

OXYANA

Directed by Sean Dunne

Running Time: 77 Minutes.

Website: Oxyana.com

Twitter: [@oxyanafilm](https://twitter.com/oxyanafilm)

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OXYANA REVIEW HIGHLIGHTS

“Fascinating in its raw honesty, the film resists treating its subjects like freak shows while evoking the long, dark history of Appalachia's exploitation.”

-Steve Dollar, Wall Street Journal

“...the film's patient, empathetic approach and top-notch production offer something conventional journalism typically doesn't; the result is an important film that deserves to be seen...”

-John DeFore, The Hollywood Reporter

“Bleak and cold and raw and beautiful...”

-Steve Pond, The Wrap

“haunting glimpse at the American dream, collapsed”

-Gregory E. Miller, New York Post

“one of the best documentaries at the 2013 Tribeca Film Festival...”

-Marlow Stern, The Daily Beast

“It's a pained and uncompromising look at horrors that have decimated a community, and while raw-nerved and difficult to stomach at times, Dunne's respectful ability to never look away from these harsh realities is what makes the doc so vital, powerful and striking.”

-Rodrigo Perez, The Playlist

“Dunne's work is fascinating for the crevices it explores, commendable for the exploitation and sensationalism it refuses, and awe-inspiring for the gut-punch of critical inspection it delivers.”

-John Jarzemsky, Twitch

**SEAN DUNNE'S OXYANA FEATURES A ONCE PROSPEROUS TOWN IN
THE WEST VIRGINIA MINEFIELDS AND THE NEW AMERICAN EPIDEMIC
OF PRESCRIPTION DRUG ADDICTION**

**Oxyana Premiered at the 2013 Tribeca Film Festival Where Dunne Won the
Best New Documentary Director Award**

On the surface, Oceana, West Virginia, has gone unchanged for generations, a tiny mining town tucked into the hills and hollers of Appalachia, surrounded by sylvan woods and free-flowing creeks. But this village of about 1,400 souls has found itself at the epicenter of a national crisis that threatens to undermine its simple, traditional values, according to director Sean Dunne's searing new documentary, **OXYANA**, which premiered at the 2013 Tribeca Film Festival.

The director's first feature-length film tells the story of Oceana's tragic fall from grace entirely through the words of its residents, revealing a generation lost to the abuse of the powerful prescription pain medication, Oxycontin. An unflinching portrait of a tight-knit rural community devastated by addiction, the film examines the root causes and consequences of a plague so encompassing that even the town's staunchest supporters now ruefully refer to it as "Oxyana."

Dunne, whose previous work includes the Emmy[®]-nominated short documentary, *The Archive*, first visited Oceana as part of a road trip through the Appalachian Mountains. He was captivated by the picturesque wilderness of the area, as well as the independent and industrious townspeople he met there. "It was one of the most beautiful places I'd ever seen," he says. "But I sensed that there was something terribly wrong there. The people were so welcoming and warm, but there was a constant hum of anxiety underlying it all."

During his stay in Oceana, Dunne began to hear a story that has become disturbingly commonplace in the landscape of rural America. An epidemic of prescription drug abuse was tearing the hamlet apart, creating poverty and lawlessness, and robbing the people of hope. In a little over a decade, Oceana

had been transformed from an idyllic small town to a nightmarish dystopia where more than half of the residents were addicts, and teenagers turned tricks to feed their habits, while parents let their children go to bed hungry in order to keep the pill bottle full.

As the coal industry, long the area's economic backbone, began a dramatic decline, greed was on the upsurge. Medical doctors based their practices on supplying drugs to patients with legitimate prescriptions. Overprescribing created addicts who supported their habits by selling the excess on the street. Like other small communities across the United States, Oceana had become engulfed in a wave of savagely addictive Oxycontin, also known as "hillbilly heroin."

Believing that Oceana's story represented a failure of the American Dream, Dunne resolved to make it the subject of his next film. The result is a shattering narrative that unfolds in beautifully framed images of the town's gradual deterioration and intimate interviews with Oceana residents trapped by the cycle of addiction.

Anchoring Dunne's story are Oceana natives like Jason, a bear of a man dressed in logoed t-shirts and a bandanna, who is lucid and self-aware when he's sober, but unravels before the camera when he injects himself with Oxy. With his first child on the way, Jason is so trapped that he can't even consider another way of life, even though his mother is offering to send to him to rehab.

Also interviewed is James, a user as well as a dealer of his drugs of choice. James poignantly and fearlessly shares the circumstances that led to the tragic, drug-related deaths of his mother, father and brother, even as he admits that he wants to get high then and there.

Adding to the wrenching saga is an array of locals bearing witness to the destructive influence that drugs have had on their lives: a high-school girl who confesses to supporting an \$800-a-day habit in whatever way she could, a

former miner who lost everything because of his addiction and found himself homeless and living under a bridge, a young woman who sees rehab as her last hope for keeping her unborn baby.

Those who are not addicted share their grief for those who are. Half his high-school graduating class have died in this epidemic, says one young man. The medical professionals who care for the plague's victims, affected family members and townspeople all seem in shock over what has happened to their once prosperous and productive neighbors.

Dunne views his lost subjects with compassion and hopes that a cautionary tale can be found in Oceana's tragedy. "This is a story I had to tell," says the filmmaker. "I met a seemingly endless line of people who have lost the will to live. God-fearing, normal people have been reduced to nothing by the uncontrollable lure of this pill. Oxycontin has created anguish and desperation wherever it has taken hold."

Sean Dunne makes his feature-film-directing debut with **OXYANA**. Dunne has directed five previous short documentaries, including *The Archive* (nominated for an Emmy in 2011), *Man in Van*, *The Bowler*, *Stray Dawg* and *American Juggalo* (named documentary of the year for 2011 by the website, *Short of the Week*). Hailed as the "master of fringe Americana" for his ability to realistically capture half-mythical corners of the country, Dunne's approach to documentary is to give his subjects the ease and opportunity to find their own voices and his viewers the freedom to form their own conclusions.

OXYANA is produced by Cass Greener and Nadine Brown. The executive producers are Colby Glenn, Norma Jean Grissom, Gerard & Sarah Falcone, Patrick Daly and Dan Sullivan. The editor is Kathy Gatto. The director of photography is Hillary Spera. Music is by Jonny Fritz and John McCauley.

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OXYNANA SYNOPSIS

Oceana, West Virginia, sits squarely in one of God's blind spots. It's one of the old coal mining communities that feeds the nation's insatiable appetite for energy. Set in the middle of unbelievable natural beauty, a beauty that in the last number of years has been marred by the Appalachian scourge of Oxycontin. Life persists, but it's a living that few Americans could explain or even believe - closer in kind to the world of a medieval plague. Men and women die epidemically. The addicts— who are the vast majority and all nice enough people— sell, scramble, and steal in an economy of nigh-endtimes desperation. Worn down and out by the pills, the mines or the indignity of both, everyone looks twice their own age and is unable to imagine an existence outside of coal, subsidies and prescription narcotics. Things could hardly get darker than in this place called Oceana.

Nevertheless, there it is. A little village in the valley of Death, where children are born, groceries are still purchased and festivity is expressed through firearms and poor decision-making. But is this enough to live for? Is it enough to provide *anyone* with any hope or deliverance? **OXYANA** is an unflinchingly close focus on the anguish and horrors of a community that the rest of the country would just as soon forget, a nearly Biblical narrative of American forsakenness.

OXYANA DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

It wasn't long after I first set foot in Oceana, WV that I knew something wasn't right. In fact, something was desperately wrong. This was one of the most beautiful places I had ever seen, filled with hands down the most honest and welcoming people I had ever met. Yet there it was, a constant and growing hum of anxiety. So we started to ask questions, and we started to get answers, all pointing towards a familiar narrative. Greed that led to overprescribing pharmaceuticals that led to addiction that led to poverty, lawlessness and hopelessness. Each story we've heard is more harrowing and haunting than the previous. Here is a place that represents our failures as a country, a microcosm of everything that's gone wrong with the American Dream. Oxyana. These stories needed to be seen; they needed to be heard.

Residents who were once talented, charismatic, hard working, God fearing, normal people have been reduced to nothing by the uncontrollable lure of this pill. There are high school girls with \$800/day habits and families, who literally can't provide food for their children, yet have full prescription bottles. There are former miners who have turned to dealing to make ends meet and pregnant women selling their bodies for another fix. It is a seemingly endless line of people who have lost the will to live.

- Sean Dunne, Director

OXYANA BIOS

SEAN DUNNE, DIRECTOR

Sean Dunne makes his feature-film-directing debut with OXYANA. Dunne has directed five previous short documentaries including: *The Archive* (nominated for an Emmy in 2011), *Man in Van*, *The Bowler*, *Stray Dawg* and *American Juggalo* (named documentary of the year for 2011 by the website, *Short of the Week*). Hailed as the “master of fringe Americana” for his ability to realistically capture half-mythical corners of the country, Dunne’s approach to documentary is to give his subjects the ease and opportunity to find their own voices and his viewers the freedom to form their own conclusions.

COLBY GLENN, EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

Colby Glenn is the man with the plan. Motivated by the recent rash of Oxy-related stories in the media and a personal connection to the subject matter, Colby left his job managing a hedge fund to embark on a career in documentary filmmaking. His knack for creativity, leadership skills and financial background got this project off the ground. OXYANA is Colby’s first venture into filmmaking.

NADINE BROWN, PRODUCER

Nadine Brown has been working in communication since studying at Pembroke College in Cambridge, England and graduating with a BA in English from UCLA. She has worked on projects including: commercials for XM Satellite Radio, Coca Cola, Nike, Mitsubishi Nissan, Toyota, VW and many more; promos for USA Networks, PBS, ABC, NBC, CBS, Fox Family Channel, The Health Network and The Learning Channel; repackaging the classic Three Stooges short films; and six episodes of reality programming for Paxtv. She produced Stacy Peralta’s film *The Bones Brigade – An Autobiography*, which premiered at the 2012 Sundance Film Festival.

KATHY GATTO, EDITOR/CO-PRODUCER

Kathy Gatto is an award-winning editor and dedicated artist. Her work has garnered a variety of PromaxBDA and CTAM Mark awards. Additionally, she counts among her successes several programs in permanent installation at museums around the United States, including: Tribute – the World Trade Center Museum, The Smithsonian Institute, Federal Hall and the World War II Museum. Her documentary work has screened in many international film festivals, including: Silver Docs, IFFB and DOXA. Her most recent film, *American Juggalo*, was directed by Sean Dunne and won the 2012 Short of the Week Award for Best Documentary and has been viewed over a million times on the Internet. Gatto’s commercial work has included spots for Nike, Microsoft and Ancestry.com. After graduating Magna Cum Laude from film school at Hunter College, she began her career at HBO as an assistant editor. While her roots are in television, her passion is in film, particularly documentary film editing.

HILLARY SPERA, CINEMATOGRAPHER

Hillary Spera works as a cinematographer on documentaries, music videos, feature films and commercials. Recent work on documentaries includes: *Darkon*, *Alice Neel*, *The Bowler*, *American Juggalo* and *After Tiller*, a film about late-term abortion doctors in America that premiered at the 2013 Sundance Film Festival. Spera has also shot short form content for the New York City Ballet, Sundance Channel and PBS/Nova, and done commercial work for clients like Kellogg's, Ancestry.com, and Nike's *Road to Gameday* campaign starring hockey player Steve Stamkos. Current narrative feature work includes comedy improv feature *High Road*, directed by Upright Citizen's Brigade founder Matt Walsh and the recently completed *Black Rock*, directed by Katie Aselton, which premiered at the 2012 Sundance Film Festival.

OXYANA CREDITS

Directed by
Sean Dunne

Editor
Kathy Gatto

Director of Photography
Hillary Spera

B Camera Operator
Jeff Powers

Executive Producer
Colby Glenn

Producer
Nadine Brown

Producer
Cass Greener

Executive Producers
Norma Jean Grissom
Gerard Falcone
Sarah Falcone
Patrick Daly
Dan Sullivan

Co-Producer
Kathy Gatto

Co-Producers
Loretta Jeneski
Jake Long

Camera Assistants
Tom Fitzgerald
Zach Rubin
David Bouley

Key Grip
Garrett Cantrell

Field Sound
Sean O'Malley
Peter Deutscher
Guillermo Pena Tapia

Production Assistants
Nathan Daugherty
Brian Hensley
Stephen Morrison

Additional Photography
Jeff Powers

Post Sound
Frank Turbe

Colorist
Alex Bickle

Music by
Jonny Fritz
John McCauley

Music Producer
Spencer Cullum

Music Engineer
Evan P. Donohue

Musicians
Jonny Fritz
John McCauley
Spencer Cullum
Josh Hedley
Jerry Pentacost
Taylor Zachary

Associate Producers
Jesse Lubbers
Joe Estrada
Catherine Dunne
Jack Dunne
Meaghan Zerrle
Peter Zerrle

Associate Producers

Chris Bobolia
Patrick Degan
Dan Sullivan
Harrington Talents
Tribeca Radiation
Diane & Jim D'Agostino
Charisse Baker
Christopher Socha
Jonny Leahan
Tom Valentino
Eleni Valasis

Special Thanks

Brandon Joyce
Jason Cooke
Daniel Johnson
Mike Moore
Martin Gatto
Marie Greener
Tim Feeney
John Silbernagel
Johnny St.Ours
Christopher Eads
Robert Longstreet
Kim Kroeger Bushell
Nancy Turbe
W. Gregg Stefancik
Morgan Berardi
Nick Kadner
Adam Overberg
Jeff Smith
Olie Griffin
Chris Brizzard
Andrew Carreon
Wanda Fitzgerald
Denise Smith
Lisa Martens
Kate Imbach
Carmella Evans-Molina
AbelCine
Eastern Effects
What's Your Twenty?
Mindsmack