

BREAK FROM THE HERD



A TRILOGY OF STORIES ABOUT COURAGE, FORTITUDE & GRIT

BREAK FROM THE HERD is a feature-length character-driven documentary, which humanizes positive solutions to issues facing the integrity of scientific research, the regeneration of healthy soil and the preservation of water relating to our food and wine production systems.





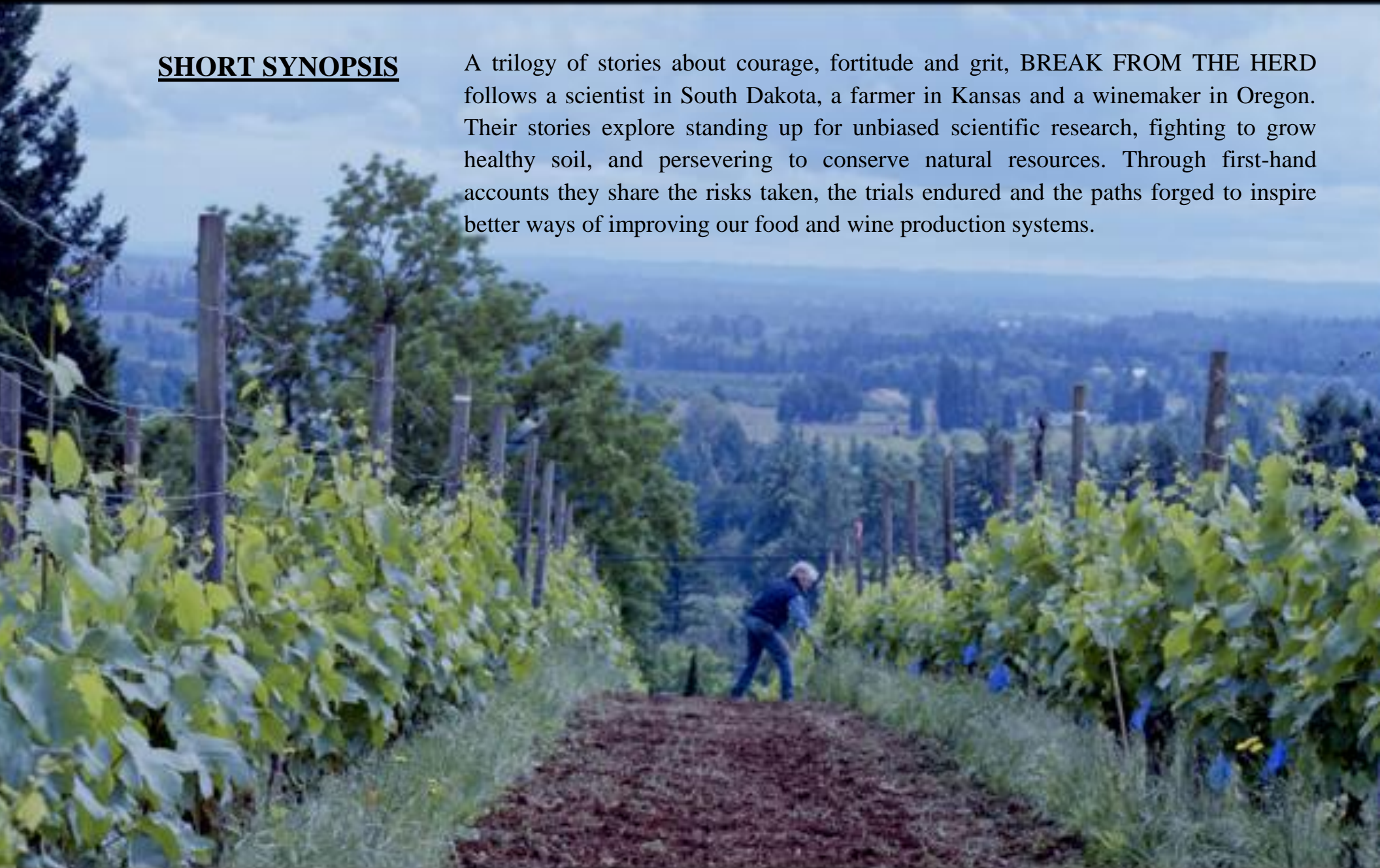
Directed by: Monica Murray & Chris Holmes

Produced by: The Magic Letters Production Company

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SHORT SYNOPSIS

A trilogy of stories about courage, fortitude and grit, **BREAK FROM THE HERD** follows a scientist in South Dakota, a farmer in Kansas and a winemaker in Oregon. Their stories explore standing up for unbiased scientific research, fighting to grow healthy soil, and persevering to conserve natural resources. Through first-hand accounts they share the risks taken, the trials endured and the paths forged to inspire better ways of improving our food and wine production systems.



LONG SYNOPSIS

BREAK FROM THE HERD is a character driven documentary featuring three individuals who are making a positive impact in the worlds of science, agriculture and wine. Dr. Jonathan Lundgren, a recipient of the Presidential Early Career Award for Science and Engineering in 2010, shares his expertise relating to improving food production systems. His story includes a pivotal time in his life, where he courageously defended the integrity of his research and the right for farmers to be included as a part of the scientific conversation. Gail Fuller, a third generation farmer who now practices regenerative farming, shares the history of his family's farm and the turbulent path that has led him on a mission to restore it to a healthy ecosystem. He is an unwavering advocate for growing healthy soil, which will in turn grow healthy food. John Paul was bound for a career in scientific research when epiphany struck and led him into the world of wine. The issue of water usage impacted his life at an early age, and he has carried it with him throughout his decades in the wine industry. John Paul's tenacious efforts to help others understand the beauty of dry farming and creating wine from non-irrigated vines leaves an indelible impression of inspiration for conserving natural resources. Collectively, these individuals represent positive solutions to improving our food and wine production systems while inspiring others to

FEATURED PEOPLE

Data and science are necessary but insufficient for changing behavior.

DR. JONATHAN LUNDGREN
Entomologist & Agroecologist

Put our emphasis on soil, grow healthy soil, and it will grow healthy food. It truly is that simple.

GAIL FULLER
Third Generation Farmer &
Soil Health Advocate

The more that consumers ask questions, the more the industry is going to have to reckon with this whole thing of irrigation.

JOHN PAUL
Winemaker & Grower of Dry-Farmed Vines



NOTES FROM THE DIRECTORS

BREAK FROM THE HERD began as a project in early 2017 when we set out to create a documentary that would make a contribution to society. Originally, we decided to focus on native bees and the role they play as pollinators right along with honey bees. As we did our research we quickly learned that the importance of pollinators went far beyond just the bees. Pollinator health is tied to the health of soil. The health of soil is tied to the health of water, both of which are reflected in land management practices.

Further research led us to Dr. Jonathan Lundgren, a prolific scientific researcher at the top of his game. Time spent with him in South Dakota helped us understand the courageous actions he took for the sake of integrity and transparency in connecting his work to helping farmers sustain healthy ecosystems in their operations. Dr. Lundgren generously showed us what it means to see the world through a systems-based perspective and how to go after issues through a solutions-oriented approach rather than a problem-focused one.

The next person to include in the story, would be someone who could talk about water. Contacting John Paul (winemaker and grower of dry-farmed vines) led to a visit where we talked about our project. John generously offered us whatever we needed. We wanted to start by volunteering, to get a sense of the place, and so we spent many hours helping out and learning about the life of the vineyard. Alternating between shooting, interviews and working on the property gave us insight on how incredibly labor intensive a vineyard is, and how John Paul rarely sits still! His intense commitment to dry-farming and crafting an honest wine showed us a man who throws his entire being into his work and gives generously in equal measure.

Lastly, we searched for a farmer to lend perspective on the issue of restoring the health of farmland. We found Gail Fuller, a third generation farmer and soil health advocate in Kansas. Our time in Kansas was spent following Gail around his family's farm and hometown. We learned about the farm's history, the town's history and Gail's life history. We left Gail's farm in Kansas with a feeling that we were leaving home; a place where the landscape has an unidentifiable grip on the sentimental. We also left with a better understanding of the challenges faced by farmers who are working to buck the status quo in the midst of thick resistance, all for the sake of healing the land and its people. Gail's efforts to grow nutrient-dense soil demonstrate an example of devotion at the ready for others to adopt.

We created this project as a crew of two and it has changed our lives. It has opened our eyes to questioning the architecture of scientific research, given new meaning to the vast role soil plays in the health of not only the planet, but all living beings, and it has inspired us to examine the importance of honest work. We hope others are inspired too, to ask how their food was grown, how their wine was made, what healthy soil really means, and grow a little garden with some pollinator-friendly plants.



PRODUCTION TEAM

CHRIS HOLMES

MONICA MURRAY

TECH SPECS

RUNNING TIME: 76 minutes

EXHIBITION FORMATS: DCP with 5.1 audio, DVD and digital

ASPECT RATIO: 2.39 Scope

LANGUAGE: English

PRODUCTION: USA

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