



sweetgrass



A film by Ilisa Barbash and Lucien Castaing-Taylor



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Produced by Ilisa Barbash

Recorded by Lucien Castaing-Taylor

Sound Editing and Mix / Ernst Karel

Colorist / Patrick Lindenmaier

Featuring / John Ahern, Elaine Allestad, Lawrence Allestad, Pat Connolly

101 mins., 35mm, 2009

sweetgrassthemovie.com

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"Magnificent... Wonderful... The first essential movie of this young year...
Astonishingly beautiful... Nature overwhelms the screen and even minds..."

MANOHLA DARGIS, THE NEW YORK TIMES

"Impressive. Bracing. Majestic. The list of things you won't get from Sweetgrass
is almost as impressive as the film itself."

ANTHONY LANE, THE NEW YORKER

"Breathtaking... close to heaven... Fascinating."

MELISSA ANDERSON, VILLAGE VOICE

"A one-of-a-kind experience. At once epic-scale and earthbound... a mad cross between
Howard Hawks' Red River and Grass...with a dash of Tex Avery's Drag-along Droopy."

RONNIE SCHEIB, VARIETY

"Breathtaking, abstract Western. Awe-inspiring and often hilarious. Big Sky country has
never looked more spectacular... and, after Sweetgrass, it will never look the same."

WAYNE LORENZO TITUS, FILMLINC

"Astounding... shockingly intimate. A grand documentary Western."

FARIHAH ZAMAN, REVERSE SHOT

"Monumental... An anthropological work of art."

ROBERT KOEHLER, CINEMA SCOPE

"A film of subtle shifts and slowly dawning disclosures...Who would have thought
it would take a formalist project about sheep to burrow so deeply into the secret
sorrows of the working class?"

ANDREW SCHENKER, ART FORUM

An unsentimental elegy to the American West,
Sweetgrass follows the last modern-day cowboys
to lead their flocks of sheep up into Montana's
breathtaking and often dangerous Absaroka-Beartooth
mountains for summer pasture. This astonishingly
beautiful yet unsparing film reveals a world in which
nature and culture, animals and humans, vulnerability
and violence are all intimately meshed.

FILMMAKERS

Barbash and Castaing-Taylor's work combines the ambiguity and provocations of art with a documentary eye on lived experience. Working in Montana since 2001, they have deployed different styles in film, video, and photography to evoke both the attractions and the ambivalence of the pastoral, and to depict the waning world of the Old West.

Previous short works of theirs include Made in USA (1990), a film about sweatshops and child labor in the Los Angeles garment industry, and In and Out of Africa (1992), an ethnographic video about authenticity, taste, and racial politics in the transnational African art market, which won eight international awards. Their films have been exhibited and the subject of symposia at the Smithsonian Institution and the British Museum, and Castaing-Taylor's artwork exhibited at Marian Goodman Gallery, the X-Initiative, the CUNY James Gallery, and the Musée du quai Branly.

Ilisa Barbash was born in 1959 in New York, and works as a filmmaker, writer and curator. She is currently a curator of Visual Anthropology at the Peabody Museum, Harvard University, creating interactive media, photography exhibitions and books. Lucien Castaing-Taylor was born in 1966 and grew up in Liverpool, UK. An anthropologist, filmmaker, and artist, he is Director of the new Sensory Ethnography Lab at Harvard University, which supports innovative combinations of aesthetics and ethnography that are at angle to the dominant conventions of documentary and anthropology.

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