



RAT CITY

44 minute Documentary, Canada

PRESS KIT

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Logline

Dive down the rathole to discover remarkable superpowers that make rats the evolutionary heroes of the animal kingdom.

Short Synopsis

Welcome to *RAT CITY*.

Reviled for millennia, the Brown rat is one of the most familiar creatures on the planet – but perhaps the least understood. We know more about life on Mars than how rats navigate life on Earth.

RAT CITY dives down the rathole to uncover remarkable superpowers that make Brown rats the evolutionary heroes of the animal kingdom, thriving in the urban landscape. Escape artists, problem solvers and master contortionists, they're supremely equipped to infiltrate our world.

In New York City, urban rodentologist Bobby Corrigan reveals the brown rat's uncanny ability to use the urban landscape to its advantage.

In Vancouver, wildlife health biologist Dr. Kaylee Byers makes a cutting-edge discovery that Vancouver's rat population is organized into distinct clans throughout the city.

At the University of Richmond in Virginia, behavioural neuroscientist Dr. Kelly Lambert discovers that driving miniature cars acts as a stressbuster for rats, but it also improves their brains' ability to adapt, which may lead to a better understanding of disorders and diseases such as ADHD and Alzheimer's.

Back on the busy streets of New York City, one particular rat, a social media phenom named Buddy, is on a crusade to deliver the message to New Yorkers about proper sanitation.

RAT CITY unmask, and celebrates, humankind's most reviled antagonists, and reveals that it's really the human inhabitants that "set the table" for one of the planet's ultimate survivors.



Long Synopsis

Welcome to **RAT CITY**.

For as long as civilization has flourished, the Brown rat has been its shadowy consort, an unwelcome partner thriving in the underbelly of human habitat. Reviled for millennia, this ubiquitous rodent is one of the most familiar creatures on the planet – but perhaps the least understood. We know more about life on Mars than how rats navigate life on Earth.

RAT CITY dives down the rathole to uncover remarkable superpowers that make Brown rats the evolutionary heroes of the animal kingdom, thriving in the urban landscape. Escape artists, problem solvers and master contortionists, they squeeze through spaces the size of a quarter, scale vertical walls and jump ten times their height from a flat surface. Seemingly immune to gravity, they can fall 50 feet without injury. Tenacious swimmers, they easily navigate municipal sewage systems and modern plumbing. With powerful, alligator-like jaws and highly specialized incisors, they cut through solid wood, lead pipe, and cinderblocks, making them supremely equipped to infiltrate our world.

Everyone has a rat story, but what do we really know about rat culture and behaviour? What makes them the ultimate survivor and master of conquest? And what can we learn about ourselves through the eyes of our unsavory neighbours?

In New York City, urban rodentologist Bobby Corrigan takes us on a tour of coveted rat real estate. *“The rat has learned to live in sewers and skyscrapers, all the way to the top of beautiful \$75 million condominiums.”* Bobby reveals the brown rat’s uncanny ability to use the urban landscape to its advantage. Travelling along the subterranean highways of subway lines and sewer pipe networks, the rat has a *“paw-hold”* in every borough of the city, popping up in graveyards, tree-pits, apartment garbage chutes, and even the occasional toilet.

Despite these daring feats, it turns out there’s a limit to the rat’s sense of adventure. Dr. Kaylee Byers, a wildlife health biologist, is on the frontlines of Vancouver’s urban rat kingdom. She’s made a cutting-edge discovery: Vancouver’s rat population isn’t a singular monolithic presence; it’s organized into distinct clans throughout the city. These *“home-bodies”* rarely stray more than 100 meters from their home base – a key behavior that helps keep disease transmission at bay.

New science also reveals that these prolific masters of adaptation might be beneficial to humans in surprising ways. Dr. Kelly Lambert, a behavioural neuroscientist from the University of Richmond, trains rats to drive miniature cars. She and her team have made some remarkable discoveries: not only does the driving act as a stressbuster for the rats, but it also improves their brains’ ability to change and adapt. The results may lead to a better understanding of numerous neurogenerative disorders and diseases such as ADHD and Alzheimer’s.

Back on the busy streets of New York City, one particular rat, a social media phenom named Buddy, is on a crusade to deliver the message to New Yorkers about proper sanitation.

In the chaotic boulevards, back alleys, and subterranean byways of the urban jungle, **RAT CITY** infiltrates these secret spaces, chronicling the rats’ evolutionary superpowers that allow them to thrive in two cities: Vancouver and New York City.

RAT CITY’s dramatic set work, cutting-edge cinematography, and a quirky narrative approach take the viewer into the darkest crevices and hidden spaces of the mysterious rat underworld.

RAT CITY unmasks, and celebrates, humankind’s most reviled antagonists, and reveals that it’s really the human inhabitants that “set the table” for one of the planet’s ultimate survivors.



“It’s an adaptable animal that is just incredible. You have to respect it.”

Dr. Bobby Corrigan

Urban Rodentologist

Bobby Corrigan has been active in the science of pest control for over 30 years starting as a pest control technician running a route in NYC for three years full time while saving for college. After graduate school, Bobby taught and conducted research on rodent control at Purdue University for 16 years.

Dr. Corrigan has authored or co-authored dozens of technical and refereed research papers current through 2022 as well as co-authoring three textbooks and their multiple editions including the 1) *The Scientific Guide to Pest Management Operations*; 2) *A Professional’s Guide to Rodent Control* and the *Mallis Handbook of Pest Control*.

Bobby is an invited lecturer on global scale and has appeared in *Time Magazine*; the *New York Times*, and *The Washington Post*. He conducts ongoing Podcasts and interviews for *PBS* and *NPR*, the *CBC* and has made multiple appearances in several documentaries and movies during the past 5 years, including two scheduled for release late 2022 and early 2023.

Bobby holds his B.S degree in urban entomology and his Ph.D. degree in urban rodentology from Purdue.

Dr. Corrigan was inducted into the Pest Control Hall of Fame in 2008.





“Rats are incredible creatures. They’ve adapted to these rapidly growing cities. They’ve taught us so much about ourselves, medicine and the world around us. I’d love to see us think differently about rats and what they can teach us.”

Dr. Kaylee Byers
Wildlife Health Biologist

Dr. Kaylee Byers is the Deputy Director of the British Columbia Node of the Canadian Wildlife Health Cooperative, and a Research Associate with the Pacific Institute on Pathogens, Pandemics, and Society at Simon Fraser University. She is a health scientist and communications researcher investigating innovative ways to improve the health of people, wildlife and ecosystems. Kaylee also hosts Genome British Columbia’s podcast [Nice Genes!](#) which explores how genomics can help to understand the world around us.

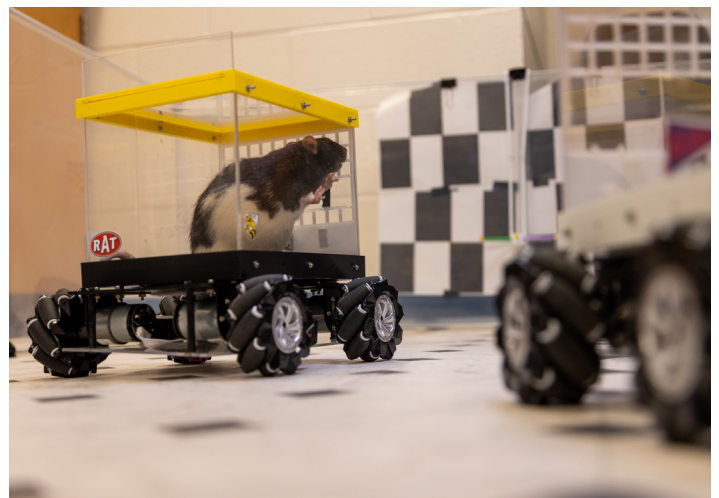




“I’m very intrigued by the rats. I have a lot of respect for their survival. I want to know more about how their brains work and see if some of that can be beneficial to humans.”

Dr. Kelly Lambert
Behavioural Neuroscientist

Dr. Kelly Lambert is the Trawick Professor of Behavioral Neuroscience at the University of Richmond where she investigates experience-based neuroplasticity using rodents, raccoons, and nonhuman primates. She has written two neuroscience textbooks and three mainstream books including *Lifting Depression*, *The Lab Rat Chronicles* and *Well-Grounded: The neurobiology of rational decisions*. She is currently writing *Wild Brains: Nature’s guide to neural flourishing*. Additionally, Lambert is the author of approximately 80 scholarly articles and has been interviewed on several podcasts including *WIRED*, *Escaped Sapiens*, and *Big Picture Science*. In 2018, Lambert was the recipient of the *Outstanding Achievement Award* given by the International Behavioral Neuroscience Society and, in 2008, the *Virginia Professor of the Year* award. Recently her research targeting connections between physical effort and emotional resilience was featured on *CBS Sunday Morning* and her rat driving research has been featured in over 1500 news stories across the world. In 2019, Lambert described her behaviorceuticals research perspective in a *TEDx* talk in Bermuda, which currently has approximately 400,000 views.





“What is really fascinating about wild rats is that they actually only live around humans. So they’re sort of intricately connected to our living experience in cities.”

Dr. Dani Dumitriu
Physician Scientist

Dr. Dumitriu is trained as a general pediatrician, neuroscientist and pediatric environmental health scientist. She joined Columbia University as an Assistant Professor of Pediatrics (in Psychiatry) in November 2018. She dedicates 80% of her time to translational research into the neurobiological basis of resilience across species and modalities as the Principal Investigator of the *DOOR (Developmental Origins of Resilience)* lab at the New York State Psychiatric Institute, and 20% of her time to caring for newborns as a pediatric hospitalist in the Well Baby Nursery at the Morgan Stanley Children’s Hospital.





“They’re super intelligent, they’re social, they’re problem solvers. I would say I’m a big fan of rats. ”

Jonothon Lyons

Performance Artist, *“Buddy the Rat”*

Jonothon Lyons is a New York based interdisciplinary theatre artist. Written works include *The Apple Boys*, raved in *The New Yorker* in 2018 for having a *“wonderfully fun yet tightly constructed book,”* *The Tenement* (2010 NY IT Award for Outstanding Original Short Script) and *Ensō* (2013 Jim Henson Foundation Seed Grant). Performance credits include *Blue Man Group*, *Sleep No More*, and Anthony Minghella’s *Madama Butterfly* at The Metropolitan Opera. His viral street performance character *“Buddy the Rat”* has garnered over 2 billion views online and nearly 4.5 million followers across all social media. He can be found on all platforms @jonothonlyons



For 10,000 years, rats have haunted the darkest corners of our cities – and minds. They're the stuff of nightmares, blamed for death and disease. But there's much more to their story. Underneath that drab brown coat beats the heart of a hero...

RAT CITY invites viewers on a rollicking journey into the secret world of one of humankind's oldest antagonists to reveal the remarkable superpowers that make rats the evolutionary champions of the animal kingdom.

Capitalizing on an age-old relationship of revulsion and fear, **RAT CITY** aims to exploit a predictable visceral response to grab viewers' attention, and then transform their fear into fascination and, ultimately, admiration with mind-blowing information and world-class natural history cinematography.



For over 25 years Director Jeff Morales' creative and playful narrative style has revealed the remarkable lives of underappreciated and misunderstood wild creatures. For Morales and producer Bryan Sullivan, the Brown rat offers a perfect opportunity to reframe the rodent-human narrative. Reviled for millennia, this ubiquitous mammal is one of the most familiar creatures on the planet – but perhaps the least understood. We know more about life on Mars than how rats navigate life on Earth.

Rats present an ideal vehicle for informing while entertaining. The subject has tremendous potential for adapting a captivating and quirky approach to visual storytelling. Revealing this story from the rat's perspective, **RAT CITY** will enter their shadowy world and explore the inner sanctum of the rat-human interface to better understand why they are one of the planet's ultimate survivors. How do they live their day-to-day lives? What challenges do they face as they navigate the underworld and the messy abundance of modern life? What adaptations have enabled them to survive and thrive?

As viewers learn more about these evolutionary heroes, a new understanding emerges regarding how humans can coexist with, and potentially benefit from, these furry home invaders – from strategies to manage the stress of daily living to understanding how disease spreads. And while exploring a history fraught with conflict, viewers will also meet rat champions spreading the message of rat fandom. Emerging neurological science is explored alongside a globetrotting performance artist, "*Buddy the Rat*", who makes amused and disconcerted onlookers consider our fraught relationship face to face.

From subterranean haunts of rat dynasties, to the bustling streets of Vancouver and Manhattan, **RAT CITY** is a playful and informative romp through the lives of humankind's unsavory partners in civilization. **RAT CITY** employs dramatic and high-end set work, innovative and cutting-edge imaging gathering tools, compelling music tracks and a non-traditional narrative approach to take the viewer into the darkest crevices, hidden spaces and mysterious underworld where human and rat worlds collide.



Jeff Morales
EP/Director/DOP

During his 25-year filmmaking career, Jeff’s intimate portrayals of wild characters have revealed the remarkable worlds of creatures large and small for National Geographic, Discovery, Animal Planet, the BBC, and The Nature Conservancy. While a staff producer-director at National Geographic Television Jeff’s films garnered four National Emmy awards and ten National Emmy nominations. Jeff has also worked on numerous CBC projects including three elephant films, *The Secret Life of Owls*, and the CSA winning series *The Wild Canadian Year*. His recent credits include *Great Lakes Untamed*, *America’s Wild Border: Northern Exposure*, and *America’s Wild Seasons*.



Bryan Sullivan
EP/Producer/Camera Operator/Editor

Bryan Sullivan is a producer, director, cinematographer, and editor with 25 years experience. He specializes in developing, producing, and delivering global content one-offs and series for broadcast, premium content for digital distribution, and high-end educational, training, and promotional content for the public and private sectors. His recent credits include *Great Lakes Untamed*, *America’s Wild Border: Northern Exposure* (Best Editing & Best Cinematography nominations - 2021 Leo Awards), *America’s Wild Seasons*, *Takaya: Lone Wolf* (Best Documentary Program win at 2021 Canadian Screen Awards), and *The Secret Life of Owls* (Best Editing & Best Cinematography nominations - 2018 Leo Awards).



Catharine Parke
Writer

Catharine works as a writer on documentary programs and series, including the episode, *The Secret Life of Owls* for CBC’s *The Nature of Things*; *Polar Bear Town*, a series set in “the polar bear capital of the world” for the Smithsonian Channel; *Wild Bear Rescue* a series featuring the Northern Lights Wildlife Shelter for Animal Planet Canada; and *Heavy Rescue: 401*, a series that follows heavy rescue tow operators for Discovery Channel Canada.



Kimberly Morin Morales

Researcher

Ever-curious and a stickler for accuracy, Kim's research has contributed to the pages of National Geographic Magazine, The Congressional Record, and more recently, over a dozen natural history films, including *America's Wild Border: Northern Exposure*, and *America's Wild Seasons* (Love Nature / Smithsonian Channel).



Patric Caird

Composer

Patric Caird is a multi award winning composer for film and television. He has composed in all genres from drama to comedy, animation to horror, for everything from small indie films to major network television series and theater.

An enthusiastic collaborator with a passion for storytelling in sound, his flexible, unique voice is a valuable addition to hundreds of projects.



Ewan Deane

Sound Supervisor/Mixer

Ewan Deane has over 30 years experience as an audio engineer, re-recording mixer, and sound supervisor. He started his career in the music industry working with Vancouver's best musicians and composers. Transitioning into documentaries, feature films and television, Ewan has elevated himself to a senior position in Vancouver Post Production community. Ewan has been nominated for 3 Emmy's, multiple Gemini's, has won 7 Leo Awards, and in 2017 he won a Leo and a Canadian Screen Award for *Sonic Magic-The Wonder of Science and Sound* in the Best Sound Category. In 2022 he won an Emmy for mixing *Octonauts-Ring of Fire* in the best overall sound category.

About Invert Films

Invert Films specializes in high-end documentary content for broadcast and educational markets worldwide. Principals and long-time collaborators Jeff Morales and Bryan Sullivan bring their 50+ years of combined broadcast/filmmaking experience to craft innovative, entertaining, and visually rich blue-chip natural history, conservation and science documentary stories for screens of all sizes. Invert Films' latest documentary, **RAT CITY**, for CBC's The Nature of Things, infiltrates the secret world of humankind's most reviled – and least understood – antagonists, the Norway rat. **RAT CITY** explores the shadowy urban lifestyles of our most successful partners in civilization, highlights the superpowers of survival that make them the evolutionary heroes of the animal kingdom, and reveals how rats may benefit humans in surprising ways.



RAT CITY is produced by Invert Films, in association with CBC, with the participation of Canada Media Fund, the Canadian Film or Video Production Tax Credit, and developed with the participation of Creative BC, and the Province of British Columbia Film Incentive BC.

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