

HBO's THE LAST CRUISE Debuts March 31

Documentary Short Recounts The Ill-Fated Diamond Princess Cruise During The Earliest Days Of COVID-19

Using intimate footage recorded by passengers and crew, **THE LAST CRUISE**, debuting MARCH 31, is a first-person account of the nightmare that transpired aboard the ill-fated Diamond Princess cruise ship, which set sail from Yokohama, Japan on January 20, 2020 in the earliest days of the COVID-19 pandemic.

By February 26, 2020, the ship accounted for more than half of all the documented COVID-19 cases outside of China, with more than 700 people on board infected. **THE LAST CRUISE** will have its world premiere at the SXSW Film Festival in the Documentary Shorts Competition category.

The film will be available on HBO and to stream on HBO GO.

The quarantined Diamond Princess floating in a Japanese harbor became a global spectacle – a faraway symbol of the new virus and its potential to upend any sense of normalcy. Otherworldly scenes – scientists in hazmat suits, passengers in face masks and cleaning teams spraying disinfectant on empty shipboard buffets -- packed the nightly news. With little information available about the new virus and limited access to resources, the ship's cases soared.

Passengers were quarantined in their staterooms for weeks while the number of cases on board skyrocketed. Meanwhile, the crew tended to the passengers, delivered room service and slept and dined in cramped, shared quarters. They'd become what we'd later term "essential workers." The ship would ultimately account for the first citizens of Argentina, Israel, Portugal, Russia, Ukraine, Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, and New Zealand to test positive for COVID-19.

While the Diamond Princess was in quarantine, U.S. government scientists studied what was transpiring on board. Despite their findings that the virus was likely airborne and that asymptomatic people contributed to the spread, it would be more than one month before the CDC advised the use of masks and more than two months -- and one million confirmed COVID-19 cases in the United States -- before the CDC advised testing asymptomatic people who had been exposed to the virus.

HBO Documentary Films presents **THE LAST CRUISE** directed and produced by Hannah Olson; produced by Shane Boris, Joe Beshenkovsky, and James A Smith. For HBO: executive producers Nancy Abraham, Lisa Heller; senior producer, Sara Rodriguez.

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