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“SPACE: THE LONGEST GOODBYE” LIFTS OFF ON MAY 6 ON PBS’S INDEPENDENT LENS

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NASA Psychologists Prepare Astronauts for the Extreme Isolation of a Three-Year-Mission to Mars

(San Francisco, CA) January 22, 2024—“Space: The Longest Goodbye,” a riveting documentary investigating life-in-space psychology, directed by Ido Mizrahy (“Gored”), written and produced by Mizrahy and Nir Sa’ar (“Love It Was Not”), and produced by Valda Witt (“Gored”) and Paul Cadieux (“The Triplets of Belleville”), premieres on INDEPENDENT LENS May 6, 2024. This thoughtful documentary explores how the monumental task of keeping astronauts mentally stable in space is tested to the extreme in anticipation of NASA’s pending Mars mission and its required three-year absence from Earth.

“Space: The Longest Goodbye” debuts on PBS’s INDEPENDENT LENS on May 6, at 10 p.m. ET (check local listings). The film will be available to stream on the [PBS App](#) and also accessible via [PBS’s flagship YouTube channel](#).

“Space: The Longest Goodbye” follows NASA’s real-life attempts to prepare astronauts for a journey to Mars. NASA’s goal to send astronauts to Mars would require a three-year absence from Earth, during which communication in real time would be impossible due to the immense distance. We meet the psychologists whose job is to keep astronauts mentally stable in outer space, as they are caught between their dream of reaching new frontiers and their basic human need to stay connected to home.

“Our initial idea was to create a kind of historical document about the first crewed mission to Mars, but documentaries have a way of telling the filmmakers where the story wants to go. And so, a chance meeting with Dr. Al Holland, a senior NASA psychologist who ultimately became one of the central subjects in the documentary, was a transformational moment for us. The moment when our space story became a personal human drama. While painted on the extraordinary canvas of the agency’s preparations for the first crewed mission to Mars, our story is about one of the most terrestrial challenges imaginable: the never-ending tension so many of us experience



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between our desire to pursue our dreams, and our equally powerful need to stay connected to our roots.”

In the next decade, NASA intends to send astronauts to Mars for the first time. To succeed, crew members must overcome unprecedented life-threatening challenges. And while many of these hazards are physical, the most elusive are psychological. Throughout their three-year absence, crew members won't be able to communicate with Earth in real time due to the immense distance. The psychological impact of this level of disconnectedness and isolation—both from mission control and loved ones—is impossible to predict, endangering the mission itself. Directed to mitigate this threat is Dr. Al Holland, a NASA psychologist whose job is to keep astronauts mentally stable in space. “Space: The Longest Goodbye” follows Holland, rookie astronauts Kayla Barron and Matthias Maurer, and former astronaut Cady Coleman, among others, as they grapple with the tension between their dream of reaching new frontiers and their basic human need to stay connected to home. This conflict transcends space travel: how do humans balance the quest for progress with a deep connection to history and each other?

“‘Space: The Longest Goodbye’ is an intensive look at the challenges faced by astronauts as they prepare for liftoff and their journey in space, the impact it has on their loved ones and relationships, and the obstacles NASA’s team has to mitigate with possible solutions,” said Lois Vossen, INDEPENDENT LENS executive producer. “It’s a documentary about courage, intelligence, community, and trust for those brave enough and willing to reach new frontiers. But most importantly, it is about sacrifice.”

“Space: The Longest Goodbye” received Series and Special Projects funding from ITVS. Visit the [“Space: The Longest Goodbye”](#) page on INDEPENDENT LENS to learn more about the film.

About the Filmmakers

Ido Mizrahy, Director/Writer/Producer

Ido Mizrahy’s narrative and documentary films premiered at Sundance, SXSW, Tribeca, and ND/NF, among many other festivals, and went on to win several awards. His films have been distributed by AMC, Sundance, Netflix, Amazon, and MTV. Mizrahy is co-directing a fictional virtual reality experience with Nir Sa’ar that’s equal parts family drama and space thriller.

Nir Sa'ar, Writer/Producer

Science buff and veteran storyteller, Nir Sa'ar is drawn to the powerful intersection between novel technology and human drama. An award-winning filmmaker and creator of innovative immersive experiences, Sa'ar's films and new-media work premiered in major film festivals such as Festival de Cannes, Venice, and Busan IFF.

Valda Witt, Producer

Valda Witt is an independent producer and investor based in New York City. Her narrative and documentary features have premiered at Sundance, Tribeca, Venice, Oldenburg, and Hot Docs. Valda serves as president of the Browning School in NYC. She began her career in management consulting at McKinsey & Co. and has an MBA from the Wharton School.

Paul Cadieux, Producer

Paul Cadieux is one of Canada's most active producers. He won a Genie Award for Best Film for "Les Triplettes de Belleville," among many other awards. For over three decades in the industry, Paul has been centrally involved in major projects, including television programs, feature films, and international documentary co-productions.

Director	Ido Mizrahy
Writers	Ido Mizrahy Nir Sa'ar
Producers	Ido Mizrahy Nir Sa'ar Valda Witt Paul Cadieux
Executive Producers	Lois Vossen Susanne Gebhardt Sally Jo Fifer Kai Henkel Guy Lavie Keren Gleicher Maryse Rouillard

ABOUT INDEPENDENT LENS

INDEPENDENT LENS is an Emmy® Award-winning PBS documentary series. With founding executive producer Lois Vossen, the series has been honored with 10 Academy Award nominations and features documentaries united by the creative freedom, artistic achievement, and unflinching visions of independent filmmakers. Presented by ITVS, INDEPENDENT LENS is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, Acton Family Giving, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Ford Foundation, Wyncote Foundation, and National Endowment for the Arts. Stream anytime on the PBS App. For more visit pbs.org/independentlens.

ABOUT ITVS

Independent Television Services (ITVS) is the largest co-producer of independent documentaries in the United States. For more than 30 years, the San Francisco nonprofit has funded and partnered with documentary filmmakers to produce and distribute untold stories. ITVS incubates and co-produces these award-winning titles and premieres them on our Emmy Award-winning PBS series, INDEPENDENT LENS. ITVS titles appear on PBS, WORLD, NETA, and can be streamed on various digital platforms including the PBS App. ITVS is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, Acton Family Giving, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Ford Foundation, Wyncote Foundation. For more information, visit itvs.org.

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