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The "Socalled" Movie

Written and directed by
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RAVIDA DIN (NFB)

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Sound recorded by
ANDRE BOISVERT

Edited by
DOMINIQUE SICOTTE

On-line editing (NFB)
Denis Pilon

Sound design and editing
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STUDIO SPR

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Ravida Din

With special thanks to

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D-Shade
Irving Fields
Arkady Gendler
CJ Goldman
Gonzales
Matt Haimovitz
David Krakauer
Fred Liebert
Katie Moore
Ben Steiger Levine
Dan Seligman
Allen Watsky
Fred Wesley
Michael Winograd
Vanya Zhuk

The "Socalled" Movie
A film by Garry Beitel

Produced by
reFrame Films
in co-production with
The National Film Board of Canada

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LONG SYNOPSIS

Meet Socalled, aka Josh Dolgin. He's a multi-disciplinary musician and artist whose unique blend of klezmer, hip hop and funk is blasting through the boundaries that separate music of different cultures, eras and generations. Socalled is unstoppable: a pianist, singer, arranger, rapper, producer and composer - as well as magician, filmmaker and visual artist.

The "Socalled" Movie is a dynamic kaleidoscopic portrait. Taking its cues from Socalled's modus operandi, the documentary samples his work and offers up 18 entertaining, exquisitely edited short films about his constant creative process. Each film reveals something different, creating a nuanced picture of an individual who's artistically fearless.

Socalled is a musical alchemist, always looking for the next old thing to make new again. The "Socalled" Movie shows him introducing funk trombone legend Fred Wesley (of James Brown fame) to klezmer music, while wowing Wesley with his knowledge of funk. When Dolgin comes across LPs from the 1950s by lounge pianist Irving Fields, he looks up 94-year-old Fields and inspires him to pen a new hit song.

Shot in Socalled's Montreal neighbourhood where Hasidic Jews and hipsters crowd the sidewalks, and in New York, France and the Ukraine, The "Socalled" Movie is a cinematic multi-faceted depiction of inspiration, collaboration and transformation. It explores Socalled's creative partnerships with singer Katie Moore; renowned klezmer clarinetist David Krakauer; filmmaker Benjamin Steiger Levine (who made the Socalled video You are Never Alone, a YouTube sensation that garnered over two million hits); and cello virtuoso Matt Haimovitz, who commissioned a Josh Dolgin composition.

Socalled defies category and refuses limitation. The "Socalled" Movie examines his energy from all angles and transmits the urgent creative spark to everyone watching: now's your chance - go out there and make something!

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SHORT SYNOPSIS #1

Meet Socalled, aka Josh Dolgin. He's a multi-disciplinary musician and artist whose unique blend of klezmer, hip hop and funk is blasting through the boundaries that separate music of different cultures, eras and generations. Socalled is unstoppable: a pianist, singer, arranger, rapper, producer and composer - as well as magician, filmmaker and visual artist. The "Socalled" Movie is a kaleidoscopic portrait, offering up 18 entertaining short films about his creative process. Each short reveals something different, creating a nuanced picture of an individual who's artistically fearless. Shot in Socalled's Montreal neighbourhood, where Hasidic Jews and hipsters crowd the sidewalks, and in New York, France and Ukraine, The "Socalled" Movie is a multi-faceted depiction of inspiration, collaboration and transformation.

SHORT SYNOPSIS #2

Meet Socalled, aka Josh Dolgin. He's a multi-disciplinary musician and artist whose unique blend of klezmer, hip hop and funk is blasting through the boundaries that separate music of different cultures, eras and generations. Socalled is unstoppable: a pianist, singer, arranger, rapper, producer and composer - as well as magician, filmmaker and visual artist. The "Socalled" Movie offers a nuanced picture of an individual who's artistically fearless.

PRODUCTION NOTES

Garry Beitel first met Josh Dolgin when he was teaching documentary film courses at McGill University in 1998. They became friends, and later on when they would run into each other, Dolgin would tell Beitel: "Hey, I'm making it big in France!"

"I was like, 'Yeah, yeah, sure,' because it wasn't happening here yet," remembers Beitel.

Then Josh pitched him on the idea of a klezmer cruise he was organizing in the Ukraine, saying: "You should make a film about this."

Beitel was intrigued and decided to follow Dolgin on the Dnieper River cruise with a camera crew. They pitched National Film Board Producer Ravida Din on the idea. Din's response: "Interesting... but I'd be more interested in a film about Josh. Think you can do that?" It was not the conventional hour-long doc that she wanted, but rather an edgy, political and entertaining feature about a very talented artist.

With integral support from Din, Beitel and producer Barry Lazar, with cinematographer Marc Gadoury and sound recordist Andre Boisvert, went on to shoot 150 hours of footage in New York, Paris, Marseilles, Grenoble, Lyons, Nancy, Toronto, Montreal, Chelsea, Quebec, and on the river in Ukraine, from Kiev to Odessa.

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The more time Beitel spent with Dolgin, the more intrigued he became by his method.

"He collects and samples everything," explains Beitel. "He takes funk and Yiddish music, and makes them fit together. He combines these disparate elements with his own talent as a singer, pianist, producer and he transforms them. It's his way of getting to the heart of contemporary creative culture. The film mirrors this. It's a collection of 18 short films; it takes samples of the whole."

For Beitel, who has been making documentaries for over 20 years, it was liberating to delve into a new kind of storytelling that was a departure from the standard narrative arc.

Francois Girard's Thirty Two Short Films About Glenn Gould was another inspiration, as it offered a variety of takes on Glenn Gould as an artist. "Josh is also a complex creative person who lends himself to a kaleidoscopic portrait," says Beitel. "Each segment gives you a different sense of the person, his life and his artistic process."

Editor Dominique Sicotte was instrumental in shaping the wealth of Marc Gadoury's cinematic footage from brainstorming conversations, collaborations-in-progress, sound checks, performances and recording sessions into a rich, multi-faceted portrait.

When Garry Beitel and producer Barry Lazar sit down to talk about the making of The "Socalled" Movie, they jump in and finish each other's sentences, in the way of people who've been working together for a long time, in their case over 15 years.

Keeping tabs on the unstoppably creative Josh Dolgin for two years had its challenges. "A love/hate relationship emerges," notes Beitel, smiling.

"Of course we were focused on Josh, but he always had a dozen things going on," says Lazar. "It's hard to keep up with him."

"We didn't try," laughs Beitel.

"He wasn't always in the mood for us," Lazar says. "We learned that 9 a.m. doesn't work for him!" "As nice and fun and inspiring as we are, we're still intrusive," says Beitel.

As someone who makes films himself (several of Dolgin's films are featured in The "Socalled" Movie, made with the collaboration of the documentary crew), Dolgin had his own ideas about what was interesting and what wasn't.

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"I'm a psychological person," Beitel explains. "I'm fascinated with the origins of actions. I always want to know why we're doing things. Josh is a doer. He didn't necessarily like being asked to examine his motives all the time. He'd say, 'If I think about it too much, I won't do it.'" Beitel says this push-pull was part of their subject-filmmaker dynamic.

Producer Lazar reflects that the way the film was financed played a role in its form. "We didn't get all the money right away, so we could only make the film bit by bit. This made us shoot over a longer period of time which actually allowed us to make a better film."

NFB producer Ravida Din provided key backing for the project early on, prior to Super Channel and French language broadcaster ARTV signing on. In 2006, the NFB had produced Benjamin Steiger Levine's short film of Socalled's These Are the Good Old Days (in association with Pop Montreal) and Din was interested in finding out more about this musician. "She believed in the film right from the beginning, so we enjoyed a very creative collaboration," says Lazar.

"I thought Socalled was a fascinating character and that this was an opportunity for the NFB to get involved in making an unconventional kind of portrait, something that was risky and would push the documentary genre," says Din.

As Beitel, Lazar and the production team put the finishing touches to this documentary mosaic, Beitel comes back to the joy he finds in unconventional storytelling - as a filmmaker and a viewer. "In watching Thirty Two Short Films about Glenn Gould, when one film ends and another title comes up, you wonder, 'Ooh, what's next?!' I hope people will have that same feeling of excitement when they watch this."

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The "Socalled" Movie

18 short films

1-10 minutes in length

including:

two short films made by Socalled,
in collaboration with The "Socalled" Movie crew

PRESS QUOTES

"An enthralling, inspring MC." - *Time Out NY*

"Socalled comes in and blows even the most jaded music listener's preconceived notions to smithereens." - *PopMatters*

"Even to those in the know, few had any idea just how quirky and just how talented Socalled is. No longer" - *Montreal Gazette*



The Socalled Movie
Directed by Garry Beitel
Produced by Ravida Din, Barry Lazar
Josh Dolgin aka "Socalled"
Photo credit: Dominique Urschfeld
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Josh Dolgin aka Socalled
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BIOS



Photo credit: Liam Maloney

Josh Dolgin (a.k.a. Socalled)

Josh "Socalled" Dolgin is a musician, producer, composer, arranger, magician, filmmaker, photographer and visual artist based in Montreal.

Born in Ottawa and raised just to the north, in Chelsea, Quebec, he grew up taking piano lessons and loving Bach, Tom Waits, funk and hip hop. As a teen, Socalled started making beats, and when he first heard Yiddish theatre music on an old record, he was fascinated by the sounds and breaks and thought it would be ideal for use in his hip hop productions. He soon realized that integrating this Jewish music from the 1930s into his songs was a way of representing himself and a rich, forgotten, cultural heritage. It enabled him to bring something of his own to whichever genres he experimented with, giving him what he calls "a real reason to make music."

Known for his genre-bending approach and his collaborations with musical giants of all styles and cultures, Socalled performs all over the world.

As well as producing and appearing as a musician on countless records, he has released three albums under his own name: *The Socalled Seder* (all Hip-Hoppified Passover music); the award-winning *HipHopKhasene*, an updated Jewish wedding album; and most recently *Ghettoblaster*, recorded with Broadway legend Theodore Bikel, 94-year-old lounge pianist Irving Fields, pianist and producer Gonzalez, master clarinetist David Krakauer, country singer Katie Moore, rapper C-Rayz Walz and funk trombone legend Fred Wesley, among others. He is currently finishing up his next disc, tentatively called *Bang Bang*, which features more unlikely/kick-ass collaborations with the likes of Enrico Macias, Boban Markovic, the Mighty Sparrow and rap legend Roxanne Shante.

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Garry Beitel, Director

Garry Beitel is a Montreal-based documentary filmmaker. His probing portraits of individuals and communities have been winning national and international awards for over 20 year. In addition to his work in Canada, he has made films in West Africa, South America and Mexico. His recent feature documentary theatrical release, *Chez Schwartz* (2007), is an evocative cinematic portrait of the legendary Montreal deli that's famous for its line-ups and smoked meat.

His acclaimed *Bonjour! Shalom!*, about the clash of cultures between Hasidic Jews and their French-speaking neighbours in the Montreal municipality of Outremont, won three Gemini awards, including Best Quebec Documentary (1991). More recently, *Vive le Quebec ... Angle!* was nominated for a Gemini (2004) for best direction in a public affairs documentary and *The Man Who Learned to Fall* won two Freddie Awards at the International Health and Medical Media Awards (2005). Garry Beitel also taught documentary film at McGill University for 20 years.

Select Filmography:

Water For Tonoumassé (TV, 1980)
Taxi Sans Detour (TV, 1988)
Bonjour Shalom (1991)
Aller-Retour (TV, French version only, 1994)
Radio Novelas (TV, 1994)
In Danku the Soup is Sweeter (TV, 1994)
Asylum (1998)
My Dear Clara (2001)
The Man Who Learned to Fall (2004)

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Barry Lazar - reFrame Films Producer

Barry Lazar has been a journalist and producer for over 30 years, and since 1995 he has been producing films with Garry Beitel, first under the banner of Beitel-Lazar Productions and now as partners in reFrame Films. Lazar started his career with CBC Radio and went on to make documentaries for the NFB, Spectra-Amerimage, CFCF-TV and TVO.

Lazar is well-known for writing books and articles about food and cultural communities in Montreal. His books include the bestsellers: Barry Lazar's Taste of Montreal, Underestimated Importance: la culture anglo-quebecoise, Tea with Mister George and Other Adventures in Montreal, and The Guide to Ethnic Montreal (Vehicule Press) / Le guide du Montreal ethnique (editeur XYZ). He teaches journalism at Concordia University.

Ravida Din, NFB Producer

Ravida Din brings a strong commitment to feminism and social justice to her documentaries. As the NFB's Quebec Executive Producer, her recent credits include Jelena's Song, a poignant and lyrical journey through memory and family history; Family Motel an alternative drama; Nollywood Babylon, a revealing look at the Nigerian film industry; and Roadsworth: Crossing the Line, a portrait of a unique street artist and the culture of street art.

Current feature-length documentaries that Din is producing include: Payback: Debt and the Shadow Side of Wealth, based on the book by Margaret Atwood and directed by Jennifer Baichwal, and Pink Inc.: Breast Cancer and the Politics of Philanthropy, directed by Lea Pool. Pink Inc., based on the book by Samantha King, investigates how the reality of breast cancer is being overshadowed by corporate philanthropy experts who are selling a pink story of success that they have labelled "a dream cause." Also in development is Karen Cho's Ten Thousand Roses: The Making of a Feminist Revolution, a moving chronicle of the Canadian women's movement based on the book by Judy Rebick.

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THE CREATIVE COLLABORATORS

D-Shade

A veteran of the Montreal hip-hop scene since 1992, D-Shade was a founding member of Shades of Culture, pioneers of rap music in Quebec. D-Shade also released the solo single "Do the Math / Full Contact."

Irving Fields

Irving Fields was born in 1915 and has been a recording artist since the 1940s. His 1959 hit album, *Bagels & Bongos*, recorded with his trio for Decca Records, was an early fusion of Jewish and Latin music. He went on to combine Latin rhythms with Italian music in *Pizza and Bongos*; with French music in *Champagne and Bongos* and with Hawaiian music in *Bikinis and Bongos*, which is slated for a 2010 re-release. Fields still performs regularly as a lounge pianist in New York City.

Gonzales

Gonzales, aka Jason Charles Beck, is a Canadian-born, Paris-based musician. His eclectic musical career includes a stint as the singer for the pop funk band Son in the late '90s with Warner Music Canada, before he adopted the name Gonzales and released six solo albums. He is also known for his musical collaborations with Feist (whose albums he also produced), Peaches, Jamie Lidell, Buck 65 and Howie Beck.

Matt Haimovitz

Cellist Matt Haimovitz has played with the greatest orchestras around the world. Haimovitz made headlines with his interpretations of Bach's Six Suites for Cello Solo and his unprecedented Bach Listening-Room Tour. He was the first classical artist to play at New York's infamous CBGB. Haimovitz has been "busily reinventing the classical recital for the new millennium." (San Francisco Chronicle) Prior to establishing Oxingale Records with composer Luna Pearl Woolf, Haimovitz had a ten-year exclusive relationship with the Deutsche Grammophon label, resulting in six acclaimed recordings.

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David Krakauer

Internationally acclaimed clarinetist David Krakauer is renowned for his mastery of classical chamber music, Eastern European Jewish klezmer music and avant-garde improvisation. His best-selling recordings further define his brilliant tone, virtuosity and imagination. As one of the foremost musicians of the new wave of klezmer, he tours the globe with his celebrated Klezmer Madness! ensemble, which has forged alliances between world music, jazz, rock, funk and hip hop. Krakauer is also in demand worldwide as a guest soloist.

Benjamin Steiger Levine

Benjamin Steiger Levine directed several short films before turning to music videos where form and content meet on equal ground. In the videos *These Are The Good Old Days* (co-produced by the NFB) and *You Are Never Alone*, he captures the essence of *Socalled* with deft visual wizardry. His work has been featured at festivals around the world and he was recently nominated for a Grammy for the bee-filled music video *Mr. Hurricane* that he directed for the Montreal band *Beast*.

Katie Moore

Katie Moore has made a name for herself with her haunting vocals, inspired songwriting and close collaborations with some of Montreal's most dynamic musicians, including Polaris-winner Patrick Watson. Her 2007 release *Only Thing Worse*, ties together all of her influences, from old-time country and bluegrass to folk and indie rock. In 2006 she was nominated for the ECHO Songwriter Prize, a SOCAN initiative to spotlight Canada's up- and-coming independent songwriters.

C-Rayz Walz

C-Rayz Walz is a socially conscious rapper from The Bronx, New York. He is a member of the underground record label *Definitive Jux* and NY hip hop syndicate *Stronghold*. In addition to releasing his own recordings, he has appeared on many other rappers' albums, including *Aesop Rock* and *Immortal Technique*. He appeared in MTV's *Made* series as a coach for a Jewish teenager who wants to be a rapper. He is also a member of the Wu- Tang affiliated group, *Almighty*, and recently collaborated with Israeli-American hip-hop artist *Kosha Dillz*, on the album *Freestyle vs. Written*.

Fred Wesley

Fred Wesley has a reputation as one of the architects of funk music. His work as music director, arranger, trombonist and primary composer for James Brown established him as the world's funkier trombone player. Born in Mobile, Alabama, Fred Wesley began his career as a trombonist with Ike and Tina Turner. He worked with James Brown in the 1970s, then with *Parliament-Funkadelic*, *Bootsy's Rubber Band* and a host of other artists. Today he fronts his own jazz-funk band, the *New JBs*, and performs with artists of various musical genres.