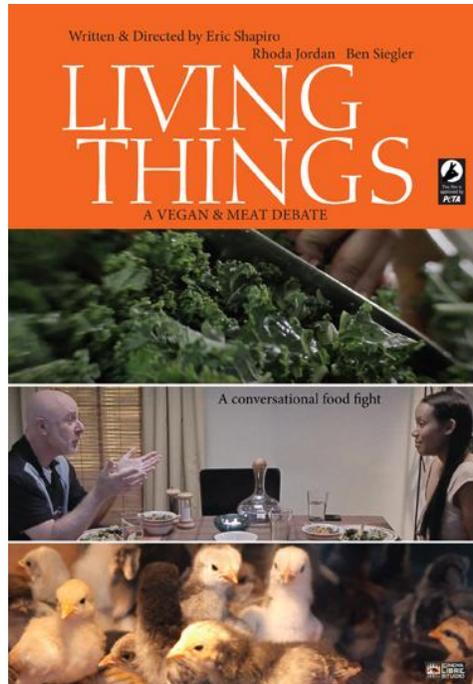




Presents:



COMING TO DVD ON APRIL 15, 2014
& ON DEMAND (VOD) PLATFORMS MAY 15, 2014

DVD Details:

SRP: \$ 19.95

Street Date: 4/15/14

UPC: 881394119024 | Catalog: CLS 1190

Genre: Documentary

TRT: 75 Minutes

DVD EXTRAS:

- Trailer
- Interactive Menus

www.facebook.com/livingthingsfilm

www.livingthingsthemovie.com

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"We appreciate the strong case that LIVING THINGS makes for going vegan and that it does so in such a well-acted, engaging, and ultimately entertaining way. From the meat industry's rampant abuse of animals and the environmental devastation that it causes to the tremendous health benefits of a vegan diet, there are many significant reasons why going vegan should be at the top of everyone's priority list. We wish more movies focused on this life-saving message in as compelling a manner as LIVING THINGS, and we hope this fine film reaches the wide audience that it deserves."

- Bruce Wieland, PETA

ABOUT THE FILM:

SHORT SYNOPSIS

A yoga instructor committed to a vegan lifestyle, must entertain her red meat-loving, blue-collar father-in-law, as she waits for her husband to join them for dinner. When he attempts to apologize for a past insult, he instead starts a debate that escalates into a heated argument that scrutinizes her lifestyle, animal cruelty, climate change, health, morality, and spirituality.

LONG SYNOPSIS

Rhona, a yoga instructor committed to a vegan lifestyle, must entertain Leo, her red meat-loving, blue collar father-in-law, as she waits for her husband to join them for dinner. When Leo attempts to apologize for a past insult, he instead opens up a debate that challenges her belief system. Their conversation quickly escalates into a heated argument that scrutinizes animal cruelty, climate change, health, morality, and spirituality.

Endorsed by PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) and reminiscent of the classic film *My Dinner With Andre*, *Living Things* presents a compelling dialogue about humanity and the benefits of a healthier, environmentally-conscious lifestyle.



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

The initial seed for LIVING THINGS was planted when I saw a friend of mine post a YouTube link on Facebook about how plants have feelings. I've been a vegetarian since 2002, and this is the one of the standard arguments used by meat-eaters who are interested in invalidating vegans or vegetarians. (There's actually some debate as to whether or not plants do have feelings, though Rhona in the film – who believes in oneness and the unity of all things – actually agrees that plants feel.) It was interesting to see that as the discussion under my friend's link unfolded, vegans and vegetarians were tagged as self-righteous and deluded, and the argument got very heated and vitriolic. You see this a lot online, underneath vegetarian/vegan articles or posts: The talk-backers shred the diet from all directions, and the anger is usually real intense.

So the inspiration for the film was that particular emotion. Up 'til LIVING THINGS, I'd done mostly horror and thriller fiction, and I like to pile on as much tension as possible. I was fascinated to see how furious people could get over something like food, and what their diets reflect about their values and priorities. I couldn't stop thinking about how strong the emotion was, and it was something I wanted to capture in dramatic form. Having the characters as in-laws helped to deepen the discomfort and awkwardness, but also make it playful and fun.

The two characters are inspired by a bunch of people I know. Rhona is like an alternate-dimension version of my wife and producing partner, Rhoda Jordan. Rhoda's far more friendly and chill than Rhona, who's wired a little more tight (though we only see her in the company of her father-in-law, with whom she's not exactly relaxed). The Rhona character also draws on different women I've met in the New Age community. As for Leo, he's got some of my late Grandpa Abe in him – even though Abe was ultra-liberal and Leo's a conservative. Both of them are philosophical, and up for sporting debates. My lifelong friend Stu Panensky, a conservative attorney, also shows up in Leo at certain moments. Stu's a great debater, too. As the writing and preparation went on, though, the characters both reached a point where they became their own people. I fell in love with them both. Since raising money's always an issue in indie film, I felt the emotion of the conflict and the simplicity of having two people together for dinner – along with my passion about vegetarianism – made for an irresistible combo. There was nothing that could stop us from shooting it.

The shoot lasted for six days, with a single day of prep beforehand (and a ton of memorization and practice for the actors before that). As we had on our first film, RULE OF 3, we served the cast and crew vegan food at the craft services table, and made sure it was fun stuff – but ordered from places that had both veggie and meat options for the meals. Some of the meals would be purely vegan, though. We shot the vast majority of the movie in order so the actors' emotions could build and the cinematography could get more gonzo and expressionistic as the debate became more radical and emotional.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT CONT'D



When a friend referred us to Lila Rose, who wrote HEART MACHINE, the song that bookends the film, it was a huge find. It's always tough to find inexpensive indie music that makes the hairs on the back of your neck stand up. In this case, we were looking for a female-voiced anthem to complement the Rhona character. Then we learned Lila's an impassioned vegan and animal rights advocate, and it seemed the energy was in alignment. The song gives us some more access to Rhona's inner world: she's big-hearted but also very exacting, and not without some anger. Once we put HEART MACHINE in the film, we felt the movie's soul come together.

We hope the movie stimulates reflection and dialogue among people about going vegan. It's engineered to stimulate a lot of emotion around the topic. In a documentary, we could have gone more factual and educational; with drama, though, it's a mistake to pile on too much info. There are so many wonderful documentaries about the diet, and we wanted to add a drama to the veggie-film library. Usually in fiction, vegans are presented as marginal figures – often for the sake of laughs. So there was something exciting about having a vegan front and center, stating her feelings and position without shame (on the part of her or the movie). It was almost surreal, because you don't see it in movies.

As far as the film's ending goes, one of the story's major themes was the idea that humans are animals. Rhona therefore sympathizes with other animals; Leo therefore feels comfortable with the fact that he eats other animals. The fact that they both become so deliriously angry and pull their gloves off goes hand-in-hand with the animal theme. That's also reflected earlier in the film, when Leo keeps apologizing for cursing. There's always tension between civility and savagery in human life. The pair in LIVING THINGS gets pretty savage with each other, but the movie's heart wants civility to prevail.

THE DEBATE

Argument Topics ... While I was writing it, I realized the debate could go off in a zillion directions. I wanted to evoke the feeling that it was eternal, though in actuality they hit on a pretty contained series of major items. They spend a lot of time on the “plants have feelings” angle. They spend lots of time reflecting on mankind's habit of waging war. Rhona asserts very Martin Luther King-esque, progressive, compassionate values. Leo asserts very raw and unsentimental values. For most of the writing, I just let the characters' chatter lead me this way and that, then I'd go back and revise. At one point I generated a bunch of pages that Rhona read and said weren't working. I'd gotten too abstract in the debate – too metaphysical or oddball. I wanted the movie to be accessible even though their tongues are flying and they take some extreme curves. Though it's hard to simplify, I'd put Rhona on the side of evolution and Leo on the side of the status quo. Neither one is wrong, though Rhona's thinking has an upward trajectory and Leo's is fixed.

→ **Animal Cruelty** ... The key in addressing this topic within a movie that's shot in warm tones and crisp colors – as opposed to a film where slaughterhouses are shown – was to comment on the nature of violence, and how it pervades human reality. Violence is at the grocery store. Violence is in our stomachs. I still eat eggs, even though I'm aware they're created in a cruel, extreme fashion. How much violence can humanity condone from itself?

→ **Al Gore** ... I make my living as a ghostwriter, and one day I walked into the house of a client who had FOX News on his TV. Now, I'm no stranger to FOX, but I've generally watched it for the sake of entertainment, or to see a thought process that isn't organic to the one I was raised with. Some of their content is more moderate than the left gives them credit for (but not most of it). It's fascinating, how they craft reality. Anyway, it was the middle of the afternoon, and the guy was watching a regular news show on FOX – not an opinion or commentary show. That struck me as surreal! He was actually tuning in for information. At one point Al Gore appeared onscreen, and he turned to me and said, “I hate that a—hole,” as though I'd wholly agree with him! It got me wondering about right-wing people's view of climate change, and why somebody like Al Gore – whom I've always admired – would get under someone's skin. Are they afraid of an apocalyptic scenario on Earth? Do they really think he's a charlatan? It's fascinating.

→ **Deepak Chopra** ... In a sense, when Rhona describes Deepak's writings about projection – and how the negative traits we see in others are actually the worst parts of ourselves, which is something I tend to believe – she's summing up the theme of the movie. She's saying that as crazy as these two people make each other – as wrong and backwards as they each think the other is – they're both to blame for the existence of the conflict. Rhona may have devoted her life to peace and harmony, but she's still human and capable of getting pissed at someone. Leo has every right to be proud of his masculine achievements (businessman, family man, veteran), but not at the expense of another person's dignity. They're similar in a lot of ways. At different points, they actually each say versions of something the other has already said. I think with every pair of people who can't stand each other, that kind of commonality exists, even though it's extremely hard to acknowledge and work beyond.

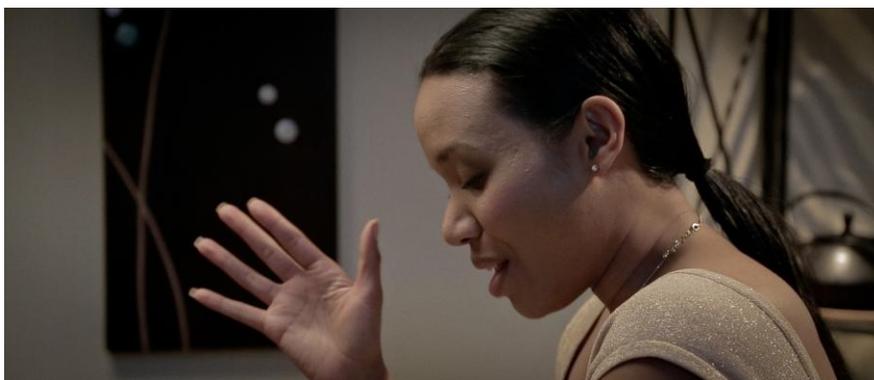
FEATURED IN THE FILM

Ben Siegler (Leo) was born in Queens, New York. He got his big break when he got a small role in the TV film *Out of Darkness*, inspired by the hunt for Son of Sam serial killer, opposite Martin Sheen and Hector Elizondo. On the big screen he could be found in films such as *Speed 2*, *Fallen* and *S.W.A.T*, while the small screen he booked notable guest roles in *L.A. Law*, *Ally Mcbeal* and *Joan of Arcadia*. For four years he was featured on the series *Big Brother Jake* and made several appearances in the final seasons of *The West Wing* as a reporter. Siegler formerly worked for Warner Bros where he was a web designer and created content seen in several of their TV series, including *Fringe*. Currently, when he's not acting he serves as Creative Director of PJ Media.



FEATURED IN THE FILM

Rhoda Jordan (Rhona) is a producer, actor, writer, teacher, and healer. She won Best Acting Performance at Shriekfest for her role in *RULE OF THREE* (2010), which she also wrote and produced. She recently produced and starred in *LIVING THINGS*, which has been endorsed by PETA (People For The Ethical Treatment Of Animals) and is due for release by Cinema Libre Studio in 2014. Rhoda can be followed at RhodaJordan.com, where she offers blog posts, videos, and online courses pertaining to abundance, spirituality, and wellness. She lives in Los Angeles with her husband, Eric Shapiro, and their son, Benjamin Shapiro.



On portraying Rhona:

At the beginning of the process, the biggest challenge in taking on the role of Rhona was the memorization process. The film is essentially a feast of lively dialogue that simply does not let up. Eric's writing is so rich; so full of depth and insight. And so I really wanted to do it justice. I really wanted to fully embody this character with everything that I had.

Before I began memorizing the script, I asked myself: Can I really do this? I had just had a baby, and was also working on other projects at the time. But I committed myself to the process. Each day, when I was on the treadmill, I committed myself to memorizing several pages. And before I knew it, I had memorized every single word. Then I was ready to roll up my sleeves and really start to understand and go deeper with the character!

It was an incredibly fulfilling process! Rhona is such a strong, verbal, opinionated, passionate, and smart woman. There aren't too many roles like that out there for women, so I was beyond thrilled to play this character.

ABOUT THE FILMMAKER



Eric Shapiro is a filmmaker, screenwriter, author, and ghostwriter. His first feature film, *RULE OF THREE* (2010), was released to iTunes and Netflix after winning Best Actor at the Fantasia International Film Festival and Best Acting Performance at Shriekfest. His recently completed feature film, *LIVING THINGS*, has been endorsed by PETA (People For The Ethical Treatment Of Animals) and is due for release by Cinema Libre Studio in 2014. He wrote the books *LOVE & ZOMBIES* (2013), *THE DEVOTED* (2012), *STORIES FOR THE END OF THE WORLD* (2010), and *SHORT OF A PICNIC* (2002). His novella *IT'S ONLY TEMPORARY* (2005) was on the Preliminary Nominee Ballot for the Bram Stoker Award in Long Fiction. He has had short stories published in fiction anthologies alongside work by Ray Bradbury, Stephen King, Neil Gaiman, Chuck Palahniuk, and many others. Eric lives in Los Angeles with his wife, Rhoda Jordan, and their son, Benjamin Shapiro.

CREDITS

Written & Directed by
Eric Shapiro

Produced by
Eric Shapiro &
Rhoda Jordan

Co-Producers
Ian McGlocklin &
Andrea James

Rhoda Jordan as
Rhona

Ben Siegler as
Leo

Cinematographer
Ian McGlocklin

Editor
Roger A. Scheck

Production Manager
Andrea James

Post-Production Consultant
Jackee Chang

Sound Recording
Aaron Muncy

Sound Designer,
Re-Recording Mixer
Jesse Ehredt

Camera Operator
Jaxon Woods

Color Correction
Jesse Glucksman

Make-Up Artist
Sarah Beattie

Production Assistant
Sarah Beattie

Vegan Production Assistant
Darwin Green

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Lila Rose
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DIGITAL ASSETS

Poster Art: <http://cinemalibrestudio.com/clscatalog/2014/living-things-dvd-key-art-final-lr.jpg>

Vimeo Trailer: <https://vimeo.com/89524526>

Clips & Trailer Album on Vimeo: <https://vimeo.com/album/2786749>

Youtube Trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kKF2H6ggpc>

Clips & Trailer Album on Youtube:

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLCOaARTyCSUK7TZDCupdLiOBPUJeaPDj>

“Politically Incorrect Dinner Guests” – Living Things <https://vimeo.com/91544534>

or on Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V28BmR5rm8w>

Rhona asks Leo if he enjoyed the pain of his recent heart attack, because it's similar to the pain and suffering that cows go through before being slaughtered and turned into steaks.

“Do Plants Have Feelings?” – Living Things <https://vimeo.com/91545177>

or on Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=URrWTkTb4sg>

Leo counters an argument against Rhona by asking her if she thought plants had feelings and whether or not that made her a hypocrite for being vegan.

“Deepak Chopra” – Living Things <https://vimeo.com/91545990>

or on Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2y7L44dx-T8>

Rhona reveals how she followed one of Deepak Chopra's exercises and made a list of everything she hates about Leo, only to realize that they were her own traits she was reflecting upon.

“Al Gore & Climate Change” – Living Things <https://vimeo.com/91548273>

or on Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fjC2z7hm2Gw>

Leo attacks Rhona's liberal point of view when he bashes Al Gore and the "myth" of global warming, leading Rhona to ask if he thinks Gore is the boogeyman or not real.