"Beautifully shot... an emotionally engaging portrait of people without a voice"
– The International Film Guide

Nominated – Grierson Award Best Newcomer // Winner – BRITDOC Pitch
Nominated – Doc/fest (Green Award), Austin, Capewineland & ENVIROFILM (Best Doc)

Title: Shelter in Place
Genre: Documentary
Completion Date: November 2009
Country of Origin: UK
Length: 47’ 40”
Master Format (PAL): DigiBeta (16:9 FHA + LB / UK + International)
Language: English

Filmed and Directed by: Zed Nelson
Producer: Hannah Patterson
Executive Producers: Sarah Tierney, Steve Boulton, Katie Bradford
Channel 4 BRITDOC Film Foundation
Editor: John Mister

Production Company: WagonTrail Productions
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TAGLINE
A compelling portrait of a community living on the fence-line of the Texan petro-chemical industry. Civil rights, environmental pollution and a battle against corporate power...

SYNOPSIS
It is the vast, sprawling complexes of oil refineries and petro-chemical plants that help make the Texan economy one of the biggest in the world. But does the wealth come at too a high a price to the local community? Texan industries are legally permitted to release millions of tons of toxic pollutants into the air each year, plus thousands of tons more in ‘accidental’ or ‘unscheduled’ releases. When these incidents happen, local residents are told to stay in their homes and tape up their windows and doors. This procedure is called ‘Shelter in Place’. Communities living on the fence-line of Texan industry are usually poor, African American and powerless to protest. This film is an intimate portrait of a community battling against environmental pollution and corporate power...
PRODUCTION NOTES:

The idea for a documentary film about communities living in the shadow of the Texan petro-chemical industry first came to photojournalist Zed Nelson after he had worked on a cover story for the Observer magazine (UK). Having pitched the story about environmental pollution in Texas in the run-up to George W. Bush’s first presidential election in 2004, Nelson spent a month documenting the scale of industry emissions and the social conditions resulting from the political and business priorities of a wealthy, vehemently pro-industry state.

Instead of the vast oil-wealth of Texas and its glittering skyscraper cities, Nelson’s research for the Observer cover story focussed on the often poor, marginalised communities living on the fenceline with Texan petro-chemical plants. As Texas overtook Los Angeles on the air pollution scale, the story questioned whether the state’s environmental laws and enforcement agencies were too ‘industry-friendly’ and claims for local communities that their health was being adversely affected. Returning to the UK, Nelson discussed the story with film journalist Hannah Patterson and the two decided to joined forces and, in October/November 2004, self-funded what would become the first of several “Shelter in Place” shoots in Texas.

Filming was often complicated by the security services, made even more vigilant in the wake of 9/11. Aside from industry security patrols descending on the crew when they filmed close to refineries, they were also questioned by the local police, state police and the FBI. One hostile Sheriff even ordered the team out of town...

In September 2005, Nelson made a second filming trip to Texas in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, as a second hurricane veered towards the centre of Port Arthur. Although the town escaped major damage, the trip gave Nelson an opportunity to reconnect with contributors filmed in the year before. In 2007, the project attracted the attention of award-winning documentary producer Sarah Tierney who came on board as Executive Producer, taking the project under the wing of her production company Clarity Productions.
In July 2008, Patterson pitched the idea for a short version of the film at BRITDOC 08 in Oxford (see press below), winning the Short Film Pitch and £10,000 from The Channel 4 BRITDOC Film Foundation. This prize funded a final trip to Texas in November 2008. Filming coincided with the presidential elections, which saw Barack Obama become the first black president of the US. On their return to the UK, the team realised that to do justice to the story and the people of Port Arthur, the film had to be longer in length. The necessary post-production funds were raised via private donations on the crowd source funding website IndieGoGo, with a further contribution from The Channel 4 BRITDOC Film Foundation to bring renowned current affairs producer Steve Boulton on-board to advise editorially during the completion process. The film was edited by award-winning documentary editor John Mister, with soundtrack featuring Blind Willie Johnson and original composition.

*Shelter in Place* premiered at the 16th Sheffield International Documentary Film Festival 2009 to a sold-out audience on the 5th November 2009. The film was nominated for the Green Doc Award, alongside multi-award-winning *The Cove* (Dir: Louis Psiroyos) and category winner *Blood of the Rose* (Dir: Henry Singer). First critical reviews of the film called it “an impressive directorial debut...beautifully shot...an emotionally engaging portrait of a people without a voice” (The International Film Guide) and “a compelling David vs. Goliath story...an important tool in the struggle for justice” (Documentary Filmmakers Group).

**FURTHER INFORMATION:**

**The Channel 4 BRITDOC Film Foundation**
The Channel 4 BRITDOC Foundation is a UK based not-for-profit organisation backed by Channel 4 Television. It is dedicated to reinventing funding and distribution models for British documentary filmmakers. As well as funding ground breaking social-issue films (such as Tribeca winner *We Are Together* and double Sundance winner *Afghan Star*), the Foundation brokers relationships between filmmakers and the NGO and brand sectors to create better, more effective films through the Good Pitch initiative in association with the Sundance Institute Documentary Film Program. For more information, see [www.britdoc.org](http://www.britdoc.org)

**IndieGoGo**
Founded on the principles of opportunity, transparency, choice and action, IndieGoGo launched in 2008 to address the fundraising challenges and market inefficiencies affecting independent media. IndieGoGo provides an open platform for people to pitch projects to the world, and gives fans the vehicle to experience, influence and fuel the projects they want to see create. For more information, see [www.indiegogo.com](http://www.indiegogo.com)

**WagonTrail Productions**
Hannah Patterson and Zed Nelson formed the company WagonTrail Productions to make *Shelter in Place*.
SELECT REVIEWS / PRESS:

“Shelter in Place...the impressive directorial debut of Zed Nelson, focuses on communities living next door to oil refineries in Texas... Beautifully shot, Shelter in Place is an emotionally engaging portrait of a people without a voice, trapped by their economic circumstances in an area whose air quality is affecting every generation”.

The International Film Guide

“Shelter in Place’s incredibly empowering narrative is quite beautiful to watch”.
Smells Like Screen Spirit

“Photojournalist Zed Nelson’s Shelter in Place never fulminates, but shoots the scene beautifully, gets to know its oppressed characters (there’s a wonderful scene in which one battered old man takes brief heart from the news of Obama’s election) and puts the powerful on the spot”
Sight & Sound
(http://www.bfi.org.uk/sightandsound/exclusive/every_doc_for_itself_2.php)

“Shelter in Place is a perfect example of an issue driven documentary. It's a combination of beautiful filmmaking and an important situation, that also maintains the importance of great storytelling. The film really shows small town Texas and the Texan mentality perfectly and you can't avoid being taken into these people's lives and their experience…” The Frontline Club (http://frontlineclub.com)

“A compelling story of a deprived Texan community living in the shadow of a whopping great oil refinery, this David vs. Goliath story has yet to find its joyous denouement, making this film an important tool in the struggle for justice for communities everywhere who are fighting for basic human rights”
Documentary Filmmakers Group (UK)

“A wonderful film”
Kris Anderson, Director of Programming, DOXA

“This chilling film sheds a light on where we can simultaneously realize the greatest cost savings and job-creation potential when we replace environmental burdens like extraction, refining and burning with clean and efficient replacements to antiquated energy technologies.”
Majora Carter, The Majora Carter Group

“The scene is neither fair nor pretty”
Top Five Documentaries – The Austinist

BRITDOC 2008 PITCH PRESS:

“The Short Pitch from the Channel 4 British Documentary Film Foundation saw six contestants pitch their projects to judges BRITDOC's Katie Bradford, Channel 4's Kate Vogel, Current TV's Emily Renshaw-Smith, and Cinelan's Jeremy Boxer. It was good to see the dosh go to…Shelter in Place, named after the instructions issued to the neighbours of Texas's self-regulating oil refineries whenever "upsets" lead to releases of toxic chemical clouds...”

“The short pitch prize went to … Shelter In Place, about Texas oil refineries, along with a $5,000 (£10,000) cheque from the Channel 4 British Documentary Film Foundation.”
Postcard from Britdoc – ScreenDaily

“Hannah Patterson and Zed Nelson won the Short Pitch award for what is a real passion project, Shelter in Place. (They have) been working on this project for a good couple of years now, which just goes to show that one of a documentary filmmaker's greatest weapons is tenacity!”
Documentary Filmmakers’ Group – Report from Britdoc

SCREENINGS:

2009: 16th Sheffield International Documentary Film Festival (UK / November / World Premiere)
– Nominated: Green Doc Award

2010:
The Frontline Club (UK / February)
3rd Cape Winelands Film Festival (South Africa / March / African Premiere)
– Nominated: Best Documentary
DOXA (Canada / May / North American Premiere)
ENVIROFILM (Slovakia / May)
– Nominated: Best Documentary
DocHouse (UK / September)
Branchage International Jersey Film Festival (UK / September)
19th Annual Hot Springs Documentary Film Festival (USA / October)
– Official Selection
19th Austin Film Festival (USA / October)
– Official Selection, Documentary Feature Competition
Colorado Environmental Film Festival (USA / November)
Cucalorus Film Festival (USA / November)
Margaret Mead Film and Video Festival (USA / November / New York Premiere)
The Coca Cola Cinemagic International Film and Television Festival For Young People
(Northern Ireland / November / Northern Ireland Premiere)
CREW BIOGRAPHIES:

**Director – Zed Nelson**
Zed Nelson is an internationally renowned photojournalist turned-film-maker who has won numerous documentary photography awards. He has photographed and written features for the Observer Magazine, the Sunday Times Magazine and TIME magazine. From the war in Sierra Leone, to back-stage with the Rolling Stones, Zed’s work is challenging and diverse, but always about people and the world we have made for ourselves. *Gun Nation* – a disturbing reflection on America’s deadly love affair with the gun – is one of his best-known projects to date. Published worldwide, the project won five major international photography prizes, and is regarded by many as the definitive body of work on the subject. Nelson’s recently published second book *Love Me* is a reflection on the dark cultural and commercial forces that drive a global obsession with youth and beauty. The project explores how a new form of globalization is taking place, where an increasingly narrow Western beauty ideal is being exported around the world like a crude universal brand. Nelson’s work is featured in *The World’s Top Photographers: Photojournalism* (Rotovision, 2006) and *Witness: The Worlds Greatest News Photographers* (Carlton, 2005). To view his website, visit: www.zednelson.com

![Image 1](image1.png)

**Producer – Hannah Patterson**
Hannah Patterson is producer of *Shelter in Place*, the winner of Britdoc 08’s Short Film Pitch. She writes extensively on film and documentary practice for outlets including *DOX, Sight & Sound, The Guardian, Time Out* Guides and *The International Film Guide*, and regularly undertakes Q&As and panel discussions with film and documentary makers. She is editor of, and contributor to, *The Cinema of Terrence Malick: Poetic Visions of America, Contemporary North American Film Directors* and *Contemporary British and Irish Film Directors*. She also works as Commissioning Editor for Kamera Books and Creative Essentials, a range of practical filmmaking guides, including *Documentaries... and How to Make Them*, and sits on the editorial board of *Vertigo* magazine and the advisory panel of The Branchage International Jersey Film Festival.

![Image 2](image2.png)

**Executive Producer – Sarah Tierney**
Producer and Company Director Sarah Tierney combines a background in biological science with experience of documentary, drama and live-broadcast production on locations ranging from Russia to India to Ukraine. These have included several award-winning productions such as the 2005 Oscar®-nominated short drama *Little Terrorist* and 2007 BAFTA Scotland Best Short Film *Losing Myself*. Sarah’s projects have screened at more than 120 international film festivals, with work featured in The Sunday Times, The Big Issue, The Scotsman, 4Ten Magazine and Shooting People’s Shooters Films. Sarah is a graduate of International EURODOC Programme 2006 and was nominated as Scotland’s CEC Creative Entrepreneur of the Year 2007.

**Executive Producer – Steve Boulton**
Steve Boulton has been making documentary and current affairs programmes for longer than he cares to remember. Editor of Granada’s iconic *World In Action* for four years, he defied Jonathan Aitken’s Sword Of Truth, setting off one of the defining political libel trials of the last century. He runs an eponymous production company in Manchester and has also worked as an exec on films for C4, More4, Five, ITV, BBC and Al Jazeera.

**Executive Producer – Katie Bradford**
Katie is one of the founding Directors of the Channel 4 BRITDOC Foundation (britdoc.org), working across the Foundation's slate of award-winning films, including *We Are Together* and campaigning documentary *Chosen*. Katie also oversees the Foundation’s online projects, including Goodfilm.org, a matchmaking site connecting filmmakers to NGOs, Foundations and educators.
Editor – John Mister


**CONTACT:**

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