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'Loving Vincent: The Impossible Dream': Film Review

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BreakThru Films



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Miki Wecel's documentary provides a behind-the-scenes account of the making of the groundbreaking, Oscar-nominated animated film 'Loving Vincent.'

A behind-the-scenes documentary about the making of the acclaimed 2017 animated film *Loving Vincent* would seem best suited as a DVD extra. Nonetheless, Miki Wecel's film will prove fascinating not only to animation and Vincent Van Gogh buffs, but to anyone interested in how the creative sausage is made. As an added bonus, *Loving Vincent: The Impossible Dream* even has a love story at its center.

Loving Vincent was the first fully painted feature animated film, using individual oil paintings in Van Gogh's distinctive style to tell the story of the artist's life and tragic death. It was the passion project of Polish artist and filmmaker Dorota Kobiela, who originally conceived it as a seven-minute short. She eventually joined forces with veteran animator Hugh Welchman, who had won an Oscar for his 2007 short film *Peter & the Wolf*. The partnership between the two quickly became personal as well as professional, and they're now married.

Kobiela, who had long been fascinated by Van Gogh, immersed herself in watching old movies and reading books about screenwriting in preparation for co-writing the screenplay. Once it was



single frame. More artists were desperately needed, which made increased financing a necessity.

The filmmakers started a Kickstarter campaign and also got support from such organizations as the Polish Film Institute. Dozens of artists signed on, toiling at specially designed workstations to speed up production. The finished project featured some 65,000 oil paintings, one for each frame of film.

In a fascinating segment, we see actor Robert Gulaczyk performing the dramatic moment in which the title figure slowly turns around to face the camera. Gulaczyk, who bears an uncanny resemblance to Van Gogh, is clad in street clothes, but a slow dissolve depicts the amazing transformation into the animated version of the artist.

"Hopefully, we'll all be remembered for this," says actor John Sessions, who played Pere Tanguy. Chris O'Dowd, who played Postman Roulin, is seen undergoing a session in which his fake beard is removed and he cries out in pain. The actor yells in faux consternation, "If I'd known about the fucking beard, I would have run a mile!" The documentary also includes interviews with Saoirse Ronan (Marguerite Gachet) and Douglas Booth (Armand Roulin) in which they describe the unique challenges the film presented.

The ending is, of course, a happy one. *Loving Vincent* had its world premiere at the Annecy International Animated Film Festival, where it received a 12-minute standing ovation. We see the creators watching TV breathlessly as the Oscar nominations for best animated feature are announced; as if designed to amp the suspense, *Loving Vincent* is the last title mentioned. Finally, there's a party in which Kobiela, Welchman and their collaborators are shown happily singing along to, what else, Don McLean's "Vincent."

Production company: BreakThru Films

Distributor: Good Deed Entertainment

Director-editor: Miki Weceł

Screenwriter: Hugh Welchman

Producers: Hugh Welchman, Sean Bobbitt

Composer: Clint Mansell

60 minutes