

Waking Life

US 2001

Directed by **Richard Linklater**

Written by **Richard Linklater**

Art Director **Bob Sabiston**

Original Music by **Glover Gill**

Cinematography by **Richard Linklater**
and **Tommy Pallotta**

Edited by **Sandra Adair**

Executive Producers **Caroline Kaplan,**

Jonathan Sehring, John Sloss

Producers **Tommy Pallotta, Jonah**

Smith, Anne Walker-McBay, Palmer

West

Cast

Trevor Jack Brooks Young Boy

Playing Paper Game; **Lorelei Linklater**

Young Girl Playing Paper Game; **Wiley**

Wiggins Main Character; **Glover Gill**

Accordion Player; **Lara Hicks** Violin

Player; **Ames Asbell** Viola Player;

Leigh Mahoney Viola Player; **Sara**

Nelson Cello Player; **Jeanine Attaway**

Piano Player; **Erik Grostic** Bass Player;

Bill Wise Boat Car Guy; **Robert C.**

Solomon Philosophy Professor; **Kim**

Krizan Himself; **Eamonn Healy**

Shape-Shifting Man; **J.C. Shakespeare**

Burning Man; **Ethan Hawke** Jesse;

Julie Delpy Celine; **Charles Gunning**

Angry Man in Jail; **David Sosa** Himself;

Alex Jones Man in Car with P.A.;

Otto Hofmann Himself; **Aklilu**

Gebrewold Himself; **Carol Dawson**

Coffee Shop Chatter; **Lisa Moore**

Coffee Shop Chatter; **Steve Fitch**

Chimpanzee; **Louis Mackey** Himself;

Alex Nixon Man Writing a Novel at the

Bar; **Violet Nichols** Woman Talking

to the Novel Writer; **Steven Prince**

Man Talking to the Bartender; **Ken**

Webster Bartender; **Mary McBay**

Woman on TV; **Kregg A. Foote** Man

on TV; **Jason T. Hodge** Man with

the Long Hair; **Guy Forsyth** Himself;

John Christensen Guy Talking about

Turning the Light on in Dreams; **Caveh**

Zahedi Himself; **David Jewell** Man

Talking to Caveh; **Adam Goldberg** One

of Four Men; **Nicky Katt** One of Four

Men; **E. Jason Liebrecht** One of Four

Men; **Brent Green** One of Four Men;

RC Whittaker Man on the Lamppost;

Hymie Samuelson Mr. Debord;

David Martinez Man on the Train;

Ryan Power Young Disappearing

Guy; **Tiana Hux** Soap Opera Woman;

Speed Levitch Himself; **Steve**

Brudniak Goatee Man; **Marta Banda**

Friendly Girl; **Steven Soderbergh**

Interviewed on television; **Charles**

Murdock Old Man; **Mona Lee** Quiet

Woman at Restaurant; **Edith Mannix**

Older Artist in the Park; **Bess Cox** Old

Woman Sitting for a Portrait; **Louis**

Black Kierkegaard Disciple; **Richard**

Linklater Pinball Playing Man / Man

on Back of Boat; **Kierstin Cunnington**

Goth Girl

bigpicture

Waking Life

“Sanity is a madness put to good uses; waking life is a dream controlled.”

George Santayana, *Interpretations of Poetry and Religion*

Richard Linklater’s hauntingly beautiful *Waking Life*, with its peripatetic cast of individualists, philosophers, wackjobs, scientists, poets and mystics, asks repeatedly what it is to be awake, and by extension, what it is to be alive. Its protagonist, Wiley Wiggins, drifts through a small city searching for the key to his own consciousness and waking state. The conversations that he has and the people that he encounters are also, for us, a primer in the philosophy of consciousness.

Waking Life was shot as a live action film on digital cameras. The footage was then animated using a technique known as rotoscoping, refined by art director Bob Sabiston. Rotoscoping involves animators tracing over projected film, but also allows for separation between background and character movement, an effect that lends *Waking Life* much of its eerie, floating aesthetic. A crew of over 30 different animators also add their individual playful styles, giving each episode’s philosophical perspective distinctive visual resonance. Linklater and Sabiston would return to the rotoscope, but in a less varied manner, for 2006’s adaptation of Philip K. Dick’s *A Scanner Darkly*.

Waking Life is also possibly a more effective exposition than *Scanner* of Dick’s recurring themes of hallucination and reality gaps. Wiggins’ constant movement between levels of perception also calls to mind the Cronenberg of *Naked Lunch* and *eXistenZ*. Shot in the Texas cities of Austin, Lockhart and San Antonio with a predominantly Texan cast, it also adds a lateral dimension to our knowledge of Texas itself: less the stereotypical land of George Bush and Dallas oil barons than the home of a thriving intellectual culture.

Director **Richard Linklater** first received acclaim for his 1991 paean to alternative culture, *Slacker*. Other well known films include *Tape* (2001), *Fast Food Nation* (2006) and the Ethan Hawke/Julie Delpy romance *Before Sunrise* (1995) and its sequel *Before Sunset* (2004). His most recent release, *Me and Orson Welles* (2008) is set in the 1930s during Welles’ period at the Mercury Theatre.

Wiley Wiggins, who also animated some of the sequences in *Waking Life*, first appeared aged 16 in Linklater’s *Dazed and Confused* (1993). He is also a musician and writer, and you can follow his blog at wileywiggins.com

Robert C. Solomon, *Waking Life*’s defender of existentialism taught continental philosophy at the University of Texas at Austin. His work concentrated on 19th century German philosophy as well as ethics and emotions. His published books include *The Passions: Emotions and the Meaning of Life* and *Living with Nietzsche*.

Kim Krizan, who argues for language as basis of existence is a screenwriter, whose other work with Linklater includes the screenplays for *Before Sunrise* and *Before Sunset*.

bigpicture

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www.bigi.org.uk/bigpicture
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Big Ideas is a series of events, mostly held in pubs in London. Anyone is welcome to turn up.

Sessions generally start with a question. Someone who has some relevant expertise gives a very brief, informal talk. After that a discussion develops in a free and unstructured manner. It's not a lecture, and it's not a debate; it's a pub argument, but unlike any you've had before.

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J. C Shakespeare's act of self-immolation is an echo of the 1963 suicide of Buddhist monk **Thích Quảng Đức**, who set fire to himself at a Saigon road junction in protest against South Vietnam's persecution of Buddhists.

Ethan Hawke and **Julie Delpy** reprise their appearances in Linklater's *Before Sunrise* (1995), a romance between an American man and a French woman that takes place in Vienna.

The philosophy of 'hard determinism', which holds that free will is unworkable concept in a universe subject to the laws of physical causality is explained by **David Sosa**, an American philosopher and editor of *A Companion to Analytic Philosophy*.

A tirade is delivered over a PA from a moving car by **Alex Jones**, a right-wing libertarian talk radio host, whose Austin-based syndicated show is accompanied by websites infowars.com and prisonplanet.tv

Caveh Zahedi is a film director, whose credits include *I Don't Hate Las Vegas Anymore* (1994) and *I Am A Sex Addict* (2005). He explains the philosophy of French film critic **Andre Bazin**, who argued for film as a direct, spiritual record of reality, and whose defence of personal vision in filmmaking was key to 1950s 'auteur' theory.

Hymie Samuelson appears very briefly as **Mr Debord**, whose name and appearance are a reference to Guy Debord, author of *The Society of the Spectacle*, and member of the revolutionary art movement the Situationist International.

Tiana Hux seems to Wiggins to be a figment of his dream world. In real life she is a performer and has since invented the musical form of honkytonkpunkrockhiphop-burlesque. You can listen to her sounds at myspace.com/tianahux

Waking Life departs from Texas only once, for New York, to encounter hyperactive tour guide, playwright and performer **Speed Levitch**. New York-lover Levitch is the star of a 1998 film based on his own Gray Line tours of Manhattan, *The Cruise* (1998).

Appearing briefly on Wiggins' TV recounting an anecdote about Louis Malle, **Steven Soderbergh** is the director of *Sex, Lies and Videotape* (1989) *Erin Brockovich* (2000) and *Che* (2008)

The dying words attributed to **Søren Aabye Kierkegaard**, 'sweep me up' are apocryphal, but the Danish philosopher's work *The Sickness Unto Death* deals with despair, and paved the way for Jean-Paul Sartre's existentialism.

Science fiction author **Philip K. Dick** does not appear in *Waking Life*, but is the subject of the closing scene in an anecdote recounted by director Linklater. He wrote more than 40 novels, most of which return to the theme of reality and unreality in human life. The anecdote, regarding a series of coincidences around the plot of *Flow My Tears, The Policemen Said* is recounted by Dick in a short work of non-fiction entitled *How to Build a Universe That Doesn't Fall Apart Two Days Later*.