

# DAN AND MARGOT



## Directors' Statements – Jake and Chloe

Mass media coverage about mental health tends to come in two juxtaposed forms. The first being the rise of mental illness amongst the general population and the “alarming” recent statistic that in North America ‘one in four adults — suffer from a diagnosable mental disorder in a given year.’ Divergently, the public, when confronted with schizophrenia, are most often introduced to the rare cases of individuals who have committed atrocious crimes and are highly demonized in the media. I believe it’s important that audiences have an opportunity to hear the other stories; those of relatable, capable and warm-hearted individuals with schizophrenia, who like everyone else, are just trying to find their place in this world.

Margot represents the other story. Having been a close, personal friend and being present when her first episode originated had a huge effect on me and my understanding of this condition. (Chloe) What’s so effective about her narrative is the relatability of her surprisingly classic coming-of-age story. The film looks at her life as she moves out of her mother’s home, seeks work that is fulfilling and ultimately, ventures on the search for love. We all go through these fundamental life steps, and will continue to- but imagine throwing a complex mental illness into the swing of things. For Margot, it removed her from living a real existence for 3 years. Can you imagine how hard it would be to come back to reality? And despite these challenges, Margot’s bravery and ability to overcome demonstrates a larger message- people with schizophrenia can have successful lives, and when they do, it demonstrates an above-average, almost super human perseverance. Margot says in the film “she is a better person now than she was before” and rightly so. The film aims to demonstrate the shared obstacles that those with schizophrenia must face and the importance of value and empowerment for all.

With this in mind, we really wanted to create a stylistic form of documentary in which various aesthetic styles and formats were interweaved together to visually express the complexity of perspectives within this story. Margot’s distinct point-of-view during her episodes is replicated through distorted POV footage, while the perspectives of her friends and family is told in parallel to demonstrate how they saw the story unfolding. To add another layer, the artist in the film, Sarafin, introduces her own colourful POV through animated comic panels. These are of course influenced by her own identification with “madness” and having gone through the psychiatric system. Her own empowerment adds to demonstrating the often unappreciated, creative abilities that comes with madness.

The self-reflexive nature of the film is central to the story and format. We, as filmmakers, consciously reflect on screen how we are impacting and twisting Margot’s story and how this film may alter her future. We hope that through our transparency as well as Margot’s, the film can inspire others to come out and talk about how mental health influences all of our lives.

## Director's Statement - Jake

I met Margot on the balcony of a condo party over 2 years ago. After a few wobbly pops we fell into a pretty in-depth discussion about our respective personal problems. I had been dealing with a year of chronic pain (resolved now!) and her, schizophrenia since she was 18. Schizophrenia was not something that I knew a lot about. If I had known people affected by schizophrenia they never divulged, so I found myself with only a half-hearted idea of what it entails - a picture painted by the media and casual, uninformed conversation. Margot's experience fascinated me. It was the first glimpse I had into a world I knew nothing about. Margot spoke her insights with a very impressive display of maturity and reflexivity. With confidence she stated that she wanted to meet other people affected by similar conditions and share her story, hoping to help people get through difficult times similar to those she had to overcome herself.

I had been connected to Chloe, a tenacious creative with an impressive aptitude for words and numbers, through the Hot Docs Documentary Film Festival scene. I quickly found out that her and Margot had known each other since they were 8 (as she was now on the balcony too). It was decided then that the 3 of us would start capturing Margot's story as a message of hope.

Two years later and I feel like my mind has been opened to an expansive world of challenges, uncertainty, acceptance, determination and fortitude. Our mission has always been to break down stereotypes and help erase the stigma associated with mental illness. We hope that you'll join us in supporting our brothers and sisters (and anyone who identifies otherwise!) around the world who could really use an open-ear, a smile or a hug and a better understanding of the challenges that we may not be familiar with.

## Director's Statement - Chloe

I first met Margot in grade two. We attended the local school together, but more importantly, we took dance lessons together. She was hands-down the most vivacious, powerfully- active and adventurous human being I'd ever seen in motion. Every dance class turned into a series of ridiculous charades- whether it was slamming randomly found objects into the studio's glass windows (at our teacher's complete dismay) or sneaking around the hallways for no reason but pure chaos. Margot was and is one of the most electric people I have ever known. We stayed friends well into our teenage years. When we were 18 and returning from university for the summer, something changed in her.... That energy turned into something unfamiliar and destructive. This summer had a profound effect on me and on our entire groups of friends. (We had, as a whole, been fairly lucky up to this point- having had been generally loved and supported by good friends and family, and having had no major illnesses or traumas.)

From this point on, I watched Margot struggle and to fight against something that was at first out of her control.... (This is a long story - watch the film!) And finally - she has won. She has regained her true self and is back - in full force - as the ultimate free spirit. She really embodies what all women struggle with in their 20's - finding their passions, seeking love and companionship, and trying to find their place in this world. While schizophrenia is a foreign concept to most - Margot's story, in my opinion, is highly accessible and relatable - and I hope that her force will resonate with many. This is what DAN AND MARGOT means to me.

*Dan and Margot is available from:*  
McNabb Connolly  
info@mcnabbconnolly.ca • www.mcnabbconnolly.ca  
866.722.1522 • 905.278.0566