

**KINO LORBER**  
i n c o r p o r a t e d

***JASON BECKER:  
NOT DEAD YET***

A FILM BY JESSE VILE

Running Time: 87 mins.  
UK / 2012 / HD  
In English

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## SHORT SYNOPSIS

Musical prodigy Jason Becker has been battling with ALS for over 22 years – the paralyzing disease has trapped Jason inside of his body. But using an eye communication system, Jason is able to escape and release the music that is trapped inside of his mind.

## SYNOPSIS

'*Jason Becker: Not Dead Yet*' is a feature-length documentary that tells the extraordinary story of Jason Becker, a musical prodigy and guitar legend, who has been battling with ALS for 22 years. A paralyzing, terminal illness with no cure, the disease has trapped Jason inside of his body rendering him completely paralyzed.

Using an eye communication system invented by his father, Jason is able to escape the confines of his body and release the music that is trapped inside of his mind. '*Jason Becker: Not Dead Yet*' is a story of dreams, love and the strength of the human spirit.

## AWARDS

**Audience Award: Best Documentary Feature**  
*Cinequest Film Festival 2012*

**Special Jury Prize: Documentary Feature**  
*Cinequest Film Festival 2012*

## NOMINATIONS

**Inspiration Award** *Full Frame Film Festival 2012*  
**The Charles E. Guggenheim Emerging Artist Award** *Full Frame Film Festival 2012*  
**Center for Documentary Studies Filmmaker Award** *Full Frame Film Festival 2012*  
**Audience Award** *Full Frame Film Festival 2012*

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## EXTENDED SYNOPSIS

The year is 1989, and all the dreams of Jason Becker, a down-to-earth teenager from California, have just come true. Jason has just landed himself the biggest rock guitar gig on the planet. He's on the cover of every rock guitar magazine and is being hailed by critics as a musical prodigy in line to become one of the all-time greats. Jason and his family have found the American dream and are about to start living it.

One week from now, during an examination of his leg, their dreams will turn into a nightmare when Jason is diagnosed with Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis and given just 3-5 years to live.

Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (also known as Lou Gehrig's Disease) is an incurable and fatal neurodegenerative disease. In just a short time, victims of ALS become completely paralyzed while their minds remains 100% in tact; essentially trapping them inside their own bodies. In most cases, ALS affects people in older age but Jason was just 19 when he was diagnosed. There is neither a cure nor any real treatment available, and the majority of sufferers die within 2-5 years. Jason was diagnosed with ALS 22 years ago and is one of the longest known survivors.

Jason Becker grew up in an artistic family from Richmond, California, a lower income city located in the San Francisco Bay Area, where his parents Gary and Patricia Becker nurtured his interest in music. Jason started playing guitar at the age of 5 and his rare talent immediately began to show. Jason's true brilliance became apparent when he was able to play Eric Clapton solos note for note at the age of 12 and was shocking audiences at his school and local open mic shows.

At the age of 16, Jason answered a call for demo tape submissions by local Shrapnel Records label founder, Mike Varney, who was looking for the best new guitar talent. Mike was blown away by Jason's tape and gave him a recording contract. Jason graduated from high school early to record his first record and to tour the US and Japan where he dazzled audiences with his incredible guitar playing. After releasing three groundbreaking and influential records for the genre, Jason began looking for his next big challenge.

In 1989, ex-Van Halen singer David Lee Roth was looking for a new lead guitarist for his band. Mike Varney played Jason's demo tape for Roth over the phone who immediately sent Jason a plane ticket to come audition in Los Angeles. Shortly after the audition, Jason was offered the biggest rock guitar gig on the planet. At the age of 19, Jason was set to become the hottest guitarist in the world.

A week later, Jason went to the doctors to have them check his left leg that had been limping for the past few months. After a series of painful tests, doctors confirmed that Jason had Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis and gave him just 3-5 years to live. Jason's parents were devastated but Jason shrugged off the diagnosis as he had big plans for his future. He was going to tour the world and live out his dream of being a rock star.

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## EXTENDED SYNOPSIS - CONTINUED

But during the course of recording the new album for Roth, the limp feeling in Jason's leg worsened and began to spread to his hands making it difficult to play. Luckily Jason finished the album (which went Gold) but he was unable to make the tour and had to leave Roth's band.

Jason moved back with his parents in Richmond where they took care of him as his health rapidly declined to the point where he lost the ability to walk on his own and eventually to speak. Jason's future looked bleak and his family had all but given up hope. Although Jason could no longer play the guitar, his desire to create music didn't stop.

Using a specially designed computer system that tracked his eye movements, Jason was able to write and record, what most assumed, would be his last album.

22 years after his diagnosis, Jason continues to write music and lives a happy and fulfilling life. He releases albums to many devoted fans around the world and has a loving family who has sacrificed their own dreams to remain together.

*"Jason Becker: Not Dead Yet"* is a story of dreams, family, and the strength of the human spirit. It is a film that celebrates triumph over adversity and shows how love can conquer any obstacle.

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## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT - JESSE VILE

I've wanted to make a film about Jason Becker since I was a 15-year-old kid trying to learn, rather unsuccessfully, all of his songs on the guitar. Jason is the most amazing human being I've ever known and, like many others around the world, he has been a personal source of inspiration for me for many years. I've always felt that his unique and powerful story needed a much wider audience and I felt compelled to be the one to tell his story.

Although I'm a fan of Jason's music, I didn't want to make just a fan film as I think that would be selling his story short. I wanted to make a film that was universal and that had a human story at its core that many people could identify with. Jason's story is an interesting one in that it isn't your typical rock star tale. It isn't a "musician-becomes-famous-gets-hooked-on-drugs-nearly-dies-and-then-redeems-themselves" kind of story you hear so often. Those are all fine but Jason's story goes so much deeper than that. It is really a story about love, family and the strength of the human spirit.

### **Note about Jason Becker's family:**

This film is also a chance for Jason to tell his story and to show the man behind the legend. This is an authorized documentary and a collaborative project with Jason and his family. Their involvement has been key to the film's success.

### **JESSE VILE'S BIO**

[DIRECTOR & PRODUCER]

Jesse trained in film production in Philadelphia in the early 2000's before moving to London to work in feature film development. He later took the job as producer of the Raindance Film Festival for three successful years.

Jesse has directed and produced shorts and promos that have screened at film festivals in the US and the UK including a short directed by Jonathan Caouette. *'Jason Becker: Not Dead Yet'* is his first feature length film.

### **FUNDING**

This is a crowd-funded project. We built up a very strong and supportive social network through Facebook, Twitter and online video channels such as YouTube and Vimeo to tap into Jason's large global fan base. We received donations from all over the world as far reaching as Argentina to Indonesia, and New Zealand to Iceland; raising over \$70,000 in less than a year.

The strong following we gathered also helped us to promote the project by doing blogs in different languages and forwarding information and news all over the world. This truly is an independent film that was funded by a passionate audience of people who have been waiting to see a film about Jason for many years.

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## FILM CREW

### **OLI HARBOTTLE**

[EXECUTIVE PRODUCER]

Oli is Head of Distribution at Dogwoof Pictures, the UK's leading film distributor for independent documentaries with social issues. He is responsible for overseeing all aspects of distribution at Dogwoof, managing the process from acquisition through to release. He has overseen the highly successful and innovative distribution campaigns for titles such as *'The Age of Stupid'*, *'End of the Line'* and *'Restrepo'*.

### **JOANNE FISHBURN**

[EXECUTIVE PRODUCER]

JoAnne Fishburn comes from a history in feature film production and financing as well as documentary filmmaking having been involved with projects for HBO, History Television, PBS and Discovery. In 2008, she founded All Living Things, a social enterprise dedicated to using media for social change, with whom she produced an independently financed feature documentary *'Fezeka's Voice'* which won Best International Documentary at Tri-Continental Festival 2009.

### **CARL BURKE**

[DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY]

Carl is an experienced cinematographer with a vast array of projects under his belt and has worked in all corners of the globe including projects in the U.S. the U.A.E. and Nigeria. Recent projects include ad campaigns for Doritos, and Adidas, and a feature documentary about Paul Weller directed by Julian Temple.

### **GIDEON GOLD**

[EDITOR]

A David Lean Scholar and NFTS graduate, Gideon worked as a second unit editor on feature films *'It's All Gone Pete Tong'* and *'The Football Factory'*. His first role as lead editor on feature film *'Misery Loves Company'* was screened at Berlinale and the New York Film Festival in 2007. Other recent work includes the BBC Arena feature documentary, *'Sonny Rollins: Beyond the Notes'*

### **DARIO SWADE**

[SOUND DESIGN]

Dario has worked freelance as a sound designer on numerous projects from documentaries to feature films. His work has appeared on Channel 4 and has gone on to win numerous awards and screen at festivals around the world including Edinburgh, Locarno and the London Film Festival. He recently won a Golden Reel award for sound work on the UK short animation *'Stanley Pickles'*.