

ALGORITHMS

Four Moves In, We Are All Blind

A Documentary by Ian McDonald

India | 2012 | HDV | B&W | 100 mins

English, Hindi, Tamil, Odiya with English subtitles



FIRST RUN FEATURES

The Film Center Building
630 Ninth Ave. #1213
New York, NY 10036
(212) 243-0600 / Fax (212) 989-7649
Website: www.firstrunfeatures.com
Email: info@firstrunfeatures.com

Synopsis

In India, a group of boys dream of becoming Chess Grandmasters. But this is no ordinary chess and these are no ordinary players. *Algorithms* is a documentary that transports us into the little known world of Blind Chess.

Chess is an ancient and universal game with origins in India. Filmed over three years in different parts of India, *Algorithms* follows three boys and an adult champion who aspires not only to bring global recognition to India's blind chess players, but also wants to encourage all blind children to play chess.

The filmmakers travel with the players to competitive tournaments, including the World Junior Blind Chess Championship. They also film them in their home milieu where they reveal their struggles, anxieties and hopes. Moving through the algorithms of the blind chess world, the film is a tactile and mindful journey that challenges the notion of what it means to "see."

Filmmaker Biography: Ian McDonald

Ian McDonald is a sport sociologist and documentary filmmaker. Having always used the camera to support his research on sport and physical culture in UK and India, Ian's move to documentary filmmaking benefits from a seemingly effortless 'way of seeing' that has resulted in documentaries with a difference on art and sport, especially of the 'sporting outsider' - the one who is seen as 'different' by a 'normal' society. His documentaries have been screened at film festivals, conferences and campaign meetings around the world.

Filmmaker's Statement

Chess is an ancient and universal game with origins in India. When Geetha and I began this project in India in 2008, we knew what we were encountering was unknown, complex and beautiful. Then began a journey that challenged our perception of ability and disability, of sight and vision. The paradox of using a visual medium to image those without sight that weighed heavily on us lessened with the complete trust we gained by being with the community through the years. Four years later and with over 240 hours of footage, we began to compose the first ever feature documentary on Blind Chess.

Initially, my concern was to capture this mind game as a game of equality for the blind and a metaphor for life. Chess demands patience and foresight that go with being blind. Four moves in, it puts the sighted on par with the blind. Blindness that emerged as 'difference, not lack' then went beyond to actually critique our ocular-centric world. Also, with one constant focus on the truth of the lives of the blind chess players, the slant shifted from the sociological to the philosophical.

I began to understand the Indian verse: sukha dukhe same kritva – that joy and sorrow, profit and loss, winning and losing are but the same; they torment us but we must treat them as same and engage in life. Finding hope in hopelessness and possibility in impossibility, the Blind Chess community moves forward, reminding us of the forgotten significance of touch and of the materiality of our social existence in an era dominated by the visual and the virtual.

The Chess Players

Charudatta Jadhav from Mumbai is a champion player turned pioneer. He discovered the game of chess soon after he went blind in his teenage years. It gave him confidence and a purpose in life. Convinced of the power of this game, he has dedicated his life to develop chess for the blind. A highly successful IT professional, Charu is a man of great drive and ambition, and he aims to situate India in the top five countries for Blind Chess.

Darpan Inani from Baroda is the most talented and highest ranked totally blind player in India. This idiosyncratic, confident and highly intelligent teenager is focussed on what he wants to achieve in chess, and in life. Darpan possesses a wisdom that belies his young age. He is a topper in his sighted school and wants to be the first blind entrepreneur of India.

SaiKrishna S.T. from Chennai is the ambitious rising star of blind chess in India. He is fun-loving, gregarious and makes friends easily. But as a partially sighted boy faced with the possibility of going totally blind, there is a lot more steel to Sai's character than at first appears. Sai studies in a blind school and is again a topper. He wants to be the first blind journalist of India.

Anant Kumar Nayak from Bhubaneswar is a promising new talent. He is a gentle boy with an endearing if slightly eccentric personality. With a strong sense of moral duty and responsibility, the totally blind Anant struggles to balance his commitment to chess and studies. Anant has come second in training exams for IAS and hopes to be a rare blind IAS officer of India.