



# Sam Branson

## HiddenLight Productions

**A** passion for adventure and belief in the power of storytelling have been guiding forces for Sam Branson. He established HiddenLight Productions in partnership with Hillary Rodham Clinton and Chelsea Clinton to highlight stories that can effect change in the world, entertain and inspire, with a mission to celebrate the best of the human spirit and help us see the world in new ways. Branson tells **World Screen** about how his partnership with the Clintons came about and shares some of the projects in development.

**By Kristin Brzoznowski**

**WS:** How did HiddenLight Productions come about, and how did you come to partner with Hillary and Chelsea Clinton for the endeavor?

**BRANSON:** I am deeply passionate about the power of stories to entertain and engage people but also effect change in the world. I'd been working with Johnny Webb on my company Sundog Pictures for several years, and we were pitching to do a series based on [Hillary and Chelsea Clinton's] incredible *The Book of Gutsy Women*. I just absolutely loved the book and what Hillary and Chelsea stood for, and the tone of the conversation was wonderful. That initial dialogue soon grew into something much, much bigger. We realized that we wanted to create similar sorts of content. We were aligned in our values, purpose and passion. It was a no-brainer to join forces and do something really special.

**WS:** How do the three of you complement each other in terms of what you bring to the company?

**BRANSON:** We each have different sets of skills and experiences. Hillary has decades' worth of experience in public service, having spent so much of her life [working] for the public good. She's defied convention and has always stood up for the things she believes in. That wealth of experience is invaluable to something like this. Chelsea, who I've gotten to know better over the last year, is such a wonderful person and an advocate for people who need it most. She's a global health expert, which at this time is in sharp focus. She's a passionate defender of human rights. In meeting these people who I had heard so much about, I was struck by their warmth, how down-to-earth they are, their sense of humor, the bond between them and their family, and how intelligent and passionate they are. I thought, what a wonderful thing it would be to be in partnership with two wonderful women. Then there's my experience of being a storyteller, a digital native, a songwriter and having set up businesses that aim to have a

positive impact in the world. At the heart of what I stand for is storytelling. It's a really wonderful fit.

**WS:** What types of stories will you aim to tell through HiddenLight?

**BRANSON:** Being lucky enough to travel the world and experience people from all walks of life, I'm fascinated by human stories and the experiences that we all have. No matter who you are, where you come from, your race, your gender, your political background or your religion, there are common traits between all of our human experiences. I'm interested in getting under the skin of that and what connects us all and celebrating the best of the human spirit. So much of media can focus on the negative aspects of life. There are wonderful, culturally authentic stories out there, right across the globe, that really will create a sense of hope and optimism—and that's what we would like to focus on.

**WS:** Tell me about some of the initial projects on the slate.

**BRANSON:** *Gutsy Women* is our first straight-to-series order for Apple TV+. We're in the business of premium content, so having Apple in partnership with us is just wonderful. I know that Hillary and Chelsea are very passionate about bringing the book to screen. The series spotlights a richly diverse cast of amazing women, and it couldn't be more timely.

There's a lot in the pipeline. *If I Could Tell You Just One Thing* is based on a book by my friend, best-selling author Richard Reed, and we're thrilled that this has been commissioned by YouTube. The series explores what motivates some of the world's most renowned women and the stories and experiences that have shaped them. It's exciting to be working with YouTube star Patricia Bright on this series, and she's already talked about her hope that the show can act as a catalyst to support, lift and inspire women across the globe. ■