

A BARAK SHPIEZ FILM

# VAX





# VAX

WRITTEN & DIRECTED  
BY

**Barak Shpiez**

STARRING

**Cade Carradine**

**Ricco Ross**

**Marguerite Wheatley**

GENRE

**Drama, Thriller**

RUNNING TIME

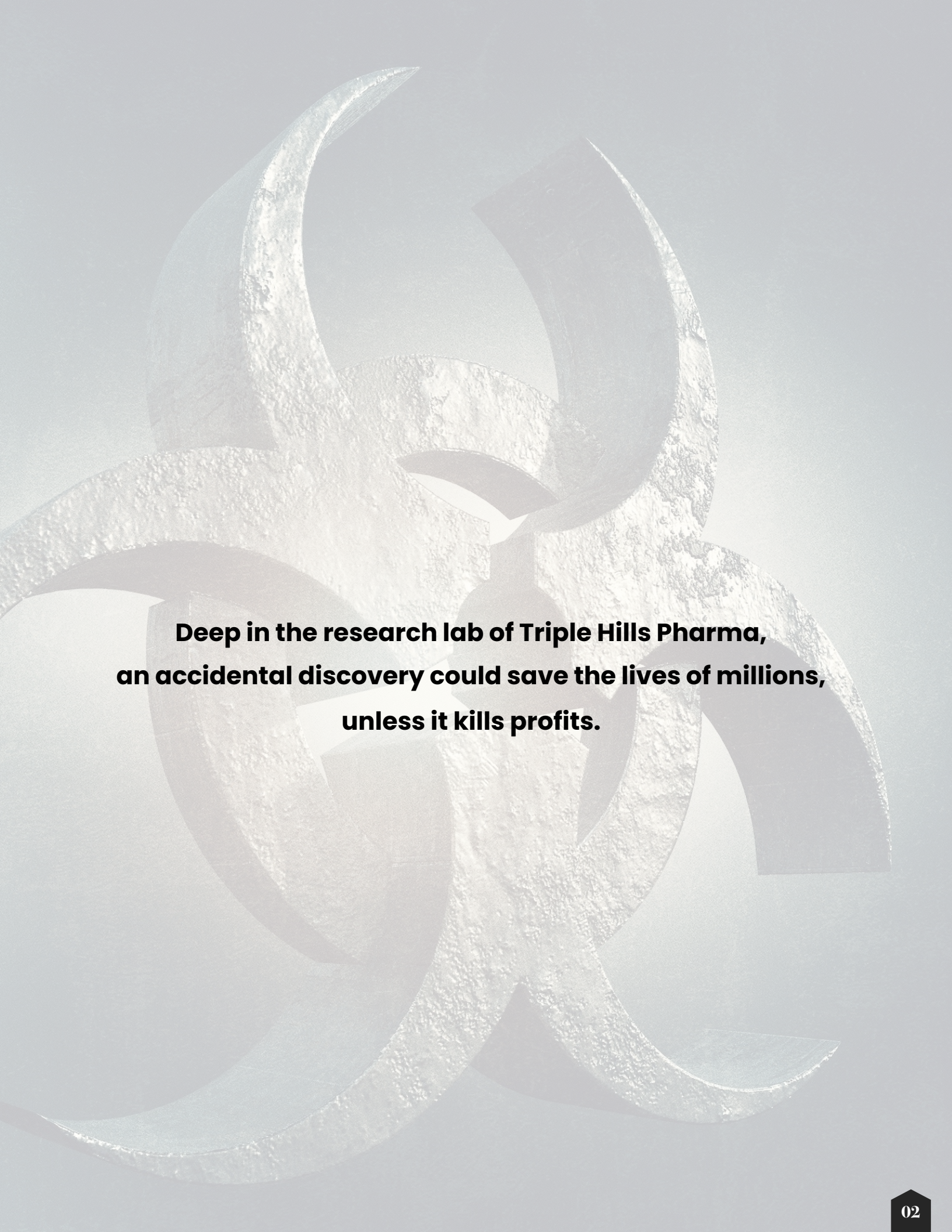
**12 Minutes**

CONTACT

 657-242-6473

 [barak.shpiez@gmail.com](mailto:barak.shpiez@gmail.com)





**Deep in the research lab of Triple Hills Pharma,  
an accidental discovery could save the lives of millions,  
unless it kills profits.**



CAST



**Cade Carradine**

*"Geoff Quinn"*

**Seen in**  
HBO's *Deadwood*



**Ricco Ross**

*"Eric Hill"*

**Seen in**  
*James Cameron's Aliens*



**Marguerite Wheatley**

*"Rachel Quinn"*

**Seen in**  
Clint Eastwood's *Invictus*

## SHORT SYNOPSIS

When two medical researchers find a potential vaccine for malaria, their publicly traded corporation's priorities come into focus. Suspicious yet naive, one employee will resort to desperate measures to ensure that the vaccine sees the light of day.



## FULL SYNOPSIS

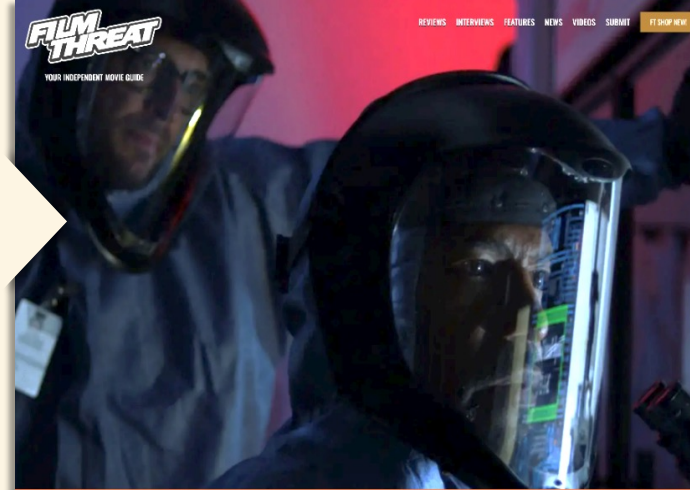
Developing a treatment for malaria, two medical researchers Eric (Ricco Ross) and Geoff (Cade Carradine) find an issue in one of their experiment samples. They soon realize their discovery may be the key to creating a vaccine.

Eric seeks guidance from higher-ups within the company while Geoff returns home and shares the news with his wife Rachel (Marguerite Wheatley). As Eric struggles to convince his business-minded counterparts of the significance of their findings, Geoff shares his doubts about the company's ethics.

Rachel convinces Geoff to return to the lab, but Eric has already received the company's final decision.

*"The star of Vax is writer/director Barak Shpiez's ability to create a thrilling short with indie filmmaking resources."*

**Film Threat** 



VAX



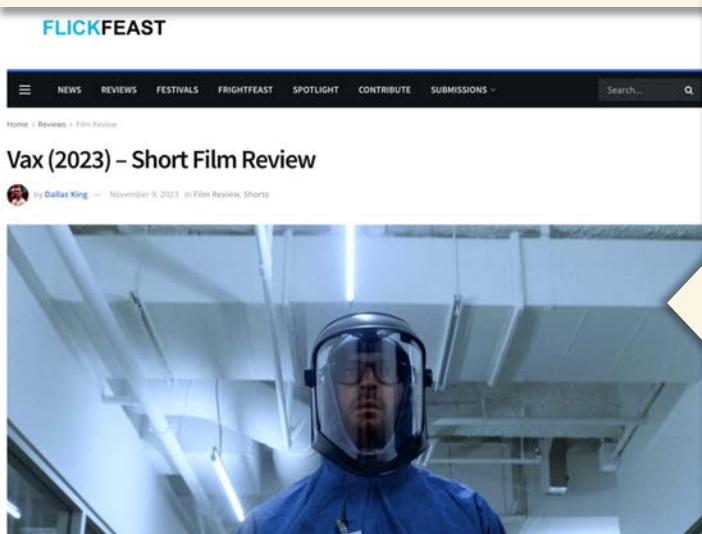
The screenshot shows the Indie Shorts Magazine (ISM) website. At the top is the ISM logo and a navigation menu with links for HOME, INTERVIEWS, NEWS, REVIEWS, HALL OF FAME, SHORT FILM FESTIVAL - 2024, TUTORIALS, and SUBMIT SHORT FILM. The main article title is "Vax: A Medical Drama That Makes You Re-examine The Pharmaceutical Industry" by the Indie Shorts Mag Team, dated 29 May 2023. Below the title is a still from the film showing a man in a blue lab coat and a clear face shield.

*"Vax manages to create the same suspense and brooding urgency that feature-length medical-conspiracy-thrillers do."*

**Indie Shorts Magazine**

*"Vax could very easily become a feature, but it exists so well as a short...that is something I find to be rare."*

**Indie Film Review Podcast**

The screenshot shows the FlickFeast website. The top navigation bar includes NEWS, REVIEWS, FESTIVALS, FRIGHTFEAST, SPOTLIGHT, CONTRIBUTE, and SUBMISSIONS. The article title is "Vax (2023) - Short Film Review" by Dallas King, dated November 9, 2023. Below the title is a still from the film showing a man in a blue lab coat and a clear face shield.

*"A fantastic film that wrings every drop of atmosphere, intrigue and tension out of its premise...5 stars."*

**FlickFeast** 



"Vax could well be expanded into a full-blown conspiracy thriller, and maybe it will, but for now, it makes its points with admirable brevity, and should be viewed by anyone keen to see beyond political point-scoring."

**Film-Authority.com** 

"Well made, meaningful and poignant, Vax is a great short film that succeeds in more ways than one."

**Indie Wrap Magazine**

"Director Barak Shpiez conjures an impressive sense of stress and tension."

**UK Film Review**


"I want more, and if that's not a great compliment - I don't know what is. In my humble opinion, Vax earns a stellar four and a half stars out of five."

**Indyred**

"An appealing balance of colour against lots of darkness; characters appear in shadow, discussing big ideas in barely illuminated spaces. It gives the film a nicely theatrical quality..."

**Warped Perspective** 

"This 12-minute short manages to create ample suspense, in some ways more effectively than other full-length features...a very impressive short and a taut example of a medical thriller done right. I wanted more!"

**Wonderfully Weird and Horrifying** 

"There's just a whole lot to appreciate here and it would be fun to see Shpiez expand this to feature-length in the future."

**The Independent Critic** 

"There have been plenty of great films in this genre over the years, but only a few have managed to capture the urgency and suspense that Vax, a cracking little conspiracy thriller from Barak Shpiez, succeeds in doing in just 12 minutes."

**Screen Critix**

"This film simply does a superb job at creating the atmosphere of unease...hopefully we might get that feature length version."

**One Film Fan**

**Pasadena International Film Festival**

**Catalina Film Festival**

**Glendale International Film Festival**  
**Nominated** *Best Short Thriller*

**Flagstaff Intl. Film Festival**

**Flicker's Rhode Island Intl. Film Festival**  
*Semi-Finalist*

**Marina del Rey Film Festival**

**Sweden Intl. Film Festival**  
**Nominated** *Best Short Film*

**London Film & TV Festival**  
**Nominated** *Best Short Film*

**Milan Shorts Film Festival**  
**Winner** *Best International Short Film*

**New York Intl. Films Infest Festival**  
**Nominated** *Best Short Film*

**Festigious Los Angeles**  
**Winner** *Best Narrative Short Film*

**Wallachia Intl. Film Festival**  
**Winner** *Best Editing*

**Munich New Wave Short Film Festival**

**Brooklyn Sci-Fi Film Festival**

**Mesa Intl. Film Festival**

**Ealing Film Festival**  
**Winner** *Highly Commended Award*

**Los Angeles CinemaFest of Hollywood**

**SoCal Film Awards**  
**Winner** *Best Editing*

**Hollywood Boulevard Film Festival**

**Indie Short Fest**  
**Winner** *Best Thriller Short*

**Treasure Coast Intl. Film Festival**  
**Winner** *Best Director - Short Film*

**Five Continents Intl. Film Festival**  
**Winner** *Best Drama Short Film*

**Marilyn Monroe Film Festival**  
 Honorable Mention

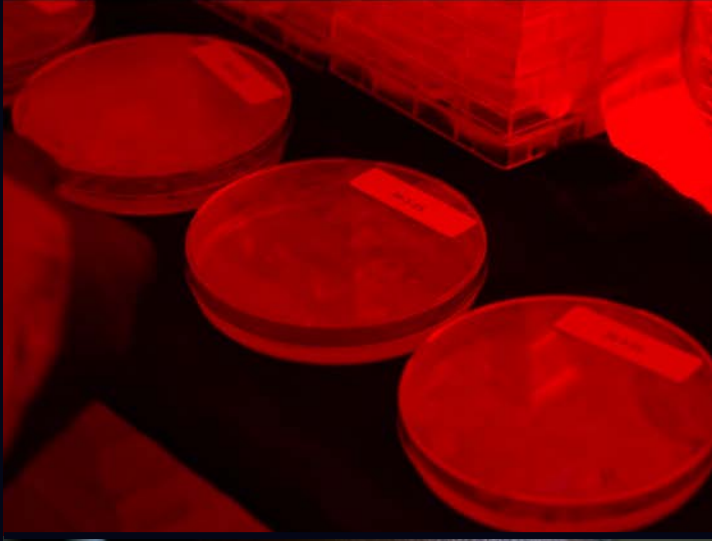
**Las Vegas Intl. Film Festival**  
**Nominated** *Best Short Film*

**Crown Point Intl. Film Festival**  
**Winner** *Best Narrative Short*

**South Film and Arts Academy Festival**  
**Winner** *Best Social Short Film*



STILLS





*We completed principal production on Vax well before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, but as cancellations of public events continued through the Fall of 2022, I was unsure when to release the film. More than that, I was unsure how it would be received. This story is not about recent events or politics any more than my previous short Inheritance was about elder abuse. It has never been my intention to critique or debate the COVID-19 vaccines or policies concerning them.*

*In Vax, the possible discovery of a new vaccine tests the film's characters and forces them to choose between what is right and what is right for themselves. The real world and well-known behavior of pharmaceutical companies and other corporations establishes the invisible antagonist's motivation without too explicit an explanation. And in the end, as in so many situations, a decision that could affect millions is made by a select few, quietly, far away from those who would be helped or harmed.*

*I am extremely grateful to Cade Carradine, Ricco Ross, and Marguerite Wheatley for their support and lending their considerable talents to this project. Their remarkable performances, aided by a tireless and dedicated crew and filtered through my admiration for the works of Stanley Kubrick, Ridley Scott, and David Fincher all combined to create this short film we are all very proud of.*

**Barak Shpiez**





## 1. Was Vax a reaction to COVID, the pandemic, and/or the vaccine controversy?

Not at all. In fact, the film was written and filmed before the pandemic. The concept wasn't intended to be specifically about vaccines or the pharmaceutical industry, but rather "the banality of evil". The idea that a choice that could help millions of people is made in some mid-level manager's office is really terrifying.

COVID exacerbated the fear that companies were pushing a vaccine people didn't need for profit. Vax takes the other side of that, which is that medicine is being delayed to increase profits. And there is evidence of this:

- i. **Wallace-Wells, David. "Millions Die of Malaria with Miracle Drugs at Hand." New York Times, January 3rd, 2024**

<https://www.nytimes.com/2024/01/03/opinion/malaria-vaccine-funding.html>

- ii. **Barry-Jester, Anna Maria. "How a Big Pharma Company Stalled a Potentially Lifesaving Vaccine in Pursuit of Bigger Profits." Pro Publica, October 4th, 2023**

<https://www.propublica.org/article/how-big-pharma-company-stalled-tuberculosis-vaccine-to-pursue-bigger-profits>

## 2. The film could have played out more like a medical procedural, yet has a very ominous feeling, more like a thriller. What was your intention for the tone of Vax?

I wanted the visual environment to match the feeling of our main character. Objects are hidden in shadow, character's faces trail off into darkness, hallways and rooms are quiet and empty. This all informs the audience that something is wrong before the actual conflict develops.

The film has three sections: the setup, the debate, and the decision. But the idea that a decision needs to be made is not fully understood by the characters until the end of the debate. The atmosphere and tension created by the music and visual mood pulls the viewer through the first two sections with the promise of some type of confrontation by the end.

### **3. How did you find your cast?**

We were really lucky there. I was able to get the script to Cade, Ricco, and Marguerite and had great conversations with all of them. Cade and I bonded over our love for Blade Runner, and Ricco really responded to the ideas and themes of the film wrapped inside an engaging story. Marguerite solidified Vax's all-star lineup when she agreed to join the cast.

These actors have worked on major projects with some of the best filmmakers, and that's really no exaggeration. We were exceptionally fortunate they all came onboard. It meant we could accomplish everything we set out to do with limited time and budget because they operate at such a high level.

### **4. Where was Vax filmed?**

This is the funny part! I worked for an engineering company in Orange County, California. The owner of that company turned half of the building into an animal stem cell research facility. I was able to pull some strings and get us in there.

The hallway scenes of Cade walking around were shot in another office I worked at in downtown Los Angeles. And the scene of Cade and Marguerite talking at the table was shot in my house!

### **5. What was the most challenging thing about making Vax?**

Everything! Logistics are complicated, money is tight, resources are limited. But that's the fun of making a movie. The real concern I had was that the film would not be received in the way it was intended and become associated with other people's perspectives. But those concerns evaporated quickly after we released the film, and the response has been amazing!



# Vax

## Written and Directed by

Barak Shpiez

## Starring

Cade Carradine

Ricco Ross

Marguerite Wheatley

and TK Kellman as *"The News Narrator"*

### First Assistant Director

Matt Duncan

### Production Assistant

Curtis Robideau

### Additional Footage

Pond5

### Director of Photography

Caleb Phillips

### Boom Operator

T.B. Plaia

### Payroll Services

ABS Accounting Services

### Camera Operator

Wade Paterson

### Editor

Barak Shpiez

### Associate Producers

Todd Baker

Josh Wark

### Production Designer

Ashley Linson

### Colorist

Edo Brizio

### Special Thanks

Michael Farino

Jim Mercer

Megan Minter

Alex Orellana

Lou Paniccia

Tom Ramos

Morgan Walker

Vetcell Therapeutics

### Gaffer

Jake Reardon

### Visual Effects

Andrew Lee

### Re-recording Mixer

Jason Stein

### Production Sound Mixer

Kevin Bible

### Music Composer

Barak Shpiez