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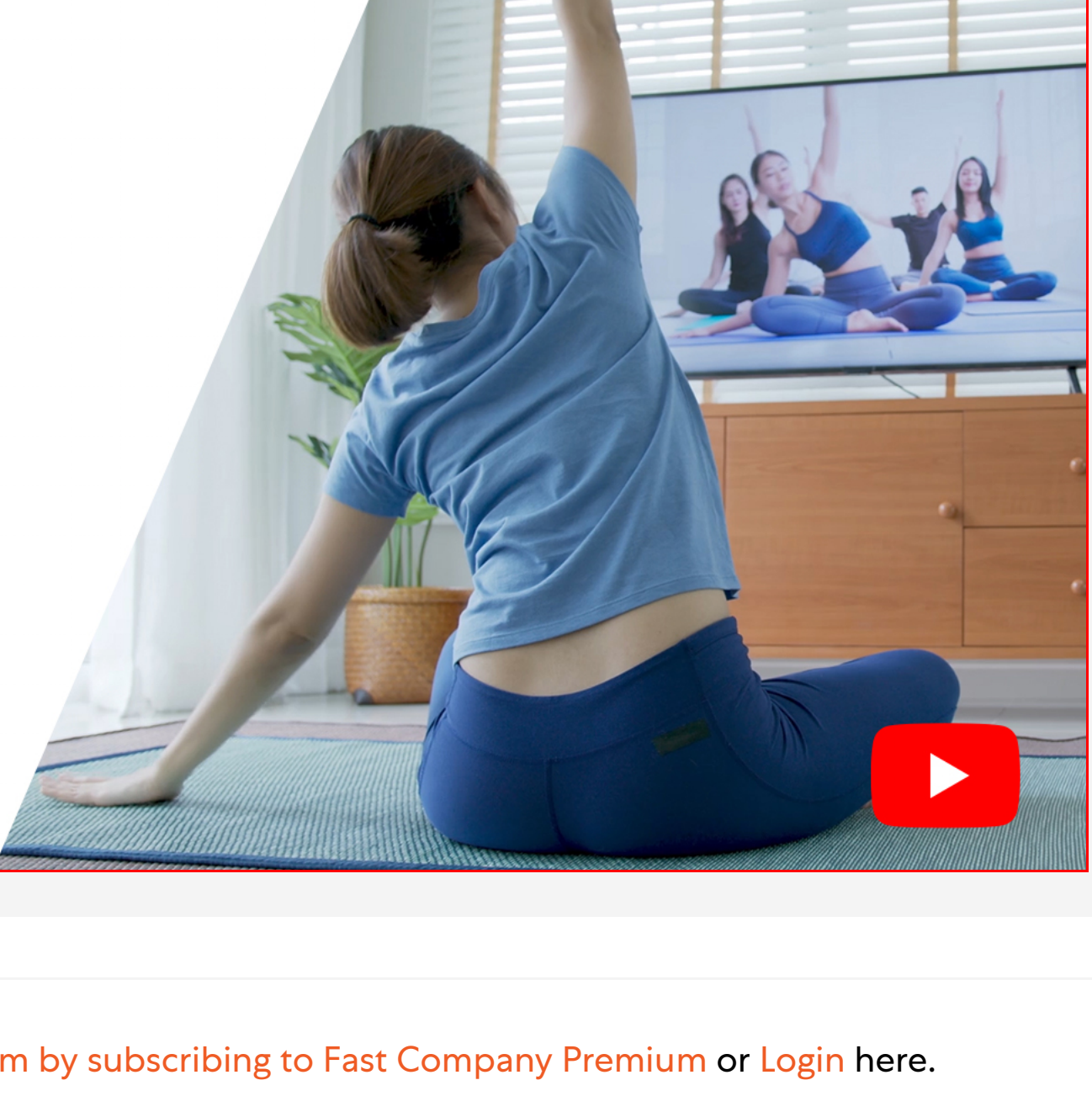


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Inside the “full feast” of Billie Eilish’s life in the Apple TV doc ‘The World’s a Little Blurry’

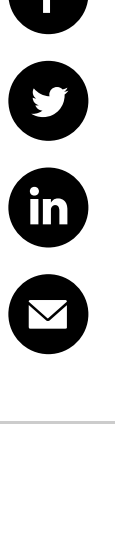
Director RJ Cutler documented Eilish’s life for a year leading up to her record-breaking debut album—and there was a lot ground to cover.



[Photo: courtesy of Apple]

BY KC IFEANYI 3 MINUTE READ

In 2018, director RJ Cutler (*The September Issue*, *Belushi*) was invited to Billie Eilish’s Los Angeles home with her parents and brother/producer Finneas O’Connell to discuss the possibility of directing a documentary of her life. At the time, the buzz around Eilish was building to a fever pitch with her breakout single “Ocean Eyes,” her well received 2017 EP *Don’t Smile at Me*, and her debut album *When We All Fall Asleep, Where Do We Go?* on the horizon.



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Billie Eilish and her mother, Maggie Baird [Photo: courtesy of Apple]

“She was just back from a trip to Asia, and there was a fitting going on. The house was overflowing with racks of clothes and boxes of sneakers that people had sent to her,” Cutler recalls. “The house was like a metaphor for Billie’s life—it was bursting at the seams.”

Cutler says he was intrigued by Eilish prior to that meeting but became exponentially so afterward.

“She’s a magnetic force,” he says. “We all sat around in the backyard chatting about what this experience would be like and my approach to filmmaking, which is kind of not much at all.”

Inspired by definitive music documentaries such as *Dont Look Back* and *Gimme Shelter*, *Billie Eilish: The World’s a Little Blurry* is a cinéma vérité exploration of Eilish’s transformation as an everyday teen (getting her driver’s license, working through a breakup, navigating mental health, and so forth) juxtaposed with her rapid ascension to becoming one of the biggest stars in the world.

“I’m not all that interested in documentary as source of information—that’s what Wikipedia is for. I’m interested in documentary as cinema,” Cutler says. “Vérité is uniquely equipped to make narrative cinematic art out of life. And Billie and her family were at a moment in their lives that was uniquely qualified to provide the raw materials for cinematic art about life.”

For example, there’s a particularly touching scene when Eilish drives off on her own for the first time after getting her license and her dad, Patrick O’Connell, is left in the driveway ruminating about parenthood. Although it’s clear O’Connell is conversing with someone, i.e. Cutler, it still feels purely observational.

“If I had rented a studio and put up a roll of paper behind a chair and gotten some lights and arranged for makeup artists to give Patrick some foundation and a little powder and put a mic on him, that would be what doing an interview is. I don’t do that,” Cutler says. “What I was doing was having very natural conversation in the moment with the subject, with whom I had this very unique relationship with. And that’s why these moments are so real. I’m looking to have a relationship with everybody wherein each of them is as comfortable being with me and my crew. So if I had been there without a crew, given my relationship with Patrick, that conversation would have happened anyway.”

To that end, Cutler certainly gave deference to letting conversations breathe, with *The World’s A Little Blurry* clocking in at a lengthy runtime of 2 hours and 20 minutes. “Believe me, it could’ve been three and half hours long—and there are versions,” he says. Cutler even included an intermission after Eilish’s whirlwind Coachella performance in 2019.

Billie Eilish and Finneas O’Connell in *Billie Eilish: The World’s A Little Blurry* [Photo: courtesy of Apple]

“I edited it without the intermission and screened it and looked at it and experienced it. And then with the intermission. It wanted that opportunity to take a breath,” Cutler says. “This is a film about emergence. It’s a film about arrival. It’s a film about transformation. Well, Coachella represents all of that for Billie and for the film and for the narrative. So the intermission becomes a very powerful [tool].”

It also helps given the fact that the film is very much a musical as well, with song performances playing out in their near entirety and backstage at a show about why she broke up with her boyfriend—cut to her performing “Wish You Were Gay” and “I Love You” on stage.

“I don’t want to be precious about it, but I mean it: The film told me that that intermission had to be there. And the film told me that it had to be at that 2:20 mark,” Cutler says. “It felt like a feast. And that is consistent with our intention, and with our experience of Billie’s life—that’s a full feast.”

Billie Eilish: The World’s a Little Blurry premieres in theaters and globally on Apple TV Plus on February 26.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

KC covers entertainment and pop culture for Fast Company. Previously, KC was part of the Emmy Award-winning team at “Good Morning America,” where he was the social media producer. [More](#)

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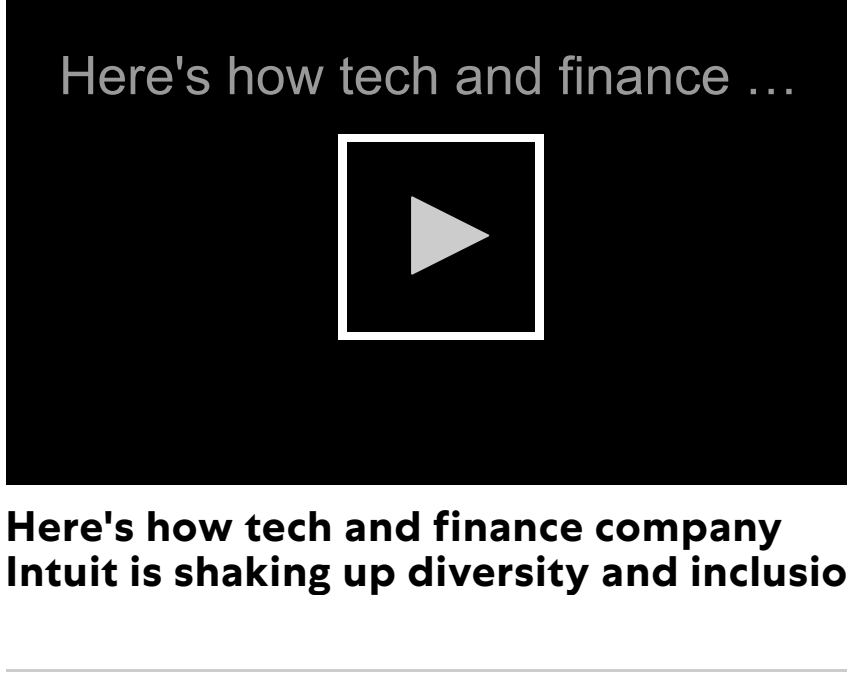
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