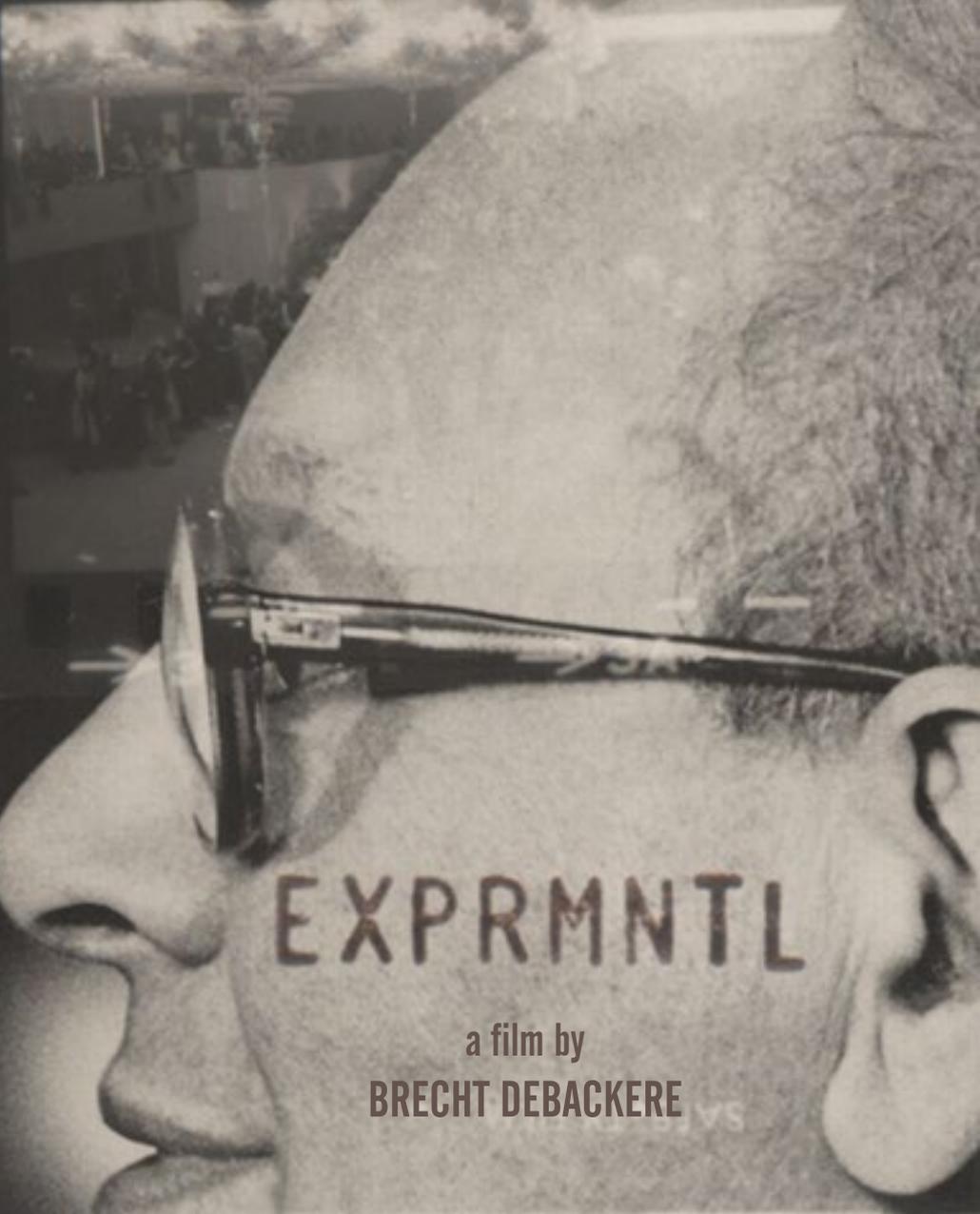
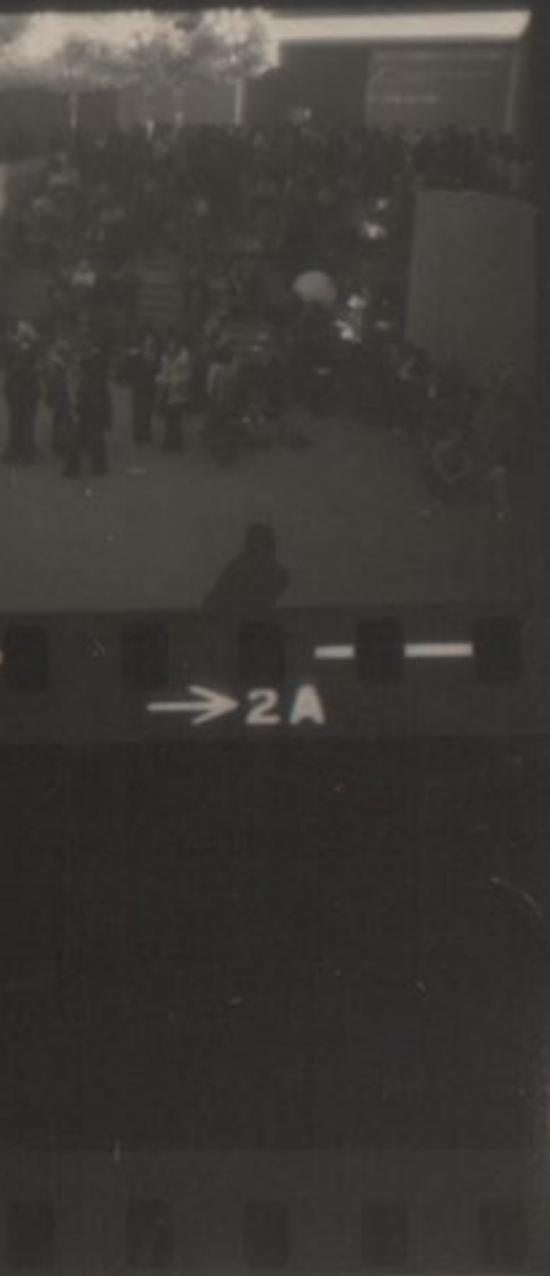


SAFETY FILM



EXPRMNTL

a film by
BRECHT DEBACKERE



→ 13A

→ 14



“Cannes and Venice are producer’s fairs, dedicated to superficiality and determined by politics. New York and London present more “dignified” festivals, but their orientation as showcases of other festivals classes them outside of the priestly gatherings that the European spectacles are; they are cram sessions to catch up on the commercial cinema rather than festivals in the vulgar sense. Knokke-le-Zoute on the other hand, stands as the sole gathering of international avant-garde film-makers.”

- P. Adams Sitney -





THE STORY

SHORT SYNOPSIS

Knokke, Belgium. The casino of this mundane coastal town became the epicentre of one of the most important events in the history of experimental and avant-garde cinema. The legendary festival 'EXPRMNTL' was the meeting place for now equally legendary filmmakers and the battle field of a clashing bourgeoisie and counterculture in the 60s.

'EXPRMNTL' tells us how this posh seaside resort became the mythical gathering place for experimental filmmakers. This legendary festival earned Belgium its place in the pantheon of cinema history and contributed to the development of our contemporary image culture.

LONG SYNOPSIS

In the early days of cinema all films were experimental. Filmmakers actively explored this new medium, searching for ways to tell a story, to convey meaning and spread ideas by structuring moving images in time. While Hollywood would start growing into a major industry in the late 1920s, others would continue the search for innovation and question its hegemony. Their work would seep slowly yet steadily into the mainstream and help shape our image culture and visual language into what it is today.

Knokke, Belgium. A small mundane coastal town, home to the beau-monde. To compete with Venice and Cannes, the posh casino hosts the second 'World Festival of Film and the Arts' in 1949, organised in part by the Royal Cinematheque of Belgium. To celebrate cinema's 50 year existence, they put together a side program showcasing the medium in all its shapes and forms: surrealist film, absolute film, dadaist films, abstract film,... The side program would soon become a festival in its own right: 'EXPRMNTL', dedicated to experimental cinema, and would become a mythical gathering of the avant-garde...

EXPRMNTL knew only five editions, in 1949, 1958, 1963, 1967 and 1974 but those five editions became known as the most legendary of all experimental film festivals.

Amongst the visitors settling down in Knokke in wintertime between Christmas and New Years: Yoko Ono, Jean-Luc Godard, Agnes Varda, Jonas Mekas, Jean-Jacques Lebel, Roman Polanski, Stan Brakhage, Nam June Paik, Jeffrey Shaw... Most of them as students or early-career filmmakers.

Why did Yoko Ono receive a jail sentence? What did Polanski, Godard, Mekas, Varda and a number of other guests do, crammed in a hotel room? How did Holger Meins, future Rote Armee Fraktion member, end up in Knokke?

The festival was a meeting place for filmmakers, avant-garde artists, the Belgian political elite and beau-monde. The mundane Knokke, the 'Saint-Tropez on the Belgian coast', consequently wasn't spared from the clash between bourgeoisie and counterculture.

EXPRMNTL tells the story of experimental film through the history of this festival, a history which questions the nature of film and how a large part of how we understand our world is based on our understanding of moving images.



DIRECTORS' STATEMENT

'This movie is rooted within my personal love for experimental cinema. Through the years I've seen a great number of avant-garde movies ranging from the early days of cinema to contemporary works. A lot of these works were shown at the various editions of the EXPRMTNL festival and a number of filmmakers are still active today. What struck me the most was the relative obscurity of these films and the fact that what we see in theatres or on television today was once considered 'different', 'strange' and even 'shocking'.

When I discovered that Knokke was once host of a festival that is considered to be the festival for experimental cinema, I was surprised to find out that its story was yet untold.

The movie tells the story of this event, of cinema and filmmakers. My presence is only felt as that of a young filmmaker, curious about the nature of cinema and searching for the meaning of the word 'experimental'. Using the historic festival as the portmanteau this documentary aims to answer this question. The documentary needs to be an invitation to further exploration. The audience needs to realize that experimental cinema is not necessarily boring and tedious but rather exciting and wonderful.

Through the years the festival has gained a mythical status. But like all myths, they contain truths and they serve as vehicles to pass on historical events but also to inspire and to push for renewal, change and reflection.

Like any other art form, cinema is a reflection of the time. Because of this, 'Exprmntl' will also reflect the current zeitgeist. With this film we want to counter the criticism the arts undergo nowadays as people question its economic value. While the movie talks about a historic event, it also stresses how our social and cultural lives are in perpetual motion by the grace of change, renewal and evolution.

We live in a time where images, sound, text,... are at our fingertips. This fact has a profound effect on the nature of creativity: more than ever we understand that culture is based on what came before. We borrow, sample, re-use, re-interpret and re-appropriate and by doing so we create new works of art.

'Exprmntl' is a collage of elements from the different periods in which the festival took place: photos, films, interviews, documents, correspondence...

In this film I wanted to bring these elements together and forge them into a new whole; a dialectical montage which tells the story of experimental, independent film production, the festival, the motivations of its filmmakers, told with their own words and images. In that sense the movie becomes more than the sum of its parts. Not a historical account, but a revival of the creative atmosphere, a sixth, purely filmic, edition of the festival.

The documentary uses style elements of the experimental cinema scene in a conscious way. Fast micro-editing, superimposition, abstraction, handheld camera... are not avoided but embraced and used where appropriate. We want to invite the spectator to discover the often unknown riches these films have to offer while avoiding becoming too experimental and impenetrable.

Brecht Debackere

THE CHARACTERS

The driving force of the festival. Jacques Ledoux was the first conservator of the Cinematek and is known as an absolute advocate of cinema. His unconditional love for film and innovation was the power behind the festival. It was he who put Belgium, Knokke and Expmntl on the world map.

JACQUES LEDOUX



JONAS MEKAS



Jonas Mekas is a Lithuanian-American filmmaker, poet and artist who has often been called “the godfather of American avant-garde cinema.” His work has been exhibited in museums and festivals worldwide.

Mekas came to Knokke to present the American Underground scene. He’s one of the founders of Anthology Film Archives in New York.

Agnès Varda is a film director who was born in Belgium, but has spent most of her working life in France. Her films, photographs, and art installations focus on documentary realism, feminist issues, and social commentary with a distinct experimental style.

Varda came to the 2nd and 3rd edition of Expmntl. Ledoux helped with the production of her film ‘Opéra Mouffe’, winning her a prize in 1958. Her movies heralded the advent of the Nouvelle Vague.

AGNÈS VARDA





THE CHARACTERS

ERIC DE KUYPER



Eric de Kuyper is a Flemish-Belgian and Dutch writer, semiologist, art critic, and experimental film director. Fictionalized autobiographical novels, written in the 3rd-person, account for most of his creative work. His academic writing encompasses reviews, essays, articles, and books on semiotics, film, dance, theater, and opera. His non-traditional films reveal an engineered penchant for melodrama, love songs, and silent movies;

Peter Kubelka is an Austrian experimental filmmaker, architect, musician, curator and lecturer. His films are primarily short experiments in linking seemingly disparate sound and images. He is best known for his 1966 avant-garde classic *Unsere Afrikareise* (Our Trip to Africa).

Kubelka came to Knokke on several occasions. There he met Jonas Mekas with whom he started Anthology Film Archives. He showed several of his films at Exprmntl.

PETER KUBELKA



HARUN FAROCKI



Harun Farocki was a German filmmaker, author, and lecturer in film. Farocki, who was deeply influenced by Bertolt Brecht and Jean-Luc Godard, studied at the German Film and Television Academy in West Berlin. He began making films — from the very beginning, they were non-narrative essays on the politics of imagery — in the mid-1960s.

Together with Holger Meins, Farocki came to Knokke in 1967. They were members of the SDS and instigators of the protests at Exprmntl 4.

He died unexpectedly on 30 July 2014, aged 70.

THE CHARACTERS

Jean-Jacques Lebel is a French artist, poet, poetry publisher, political activist and scholar born in Paris in 1936. He is known primarily for his work with Happenings, and as an art theory writer and art curator. He is the son of Robert Lebel, art critic and friend of Marcel Duchamp.

Lebel came to Knokke after being asked by Ledoux to take part in the symposia. He was known as the 'Pope of the happening' and he organized several unforeseen events, amongst which the 'Miss Exprmntl' election for which he was convicted.

JEAN-JACQUES LEBEL



BIRGIT HEIN



Birgit Hein is a German film director, producer and screenwriter who has made experimental films with her husband Wilhelm Hein since the 1960s.

Together with Wilhelm Hein, Birgit came to Exprmntl 4 & 5. They had several of their films in competition. She also provided us with 90 minutes of never before seen 8mm home movies containing meetings between filmmakers but also of Jacques Ledoux, Knokke and Exprmntl 5.

Gabrielle Claes was Jacques Ledoux' successor as conservator of the Cinematek. In 1974 she worked as an assistant and helped with the organisation of the festival.

Gabrielle Claes made an appearance in "All Night Long" ("Toute une nuit") by Chantal Akerman (1982).

GABRIELLE CLAES



THE CHARACTERS

Roland Lethem is a Belgian filmmaker and writer.

Inspired in his early career by Buñuel, Cocteau, the surrealists and by the Japanese cinema (Seijun Suzuki, Ishirō Honda, Kōji Wakamatsu, Yoko Ono), he was heavily influenced by the Exprmntl festival of 1967 and by the social turmoil of May '68. Roland Lethem wants to confront people with the things fromf which they believe they have been freed; to make them face their responsibilities.

He frequently collaborated with Jean-Pierre Bouyxou and Jio Berk.

ROLAND LETHEM



BORIS LEHMAN



Boris Lehman is a Belgian author-filmmaker of experimental cinema. He has assisted Henri Storck with the films *Secret Forest of Africa* and *Fêtes de Belgique*, and Chantal Akerman with *Jeanne Dielman*. He has also collaborated with filmmakers Patrick Van Antwerpen, Jean-Marie Buchet and Gérard Courant.

Boris made more than 400 films, which makes him one of the most active independent filmmakers in Belgium. He visited the festival on several occasions.

Robert Stéphane is a Belgian journalist and the former director-general of the national broadcaster RTBF, at the time the media partner of the festival.

He was also responsible for bringing the MovieMovie performance to Knokke in 1976.

ROBERT STÉPHANE



THE CHARACTERS

Werner Nekes is a German director and collector. Nekes studied linguistics and psychology at Freiburg. He began his film career in 1964 in Bonn and is part of the University Film Club and is chair at FIAG. Following this early career, he developed friendships with several filmmakers, sculptors and painters. After meeting with Dore O., both started collaborating since 1967. In 1965, he began painting and using various materials and objects, he then makes films in 8 mm and 16 mm. Nekes aims to release the film from narration and its psychologizing goal to then make it while respecting the structural system and the temporal criteria.

WERNER NEKES



GODFRIED-WILLEM RAES



Godfried-Willem Raes is a Belgian composer, performer and instrument maker. He is the founder of the Logos Foundation of which he is still the president. He holds a PhD from Ghent University and is professor of experimental music composition at the Ghent Royal Conservatory.

Next to his reputation as a composer, he is also a well known expert in computer technology and electronic art. His PhD from Ghent State University he got on the basis of his dissertation on the technology of virtual instruments of his design and invention.

Michael Snow is a Canadian artist working in painting, sculpture, video, films, photography, holography, drawing, books and music.

His work has appeared at exhibitions across Europe, North America and South America. Snows' works were included in the shows marking the reopening of both the Centre Pompidou in Paris in 2000 and the MoMA in New York in 2005. In March 2006, his works were included in the Whitney Biennial.

MICHAEL SNOW



TEAM

BRECHT DEBACKERE AUTHOR/DIRECTOR



Since 1995, Brecht Debackere (1979, BE) has taken a particular interest in moving images. He has been working with fiction film, animation, motion-graphics and exploring applications such as video syntheses, interaction and concept development. With his work he seeks to explore intrinsic characteristics of 'virtual space'. He worked as researcher for CREW within the European project 2020 3D media, a project concerned with, among other things, omnidirectional and stereoscopic film.

He is co-founder of the Brussels based production company Visualantics and the online magazine Rupture. His works have been shown at festivals around the world, in Belgium, Netherlands, France, Italy, Korea, Canada, Germany,... and in museums like the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, SMAK in Ghent, KMSK in Antwerp,...

STEVEN DHOEDT PRODUCER/CAMERA



Steven Dhoedt (°1980, Gent) is a Belgian filmmaker, producer and cinematographer. He studied film at the RITCS School of Arts in Brussels and graduated as a Master in Audiovisual Arts.

After his studies he moved to Hong Kong, where he lived and worked for several years, gaining experience as a freelance producer and director. In 2003 he founded VISUALANTICS, a Brussels based independent production house, focusing on creative documentaries, fiction films and new media projects.

His films have screened on numerous film festivals all over the world and have been broadcasted on TV in over 30 countries. His most recent film, 'REACH FOR THE SKY', a documentary about the competitive South-Korean education system, had its world premiere at the Busan International Film Festival 2015 and won the award for Best Belgian Documentary at the 2016 Docville festival.

TEAM

IMAGE EDITOR **BEPPE LEONETTI**

Born in Turin in 1977, Beppe Leonetti graduated in film editing at the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia – National School of Cinema.

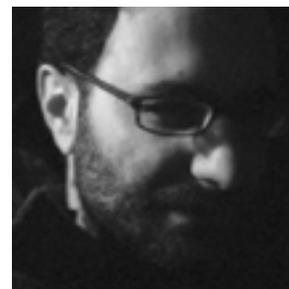
From 2006 to 2009 he collaborated with Nanni Moretti, editing some of his documentaries (“Il diario del caimano”, “Palombella rossa: intorno al film”, “L’ultimo campionato”) and some of his short films (including “Il diario di uno spettatore”, segment of the movie “Chacun son cinéma”, screened at Cannes Film Festival in 2009).

Among the films he edited: “Something left wing” by W. Achtner, “The love hour” by C. Carosino, “The economist’s dream” by Monica Repetto.

In 2011 he edited “Là Bas. A criminal education”, directed by Guido Lombardi, which won the Lion of the Future at the 68th Venice Film Festival.

“The journey of Marco Cavallo”, by Erika Rossi and Giuseppe Tedeschi, presented at the Turin Film Festival XXXII and XXVI Trieste Film Festival, was edited in 2014.

Beppe Leonetti is currently working on his first film as a director: “Chief White Elk”, Since 2015 he is a board member of Doc/IT, the Association of Italian Documentarists.



SOUND EDIT & DESIGN **BORIS DEBACKERE**

Boris Debackere is a sound artist and researcher teaching at LUCA School of Arts, KU Leuven. Debackere is currently serving as the head of V2_Lab in Rotterdam, an instigator of artistic projects that interrogate and illuminate contemporary issues in art, science, technology, and society.

As a sound designer his scope ranges from media art over video art, like Herman Aselberghs’ “a.m./p.m.” (Courtisane Canvas price) and “Proof of Life” (1st price Transmediale), to cinema.

Debackere won the Georges Deleuze 2014 Prize for Best Original Music and Sound Design and received the 2015 Ensor Sound Design Award for Violet by Bas Devos.





PRODUCTION INFO

| | |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------|
| English Title | EXPRMNTL |
| Year of Production | 2016 |
| Country of Production | BELGIUM |
| Length | 68' |
| Language | English / French / Dutch |
| Subtitles | English / French / Dutch |
| Colour | BW / Colour |
| Shooting Format | HD 1080p25 |
| Screening Format | DCP / BluRay / Digital |
| Sound | 5.1 Surround / Stereo |

WWW.EXPRMNTL.BE

WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/EXPRMNTL

WWW.TWITTER.COM/EXPRMNTL

TRAILER

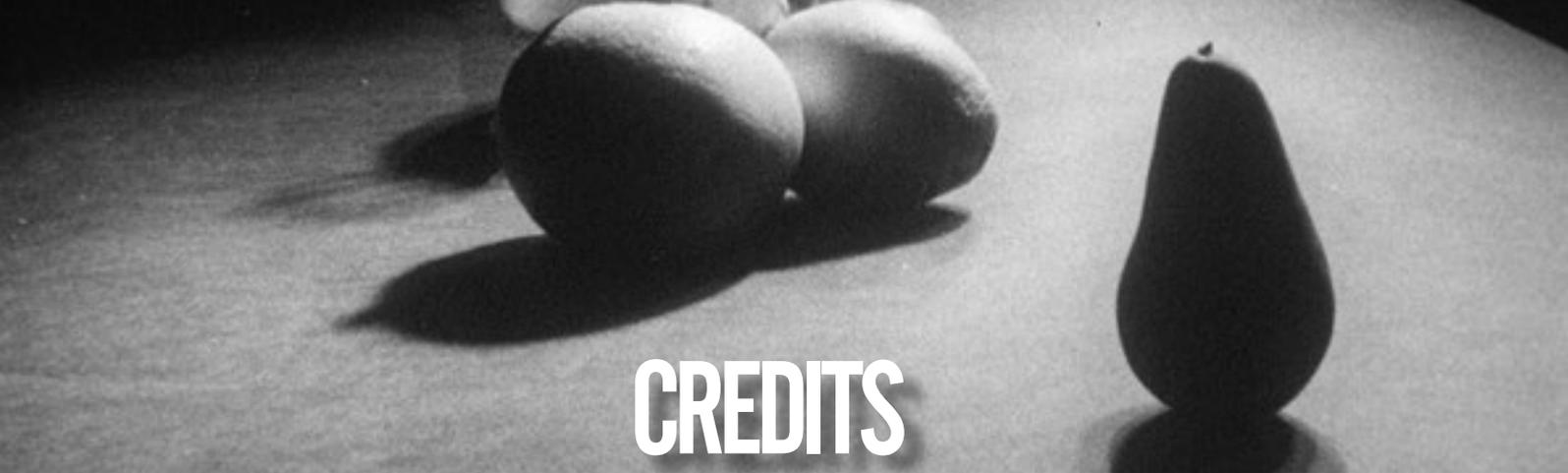
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WORLD PREMIERE

L'Age d'Or Film Festival - October 2016

INTERNATIONAL PREMIERE

BFI London Film Festival - October 2016



CREDITS

A film by
Brecht Debackere

a VISUALANTICS production

a co-production with
CINAMETEK Royal Belgian Film Archive
RTBF
CANVAS

Produced by
Steven Dhoedt

Edited by
Beppe Leonetti

Sound editing & design
Boris Debackere

Written & Directed by
Brecht Debackere

Camera
Steven Dhoedt
Sander Vandenbroucke

Archive Research
Brecht Debackere
Steven Dhoedt
Olivier Dekegel

Lights
Julien Ladavid

Sound mixing
Raf Enckels

Production Assistant
Jesse Van Bauwel

Compositing & retouche
Robin Sinnaeve
Wim De Rick

Graphics & Motion Design
Annelies Vaes
Robin Sinnaeve

Color Grading
Franck Ravel

DI
Arnout Deurinck
Pieter-Jan Uvyn

Online supervisor
Wim De Rick

Online
Tim Trenson

Offline Facilities
De Montagewinkel

Online Facilities
Mikros

Audio facilities
A-Sound



PRODUCTION COMPANY

VISUALANTICS

VISUALANTICS, founded in 2003 and based in Brussels, specializes in independent projects for an international market and is involved in the field of new media, fiction and creative documentary. The company enjoys a growing reputation with contemporary documentaries; Reach for the SKY (on the education system in South-Korea), The Sound of Belgium (on the history of Belgian dance music), State of Play (on professional gaming in South-Korea), the Brussels Business (on lobbying in Brussels) and with award winning shorts such as 'The Extraordinary Life Of Rocky.

Today the company has had collaborations with national and international broadcasting companies such as ARTE, ZDF, NRK, SVT, YLE, VRT, RTBF, LICHTPUNT etc.

VISUALANTICS is a founding member of FlandersDoc, the Belgian-Flemish association of documentary producers.

FILMOGRAPHY

- 2015 REACH FOR THE SKY / documentary / 90' & 52' / in HD
- 2014 BETWEEN THE DEVIL AND THE DEEP / documentary / 100' & 52' / in HD
- 2014 SHIP OF FOOLS / documentary / 85' & 52' / in HD
- 2014 THE HORSEMAN / short fiction / HD
- 2013 STATE OF PLAY / documentary / 85' & 52' / in HD
- 2013 THE SOUND OF BELGIUM /documentary / 85' / in HD
- 2012 THE BRUSSELS BUSINESS / documentary / 90' & 52' / in HD
- 2010 INSIDE THE METAVERSE / documentary / 52' / in HD
- 2010 THE EXTRAORDINARY LIFE OF ROCKY / short fiction /15'/ S16mm
- 2009 NIGHTHAWKS / short fiction /13'50"/ 35mm
- 2008 VERBRANDMAN / short fiction /14'

CINEMATEK

In 1938, Henri Storck, André Thirifays and Pierre Vermeylen founded The Royal Belgian Filmarchive (Cinémathèque Royale de Belgique), now called CINEMATEK. Ever since it has been preserving a collection of films with a permanent esthetical, technical and historical value.

The archive also has a vast collection of documents on the cinematographic art and assures the consultation of these films and documents for esthetic and scientific reasons.

The collection is one of the largest in the world, now counting up to 100.000 copies corresponding to 45.000 titles: full-length fiction films, documentaries, short films, which illustrate the history of film from the beginnings to our times. The collection grows every year with an average of 2.000 copies.

CONTACT

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