

WINNER
Best Documentary Audience Award
ASHLAND
INDEPENDENT FILM FESTIVAL

WINNER
Audience Choice Award
MOUNTAINFILM
IN TELLURIDE FILM FESTIVAL

WINNER
Audience Award Second Place
WILD & SCENIC
FILM FESTIVAL

OFFICIAL SELECTION
STARZ DENVER
FILM FESTIVAL 2010

OFFICIAL SELECTION
SAN DIEGO
FILM FESTIVAL 2010

OFFICIAL SELECTION
DC ENVIRONMENTAL
FILM FESTIVAL 2010

OFFICIAL SELECTION
ENVIRONMENTAL FILM FESTIVAL
MELBOURNE

OFFICIAL SELECTION
ECOFOCUS
FILM FESTIVAL 2010

OFFICIAL SELECTION
BLUE OCEAN
FILM FESTIVAL 2010

OFFICIAL SELECTION
DUTCH
ENVIRONMENTAL
FILM FESTIVAL 2010

OFFICIAL SELECTION
PORT TOWNSEND
FILM FESTIVAL 2010

OFFICIAL SELECTION
DC ENVIRONMENTAL
FILM FESTIVAL 2010

bag it

is your life too plastic?



PRESS KIT

www.bagitmovie.com

A REELTHING FILM

FILM INFORMATION

FILM TITLE

Bag It

LOG LINE

Is your life too plastic?

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TECHNICAL INFO

TRT: 78
Exhibition Format: HD CAM, DVD
Aspect Ratio – 16:9 or 1.85
Shooting Format – HD
Color, English

A Reel Thing Film
in association with the Telluride Institute

“A powerful and deceptively simple movie that is sure to change the way you look at everyday objects. I didn’t expect a movie about plastic bags to change my life in such a deep and profound way. Gripping, funny, intelligent and sure to change your life.”

-Louie Psihoyos, Director of *The Cove*

BAG IT

“Documentary is a Powerful Look at the Impacts of Plastics on Society”

Americans use 60,000 plastic bags every five minutes, disposable bags that they throw away without much thought. But where is “away?” Where do the bags and other plastics end up, and at what cost to the environment, marine life and human health?

Bag It follows “everyman” Jeb Berrier as he navigates our plastic world. Jeb is not a radical environmentalist, but an average American who decides to take a closer look at our cultural love affair with plastics. Jeb’s journey in this documentary film starts with simple questions: Are plastic bags really necessary? What are plastic bags made from? What happens to plastic bags after they are discarded? What he learns quickly grows far beyond plastic bags.

What he discovers is shocking:

- The average American uses about **500 PLASTIC BAGS EACH YEAR**, for an average of **12 MINUTES** before they are discarded.
- **TWO MILLION PLASTIC BOTTLES** are consumed in the U.S. every **FIVE MINUTES**, less than 25% are recycled.
- The average American contributes **800 pounds** of packaging waste to landfills per year.
- **14 MILLION POUNDS** of trash end up in the **OCEAN** each year.
- The floating “island” of **PLASTIC AND OTHER DEBRIS** swirling around in the North Pacific Gyre is **MORE THAN TWICE THE SIZE OF TEXAS**.
- Plastic debris resembles plankton—fish food—and there is **40 TIMES MORE PLASTIC THAN PLANKTON** in some parts of the ocean. In this way plastic enters our food chain.
- It is estimated that **100,000 MARINE MAMMALS AND SEA BIRDS DIE EACH YEAR** from becoming entangled in or ingesting plastic debris.
- Plastic bags are made of fossil fuels such as petroleum and natural gas, which are **NON-RENEWABLE** resources.
- The U.S. was once the largest **EXPORTER OF OIL** in the world. Now, it is the largest **IMPORTER**.
- **IRELAND** reduced its plastic bag use by 90% after instituting a fee on single-use disposable plastic bags.
- **CHINA** banned “ultra thin” plastic bags in 2008. They **REDUCED** their use by **40 BILLION** bags in the first year.

When Jeb finds out he and his partner are expecting a child, his plastic odyssey becomes a truly personal one. How can they protect their baby from plastic’s pervasive health effects? Jeb looks beyond plastic bags and discovers that virtually everything in modern society – from baby bottles, to sports equipment, to dental sealants, to personal care products – is made with plastic or contains potentially harmful chemical additives used in the plastic-making process. Two of the most common of these additives, “endocrine disruptors” Bisphenol A (BPA) and phthalates, show links to cancer, diabetes, autism, attention deficit disorder, obesity, infertility, and even smaller penis size.

As adults, we make all kinds of choices of convenience: single-serve bottles, small units of food, household items, and bath and beauty products. These products are both made with and come packaged in plastic. As a consequence of our modern day culture, we have become addicted to plastics, and they have quietly infiltrated every aspect of our lives. Even our children (especially during *in utero* development) have unwittingly and alarmingly become our modern day lab rats.

Bag It makes it clear that it is time for a paradigm shift. Join Jeb as he meets with people who fought the American Chemistry Council lobby that spent more than a million dollars fighting the Seattle bag fee; as he interviews a man sailing the Pacific in a boat made of plastic to raise awareness about our ocean’s health; as he gets tested to determine the levels of chemicals in his own body; and as he welcomes his baby into the world, a world he hopes we can leave with a little less plastic and in a little better shape for the next generation.

“Think about it—why would you make something that you’re going to use for a few minutes out of a material that’s basically going to last forever, and you’re just going to throw it away? What’s up with that?”
—Jeb Berrier

SYNOPSIS SHORT

Our story follows Jeb Berrier, an average American guy who is admittedly not a “tree hugger,” who makes a pledge to stop using plastic bags. This simple action gets Jeb thinking about all kinds of plastic as he embarks on a global tour to unravel the complexities of our plastic world. When Jeb’s journey takes a personal twist, we see how our crazy-for-plastic world has finally caught up to us and what we can do about it. Today. Right now.

BAG IT is a film that examines our society’s use and abuse of plastic. The film focuses on plastic as it relates to our society’s throwaway mentality, our culture of convenience, our over consumption of unnecessary, disposable products and packaging—things that we use one time and then, without another thought, throw them away. Where is AWAY?? Away is overflowing landfills, clogged rivers, islands of trash in our oceans, and even our very own toxic bodies. Jeb travels the globe on a fact-finding mission—not realizing that after his simple resolution, plastic will never look the same again!

SYNOPSIS LONG

Our story follows Jeb Berrier, an average American guy who is admittedly not a “tree hugger,” who makes a pledge to stop using plastic bags. His girlfriend, Anne, joins him in the challenge to decrease their use of plastic at home. This small action gets Jeb thinking about plastic—not just about plastic bags, but other kinds of plastic. “What is plastic made of? Is it recyclable? Does it decompose when it ends up in the landfill? Does plastic have negative health effects?” Jeb wants to learn more, so he embarks on a global tour to unravel the complexities of our plastic world.

Jeb begins his journey by delving into the history of the plastic bag and how they have become a ubiquitous part of our daily lives. Only 50 years ago, plastic bags did not exist! Jeb travels around the world to find better possible models. In Ireland he finds that a fee on plastic bags has had a tremendous positive impact on plastic bag reduction—over 90%. He ventures to communities in the U.S. that have implemented or proposed plastic bag bans and fees, and we learn of the complicated politics surrounding the issue. He discovers that the American Chemistry Council (the ACC) has been leveraging big money to keep plastic bag use free.

Plastic bags then lead Jeb into the world of ‘single-use disposable’ plastic. Jeb goes into a well-known coffee chain and is incensed to see everyone sitting inside using to-go cups. Jeb alludes to our ‘culture of convenience’—we want everything now and FAST! Most people don’t even think about the massive amount of plastic wrappers, food containers, bottles and packaging materials that make up an average American’s plastic waste per year—800 lbs!!

Upon thinking about this massive amount of waste from only single use disposables, Jeb then begins to consider the rest of our waste. What really happens to items that have the “chasing arrows” recycling symbol on them? Do they all really get recycled? What do the numbers mean? Jeb does quite a bit of research on the matter and still finds himself confused. Turns’ out, recycling is very confusing, and *BAG IT* attempts to get to the bottom of this.

In an intimate moment in front of the camera, Jeb tells us that he and Anne are going to have a baby! The story of Jeb and Anne about to have a baby gives the movie a dramatic twist, as the story becomes very intimate. We watch our protagonists go through all of the excitement, nervousness, planning, and joy that comes with having their first child. We listen intently as Anne and Jeb describe their feelings about plastic as it relates to their unborn child. Everything takes on new meaning when the world you are living in will be what you are creating for your child.

BAG IT explores the impact of plastic on marine life. Plastic never fully degrades, and when it is thrown “away,” some of it finds its way into our waterways, and eventually, our oceans. Plastic breaks down into smaller and smaller pieces, and marine animals are ingesting these bits of plastic ... and it’s killing them. It is estimated that over a hundred thousands birds and marine animals die each year from ingesting, or getting entangled in, plastic debris. Jeb learns that the chemicals in plastics are making their way up the food chain and straight onto our dinner plates.

If plastic is making its way into the food we eat, in what other ways might plastic be impacting our health? Again, this hits close to home. We discover that to make plastics hard or soft, chemicals must be added. Chemicals such as Bisphenol-A, (BPA) and phthalates are added during manufacturing. Scientists have overwhelming evidence that these and other chemicals are affecting humans—specifically babies in utero and children. BPA and phthalates are linked to numerous health problems—cancer, diabetes, autism, attention deficit disorder, obesity, infertility—even smaller penis size. These chemicals are also found in personal care products and cosmetics, something not many people know, and leach into our bodies through our skin. Jeb asks, who is protecting us? Do corporations care about their consumers, or just about their profits?

While *BAG IT* is a film that deals with a serious subject, the film’s tone and mood is kept light to keep audiences engaged and entertained. *BAG IT* will draw in a broad range of people to the film, not just environmentalists. While many environmental films leave viewers disheartened and feeling helpless, *BAG IT* will leave viewers feeling empowered, informed, and excited to create change starting today!

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

A few years ago, I made a resolution to stop using plastic bags. This simple decision opened the floodgates. I suddenly became aware of plastic for the first time. Fast forward a year, to when my town entered into a friendly competition against a neighboring town to see who could reduce their use of plastic bags the most. I began work on a short film to chronicle this challenge. Plastic bags led me into the world of other single-use disposable items – things that are, by design, meant to be used only once and then thrown “away.” I started to question where “away” really is. I came to realize that plastic is an amazing subject, and that when you start to unravel it, you find the whole world attached.

The story in the film really grew from this initial idea, and the film quickly grew from a short to a feature-length documentary. Jeb Berrier, long time friend from my previous theater life, loved the idea and wanted to be involved. The more research we did, the more complex the issues became, such as how plastic affects not only the health of our planet, but our own health and that of our unborn children. Just as these details came to light, Jeb and his partner Anne found out that they were going to have a baby! Following Jeb and Anne's personal journey with the pregnancy took our story to the next level, which was the personal touch that I had been hoping to find with the story all along.

After two years working on this project, I know that everyone connected to this film has at some point felt inspired, shocked, frustrated and overwhelmed. We are all average people who want to do the best we can. It is not always easy and/or obvious what the best choices are. I often think of how my grandparents managed without all of this plastic. While modern conveniences have moved us forward in many ways, I am constantly finding things cluttering my life that aren't “necessary” at all. Often I find that good ‘ole common sense leads us in the right direction.

JEB'S STATEMENT

When Suzan asked me to help her with a film about plastic bags I agreed without giving it much thought. I had no idea what I was in for. I never really liked plastic bags, especially seeing them flying in the wind as trash, but I hadn't given much thought to the bigger picture. We began by locating “experts” in the field from all different angles of the issue.

We found some incredible people working hard to change what seems to have become the status quo. The more experts I interviewed, the more I learned, the more confusing things became. It can often seem like the more you learn about something, the less you seem to know. The topic quickly grew from bags to waste, to issues of recycling, to the garbage patch in the ocean, and to the chemicals in plastic that can harm us, and most importantly, are harming our children.

No longer was I just a guy along for the ride, I became more and more invested in the topic. Then, during the making of the movie, I learned that my girlfriend was pregnant and that we were going to bring a child into the world. Everything took on an even greater meaning. The story of the film then became obvious to us. It would be my story, and my journey, to learn about and shed light on all of these complex issues regarding plastic in our world. Hopefully audiences will be able to identify with my story, as this learning process has taken me through feelings of disbelief, frustration, at times outrage, but most importantly, hope.



**Suzan Beraza | Director**

Born in Jamaica and raised in Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic, Suzan Beraza's thought-provoking films challenge viewers to examine their lives and consider the impact of their choices. Social and environmental issues pervade her work. Her films have appeared on PBS, and at many festivals, winning top awards at Worldfest, Montreal Film Festival, San Luis Obispo Film Festival, EarthVision, and Mountainfilm in Telluride Film Festival. Documentaries she has worked on have also won three Telly Awards, including Best Documentary.

**Jeb Berrier | Talent**

Jeb is the host for a morning television show on Telluride TV. Before that, he was an on air personality for Plum TV for three years, where he won an Emmy award for his coverage of the 2008 Democratic Convention. Jeb also works as an actor and director, doing theater, film and television commercials. He was a member of the National Shakespeare Company in New York City in the mid 90's. Jeb also produces the annual Telluride Comedy Festival.

**Judith Kohin | Executive Producer**

Judith was the executive director of the Ah Haa School for the Arts in Telluride, Colorado from 1991- 2006, an organization she grew from a two person staff to one of southwest Colorado's most successful arts organizations. Under her leadership, the Ah Haa School served thousands of students, hosted hundreds of art exhibitions and raised over a million dollars for arts programming, facilities and financial aid.

**Michelle Hill | Producer**

Michelle has only recently discovered the art of film production. She is an artist, small business owner, sociologist, and environmentalist. She believes that one of the most important things anyone can do to make the world a better place is by constantly gaining new perspectives on life. Documentary film production has been a perfect way to integrate her many skills and talents. *Bag It* is her first film.

**Leigh Reagan | Director of Photography**

Leigh has shot and edited television programs for PBS, Outdoor Life Network (OLN), VOOM Network, Fox Network, the Showtime Network, Rush HD, National Geographic and NBC. She edited *Re-evolution: The Evolution of Extreme Sports*, a 13-part television series for Showtime. Her latest documentary, *Don't Fence Me In*, which she shot and edited, aired on PBS in April 2008.

**Jim Hurst | Camera, 2nd Unit Director**

Jim is an accomplished photographer, adventurer, climber and filmmaker who has worked on many documentary films, including shooting for two years in India for the film *Schooling the World*. His most recent project, *The Sharp End* was for NBC and challenged him to film climbing and base-jumping on the Eiger in Switzerland. He specializes in self-sufficient location documentary shooting in places where a large crew would be impractical or obtrusive.

**Michelle Curry Wright | Writer**

Michelle Curry Wright, who has lived in Telluride for many years, has been a journalist, an essayist, and written two novels (*Wait and See*, Annie Lee, Warner Books, 2001 and *Miranda Blue Calling*, Avon, 2004). She is currently adapting one of them for the screen. She is also a painter and works full time at an art gallery. This is her first documentary film project.

**Casey Nay | Editor**

Casey has shot and edited television programs for the Outdoor Channel and Spike TV. Films he has edited have appeared at the Mountainfilm in Telluride Film Festival and Wild and Scenic Festival. In recent years he has edited for Telluride Television, Gage and Gage Productions and Reel Thing Productions. He specializes in graphic design and motion graphics. This is his first documentary film.

**Larry Groupé | Composer**

Larry Groupé is an Emmy award-winning composer with an impressive musical résumé in film, television and concert stage. His achievements have received both critical praise and popular acclaim. His theatrical scores include *The Contender*, *Deterrence*, *Resurrecting the Champ*, *Nothing but the Truth*, *Straw Dogs* and *Jonas Salk: Personally Speaking* (Emmy for Best Documentary Score). His original television scores include ABC's *Line of Fire* and HBO's *Mind of the Married Man*. Larry has composed, conducted and produced over eighty CD recordings.

CREDITS

Featuring

and Featuring Interviews From:

DR. FREDERICK VOM SAAL
DR. THEO COLBORN
PROF. DR. MICHAEL BRAUNGART
SYLVIA EARLE
RICHARD CONLIN
CHRISTINE QUINN
JARED BLUMENFELD
FREDRIC SCHEER
BRADY MONTZ
PETER COYOTE
DR. MARCUS ERIKSEN
CAPT. CHARLES MOORE
CHRIS JORDAN
CAPT. PAUL WATSON
ERIKA SCHREDER
ELIZABETH GRIFFIN
WALLACE 'J' NICHOLS
SCOTT HARRISON
LINDEN DAHLKEMPER
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ANNIE LEONARD
DR. SHANNA SWAN
BETH TERRY
ELIZABETH ROYTE
ELLIE ROSE
SHARON ROWE
ERIC GOLDSTEIN
MARTIN BOURQUE
RICHARD THOMPSON
JOHN KLAVITTER
REBECCA SUTTON
SHARYLE PATTON

Director
Executive Producer
Producers
Associate Producers
Director of Photography
Camera
Additional Camera
Editors
Assistant Editors
Composer
Additional Composition
Writer
Additional Writing

JEB BERRIER

Professor, Endocrine Disruptors Group
Director, TEDX (The Endocrine Disruption Exchange)
Author, *Cradle to Cradle*
National Geographic Ocean Explorer
President, Seattle City Council
Speaker, New York City Council
Director, San Francisco Department of Environment
CEO, Cereplast
Sierra Club chapter president
Activist, Author, Actor
Scientist, Algalita Marine Research Foundation
Founder, Algalita Marine Research Foundation
Artist, Activist
Captain, Sea Shepherd
Staff Scientist, Washington Toxics Coalition
Senior Scientist, Oceana
Researcher, California Academy of Sciences
Chair, San Diego Surfrider Foundation
Ensign, US Coast Guard
Author, *Paper or Plastic*
Author, *The Story of Stuff*
Prof. of Environmental Medicine, Univ. of Rochester
Activist, www.fakeplasticfish.com
Author, *Bottlemania, Garbage Land*
Founder, Foam Free Seattle
Founder, Eco-Bags
Natural Resources Defense Council
Executive Director, Ecology Center
Marine Biologist, University of Plymouth
Wildlife Biologist, Midway Atoll Refuge
Staff Scientist, Environmental Working Group
Director, Commonweal Biomonitoring

SUZAN BERAZA
JUDITH KOHIN
MICHELLE HILL, SUZAN BERAZA
ALEXA WARREN, JADE GRAHAM
LEIGH REAGAN
JIM HURST, SUZAN BERAZA
ALEXA WARREN
CASEY NAY, SUZAN BERAZA
SUSANNA REMEC, LEIGH REAGAN
LARRY GROUPÉ
VALENTINA MITZKAT
MICHELLE CURRY WRIGHT
SUZAN BERAZA, JEB BERRIER

PHOTOS



BAG IT WINS AUDIENCE AWARD AT ASHLAND FILM FESTIVAL

LOCALLY PRODUCED DOCUMENTARY HAS STYLE AND SUBSTANCE

BY KAREN JAMES

TELLURIDE – Homegrown filmmaker Suzan Beraza's documentary *Bag It* took a top honor at the 9th Annual Ashland Independent Film Festival last week where the audience picked it as the best documentary feature from a field of 20 other feature-length documentary films.

"Out of the 6,000 plus people who sat in 18,000 plus seats throughout the entire festival, when they had a chance to vote for best documentary feature... it was voted the highest rated," said Executive Director Tom Olbrich.

"They said very loud and clear – they were moved by *Bag It*; they thought it was a fantastic film."

"It's kind of crazy to think that we won with the films that they had there," said local television host, comedian and film protagonist Jeb Berrier, who admitted to being surprised at the win in part because he viewed the competition as very stiff, and in part because the festival jury did not select *Bag It* as its pick for top documentary.

"There were a lot of very good films that we were up against," he said.

"I watched films that made me cry."

The award, sponsored by Oregon's award-winning artisan cheese company, Rogue Creamery, won Berrier and *Bag It* a trophy and some cheese.

"It's really good cheese," said Berrier. (Beraza did not attend the festival because she is currently out of the country.)

Bag It tackles the complex and confounding subject of plastic and its effects on environmental and human health as seen through Berrier's eyes.

"We set out on an exploration of plastic bags," Berrier said, explaining how Beraza's original inspiration for the film was Telluride's plastic bag challenge against Aspen, to see which community could reduce the most number of single-use plastic bags handed out at grocery stores. Through the course of the film, Berrier learns about the impact of plastic on the world around him – from the enormous amount of energy required to make a single throw-away drink bottle, to the giant vortex of plastic debris estimated as twice the size of Texas floating in the Pacific Ocean, to how much plastic animals unwittingly eat and we put on our skin and in our bodies, to how chemicals found in some plastics are believed to act as hormone disruptors.

"It's such a vast topic, once you learn a few things it starts to open up," Berrier explained. "Bags are just a tiny bit of the story."

Then, after filming begins, he discovers that his partner, Watch staffer Anne Reeser, is pregnant.

"While I've been learning about plastic I realize that we're going to have a kid and things take on a different meaning," he explained.

Yet while the subject of plastic can be as confusing as the code of numbers stamped on the bottom of yogurt containers and drink bottles that is supposed to tell us how to recycle them, Berrier's "everyman" persona and low-key humor that Telluride has come to know and love seems to have given the film an accessible edge that audiences are drawn to.

"What people told me was that even though there were lots of re-

ally good films, our film was one people really felt affected by," Berrier explained.

Festival director Olbrich seemed to agree, calling it, "One of the top couple films that changed my life this year."

"I thought I recycled very well, I thought I was doing a good job," he explained. But after first seeing the film in January he felt more strongly compelled to try to reduce or eliminate plastic from his life.

So at the festival last week Olbrich said he cleaned off the disposable plastic fork he got during a meal and put it in his pocket to reuse later.

"I know I would not have done that before the screening of *Bag It*," he said.

If the award is any indication, it appears that the Ashland audience came away with similar feelings.

"They were just bowled over," said Olbrich, describing the film as a blend of "fantastic story telling" with "a very important message."

While not as well known as major film festivals like Cannes, Sundance or Toronto, the Ashland festival is gaining in recognition. Last year the trade publication *MovieMaker* recommended it to filmmakers as one of the top 25 lesser-known North American film festivals (out of 4,000) "worth the entry fee."

"We are becoming more and more respected every year," said Olbrich.

Berrier is excited about future prospects of *Bag It*.

"When you work on a film for so long you don't really know how good it is or how people are going to respond," he explained.

But Ashland was a new place and the film's viewers unknown to him.

"The response was really great," he said. "It makes you think we're on to something."



TOXINS, WASTE AND POLLUTANTS: JUST BAG IT.

**THIS FILM IS A
MUST-ADD IT TO
YOUR CANVAS BAG
OF ECO TRICKS!**

BY CLAIRE LOCHRIDGE

Bag It, premiering in Telluride this spring at the annual Mountain Film festival, is a feature-length documentary about the infamous plastic bag and its world of cousins. Narrator and protagonist Jeb Berrier weaves a tale around plastic that is at once candid and overwhelming. His role as a regular guy finding out about the offenses of plastics is the perfect persona to lead the audience through the natural progression of discovery and ultimately, disbelief at these findings. From an analysis of the composition of the plastic bag to a breakdown of the plastic-related chemicals found in cosmetics and toiletries, Bag It covers all aspects of the product that is now affecting our environment and our health.

The statistics presented in Bag It are alarming. Because we are so accustomed to using single-use items for literally a day or even fifteen minutes, we therefore assume that when we do dispose of them, they just “go away.” But, as Jeb aptly inquires, “Where is away?”

Plastic as an environmental pollutant:

We find out that away is anywhere from a treetop in New York City (ever heard the term “the city flower of New York?”) to a circular ocean current called a gyre. Just think about it, all waterways drain into an ocean. What astounded me about these gyres is that they are now full of floating plastic debris. The island of floating plastic in the Pacific Ocean is impossible to measure exactly, but it is somewhere between the size of Texas and that

of the United States.

Ok, so we made a mess in the ocean—let’s clean it up, right? Not so easy. Sadly, the plastic debris has been broken down into tiny bits by the sun and is now the consistency of soup. Jeb inspects a sample of the densely polluted water on the deck of a boat at sea. This plastic soup cannot be sifted out, but would have to be vacuumed, basically. Cleaning the North Pacific Gyre would be like vacuuming the US 3 times over. And I can’t help but wonder, then what?

Jeb explores the reason why we should care about the Pacific Gyre. It affects the creatures who make the Pacific their home. It affects the animals above these creatures in the food chain. And it affects the humans who actually care about the well-being of ocean animals.

Gyre researchers inform us in Bag It that there is more plastic than plankton by weight in these areas, and therefore 40 times more plastic than food in some parts of the ocean. Fish are eating plastic rather than plankton and ocean birds eat the fish. One of the most moving parts of the film is an autopsy of a Pacific albatross, whose stomach is all plastic, and no food.

About Jeb as a “real” character:

The camera follows Jeb to places near and far, including the UK and San Francisco. With his casual dialogue, Jeb serves as a big-screen tour guide. He is such a likable, hilarious person (a truly outstanding personality in his local Telluride), that you can’t help but feel yourself get involved with his very personal account. The film transitions from each plastic-wrapped topic with a mini-musing by Jeb, delivered from his kitchen or couch. These little monologues take a personal twist when he discovers his girlfriend Anne is pregnant.

Speaking of which, the story of his home life blends seamlessly with the plastic research he conducts, since the plastic he hones in on is that which is all around us. He muddles his way through sorting out recycling like most people. We’ve all had similar discussions—for example, at my house: “Babe, that’s a ‘7.’” “I know, so it goes in.” “I don’t think so...Well fine, but I’m just not sure.”

Jeb attempts to decipher the ingredients on the back of lotion containers. (Fragrance, phthalates, methyl, ethyl and butyl paraben... oh my!) The news of the pregnancy creates a new urgency to Jeb’s undertaking; suddenly he isn’t just uncovering facts to share, but considering the health of his baby in utero and in his home.

About plastics and our health:

To make plastics hard, or soft and pliable, chemicals such as Bisphenol-A, (BPA) and phthalates are added during manufacturing. Phthalates are also hidden in cosmetics and toiletries under the label “fragrance.” These chemical additives, which are often used in food and drink containers, have been found to leach, and scientists have overwhelming evidence that the chemicals are effecting humans—specifically babies in utero and children. BPA and phthalates are linked to numerous health problems—cancer, diabetes, autism, attention deficit disorder, obesity, infertility—even smaller penis size.

Activist and actor Peter Coyote makes an appearance in Bag It to testify to the effects of these harsh chemicals. He takes a blood test to determine the levels of various toxins housed in the body as a result of everyday exposure, a test also known as a “Body Burden” test. Even though he lives a clean, healthy lifestyle, his body

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burden is incredibly high; there are a number of toxic chemicals in his system. “Who gave these sons-of-bitches the right to poison the commons?!” he cries, referring to the companies that produce items containing BPA, phthalates and other chemicals. These chemicals are also found in personal care products and cosmetics, something people may not know, and are absorbed into our bodies through the

these chemicals.

More reasons to enjoy Bag It:

Throughout the film Jeb interviews an eco all-star cast of authors, artists, actors, activists and scientists: Chris Jordan, Peter Coyote (E.T. cast member turned activist), Annie Leonard and Dr. Theo Colburn, to name a few. The soundtrack rolls along to the meandering beat of Edward Sharpe and the Magnetic Zeros and bounces Jeb through the film from grocery store to hospital birthing room.

behavior we’ve adopted for everyday convenience, the screw-top, peel-off circles are completely unnecessary, and he has a point: when did they start doing that?”

I love Bag It for what it accomplishes as a film for everyone. It is very accessible—a simple message delivered through one average man’s candid point of view. Questions are presented and answers offered. The facts are never confusing or “for the environmental guru,” but usually depicted

THE GOOD NEWS IS THAT THESE CHEMICALS ARE SHORT-LIVED IN YOUR BODY, SO IT’S NEVER TOO LATE TO STOP INGESTING ABSORBING, AND INHALING THESE CHEMICALS.

skin. And unfortunately, they are still FDA approved.

After discovering the toxic effects of plastic-y substances on the human body, Jeb decides to make a personal sacrifice to see the level of truth in the information. He does a “before and after” test for BPA and phthalates—the “before” showing very low levels of the chemicals (Dr. Colborn commends him). He then subjects himself to 48 hours of exposure to what he knows are typical household culprits: dinners out of plastic containers that he heats in the microwave, fragrant shampoos, conditioners, body washes and lotions, various body and room sprays and even baby products. All I can report on his test is that the results are alarming.

The good news is that these chemicals are short-lived in your body, so it’s never too late to stop ingesting absorbing, and inhaling

Watching Bag It is something everyone should do—I feel that I need a weekly dose of the documentary to keep me mindful of the issues it presents, especially as they affect our daily routines. I can honestly say it changed the way I shop for and dispose of things. I bring my own baggies and containers for bulk foods and rinse and reuse the containers that do come home with me newly bought. The tiny unrecyclable pieces irk me now: screw caps, peel-offs from milk and juice cartons, lips, rings and tabs—all the pieces that get shipped to Asia for sorting by indigent women and children or end up in the Pacific gyre and eventually in an innocent albatross’s stomach. Jeb points out the peel-off plastic circles under the plastic screw cap that now comes on every carton, and asks, “When did they start doing that?” A great example of the wasteful

with real footage, simple graphs, or from the mouth of a real person. It isn’t just about bags, but the baggage we as humans now have to deal with as a result of years of over-consumption, waste, and yes—greed.

And, after several weeks of bringing my own bags or taking recycled paper ones when available, I have officially run out of plastic grocery shopping bags! This in itself gives me a cleansing feeling; they were always stuffed everywhere, taking up entire drawers, pantry space and other bags. I used them for picking up after my dog, can liners and, you know “gross things.” Now I just don’t line the can, and I dump the trash directly into the big bin outside. As far as picking up after Daisy, don’t get carried away just yet—there’s always plenty of old newspaper to use for her deposits!

FAQS

1. Do you have any practical suggestions for what I can do?

The first step is to become more aware. As you go about your life, really begin to think about your choices, your true “needs,” and how they can most conscientiously be met. We have put many of the resources we used in the making of this film on our website. These resources all offer great ways to get involved, from learning more about various ongoing campaigns, to writing letters to your elected officials and business owners, to simple day to day alternative ways of living. Before making this film, I really thought that we didn’t have much power as citizens. Thankfully, I was proven wrong. We have enormous influence over government and corporations. We just have to be passionate and make our voices heard.

2. What is your relationship to Jeb Berrier, the film’s host? How did you find him?

I needed a face for the film and knew that I didn’t want to turn the camera on my own family; it was going to be enough of a challenge to get the film done. I met Jeb about 16 years ago when I was the artistic director of the Telluride Repertory Theater Company. I directed Jeb in several plays, and have also worked with him as a fellow actor. When thinking about who would fit the film, I knew instantly that Jeb would be perfect to depict the “everyman” that I was looking for. He is non-threatening, not preachy, sincere, just an average guy trying to figure out how to make his way in the world as best he can. He is also flat out funny, and I knew he could bring out the humor in this potentially dour and depressing subject matter.

3. How did the pregnancy change your story?

It made the story line of the film take shape. The film needed a compelling reason to discuss important facts about how plastic additives are affecting the development of our children, and why information about this topic is so important for women of child-bearing age. How was Jeb going to do this in a way that would speak to future moms and parents? Once Jeb was a future dad, he became intensely involved in the topic of health-related risks associated with plastics and plastic additives.

4. How long did the project take?

We began work on this film almost two years ago, and what a wild ride it has been! We began with a short list of plastic topics to research, but the list grew rapidly. One interview led to the next, and there was always new information being revealed that we felt the average person knew little or nothing about! As long as the information held our interest, we felt that it would hold audiences interest.

5. What was your inspiration for the film?

A few years ago, a competition was created where our small town challenged a neighboring town to see who could reduce their use of plastic bags the most. I got on board to make a short film chronicling the challenge. As I mentioned before, with each interview the story grew and grew. As a filmmaker, I decided this would be a great journey to document.

6. How were you able to fund the project?

From the very start we felt it would be important not to align ourselves with any single organization or special interest group to keep the message as unbiased as possible. We wanted to tell a story with content integrity and a clear, uncompromising message. Grant funding and generous donations from family foundations and individuals have made this film possible.

7. What was the most interesting subject of the film for you personally?

I grew up on islands, so the ocean section really hit home for me, as I spent my youth in the water. But I have to say that when we got to our health interviews, I was floored. When we first began the film, health wasn’t even going to be included in the film, but we came to realize that it was so important because the general public is uninformed and misinformed. I am a mother, and I have a seven-year-old son. I took the normal precautions when I was pregnant—I ate really healthy, I didn’t drink, I exercised—but I didn’t know anything about BPA, phthalates, or any other chemicals that could potentially be a threat to the health of my unborn child. I was under the impression that chemicals had to be tested for safety. When I found out that this wasn’t the case, I felt angry. I knew that parents deserved to know this information—and wanted to know!

8. What changes have you made in your life? How hard has it been?

Well, I definitely use way less plastic than I used to. Our family has really shifted its priorities. We try to worry less about making money and focus more on quality of life. We cook meals from scratch, not out of boxes. I dusted off the bread maker and now bake all of our bread. I make our yogurt. I even recently started making our own cleaning products and lotions. We compost. We have noticed that we create so little garbage now that it takes us over two weeks to fill our 13 gallon garbage can. This all may sound really time consuming, but it isn’t so bad. We seem to have more time than we used to. One real thief of time and money is television, so we switched it off. I wonder how we ever had time to watch it. We don’t miss it.

All of this being said, we are by no means perfect. I still grab a bag of chips now and then, or something else with really stupid packaging. But on the whole our lives are very different, and we really like the changes.