

“All Too Clear”

Documentary Filmmaking beneath the Great Lakes with Inspired Planet Productions and Boxfish Luna

with Yvonne Drebert and Zach Melnick

Yvonne Drebert and Zach Melnick of Inspired Planet Productions use the Boxfish Luna underwater cinematography drone to film their latest project about the Great Lakes.

Boxfish Research interviewed the documentary filmmakers about the documentary “All Too Clear” and why they chose the Boxfish Luna for underwater filming.

Tell us about Inspired Planet Productions and your new documentary project, “All Too Clear”.

Yvonne Drebert, Producer – Inspired Planet Productions, is located on the Bruce Peninsula in Ontario, Canada, right on the shore of the Great Lakes, where 20% of the world’s freshwater comes from.

“All Too Clear” is a documentary series about the invasion of the Great Lakes by the quagga mussel.

Zach Melnick, Director Cinematographer – These little critters’ quadrillions of them at the bottom of the Great Lakes have completely changed how these ecosystems function.

What challenges or problems necessitated a new ROV (remotely operated vehicle) solution?

Zach Melnick, Director Cinematographer – When we first started talking about doing a story about the offshore ecosystem of the Great Lakes, we realized this was a massive challenge. So how do you show people something that they almost never have any experience with personally unless they’re divers? And even then, most of the area we’re talking about is inaccessible to divers.

We found that there were some consumer devices that were okay, but their cameras were terrible, and there were a few remotely operated vehicles designed for big expeditions and scientists mainly. And so we found pretty quickly the Boxfish Luna as this sort of underwater drone concept.

What features of Boxfish Luna were most appealing and made it suitable for your documentary?

Yvonne Drebert, Producer – The Boxfish Luna kind of fits in this pretty amazing niche where someone like an independent production company



“All Too Clear” co-directors Yvonne Drebert and Zach Melnick of Inspired Planet Productions with the Boxfish Luna underwater cinematography drone the team uses to explore the Great Lakes. Photo Credit: Inspired Planet Productions.

can get one and start exploring waterways and lakes and oceans in a way that before just really hasn’t been possible. So it’s a really exciting time for us as filmmakers.

What made the Boxfish Luna stand out over other cinematography ROVs you researched?

Zach Melnick, Director Cinematographer – What really stood out with the Boxfish Luna is that it had

an incredible camera. So it has a real camera underwater, and it sends the signal up to the surface in real-time 4k uncompressed raw if you want.

We can control all of the camera settings from the surface. We see exactly what we’re filming, and we have total control, exactly the same as if you have the camera right in front of you.

By putting the Sony A7 SIII into the Luna, we’re able to see in very,



This new drone was specifically designed for underwater film production. The Luna gives the user full creative freedom to capture the incredible diversity of the undersea world.

very low light conditions, more than 300 feet, almost 100 meters without any extra lights at all, which is pretty incredible.

What have you been most impressed with when using Boxfish Luna for wildlife filmmaking?

Yvonne Drebert, Producer – The Boxfish Luna has an amazing battery life. So when we compare it to something that we can get with, say, divers who are limited in time to, say, 30, 40 minutes with the Luna, we can be down for hours. And honestly, we usually run out of energy before the Luna.

Zach Melnick, Director Cinematographer – One of the innovative things about the Luna is that you can point it in any direction and then move in that direction. So that really opens up a whole lot of opportunity for filming both moving wildlife like a fish, or if you want to get a really smooth pan of lake bottom or a shipwreck or something. Really, the sky's the limit in the freedom you have to get those shots as you want to get them.

Yvonne Drebert, Producer – One of the things that really drew us to the Luna was the safety aspect of it. We're not going to be sending divers



A moment of zen cruising with a gorgeous Rainbow Trout filmed beneath the surface of the Great Lakes. The photo is a screengrab from "All Too Clear" documentary footage shot on the Boxfish Luna with an integrated Sony A7SIII camera. Photo Credit: Inspired Planet Productions.

down. We're not going to be asking them to go a little deeper, to stay down a little longer to get that shot. With the Luna, we're all safely above the surface, and we can see in real-time what the Luna is seeing and what animals the Luna is interacting with. And that was something really special for us. The other thing is that the Luna doesn't emit bubbles. When we've encountered a lot of fish, they don't seem to be too concerned about us. In fact, some fish even come to us to check us out.

The Luna allows us to find an animal underwater and just be with it while it explores the environment,

which is really kind of a magical thing that we haven't really been able to do before.

We know you work a lot with scientists now. Tell us more about how you collaborate with them.

Yvonne Drebert, Producer – So for "All Too Clear", we've been working with a lot of fish scientists who are pretty excited to see the material we're putting out there. Unfortunately, a lot of the research methods that fish scientists use are fatal for the fish. So the footage that we've been able to gather with the Boxfish Luna of fish doing their thing, exploring the



During filming, footage of the underwater ecosystem is displayed on Bofish Luna's control console and monitored by Zach Melnick. Photo Credit: Inspired Planet Productions.

environment, eating, reproducing, the scientific community has just been so excited because they're able to see the fish that they love and work with all the time alive and interacting with the environment.

For us as wildlife filmmakers, it's amazing to get great film, but it kind of is a whole other level when the work you're doing is in collaboration with scientists who are then able to use that material to further the scientific research on a specific species and to hopefully help that species if it's struggling.

What plans do you have to use Bofish Luna in the future?

Zach Melnick, Director Cinematographer – Being able to have this freedom to film underwater has completely changed how we think about what we're going to do with our work in the future. We can get in the middle of a school of fish and be right with them in a way that would not be possible, I don't believe, before this. The sky is the limit, really. We have a whole series of projects that we want to do to show people things they've never been able to see before using this technology, with an initial focus on freshwater. But marine ecosystems are in our future as well.



The documentary filmmakers' version of ice fishing is filming a Lake Sturgeon beneath the Great Lakes ice in February. The photo is a screengrab from "All Too Clear" documentary footage shot on the Bofish Luna with an integrated Sony A7SIII camera. Photo Credit: Inspired Planet Productions.

Boxfish Luna

Boxfish Luna is the next-generation 8K underwater drone from Bofish Research designed for documentary filmmaking, wildlife cinematography and scientific research. The drone's full-frame professional camera allows filmmakers to shoot exceptionally crisp and stable 8K video and 50MP stills underwater. Scientists can equip Bofish Luna with up to eight sensors or add-ons for research and data collection, making capturing imagery and data quick, easy and safe.

Boxfish Research designs and

manufactures industry-leading, actively stabilized, ultra-high-definition remotely operated and autonomous capable vehicles for submerged asset inspection; marine science; expedition superyachts; offshore energy; aquaculture; biosecurity and search & rescue, and cinematography. Bofish Research incorporates cutting-edge technology with ease of use and advanced sensing to expand the possibilities for humans to understand, experience and work within the underwater world.



About Inspired Planet Productions

Producer Yvonne Drebert and Director/Cinematographer Zach Melnick are a husband-and-wife documentary production team working under the banner of Inspired Planet Productions. They have been creating documentaries for 20 years. Inspired Planet was most recently recognized at the Canadian Screen Awards with a nomination for the Rob Stewart Award for Best Science or Nature Documentary Program or Series in 2021 for their TVO/Knowledge Network series, Striking Balance. Yvonne and Zach have spent their documentary careers exploring

the connection between people and nature through stories of sustainable development, overlooked natural worlds, and forgotten history. They live on the shores of Lake Huron's Saugeen (Bruce) Peninsula in Ontario.

**Yvonne Drebert
and Zach Melnick**
www.inspiredplanet.ca

www.boxfish.nz

<https://www.inspiredplanet.ca/alltooclear>



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