

DESCENT

THERE IS A DEEPER PEACE BEYOND FEAR.

RUNNING CLOUD PRODUCTIONS PRESENTS A NAYS BAGHAI FILM "DESCENT" STARRING KIKI BOSCH
MUSIC BY KAILESH REITMANS EDITED BY NAYS BAGHAI DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY NAYS BAGHAI EERO HEINONEN STEFAN ANDREWS
CO-PRODUCED BY ROYA BAGHAI GEORDIE BROWN EXECUTIVE PRODUCER MEHRDAD BAGHAI PRODUCED BY NAYS BAGHAI EERO HEINONEN
DIRECTED BY NAYS BAGHAI

RUNNING CLOUD
PRODUCTIONS

ELECTRONIC
PRESS KIT



SUMMARY



LOGLINE

Dutch ice freediver Kiki Bosch swims in the world's coldest waters without a wetsuit as therapy for a trauma she experienced, and to inspire others.

SUMMARY

Kiki Bosch is a professional Dutch ice freediver. She dives into the world's most freezing waters on a single breath and without a wetsuit, from the iceberg fjords of Greenland to the frozen lakes of Finland. Kiki discovered the healing effect of cold water immersion after experiencing the debilitating trauma of being raped. She has pushed her physical and psychological limits to overcome her scars and break boundaries that most people can barely imagine. She now travels across the world and inspires others to harness the power of the cold for their own healing.

TECH SPECS

Length:	59 minutes 53 seconds
Aspect ratio:	1.85:1
Format:	DCP, 5.1, 4K
Languages:	English, Dutch
Shooting locations:	Australia, New Zealand, England, Iceland
Production company:	Running Cloud Productions
Completion date:	February 21, 2020
Budget (AUD):	\$130,000

SYNOPSIS

Kiki Bosch is a 26-year-old professional freediver - meaning, she dives in freezing water without the comfort of wetsuits or oxygen tanks. She loves the cold because of its healing power and psychological benefits that she claims have helped her overcome trauma, depression and anxiety.

A flashback to 15 years ago reveals Kiki's origin story. Born and raised in Eys, Netherlands, young Kiki is fond of playing outdoors, swimming and scuba diving. The latter inspires her to travel years later as an adult to Colombia, where she unexpectedly gravitates towards freediving, and abandons her university degree. While working as a divemaster in Thailand, Kiki is deceived by one of her colleagues in the dive shop, who rapes her while she is vulnerable. Recounting the story, she is initially too afraid to report her rapist, but her silence causes another girl to be raped by him, and he flees the island. This trauma causes Kiki to suffer from depression, anxiety and suicidal thoughts over several months.

Kiki eventually recovers from the trauma after being inspired by cold water athlete Wim Hof. Recognising the physical and psychological benefits of cold water immersion, Kiki's new career as an ice freediver takes her to various breathtaking locations, including South Australia, England and Iceland. Kiki's parents are revealed to be afraid of the water and have raised the issue of mortality with her. Yet, while her father can empathise with her as a former sportsman, her mother in particular expresses fear and concern for her endeavours. Kiki expands her diving with adventures in Iceland and Greenland; the latter sees her dive in -2 degree Celsius water, the coldest of her career. However, the biggest challenge Kiki encounters is a job as an underwater actress on a Norwegian production.

Archival footage and interviews reveal the numerous difficulties, including Kiki's unrelaxed state of mind, long shooting hours, the 4 degree water temperature, diving without a mask and being blind, and being weighted down with 6 kgs of lead weight and not being able to swim back to the surface. On the last day, Kiki loses consciousness and suffers a massive afterdrop, vowing to never again push herself to the extremes of hypothermia and exhaustion. Eventually however, she returns to ice freediving when she is enticed by the challenge of diving under the frozen lake of Päijänne in Finland. The dive inspires her to set two world records for ice freediving - longest distance under the ice with bi-fins and no wetsuit, and being the first person to freedive under ice in the lakes of Mount Everest.

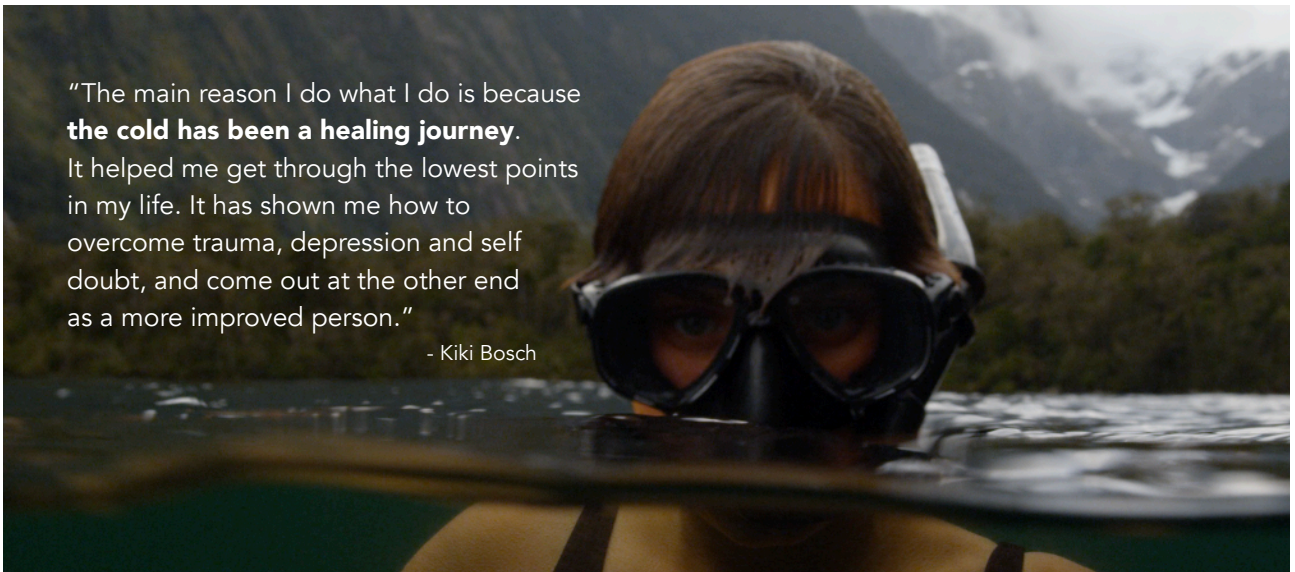
However, while training for both of these records, Kiki's eyesight begins to worsen. A local health specialist reveals that a herpes virus that Kiki had as a child is now reawakened and being aggravated by her freediving, and that she could potentially lose her eyesight permanently if she's not careful. Kiki is shocked and in denial, and continues to freedive, but when her vision fails to return quickly, it finally convinces her to abandon the records. Kiki travels to Mexico and Venezuela to take some time to reflect about her life and career paths. She realises how her identity as a freediver doesn't have to be defined by records or limit pushing, but rather, spiritual fulfilment.

Kiki also comes to the conclusion that there is power in sharing her story and teaching others the art of cold water immersion to help them address their own emotional and mental challenges. She hosts Wim Hof Method courses in London and New Zealand. Her students come from backgrounds of trauma, mental illness, frustration and curiosity. As they all step into the icy water, Kiki coaches them to access the moment of calm. In voiceover, she reflects on how the students remind her of herself, and inspire her to continue her journey as a freediver. Kiki performs a dive in Milford Sound, now incorporating her new philosophy on diving for pleasure and healing. She describes the healing associated with the experience of freediving in a poem of hers, as she dives into the deep blue waters amongst the marine life.

QUOTES & IMAGES

"The main reason I do what I do is because **the cold has been a healing journey.** It helped me get through the lowest points in my life. It has shown me how to overcome trauma, depression and self doubt, and come out at the other end as a more improved person."

- Kiki Bosch



"When people hear that I freedive into ice cold water without a wetsuit, the first question that comes up is always

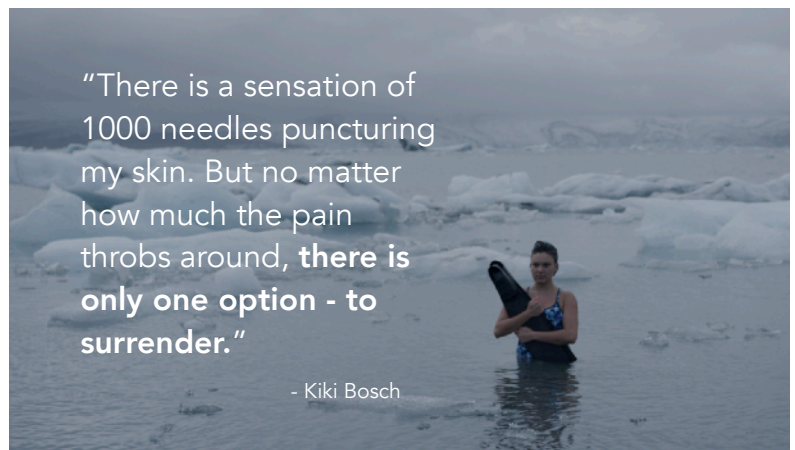
WHY? "

- Kiki Bosch



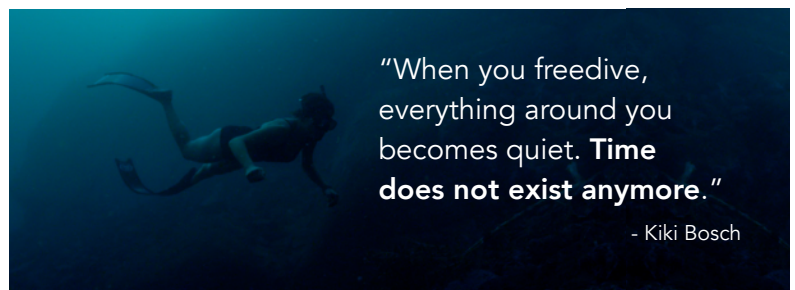
"There is a sensation of 1000 needles puncturing my skin. But no matter how much the pain throbs around, **there is only one option - to surrender.**"

- Kiki Bosch



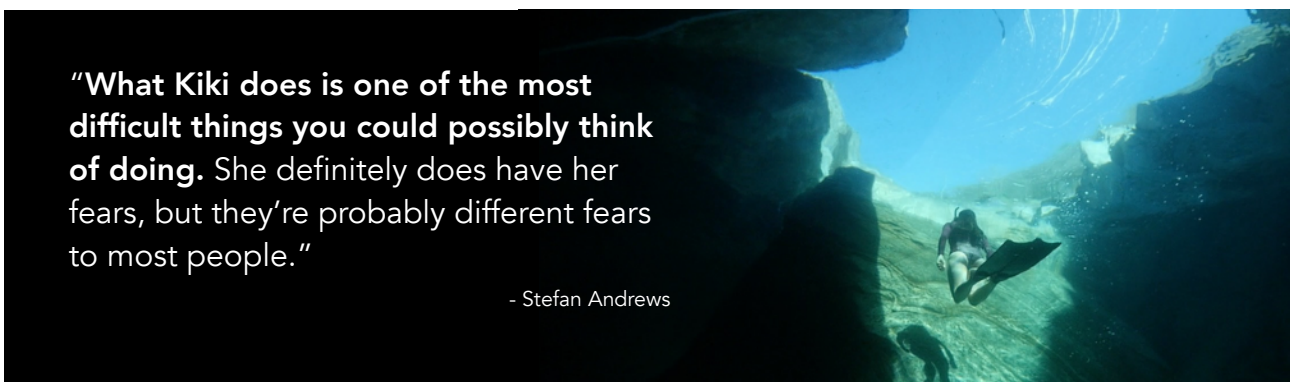
"When you freedive, everything around you becomes quiet. **Time does not exist anymore.**"

- Kiki Bosch



"**What Kiki does is one of the most difficult things you could possibly think of doing.** She definitely does have her fears, but they're probably different fears to most people."

- Stefan Andrews



CAST & CREW



CAST

Adult Kiki Bosch
Young Kiki Bosch
Scuba Diving Instructor
Teenage Kiki Bosch
Freediving Instructor
Stefan Andrews
Birgir Skúlason
Samuel Whiting
Dr. Dina Wittfoth
Thijs Bosch
Ilma Guerts
Dr. Matthew Stevens

KIKI BOSCH
CHARLOTTE PIETSCH
CLAY WARNER
BRIELLE REVELLO
REMY VAN EIJK
STEFAN ANDREWS
BIRGIR SKÚLASON
SAMUEL WHITING
DINA WITTFOTH
THIJS BOSCH
ILMA GUERTS
ROWAN FREEMAN

CREW

Written, directed and edited by
Produced by
Executive producer
Associate producers
Cinematography by
Underwater cinematographers
Additional cinematography
Colourists
Original music composed by
Additional music by
Sound design and mixing by
Sound recordists

NAYS BAGHAI
NAYS BAGHAI, EERO HEINONEN
MEHRDAD BAGHAI
ROYA BAGHAI, GEORDIE BROWN
NAYS BAGHAI, EERO HEINONEN, STEFAN ANDREWS
TEEMU LIAKKA, PETER LIGHTOWLER, SPENCER FROST
EHRAN EDWARDS, FIN DAVIES, JOSH WILLIAMS
NAYS BAGHAI, DEMI LOUISE
KAILESH REITMANS
RYAN TAUBERT, YEHKZKEL RAZ
NAYS BAGHAI
ALEX HUDD, EERO HEINONEN, NAYS BAGHAI
ROXANE AVICE, PADDY HENCHMAN, JACOB HAFNER KEELAN

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

When I got into underwater cinematography at the age of 18, I took courses in freediving, scuba diving, tech diving and cold water immersion in the cold, rough waters of Sydney. As I began doing deeper, more challenging dives with large sharks and wrecks, a lot of my non-diver friends started questioning my sanity, often asking "Why do you do that?". The why question resonated with me more than I had anticipated, and it occurred to me that the psychology of people who dive in challenging underwater environments had been seldom depicted in film and television. I wanted to depart from the fast-paced, adrenaline-fuelled, action-driven style, and instead tell a more intimate, authentic portrait of the psychology and motivation behind human beings.

I was heavily inspired by the documentary series *Chef's Table*, which depicts the backstories, philosophies and emotions of the world's best chefs with expert sensitivity and elegance. I frequently referred to *Chef's Table*, along with other character-driven documentaries (*Jago: A Life Underwater*, *Diving Into The Unknown*, *Touching The Void*) throughout my own creative process with *Descent*. The visual storytelling and character development in fictional dramas like *The Sopranos* and *Breaking Bad* were also an enormous influence on the tone of the project.

I originally conceived *Descent* as a documentary series with other characters but concentrated my efforts on producing one feature film about a single protagonist, with hopes of doing the other stories in the future. At the time, I had recently become friends with Kiki Bosch, due to our mutual experiences of freediving and scuba diving. But after she opened up about her story as a rape survivor turned ice freediver, I immediately recognised how her story was an inspiring one that I wanted to tell. She had had several exciting, hair-raising freediving adventures, but the pathos and complexity of her life out of the water was just as gripping, if not more so. Moreover, I wanted to witness and document her incredible mental and physical discipline at work while in exotic locations.

The principal photography process was an incredible experience that saw us travel to dozens of stunning locations in Iceland, England, New Zealand and Australia. Shooting in cold water environments required insanely intricate planning on our part, because of how physically and mentally demanding the diving can be, and also how capricious the underwater conditions can be. Because Kiki wears only a swimsuit while diving, it required a lot of meditation and mental discipline on her part to be able to swim in water as cold as 3 degrees Celsius. My role as the director involved communicating with and aligning the dry crew, the freedivers and scuba divers, which meant I could be in the water for up to 9 hours in one day. Even more exhausting was the long post-production period, because of the stamina, discipline and concentration that was required to edit 150 hours of footage down to one hour over the course of five months.

My biggest goal for the project was to offer viewers a detailed psychoanalytical portrait of Kiki's personality, as well as to shed light on the psychological demands and sensations of ice freediving. I wanted to take an esoteric, seldom-known subject matter and alchemise it into a modern Hero's Journey with universal themes, the core ones being healing, safety and self-identity. I hope that viewers will feel inspired and moved by Kiki's story, and realise that anything is possible. If they leave the film with the curiosity to try cold water immersion or freediving afterwards, then I will feel like I've done my job well.

Ultimately, I think the experience of watching *Descent* is a lot like the process of diving. The fear of descending into the unknown is quickly overcome by the fascination towards the hidden gems beneath the surface. Although it might not be a comfortable journey, it's one that grabs you and leaves you with a sense of curiosity that beckons you to keep at it.

- Nays Baghai

ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

Nays Baghai is an independent filmmaker and underwater cameraman based in Sydney, Australia.

Inspired by *The Blue Planet* and the Criterion Collection as a youngster, Nays began his career in 2013, and his passion for filmmaking still blossoms to this day. He has won over 20 awards for his student short films across various international film festivals, including the Calgary International Film Festival, FlickerFest, the Adelaide Youth International Film Festival and the Portuguese International Music Film Festival.



In 2020, Nays made his directorial debut with the upcoming feature *Descent*, which is a finalist for the 2020 Documentary Australia Foundation award, and is slated to be developed into a miniseries.

Nays is the Creative Director of Running Cloud Productions, and has shot and edited content for dozens of corporate brands, including the Commonwealth Bank of Australia, Telstra, Deloitte and High Resolves. Nays also specialises in underwater cinematography and photography, and his work has been showcased by DeeperBlue, Molchanovs Freediving, Rodney Fox Shark Expeditions, Arctic Adventures, Wim Hof Method International, and Cressi Australia. He is a PADI-certified Master Scuba Diver and Master Freediver, and can hold his breath for over five minutes.

Nays graduated from the Bachelor of Arts (Screen Production) program at Australia's national film school AFTRS in 2018 with high honours.

ABOUT THE PRODUCERS



EERO HEINOEN

(CO-PRODUCER, CINEMATOGRAPHER)

Eero Heinonen is a musician and filmmaker born and raised in Helsinki, Finland. He has made several documentary films in short and long form, and studied a Master's Degree in producing at Australia's national film school AFTRS. His passion is personal stories in documentary form, and previous credits include *Walker*, *The Forest Cartel Case* and *Escape By Sea*. Eero is also well-known as the bassist of the alternative rock group The Rasmus; the group has toured the globe and sold several million records.



MEHRDAD BAGHAI

(EXECUTIVE PRODUCER)

Mehrdad Baghai is an entrepreneur, strategic advisor and executive producer. He is currently the Business Director of Running Cloud Productions, and was the executive producer of the upcoming documentary *Descent*. His business career has included a partnership at McKinsey, operating as the global CEO of High Resolves, and chairman of Alchemy Growth Partners. He has multiple advanced degrees from Harvard and Princeton Universities, and is a New York Times best-selling author.

AUDIENCE REVIEWS

In February 2020, the filmmakers hosted a private screening of *Descent* in Sydney to gauge audience reactions. Below are some of the comments:

- “ I found this a rare combination of visual beauty, an unusual backdrop of gorgeous locations, but mostly an engrossing story of both an incredible endeavour and a poignant individual's story. Nays Baghai treats the topic extremely sensitively and brings it to life with no melodrama, but with beauty and simplicity. Very moving, and a pretty extraordinary directorial debut!”
- Patrick F.
- “ It is rare that a film leaves my mind and body inspired, and my heart stirred with emotion. *Descent* does just that.”
- Sandy B.
- “ I was blown away by this film. My only previous knowledge of freediving was from *The Big Blue*, and this opened up a whole new world, and was told with tremendous dignity.”
- Lee M.
- “ *Descent* navigates the *why* behind ice freediving, but despite the cinematic and grand serenity of the underwater world and the sport, the real journey is the personal experience of trauma, and an attempt to survive.”
- John H.
- “ *Descent* is an absorbing, intimate and powerful film. Great respect and space is given to Kiki's vulnerability in telling her personal story.’
- Donna H.
- “ *Descent* is powerful, insightful, profoundly expansive, yet intimately human. Through the story of freediver Kiki Bosch, *Descent* explores the delicate balance between the mind and body and one woman's search to find harmony between the two.”
- Hannah M.
- “ *Descent* is an incredible journey into the life and experiences of a person pushing all her boundaries: physically, mentally and emotionally. The documentary manages – in the same breath – to capture the extraordinary beauty of the (nearly) freezing underwater world, with the risks and rewards of skirting near the limits of what we are capable of as human beings. Set against the backdrop of Kiki Bosch's powerful and raw personal story, the film gives a unique insight into the world of cold water freediving, making you feel like you're taking the plunge too, into the icy depths. It's a wonderful and thought-provoking documentary.”
- Steve M.
- “ *Descent* takes you on a journey from start to finish. With stunning cinematography and beautiful scenery throughout, it powerfully portrays Kiki Bosch's story and highlights her incredible resilience and ability to overcome adversity. I highly recommend this film.”
- Daniel D.
- “ With mesmerising footage and poetic storytelling, *Descent* revealed an underwater world in a way I couldn't have expected. It tells the story of a young woman's epic freediving achievements in the iciest of environments, but more than that, *Descent* is a fascinating story of healing, resilience and what makes a person push their body to its absolute limits. The story of Kiki Bosch will touch you and have you sitting on the edge of your seat, and it will leave you wondering what you too might be capable of.”
- Greta T.

SCREENINGS & LINKS

SCREENINGS

As of May 2020, the international premiere for *Descent* will be held at the 2020 Sydney Film Festival. It has been selected to compete in the Documentary Australia Foundation category, and will premiere as part of a virtual screening hosted by the festival.

Submission notifications from all other film festivals commenced in April 2020, and are scheduled to end in October 2020.

TRAILER & WEBSITE

The official trailer for *Descent* can be viewed on Vimeo under the link <https://vimeo.com/420979659>

The official website address for *Descent* is descentproject.com.

CONTACT DETAILS

NAYS BAGHAI
Director, Running Cloud Productions
n@runningcloudproductions.com
+61 413 105 152
naysbaghai.com

