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***Autism in Love* Premieres on *Independent Lens* Monday, January 11, 2016 on PBS**

Four People with Autism Spectrum Disorders Search for Love



Dave and Lindsey.
Credit: Scott Uhlfelder.

(San Francisco, CA) — Finding love can be hard enough for anyone, but for those with an autism spectrum disorder, the challenges may seem overwhelming. The disorder can jeopardize the core characteristics of a successful relationship — communication and social interaction. ***Autism in Love*** offers a warm and stereotype-shattering look at four people as they pursue and manage romantic relationships. Directed by Matt Fuller, *Autism in Love* premieres on *Independent Lens* Monday, January 11, 2016, 10:00-11:30 PM ET ([check local listings](#)) on PBS.

Thirtysomethings Dave and Lindsey have been together for eight years. Both “high functioning” and employed, they met at a conference on autism and, through the years, have learned to cope with each other’s quirks and different ways of communicating. Lindsey and Dave are now contemplating marriage.

Lenny, who lives in Los Angeles with his single mother, constantly struggles to accept that autism will always be part of who he is. The biggest hurdle in his life, the label has made meeting and dating girls seemingly impossible. Frustrated and angry, he spends his time watching sports, playing video games, and just trying to fit in, confiding that he “would rather be a normal man than an autistic person with a million dollars.”

Stephen’s autism manifests itself in more obvious ways than the others profiled. But his detached affect and monotone speech are no barrier to love. Now in the twilight of his 20-year marriage to Gita, they are faced with the ultimate test of terminal illness. Despite his limited speech and her physical deterioration, their love persists as Stephen supports Gita in her battle with ovarian cancer.

“This film allows us to get to know four remarkable people, who have opened up their lives in such an intimate and deeply personal way in front of the camera,” said Lois Vossen, *Independent Lens* Executive Producer. “Their courage to reveal the struggles and challenges they face allows us to understand and empathize with them.”

“In recent years the rate of autism spectrum disorder diagnosis has increased at an alarming rate and yet the causes are still unknown,” director Matt Fuller says. “Regardless of the disorder’s



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origin, what is seldom heard are stories about what happens once these kids who have been diagnosed grow up. What happens after the sleepless nights, years of therapy, special schooling, and exhaustive treatments? What happens when children with autism become adults and want to have lives of their own?"

Visit the *Autism in Love* film site (<http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/films/autism-in-love/>), which features information about the film.

About the Filmmakers

Matt Fuller (Director) discovered his passion and talent for storytelling early in life. While a junior in high school, he began directing documentaries and public service announcements for the Boys & Girls Clubs of America, local government agencies, and national corporate clients. After graduating from the University of Central Florida, Fuller began working for Sony Pictures Entertainment on the thriller *Vacancy*. While on the Sony backlot, Fuller went on to work for director Nelson McCormick as he directed two Sony feature films, *Prom Night* and *The Stepfather*. Fuller then transitioned to MBST Entertainment, working under seasoned producers Scott Kroopf and Larry Brezner as a creative executive. He soon became director of film and television development, where he supervised the development and production of Warner Bros.'s *Arthur* and Relativity's *Limitless*. *Autism in Love* is his directorial debut; he recently launched The InSight Picture Company.

Carolina Groppa (Producer) was born and raised in São Paulo, Brazil, and moved to the U.S. with her family at the age of nine. After studying theater and film at the University of Central Florida, Groppa relocated to Los Angeles to pursue her love of what goes on behind the camera. She was an integral part of raising capital and managing the day-to-day operations for the 2011 indie thriller *Brake*, starring Stephen Dorff. She next worked alongside producer Steven Berger on the dark comedy *The Pretty One*, starring Zoe Kazan. In October 2014, she produced a short for *Project Greenlight* finalist Marko Slavnic. Groppa has also produced stage productions around Los Angeles, commercials for LENOVO, and award-winning short films, including the character drama *Donor*, directed by Mark Gantt, and the sci-fi thriller *The Taste of Copper*, starring Scott Haze.

Ira Heilveil (Executive Producer), Ph.D., is a licensed clinical psychologist in three states (California, New Mexico, and Minnesota) and a board certified behavior analyst. He began his career as a clinical child psychologist and family therapist. In 1988 he created his own agency, which he grew to one of the largest providers of applied behavior analysis (ABA) services for children with autism in the U.S. During his tenure as that company's CEO, he also founded a school for children with autism in Armenia as a charitable NGO, which he still operates and is thriving today. Dr. Heilveil maintains his connection to academia through teaching at UCLA medical school, where he is assistant clinical professor of psychiatry. He also publishes scholarly articles, presents at conferences, and writes a blog on a variety of his interests. He is currently CEO of Touchstone Educational Consultants. He also holds a private pilot license.





CREDITS

Directed and Produced by
Produced by
Executive Producer
Cinematography by
Edited by
Music by

Matt Fuller
Carolina Groppa
Ira P. Heilveil
Scott Uhlfelder
Alex O'Flinn
Mac Quayle

About *Independent Lens*

Independent Lens is an Emmy® Award-winning weekly series airing on PBS Monday nights at 10:00 PM. The acclaimed series features documentaries united by the creative freedom, artistic achievement, and unflinching visions of independent filmmakers. Presented by Independent Television Service, the series is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a private corporation funded by the American people, with additional funding from PBS and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. For more visit pbs.org/independentlens. Join the conversation: [facebook.com/independentlens](https://www.facebook.com/independentlens) and on Twitter [@IndependentLens](https://twitter.com/IndependentLens).

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