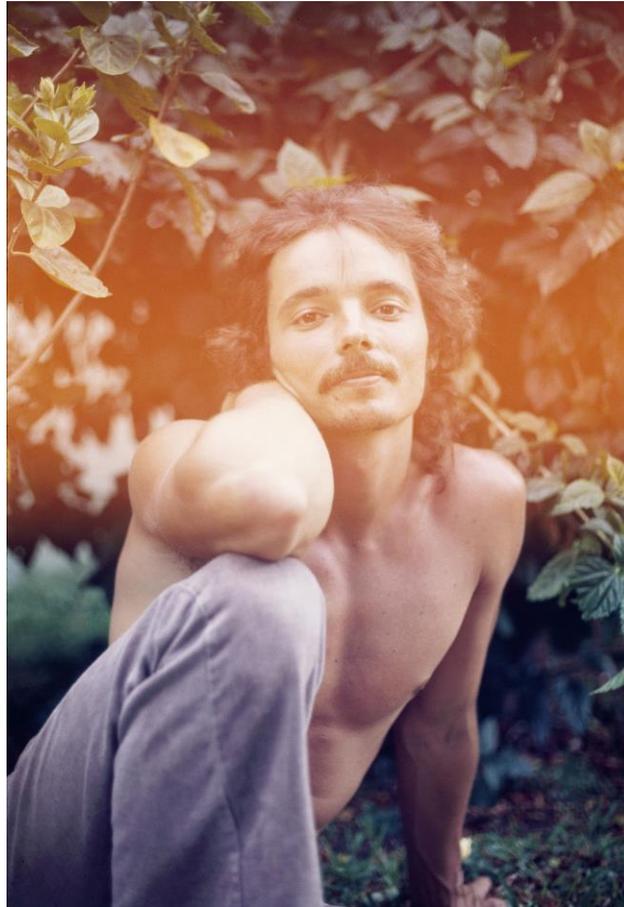


EYESTEELFILM

Presents

# MANIC



**A film by Kalina Bertin**  
84 MIN | Canada | 2017 | HD

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# MANIC

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## LOGLINE

**Manic** chronicles filmmaker Kalina Bertin's journey to understand the devastating impacts of mental illness on her family.

Convinced that her father holds a key piece of the puzzle, she sets out to find the truth about a man known alternately as a cult leader, a scam artist, a prophet, and a dad of fifteen children across five separate families.

## SHORT SYNOPSIS

**Manic** chronicles filmmaker Kalina Bertin's struggle to make sense of the legacy of mental illness wreaking havoc over her siblings' lives.

Convinced that her father holds a key piece of the puzzle, she sets out to find the truth about him, and discovers a man known alternately as a cult leader, a scam artist, a prophet, and a father of fifteen. *Manic* invites the viewer on a compelling and intimate journey through time and through the mind, where past and present collide.

## DETAILED SYNOPSIS

**Manic** chronicles filmmaker Kalina Bertin's journey to make sense of the mental illness wreaking havoc over her family's household.

Convinced that her father holds a piece to the puzzle, she sets out to find the truth about him. Through a maze of intricately woven interviews, and vivid 8mm archives, she travels back in time, to the seventies, on the exotic Island of Kauai in Hawaii. She meets with Don, Steven, Karen and Margaret, who describe the charismatic man who seduced them and invited them to follow him on his holy mission: to bring together a group of people who he described as being "significant human beings". Slowly, the idea of past lives is brought into the picture, and they start believing that he is the reincarnation of Christ. But is this man stable? Visual and auditory hallucinations... delusions of grandeur... the signs of mental illness are everywhere.

Which brings the filmmaker back to the present, where her sister Felicia and brother François are both experiencing manic episodes. As the film travels from past to present, we can clearly see that the father's story echoes back to the present struggles of her siblings, whom the viewer learns to love through vulnerable and human sequences highlighting the hardship of living with mental illness.

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## FILMMAKER'S STATEMENT

I still have vivid memories of my childhood with my father when we lived on the Caribbean island of Montserrat. When his love shone on me, my existence was filled with meaning and purpose. Occasionally experiencing his wrath, no matter how terrifying it could get, seemed to me at the time as a natural compromise part of the process of receiving his affection.

But he was constantly in and out of my life. I didn't have the basic information you normally should have of your father: His name was always changing, so I was confused as to what it actually was; I had no idea where he was from and not a clue what his profession was.

When I was 5 years old, my mother ran away with my 3 siblings and myself to Montreal to start a new life. Since then, my father remained a mysterious character that I longed to know more about.

When my father's sudden death was announced to us years later, it came as a shock. It was around this time that my family's mental health started falling apart. My sister had her first psychotic episode and was diagnosed with bipolar disorder. My brother François had been living with bipolar disorder for 7 years, and his state was deteriorating.

Could our father have something to do with this? Could his story hold the key to understanding what was happening to us?

There was a deep sense of urgency for me to understand and shed light on this mental illness that became very much part of my daily life and, which I suspected, played a major role in my father's demise. Filming became my way of coping with what was happening at home but it also became a gateway into my siblings' worlds, both of whom I loved and desperately wanted to understand.

Aiming to build empathy and awareness toward such a complex condition, I am currently directing a virtual reality experience which will enable the viewer to explore the world of manic-depression from within – through poetry, interaction and abstraction. Trying to cope and make sense of the destabilizing effects of the disorder, my siblings would often call me and leave me long and detailed messages while I was making the documentary film. They wanted to talk, to try to understand themselves; the strange and the beautiful, but also frightening worlds that were building up around them.

The VR experience – **ManicVR** - is based on those vivid testimonies. Their voices are guiding the user throughout the key stages of the illness as they express what it feels like to be in mania, in psychosis and in depression. Vivid worlds depicting these phases build, collide and collapse around the user throughout the experience. The natural arc of the disorder is what the structure is based upon, and our interaction design is built around that model.

- **Kalina Bertin, Filmmaker**



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## ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

### **KALINA BERTIN - Director / Writer / Director of Photography / Producer**

Kalina Bertin is an award-winning filmmaker based in Montreal. After completing her degree in film production at UQÀM, she quickly realized that if she didn't set out to understand the mental illness in her family it would destroy her. This process gave birth to her award-winning documentary film *Manic*, which explores the legacy of bipolar disorder in her family. *Manic* had its world premiere at Hot Docs in 2017, where Kalina received the Don Haig Pay it forward award. The film went on to win the documentary Spirit Award at the Brooklyn film festival and has been received with much enthusiasm at over 8 film festivals including the Montreal International Documentary Film Festival (RIDM) and Rendez-vous with Madness. *Manic* has been nominated for two Canadian screen awards (2018) by the Canadian Academy of Cinema and Television. It continues to screen in film festivals across the world and will have its Montreal Theatrical release on February 2, 2018. Aiming to build empathy and awareness toward such a complex condition, Kalina is currently directing a virtual reality experience which will enable the viewer to explore the world of manic depression from within. She presented this project in development at the MIT Open Documentary lab and at MUTEK's Atelier Grand Nord VR. *ManicVR* is both produced by EyeSteelFilm, a two-time Emmy award winning production company based in Montreal and DPT creative digital studio.

### **MARINA SERRAO - Producer**

Marina Serrao is an emerging producer from Montreal, Canada whose diverse family background has informed her interests in social justice and identity, lead to a degree in Anthropology and a passion for different cultures and world views. Her adventures lead her to a decade in New Zealand, and to film school in Auckland. Over the last eight years, Marina has had the good fortune to have worked in fiction, TV and documentaries on set and in award-winning production companies, as well as programmed for the Cinema Politica Network, cementing her passion for documentaries that explore justice and build empathy. She is committed to working with marginalized individuals and communities and making sure their voices are heard.

### **BOB MOORE - Executive Producer**

Bob Moore is a Creative Producer and Co-President of EyeSteelFilm in Montreal, specializing in the creation of cinematic documentaries such as *Last Train Home*, *China Heavyweight*, *I Am the Blues*, and *Forest of the Dancing Spirits*. With partners Daniel Cross and Mila Aung-Thwin, Bob has produced films that have been recognized by international awards including the Emmys and Golden Horse, as well as numerous festival grand jury awards. Bob also oversees EyeSteelFilm's theatrical distribution company and its new Creative Reality Lab, which focuses on meaningful interactive and immersive storytelling. He has degrees in Philosophy, Fine Art, and Law, and regularly lectures at and consults with film institutions around the world.

## **CREDITS**

Writer / Director	Kalina Bertin
Producers	Marina Serrao & Kalina Bertin
Executive Producers	Bob Moore, Mila Aung-Thwin, Daniel Cross
DOP	Kalina Bertin
Editor	Anouk Deschênes
Music	Octavio Torija Alvarez
Production company	EyeSteelFilm

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## MAIN CHARACTERS

**My sister Felicia**



**My brother François**



**My father, George Dubie**

