As months of waiting ensue, Michelle fills her time on the computer, feeding her interests and bold curiosity about the world beyond her walls. Online, she meets and falls in love with a young college student named Michael, and together they become involved in a local fetish role-playing community. Through her relationship with Michael and their adventures with kink and BDSM, Michelle experiences a burgeoning empowerment and finds the acceptance that has eluded her since her time at Perkins.

*Best and Most Beautiful Things* had its World Premiere at SXSW Film Festival and has gone on to screen and win awards at top film festivals around the world. "This heartening coming of age story breaks down another stereotype," said Lois Vossen, *Independent Lens* executive producer. "It gently reveals how all the most beautiful things, including love and sexuality, are not bound by disability."

Visit the *Best and Most Beautiful Things* page on [Independent Lens](#), which features more information about the film. *Best and Most Beautiful Things* will be available for online viewing on the site beginning January 3.

### About the Filmmakers

**Garrett Zevgetis (Producer/Director)** is a Boston-based documentary filmmaker focusing on fascinating people and social change. After growing up in Kissimmee, Florida, Garrett served in the U.S. Navy during Desert Storm, and earned an MFA in Media Art from Emerson College. He has directed several short films, including *A Mercenary Tale*, which premiered at the Boston International Film Festival and was distributed worldwide by Ouat Media. *Best and Most Beautiful Things* is Zevgetis's first feature film. He previously worked at WGBH's FRONTLINE, under acclaimed producer Judith Vecchione, and as a producer for the nationally syndicated public radio program, "Radio Open Source with Christopher Lydon." He was recently named one of "10 Filmmakers to Watch" by *The Independent* magazine.

In 2009, Zevgetis googled the word "beauty." He had been working on a number of darker-themed documentaries and was determined to find an uplifting story for a future project. The search returned a poignant Helen Keller quote that led him to Perkins School for the Blind. He began volunteering at Perkins and on the last day of his scheduled term a bubbly young student introduced herself – Michelle had found him and the film was born.

**Ariana Garfinkel (Producer)** is an independent film producer based in the Bay Area. She produced the award-winning feature documentary *Boys of Summer*, distributed by Tribeca Film and broadcast by ESPN, PBS, and Sundance Channel internationally. She produced two

narrative shorts, *Sea Meadow* (SXSW World Premiere) and *A Juice Box Afternoon* (Lincoln Center premiere). Through her production company Carriage House Pictures, Garfinkel is producing the upcoming narrative feature film *Glass* by Lily Baldwin. Past projects include the documentaries *Nuns on the Bus*, *Symphony of the Soil*, *Sonatas of the Soil*, *Wrenched*, and *Trumbo*. Previously, Garfinkel held development and production positions in New York City for ten years at companies including Miramax Films, Tribeca Productions, and Reno Productions. She started her career on location for HBO Films and Columbia Pictures, and graduated from Stanford University. She is currently a FilmHouse Resident at the San Francisco Film Society.

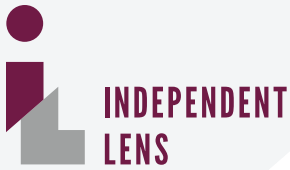
**Jeff Consiglio (Producer/Editor)** has worked as a director, producer, editor and creative consultant on films for over 30 years. He edited the Academy Award-winning documentary film *Inocente* (Best Documentary Short Subject, 2013) and earned his first Oscar nomination for the feature documentary *War/Dance* in 2008, which also won Best Directing at Sundance and an Emmy Award. For HBO, Consiglio edited *Life According to Sam*, which premiered at Sundance and was shortlisted for the Academy Award. He produced and edited the feature documentary *Twinsters*, which premiered at SXSW in 2015 and won the Special Jury award for Editing.

**Jordan Salvatoriello (Producer/Cinematographer)** is an award-winning media artist and journalist with a BS in Journalism from Boston University and MFA in Media Art from Emerson College, where she received Emerson's Graduate Program Award for Creative Excellence. Her documentary work includes projects on a variety of international issues, including education, trauma, gender issues, and healthcare. Her short film, *Graceland Girls*, won the DGA Jury Prize, Gold Circle Award from the Caucus for Producers, Writers & Directors, and was nominated for a Student Academy Award. Drawing on her desire to tell real stories of social good, Jordan has also served as Public Relations Manager for Make-A-Wish.

**Kevin S. Bright and Claudia Bright** are the **Executive Producers** of *Best and Most Beautiful Things* through their company, Only Bright Productions. For its entire ten-year run, Kevin was Executive Producer of the Emmy-winning television series *Friends*. He directed more than 50 episodes of the show, including all ten season finales. He also produced and directed other programs, including *Dream On*, *Joey*, and *Veronica's Closet*. Kevin was the Founding Director of Emerson College Los Angeles. While teaching at Emerson College in Boston, Kevin attended a Celtics game where he heard the Perkins School Chorus sing the national anthem. Inspired by their performance, Kevin began a relationship with Perkins and developed a film production class for the visually impaired, which was featured on NBC's *Rock Center*. A student in his first class was Michelle Smith and he has been involved with the film project since it began.

## CREDITS

Directed by	Garrett Zevgetis
Produced by	Ariana Garfinkel
	Jeff Consiglio
	Garrett Zevgetis



Edited by  
Additional Editing by  
Cinematography by

Jordan Salvatoriello  
Jeff Consiglio  
Sarah Ginsburg  
Sarah Ginsburg  
Jordan Salvatoriello  
Tyler Strickland  
Kevin S. Bright  
Claudia Bright

Original Music by  
Executive Producers

*Best and Most Beautiful Things* is a Beacon Street Film produced in association with Carriage House Pictures and VFRFilms and presented by Only Bright Productions.

**About *Independent Lens***

*Independent Lens* is an Emmy® Award-winning weekly series airing on PBS Monday nights at 10:00 PM. The acclaimed series, with Lois Vossen as executive producer, features documentaries united by the creative freedom, artistic achievement, and unflinching visions of independent filmmakers. Presented by ITVS, the series is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a private corporation funded by the American people, with additional funding from PBS, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Wyncote Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts. For more visit [pbs.org/independentlens](http://pbs.org/independentlens). Join the conversation: [facebook.com/independentlens](https://www.facebook.com/independentlens) and on Twitter [@IndependentLens](https://twitter.com/IndependentLens).

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