

# TAKE ♥ HEART

The quest to rid Australasia of Rheumatic Heart Disease

Presented by **aspen**foundation



A MOONSHINE MOVIES PRODUCTION "TAKE HEART"

NARRATED BY STAN GRANT

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY **MIKE HILL** SOUND RECORDIST **SUE COLLINS** EDITOR **ALEX ARCHER** ASSISTANT EDITOR **HAMISH JOHNSTON**  
COMPOSER **ADAM STARR** DIDGERIDOO VIRTUOSO **MARK ATKINS** SOUND DESIGNER **KEITH THOMAS** MULTIPLATFORM DESIGNER **HAMISH JOHNSTON**  
INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIAN LIAISON **ALICE MITCHELL** WRITTEN BY **MIKE HILL & SUE COLLINS** SUBJECT CONSULTANT **ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR ANDREW STEER**  
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS **PROFESSOR DAVID HILL AO, MIKE HILL & SUE COLLINS**  
DIRECTED BY **MIKE HILL** PRODUCED BY **SUE COLLINS & MIKE HILL**

[WWW.TAKEHEART.TV](http://WWW.TAKEHEART.TV)





# PRESS KIT

Written and Directed by MIKE HILL  
Produced by SUE COLLINS and MIKE HILL  
Executive Producers: Professor DAVID HILL AO, MIKE HILL and SUE COLLINS  
Narrated by STAN GRANT

WINNER 9 Awards at the 2016 Global Independent Film Awards  
including Gold Medal, Best Featurette, Silver Medal, Best Documentary

## **Australian Premiere Dates 2016**

**World Premiere** Thu 10 Mar, ACMI Cinema, Melbourne  
Liddywoo Mardi, Dr Bo Remenyi and Director Mike Hill in attendance

**Canberra Premiere** Fri 11 Mar

**Darwin Premiere** Thu 17 Mar, BBC Cinemas

**Tiwi Islands Premiere** Sun 20 Mar, Wurrumiyanga

**Brisbane Premiere** Tue 22 Mar, Menzies School of Research

Duration: 52 mins  
[www.takeheart.tv](http://www.takeheart.tv)

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The Filmmakers acknowledge and respect the Traditional Custodians and Elders of the Lands across Australia, and in particular, the lands in this film.

# TAKE ♥ HEART

**The quest to rid Australasia of  
Rheumatic Heart Disease**

This March in the lead up to the national Closing The Gap Day, Moonshine Movies will premiere screenings of **Take Heart: The Quest to Rid Australasia of Rheumatic Heart Disease**, a powerful and provocative documentary that lifts the lid on this largely invisible disease that threatens the lives of over thirty million young people around the world, and is 100% preventable. The film will be released via the Tugg Platform and will screen on NITV (SBS) in 2016.

The first peoples of Australasia have among the highest rates of Rheumatic Heart Disease (RHD) globally, highlighting the gap in health services between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. Directed by Mike Hill and narrated by Stan Grant, *Take Heart* follows the stories of four Indigenous Australians – Brooklyn (7), Trenton (8), Carlissa (16) and Liddywoo (17) – over two years. The one-hour feature film accompanies them through harrowing open-heart surgery, long-term hospital stays, and the reality of daily life with RHD, examining the complexities involved in balancing traditional lifestyles with the demands of the modern medical system.

*Take Heart* explores the social, environmental and health factors that place young Indigenous Australian, Māori and Pacific Islander children in Australasians at such high risk, together with a roadmap to prevent future generations of children from being struck down.





## Logline

*Take Heart* – The Quest To Rid Australasia of Rheumatic Heart Disease.

## Long Synopsis

*Take Heart* follows the stories of four Indigenous Australian youngsters over two years. Their voices are supported by their Hungarian-Australian doctor, Darwin-based paediatric cardiologist Dr Bo Remenyi, Dr Lance O’Sullivan (2014 New Zealander of the Year), as well as Maori and Pacific Island New Zealand patients. Told through the eyes of BROOKLYN (7), TRENTON (8), CARLISSA (16), LIDDYWOOL (17), MELESIU (17) and TAAME (14), *Take Heart* seeks to get to the heart of the complex social, environmental and health factors that place these young Australasians at such high risk.

The film charts the trajectory of the disease through the narrative journeys of the participants, meeting the adorable BROOKLYN (7) in the children’s ward of the Royal Darwin Hospital. Despite the best efforts of her ‘clown doctors’, Brooklyn’s eyes betray her sadness. She has been bed-bound for over a month, misses her siblings terribly and despises the frequent needles administered to keep her heart safe from RHD. When Dr Bo Remenyi speaks to Brooklyn’s father James, an open-heart surgery patient himself, we realise that the family is worried sick about Brooklyn but knows next-to-nothing about the disease that will shortly see her transferred to the Royal Children’s Hospital in Melbourne for major open-heart surgery.

In the island paradise of Tiwi Islands, we meet eight-year-old TRENTON. A natural-born hunter, Trenton fills his days with activities in keeping with his traditional lifestyle. Through Trenton’s story we discover the common causes of Acute Rheumatic Fever (ARF) – transmission of ‘Strep’ amongst children through sore throats and skin sores in the community due to overcrowding, close sleeping arrangements, sharing towels and most critically, the absence of early referrals to the health clinic when children are symptomatic. “Education is the key to beating this disease,” affirms Dr Bo Remenyi.

In her traditional homelands of Werenben, some sixty kilometres from Katherine, CARLISSA (16) reflects on the devastating impact RHD has had on her immediate family and the Jawoyn people. “Well, really it runs through the family. My uncle, he died from Rheumatic Heart Disease, and my other uncle died from it too, and my mum, and my cousin sister, the one took me to Melbourne. I think it runs through the



family," explains Carlissa. "A little bug. A little Strep. Well it could be anywhere. Cos kids and people like to walk around. Well, it could get like onto your body then it could go into open wounds. Maybe it got into my body and then I felt sick, like sore joints and sore throat and that's how it caused Rheumatic Heart Disease."

Swimming at the local watering hole of Edith Falls, Carlissa confides, "I really like school. I wanted to be a nurse but now I'm thinking a ranger might be better. Look after the animals here and catch the salties [saltwater crocodiles]." Carlissa has had four open-heart surgeries, her last involving the insertion of a mechanical heart valve which now clicks "like a grasshopper – a little ticking sound which makes me know it's working well." But she's not completely in the clear; she must now comply to a strict schedule of medications including a daily dose of the blood-thinning Warfarin and monthly Bicillin needles. "It's unfair really. Cos sometimes I'm not allowed to play sports or do like some contact sports. It's really hard having Rheumatic Heart Disease." Due to the remoteness of her homelands to the local medical clinic in Katherine, her age and complex social factors, Carlissa's compliance to these life-saving medicines has been dangerously low despite her best efforts. "I don't want to take a stroke cos I'm too young to die."

In Melbourne, we meet LIDDYWO (17) the day before his third open-heart surgery. 'Liddy' is coughing relentlessly and wheezing with each breath. His surgeon, Dr Yves Dudekem, reports that the mechanical valve replacement procedure is urgent and due to the advanced nature of his Rheumatic Heart Disease he is at high risk of dying in theatre. His heart could stop working any moment. Our camera accompanies Liddy through his marathon nine-hour open-heart surgery, which he thankfully survives.

Over the course of the following two years we delve deeper into the lives of these young Australians. In their own unique ways, they show us their worlds and share intimate insights that help us understand the complex nature of preventing a disease with so many social determinants.

*Take Heart* witnesses moments of great joy – Liddy tearing around his home community in urban Darwin on a four-wheeler adorned with his beloved Essendon football guernsey; Trenton leading us on a turtle hunt in Milikapiti; Brooklyn and 'her mob' performing a choreographed dance routine in their lounge room; Carlissa and her family hosting an outback Christmas lunch beside the Wereben school house.

In New Zealand, a world-leading Rheumatic Fever prevention program is bringing new knowledge and innovation to the region. MELESIU, a seventeen-year-old Tongan New Zealander, shares her concerns about progression of the disease and her passion for spreading critical preventative health knowledge amongst her peers. "I would rather we got better at preventing this problem than becoming experts at treating the complications of it," reflects Dr O'Sullivan, 2014 New Zealander of the Year.

Through the eyes of these young people living with RHD, we see the complexities involved in balancing traditional lifestyles with the demands of the modern medical system. Consistent with their cultural norms, the featured families use verbal communication sparingly. However, they have a great deal to share with us. And when they do speak, it's often with stories, lore and questions that cut through to the heart of the matter.



"Why does this only affect us (Indigenous Australians) in the top end?" demands Brooklyn's father James. "Is it the climate or something?" Well, it turns out that climate has nothing to do with it. In fact, rates of RHD were high all over southern Australia in the early twentieth century. Famously, former Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd had RHD and subsequent surgical interventions relating to the disease. As living conditions and medical services 'down south' improved, rates of RHD were reduced to next to nothing.

Because its prevention requires a combination of social services working well together, the prevalence of RHD is actually a measure of a society. In New Zealand, it's considered to be one of ten targets of Better Public Service. Nonetheless, throughout the region, we find a pattern of disadvantaged populations being most at-risk. The prevalence of RHD in Australia's Indigenous population and New Zealand's Maori and Pacific Islander populations are amongst the highest in the world. As a result, the answers to the pertinent questions raised by these families about lifestyle choices, living conditions, overcrowding and access to health services guides the audience to important new insights related to 'Closing the Gap'.

# Director's Statement

MIKE HILL

*Take Heart* tackles the big subject of 'Closing the Gap' on Indigenous disadvantage through the story of RHD, stepping into the shoes of the young Australasians affected by the epidemic. The young people's choices and insights reframe the largely misunderstood issue of Indigenous health from a fresh perspective, while their visible chest scars remind us that this wholly preventable disease has literally scarred these children for life.

## About the Project

The documentary is one part of an international initiative to put RHD on the global media and public health agendas in Australasia, Africa and the Middle East, Asia and Latin America. *Take Heart* is accompanied by fourteen short films, a free action tool-kit, two free smart-phone apps, photography exhibitions, and an interactive website with social-media resources. In Australia, a community outreach program, supported by Bupa, will complement the film, providing local communities with access to an educational tool kit, interactive apps and website including essential information to recognise symptoms and access treatment for RHD.

Bupa National Medical Director, Dr Rob Grenfell, said, "*Take Heart* shines a light on a disease that simply should not exist in this country. Through the outreach program, we want to enable communities to identify symptoms early and seek treatment. By addressing the factors contributing to the prevalence of Rheumatic Heart Disease, we can take a significant step towards closing the gap."

## What is RHD?

Rheumatic Heart Disease (RHD) starts with a sore throat or infected skin sores, symptoms of a common bacterial infection (Group A Streptococcus) common in children 5-15 years of age. If left untreated, this can develop into Acute Rheumatic Fever (ARF) and the permanent heart damage known as RHD, which can lead to open-heart surgery, permanent disability, stroke and premature death. Key risk factors include poverty, overcrowding and reduced access to medical care. The global profile of RHD has increased over the past decade but still remains in the shadow of other communicable diseases such as malaria, HIV and TB, despite being the most common acquired form of cardiovascular disease in children, adolescents and young adults in the world. Indigenous children and young adults are up to eight times more likely than other groups to be hospitalised and nearly 20 times as likely to die from RHD. currently affecting over thirty million people globally and 2% of Indigenous Australasians living in the Top End.

# THE FILMMAKERS

## Mike Hill - Director

*Take Heart* director, producer and DOP Mike Hill is an award-winning Australian filmmaker passionate about crafting incredible screen stories that inspire change. Hill's past credits include *Little Stars* (2015), *LIFE Before Death* (2012), *The Man Who Souled The World* (2007), and the television series *Jokes On You* (2011) and *Jailbait* (2008).

## Sue Collins - Producer

*Take Heart* producer Sue Collins is an experienced documentary film producer, drama film production manager and skilled researcher committed to creating work that directly benefits others. Her films have been honoured with a multitude of awards, including her role as First Assistant Director to Academy-Award winning filmmaker Adam Elliot on *Mary & Max* (2009), and her work has reached millions around the world, shaped government policy and led to the development of several important social initiatives.

## Stan Grant - Narrator

*Take Heart* Narrator Stan Grant is a Wiradjuri man, a Logie and Walkley Award winner and *Guardian Australia's* Indigenous News Editor. He is the presenter of NITV's *Awaken* and Sky news, and previously appeared on *Real Life*, *SBS World News Australia* and CNN.





# THE FILMMAKERS

## Hamish Johnston - Multi-Platform Designer/ Assistant Editor

Hamish Johnston is a gifted multimedia artist who specialises in film editing, digital design and development. His passion is in designing original interactive work that reaches out and engages audiences in new and innovative ways. He has led the creative and multimedia design for impact films *Little Stars* (2015), *Common Ground* (2013) and *LIFE Before Death* (2012), as well as the world's first interactive stand-up comedy series *Jokes On You* starring Eddie Ifft (2011).

## Alex Archer - Editor

Alex Archer is a screen editor whose work has been nominated for and won various awards, including two Emmys, a Peabody, an AIB and several RTS awards. He is an experienced multi-award winning documentary editor with credits including *Uranium: Twisting the Dragon's Tail* (2015), *Tony Robinson's Tour of Duty* (WTFN for History), *Bodyline: The Ultimate Test* (Serendipity West for ABC), *Devil Island* (360 Degree Films for ABC and ITV), *Murdoch* (Brook Lapping & Electric Pictures for SBS (Australia, ITV UK and BBC World Wide), *Inside the Meltdown* (Mongoose Pictures and Quicksilver for This World BBC2 and Frontline WGBH), *The Wounded Platoon* (Mongoose Pictures for WGBH Frontline and BBC) and *Pakistan's Taliban Generation* (October Films for Channel 4 and PBS Frontline World).

## Adam Starr - Composer

Adam Starr is a talented composer who has worked on many of Moonshine's previous productions including *Little Stars* (2015), *Common Ground* (2013), *LIFE Before Death* (2012), *The Man Who Souled the World* (2007) and *Tic Tac 2 Heelflip: Australia's Skateboarding History* (2001). His original music has been recorded by different artists and bands on more than fifteen CDs. Starr also composes concert music: he has written for soloists, chamber groups, Big Bands and orchestras. Adam's compositions have been performed in Italy, Germany, Switzerland, Singapore and the UK. Starr completed a Masters in Composition for the Screen at the Royal College of Music in London in 2005 and a PhD in Composition at University of Melbourne.

## Keith Thomas - Sound Designer

Keith Thomas is an AFI award-winning sound designer, winning Best Sound in a Documentary for his work on *Vietnam Nurses* (2005). As the founder of Alchemy Audio Post Production, Thomas has previously collaborated with Moonshine on various projects including *Little Stars* (2015), *Common Ground* (2013) and *LIFE Before Death* (2012). He was awarded the Australian Centenary Medal in the 2001 Queen's New Years Honours List for his services to Australian society and Australian film production.



# KEY CREDITS

Director	MIKE HILL
Writers	MIKE HILL SUE COLLINS
Producers	MIKE HILL SUE COLLINS
Executive Producers	MIKE HILL SUE COLLINS PROFESSOR DAVID HILL AO
Narrator	STAN GRANT
Editor	ALEX ARCHER
Sound Designer	KEITH THOMAS
Composer	ADAM STARR
Designer / Ass. Editor	HAMISH JOHNSTON
Didgeridoo Virtuoso	MARK ATKINS

*Take Heart* includes interviews with experts in the field Dr Bo Remenyi (Paediatric Cardiologist), Dr Yves D'Udekem, (Paediatric Heart Surgeon) Dr Lance O'Sullivan (GP), Dr David Jansen (GP), Associate Professor Dr Andrew Steer (Paediatrician), Associate Professor Nigel Wilson Paediatric (Cardiologist) and Professor Bart Currie (Tropical and Emerging Infectious Diseases Expert).

## **Moonshine Movies**

Moonshine Movies is a multiple award-winning independent film production company specialising in creating moving picture projects of all forms that move audiences to action.

At Moonshine, we believe that stories shape our world. With their unique visceral power, movies have the capacity to harness the mind and spirit unlike any other medium. This power combined with ever increasing inter-connectivity empowers us to go beyond the didactic and embrace audience engagement, participation and interactivity.

This is why Moonshine Movies exists – to move audiences to action. Moonshine Movies past and present productions have been released theatrically, broadcast on TV worldwide and distributed in other innovative ways including hosted public screenings, interactive DVDs and mobile apps, as well as through video-on-demand services like the iTunes and Netflix. Moonshine Movies present and past productions include *Little Stars* (2015), *Jokes On You* (2014) and *LIFE Before Death* (2013) as well as a variety of short films and campaigns.

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Production Country:  
Australia, New Zealand  
Year: 2016

Language: English, Māori  
Genre: Documentary, Feature, Television,  
Web/New Media  
Format: Digital HD  
Running Time: 52 minutes  
Colour/BW: Colour  
Aspect Ratio: 16:9

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