

THE BETTER ANGELS

A Film by
A. J Edwards

94 minutes, B&W, English, Digital (DCP, Blu-ray), USA, 2013, Narrative

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SYNOPSIS

This is a story of the youth of one of America's greatest heroes, Abraham Lincoln. Spanning nearly three years in the wilderness of Indiana, it tells of the hardships that shaped him, the tragedy that marked him forever and the two women who guided him to immortality.

Tom Lincoln leads his wife and children, Sally and Abe from Kentucky to the new state of Indiana. Abe, 10, is a quiet boy, gentle and intelligent. He knows happiness for a time until his mother is infected and dies from a mysterious illness. Abe, Sally and their cousin Dennis are left under the care of Tom, a callous disciplinarian.

When Tom leaves to find a new wife, the children are abandoned in the wilderness during a harsh winter. Abe must protect his siblings from wild animals, cold and hunger. Weeks pass before Tom's return. He brings a new mother, Sarah. Having pledged his love solely to his late mother, Abe resists Sarah as she strives to win him over.

Recognizing Abe's insatiable appetite for knowledge, Sarah takes up the challenge of schooling him and raising him as if he was her own. Sarah proves unyielding in her tenderness, love and devotion to Abe and his family. He learns to accept her, seeing that, in her he has regained his lost mother and a loving parent who inspires him forever. This understanding frees him to journey onward to the destiny that awaits him. He would later in life call her his "angel mother."

THE FILMMAKERS

Writer/Director: A. J Edwards

Starring:

Sarah Lincoln: Diane Kruger

Tom Lincoln: Jason Clarke

Nancy Lincoln: Brit Marling

Mr. Crawford: Wes Bentley

and introducing:

Abe: Braydon Denney

Dennis: Cameron Williams

Sally: McKenzie Blankenship

Producers: Terrence Malick, Nicolas Gonda, Charley Beil and Jake Devito

Executive Producer: Antoine Douaihy

Co-Producer: Elizabeth Lodge

Casting Director: Margery Simkin

Director of Photography: Matthew J. Lloyd CSC

Production Designer: Caroline Hanania

Costume Designer: Lisa Tomczeszyn

Composer: Hanan Townsend
Editor: Alexander Richard Milan

THE BETTER ANGELS DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

This picture presents the compelling, but seldom told story of Abraham Lincoln's childhood in the wilderness of Indiana in the early 1800s. It is a classic narrative of a young man's rite of passage. In each hardship he faces, in each challenge he overcomes, we see hints of the destiny that awaits this future president.

The film charts the story of young Lincoln's strong bond with his mother, her death from illness, the arrival of his stepmother, and how through coming to love her, he regains that which he thought he had lost. Throughout this trying time he struggles with the pain caused by a callous and distant father.

First and foremost, the picture strives to create an emotional experience for the viewer: It is a journey of the senses through the pioneer world of young Lincoln. The production endeavored not to depict a purely biographical account of this period, something that could be documented in any book, but rather to present a cinematic flight through two years of Abe's life where we first see traces of his maturity, eloquence, compassion, and scholarliness. These elements are not always conveyed through traditional scenes or dialogue; instead they emerge through sound, image, and movement. The emotional experience at its finale aims to be something more akin to experiencing a piece of music rather than any kind of theater.

The project's origins lie with producer Terrence Malick. For some years, Malick researched and developed the concept, attracted to the simplicity the production could possess because of its few characters and stage-like setting. Through his generosity and involvement in laying the cornerstones of the script, I was able to adopt the project and see it through. Malick was a guiding influence for the film at many stages and deserves the immense gratitude of all involved.

To ensure historical accuracy, we consulted with the young Lincoln scholar William E. Bartelt, the author of *There I Grew Up*. No living historian has more expertise in this early period of Lincoln's life. In addition to Mr. Bartelt, countless seminal biographies of Lincoln were consulted during story development, including works by authors such as Benjamin P. Thomas, Carl Sandburg, Ida M. Tarbell and David Herbert Donald. Creative liberties were taken by the production in areas of the historical narrative that lacked sufficient documentation, but where necessary, the film relies on the knowledge of these great historians.

The remarkable performances of Diane Kruger, Jason Clarke, Brit Marling, and Wes Bentley are undoubtedly one of the greatest strengths of this picture. After an exhaustive search of Kentucky school districts, we were also fortunate to discover several new talents to fill the roles of the Lincoln children. The dedication of the principal players to their craft and their deep understanding of the historical setting resulted in characters that were both sincere and passionate on screen.

This is a film that portrays profound and personal loss, intense suffering, and the realization that faith and endurance can transform one's suffering into good for all. The importance of family, education, belief and tolerance are at its heart. I hope this film and its universal message reach an audience of young and old alike.

I hope the film acts as a mirror to audiences everywhere, showing who we are, where we came from, and what we can all be.

FILMMAKER BIOGRAPHIES

A. J EDWARDS - Writer / Director

A. J Edwards was born in Walnut Creek, CA and raised in San Antonio, TX. In 2004, he was co-Cinematographer on the documentary, THE MAKING OF THE NEW WORLD, as well as co-Editor of the Terrence Malick film, THE NEW WORLD. Edwards has since worked with Malick as 2nd Unit Director and co-Editor on several other features, including Palme d'Or winner THE TREE OF LIFE, starring Brad Pitt and Sean Penn, TO THE WONDER starring Ben Affleck, Rachel McAdams, and Javier Bardem, and KNIGHT OF CUPS, starring Christian Bale, Cate Blanchett, and Natalie Portman. On Tree, Edwards was also integral in the development of the project, assisting in the casting of the major players, namely, three young boys. This was achieved through an exhaustive, nationwide search that resulted in tremendous success. The naturalism of the unknown boys brought great authenticity and believability to the historical drama.

TERRENCE MALICK - Producer

Terrence Malick was born in Illinois. He grew up in Texas and Oklahoma. He graduated from Harvard University in 1966, attended Oxford University as a Rhodes Scholar, worked for LIFE and THE NEW YORKER, and taught philosophy at MIT before going to the American Film Institute in Los Angeles. He is the director of BADLANDS, DAYS OF HEAVEN, THE THIN RED LINE, THE NEW WORLD, and THE TREE OF LIFE, which won the Palme d'Or at the 2011 Cannes Film Festival. He is currently in post-production on two features, KNIGHT OF CUPS and the currently untitled feature based in the Austin music scene.

NICOLAS GONDA - Producer

As a producer, Nicolas Gonda has worked with Terrence Malick on Palme D'Or winning feature THE TREE OF LIFE and TO THE WONDER. He has several projects in various stages of production, including continuing his work with Mr. Malick, producing his two upcoming films, KNIGHT OF CUPS and the currently untitled feature based in the Austin music scene whose combined casts include Christian Bale, Ryan Gosling, Natalie Portman, Cate Blanchett, Michael Fassbender and Rooney Mara. Mr. Gonda was recently named one of Indiewire's inaugural "Influencers" and Variety's "10 Producers to Watch" for his work in the independent film industry. Mr. Gonda began his career working for Focus Features while a student at New York University. He lives in Austin, Texas.

CHARLEY BEIL - Producer

Charley Beil is a film and commercial producer based in New York City. He is an associate producer on Terrence Malick's forthcoming untitled film, starring Ben Affleck, Javier Bardem, and Rachel McAdams. Charley began working with Terrence Malick during the post-production of the director's Palme d'Or winning THE TREE OF LIFE. He has produced international advertising campaigns for Sony, Levis, and Club Monaco. Prior to producing, Charley worked on a talent desk at The Endeavor Agency and on the production of Emmy award-winning Showtime series Dexter. Charley holds a B.A. in Cinema Studies and Mathematics from New York University.

JAKE DEVITO - Producer

Jake DeVito is a producer, director, and photographer based out of New York City and Los Angeles. He was recently a producer on the supernatural horror thriller *The Last Good Man*, directed by his father Danny DeVito and starring Lance Reddick, Bill Fichtner and Constance Zimmer. Jake's work spans many aspects of film production from wardrobe, to camera department. His production experience brought him to work on several political documentary features shot in Sierra Leone, South Africa, Bosnia/Herzegovina, Serbia, Croatia and Kosovo. While continuing to develop his career as a film and television producer Jake has also begun directing music videos for artists such as Sigur Rós. He earned his BA in History from Oberlin College.

ANTOINE DOUAIHY - Executive Producer

Antoine Douaihy is a New York City based Director, Producer, Visual Consultant and Photographer. His work as a Second Unit Director and Visual Consultant in the motion picture industry has been featured in such films as *Dust*, *Angels In America*, *The Manchurian Candidate*, *Charlie Wilson's War* and *Wall Street: Money Never Sleeps*. He has collaborated with Academy Award recognized directors, Mike Nichols, Jonathan Demme, Oliver Stone, Ridley Scott, Steven Soderbergh and Stephen Daldry, among others. As a Producer and Production Manager he has worked internationally on such films as *Black Hawk Down*, *Closer*, *It's Always Sunny In Philadelphia*, *Che*, *Charlie Wilson's War*, *Doubt* and *Wall Street: Money Never Sleeps*. Antoine's photographs are held in the permanent collections of several museums, as well as private and institutional collections, in the United States and Europe. He was also commissioned by directors Woody Allen and Neil Jordan to create specific plot-related photographic works for their films.

MATTHEW LLOYD - Director of Photography

Matthew J. Lloyd earned an MFA degree in Cinematography at the American Film Institute. While at AFI, Lloyd shot several award-winning shorts including, *Plume*, which premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival and won the Kodak Award for Excellence in Cinematography. Shortly after graduating, Lloyd began working with the young filmmaker Kahlil Joseph on commercials and music videos at The Director's Bureau, with whom he shot numerous campaigns for Nike Sportswear, Vans and Pepsi and seminal videos for Aloe Blacc, Shibazz Palaces, Bilal and Seu Jorge. Lloyd also shot the noise rock band HEALTH's *We Are Water* music video with Eric Wareheim, which went on to become a cult classic and was included in Pitchfork's Top 40 Videos of 2010. He also collaborated with Isaiah Seret, acclaimed young director at *Pretty Bird*, on a number of esteemed music videos and commercials including Raphael Saddiq's "Good Man" and the Jack Daniel's "Tennessee Honey" campaign. Lloyd's 2010 contribution to the world of fashion included "Curve of Forgotten Things," starring Elle Fanning - the second installment of director Todd Cole's short film trilogy with the fashion brand Rodarte. In 2011, Lloyd shot the Sundance hit, *Robot and Frank*, in New York with director Jake Sherier of Park Pictures, starring Frank Langella, James Marsden, Susan Sarandon and Liv Tyler. That same year he was invited into the Canadian Society of Cinematographers and was named as one of the cinematographers to watch by *Variety's* Below-The-Line Impact Report. Most recently, Lloyd was hand-picked by the famed American filmmaker, Oliver Stone, to shoot 2nd unit on his new feature film *Savages* under celebrated 1st Unit DP, Daniel Mindel ASC.

CREDITS

Tom Lincoln
Sarah Lincoln
Nancy Lincoln
Mr. Crawford
Abe
Dennis
Sally
Johnny
Matilda
Uncle Thomas
Aunt Elizabeth
Reverend Elkin
Ben
Young School Girl
William
Lucia
Josiah
Charles
Johnny Kongapod
Vagabond
Stranger
Lawyer

CAST

JASON CLARKE
DIANE KRUGER
BRIT MARLING
WES BENTLEY
BRAYDON DENNEY
CAMERON WILLIAMS
MCKENZIE BLANKENSHIP
RYAN MCFALL
MADISON STILTNER
BRUCE BAYARD
VEANNE COX
ROBERT VINCENT SMITH
ADAM TETERS
IDA JOY
RILEY BRUTVAN
ALANA COLLOPY
BYRON BRADLEY
JOE WEBBER
GARY SUNDOWN
JAMIE HARROLD
JOSEPH MCKENNA
JOE BEVILACQUA

Written and Directed By

A.J EDWARDS

Produced by

CHARLEY BEIL
NICOLAS GONDA
TERRENCE MALICK
JAKE DEVITO

Executive Producers

JASON KRIGSFELD
JOSEPH KRIGSFELD
SUZANNE DEAL BOOTH
ANTOINE DOUAIHY

Co-Executive Producers

CLAUDIA KOWALSKI
KEVIN KOWALSKI
MICHAEL KOWALSKI

	STEFAN SONNENFELD
Director of Photography	MATTHEW LLOYD, CSC
Production Designer	CAROLINE HANANIA
Edited by	ALEXANDER RICHARD MILAN
Costume Designer	LISA TOMCZYSZYN
Co-Producer	ELIZABETH LODGE
Line Producer	ANTOINE DOUAIHY
Associate Producer	BRENT GLASS
Unit Production Manager	ASHLIEGH TUCKER
First Assistant Director	RANDALL EHRMANN
Key Second Assistant Director	RUTH DU
Camera Operator/Steadicam	DANA MORRIS
Supervising Sound Editor	JOEL DOUGHERTY
Casting Directors	MARGERY SIMKIN STEFNI COLLE
Locations Manager	TAE JUNG CHOI
Composer	HANAN TOWNSEND
Music Supervisor	LAUREN MARIE MIKUS
Sound Mixer	DANIEL BRICKER