

# STILL BREATHING

## SYNOPSIS

Rob Fraser always knew his life would be condensed. That's what comes with having cystic fibrosis. Rob calculates his age in dog years. He looks like a healthy bloke but now at 33, Rob's really an old man of 99. Rob can see the end of his life clearly and he's deciding to place himself on the waiting list for a lung transplant. He's had to come to grips with things most of us struggle with: body and soul, life and death. He's deciding what he's really prepared to risk.

Rob has a huge capacity for life. Somehow for Rob the surf seems bigger and his guitar sounds sweeter. He's funny and down-to-earth and gets very tired of pills, hospitals and the medical system – at the same time he utterly depends on them.

Still Breathing brings together startling, highly stylised images with a remarkably intimate voiceover by Rob. Leaving sentimentality behind, Still Breathing takes us on a lifetime's journey in less than half an hour.

*Produced and developed with the assistance of the Australian Film Commission, produced with the assistance of Film Victoria and produced in association with SBS Independent.*



# STILL BREATHING

## Production details

Film title: Still Breathing  
Type: Documentary  
Length: 26 mins  
Master: SP Betacam  
Film print: 16mm  
Language English  
Country of origin Australia

Produced and developed with the assistance of the Australian Film Commission.  
Produced with the assistance of Film Victoria. Produced in association with SBS Independent.  
© 2001 Australian Film Commission, Cinemedia and Belly Productions.

## Principal crew

Writer/Director Charlotte Roseby  
Producers Nell White, Charlotte Roseby  
Cinematographer Jenni Meaney  
Sound Mark Tarpey  
Editor Mark Atkin  
Music Rob Fraser

## Screenings and awards

Infinity Festival, Alba, Italy  
DOXA Documentary Festival, Canada  
37th Karlovy Vary International Film Festival, Prague, Czech Republic  
'Uherske Hradist', Focus on Australian and New Zealand Film, Czech Republic  
Honorable Mention, 50th Columbus International Film Festival, USA  
Cinema Nova, screening and panel, Melbourne, Australia  
SBS Television, Australia

## World-wide sales and distribution

### Ronin Films

PO Box 1005, Civic Square, Canberra ACT, Australia  
Phone +61 2 62480851  
[orders@roninfilms.com.au](mailto:orders@roninfilms.com.au)  
[www.roninfilms.com.au](http://www.roninfilms.com.au)

# STILL BREATHING

## REVIEWS

"My Way's finest half-hour, Rob Fraser's dead now, but in Still Breathing he explained why a cystic fibrosis sufferer, barely able to move without sucking from an oxygen canister, still cherished getting out of bed each day,

It's one of the few television shows you'd imagine wanting to record and save."

– James Collie, *Courier Mail*

"Still Breathing is imaginatively presented as footage and stills that reflect the internal dialogue of Rob's voiceover. Lest that sound artsy or affected, it's not. Still Breathing is surprisingly upbeat and positive. It's as if Rob's love of life is also condensed, into a pure and potent essence."

– Barbara Hooks, *Sydney Morning Herald*

"It's very hard to make a documentary about a very likeable young man who is suffering a fatal illness without falling into sentimentality. Charlotte Roseby succeeds in doing it, nonetheless, in her understated but powerful and very moving documentary, Still Breathing.

Her film shows us a few months in the life of Rob who suffers from cystic fibrosis and who speaks frankly of its debilitating effects and of the fact that he knows he has only a few years to live, if he is lucky. With wry humour he estimates his age in dog years. His thirty-three years become ninety-nine. We see - and as the film progresses count ourselves as privileged to see - his struggle for identity and dignity against the sometimes humiliating effects of his illness and against the tendency of the doctors and nurses who care for him to lose sight of his humanity.

Roseby's film is a meditation on life suffering and death, and crucially, on the companionship given to those who are facing death by others who are also facing it, and by those (like Rob's wife) who show a calm and steadfast love that nourishes energy and hope as surely as the awesome number of tablets on the bedside table. As well as being shown the companionship, however, we are also given heartrending glimpses of the sense of radical aloneness that grips almost everyone who faces death, and which, while it lasts, is beyond the reach of any consolation. The tension - this film seems to say - between consolation that is found in love and companionship and in the knowledge that we do not suffer alone, and the sense of radical aloneness that companionship and love seem unable to reach, is at the heart of our mortal identity."

– Raimond Gaita  
Author, *Romulus, My Father; A Common Humanity: Thinking about Love & Truth & Justice*;  
Professor of Moral Philosophy, University of London Kings College