

## A Down syndrome couple defies the odds in marriage



ON TV  
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### THE DOCUMENTARY

"Monica & David"

**WHEN | WHERE** Tomorrow night at 8 on HBO

**REASON TO WATCH** 2010

Tribeca Film Festival documentary winner about newlyweds, Monica and David, both of whom have Down syndrome.

**WHAT IT'S ABOUT** "If you could have one more wonderful thing in your life," filmmaker Alexandra Codina asks David toward the end of her documentary, "what would it be?" "Same thing," says David without a moment's thought. "Monica."

They are in their thirties, at the outset of the film, practicing their wedding vows (the film ends with their first anniversary). Viewers are told marriage is rare between people with Down syndrome, but Monica's mother, Maria Elena, explains that parents who so desperately want to protect their children with the syndrome "are typically the first ones who treat them poorly by subconsciously denying them their right to have a normal life."

So Maria Elena and her



"Monica & David," the 2010 Tribeca Film Festival documentary winner, stars a disabled married couple who transcend pity.

husband, Bob — Monica's stepfather — work hard to give them that life. They live in Florida, and while their lives are anything but normal, it's still a wonderful life.

**MY SAY** First impressions, of course, are always important, and the first impression upon meeting the couple is pity — pity for their disability, their circumstances, their future and their parents. But "Monica & David" is an exercise — and a largely successful one — in demolishing first impressions. Not that there isn't plenty of sadness to go around. Monica and David can't live normal lives, but that doesn't mean they can't live happy ones. Codina

(Monica's cousin) has taken a glass half full and filled it to the brim.

Monica and David love each other deeply, somewhat understand their limitations and don't seem particularly bothered by them. They are also terribly lucky — if "lucky" is the right word — here because they live with Maria Elena and Bob, who have provided an opulent home in Hollywood, Fla. "There's not much more I can give them except safety and happiness," says Maria Elena, who is the real hero of this piece.

**BOTTOM LINE** Go ahead and watch this, then count your blessings; after all, Monica and David have counted theirs.

**GRADE A**

