



Contact:

POV Communications: 212-989-7425. Emergency contact: [646-729-4748](tel:646-729-4748)

Communications@pov.org; Cathy Fisher, cfisher@pov.org; Cynthia López, clopez@pov.org

POV online pressroom: www.pbs.org/pov/pressroom

POV's 'The City Dark' Asks, 'Do We Need the Stars?'

Thursday, July 5, 2012 on PBS

The Advance of Electric Light Has Sent Nighttime into Retreat, With Astonishing Effects
On Humans and Wildlife

Produced in Association with American Documentary | POV

"A documentary about light pollution that is entertaining and thought-provoking? It hardly seems possible, but that's what Ian Cheney has made in *The City Dark*. . . . This film makes you want to go find a starry sky to camp under quickly, before it's all gone."—Neil Genzlinger, *The New York Times*

MEDIA ALERT – FACT SHEET

National Dates: **The City Dark** has its national broadcast premiere on **Thursday, July 5, 2012** at 10 p.m. during the 25th anniversary season of the award-winning PBS series **POV (Point of View)**. (Check local listings.) The film also streams on POV's website www.pbs.org/pov/ from **July 6-Aug. 5**. POV continues on Thursdays at 10 p.m. through Oct. 25 and concludes the season with fall and winter specials.

American television's longest-running independent documentary series, POV is the winner of a Special News & Documentary Emmy Award for Excellence in Television Documentary Filmmaking and two International Documentary Association IDA Awards for Continuing Series.

The Film: Is darkness becoming extinct? When filmmaker Ian Cheney moves from rural Maine to New York City and discovers streets awash in light and skies devoid of stars, he embarks on a journey to America's brightest and darkest corners, asking astronomers, cancer researchers and ecologists what is lost in the glare of city lights. Blending a humorous, searching narrative with poetic footage of the night sky, **The City Dark** provides a fascinating introduction to the science of the dark and an exploration of our relationship to the stars.

The world's first light bulb was switched on in 1879, and since then artificial illumination has spread across an increasingly urban globe, radically changing humanity's relation to the night. Yet light pollution is a phenomenon little noted except by those, like astronomers, whose endeavors have been directly hindered by the changes.

The City Dark is a production of Wicked Delicate Films and is produced in association with American Documentary | POV.

Embed a trailer, download press materials and learn more at www.pbs.org/pressroom.

People/places: Irve Robbins, a Brooklyn-born astronomer running the last remaining observatory in Staten Island, is a surprising reminder that stars could once be studied in New York City.

Larry Birnbaum, owner of a vast Hackensack, N.J. warehouse filled with myriad light bulbs, shows off antique bulbs, including an original Edison that still works, and explains that successive generations of bulbs have exponentially increased in brightness.

Astrophysicist Neil deGrasse Tyson describes falling in love with the stars during his first visit to the Hayden Planetarium in Manhattan—noting the irony of being smitten with an artificial night sky while the real sky above his own Bronx neighborhood revealed just a handful of stars.

Suzanne Goldklang worked a night shift selling jewelry on television. Now a breast cancer patient, she is surprised to learn about epidemiologist Richard Stevens' suggestion of a link between persistent exposure to light at night and increased breast cancer risk. Stevens' research shows that female night-shift workers are almost twice as likely as day-shift workers to develop breast cancer.

Criminologist and former policeman Jon Shane goes on a nighttime visit to a well-lit Newark, N.J., park once riddled with crime.

Biologists along the Florida coast have determined that thousands of hatching sea turtles die every year because they confuse the light-polluted horizon of the land with the starlit horizon of the sea.

Sky Village is a dark-sky haven for astronomers in rural Arizona. While the village's denizens come from all walks of life, what draws them together is their need for a dark night sky.

A mountaintop in Mauna Kea, Hawaii, is considered the best site for professional astronomy in the world. Astronomers rely on Pan-STARRS, the world's newest, largest telescope-camera to detect Earth-killing asteroids.

POV Website: POV's Webby Award-winning website for **The City Dark** www.pbs.org/pov/citydark/ offers a broad range of exclusive online content to enhance the broadcast of **The City Dark**. Download a discussion guide and other viewing resources, and interact with the filmmaker through video interviews and a live Q&A after the broadcast.

Outreach: POV works with public television stations and national and community groups across the country to foster dialogue around the issues presented in our films. For a list of upcoming screening events, go to www.pbs.org/pov/outreach. POV and nationally recognized media educator Dr. Faith Rogow have developed a discussion guide with background information to help event organizers. Cari Ladd, M.Ed., is creating a lesson plan. Educators may record and show **The City Dark** in their classrooms for one year following the premiere broadcast.

Filmmaker's Statement: "Spending a lot of my childhood in rural Maine, I fell in love with the night sky and wanted to try and capture it as best I could," says director Cheney. "I used a Pentax camera borrowed from my dad, a high school photography teacher, and used an unforgivable amount of his Kodak Gold film. But when I moved to brightly lit cities, my connection to stars faded and I began to feel I was losing something important. I asked myself, 'Why do we need the stars?'"

“**The City Dark** took three years to make. I began by speaking with astronomers, which pushed me toward two other lines of inquiry: the intangible idea of our spiritual and emotional connection to the stars and the science of the night, including the effect on humans and wildlife. My hope is that the film will inspire people to look up more; to reconsider the way their houses, streets and cities are lit; and to realize that tiny changes in the way we light our world can make a big difference.”

Bio: [Ian Cheney \(Director, Producer, Co-cinematographer, Co-editor\)](#)

Ian Cheney is a Brooklyn-based documentary filmmaker. He grew up in New England and earned his bachelor’s and master’s degrees at Yale University. He co-created and starred in the Peabody Award-winning theatrical and PBS documentary *King Corn* (2007); directed the feature documentary *The Greening of Southie* (Sundance Channel, 2008); co-produced the Planet Green documentary *Big River* (2009); and directed the whimsical 2011 documentary *Truck Farm*, starring the farm Cheney planted in the back of his ’86 Dodge pickup. He has been featured in *The New Yorker*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post* and *Men’s Journal*, as well as on CNN, MSNBC and ABC’s *Good Morning America*.

Cheney is a co-founder of FoodCorps, a national service program launched in 2011 that places young people in communities of need to plant and tend school gardens, teach nutrition education and source healthful foods for school cafeterias. In 2011, Cheney and longtime collaborator Curt Ellis received the Heinz Award for their innovative approach to environmental advocacy.

An avid astrophotographer, Cheney travels frequently to show his films, lead discussions and give talks about sustainability, agriculture and the human relationship to the natural world. He is currently working on two projects: *The Search for General Tso*, a documentary about the cultural history of Chinese food in America, and *BLUESPACE*, a feature documentary about the degradation and renewal of urban waterways and the search for water in outer space.

Related Stories: “Meet Ian Cheney,” IndieWire, March 7, 2011. <http://tinyurl.com/bowfn9c>

“A City of Glass Towers, and a Hazard for Migratory Birds” by Lisa W. Foderaro, *The New York Times*, Sept. 14, 2011.
www.nytimes.com/2011/09/15/nyregion/making-new-yorks-glass-buildings-safer-for-birds.html?_r=2&hp

“Light pollution: Is there a solution?” by Denise Winterman, *BBC News Magazine*, Jan. 18, 2012. www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-16470744

“Our Vanishing Night” by Verlyn Klinkenborg, *National Geographic*, Nov. 2008.
<http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2008/11/light-pollution/klinkenborg-text>

“He turns on NYC: Lighting designer Herve Descottes' bright ideas light up the city” by Jason Sheftell, *NY Daily News*, Oct. 1, 2010.
http://articles.nydailynews.com/2010-10-01/news/27076832_1_water-and-light-l-observatoire-international-columbus-circle

“It’s All About the Lighting” by Robert Lee Hotz, *The Wall Street Journal*, July 25, 2008.
<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB121692767218982013.html>

Credits: Director/Producer: Ian Cheney
Co-producers: Tamara Rosenberg, Colin Cheney, Julia

Cinematographers: Marchesi
Ian Cheney, Taylor Gentry
Editors: Ian Cheney, Frederick Shanahan
Original Music: The Fishermen Three, Ben Fries

Running Time: 56:46

POV Series Credits:

Executive Producer: Simon Kilmurry
Co-Executive Producer: Cynthia López
Vice President, Programming and Production: Chris White
Series Producer: Yance Ford
Coordinating Producer: Andrew Catauro

Awards/Festivals:

Jury Award, Best Score/Music, SXSW Film Festival, 2011
Grand Jury Prize, Best Feature, Environmental Film Festival at Yale, 2011
Best Professional Documentary Award, Real to Reel Film Festival, 2011
Best Documentary Award, Hardacre Film Festival, 2011
Audience Award, Kandy International Film Festival, 2011
Official Selection, Independent Film Festival Boston, 2011
Official Selection, Maui Film Festival, 2011
Official Selection, MountainFilm in Telluride, 2011
Official Selection, Environmental Film Fest in the Nation's Capital, 2012
Official Selection, Green Film Festival in Seoul, 2012

POV: Produced by American Documentary, Inc. and celebrating its 25th season on PBS in 2012, the award-winning POV is the longest-running showcase on American television to feature the work of today's best independent documentary filmmakers. POV has brought more than 325 acclaimed documentaries to millions nationwide and has a Webby Award-winning online series, *POV's Borders*. Since 1988, POV has pioneered the art of presentation and outreach using independent nonfiction media to build new communities in conversation about today's most pressing social issues. Visit www.pbs.org/pov.

Major funding for POV is provided by PBS, The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, National Endowment for the Arts, New York State Council on the Arts, New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, the desJardins/Blachman Fund and public television viewers. Funding for POV's *Diverse Voices Project* is provided by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. Special support provided by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. POV is presented by a consortium of public television stations, including KQED San Francisco, WGBH Boston and THIRTEEN in association with WNET.ORG.

