



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT

Lisa Tawil, ITVS 415-356-8383 lisa_tawil@itvs.org
Mary Lugo 770-623-8190 lugo@negia.net
Cara White 843-881-1480 cara.white@mac.com

For downloadable images, visit pbs.org/pressroom/

***Happiness* Premieres on *Independent Lens* Monday, November 17, 2014 on PBS**

Documentary Captures Life in a Remote Bhutan Village on the Verge of Modernization

(San Francisco, CA) — In 1999, King Jigme Singye Wangchuck made a landmark proclamation approving the use of television and the internet in the tiny South Asian nation of Bhutan, promising to usher in a new modern era and increase the nation's "gross national happiness." But he cautioned the youth of the country in his speech, warning that TV and the internet have "contents that are both harmful and useful to you and your country. For this reason, we must be careful and selective in using this new resource." *Happiness*, the new film by Thomas Balmès (director of the hit documentary *Babies*), is a haunting portrait of an ancient society on the brink of technological revolution. The film premieres on *Independent Lens* on Monday, November 17, 2014, 10:00-11:00 PM ET on PBS ([check local listings](#).)

Over a decade after the King's proclamation, the remote mountainside village of Laya is still without electricity. Peyangki, a dreamy and solitary nine-year-old Buddhist monk, yearns for the world to come to him in the form of a flickering television screen. Between studying and prayer, he watches as his world is slowly transformed by the arrival of new roads and electrical cables. Finally, when taken by his uncle to the capital city of Thimphu, he discovers a new and bustling world of traffic, indoor plumbing, and nightclubs, as they search for the perfect television to bring back to the village.

In *Happiness*, filmmaker Balmès captures the moment where ancient life bows to the seduction of technology, illuminating how complicated and bittersweet the arrival of progress can be.

Visit the *Happiness* companion website (<http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/happiness/>) which features information about the film, including an interview with the filmmaker, preview clips, and more.

* * *

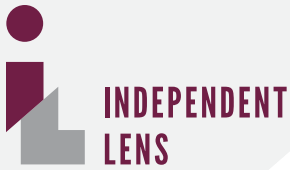
About the Filmmaker

Thomas Balmès (Director/Producer/Writer/Cinematographer) has been working as an independent director and producer of non-fiction films, specializing in international co-productions, since 1992. A native of France, his initial projects included studies of filmmakers James Ivory and Michelangelo Antonioni.



His first film, *Bosnia Hotel* (1996), was the story of U.N. Kenyan peacekeepers in Bosnia,

651 Brannan Street, Suite 410
San Francisco, Ca 94107
T. 415 356 8383
F. 415 356 8391
pbs.org/independentlens



followed by *Maharajah Burger: Mad Cows, Holy Cows*, about the mad cow crisis from the Indian perspective. *The Gospel According to the Papuans* (2000) followed the conversion of a Papuan chief to Christianity, and was honored with the Silver Spire Award at the San Francisco International Film Festival. He directed a sequel in Papua the following year, *Waiting for Jesus. A Decent Factory*, the story of a Nokia executive who inspects a mobile phone factory in China, was screened at more than 50 film festivals and received many honors, including a Europa Award. The film was released theatrically in the U.S. in 2005. *Damages* (a.k.a. *How Much Is Your Life Worth?*) was filmed at a Connecticut law firm specializing in personal injury cases. Balmès initiated a series for national Japanese television (NHK, *Tokyo Modern*) and produced *A Normal Life: Chronicle of a Young Sumo Wrestler*, directed by Jill Coulon, which screened at the 2009 Amsterdam International Documentary Film Festival. He is regularly invited to conduct lectures and master classes in France and abroad including at Brown University, the Watson Institute, and the Lisbon International Film Festival.

His previous film, *Babies*, looked at one year in the life of four babies from around the world, from Mongolia to Namibia to San Francisco to Tokyo. The film was distributed by Studio Canal and Focus Features in 2010.

CREDITS

Directed, Filmed and Produced by	Thomas Balmès
Cinematography by	Thomas Balmès
	Assisted by Nina Bernfeld
Editing by	Alex Cardon
	Ronan Sinquin

Happiness is a co-production of TBC Productions, Quark Productions, Making Movies, ARTE France, BBC, WDR, NHK, and ITVS International.

About *Independent Lens*

Independent Lens is an Emmy® Award-winning weekly series airing on PBS Monday nights at 10 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 at facebook.com/independentlens and [@IndependentLens](https://twitter.com/IndependentLens).



651 Brannan Street, Suite 410
San Francisco, Ca 94107
T. 415 356 8383
F. 415 356 8391
pbs.org/independentlens