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For downloadable images, visit pbs.org/pressroom

For the program companion website, visit pbs.org/independentlens/eyes-of-me

***THE EYES OF ME TO AIR NATIONALLY ON THE PBS SERIES INDEPENDENT LENS
ON TUESDAY, MARCH 2, 2010 AT 10 PM***

Four blind teens. One dynamic year. How do you see yourself, when you can't see at all?

(San Francisco, CA)—*The Eyes of Me* presents an extraordinary look at four blind teenagers — two freshmen and two seniors — over the course of one year at the Texas School for the Blind in Austin. Distilled from over 250 hours of footage and using innovative animation, Keith Maitland's acclaimed documentary *The Eyes of Me* will air on the Emmy® Award-winning PBS series *Independent Lens*, hosted by Maggie Gyllenhaal, on Tuesday, March 2, 2010 at 10 PM (check local listings).

In *The Eyes of Me*, we meet Chas, Denise, Meagan, and Isaac who — like all teens — face the challenge of finding their place in an ever-shifting universe of friends, crushes, homework, teachers, parents, and expectations. With the additional challenge of being forced to confront the world without sight, they share their thoughts, perceptions, fears, triumphs, and inner-visions of the outer world.

"I wouldn't wish my sight back, so many things in the world today that I don't want to see." — Chas

Chas bristles for greater independence. At 17, he leaves the school's dorms to get a job and live independently in his own apartment. Chas' passion for creating hip-hop music is his top priority, but when he drops out of school halfway through his senior year, his resolve to chart his own path is tested.



Scenes from The Eyes of Me, coming to Independent Lens March 2010.

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“I was very shy ... I didn't say anything to anybody. People were talking to other people and I thought, why am I in this shell? Why am I not talking to people?” – Denise

At her old school, **Denise**'s classmates made fun of her cane and called her names. The shy 15-year-old isolated herself and struggled with bouts of depression. At the School for the Blind, she's living away from her supportive family for the first time. This is Denise's chance to break out of her shell.

“I know what it's like to be sighted, and I know what it's like to be blind. And I do think going blind has given me a different point of view.” – Isaac

Isaac has been blind for less than a year. When his retina detached, his uninsured grandparents couldn't afford the emergency surgery. Now the freshman must leave his rural home in Paris, Texas to adjust to a new city, a new school, and a very new life.

“People have actually come up to me and said, ‘Hey, do you want to feel my face to see what I look like?’ It's like, ‘Hello, personal space.’ “ – Meagan

Meagan focuses on her future. As graduation approaches, she prepares for community college in the fall. Is this valedictorian ready to leave the nurturing environment of the school to prove herself in the sighted world?

The Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired, a public residential high school, has served the needs of visually impaired students from across the state for over 150 years. Nationally, over 9,000 students attend similar residential schools.

To learn more about the film and its subjects, visit the companion website for *The Eyes of Me* at pbs.org/eyes-of-me. Get detailed information on the film, watch preview clips, read an interview with the filmmaker and explore the subject in depth with links and resources. The site also features a Talkback section where viewers can share their ideas and opinions.

About the Filmmaker

Keith Maitland (Producer/Director/Editor)

Maitland's interest in human perception, coupled with a desire to connect with teens on a quest for independence, led him to devote four years to creating *The Eyes of Me*. After college at the University of Texas, Keith Maitland was chosen to participate in the Director's Guild of America (DGA) Trainee Program in NYC. Upon completion of the two year program, Maitland became one of the youngest members of the DGA, working alongside directors including Woody Allen, Janusz Kaminski, and Joel Schumacher, as well as on NBC's *Law & Order*. While working as an assistant director, Maitland had the unique opportunity to learn the skills of production with unfettered access to the creative processes of narrative filmmaking. Working as an AD was challenging, but the job didn't offer Maitland the opportunity to express himself or to get his hands dirty, shooting or editing.

In 2001, Keith Maitland created IllegalFilms, taking the lessons he learned in the narrative world and applying them to his own independent documentaries. Maitland's first short film, *The Grown-Up*, won an Audience Award at the 2003 Santa Monica Film Festival. *The Eyes of Me* is Maitland's first feature length film.

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About *Independent Lens*

Independent Lens is an Emmy® Award-winning weekly series airing Tuesday nights at 10 PM on PBS. The acclaimed anthology series features documentaries and a limited number of fiction films united by the creative freedom, artistic achievement, and unflinching visions of their independent producers. *Independent Lens* features unforgettable stories about a unique individual, community or moment in history. Presented by the Independent Television Service (ITVS), the series is supported by interactive companion websites, national publicity, and community engagement campaigns. Further information about the series is available at www.pbs.org/independentlens. *Independent Lens* is jointly curated by ITVS and PBS, and is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), a private corporation funded by the American people, with additional funding provided by PBS and the National Endowment for the Arts. The series producer is Lois Vossen.

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