



FIRST LOOK
PICTURES
A DIVISION OF FIRST LOOK MEDIA

presents

EMMANUEL'S GIFT

a film directed by

LISA LAX and NANCY STERN

Running time: 80 minutes

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What people are saying about “Emmanuel’s Gift”:

“Emmanuel’s brave struggle to overcome his physical handicap and be recognized as a whole human being in Ghanaian society is heartwarming and uplifting. Emmanuel inspires every witness to his life story to reach for the impossible. ‘Emmanuel’s Gift’ is a gift for all humanity”

-Muhammad Ali

“A richly textured and deeply moving film. ‘Emmanuel’s Gift’ is a fascinating and important story-beautifully told.”

-Bob Costas
NBC Sports &HBO

“Nancy Stern and Lisa Lax have produced a wonderful film that is a tribute to the joy and endurance of the human spirit.”

-Alma Powell
(Wife of former U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell)

“How often does it happen that you walk out of a movie theater re-examining the way you live your own life? ‘Emmanuel’s Gift’ is one of those films: inspiring, joyous, immensely powerful. It made me reflect on, among other things, how we over-use the word ‘hero’ in my line of work.”

-Austin Murphy
Senior Writer, Sports Illustrated

“Considering that twin sisters Lisa Lax and Nancy Stern are responsible for producing, directing and writing “Emmanuel’s Gift,” the quality of work done on it is a given.

-Tom Hoffarth
Los Angeles Daily News

“Disabled Athlete’s Life Inspires “Gift” – His success has led to introductions to African Kings and United Nations leaders, improvements for the disabled in Ghana and a shift in cultural thinking about the physically impaired.”

-Bob Longino
-Atlanta Journal Constitution

“Elevated by Samson Chan’s gorgeous digital cinematography, ‘Emmanuel’s Gift’ will bowl auds over...”

- Variety

4 Stars – “I’m not sure how directors Lisa Lax and Nancy Stern learned of Emmanuel’s story, but the world is a better place because they did, then turned it into this sprawling, remarkable film.”

- Film Threat

3 Stars - "Beautiful to look at, and the power of one man's example is undeniable."
- Austin American Statesman

4 Stars- "This film -- directed by Lisa Lax and Nancy Stern, and narrated by Oprah Winfrey -- serves as a transcendent antidote to the customary cliché."
- San Jose Mercury News

"'Emmanuel's Gift' is not to be missed."
- Santa Barbara News Press

"Yeboah is the brightest star of the festival."
- Santa Barbara News Press

"The one film that all Santa Barbara staffers seem to be behind is the documentary 'Emmanuel's Gift'."
- Los Angeles Times

Logline

This is the story of a disabled orphan whose father abandoned him, whose village dismissed him and whose country thought him better off dead. This is the story of Emmanuel Ofose Yeboah, who had nothing, but gave everything --- and changed a nation forever.

Synopsis

If you are born disabled in Ghana, West Africa you are likely to be poisoned, or left to die by your family; if you are not poisoned or left for dead, you're likely to be hidden away in a room; and if you're not hidden, you are destined to spend your lifetime begging on the streets. Of the twenty million people in Ghana, two million are disabled. This is the story of one disabled man whose mission --- and purpose --- is to change all that forever.

In "Emmanuel's Gift," filmmakers Lisa Lax and Nancy Stern have uncovered a story as compelling as it is important. Narrated by Oprah Winfrey, the film chronicles the life of Emmanuel Ofose Yeboah, a young Ghanaian man born with a severely deformed right leg, who today, against incalculable odds, is opening minds, hearts and doors --- and effecting social and political change throughout his country.

While Emmanuel's message is vital --- People with disabilities are valuable contributors to any society --- his method is inspirational. With only one leg, Emmanuel begins his courageous quest with a 600-kilometer bicycle ride across Ghana, spreading his vision of grit and resolve with each turn of the bike's pedals.

Lisa Lax and Nancy Stern have been documenting Emmanuel's plight for over two years, having shot over 400 hours of powerful footage. The film includes original footage shot in Ghana, California, Oregon and New York, as well as photographs and other acquired film and video of Emmanuel's early years.

Through it all, they have created an intimate insight into the mind and heart of a courageous, awe inspiring, heroic visionary, one whose unforgettable journey transcends continents and cultures to become a vision shared by each of us.

Biographies

Emmanuel Ofosu Yeboah

Emmanuel was born in Ghana, with a deformed right leg and meager expectations. Abandoned by his father and shunned by his community, his path was predetermined: Become a beggar and rely upon others for survival. But Emmanuel chose a different road. He refused to sacrifice his dignity or to be forced into the streets like others in his situation.

When he was a teenager, after the death of his mother, to whom he owed his resolve, Emmanuel took matters into his own hands and started a shoeshine business, earning \$2 a day. Building on the pride he felt in his work and accomplishment, Emmanuel set out to show the nation of Ghana that physically challenged individuals can actively shape their destiny --- not just meekly accept it.

He contacted the Challenged Athletes Foundation (CAF) for help. But, rather than asking for money, Emmanuel asked for a bicycle, a tool with which to show his country and the world his mettle. Emmanuel pedaled 610 kilometers (almost 380 miles) across Ghana using only his left leg, determined to spread his message: Disability does *not* mean inability.

Impressed by Emmanuel's thirst for equality and hunger for change, CAF flew him to the 2002 San Diego Triathlon Challenge to participate in the 56-mile bike portion of the event. There he met world-class athletes like Rudy Garcia-Tolsen and Jim MacLaren, both of whom had accomplished tremendous athletic feats via the aid of high-tech prosthetic devices.

CAF and a key partner, Loma Linda University Rehabilitation Institute, wondered if such a prosthetic might also be the answer for Emmanuel. Even after a weeklong stay at the world-renowned rehabilitation facility, Emmanuel still had doubts about the prospect of surgery. In Ghana, such an operation could prove to be fatal. He shared his fears with Rudy, who at age five had had both legs amputated above the knee. Convinced that a prosthetic limb would serve him better than the one with which he had been born, Emmanuel decided to undergo the surgical amputation of his right leg above the knee, and receive a new prosthesis from Loma Linda. For the first time in his life, he would stand on two feet.

Today, Emmanuel runs, rides a bike using both legs, and wears trousers. He stands proudly, supported by his inner tenacity and strength of character --- rather than the crutches upon which he once relied. After winning the prestigious Casey Martin Award from Nike, he decided to apply his \$25,000 grant --- matched by CAF, whose Emmanuel Fund provides education and sports equipment --- toward continuing to change attitudes and lives in his homeland, where one of every ten citizens (over two million people) is disabled. Emmanuel hopes to build a sports center for athletes of all backgrounds and abilities, but staffed solely by the disabled.

President Bush recently met with Emmanuel and remarked, “[He has] set an example for others in his country that just because you're lame doesn't mean you're a second-class citizen.”

Emmanuel was the co-winner of the prestigious Arthur Ashe Courage Award this year. Emmanuel and his co-winner, Jim MacLaren, were presented the award by Oprah Winfrey in a ceremony co-hosted by Matthew Perry at Hollywood’s Kodak Theatre, and broadcast on ESPN on July 17th.

Jim MacLaren

James E. MacLaren, born April 13, 1963, has survived two would-be fatal accidents. The first, at age 22, resulted in the loss of his left leg. The second, 10 years later, left Jim a quadriplegic. Each time Jim has used sheer force of will and awe-inspiring courage to come back --- the first time to become the fastest amputee athlete in the world, and now as an individual with an amazing story to share and an attitude that inspires others to greatness.

Jim loves life and his passion for living is contagious. With physical limitations a given, Jim has looked to myth and depth psychology to expand his understanding of what it means to be wounded and how wounds can serve as catalysts to deepening one’s understanding of self and spirit. Working on a first-40-years memoir, he is drawing together the many strands of his life and the journey he has undertaken. He shares these stories casually, by giving motivational speeches, through consulting, and in the articles he authors.

A 1985 graduate of Yale University with a BA in Theatre Studies and, subsequently, a Masters from the Yale School of Drama, Jim also acts and is considering reviving a one-man show he once performed in Denver. Jim continues to donate time to the Challenged Athletes Foundation --- a charitable organization formed by his triathlete friends --- and to Camp Good Days and Special Times, a summer camp for children facing the toughest challenges of life.

Elizabeth Gilbert recently authored an in-depth feature on Jim, which ran in the May, 2002 issue of GQ magazine, and was reprinted in the February, 2003 issue of The Reader’s Digest.

Co-winner of the prestigious Arthur Ashe Courage Award this year, Jim and his co-winner, Emmanuel Yeboah, were presented the award by Oprah Winfrey in a ceremony co-hosted by Matthew Perry at Hollywood’s Kodak Theatre, and broadcast on ESPN on July 17th.

For more information on Jim MacLaren go to: www.jimmaclaren.com

Lisa Lax

Co-Producer/Co-Director

During Lisa Lax's twelve-year tenure as a Producer/Director at NBC Sports, she became one of the most respected production talents in the business. In her role as head of NBC's Olympic profile unit, Lax supervised the production of over 500 feature stories on the world's best Olympians. Her work in coordinating the team that traveled the globe gathering footage and interviewing athletes was an essential part of NBC's commitment to storytelling during the 1996, 2000 and 2002 Olympic Games. Lax won 13 Emmy Awards in her time at NBC, including a Special Classification Emmy Award for Outstanding Individual Achievement in producing and directing over 140 profiles for NBC's coverage of the 1996 Atlanta Games.

Starting in 1996, Lax served as the producer and director of the documentary films that have become a special tradition in NBC's presentation of the Olympic Games. The 1996 "*Wonders of Rome*" film won a Sports Emmy for Program Achievement and an International Film & Video Festival Gold Camera Award for Best Documentary. The 2000 Olympic film "*Twice Born – Muhammad Ali*" won critical acclaim, and the 2002 films "*Peggy & Dorothy*" and "*Triumphs of the Tenth*" were highlights of NBC's coverage in Salt Lake City.

In Salt Lake City, Lax also ran the Special Features Unit (SFU), overseeing news coverage and non-sporting event activities. Her duties in Sydney included NBC's Olympic "SWAT Team," the mobile production unit which tackled broadcast challenges including triathlon, road cycling, mountain biking and equestrian cross-country. In addition, Lax was the executive producer of "*The Olympic Show*," a weekly 30-minute program airing on CNBC for four consecutive years.

Lax also directed and produced the long-form Arthur Ashe tribute that aired during NBC's coverage of the 1993 Wimbledon Tennis Championships, earning an Emmy Award for Best Feature. She also won an International Monitor Award and a Sports Emmy Award for directing and producing the 1996 and 1999 Ironman Triathlon World Championships. In 1997, she served as lead producer for NBC's coverage of the inaugural WNBA season. Her other production credits include NFL and NBA game telecasts, the World Figure Skating Championships, the World Track and Field Championships, Wimbledon Tennis Championships, and AVP pro-beach volleyball.

Before moving to NBC Sports, Lax worked as a production assistant, associate director and feature producer for "*Later... with Bob Costas*" --- from that program's inception in the spring of 1988.

Lax was an All-American lacrosse player and All-New England tennis player at Tufts University, where she graduated with a political science degree in 1986. Tufts recently commended Lisa with the 2002 Distinguished Achievement Award, one of the University's highest honors. She and her identical twin sister Nancy Stern are co-founders of Lookalike Productions. Lax currently resides with her husband Craig in New York City.

Nancy Stern

Co-Producer/Co-Director

As head of Lookalike and Jumbolaya Productions, Nancy Stern is pursuing in all genres her love of storytelling.

Stern began her career at ABC News as a desk assistant for *Nightline*, but followed her passion and quickly moved to the world of sports. At ABC Sports she was the first woman to produce the world's most famous bicycle race, The Tour de France. She also produced the 17 hours of the Goodwill Games from St. Petersburg, Russia. For the primetime broadcasts of the 1984 U.S Figure Skating Championships, she reported on the infamous "Nancy and Tonya" scandal. Other work at ABC Sports included: the 1988 Winter Olympics; Monday Night Football; College Football; the Little League World Series; an American classic, Wide World of Sports; and the Emmy Award-winning documentaries, *A Passion to Play: Stories of Women in Sports* and *Athletes and Addiction: It's Not A Game*, for which she was a producer and creative director.

Stern segued to entertainment in 1995 when she joined the staff of ABC Daytime. She was consulting producer and director in Daytime Drama on the Emmy Award-winning *The City*, and also directed for *All My Children* and *One Life to Live*. Also for ABC, on the heels of the now infamous "Bite Fight" in Las Vegas, Stern produced a primetime hour chronicling the lives of Mike Tyson and Evander Holyfield. In 1997 she was Co-Executive Producer for the live primetime broadcast of the Daytime Emmy Awards.

Under Lookalike Productions, Stern was both Executive Producer and Director of *General Hospital 35th Anniversary Special*, *ABC Soaps' Most Unforgettable Love Stories*, and FOX's *Opening the Lost Tombs: Live From Egypt*, and *Signs From God: Science Tests Faith*, the ABC Special *Celebrity Weddings In Style*, and ABC's *David Blaine: Frozen in Time*. Her sister company *Jumbolaya Productions* produced the scripted series *Cinematherapy* which aired daily on the Women's Entertainment Network (WE).

For the past six years, Stern has executive produced various television shows under the banner Jumbolaya Productions. In the fall of 2001, she executive produced six episodes of NBC's reality series *LOST*, 13 episodes of the ESPN docu-drama series *Sidelines*, and three seasons of the hit ESPN show "Dream Job". She was Executive Producer, Director and Writer of NBC's retrospective *The Cosby Show...A Look Back*.

Nancy and her twin sister and partner in Lookalike Productions, Lisa Lax, are producing and directing documentary films. "*Emmanuel's Gift*" is their first full length documentary.

Stern has won three Emmy awards, a Cine Golden Eagle Award, a Christopher Award and an International Monitor Award. She lives in New Jersey with her husband Rick, daughter Sophie and son Brian.

Samson Chan

Director of Photography

Samson Chan is an acclaimed cinematographer and photographer with over ten years of filmmaking experience. Throughout his career he has captured awe-inspiring images from some of the most memorable moments in sports, news and entertainment. It was Chan who showed us the power of soccer in war-torn Liberia, the majesty of centre court at Wimbledon, the stunned silence of the Columbia Shuttle disaster and most recently the raw passion of a Ghanaian athlete driven to enlighten an entire nation. Samson's film credits also include Vanilla City, which won Best Comedy Short at the Houston Film Festival, and The Pitch, part of the HBO U.S. Comedy Arts Festival.

April Wilson

Editor

April Wilson is a prolific editor whose talents are as diverse as her experience. Working across the commercial film spectrum, she has edited television programs, including 13 episodes of "Location! Location! Location!" and two one-hour episodes for HGTV, The Home & Garden Network, as well as promotional spots for Queer as Folk, VH1's Command the Band and The Lifetime Movie Network. April has also produced, written and edited film trailers, including the Emmy-winning The Passion of Ayn Rand and Free of Eden, as well as Falcon Down and The Rich Donato Story. April also wrote, shot and edited a pilot for a children's show about physics and Texas history called Exploration Texas.

Meredith Paige

Editor

Meredith Paige has an extensive career in television, spanning over 20 years as an editor of sports, entertainment and documentary films. She began her career as an Editor for NBC and worked on such programs as David Letterman, The Today Show, and Saturday Night Live. In 1996, she joined Lisa Lax as an Editor and Feature Producer for the Atlanta Olympics. In 2001, she joined Nancy Stern on The Cosby Show...A Look Back. She has also produced for the Sundance Channel's Anatomy of a Scene show, which focused on the movies "Confidence" and "The Secret Lives of Dentists". Meredith has won eight Emmy Awards and an International Monitor Award in 2000 for best sports editing of the Ironman Triathlon World Championship. She was the Senior Feature Producer for the new Jane Pauley Show at NBC, and is the Supervising Producer of the Martha Stewart Show.

Alan L. Strusser

Sound

Alan L. Strusser is a highly respected artist-technician who not only uses sound to reinforce the visual medium, but to create visuals as well. While his extraordinary career has taken him around the globe, no experience has meant more to him than that of his journey to Ghana for the documentary film, "Emmanuel's Gift". Alan's credits include features for the Seoul, Barcelona, Atlanta and Sydney Olympics; documentaries for HBO Sports, including Women In Sports, Howard Cosell and Sports Century; the BBC documentaries, Inside The Porn Industry and Bird Migration, and the ESPN documentary, World Series of Poker.

Jeff Beal

Composer

Emmy award-winning composer Jeff Beal is a member of a new generation of eclectic composers. He is fluent in the diverse languages of jazz, classical, contemporary, electronic and world music. Beal's compositions can be heard in movie theaters, concert halls, CD recordings and on television. Steven Schneider (regular contributor to The New York Times) wrote of "...the richness of Beal's musical thinking --- the ways in which he conceives of his solos as fully-developed mini-compositions, while his compositions often capture the liveliness and unpredictability of the best improvisation."

As a film composer, Beal scored Ed Harris' critically acclaimed directorial debut, Pollock. Other scores include director Bob Rafelson's latest feature No Good Deed, William H. Macy's acclaimed Door to Door, The Passion of Ayn Rand, From the Earth to the Moon (episode 9), and the theme and underscore for USA's hit series Monk, starring Tony Shalhoub. Beal's concert music has been performed by many leading orchestras and conductors, including the St. Louis, Rochester, Pacific, Frankfurt, Munich and Detroit Symphonies.

About the Challenged Athletes Foundation (CAF)

The San Diego Triathlon Challenge was created to help one person, one athlete, one injured friend in need. In 1993, Jim MacLaren was at the top of his game. He had overcome a near fatal accident that resulted in the loss of his leg below the knee. Jim was embracing his role as the world's most accomplished amputee marathoner and as a gritty competitor in the ultimate test of human endurance: Ironman Hawaii. He was paving the way for generations of challenged athletes who would look to him for guidance. His performances, most in the top 20% of all competitors, stunned his fellow racers and exasperated those he beat.

In 1993, Jim's world was once again turned upside down. While competing in the bike portion on a closed triathlon racecourse, Jim was hit by a van that left him --- for the second time --- fighting for his life. Jim was left a quadriplegic, but help – and hope – were on the way. Soon after the accident, friends from the triathlon community gathered at the first San Diego Triathlon Challenge (SDTC) in 1994 to raise \$25,000 to buy Jim a new adaptable van. They raised twice that amount. The trend continued and year after year, fundraising expectations were blown away. After Jim's bills were paid, organizers turned their focus to the many SDTC participants with disabilities who were inspired to greater heights by Jim's accomplishments. In 1997, the Challenged Athletes Foundation was established with the same spirit and determination that fueled Jim.

Since then, the CAF has raised close to \$6 million and helped more than 1,600 challenged athletes obtain such special equipment as sports chairs and handcycles needed to participate in sports and physical fitness. This funding has helped pay for other needs, too --- like teaching physically challenged children to swim and helping send athletes to the Paralympic Games.

Because of the success of the San Diego Triathlon Challenge, the CAF has flourished into a world-renowned organization that has helped thousands of challenged athletes live out their dreams. In response to this growth, the CAF has begun pursuing additional sources of funding that include planned giving, individual donations, grant writing and corporate partnerships. Along with new sources of funding, CAF has created mentoring and outreach programs that will better serve challenged athletes and educate communities around the world about disability.

Like Jim MacLaren, the CAF seeks to constantly re-define the parameters of what is considered “possible” for challenged athletes.

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