

MAIDENTRIP

A FILM BY JILLIAN SCHLESINGER



82 Min / Blu-Ray, DVD, QuickTime ProRes / 5.1 Audio

English, Dutch w. English Subtitles / 16:9 / 1.77.1



Press Materials and Photographs available for download:

www.firstrunfeatures.com/maidentrip

SYNOPSIS

15-year-old Laura Dekker sets out—camera in hand—on a two-year voyage in pursuit of her dream to be the youngest person ever to sail around the world alone. In the wake of a year-long battle with Dutch authorities that sparked a global storm of media scrutiny, Laura now finds herself far from land, family and unwanted attention, exploring the world in search of freedom, adventure, and distant dreams of her early youth at sea. Jillian Schlesinger's debut feature amplifies Laura's brave, defiant voice through a mix of Laura's own video and voice recordings at sea and intimate vérité footage from locations including the Galapagos Islands, French Polynesia, Australia, and South Africa.

LAURA DEKKER TIMELINE

1995 Laura Dekker is born on a boat in the port of Whangarei, New Zealand during her parents' seven-year voyage around the world on their sailboat.

2000 Laura's parents Dick Dekker and Babs Muller divorce. Laura chooses to live with her father in The Netherlands.

2001 At just six years of age, Laura sails her Optimist dinghy alone across the lake where she lives.

2005 At ten years of age, Laura takes multi-week trips to Friesland accompanied by only her dog Spot as crew.

2009 Laura announces her plans to become the youngest person to circumnavigate the globe alone at just 13 years old.

2009 Dutch authorities object to Laura's voyage and prevent her from departing.

July 2010 A Dutch family court rules in favor of Laura and her father, allowing her to set sail.

August 2010 Laura sets sail alone from Gibraltar on Guppy, her red 38-foot two-masted ketch.

January 2012 Laura Dekker arrives in St. Marteen after her 17-month solo odyssey, officially making her the youngest person to ever sail around the world alone.

February 2012 Instead of returning to Europe, Laura continues sailing around the world with the goal of returning to New Zealand where she was born.

September 2012 Laura arrives and settles in Whangarei, NZ (the port where she was born) independent of her parents.

A Conversation with Director Jillian Schlesinger

How did you meet Laura and decide to do this film?

I read an op-ed piece in The New York Times about Laura in 2009 with the headline "How Young is Too Young to Sail Around the World?" The story instantly captivated me. It sparked something in people, such strong reactions from every angle. As I read more, I observed that the only voice not represented in the media conversation about it was Laura's own. I reached out to her with a proposal for a collaborative film project that would allow her to tell her own story from her point of view in a way that's not possible in mainstream coverage of such a sensational story.

I was so curious about who Laura was as a person, as a young person with the desire to pursue such a courageous adventure and the tenacity to fight for it against government authorities and public opinion. I was delighted when Laura responded to my proposal and then I took a solo bike trip across southern Holland to meet her and her dad on the boat where they were living in Den Osse in 2010. That was about two months before Laura got permission to do the trip and set sail.

Did you meet up with her at each of her destinations? Was that difficult to schedule given the uncertain timing of her voyage?

I met Laura in St. Maarten, Panama, the Galapagos Islands, took an unplanned trip across the Pacific on another boat with a Canadian family, met up again on the other side of the Pacific in the Marquesas, Tahiti, and then Australia and South Africa before returning to St. Maarten for Laura's finish. And between these trips I was working crazy hours on freelance work in New York, so scheduling was extremely difficult and unpredictable. It wasn't until South Africa that we were finally able to beat Laura to a place and get aerial shots of her sailing. Since Laura sailed alone with no support crew or follow boat, she did all the filming at sea on her own, meaning if we had not gotten those shots, there would have been no visuals in the film of Laura sailing taken from off of the boat. Last minute one-way tickets, we quickly learned, were the best way to go and actually saved money compared to making a million changes to round trip tickets purchased in advance.

Much of the film relies on footage that Laura shot herself, which seems like it would require a lot of trust on your part. What kind of instruction did you give her? And were you worried about the footage getting damaged at sea?

We were careful about process and collected footage at every stop where we met Laura. We sometimes had to replace the cameras that were mounted outside on the boat if they were malfunctioning. In terms of instructions about filming, I observed early on that Laura had a really unique and natural gift with the camera and didn't want to interfere with that at all. People are often surprised to discover that I never told Laura what or how much to film. It was important for it to be her thing—something she wanted to be doing for herself, to share with her children and grandchildren someday—not just because someone told her to do it. The camera was a friend, not a chore, so whatever we got was what we got and what we'd work with. I experienced that as an exciting challenge of the project, accepting that lack of control and viewing it as an asset, a really interesting creative constraint.

Laura reflects on emotions and obstacles during her time alone on sea. Did you guide her in that respect or did it all come from her?

While I didn't give any instructions regarding the filming, I did provide Laura with a Zoom sound recorder and would give her lists of topics that I was interested in having her reflect on. Beyond the list of topics, I didn't give any direction for the recordings, and often Laura would speak about other things that weren't on the list as well. These unscripted reflections were made throughout the trip and after. Sometimes it was something Laura did totally on her own, sometimes she required more cajoling. In one port, I even did Laura's laundry so she would have more time do the recordings. I always felt it would be a really important part of telling the story from Laura's point of view and a great, self-directed alternative to traditional on-camera interviews, which Laura found uncomfortable and invasive. The recorder gave her time and space to reflect on her experiences without pressure or people around and in her own environment, on the boat, where she felt most comfortable.

What was the editing process like?

We were very fortunate to be able to work with an exceptional doc editor, Penelope Falk, whom I had met about six years ago when I was doing archival research for another film she was cutting. Our process was to first focus on the natural physical arc—the journey around the world—and then weave in the backstory and emotional content, which we all felt was the heart of this story and what makes it so universally relatable even though the backdrop is so extreme and remote. It was an unusual process for a doc, starting short and continuing to add pieces. We never had that four hour rough cut where you're like, "Oh god how will we ever cut this down?" The film gradually increased in length, scene by scene, we didn't have to kill a lot of darlings. And it was great to have Laura in on the edit and learning about that stage of the process. She stayed on my couch in New York for a month while we worked and she seemed to really enjoy it, picking up on a lot of the editing lingo we were using and giving great feedback, thinking as much like a filmmaker as a subject. I felt lucky to be able to collaborate that way in post-production and I think it worked out so well, particularly because our goal was to tell a very subjective story expressly from Laura's point of view, so having her there in the room was great, even, and often especially, when we disagreed about how best to tell the story.

Laura established adoptive parents with fellow sailors Mike and Deana during her journey. Do you know if she has kept in contact with them or sailed with them again?

Yes, Mike and Deana have been like family to both of us and they continue to keep in touch with Laura. When Laura came to New York from New Zealand last year, she had a quick layover in LA and they went to meet her for dinner at LAX. I stayed with Mike and Deana in Marina Del Rey when Emily (McAllister, producer) and I were out at the Film Independent Documentary Lab earlier this year and we talked with Laura on Skype. They are wonderful friends and Laura was very fortunate to encounter them and a lot of other really warm, supportive sailing friends along her voyage. There's an amazing community of cruising sailors that most people don't know about, and they have been like a big family to Laura during her solo trip as well as now that she has settled in New Zealand.

---Written by Tiffany Vasquez on behalf of FilmLinc.com

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

Jillian Schlesinger (Director/Producer) is an independent filmmaker and writer-producer-editor of promotional content for television. Her debut feature documentary, **MAIDENTRIP**, won an Audience Award at SXSW and the Festival Director's Award at Mountainfilm in Telluride.

Jillian has previously worked in various roles on documentaries, including writing, story development, and archival research. She has also written, produced, and edited numerous on-air promotions for television networks, including AMC, Sundance Channel, and BBC America. Her work on Sundance Channel's **Dysfunctional Family Thanksgiving** earned a 2010 PromaxBDA Award in the "Something for Nothing" category. Jillian graduated from Brown University, where she studied creative writing and linguistic anthropology. She lives in Brooklyn, New York.

Emily McAllister (Producer) is an independent filmmaker based in Brooklyn. She began working on **MAIDENTRIP** shortly after graduating from Cornell University with a degree in Film and Economics. She started her career interning at the award-winning production company Part2 Pictures, where she worked on television documentaries for National Geographic, OWN, and PBS. Currently, she is working on the post-production team at Pilot, a full service creative agency in Manhattan. Emily is also a part of Pilot's new venture to support emerging filmmakers through its sister company CoPilot Pictures. In her spare time, she loves to make flipbooks and animated shorts.

Penelope Falk (Editor) started her career on Jennifer Fox's groundbreaking series "An American Love Story." Other credits include: **A LETTER WITHOUT WORDS** (Sundance Film Festival), **BOMBAY EUNUCH** (winner of the New York Gay and Lesbian Film Festival), **STAGEDOOR** (programmed at New York's prestigious Film Forum), **TOOTS** (premiered Tribeca Film Festival), **SMILE TIL IT HURTS** (premiered Slamdance Festival) and **JOAN RIVERS: A PIECE OF WORK** (Sundance Film Festival, winner Excellence in Editing award). TV film credits include: **AFGHAN STORIES** (the Sundance Channel), **UNCLE SAM WANTS YOU** (A&E), **ESCUELA** (PBS) and **UNFINISHED COUNTRY** (PBS).

Hillary Fyfe Spera is the award-winning director of photography of documentaries including **AFTER TILLER** (Sundance 2013), **MAIDENTRIP** (SXSW 2013, Audience Award) and **OXYANA** (Tribeca 2013, Special Jury Prize for Best New Director.) Among her narrative film credits are Katie Aselton's **BLACK ROCK** (Sundance 2012), Matt Walsh's **HIGH ROAD**, and Nicholas Greene's **SALAR**, shortlisted for a 2013 Academy Award. Hillary has also shot numerous commercials and music videos around the world. She lives in Brooklyn, New York.

Ben Sollee (Original Music) was born and raised in Kentucky, where he learned to play cello and learned to sing. Sollee currently lives in Kentucky and will likely always live in Kentucky.

Louis Venezia (Executive Producer) is the owner and executive creative director of Pilot, a full service creative and branding agency. Before starting a precursor of Pilot in 2005, Venezia was the creative director of the on-air creative group for VH1, where he helped rebrand the channel in 2003. He got his start in television in 1997, writing and producing award-winning promos and spots for network and cable channels on both coasts, most notably for NBC, THE WB, Food Network, Showtime, and VH1. He has written for television, magazines and newspapers, since 1995. He has taught screenwriting for the English Department at his alma mater, Rutgers University. He is the executive producer of BECOMING SANTA which premiered at SXSW in 2011, and producer of FIVE DAYS GONE which premiered at The Brooklyn Film Festival in 2011. Louis is also an executive producer on the documentary OUR NIXON, which premiered at The International Film Festival Rotterdam 2013, and will have its North American premiere at SXSW 2013.

Rebecca Ritchie Brower (Executive Producer) began her film career at Partisan Pictures, in 1998. In 2002 she became the primary shoot producer of the VH1 Creative Department where she produced hundreds of live action promo, co-branded and print campaigns for VH1 and CMT. In April 2005, she added Executive Producing for LOGO to that roster, and in September of that year, she was named Director of Production for VH1 and LOGO Creative. In 2004, Rebecca formed Trivial Pictures, LLC, to produce TRIVIATOWN a feature length award winning documentary on the World's Largest Trivia Contest. Over five hundred film and video projects later— including BDA Gold Award Winning Promo Campaigns— Rebecca now runs all production for Pilot. Rebecca became a member of The Producers Guild of America in February 2009.

Gill Holland (Executive Producer) owns The Group Entertainment LLC, which includes a film production company, talent management division, a music company and an art gallery. Holland has produced more than 70 feature films including HURRICANE STREETS which was the first film ever to win three Sundance Film Festival awards in 1997 as well as the Cannes Film Festival selection INSIDE/OUT, the Independent Spirit Awards winner SWEET LAND and nominee DEAR JESSE (also nominated for an Emmy), the Gotham Awards nominee SPRING FORWARD and FLOW: for Love of Water which was short-listed for an Academy Award. Holland is also the founder of sonaBLAST! Records, an independent record label featuring Ben Sollee, Nerves Junior, The Pass, Cheyenne Marie Mize, The Old Ceremony and Irish singer-songwriter Mark Geary.

Alex Halpern (Co-Producer) founded Post FactoryNY in 1996, during the post-production of his award-winning feature documentary Nine Good Teeth. Post FactoryNY's credits include big budget studio films, small independent productions, documentaries, television shows and commercials. Post FactoryNY is also one of the founding members of the Post New York Alliance. Prior to founding Post FactoryNY, Alex directed music videos, commercials and television. His stop-motion video for Tripping Daisy's hit song, "Blown Away," was the first music video to feature a live performance by a puppet band. He also co-directed and starred in "Cherub", for Butthole Surfers, which featured him streaking naked through Grand Central Station.

Awards and Recognition

NOMINATED Outstanding Achievement in Graphic Design or Animation- Cinema Eye Honors (to be awarded Jan 2014)

WINNER Visions Audience Award - SXSW Film Festival

WINNER Festival Director's Award - Mountainfilm in Telluride WINNER Audience Award - Camden International Film Festival

WINNER Special Jury Prize for First Time Director - Port Townsend Film Festival

WINNER Best Feature - Flagstaff Mountain Film Festival

Official Selection - Hot Docs

Official Selection - Full Frame Documentary Film Festival Official Selection - Sarasota Film Festival Official Selection - SFIFF Schools at the Festival Official Selection - Nantucket Film Festival Official Selection - Bergen International Film Festival

Credits

Director:	Jillian Schlesinger
Producers:	Jillian Schlesinger & Emily McAllister
Editor:	Penelope Falk
Executive Producers:	Louis Venezia/Rebecca RitchieBrower/Gill Holland/ Dominic Cicere
Co-Producer:	Alex Halpern
Director of Photography:	Hillary Fyfe Spera
Music:	Ben Sollee
Animation:	Moth Collective
Sound Editor:	Clemence Stoloff
Sound Mixer	Chad Birmingham
Sound Editor & Re-Recording Mixer	Joe Deihl C.A.S M.P.S.E
Associate Producers:	Mary Murphy/Scott M. Kush
Art Director:	Leah Koransky
Post-Production Facilities:	Broadway Video
Post-Production Equipment:	Pilot
Color & Online:	Post Factory NY
Lead Colorist:	Eyal Dimant
Colorist:	Michael Hernandez



Maidentrip: SXSW Review

3/8/2013 by Sheri Linden

The Bottom Line: *A remarkable young sailor is both in focus and elusive in this solid, seaworthy vessel.*

The portrait of teenage sailor Laura Dekker during her record-setting solo trip around the world is an immersive first-person chronicle.

Dutch authorities tried to stop her, and editorials called Laura Dekker delusional, spoiled, insane. On the evidence of the documentary *Maidentrip*, receiving its world premiere at SXSW, the young sailor is as grounded, resourceful and clearheaded as anyone could hope to be. In 2012, she fulfilled her “delusional” goal and became, at 16, the youngest person to sail around the world solo.

Jillian Schlesinger’s first feature, made in collaboration with Dekker and composed largely of footage that the hardy adventurer shot herself, is both low-key and lyrical as it focuses on the mundane and the magnificent. The well-crafted film might not be destined to make theatrical waves, but it has enough cinematic oomph to draw niche interest in select markets. And given the international media attention Dekker’s journey received, *Maidentrip* is a sure fit for broad-based small-screen exposure.

Beginning with a Kickstarter campaign, New York-based Schlesinger provided her subject, who set out in 2010 without a follow boat or support team, with a Sony Handycam and mounted GoPro cameras. Novice camera operator Dekker captures the stillness of the open sea as well as the “super awesome” rainstorms and rough winds that toss her 38-foot ketch and sometimes create disasters in the compact kitchen.

The director also gave her lists of topics to address on camera or into a tape recorder during her downtime. What emerges, onscreen and in voice-over, is a preternaturally self-confident teen who doesn’t subscribe to her generation’s social-media egocentrism. When she says, “I don’t like when people tell me what to do,” it’s not an expression of mere adolescent impudence but the voice of someone who knows what she wants and is willing to do the hard work to get it. Fame and publicity are ordeals for her, not goals, as her bristly impatience with a reporter demonstrates. Repulsed by Western conformity and materialism, Dekker quite pointedly arranges for the finish line of her circumnavigation to be somewhere other than Europe.

Schlesinger doesn’t get into the nitty gritty, but Dekker’s trip was prefaced by a legal battle in which the Netherlands’ child-welfare bureaucracy sought custody of the then 13-year-old to prevent her from

embarking on her solo trip. After 10 months, she prevailed. "They tried to break Laura down," her father notes, "but she's too strong."

The inventive, moody score by Kentucky-based musician Ben Sollee is a fine enhancement to the material Schlesinger has selected to shape her tale of a brave soul eager to explore the wide world. With the help of lovely watercolor-style maps by animation house Moth Collective, the film charts the progression of the trip, interweaving material from family archives to provide the basic backstory.

Born during her parents' seven-year sailing trip, Dekker is at home on the water; when her folks divorced, she stayed with her shipbuilder father to pursue her passion. Their life is anything but privileged. The Guppy, the boat of Laura's landmark trip, was a wreck they bought cheap and refurbished themselves.

Director Schlesinger rendezvoused with Dekker at various ports along her route, and the film includes footage of her traipsing around St. Maarten, the Galapagos Islands and French Polynesia, among other picturesque locales. The beauty of the settings notwithstanding, her time on land at first has the so-what feel of home movies, but through the glimpse of her bond with an older couple, a portrait of the sailing community comes into poignant focus.

As the months go by, Dekker's interest in being ashore lessens and, as for countless sailors before her, the solitude of the sea is what matters. Along the way she braves the treacherous Torres Strait, weeps at the company of a pod of dolphins and casually mentions that she's chosen a certain route to avoid pirates. Through it all, she reveals only as much as she wants to reveal. The film's final surprise is an apt illustration of this young woman's singular combination of forthrightness and reserve.

<http://www.timeout.com/us/film/maidentrip>



Maidentrip

Time Out rating: ★★★★★

Time Out says

Tue Jan 14

Dutch teenager Laura Dekker made headlines in 2009 when she announced her plan to circumnavigate the globe in a 38-foot ketch named Guppy. She was 13 at the time, and a legal battle with child-welfare officials ensued that delayed her expedition for a year. Jillian Schlesinger's inspiring documentary (as spirited as its gutsy protagonist) opens with a quick recap of that trying chapter via newsreel footage and retrospective comments by Laura, then gets to the meat of the story—the journey itself.

Schlesinger gave Dekker several portable cameras that she used to document the solo portions of her two-year odyssey. One of the most moving moments comes when the young sailor bursts into tears after spotting a school of dolphins swimming alongside her boat—you can sense the curious child gently emerging into an enlightened adult. The real beauty of *Maidentrip* is how it downplays the go-for-glory aspect of the tale (this adolescent mariner's aim is to become the youngest person ever to sail around the world) to focus on more earthly matters like the isolation and loneliness of the voyage or the lingering effects of the divorce that irrevocably shaped Dekker's life. There's plenty of triumph in this quest, but also an equally potent dose of coming-of-age melancholy.

- Keith Uhlich

http://www.thestar.com/entertainment/movies/2013/12/19/maidentrip_follows_dutch_teens_solo_sail_around_the_world.html



'Maidentrip' follows Dutch teen's solo sail around the world

By: Jason Anderson Special to the Star, Published on Thu Dec 19 2013

Maidentrip: The story of a lone sailor's travails on the high seas, *All Is Lost* may be one of 2013's most widely praised films but surely there were some moviegoers who wondered what it would've been like if Robert Redford's rugged hero were replaced by a perky Dutch teenager.

Well, these viewers' curiosity will be satiated by *Maidentrip*, a vividly rendered true-life travelogue that begins a run at the Bloor Hot Docs Cinema this weekend. In 2010, a 14-year-old sailor named Laura Dekker set out to become the youngest person to ever complete a solo voyage around the world. The trip would take two years, much of which Dekker spent all by her lonesome. (Dancing to Red Hot Chili Peppers songs and eating pots of pasta appear to be her two favourite pastimes.)

Filmmaker Jillian Schlesinger integrates Dekker's own movies of her travels along with other footage shot along the route. Though Dekker maintains a cheerful, can-do attitude in the face of many challenges, *Maidentrip's* most fraught moments suggest that the emotional whirlpools of adolescence may be even more tumultuous than a stormy night in the South Pacific.

An audience award winner at the SXSW festival last March, *Maidentrip* plays Dec. 20 to Jan. 3 at the Bloor.

<http://www.filmschoolrejects.com/reviews/maidentrip-laura-dekker.php>



[‘Maidentrip’ Review: A Teenage Girl Grows Older and Wiser While Sailing Solo Around the World](#)

By [Rob Hunter](#) on January 14, 2014

When I was fourteen years old my greatest accomplishment was installing a homemade (from instructions) cable de-scrambler on my television so I could experience the late-night joys of Cinemax. By contrast, Dutch teenager **Laura Dekker** set out at fourteen on a solo sailing trip around the globe. Her journey covered 27,000 nautical miles and lasted 519 days, and she currently holds the unofficial record for youngest person to accomplish such a feat.

I bet I’ve seen *Hardbodies* more than she has, though.

Maidentrip documents Dekker’s incredibly impressive adventure mostly through footage she took herself while sailing apart from friends, family and strangers alike. We get to watch as this confident and capable young woman deals with inclement weather, impending madness caused by doldrums, and a constantly developing desire for a life other than the one she left behind in Holland. By the time she crosses the equator, dancing alone in a party hat and offering pancakes to Neptune, you’ll find yourself loving her spirit and personality nearly as much as she loves the sea.

“Freedom is when you’re not attached to anything.”

Dekker’s larger journey of life began off New Zealand where she was born on a boat to parents who themselves had set out to sail the world. They made a home on land a few years later, but the saltwater bug was already coursing through Laura’s little veins. When her parents split up she chose to stay with the one who shared an affection for sailing, but life with her father also shaped her into an independent and self-sustaining child. That drive helped her win a ten-month-long court battle with the Dutch government who wanted to stop her plans to sail the world solo, even going so far as attempting to take custody away from her dad.

She set sail in August of 2010 intent on setting the age record, but while other teens focused on speed, Laura was more interested in seeing and experiencing the world around her. She made multiple stops along the way, and we see her time split between the solitary life aboard the *Guppy* and her brief, social excursions at various ports or with fellow sailors. Her initial jubilation is tempered by ravioli disasters and clumsiness as she learns to film while going about her business on a rocking boat, but even as her spirit sinks and nerves settle in at the beginning of the 2200 -mile stretch across the Atlantic ocean, she stays remarkably focused and controlled.

There are tense moments as storms approach, water gets in where it shouldn't, and Laura works to navigate a deadly, reef-filled strait at night in the rain, but the film is filled with vitality, charm, and a sense of humor. Animated maps show the legs of the trip with watercolors and personalized little touches highlighting her dog Spot, where she was when she turned 15, and more add a human touch. A scene counting the days trapped by dead winds in the Indian ocean features Laura joking that "bobbing on the waves for days" is enough to drive someone crazy, and it's followed by her introducing a bird that had taken up residence on the boat. "I'm only speaking English to him," she says straight-faced, "because he probably doesn't understand Dutch."

Director **Jillian Schlesinger's** film mostly uses Laura's own footage, but we also see scenes taken by third parties. Friends made along the way, family members who visit at the halfway point, and even the director herself points the camera Laura's way revealing an abbreviated version of someone growing up before our eyes and ears. Laura's priorities shift as her loneliness morphs into a preference for the solitary life at sea, and a distaste for people in general (and the media in particular) evolves into a love for individuals like her family and like-minded sailors.

The film runs a too-slim 82 minutes, and while there's little here that could have been cut or altered there's plenty more that could have been added. It's a coming-of-age film in the guise of a sailing documentary, but both halves of that equation would benefit from more time on the ocean showing us Laura in action. We see glimpses of her working on deck in silence, but more time spent highlighting her growing expertise or showing her appreciation of the world she's traversing through would not have been wasted.

Maidentrip is Schlesinger's film to the point that she crafted and culled it from presumably hundreds (if not thousands) of hours of footage, but it's undeniably Laura's story. She's already a "beyond her years" type when she begins the trip at fourteen, but by the time pulls into St. Martin to complete the official journey at the grizzled old age of sixteen it's clear that we've watched a confident girl grow into an accomplished and wise young woman. "It's the end of the dream I had as a kid," she says, "and it's the beginning of my life as a sailor." With any luck she'll invite the rest of us along on another adventure soon.

The Upside: Laura Dekker is inspiring and charismatic; beautiful visuals; well-crafted in how it tells Laura's story past and present

The Downside: Scene showing Laura arguing with Dutch journalist seems extraneous; more footage of the journey, with or without narration, would have been nice

On the Side: Laura Dekker has taken issue with the film, [stating](#) only that "I am not going to say much about the film *Maidentrip*, but I won't be representing it as I am not fully standing behind it."

<http://nonfics.com/maidentrip-review/>



'Maidentrip' Review

by Christopher Campbell on January 9, 2014

Laura Dekker is like most teenagers. She's gaining more responsibility and control over her life as she demands more independence, and yet she's also floating about as she explores her identity. The difference is that Dekker is doing all this on a boat as she sails around the world. By herself. She literally holds the reigns, or steering wheel, as she heads out into the uncertain waters of her own existence. As with any classic tale involving the sea, the metaphors could go on and on.

But the usual themes of coming of age do fit so well with Dekker's unique story and setting, and in the documentary *Maidentrip*, director **Jillian Schlesinger** thankfully allows these connections to play for themselves rather than pointing them out. All that the film literally offers is a kind of selfie cinema about a girl and her ketch. Dive deeper, though, and it's another terrific portrait of the woes and wonders of youth on the verge of whatever comes next.

Dekker embarked on her journey back in 2010, documenting almost everything herself along the way from Gibraltar to Saint Martin then west through the Panama Canal and French Polynesia, past Australia and South Africa, and finally returning to the Caribbean after 17 months at sea, upon which she was officially designated the youngest person ever to take such a global trek solo. She was 16.

Rather than sail non-stop, Dekker wanted to visit different ports and actually see the world, and Schlesinger would meet her at various times of landfall, filming hikes and bike rides and scuba tours and visits with new friends gained during the trip or with family members flying out to whatever location she'd included in her plans. In one memorable scene, she has a minor squabble with a customs agent illustrating how far from total freedom an adventure like this is.

Those interludes help *Maidentrip* avoid being just a monotonous ride-along filled with self-shot close-ups of a magnetic young individual and the occasional view of the ocean when it's especially beautiful or choppy, even though those onshore bits are often the parts that feel most like insignificant home movies. We learn very little about Dekker's personal journey when she's on land and not alone, except for in sequences where she's interacting with her mother and father.

Other more welcome interruptions involve cuts to Dekker's back story, shown via old photos and clips while she tells us in voiceover about her being born on a boat, her parents' divorce, her sailing history and, just before this voyage, a custody situation with her local government in Holland, where she was

temporarily prohibited from attempting the sailing record on account of her age. The ordeal would greatly effect her feelings later of being adrift without a homeland.

What we surprisingly don't see much of is actual sailing. As in Dekker at the wheel or hoisting sails or whatever else goes into the driving and navigation of the vessel. This makes sense given that someone can't hold a camera and do that kind of work at the same time. And it's only really missed during two crucial storm scenes. We can only imagine just how dangerous and harrowing they were based on what we're told after and what kind of damage we see the boat in.

But Maidentrip isn't about the sport of sailing. Any doc can be made about someone rounding the globe on their own, and in fact there's even one about another teen girl who tried it before (Wild Eyes). That's not the story here. At one point Dekker claims not to care at all about the record, though that seems to be a change of mind from the start. And changes of mind — others being which flag to fly under, where to finish up her trip, going from not being able to wait to get on land and “kick around” to making fewer port stops — are key to her character at this time in her life, because this is a film about a person finding herself.

Maybe having the sailing fall to side in importance is why Dekker isn't a fan of the doc in which she stars. Or maybe that's just another part of her current attitude, something that was to be expected given her professed and depicted clash with any sort of media coverage of her life and voyage. Knowing her response before watching, though, you might be surprised. She's clearly interested in participating, filming her brief updates and intimately sharing herself on camera and in the narration, mostly looking happy to be on camera.

Yet she's also an outsider, and the way the doc ends, the things she says about what's next for her, the person she's become and continues to move towards, it's understandable for her character that she's “not fully standing behind” a feature depicting her mid-teens so personally. I've read that Schlesinger worked with Dekker to try to appease her during post-production, and I'm glad that in the end she obviously didn't give in too much. Dekker ought to come around on the film eventually. It really is a treasure.

I need to comment on the title, as I'm always a fan of words used for multiple meanings. As clever as it seems, the association with “maiden voyage” doesn't quite make sense since this isn't necessarily about the boat's first time at sea. That makes the point that this is about a trip of a maiden, as in the journey of a young girl and of being a young girl all the more definite.

Maidentrip is, along with recent films *Only the Young*, *12 O'Clock Boys* and *Medora*, part of a new breed of nonfiction teen movies that acutely tap into the true heart and soul of that age better than any fiction filmmakers are doing right now. Specifically here, that time is an exploration, paralleled with a physical analogy of both triumph and inconclusiveness in the spirit of not only growing up but also growing outward.

<http://thedissolve.com/reviews/480-maidentrip/>



Maidentrip

by Scott Tobias

On August 21, 2010, 14-year-old Laura Dekker left the port of Gibraltar, on the tip of the Iberian Peninsula, and embarked on a bid to become the youngest sailor ever to circumnavigate the globe alone. As just one indicator of the controversy that surrounded her mission, she had to depart from Gibraltar instead of Lisbon in neighboring Portugal because the law forbids a person that young from captaining a ship. Dekker's adventure also followed a legal and media brouhaha back in her native Holland, where the government actually threatened to take custody away from her father for allowing his daughter to try something so dangerous and irresponsible. Between the threat of powerful storms and hull-shredding reefs, the presence of pirates on certain routes, and the sheer psychological toll of spending so many days alone at sea, it seemed to some critics like a reckless stunt borne of arrogance and hubris. The courts ruled in the Dekkers' favor.

Jillian Schlesinger's *Maidentrip*, a documentary made in close collaboration with Dekker herself, brings in the court case and Dekker's family history for context, but the film is as anxious as she was to hit the high seas. The fact that Dekker was shooting for a record gives the story a peg, but it's also revealed as a red herring—or at least low on her list of reasons for making the attempt. She was more interested in escaping the strictures of life in Holland—and of being a typically awkward teenager, too—and having the freedom to strike out on her own and see the world, which is a much more inspiring goal. Though she spent weeks in isolation, traversing thousands of miles across the Atlantic, Pacific, and Indian Oceans, hers wasn't a nonstop voyage. She took her time, stopping in exotic locales like the Galapagos Islands and French Polynesia, and was 16 years old when she returned.

Schlesinger builds much of *Maidentrip* around footage that Dekker herself recorded along the way, and she's fortunate her subject has a teenager's adeptness at self-documentation. With no human companion—Dekker had no support boats following her—the camera becomes a little like the volleyball in *Castaway*, an inanimate friend to whom she can confide. What it reveals is the true heart of a sailor, someone who's reserved and resourceful, who doesn't mind being alone, and who has an adventurous spirit, tied both to a yearning for freedom and a desire to explore new cultures and landscapes. For someone in early-to-mid-adolescence, Dekker comes across as remarkably self-possessed, without a teenager's typical insecurities or need for approval from her peers. It's understandable that the Dutch government found the prospect of a 14-year-old circumnavigating the globe on her own alarming, but this 14-year-old is not only precocious, but emotionally developed beyond her age.

Some patches of *Maidentrip* feel too much like reality television, with video confessionals and mini-subplots that aren't adequately fleshed out. That may be a result of Schlesinger working with limited materials—after all, Dekker had other things to do besides filming herself—but the film is best when it's more spontaneous, as when Dekker celebrates reaching the Equator as if it were a New Year's Eve countdown, or when she confidently barrels through a treacherous storm. Pockets of despair set in, especially when the absence of wind has her drifting listlessly for days on the Indian Ocean, but they're dispelled quickly. Dekker knows who she is, what she wants to do, and how to get it done, and *Maidentrip* wisely sails off the tailwinds of her confidence and boundless curiosity.