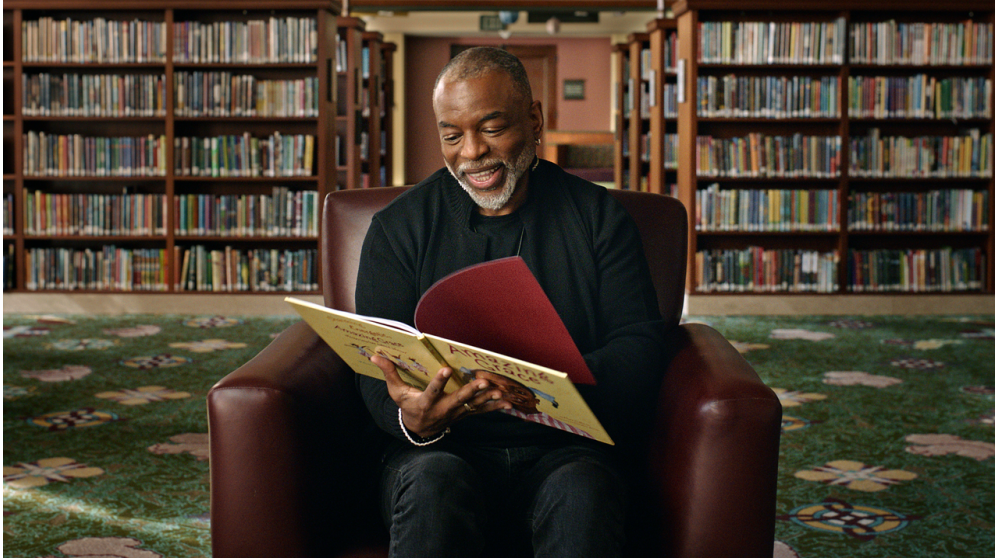


# BUTTERFLY IN THE SKY

Directed by Bradford Thomason & Brett Whitcomb



2022 // USA // DOCUMENTARY // ENGLISH // 87 MINUTES



***“If you’re a reader for life, then you’re a learner for life. No one can hold sway over you or your mind if you can self-educate.”***

**- LeVar Burton**

## **SYNOPSIS**

BUTTERFLY IN THE SKY tells the story of the beloved PBS children’s series "Reading Rainbow," its iconic host LeVar Burton, and the challenges its creators faced in cultivating a love of reading through television. Two seconds into the bubbling synth sounds of its theme song will have a child of the 1980s or ‘90s exclaiming “Reading Rainbow!” Such is the beloved nature of the classic children’s literary television show that introduced millions of kids to the wonder of books.

Not only did the series insist on having kids speak to kids about their favorite stories, Reading Rainbow introduced the world to one of the most adored television hosts of all time, LeVar Burton. Thanks to his direct, non-patronizing and, most importantly, kind delivery, Burton became a conduit to learning for children of every background - delving behind the pages to the people, places, and things each new story explored.

## **DIRECTORS’ STATEMENT**

Bradford Thomason (Director / Editor): As a Mexican-American growing up in Houston, TX, I was surrounded by diversity. More than any show on television, *Reading Rainbow* reflected the cultures that surrounded me. I also loved to read but lacked the discipline to do so.

Something about the way the books were represented made me want every single one. When the book fair came to my school, I went straight for the *Reading Rainbow* titles. I didn’t know it at the time, but the show’s mission statement was manifesting itself in me. I devour books to this day, and I know *Reading Rainbow* had a hand in that.

Brett Whitcomb (Director / Cinematographer): I grew up in the Texas suburbs. Whether I knew it or not, *Reading Rainbow* was my window into the big city and into diverse cultures. New York, where LeVar spent so much time, didn’t seem scary like in movies of the time, but instead seemed colorful and full of life. Additionally, with segments like those in “Hill of Fire,” “Liang and and the Magic Paintbrush,” and countless other episodes, *Reading Rainbow* was arguably the first time I encountered “documentary-style” television as a young person, planting a seed that would inspire me for the rest of my life.

We believe *Reading Rainbow* is among the most important shows ever produced and an early example of distance learning before distance learning was on everyone's mind. It's a true unsung hero of children's programming, and we want more than anything to tell its story in a way that honors its legacy and teaches a new generation about this important milestone in television history.

—Bradford & Brett

## **FILM SUBJECTS**

### **LeVar Burton** (*Reading Rainbow* Host)

From his calming yet authoritative voice, to his enthusiastic yet authentic love of reading, to his trademark earring and mustache, both of which caused controversy for network heads throughout *Reading Rainbow's* 26 years, LeVar *is* Reading Rainbow. He's an accomplished actor whose early role as Kunta Kinte in the beloved "Roots" mini-series showed him the power of television, and whose 15 year turn as Geordi La Forge on "Star-Trek: The Next Generation" made him a cult hero. Still reading to this day with his podcast, "LeVar Burton Read," LeVar's journey with *Reading Rainbow* from host to executive producer to educational icon is the heart of the story and an inspiring tale of success against the odds.

### **Twila Liggett** (*Reading Rainbow* Creator / Producer)

Twila Liggett is the beating heart behind *Reading Rainbow*. Her educational background inspired the creation of the show and she was the one who hustled against the grain to find funding throughout the show's run.

### **Larry Lancit & Cecily Truett Lancit** (*Reading Rainbow* Directors / Producers)

A husband and wife production duo, Larry and Cecily directed and produced over 30 episodes together, and continued to produce the show for nearly 20 years. As young newlyweds, they were instrumental in the development of the show's format and in finding its host, LeVar Burton.

### **Tony Buttino** (*Reading Rainbow* Co-creator and Executive Producer)

Instrumental in the creation of *Reading Rainbow*, former WNED-TV vice president Tony Buttino was among the first to express concern over the summer reading loss phenomenon. It was his vision of the show and pursuit of the perfect team that got things moving in the early days.

### **Steve Horelick** (*Reading Rainbow* Composer)

Along with Tina Fabrique, Steve Horelick is responsible for *Reading Rainbow's* theme song among hundreds of others featured on the show. A modular synthesizer devotee and electronic music pioneer, his contributions to the series cannot be overstated.

**Ed Wiseman** (*Reading Rainbow* Director / Producer)

Next to Cecily and Larry, Ed is the most prolific director and producer in *Reading Rainbow* history. He won 8 Emmys for his work on the show and his personal mission always aligned with that of *Reading Rainbow* - to encourage a lifelong love of reading.

**Ellen Schecter** (*Reading Rainbow* Writer)

Ellen wrote over 20 episodes of *Reading Rainbow* and helped establish the show's empathetic, inspiring and non-condescending tone. She was also responsible for the children's book reviews, a favorite segment amongst *Reading Rainbow* fans.

## **FILMMAKER BIOGRAPHIES**

**Bradford Thomason & Brett Whitcomb** (Director / Producers)

Bradford Thomason & Brett Whitcomb are a filmmaking team with a catalog that oscillates between archive-rich nostalgic portraits of pop culture, compelling stories of female empowerment, and observational snapshots of under-explored cultures.

Their acclaimed film *GLOW: The Story of the Gorgeous Ladies of Wrestling* premiered at Hot Docs in 2012. The Village Voice called it "a beautiful and touching documentary," and the film itself helped inspire the hit Netflix series *GLOW*.

*A Life in Waves*, which explores the life and career of electronic music pioneer Suzanne Ciani, premiered at SXSW in 2017 and was distributed by Hulu.

Their most recent feature, *Jasper Mall*, premiered at Slamdance in 2020 and was released on Amazon Prime and PBS.

**Bryan Storkel** (Producer)

Byran Storkel is best known for producing *The Legend of Cocaine Island* (Netflix) and producing/writing *Alabama Snake* (HBO). He also directed the ESPN 30-for-30 film *The Bad Boy of Bowling* and an Emmy-nominated episode of HBO's *State of Play*. Storkel's latest directing venture is *The Pez Outlaw*, which premiered at SXSW 2022 and won a Special Jury Prize in the documentary competition.

**PRODUCTION CREDITS**

Produced & Directed by BRADFORD THOMASON  
BRETT WHITCOMB

Produced by BRYAN STORKEL

Executive Producers WHOOPI GOLDBERG  
TOM LEONARDIS  
BRYN MOOSER  
JUSTIN LACOB  
KATHRYN EVERETT  
ANDY HSIEH  
TONY HSIEH  
RAYMOND ESPOSITO  
JOHN B POUNDERS  
DAVA WHISENANT

Original Music by THE OCTOPUS PROJECT

Original Reading Rainbow Music STEVE HORELICK

Edited by BRADFORD THOMASON

Cinematography by TONY HARDMON  
BRETT WHITCOMB

Consulting Editor DAVA WHISENANT, ACE

Co-Producer DEBORAH LEE SMITH

Co-Executive Producers ALI CLARK  
BRYANT SAXTON  
JEFF TULLIS  
MARRY WU TULLIS  
NANCY BLANCHMAN  
COLIN JONES  
LEE LESHEN  
TOMMY AVALLONE

FOR FOOTHILL PRODUCTIONS:  
JAMIE WOLF  
NATHALIE SEAVER

Supervising Producer AMY BANDLIEN STORKEL

Coordinating Producer DAWN BENDER

Post Production Supervisor JACOB BENDER

### FEATURING

LEVAR BURTON  
TOM BUCKETT  
JASON REYNOLDS  
TWILA C. LIGGETT, PhD  
PAM JOHNSON, PhD  
STEVE HORELICK  
MARK MANNUCCI  
ROBIN FOGLEMAN  
NIKKI SILVER

JAMIE DUNEIER  
KENN MICHAEL  
KATHY KINSNER  
TONY BUTTINO  
CECILY TRUETT LANCIT  
JILL GLUCKSON  
DEAN PARISOT  
ELLEN DOHERTY

ALISA REYES  
ED WISEMAN  
WHOOPI GOLDBERG  
BARBARA ERWIN, PhD  
LARRY LANCIT  
ELLEN SCHECTER, PhD  
ORLY WISEMAN  
ARI HABERBERG  
JEFFREY SICKLES

### PRODUCTION CREW

Cinematography TONY HARDMON  
BRETT WHITCOMB  
First Assistant Camera KYLE CUNNINGHAM  
Additional Cinematography MICHAEL LATHAM  
ZACH SALSMAN  
MICHAEL MARTIN  
Camera Operator TED SNOW  
KYLE CUNNINGHAM  
Production Sound Mixer BRYAN STORKEL  
KURT PIERCE  
Gaffers JON CHAMPION  
CESAR ALVAREZ  
CHRISTOPHER FISHER  
JOHN FRISBIE  
Key Grip MIKE FALCO  
Grip & Lighting Equipment Provided by CHAMPION LIGHTING  
Production Assistants ZAC RIGG  
AUDREY KURTZ  
TONY DABAS

Makeup Artist STEPHANIE COZART BURTON  
KELLY FOX  
JENNIFER DROUILLARD  
LORNA BASSE  
ARIA FERRARO  
CHRISTINA VIDA  
Covid Compliance Officer DAWN BENDER

## POST PRODUCTION

Edited by BRADFORD THOMASON  
Assistant Editor PATRICK SIMPSON  
Additional VFX MYLES CAIN  
Post Production Interns BENJAMIN TIEDE  
FRANKLIN SNYDER  
KENDRA COPELAND

Main Titles Director & Animator ALI CLARK  
Main Titles Illustration ADAMASTOR  
Main Title Typography KATIE ERICKSON

Digital Intermediate by DIFFERENT BY DESIGN  
DI Colorist LUKE CAHILL  
DI Producers MATT RADECKI  
GREG LANESEY  
DI Editor MISHA ARANY SHEV  
Archival Conversions JOE BOGDANOVIC  
DI Assistant MIKE WERNER

Sound Design and Re-recording Mixer LAWRENCE EVERSON  
Sound Editor JESSE HERRERA  
Music Editor DANNY REISCH

Original Music by	THE OCTOPUS PROJECT TOTO MIRANDA YVONNE LAMBERT	Production Counsel	THE LAW FIRM OF STACEY A. DAVIS
Additional Music by	ROCKY MOON	Archival Producer	GIDEON KENNEDY
Score Mixer	DANNY REISCH	Clearance Counsel	LISA CALLIF JONATHAN FISHER
		Star Trek Consultant	TONY DREHER
Music Supervisor/Licensing	JULES ZUCKER BRYAN STORKEL	Production Accountant	KAREN BOWLIN
Festival Publicity by	OBSCURED PICTURES RJ MILLARD	Sales Representation	SUBMARINE DELUXE JOSH BRAUN DAN BRAUN

KORY MELLO  
AIMEE MORRIS  
AO LAN GUO

BEN BRAUN  
MATT BURKE  
BEN SCHWARTZ

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LOUIS THE FISH

Written by Arthur Yorinks  
Illustrated by Richard Egielski  
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Illustrated by Joan Sandin  
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AIRPORT

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Illustrated by Byron Barton  
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Written and Illustrated by John Stadler  
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AMAZING GRACE

Written by Mary Hoffman  
Illustrated by Caroline Binch  
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Featured Music

READING RAINBOW THEME SONG

Performed by Tina Fabrique  
Music by Steve Horelick  
Lyrics by Dennis Kleinman and Janet Weir  
Courtesy of Steve Horelick

THE TURTLE SONG

Performed by Marty Goetz  
Music by Steve Horelick  
Lyrics by Dennis Kleinman and Janet Weir  
Courtesy of Steve Horelick

TEAMWORK

Performed by Rory Dodd, Terry Textor, Holly Sherwood and  
Eric Troyer  
Music by Steve Horelick  
Lyrics by Dennis Kleinman and Janet Weir  
Courtesy of Steve Horelick

DISTANT MEMORY (NO OOHS AND AHHS)

Written & Performed by Virgil Arles  
Courtesy of The Musicbed

HEROIC QUEST

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FLAMENCO RUN

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