

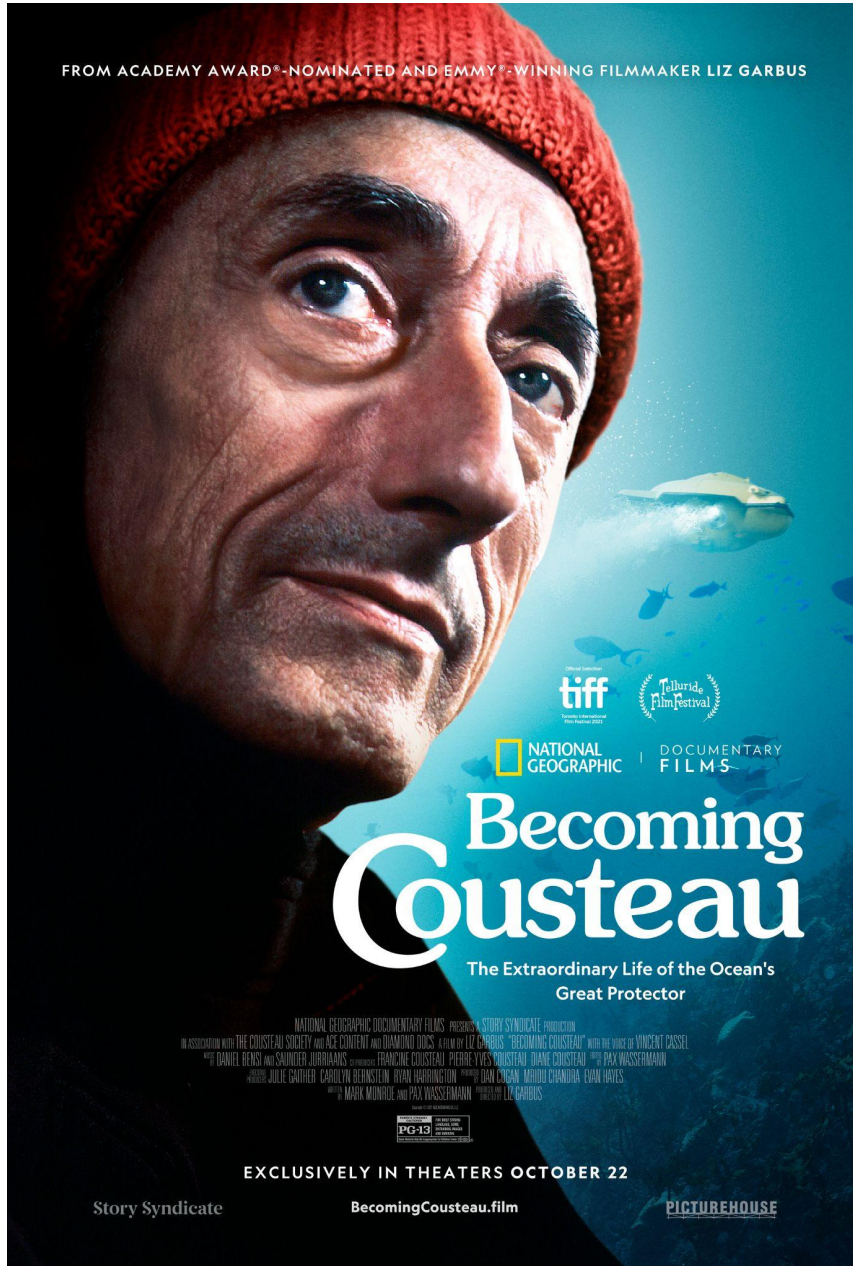


DOCUMENTARY FILMS

BECOMING COUSTEAU

Directed by Liz Garbus

Produced by Dan Cogan, Mridu Chandra, Evan Hayes



RUN TIME: 93:17

LANGUAGE: English, French

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: USA

PRESS CONTACTS

Falco Ink.

Shannon Treusch and Janice Roland | Cousteau@falcoink.com

Acme PR

Nancy Willen | nancywillen@acmepr.net | 310-963-3433
Emily McDonald | emilymcdonald@acmepr.net | 909-395-6795

National Geographic Documentary Films

Tiffany Malloy | malloy@tiffical.com | 201-925-1122
Marcus Cammack | marcus.cammack@natgeo.com | 424-333-4864 (International, ex-U.S.)
Jennifer Bond | jennifer.bond@natgeo.com | 301-787-4721
Kristin Montalbano | kristin.montalbano@natgeo.com
Chris Albert | chris.albert@natgeo.com

PHOTOS

Available [HERE](#)

WEBSITE

BecomingCousteau.film

TRAILER

Available [HERE](#)

SOCIAL MEDIA

Facebook: [@natgeodocs](https://www.facebook.com/natgeodocs)

Instagram: [@natgeodocs](https://www.instagram.com/natgeodocs)

Twitter: [@natgeodocs](https://twitter.com/natgeodocs)

Hashtag: #BecomingCousteau

BECOMING COUSTEAU

LOGLINE

An inside look at the life of explorer, filmmaker and beloved adventurer Jacques-Yves Cousteau, his iconic films and inventions, and the experiences that made him the 20th century's most unique and renowned environmental voice.

SHORT SYNOPSIS

Adventurer, filmmaker, inventor, author, unlikely celebrity and conservationist: For over four decades, Jacques-Yves Cousteau and his explorations under the ocean became synonymous with a love of science and the natural world. As he learned to protect the environment, he brought the whole world with him, sounding alarms more than 50 years ago about the warming seas and our planet's vulnerability. In **BECOMING COUSTEAU**, from National Geographic Documentary Films, two-time Academy Award®-nominated filmmaker LIZ GARBUS takes an inside look at Cousteau and his life, his iconic films and inventions, and the experiences that made him the 20th century's most unique and renowned environmental voice — and the man who inspired generations to protect the Earth.

SYNOPSIS

Capt. Jacques-Yves Cousteau was one of the 20th century's great explorers, a filmmaker and beloved adventurer who documented the exotic wonders below the ocean with pioneering equipment that yielded a Cannes Film Festival-winning film, two Academy Awards®, and a pair of iconic and long-running television shows, "The Undersea World of Jacques Cousteau" and "The Cousteau Odyssey." His work became synonymous with life on the sea and on his famous boat, the Calypso. He authored over 50 books on his aquatic life and invented the Aqua-Lung, advancing the boundaries of scuba diving. Yet, it was as an environmentalist that Cousteau would have his most lasting impacts, alerting the world about the warming oceans decades before the climate crisis made headlines. Instrumental in protecting Antarctica and taking part in the first Earth Summit, Cousteau's insight into what needs to be done for the planet continues to inspire generations.

In **BECOMING COUSTEAU**, from National Geographic Documentary Films, two-time Academy Award-nominated filmmaker LIZ GARBUS ("All In: The Fight for Democracy," "What Happened, Miss Simone?") poured through 550 hours of archival material and rarely-seen footage to let Cousteau's films, words and recollections tell his own story. **BECOMING COUSTEAU** shines a spotlight on the man many of us grew up worshipping yet knew very little about while introducing him to a new generation. After prospecting for oil companies to support his globe-trotting adventuring, he had a late-in-life awakening and became the first great advocate for ocean preservation. Cousteau led a somewhat fractured family life, checkered with great loss, but he remained true to his one great love — the sea. Over 100 hours of audio journal entries, interviews and observations from collaborators and crew members add to this inside look at Cousteau. The documentary also chronicles his first wife and collaborator Simone Melchior (known aboard the Calypso as "The Shepherdess"), his family experiences, his second wife Francine Triplet, the creation of The Cousteau Society and the crucial work they do, and his evolution into one of the most important environmental voices of the 20th century, whose words and images are more vital today than ever.

INTRODUCTION

*“I saw my job as getting people to know and love the sea... Because you only protect what you love.”
— Jacques Cousteau*

In 2021, we can visualize the world under the ocean thanks to the popularity of nature series and big-screen documentaries. Yet 70 years ago, when Jacques-Yves Cousteau combined an explorer’s love of the sea with his talents as a filmmaker, audiences were amazed at what the intrepid French adventurer caught on camera. In his groundbreaking 1956 feature, “The Silent World” — the first non-narrative film to win Cannes Film Festival’s Palme d’Or, which then won an Oscar® for Best Documentary Feature — and his subsequent films “World Without Sun” and “Voyage to the Edge of the World,” Cousteau and the genial crew aboard his storied ship Calypso captured a generation’s imagination and set the stage for an ever-more-urgent environmental movement.

In addition to writing over 50 books, Cousteau brought his adventures into millions of living rooms starting in 1966 through two iconic and enormously popular series of TV specials, “The Undersea World of Jacques Cousteau” and “The Cousteau Odyssey.” His documentaries have garnered 40 Emmy® nominations and 10 wins, while Cousteau himself received the National Geographic Society’s Special Gold Medal, France’s Grand Cross of National Order of Merit, and the U.S. Presidential Medal of Freedom, among many other honors.

Yet Cousteau, whose landmark accomplishments began when he co-invented the Aqua-Lung for longer deep-sea dives, was ahead of his time in another way. He and his crew experienced firsthand the catastrophic changes — warm sea waters, dying coral reefs and glaciers cracking before their eyes — that we now know are evidence of the planet’s worsening climate crisis. He was determined to alert people to the dangers by forming The Cousteau Society in 1974 as a non-profit environmental advocacy group, successfully altering policies toward Antarctica and creating momentum for the historic first Earth Summit in 1992.

“As I began this film, just the fact that Cousteau himself is not a household name seemed extraordinary to me,” Garbus says. “Today’s generation has grown up with popular nature programs that highlight the wonders of the ocean, and they take these programs for granted as if we have always had them. It took a great mind, tremendous bravery and a pioneering spirit to do what he did — and today, we are surrounded by imagery and technology that exists because of him. And at the end of the day, the future of our species, and the survival of huge swaths of biodiversity on the planet, will depend on innovation in the spirit of Cousteau.”

“It may be difficult for younger people today to imagine just how revolutionary it was to actually see, every week in the 1970s, all of the undersea creatures that Cousteau filmed,” continued Garbus, whose deep dive into The Cousteau Society’s aisles of film reels was an adventure in itself. “Underwater filmmaking was very new at the time. And not only did he use it to popularize science and important issues, but he also created a style of storytelling that has now become ubiquitous on TV and in film.”

At the same time that **BECOMING COUSTEAU** celebrates his achievements, Garbus did not shy away from exploring Cousteau’s flaws. “In some ways, Cousteau was an accidental environmentalist. He took money from oil companies and mapped undersea drilling locations, he and his crew killed some of the

creatures they met, and he pushed the limits of safety for his team in an effort to go deeper, further, longer. He had a complex family life, which left a wake of problems for many who loved him. But, I do feel storytelling that is an honest, as opposed to hagiographic, exploration of our heroes does them — and us — a greater service. If you are flawed, as we all are, and you can change, adapt, do better, then there is always hope for the rest of us and our planet.”

“Famously, Cousteau said that people only protect what they love, and that was the greatest gift he gave us,” Garbus says. “He showed us the sea and inspired us to love all that was in it, and in so doing, he created generations of conservationists.”

In **BECOMING COUSTEAU**, two-time Academy Award nominee LIZ GARBUS (“All In: The Fight for Democracy,” “What Happened, Miss Simone?” and “The Farm: Angola, USA”) worked with almost 550 hours of archival footage. This included over 240 hours of Cousteau’s videos as well as footage from The Cousteau Society, which contains nearly 100 hours of rarely-seen footage from before he became one of the most important environmental figures of the 20th century. Additionally, over 100 hours of Cousteau’s audio journals, interviews and conversations with cohorts and friends help make **BECOMING COUSTEAU** an intimate and immersive experience into the life of the French explorer. Garbus eschews talking-head interviews in favor of an intricately knit pastiche of Cousteau’s own words with archival and present-day audio interviews of those who knew him best in order to live and breathe in his visual world for the entirety of the film.



Liz Garbus and producer Evan Hayes look through reels of archival footage from The Cousteau Society.

DIVING IN

Thanks to a rich treasure trove of journals and interview recollections, **BECOMING COUSTEAU** tracks Cousteau's love of the sea to his growing up in Saint-André-de-Cubzac, near Bordeaux, France, and the moment when a life-changing event brought it into focus. In 1936, just after enrolling in the French Navy's aviation school, Cousteau was wounded at age 26 in a car accident on a foggy mountain in eastern France, breaking 12 bones and both arms, which ended his plans of becoming a pilot.¹ Recovering in the south of France on a naval base in Toulon, Cousteau swam to rebuild his strength at the suggestion of friends Philippe Tailliez, a fellow officer² and free diver in the French Navy, and spearfisher Frédéric Dumas. But Cousteau's affinity for capturing images drove him even further.

"Cousteau was a filmmaker, first and foremost," explains Garbus. "His early passion for filmmaking, including during his service in World War II, was something of a surprise to me. Home movies that we highlight in the film include some amazing footage he took of the first time he laid eyes on Simone Melchior before they married in 1937. During the war, he filmed underwater wrecks, which led to his short film 'Epaves,' which went on to premiere at Cannes and established his reputation as a filmmaker."

Innovation in every sense was important. He built a waterproof housing for a movie camera to film underwater, and, while serving in World War II as a Naval lieutenant, Cousteau teamed with French engineer Émile Gagnan to co-invent an autonomous breathing apparatus that allowed divers to descend underwater without being tethered to tubes, diving bells or helmeted suits. The Aqua-Lung, as Cousteau called this invention, revolutionized diving, allowed for record-setting dives to the lower depths of the ocean, and ushered deep-sea photography into a new era. Soon after, scuba diving became a popular cultural pursuit, as commercial scuba gear came on the market in 1946.³

"Undersea exploration at that time really does echo the beginning of the Space Race, which was happening almost concurrently — divers were saying, 'We can only go down *this* deep and stay down *this* long, so how can we do *more*?' " says Garbus. "There was happenstance in all of this, as well. The invention of the Aqua-Lung happened because of the war, because of Cousteau's car accident, and because he'd met Tailliez and Dumas. All of this brought his love of the ocean to the forefront and pushed him further; it helped them form a kind of superhero team, who brought their talents together to change the world."

"An early article published about Cousteau, Tailliez and Dumas referred to them as 'Men de Mer' — 'Men Fish' — because what they were doing was unique. Entering the sea world as *part* of their surroundings," adds Garbus. "There were already ways to go into the water, but divers were attached to heavy equipment and pipes that provided air and tethered them to the surface. The invention of the Aqua-Lung changed that, and also introduced a revolution of underwater cinema vérité and handheld photography, since divers were now able to swim freely and be one with the water."

¹ Brad Matsen. [Jacques Cousteau: The Sea King](#) 2009, p.11-12

² Brad Matsen. [Jacques Cousteau: The Sea King](#) 2009, p.23

³ <https://www.invent.org/inductees/jacques-yves-cousteau> "The Aqualung was introduced in 1946 and was available on the U.S. market in 1952."

In 1951,⁴ Cousteau converted a 140-foot former British minesweeping boat into the beloved and iconic Calypso, ⁵guiding it on its first voyage to the Red Sea in the winter of 1951. Onboard, the boisterous crew bonded, and Simone Melchior Cousteau— who loved the sea possibly more than her husband did — presided over the ship as a co-captain and manager. **BECOMING COUSTEAU** shows us the footage and photographs Cousteau brought back, which were like nothing anyone had seen before.

“The photography Cousteau began at that time was published in the pages of National Geographic magazine and was truly revolutionary,” explains Garbus. “With the freedom that the Aqua-Lung gave to a diver, sea life could be photographed and followed in a totally new way, up close and intimate. People began to appreciate that there is this entire world down there that is mysterious and wonderful. Cousteau opened that door for us.”

As a boy, Cousteau loved films like the 1916 silent “20,000 Leagues Under the Sea” and understood the power of images, making his own films with an early Pathé Baby, a hand-cranked movie camera, as a teenager in the 1920s. In the early 1940s, Cousteau began making short underwater films, including “Shipwrecks” (1943), “Silent Lands” (1947) and “Around a Reef” (1948). His goal, he stated, was “to be a John Ford or John Huston of the ocean.”

Cousteau utilized his filmmaking skills, the freedom accorded by the Aqua-Lung, and the prevailing spirit of discovery in the mid-20th century to make his first feature film, 1956’s “The Silent World” (adapted from a 1953 book with the same title he wrote with Dumas). Co-directed by Cousteau’s friend and compatriot Louis Malle; who would go on to direct such acclaimed films as “Murmur of the Heart,” “Atlantic City” and “Au Revoir, Les Enfants”; “The Silent World” gave us high-seas adventure under the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf, the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian Ocean. It was the first non-narrative film to win the prestigious Palme D’or at the Cannes Film Festival; 11 months later, the film won the Oscar for Best Documentary Feature at the 29th Academy Awards. Following its victory at Cannes, Cousteau pressured Columbia Pictures in late 1956 to test the film in a small town to justify to the studio why it deserved a wide release. When “The Silent World” became a hit in Kalamazoo, Michigan, Columbia released it to critical and popular acclaim.

“Cousteau never wanted to call his films documentaries,” explains Garbus. “He said, ‘That sounds like something you’d see in science class!’ He thought it made them seem like lectures. He called them ‘adventure films,’ and that’s what they were. He took us all on a high-seas adventure and showed us the majestic beauty of ocean life.”

And aboard each journey was Simone Melchior Cousteau whose love of the Calypso and need to be on the ocean was vital to Cousteau’s missions. Nicknamed “La Bergere” — “The Shepherdess” — Simone, who shied away from cameras and interviews, was instrumental in keeping the ship and its explorations operational.

“Jacques-Yves and his sons Philippe and Jean-Michel readily acknowledged that Simone kept the missions going. She was essentially the producer of the Calypso,” says Garbus. “I found her love of the

⁴ Brad Matsen. Jacques Cousteau: The Sea King 2009, p.111-2

⁵ Kathleen Olmstead. Jacques Cousteau: a life under the sea 2008, p.51, “The Calypso was 140 feet long and 24 feet across.”

sea and of the ship so captivating. In **BECOMING COUSTEAU**, a friend of Simone's reads a letter she received from Simone in which she talks about 'the saltwater in her veins.' She was a poet in addition to everything else.

"Simone came from a family of sailors and Naval officers, but being a woman in the first half of the 20th century, she was never allowed to dream of that," says Garbus. "She had to marry into it. Often, if you have to work extremely hard to get something, you cherish it in a way others don't. To be a woman and essentially be the co-captain of the most famous ship in the world at that time was extraordinary. This is something I did not want to overlook in the film."

A NEW MEDIUM, AN URGENT MESSAGE

Cousteau followed up "The Silent World" with more popular short films and a second feature film in 1964, "World Without Sun." It follows about a half-dozen "Oceanauts" living 10 meters below the surface of the Red Sea in an underwater habitat, Continental Shelf Station Two (Conshelf II), and won Cousteau his second Academy Award for Best Documentary Feature. He was ahead of even the U.S. Navy, which was also trying to prove that people could live and work underwater for extended periods of time.

BECOMING COUSTEAU examines how Cousteau ultimately untethered his research and exploration work from petrochemical funding by turning to television. With veteran National Geographic Society program producer David L. Wolper, he shopped a series of prime-time television specials to the networks.

The new series, "The Undersea World of Jacques Cousteau," landed on ABC in 1968 and ran until 1976; the first regular episode special, about sharks, aired in 1968. TV icon Rod Serling, creator of "The Twilight Zone," narrated its first six years. A second series, "The Cousteau Odyssey," began in 1977.

"The Undersea World of Jacques Cousteau" was an international hit. Yet, as **BECOMING COUSTEAU** brings into stark focus, the undersea world was changing while the programs were airing. Cousteau and his crew were documenting things that were disappearing. There was no denying human activity had brought about catastrophes in the natural world. For Cousteau, the need to get the word out became increasingly urgent.

The film documents how instrumental Cousteau was to the formation of the first Earth Day celebration in 1970. "My films are not just about fish but about the fate of mankind," he said. It shows how Cousteau and his divers embarked on a mission in 1977 off the Italian coast to locate and recover 900 drums filled with toxic chemicals aboard a sunken ship to stop the deadly poison from being released into the sea, and the creation of the not-for-profit Cousteau Society in 1974, which was instrumental in establishing protected areas for endangered species as well as being at the forefront of environmental protection and ocean research. In its first two years, The Cousteau Society became the fastest-growing NGO at that time.

However, when Cousteau increasingly made environmental concerns a part of his programs, ABC took issue with what they saw as a tone shift and dropped him in 1976. It also resulted in lower ratings. Cousteau moved on to create a new series for PBS but, for the same reasons, "The Cousteau Odyssey" was canceled in 1980.

“If you watch the trajectory of Cousteau’s TV programs, the focus really does change. Early episodes celebrated the beauty of the undersea world, but over time they became much more of a cautionary experience, which caused ratings to drop,” says Garbus. “But he did what he had to do on those shows, and you see the evolution of his environmental message. Cousteau felt that if his audiences could connect with the undersea world personally, it would make them care enough to protect it.”

In a 1979 episode of “The Cousteau Odyssey” titled “Mediterranean: Cradle or Coffin?,” Cousteau returned to the waters of Marseilles and found that the natural habitats of many forms of sea life were gone, stating, “The seafloor had become a desert.” Later, in a 1990 interview, Cousteau reflected, “Many of the films I made 20 years ago, I couldn’t make today ... [because] the animals have just disappeared.”

CRUSADING FOR THE PLANET

Since early in his career, Cousteau sounded alarm bells for world leaders and humanity as a whole to address the planetary crisis he saw on the horizon, and he and Philippe often noted how warning signs were all around them in the water. In November 1971, Cousteau published an op-ed in The New York Times headlined “Our Oceans are Dying.” That same year he went to Washington, D.C., to testify about the sea in distress, saying, “In the past 30 years, I have been disturbed to find the original fauna of the continental shelf has been destroyed. We are facing the destruction of the ocean.”

In his 1975 film “Voyage to the Edge of the World,” chronicling The Cousteau Society’s four-month expedition to Antarctica in 1972, Cousteau described gaps in the ice and the sound of glaciers breaking from warm temperatures. “Cousteau was a huge part of the creation of the environmental movement of the 1960s and ‘70s,” says Garbus. “The myth of Cassandra is one we evoked many times as we made the film. Jacques-Yves and Philippe literally felt the waters in the Antarctic being hotter from when they were there previously. They could feel it on their bodies before anyone used the term global warming. They truly were the canary in the coal mine, telling the world, ‘We are not properly addressing this problem.’ That became such a large part of the work of The Cousteau Society, and what Jacques-Yves dedicated the rest of his life to.”

Tragically, Philippe Cousteau wouldn’t be part of that. In 1979, at age 38, Philippe was killed when a plane he was piloting crashed in the Tagus River near Lisbon, Portugal. As young boys, Philippe and his older brother, Jean-Michel, learned to dive, and Philippe studied to be a cinematographer like his father. Grief over his younger son spurred Jacques-Yves Cousteau to champion even more for environmental causes, which were so important to Philippe.

“I think Philippe’s death recentered that message for Cousteau,” says Garbus. “Philippe was very passionate about environmental protection, as was his father. But the loss of a child will, of course, change anyone profoundly, and you can see it in Jacques-Yves’ work and how devoted he became to this mission, pouring all of his heart into The Cousteau Society and its work.”

Cousteau also had to come to terms at that time with the way diving expeditions were funded in the 1950s and early ‘60s — including by British Petroleum, which used expeditions to seek locations to drill for oil on the seafloor — and the way his crew, at times, dealt with the natural world.

“In some of the early films, the cavalier attitude with which the Calypso sailors approached the undersea

life and architecture haunted Cousteau later on,” says Garbus. “In **BECOMING COUSTEAU**, we have a clip of him speaking about watching a scene in ‘The Silent World’ in which the crew quite brutally kill a shark that had been attacking a pod of dolphins, and regretting how areas of the Red Sea were blown up to see what kinds of sea life would rise to the surface. He wouldn’t re-edit the film because it was a testament to the time, but he wanted to get the message across that he now deeply regretted those scenes.”

“Cousteau opened up this wonderful world to us, but paradoxically it became a Pandora’s box of exploration and exploitation,” continues Garbus. “In the 1950s, there just wasn’t a full understanding of environmental sciences the way there is in 2021, and there certainly wasn’t the same understanding of the effects of drilling on the ocean floor. But Cousteau did realize at a certain point that he had to stop taking that money, which is when he focused on getting money from TV to fund his explorations.”

The film also details how late in life Cousteau addressed personal issues, including Simone’s death from cancer at age 71 in 1990, and his second marriage to Francine Triplet, shortly afterward, in 1991. (Prior to getting married, Cousteau and Francine had two children, Diane and Pierre-Yves. Francine has continued to guide The Cousteau Society.)

Most affectingly, Cousteau wrestled with growing pessimism about humanity’s ability to act in time to save the environment, which existed in tandem with his hopefulness. “From the accounts of several of his friends, co-authors and crew members, there was definitely a sense of despair in Cousteau about not enough being done, but he was also encouraged because an environmental movement was born — the beginning of a climate consciousness — and he was a huge part of it,” says Garbus. “What he hoped for most was that the next generation would pick up the baton.”

In 1991, Cousteau’s tireless efforts to preserve the Antarctic resulted in a historic agreement by the United States and 26 other nations to leave that continent untouched for 50 years and prohibit mineral resource activities. In Rio de Janeiro in 1992, Cousteau and The Cousteau Society helped make possible the first United Nations Conference on Environment and Development — also known as the Earth Summit — which brought together 170 nations⁶ and was called “The most important conference ever on the environment.” In the official photograph from that event, seen in **BECOMING COUSTEAU**, the indefatigable explorer is the only person in the picture who was not a head of state.

“Jacques Cousteau was, at the time of the first Earth Summit, one of the most recognizable faces on the planet — the person Americans said they would most want to meet besides the President — and because of his influence and celebrity, he was able to bring world leaders together,” says Garbus. “An explorer who *wasn’t* also a TV star could not have made that happen. And Cousteau was quite aware of that; he’d get pushback for not being a ‘proper scientist.’ But he would say, ‘I’m not a ‘proper scientist’ — I’m a filmmaker, a storyteller and an innovator.’ His celebrity and popularity enabled a growing global awareness of the preciousness and precariousness of the undersea world.”

⁶ Barbara Parker. Introduction to globalization and business 2005, p.169, “An important intergovernmental environmental activity occurred in 1992. Organized by the UN Conference on the Environment and Development, the so-called Earth Summit brought together 170 nations that agreed to develop regulations and programs to address environmental threats. Because the group met in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, it is sometimes referred to as the Rio Summit.”

At the time of his death, on June 25, 1997, at age 87 at his home in Paris, Cousteau occupied a rare spot in the world’s consciousness. The Cousteau Society continues his mission to save aquatic life, to fight for the planet, and endeavor to protect the oceans that Cousteau loved and which he inspired others to love.

“He could talk about environmental concerns and why it was so important that people pay attention to the Earth Summit and open us up to so many beautiful things in the natural world,” says Garbus. “Jacques-Yves Cousteau was a key ingredient as to why our environmental consciousness occurred, and what those vital movements to protect the Earth have brought forward since.”

###

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS



Liz Garbus, Director, Producer

Two-time Academy Award® nominee (“The Farm: Angola, USA,” “What Happened, Miss Simone?”), two-time Emmy® winner (Directing, Drama Series, and Directing, Nonfiction Programming), Peabody winner (“A Dangerous Son”), GRAMMY® nominee (“What Happened, Miss Simone?”), DGA nominee (“What Happened, Miss Simone?”) and BAFTA-nominated (“Reporting Trump’s First Year: The Fourth Estate”), director Liz Garbus is one of America’s most celebrated filmmakers, renowned for her documentary work and also for her breakthrough scripted debut. Her work has been featured in film festivals from Sundance to Telluride to Toronto to the New York Film festival and has appeared in theaters and across streaming platforms, as well as premium cable television. She is known for her propulsive, socially incisive storytelling across genres. From “The Farm: Angola, USA” to “What Happened, Miss Simone?” to “I’ll Be Gone In The Dark,” Garbus has created some of the most important documentaries of our time.

Her series “I’ll Be Gone in the Dark” premiered on HBO in June 2020. Garbus’ recent film “All In: The Fight for Democracy” premiered at the New York Film Festival, Telluride Film Festival, drive-in screenings, theaters and digitally on Amazon Prime Video in September 2020. Her narrative feature debut, “Lost Girls,” premiered at Sundance Film Festival in 2020 and was released on Netflix and in theaters in March 2020. “The Fourth Estate,” for Showtime, was nominated for a 2018 Emmy for Outstanding Documentary or Nonfiction Series. Her 2015 feature, Sundance opener, “What Happened, Miss Simone?,” a Netflix original, was nominated for a 2016 Oscar® for Best Documentary Feature and took home the Emmy Award for Best Documentary or Nonfiction Special.

Other credits include “The Innocence Files” (Netflix, 2020), “Who Killed Garrett Phillips?” (HBO, 2019), “There’s Something Wrong with Aunt Diane” (HBO, 2011), “The Farm: Angola, USA” (AA nominee, 1998) and many others.



Dan Cogan, Producer

Dan Cogan is one of the most prominent non-fiction producers working today. Both an Academy Award® (Icarus) and Emmy® Award (“The Apollo”) winner, Cogan founded Story Syndicate with Liz Garbus in 2019. Previously, he was the founding executive director of Impact Partners. He has produced more than 100 films and series, including “Icarus,” which won the 2018 Academy Award for Best Documentary Feature; “Won’t You Be My Neighbor?,” which won the 2019 Independent Spirit Award for Best Documentary; “The Cove,” which won the 2010 Academy Award for Best Documentary Feature; and “The Apollo,” which won the 2020 Emmy for Outstanding Documentary.



Mridu Chandra, Producer

Mridu Chandra is a New York-based filmmaker and veteran producer of award-winning documentaries and narrative films that have premiered at the Sundance, SXSW and Hot Docs film festivals; aired on PBS, HBO, Hulu and Netflix; screened for members of U.S. Congress and the United Nations; and showcased at museums and film festivals worldwide. Her documentaries explore topics of civil rights and peace, gender and sexuality, environmental justice, and the law. Her credits include producing “Ask the Sexpert,” “Out in the Night” (selected to launch the U.N.’s Free & Equal Global Film Series), “CURED” (for PBS in fall 2020), “Brother Outsider: The Life of Bayard Rustin” (winner of over 20 international awards including the GLAAD Media Award), and “Electoral Dysfunction” (featured in a four-part The New York Times op-docs series and recipient of the American Bar Association’s Silver Gavel Award). Her expertise as an archival media researcher and clearance specialist has additionally served numerous documentaries, narrative films, and Broadway productions, including “Whose Streets?,” “Shadow World,” “Steve Jobs” (directed by Danny Boyle), “Betrayal” (directed by Mike Nichols), “This Changes Everything” (based on the book by Naomi Klein) and “Regarding Susan Sontag” (recipient of the 2015 FOCAL International Award for Best Use of Archival Footage in an Arts Program). Prior to producing **BECOMING COUSTEAU**, she was the founding director (2016-2019) of IF/Then Shorts at Tribeca Film Institute, where she designed, launched and managed a new film fund and distribution initiative to support the professional development and increased visibility of filmmakers working regionally across the U.S. and around the world.


Evan Hayes, Producer

Evan Hayes is an Academy Award®, BAFTA and Emmy® Award-winning producer and a partner at ACE Content, based in Los Angeles. He has worked on over 30 films or series across a range of budgets and genres throughout his career. Hayes is currently in post-production on “The Yin & Yang of Gerry Lopez,” about the legendary surfer and directed by Stacy Peralta. He is also in production on the scripted series “Maggie” for ABC and 20th Television and two as-yet-unannounced feature documentaries. Previously, Hayes produced Dawn Porter’s award-winning documentary “The Way I See It” about President Obama’s chief official White House photographer Pete Souza, co-produced by Laura Dern, for Focus Features and NBC News Studios.

In 2019, Hayes won an Academy Award for Best Documentary Feature for producing “Free Solo,” directed by E. Chai Vasarhelyi and Jimmy Chin for National Geographic Films. In addition to winning an Oscar®, the film also won a BAFTA Award, four Critics Choice Awards, three Cinema Eye Honors awards, the TIFF People’s Choice Award and seven Primetime Emmy Awards, among others. Before joining ACE, Hayes served as president of Production at Parkes+MacDonald/Image Nation. The company made five feature films and a number of television projects during his tenure, including the documentary “He Named Me Malala,” directed by Academy Award-winner Davis Guggenheim about Nobel Peace Prize-winner Malala Yousafzai, and “The Circle,” starring Tom Hanks, Emma Watson and John Boyega. Prior to joining Parkes+MacDonald, Hayes served as president of Production at Story Mining & Supply Co., where he oversaw the Starz original series “Outlander” as well as the feature film “The Yellow Birds.” Hayes also spent eleven years at Working Title Films, where he worked as a producer or executive on such films as “Everest,” “Les Miserables,” “Contraband,” “Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy,” “State of Play,” “Frost/Nixon,” “A Serious Man,” “Burn After Reading,” “Hot Fuzz,” “Atonement,” “United 93” and “Senna.” Before joining Working Title, Hayes worked for producer Philip Steuer and Paramount Pictures’ Financial Planning and Creative Affairs departments. Born and raised in Massachusetts, Hayes is a graduate of Phillips Exeter Academy and the University of Southern California’s School of Cinematic Arts. He is a member of the British Academy of Film and Television Arts, the Producer’s Guild of America and the Academy of Television Arts & Sciences.