



*Don't be  
A Dick  
About It*



# **Section 1: Project Description**



## Logline

Two red-headed brothers, one with a crippling fear of dogs and the other with a fake reality TV show, are dicks to each other over one meaningful summer in a suburb of Washington, D.C.



## Synopsis

On *Survivor*, the still-running hit Reality TV show, the “tribal council” segment has become so ubiquitous and popular it would be almost redundant to explain it - It’s been spoofed and parodied everywhere; adapted to countless other types of media and become, essentially, a corner-stone of reality TV. You know what I’m talking about: it’s the part where the players vote each other off the island, each player individually stepping into a booth and explaining the reasons to her or his vote, flashing the ballot to the camera, and then casting it into the voting urn, to be tallied and dramatically recited by the host, moments later.

Every single night for the past 8 years, in a quiet suburb of Washington, D.C., **Peter Mullin**, now 22, has re-created the tribal council segment of *Survivor* in his living room. The name of Peter’s version is ***Peter’s World Adventure***, and he plans, hosts, and acts as all the participants, which are usually culled from Peter’s imagination and day-to-day interactions.





Throughout the years, via birthday and Christmas gifts, Peter has obtained torches, an urn for the votes, and a torch snuffer to extinguish the flames of those voted off the island. Around 9 PM, Peter sets into motion *Peter's World Adventure* in the living room of his family home. For better or for worse, everyone leaves the living room when he is performing his nightly ritual.

Seasons of *Peter's World Adventure* start and end arbitrarily. **This documentary follows the show's 32nd season** – in which the 25 participants are all members of Peter's extended family, including Matthew and myself, his cousin Ben (as performed by Peter).



**Matthew** is fifteen years old and is Peter's younger brother. As The 32nd Season of *Peter's World Adventure* unfolds every night in the living room, Matthew's personal project for the summer is to overcome his **fear of dogs**. In the meantime, he goes to soccer camp, plays Xbox, and wonders which kids in his grade are already smoking weed.

In-between visits to the dog park, where Matthew looks at dogs from behind the fences, and nightly episodes of *Peter's World Adventure*, the brothers brave through the summer figuring out where they fit in the world as they slowly outgrow their status quo.



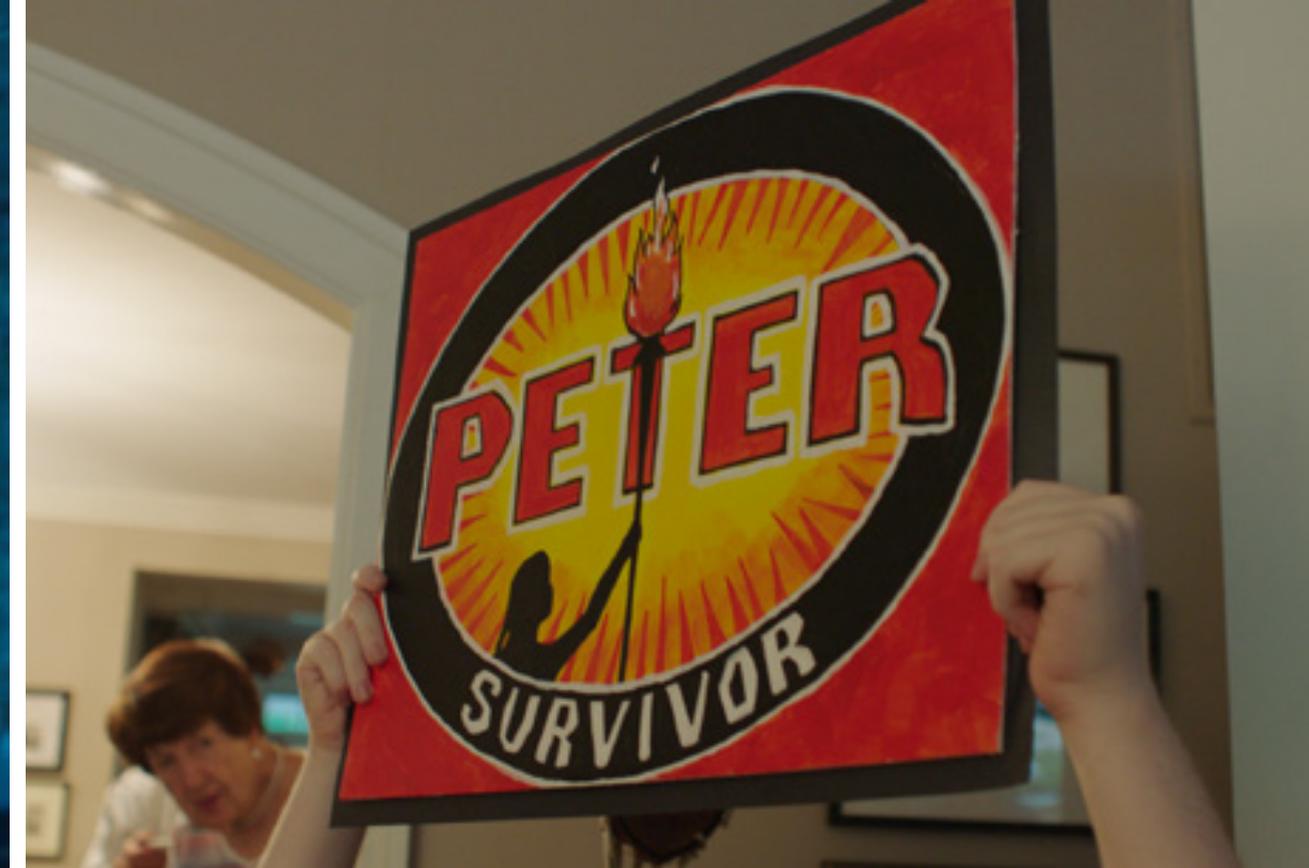


On a trip to the Beach, Peter gets on Matthew's nerves, and Peter tells the camera he hates Matthew. They eat burgers in silence. **At night, Matthew is voted off the island on Peter's World Adventure.** When Peter tells Matthew the bad news, Matthew groans and laughs at the same time, while playing Xbox in the den downstairs.

"Am I in the final jury?" Matthew asks. "No... you were fourth voted off..." Smiling, Matthew argues with Peter: "My brother hates me and he has ruined the movie." Peter asks me: "Have I ruined the movie?" and I tell him he has not. Matthew insists that he has. Peter tells Matthew he can stab him with a knife, if he wants. Matthew ignores him and says: "I love you Peter!" The scene ends on that note.



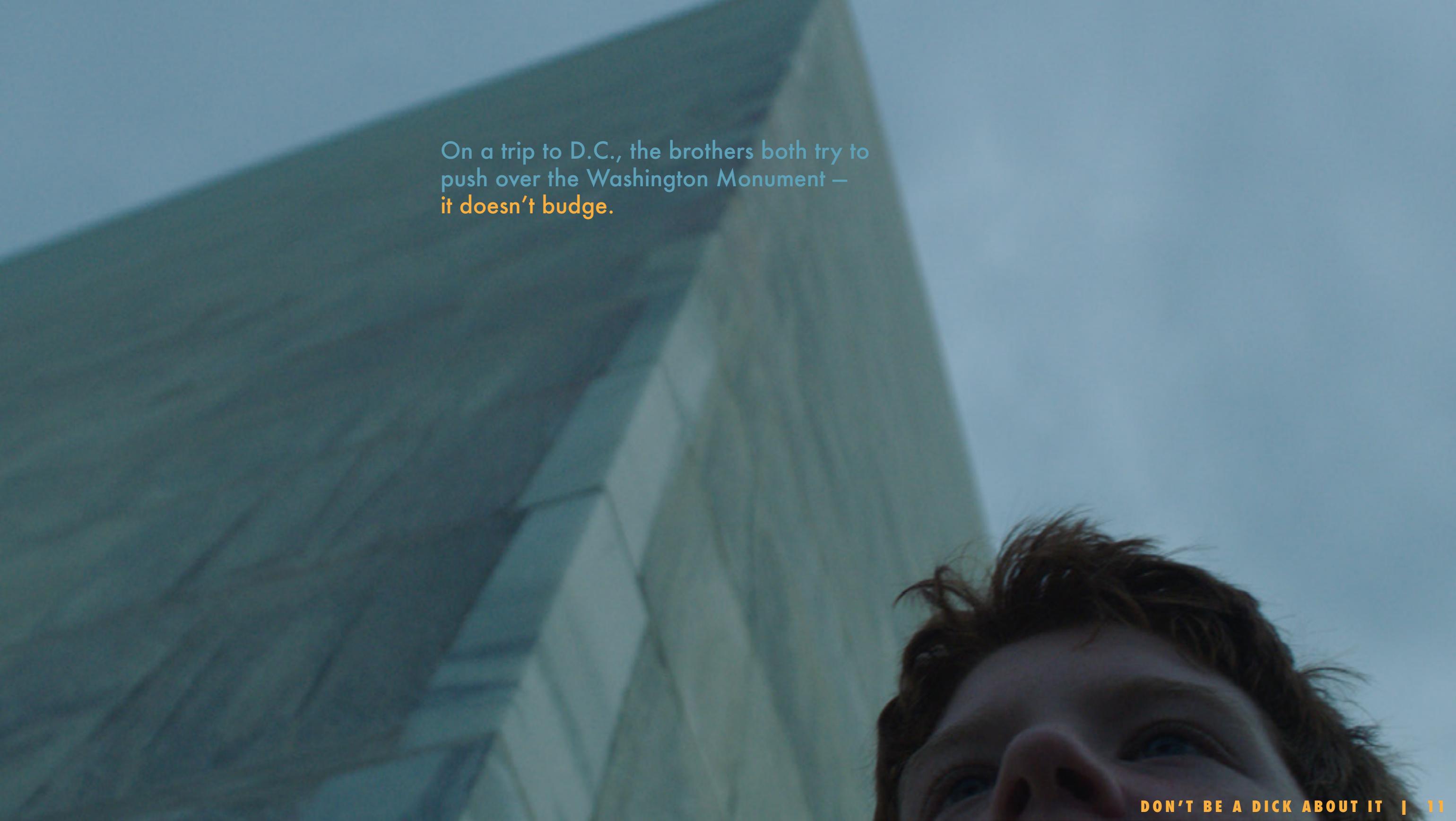
The following morning, Matthew deliberately eats Cheerios, Peter's greatest fear, in front of him. **Peter removes himself from the room, cursing Matthew.**



On Peter's 23rd Birthday, everyone brings him *Survivor*-themed gifts, while Matthew goes off and wanders by himself.



When Matthew goes  
away to soccer camp,  
Peter calls him and  
says he misses him.



On a trip to D.C., the brothers both try to push over the Washington Monument — **it doesn't budge.**

A young man with short brown hair, wearing a blue t-shirt, sits in a patterned armchair in a room with a large white-framed window. He is holding an open book and looking towards a group of children whose heads are visible in the foreground. The room is dimly lit, with light coming from the window. To the right of the man is another empty patterned armchair. A tissue box is on a table in front of the window.

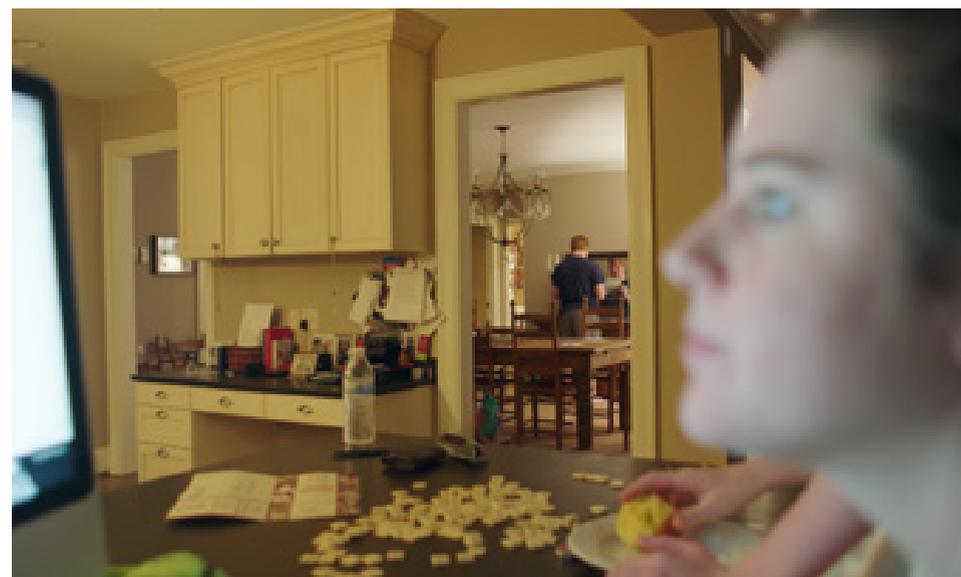
Peter gives a speech to an elementary school about life with autism. He gets a job with the Washington Wizards, perhaps the largest responsibility of his life as an adult. He's an aid to the mascot – he works hard and does well.

*Peter's World Adventure* moves forward, and family members get eliminated. So goes the cutthroat nature of the game. Without much warning, I am voted off the island. So is my brother, and so forth.

Watching Peter's family members observe "themselves", as performed by Peter, get voted off the Island, is a surreal thing to capture on camera and striking visual insight on the differences between documentary, reality TV, and real life.



One of the documentary's most meaningful scenes happens in the final stretch of *Peter's World Adventure*, when Peter votes his sister, Kerry, off the island. Moments before the nightly show, Kerry discusses with Peter the dynamics of the island, trying to coax him not to vote her off. To no avail, family members watch from the adjacent rooms of the living room as Peter goes ahead and eliminates her anyway — role-playing as his other family members, he justifies her elimination from the Island.



During the hilarious and heartbreaking tallying of the votes (“Five votes for...Kerry. Six votes for Kerry!”), Matthew watches from the staircase. Kerry, listening to her elimination from the kitchen, interrupts Peter’s performance: “I took you to Candy World AND to Cal Tort!” Peter screams at her to be a good sport, and goes on with the show. As he counts the votes, Matthew screams from the staircase: “You’re voted out Kerry!” which seems to strike a chord with Peter. He bows his head down, and thinks about his actions.

He takes a moment and, showing no sign of remorse, concludes the nightly segment: “The tribe has spoken...KERRY you are voted off the Island!” Mary Jo, also from the Kitchen, joins in: “You’ve just broken someone’s heart, Peter”. Peter, performing as Kerry, walks off the living room, cursing Peter (“Peter, kiss my ass!”), and the show ends for the night.

As soon as it’s over, Peter, now out of character, meekly walks over to Kerry and tries to apologize – but she just won’t have it. She doesn’t believe in his apology, and in a sense, she’s right: as soon as Peter apologizes, he asks if he’s still going to get his birthday gift. After a couple of back and forths – Peter trying to justify Kerry’s elimination, and Kerry being butt-hurt – their dad intervenes with the line that gives the movie its title: **“Kerry, you don’t have to be a dick about it!”**

She backs down and they hug it out. The show, as always, must go on.



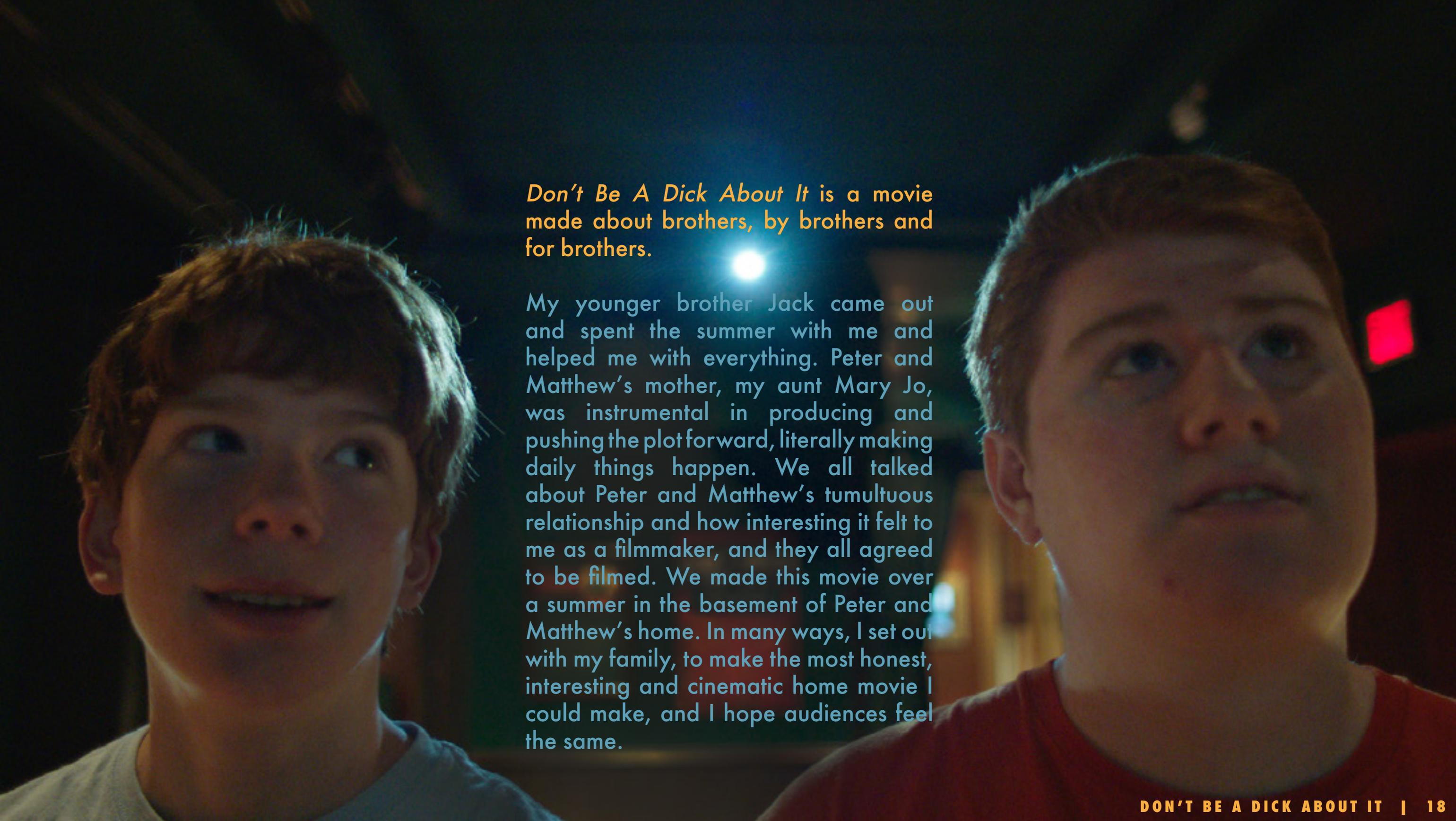
To see Peter's family members take *Peter's World Adventure* seriously, personally, and to heart is beautiful and meaningful, tragic and hilarious. In a way, it's exactly what family is for – to take you seriously when no one else does.





Eventually, Matthew conquers his fear of dogs (at least temporarily) by petting a German shepherd, and, unsurprisingly, Peter is the winner of *Peter's World Adventure*. Their individual arcs also culminate in a genuinely deeper understanding of each other and the world, especially in Matthew's case.

The movie ends with Matthew and Peter celebrating their inner children, goofing around in a science museum, reminiscing about the reasons why they love each other. **It's heartwarming, but complex. Not growing up is nice – but how long can it last?**

A photograph of two young boys looking upwards in a dark, dimly lit environment. The boy on the left has curly brown hair and is wearing a light-colored t-shirt. The boy on the right has straight brown hair and is wearing a red t-shirt. The background is dark with some out-of-focus lights, including a bright blue one in the center and a red one on the right.

*Don't Be A Dick About It* is a movie made about brothers, by brothers and for brothers.

My younger brother Jack came out and spent the summer with me and helped me with everything. Peter and Matthew's mother, my aunt Mary Jo, was instrumental in producing and pushing the plot forward, literally making daily things happen. We all talked about Peter and Matthew's tumultuous relationship and how interesting it felt to me as a filmmaker, and they all agreed to be filmed. We made this movie over a summer in the basement of Peter and Matthew's home. In many ways, I set out with my family, to make the most honest, interesting and cinematic home movie I could make, and I hope audiences feel the same.



## Topic Summary

*Don't Be A Dick About It* is a documentary about brotherhood and growing up. **But like all of my favorite documentaries,** *Don't Be A Dick About It* is actually about many other things – things that contradict and overlap themselves, that unfold as time moves forward. It is also, by far and large, a modern, dynamic comedy.

At the center of *Don't Be A Dick About It* are two brothers: my beloved cousins Peter and Matthew. They are distinct and electric characters, which, beyond the high wire balancing act of simply living together under the same roof and being young and confused and a *family*, have a lot of unusual things about them.





Peter is 22 years old, a high-functioning young man who has a condition on the autism spectrum and epilepsy. In the movie, we see him turning 23. As he enters adulthood in earnest, he and his family are still figuring out how he can thrive and find joy in a world that is often abrasive and insensitive to his needs.

Because of Peter's condition, this documentary, inevitably, becomes a documentary that concerns autism; that has to make

clear and defined choices on how to portray it. Peter's autism, a condition that inevitably takes a toll and requires a certain degree of care and attention by those around him, and the way Matthew reacts to Peter's autism are a couple of the reasons why I set out to make this documentary. The last thing I want to make is a documentary about autism; that tries to explain it or showcase its symptoms — **I'd much rather do a documentary about life with autism and the world that exists around it.**

Life with autism includes laughter, heartbreak, despair, hope, boredom and surprise. It includes needlessly pissing people off, and unexpectedly bringing joy to their lives. **Life with autism, much like all other kinds of life, is a life that is often full and often contradictory.** This documentary, above everything, wants to communicate those feelings to its audience. It's a documentary about Peter, but also about those around him. In particular, the documentary is also about Matthew.



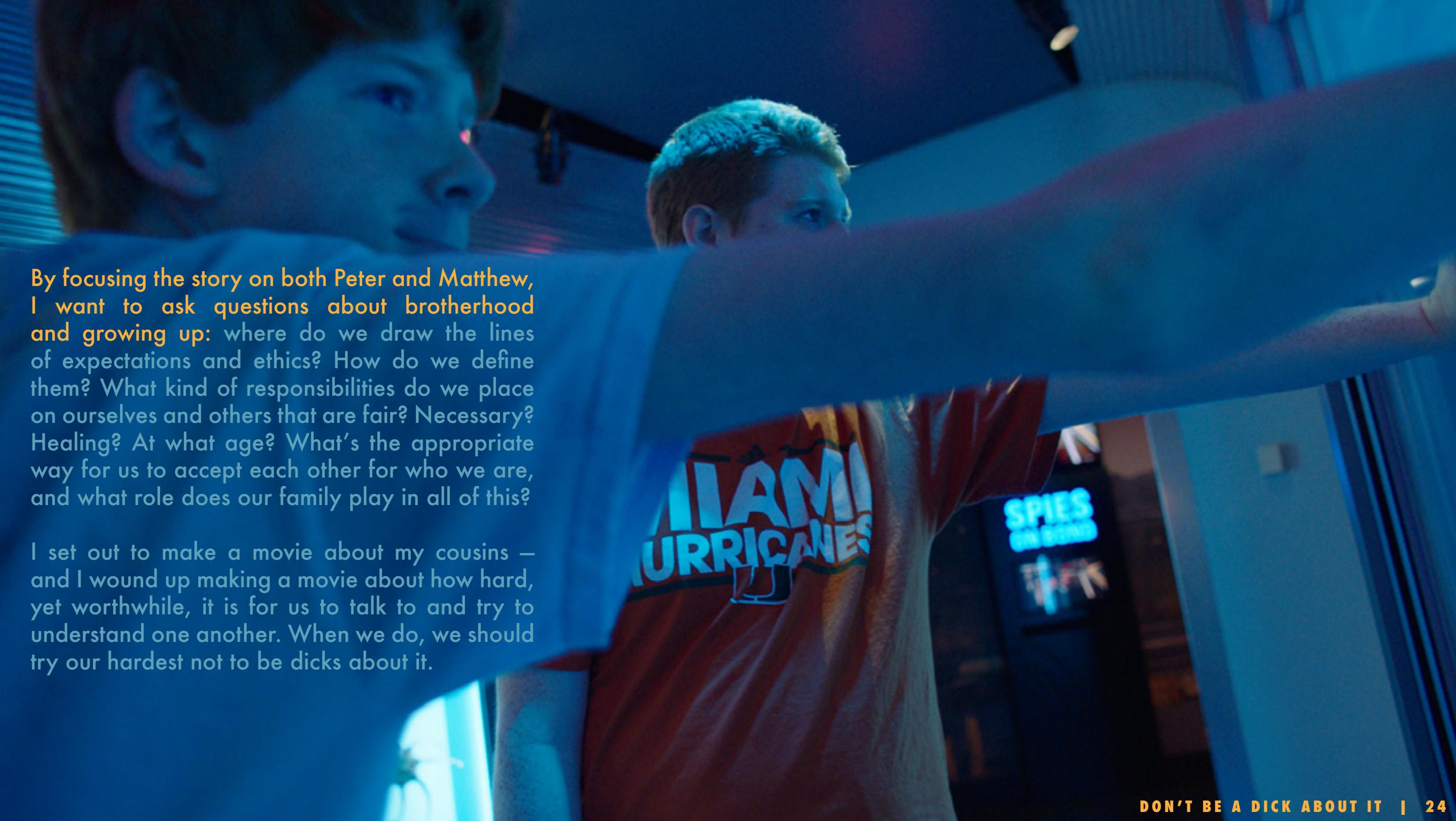


Matthew is the only person in Peter's family who treats Peter as if he weren't autistic – for Matthew, this often means with unrealistic expectations and little patience, but also with unfiltered honesty. Often, the moments between Matthew and Peter are full of attrition and tension. Often, the moments between Matthew and Peter are surprisingly tender and insightful. **When Peter and Matthew get together, it's always hard to tell what's going to happen.**

A young boy with reddish hair, shirtless, smiling in the rain. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with green foliage and a white building.

Matthew is 15 years old and has a lack of social skills, a number of severe anxieties, and an irrational fear of dogs, that his mother is helping him get over. **Growing up is hard for everybody – but for Matthew, living with someone that is clinically stunted during his formative years, creates interesting parallels, points of contention, and also, strangely, a safe haven.** For all of Matthew's impatience with Peter, Peter's difficulties in growing up also suggest the possibility that, in Matthew's refusal to grow up, he'll always have someone to play with. But is this something that Matthew actually wants? And is this even possible? The relationship between Matthew and Peter is wildly particular - it asks so many questions.

Does Matthew's indifference to Peter's autism make Matthew more calloused, or more human? Is his lack of interest in acknowledging Peter's autism simply another defense mechanism of his inner child refusing to grow up, or just pure selfishness? Is it misplaced affection or simply a desire to relate? When are these things ever clear cut?

A young man with short brown hair, wearing a red t-shirt with "MIAMI HURRICANES" printed on it, is looking out a window at night. The scene is dimly lit with blue and purple tones. In the foreground, the profile of a woman's face is visible, looking towards the man. In the background, a neon sign for "SPIES IN BOND" is visible through the window.

By focusing the story on both Peter and Matthew, I want to ask questions about brotherhood and growing up: where do we draw the lines of expectations and ethics? How do we define them? What kind of responsibilities do we place on ourselves and others that are fair? Necessary? Healing? At what age? What's the appropriate way for us to accept each other for who we are, and what role does our family play in all of this?

I set out to make a movie about my cousins — and I wound up making a movie about how hard, yet worthwhile, it is for us to talk to and try to understand one another. When we do, we should try our hardest not to be dicks about it.

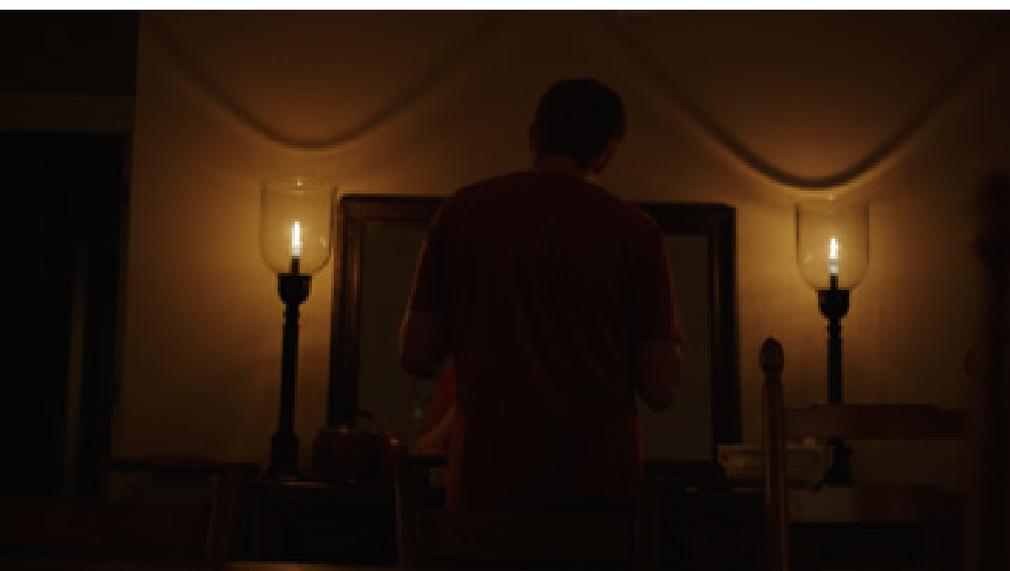
## Artistic Approach

It is very exciting for me, as a filmmaker, to have had such unlimited access to these characters. Because of their generosity, I am making the movie I set out to make in the first place: a stylized, but beautiful and cinematic cinema verité film. There are no interviews, no outsider opinions — just life, unfolding over one summer, and the visual stylizations of the inner worlds of Matthew and Peter.





Matthew and Peter are such kids when they're together, that I thought it was important to communicate their **childlike joy and wonder** by occasionally breaking from cinema verité conventions, and creating dynamic and unexpected music-video-like interludes throughout. I peppered in some trap music, some funny, surprising and tender moments throughout the verité, just so we don't forget how much Peter and Matthew have fun goofing around (even if they're not really supposed to play that way any longer).



A large portion of this film is about Peter's recreation of a famous Reality TV show, so it has been really fun and fascinating to borrow some reality TV conventions, especially with music and editing, to articulate *Peter's World Adventure* to the audience, as he sees it in his head.

In a sense, *Don't Be A Dick About It* is very much a documentary about perception, having an angle on something, and the reality TV bits, intercut with the cinema verité, creates visual parallels and sparks ideas. **Unintentionally, it becomes a meta-commentary on documentary filmmaking itself, since "Reality TV", once purported to be real, as it's name implies, is anything but.** That we have outsmarted its conventions many years ago is common knowledge; it is far more interesting to try to understand why, even so, it remains so compelling. Following *Peter's World Adventure*, night after night, we might have some ideas.

All of my family members have put the utmost trust and faith in me while I film them, and it shows – *Don't Be A Dick About It* retains the striking intimacy and charm of a home movie, while being cinematic; carefully filmed and constructed.

## Project Stage

I have shot all of the footage that is going to be in the movie (including a couple of additional, unplanned shoots), and I have edited a few rough cuts, but there's still a long way to go. One of the coolest aspects of filmmaking is collaboration, so I would love to bring in, at least, another editor onboard to flesh out some of the more complicated arcs and bring in a new perspective on Peter and Matthew's relationship. Beyond the obvious post-production phases that still need to occur (sound-design, color, graphics, mastering etc.), we are also in the early stages of figuring out how to license all the *Survivor* content with CBS, and speaking to lawyers about what the process will entail. At this point, it's a lot of technical production duties, and post-production work.

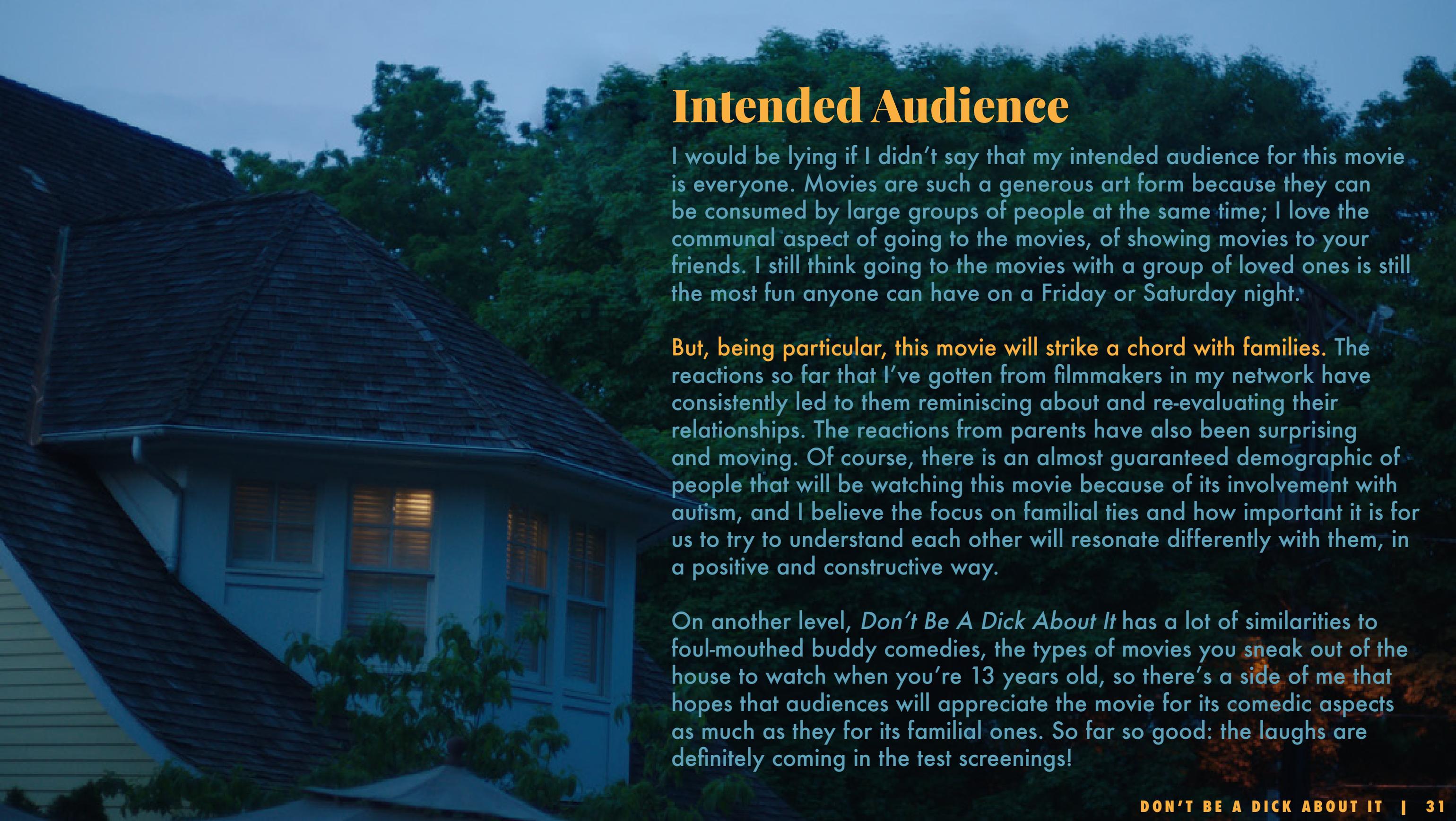


## **Section 2: Audience & Distribution**

# Distribution & Marketing Strategy

I think it's important to try to find festivals for this film that are tailor-made for families, that showcase personal films, cinema verité films, and to try to get this film screened in as many communities that work with autism as possible. Peter is involved with the Best Buddies NGO and the Monumental Sports organization, so reaching out to them seems like a good idea in ensuring wider distribution and broadcast. The final objectives for this movie are pretty clear, but there are several ways in which we can navigate the simultaneous paths to achieve them.

A theatrical release would be swell, but realistically speaking **this film's digital release is far more important, and would have far more outreach, than whatever sort of theatrical deal it would get.** There are so many cool digital platforms that get behind independent filmmakers, that I think reaching out to them for a digital release would be cool and very plausible – platforms such as Filmstruck, Hulu, Vimeo, and MUBI come to mind. Eventually, of course, it would be streaming and VOD on as many platforms as possible.

A photograph of a house at dusk. The house has a dark roof and light-colored siding. Several windows are visible, some with warm interior lights glowing through. The background is filled with dark green trees under a twilight sky. The overall mood is quiet and domestic.

## Intended Audience

I would be lying if I didn't say that my intended audience for this movie is everyone. Movies are such a generous art form because they can be consumed by large groups of people at the same time; I love the communal aspect of going to the movies, of showing movies to your friends. I still think going to the movies with a group of loved ones is still the most fun anyone can have on a Friday or Saturday night.

**But, being particular, this movie will strike a chord with families.** The reactions so far that I've gotten from filmmakers in my network have consistently led to them reminiscing about and re-evaluating their relationships. The reactions from parents have also been surprising and moving. Of course, there is an almost guaranteed demographic of people that will be watching this movie because of its involvement with autism, and I believe the focus on familial ties and how important it is for us to try to understand each other will resonate differently with them, in a positive and constructive way.

On another level, *Don't Be A Dick About It* has a lot of similarities to foul-mouthed buddy comedies, the types of movies you sneak out of the house to watch when you're 13 years old, so there's a side of me that hopes that audiences will appreciate the movie for its comedic aspects as much as they for its familial ones. So far so good: the laughs are definitely coming in the test screenings!

A young man with short, wavy red hair, wearing a blue button-down shirt, is shown in profile from the chest up, speaking to a group of children. The children are seated at desks in the background, some looking towards him. The scene is set in a classroom with a whiteboard and a window visible. The lighting is soft and natural.

## Audience Engagement & Social Impact

Peter's involvement with *Best Buddies* and *Monumental Sports*, as I mentioned before, would be great to push out the film at community engagement events. Using our connections there, the plan is to host screenings across the D.M.V. (D.C., Maryland, Virginia) area that would include Q&A's where Peter and myself would be present. These screenings would be focused primarily on mental health, autism, and how families deal with it. Because *Don't Be A Dick About It* is, in my view, a highly entertaining movie – it will push the conversation about autism to a larger audience in a constructive and positive way.



## **Section 3: Key Creative Personnel**

# Ben Mullinkosson

Ben grew up shooting skate videos in Chicago, went to film school in Los Angeles and learned, formally, about documentaries. He moved to China with his best friend Bobby for a couple of years, and they made a weird documentary about plastic surgery that premiered at Slamdance. He made a bunch of other movies, travelled all over the world, and then made another one called *Gnarly in Pink*, about these amazing six year old girls that skateboard in pink tutus. That one premiered at Tribeca, and also got featured as an NYT Op-Doc.

As a commercial director, he's worked with clients such as Samsung, Yelp, HBO, Vice, John Legend, Home Depot, Usher and Ellie Goulding. He has also worked closely with Tracy Droz Tragos as a shooter and editor for a couple of her projects. **Now he's made a movie about his family, with his family.**





## Matthew Robert Moser

Bobby grew up in the Bahamas, Texas, and a bunch of other places. He went to film school and also learned, formally, about documentaries. There he met Ben, and they both went to China to make the aforementioned weird documentary about plastic surgery that premiered at Slamdance. He has made documentaries about butchers, trees, wildlife, his grandma and many other things — Bobby travelled to numerous prestigious festivals around the world. As a commercial director, he's worked with Apple, Dove, Nico & Vinz, FIFA, Coca Cola, and, spectacularly, The Muppets. He's also a programmer at Slamdance. He's helping Ben edit *Don't Be A Dick About It*. They were not the brothers they were born with, but the brothers they chose in life.



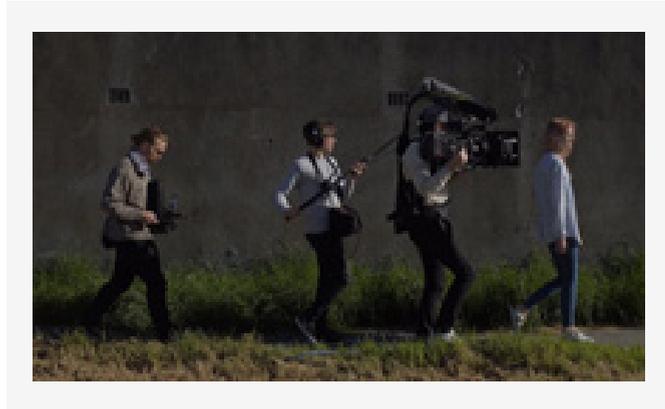
## Jack Mullinkoson

Jack is the brother Ben was born with, but actually the other way around since Ben came first. Jack is currently studying film at Ben's alma mater, Chapman University, and formally learning about documentary. Jack and Ben lived together in their uncle and aunt's basement for one summer filming Peter and Matthew. Because he has known Peter and Matthew for as long as he's been alive, his presence, intuition and disposition were instrumental in the making of this documentary. He's a talented filmmaker with a bright future ahead of him.



## Mary Jo Mullin

Mary Jo is Peter and Matthew's mother, and Ben and Jack's aunt. She was the engine that fueled the film's day to day, giving us full access to the house and their lives. Beyond being as cooperative and unobtrusive as possible (a rare combo for a producer), she made sure Peter and Matthew were their best for the scenes, from wardrobe to emotional support. She got them haircuts. She got us all fed.



## Whitelist

Whitelist is a production company in Los Angeles that came into existence when a tight-knit group of filmmakers that had been working together for a long-time decided to formalize their collective to make movies at a larger, more organized and profitable scale. Whitelist has worked with an extensive and prestigious client-list, doing acclaimed and passionate work that they are proud of. Ben and Bobby are signed to them as directors, and Whitelist has been behind the making of *Don't Be A Dick About It* since day one.



## YouTooCanWoo

YouTooCanWoo is a collective of musicians that do unique sound work, including music composition, original production, mix engineering, and sound design. They've produced for MGMT, created the sound identity for Spotify, scored the Cinema Eye-nominated documentary *Mateo*, and composed original music for the videogame *Just Cause 3* — amongst many other gigs. They are also founders of the groups French Horn Rebellion, Savoir Adore, Deirdre & The Dark, and Violent Sands, and have toured extensively around the world with these groups.



**Section 4: Fundraising Strategy & Grant Impact**



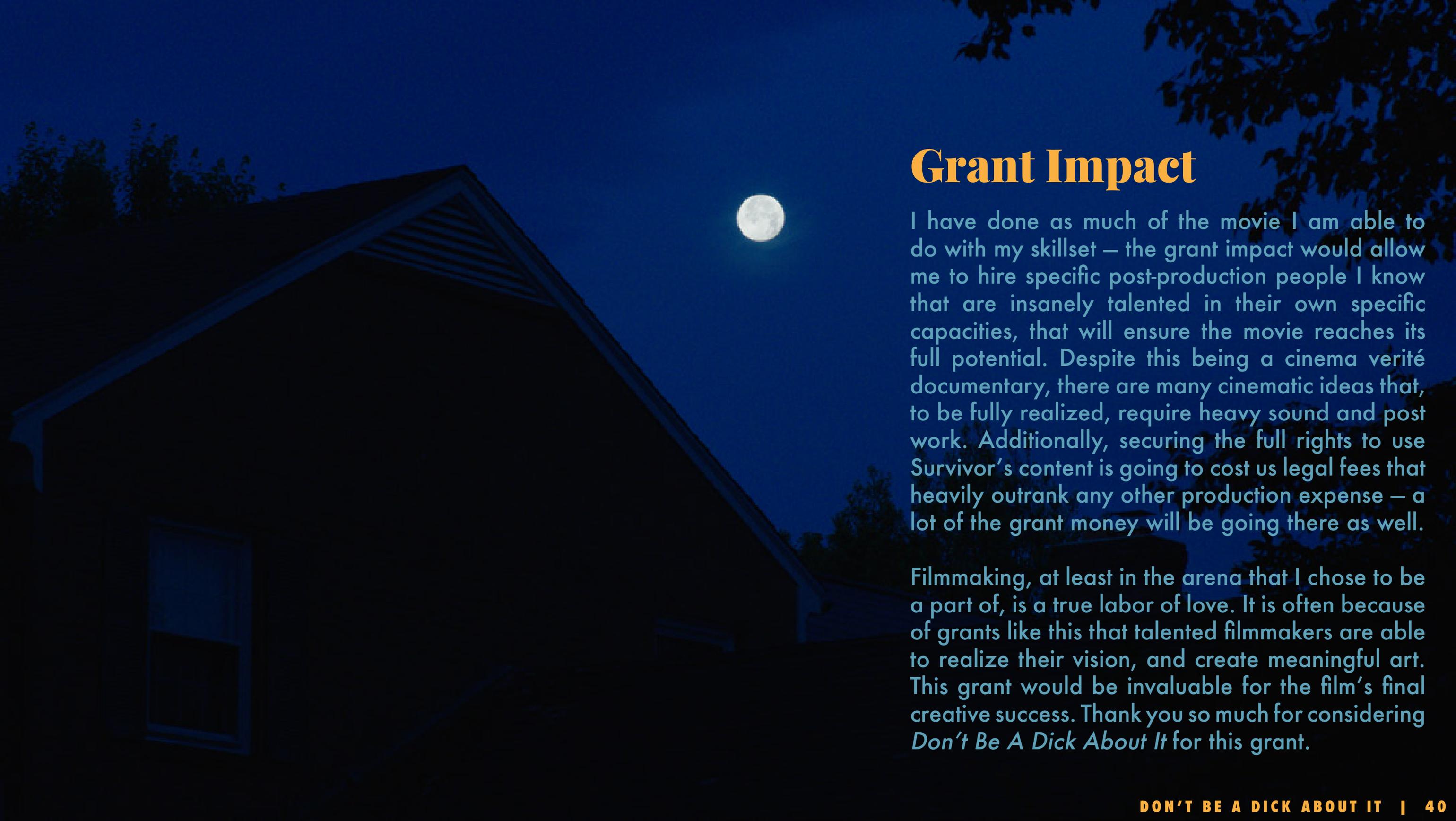
## Fundraising Strategy

I have worked as a filmmaker for many years now, and have met and become acquainted with many filmmakers I respect, that do passionate and honest work within a framework and system they are comfortable with. Talking to them as I make this film, my first feature, they have given me many ideas and strategies on how to fundraise for it. My commercial reps, Whitelist, and myself have created a couple of different short presentations tailored for different possible investors, which range from filmmakers to people in the autism community. The presentation will then be fine-tuned and edited into a crowd-funding campaign – which will be made in the example of other successful crowd-funding campaigns that myself and my friends have led before. The intended goal for this strategy is to raise about US\$50,000.

# Funding to Date

Source	Status	Amount
Whitelist	Secured	\$20,000.00
Private Investment	Secured	\$7,000.00
Crowdfunding Campaign	Pending	\$46,378.15
Sundance Institute Documentary Fund	Applied	\$50,000.00
<b>Total Projected Funding:</b>		<b>\$123,378.15</b>



A photograph of a house at night with a full moon in the sky. The house is dark, and the moon is bright against the dark blue night sky. The house has a gabled roof and a window is visible on the left side. The overall mood is quiet and contemplative.

## Grant Impact

I have done as much of the movie I am able to do with my skillset – the grant impact would allow me to hire specific post-production people I know that are insanely talented in their own specific capacities, that will ensure the movie reaches its full potential. Despite this being a cinema verité documentary, there are many cinematic ideas that, to be fully realized, require heavy sound and post work. Additionally, securing the full rights to use Survivor’s content is going to cost us legal fees that heavily outrank any other production expense – a lot of the grant money will be going there as well.

Filmmaking, at least in the arena that I chose to be a part of, is a true labor of love. It is often because of grants like this that talented filmmakers are able to realize their vision, and create meaningful art. This grant would be invaluable for the film’s final creative success. Thank you so much for considering *Don’t Be A Dick About It* for this grant.

# Section 5: Budget



## Description

Proposal Development | Fundraising

Story Consultant | Writer

Production stills

### **Subtotal Development & Pre-production:**

Producer | Director

Associate Producer | Field Producer

Camera Package

Stock

Production Supplies

Airfare

Hotel

Meals

Car Rental

Gas | Parking | Mileage | Toll | Taxis

### **Subtotal Production:**

Editor: Picture

Transfers and Conversions

Original Music Composition | Recording

Sound Mix

### **Subtotal Post Production:**

Shipping

Festival Entry Fees

Travel: Filmmakers and Subjects

Grassroots Screenings, Panels, Receptions

### **Subtotal Outreach & Impact:**

Legal Support

### **Subtotal Administration:**

## **Project Total Costs:**

## Total Cost

\$1,000.00

\$1,500.00

\$200.00

**\$2,700.00**

\$7,000.00

\$2,000.00

\$10,183.00

\$3,549.00

\$1,000.00

\$2,096.15

\$1,000.00

\$1,200.00

\$750.00

\$1,500.00

**\$30,278.15**

\$5,000.00

\$10,000.00

\$7,000.00

\$4,000.00

**\$26,000.00**

\$400.00

\$2,000.00

\$5,000.00

\$1,000.00

**\$8,400.00**

\$56,000.00

**\$56,000.00**

**\$123,378.15**



## Section 6: Work Sample

# Director's Prior Work

I have done documentaries all over the world (directing, producing, editing and shooting) for a few years now, and the favorite thing I've done is a short film I directed called *Gnarly In Pink*, which is the project I'm attaching here. *Gnarly In Pink* is about Bella, Rella and Sierra, a trio of skateboarding six-year-olds, who, despite being severely underrepresented in the sport, pop ollies while wearing pink tutus. Aesthetically, I feel like *Don't Be A Dick About It* is very similar to *Gnarly In Pink* in which I use stylized sequences to communicate the inner world of its protagonists, and also communicate heavy or dense ideas through a comedic lens.

I've made all kinds of documentaries, and I discovered that I like making funny documentaries about serious subjects — **I feel like laughter (when it's possible; when it's not nihilistic) is one of the best ways to deal with our problems.**



## Sample/Rough Cut

The sample I've linked is fairly representative of what we're going to get in the final cut of the movie: we get to see Peter, we get to see Matthew, we get to see some interesting aspects of their relationship, and we get the film's aesthetic and style. Right now I think that Matthew and Peter's individual scenes really shine, but as I continue to edit the movie I want to make the scenes in which they interact with each other more evocative and compelling. I think that I will achieve that by playing around with the overarching structure of this film — **the idea is to make a movie that tells the story of their life together more so than their individual predicaments being sorted out.**

Beyond the obvious post-process (sound, color, etc), I think there needs to be some serious finessing and tinkering with the stylized sequences, and more Matthew in the mix. One of the film's last sequences, in which Matthew and Peter play around in a science museum, is the movie's emotional endpoint, and one of my favorite scenes I've shot and edited — it's hopeful and joyous, but also ambiguous and interpretative: you think that Matthew and Peter will be alright, but you can't be entirely sure if they will ever grow up. I am excited to further create a buildup to it, in which the movie hits all the right notes as it comes to its close.





**Thank you**