



## ***For Immediate Release***

BLUE VINYL WINS CINEMATOGRAPHY AWARD IN  
DOCUMENTARY COMPETITION  
AT 2002 SUNDANCE FILM FESTIVAL AND WILL BROADCAST ON  
HBO SUNDAY MAY 5th

*Directed By Judith Helfand and Daniel B. Gold*  
*Produced by Daniel B. Gold, Judith Helfand and Julia D. Parker*

*A Toxic Comedy Look at Vinyl, The World's Second Largest Selling Plastic. With humor, hope and a piece of vinyl siding firmly in hand, Peabody Award-winning filmmaker Judith Helfand and co-director Daniel B. Gold travel from Helfand's hometown to America's vinyl manufacturing capital and beyond in search of answers about the nature of polyvinyl chloride (PVC). Her parents' decision to "re-side" their house with this seemingly benign cure-all for many suburban homes turns into a toxic odyssey with twists and turns that most ordinary homeowners would never dare to take. The result is a humorous but sobering and uniquely personal exploration of the relationship between consumers and industry in the feature-length documentary BLUE VINYL, which won the cinematography award in the documentary competition at the 2002 Sundance Film Festival and will broadcast on HBO Sunday May 5th .*

Early in the film, Helfand, who readily admits that her last science class was tenth-grade biology, invites two environmental experts from Greenpeace over to her parents' vinyl-sided home in Long Island to give her and her dad Ted, a crash course on PVC. "Granted, these guys were biased in favor of saving the planet and its inhabitants," Helfand quips, acknowledging the inevitable bias of advocacy groups, "but I didn't have a problem with that." But, she soon augments her Greenpeace education with more revelations about vinyl from people such as Billy Bagget—an independent lawyer in Louisiana who has spent the last decade piecing together a conspiracy case against 29 of the largest PVC-producing chemical companies in the world. From Bagget's office in Lake Charles, Louisiana, the film travels to Venice, Italy, where 31 executives from a PVC-producing company are in the midst of a trial, personally accused of manslaughter in the deaths of their employees and polluting the Venice Lagoon. (All of whom were subsequently acquitted.)

What makes BLUE VINYL unique is the balance of humor and horror, facts and anecdotes, and the face off between cynicism and hope. Helfand's character—and the overall attitude of the film—never shies away from having a point of view. Although the film reveals a complex web of alleged corporate conspiracies and the tragic loss of human life from chemical exposure, BLUE VINYL also poses a refreshingly simple question: "Is it possible to make products that never hurt anyone at any point of their life cycle—when manufactured, when used, or when disposed of?" With this reasonable question, Helfand turns her attention to her parents' modest, vinyl-sided home, where she attempts to convince her mother and father, Florence and Ted, to take the vinyl off the house if she can find a safe—throughout the entire course of its lifecycle—and affordable alternative that fits in with the neighborhood.

People often grow numb at the suggestion of the next toxic threat to fret about, so BLUE VINYL was made to transcend the expected. Never lingering on the fear of what might be lurking in our chemically infused environment, Helfand leads the audience on an international journey using a scrap of blue vinyl siding left over from her parents' renovation as a calling card and conversation starter. The film's quirky, fun and irreverent style—coupled with its clear mission for environmental health and justice—uniquely places it at the nexus between the worlds of entertainment and corporate accountability.

Among those people featured in BLUE VINYL are:

- Ted and Florence Helfand - Judith's parents are unsuspecting inspirations for the film after they decide to put embossed, blue vinyl siding on their house - in an effort to spruce it up for its pending sale and so they wouldn't have to ever paint it again.

- Diane Prince - Diane is a resident of Mossville/Lake Charles, Louisiana who lives across the street from the massive Condea Vista plant. Stricken with cancer, she believes it was caused by the by-products discharged from the plant's burned chemicals and airborne pollutants.
- Billy Baggett - Indefatigable attorney Baggett represents not only Lake Charles PVC workers and their widows, but also a growing number of affected vinyl workers and families throughout the U.S. Baggett patents the Transcenic Camera-an ingenious 360 degree multi-camera contraption that he uses to document the plaintiffs' workplace.
- Elaine Ross - Ross is a widow whose husband suffered a slow and agonizing death after working with vinyl chloride in the Conoco plant for 23 years.
- Ampelio Magro - Magro is a surviving plant worker who lost his ability to speak from cancer of the larynx and now uses a vibrating voice box.
- Patrick Hayes - A "green" builder from the bay area in CA whom Helfand met on her quest and agrees to come back to LI to help pitch her parents on finding an alternative to vinyl siding. While there he sleeps in a tent and fixes her parents' TV antenna.
- Dr. Cesare Maltoni - The late pioneering Italian scientist Dr. Maltoni performed ground breaking studies linking small amounts of vinyl chloride exposure to cancer in laboratory animals. Maltoni urged the industry to recognize the predictive nature of his results for PVC workers, but the vinyl industry did not heed his warnings until workers started dying from the identical cancer found in his laboratory animals.
- Dr. Paul W. Brandt-Rauf - is a tenured Professor of Public Health and Director of Occupational and Environmental Medicine at Columbia University in New York City. He's conducting gene studies on people working with PVC at the current maximum exposure levels and below. He is finding mutations that suggest what the vinyl industry considers safe just might not be. Over 25 years ago, when permissible occupational exposure to vinyl chloride was 500 times higher than is allowed today, workers got malignant tumors with very specific gene mutations. Today, Dr. Brandt Rauf is finding the same type of mutations quietly occurring in the genes of PVC workers who feel healthy and believe their workplace to be safe. Nobody knows if these mutations will result in life threatening cancers, but Dr. Brandt- Rauf says it is quite possible.
- Dr. William F. Carroll Jr. - A spokesperson for The Vinyl Institute, Vice President of Occidental Chemical Corp., former adjunct industrial professor of Chemistry at Indiana University, and former executive of the Chlorine Chemistry Council. Dr. Carroll is the spokesperson designated to speak on camera when Helfand requests an interview with The Vinyl Institute - a trade association dedicated to the protection and promotion of PVC. During the interview, Carroll skillfully delivers the industry's position.

**BLUE VINYL** is the second collaboration for Gold and Helfand — herself a cancer survivor, who underwent a hysterectomy at 25 after contracting a rare form of cervical cancer due to her mother's ingestion of the drug DES, a synthetic estrogen that was supposed to prevent miscarriage. Along with Gold, Helfand chronicled that period in her life, exploring the personal impact of toxic chemical exposure on her relationship with her mother — in her lauded documentary, "A Healthy Baby Girl" (Sundance 1997) which garnered her a Peabody Award for excellence in journalism and public education. A sequel of sorts, **BLUE VINYL** picks up essentially where **A HEALTHY BABY GIRL** left off in front of the Helfand's house as they are putting up the blue vinyl siding. Who knew?

**BLUE VINYL** is a Toxic Comedy Picture, directed by Judith Helfand and Daniel B. Gold; produced by Daniel B. Gold, Judith Helfand and Julia D. Parker. Edited by Sari Gilman, Director of Photography, Daniel B. Gold; Senior Creative Advisor Michelle Ferarri, Animation by Emily Hubley, Original Music by Marty Ehrlich & Sam Broussard, Steven Thomas Cavit, Terry Dame, Four Piece Suit. Community outreach and education is being designed and coordinated by Working Films.

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