



SAVAGE FILM
IN COPRODUCTION WITH FASTNET FILMS,
GEBRUEDER BEETZ FILMPRODUKTION & SUBMARINE
PRESENT

THE LAND OF THE ENLIGHTENED

A FILM BY PIETER-JAN DE PUE



87 MIN. • BELGIUM/IRELAND/NETHERLANDS/GERMANY /AFGHANISTAN • 2016

THE LAND OF THE ENLIGHTENED



YECOM
COMM-100

FOR TRANSMISSION, 1. BATTERY RECEIVER
ON 10 100 100 100 100 100
ON 10 100 100 100 100 100

100 100 100 100 100 100
100 100 100 100 100 100



SHORT SYNOPSIS

A gang of Afghan kids from the Kuchi tribe dig out old Soviet mines and sell the explosives to children working in a lapis lazuli mine. When not dreaming of the time when American troops finally withdraw from their land, another gang of children keeps tight control on the caravans smuggling the blue gemstones through the arid mountains of Pamir.

In this seamless blend of fictional and documentary form, we experience a stunning cinematic journey into the beauty of war-tormented Afghanistan. Shot over seven years on evocative 16mm footage, first-time director Pieter-Jan De Pue paints a whimsical yet haunting look at the condition of Afghanistan left for the next generation. As American soldiers prepare to leave, we follow De Pue deep into this hidden land where young boys form wild gangs to control trade routes, sell explosives from mines left over from war, and climb rusting tanks as playgrounds making the new rules of war based on the harsh landscape left to them.

De Pue's transportative and wonderfully crafted film confronts the visceral beauty and roughness of survival, serving as a testament to the spirited innovation of childhood and the extreme resilience of a people and country.

- *Sundance Film Festival*

INTRODUCTION

The Land of the Enlightened is a hybrid feature documentary by Pieter-Jan De Pue, a first-time director with a huge passion for the Afghan people and for the extraordinary beauty of their war-tormented country. It was filmed over a period of seven years in different regions throughout the country on amazing 16mm footage.

Thirty-four-year-old Belgian director Pieter-Jan De Pue first started working on the subject of his first film – children and how they live the war in Afghanistan – straight from film school in 2008. He shot large parts of the film almost entirely by himself on Super 16, carrying the cans of film around with him for months on end across some of the most remote and dangerous regions of Afghanistan.

The project was a ‘hybrid’ film through its conception. Pieter-Jan had been visiting different groups of children over the course of several years, initially discovering their world when he was sent there on assignment as a stills photographer for a number of charity organizations and magazines. For this film he wanted to tell their story in a cinematographic way, but as a documentary, because it is about these children and how they cope with the continuous foreign occupation in their daily lives.

During the script and pre-production phase, however, we realized that, production-wise and technically, it would be almost impossible to tell their story in a pure documentary style. The children in the film are not the kids Pieter-Jan met many years ago, yet they have exactly the same issues, hopes and fears as the ones that crossed his path earlier. He had to scout groups of children who could ‘re-enact’ their own reality, make deals with village chiefs and war lords, and direct his subjects. Nevertheless, the children are not actors but they play themselves in the film. This tool of storytelling is something we embraced throughout the shoot and the editing, using the fictional style in such a way that we can tell more than just their way of living, but also their dreams and their imagination.

While the beginning and ending are heightened realism, the events they tell are the reality, their dreams being a part of this reality. As Werner Herzog once said: ‘construct a reality that illuminates the truth’. In retrospect, this is exactly what Pieter-Jan has managed to do, resulting in a unique film.

- Bart Van Langendonck, Producer

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

We will never allow you to dictate us how to run our country and whom to employ in Afghanistan. Afghanistan shall remain poor, if necessary, but free in its acts and decisions.

*- Daoud Khan,
former president of Afghanistan*

Thirty years of Soviet occupation, Mujaheddin civil war and the Taliban regime have plunged Afghanistan back into the middle ages, especially in the arid and barren mountain provinces. Despite 14 years of reconstruction by the international community, the population distrusts foreign aid and the Afghan government remains unstable and corrupt. The Taliban are indirectly financed by Pakistani and American secret services and the opium harvest is breaking records. The gap between rich and poor is widening conspicuously. SUVs drive back and forth on the streets of Kabul and drug-financed villas shoot up like mushrooms. Having returned from Iran and Pakistan, heroin-addicted Afghan refugees live in Kabul underneath bridges or in war ruins. Most of the refugees who returned from border camps have lost all contact with their family. Despite the local populations' increasing frustration vis-à-vis western intervention, a lot of Afghans fear that a new civil war will break out as soon as the international troops have left the country in 2016. People fear the return of the Taliban and other fundamentalist groups to fill the gap left by the Westerners. There is an immense shortage of educated people to put the country back on track.

In June 2007, I left for Afghanistan to make photo reports for the International Red Cross, Caritas Germany, Demining, Dutch Committee for Afghanistan, etc... I crossed the Hindu Kush mountains with my Afghan friend Gholam Hassan via the Wakhan Corridor towards "the Roof of the World" – the frontier zone between Afghanistan, Pakistan, Tajikistan and China – looking for the country's various ethnic groups. Then came six long treks across different regions of Afghanistan to improve my understanding of the various languages, cultures and customs.

Scouting locations for the film, I also spent time with American and ISAF troops on various occasions. What Western media show us are the leading political issues, the disputed presence of NATO and American troops in a country that has no future. There is a strong divergence between the Afghans' view of the future of their country and how the international community attempts to impose a democratic system based on western values. An American officer once told me: "We have to make these people familiar with the material world in order to give them something to fight for."

So I decided to focus on the children born during wartime, in an attempt to understand how they experience and perceive life in wartime. I have met children who work in surreal conditions, doing incredible jobs to survive and feed their families. In a country where life expectancy is 43, people start working at the age of 8 and start a family when they are 14.

The children's incessant struggle forces them to become completely independent at a very young age. They are determined to solve any problem, possess an unfaltering talent for improvisation and an inexhaustible eagerness to learn. Their archaic and traditional way of life, closely connected with nature and their system of values and entirely devoid of western materialist influence, increasingly wraps the children up inside a magic world of their own. The purpose of their actions always prevails over the possible consequences. The boundaries between reason and folly, life and death, have become blurred. There is no grey zone between black and white. Constant optimism and endless struggle against the mighty. They all desire to become the leader of a gang as soon as they reach the age of 12. They are powerful yet pure children who make radical decisions without any compromise. Despite their childlike imagination and naiveté, they are grownups who will never have had the time to be children.

In my film I wanted to tell the reality of Afghanistan as seen through these children's eyes. The film depicts four groups of children in four different regions of Afghanistan, all involved in commercial exchange and war trafficking, united by the will to survive by means of mutual exchange of experience.

The film is an odyssey across Afghanistan, with Gholam Nasir and his gang as our guides, following the smuggling of opium and the course of the weapons they recycle, the lapis lazuli they extract and the opium they cultivate, receive as payment or sell for cash, to arm the Taliban and feed the war, or to convince an opium-addicted father to marry his beautiful daughter.

The film is intended as a mixture of reality and dream. Immersed in the daily reality of the children, it seeks to convey their views, feelings, dreams and expectations. The imaginary scenes depicted are visual representations of the stories told and experienced by the children. The idea is to get inside their head. They experience the violence and extremes of war in a mixture of dream and reality. We hope the film will communicate that experience.

This is an intimate story of a handful of children, about a reality unknown in the West. While the world concentrates on the international community, the withdrawal of U.S. troops and NATO, and in this historical moment wonders what post-2016 Afghanistan will be like.

- Pieter-Jan De Pue

GALLERY













FEATURING



Gholam Nasir



Khyrgyz Baj



Noor & Zulfu



Koko Ewas



Koko Mullalih



Marina Golbahari



Sergei Kovinchenko



Devin A. Cleeves
US Soldier



Children of Argo
Badhakshan



Children of
Ladjewarsho
Badhakshan



Children of Pamir
Badhakshan



Villagers of
Sarhad de Broughil
Pamir, Badhakshan



Children of Nichigam
Kunar



Children of
Qala e Fatuh
Kabul



Children of Sudgul
Nuristan



Children of Zurabad
Bagram

ABOUT THE FILMMAKER



Pieter-Jan De Pue
Director & Writer

Pieter-Jan De Pue is an independent filmmaker and photographer who graduated from the RITS film academy in Brussels. While directing commercials, he was concentrating on his first feature documentary, *The Land of the Enlightened*. He has travelled for long periods of time in Afghanistan, photographing the country and its people for organizations such as the International Red Cross, Caritas International, the UN and international Demining organizations. His photographic work on Afghanistan and Central Asia has been published in Weekend Knack, Le Monde, DeMorgen, De Standaard, and has been exhibited in several galleries and museums such as Photo Museum Antwerp, deBuren in Brussels and the Institut des Cultures d'Islam in Paris. In between film and photo projects abroad, he has worked as a film director and photographer on several book projects and museums. Pieter-Jan is connected to the German photo agency LAIF.

CREW

SAVAGEFILM

Savage Film is an independent production company founded in 2007 by Bart Van Langendonck and operating from Brussels in an association with Eyeworks. The company established itself internationally with Michaël R. Roskam's film "Bullhead" ("Rundskop"), a box office hit in Belgium as well as a César and Oscar® nominee for Best Foreign Language Film in 2012. The film sold to over 20 territories and was awarded at numerous festivals. More recently Robin Pront's debut "The Ardennes", another 'flemish noir', became a box office and festival success as well, while the astonishing docu-fiction "The Land of the Enlightened" by first-time director Pieter-Jan De Pue conquers the world out of its world premiere at the 2016 Sundance Film Festival.

Savage Film produces fiction films and documentaries with subjects just as versatile as its directors' backgrounds. Daring or controversial, Savage Film projects often balance on the boundaries of genres, be it fiction, documentary or art.

Savage Film also co-produces internationally with major production companies worldwide such as Submarine Channel, Eyeworks, Cobos Films, Phanta Films, Waterland Films, CTM-Lev, Family Affair Films, PRPL/Bastide Films, Fastnet Films, UJ Budapest Film Studio, Gebrüder Beetz, 41 Shadows, Les Films Pélleas, Batisphère, Orisa Films and many more.

FASTNET FILMS

Fastnet Films is the production company of Macdara Kelleher, Morgan Bushe & director Lance Daly. Fastnet has produced and co-produced feature films and drama series with cumulative budgets of over \$100 million for domestic and international markets. The company has been nominated for over 28 Irish film and television awards. Previous films have premiered at Cannes, Toronto, Berlin, Locarno, Sundance, Tribeca and London film festivals as well as being nominated for the European Film Awards. Integral to their ethos is a bold and dynamic approach to filmmaking. Seeking out original, challenging and cutting-edge films, they aim to nurture, develop and creatively exploit the radical, the innovative, the visionary, the truly extraordinary in cinema worldwide. Fastnet's only criteria are excellence, singularity of vision and that each new project offers a new challenge. They believe that these values and aspirations of the company attract distinctive cinematic voices, both emerging and established, and they provide them a supportive and stimulating environment in which to work.

gebrueder**beetz**
FILMPRODUKTION

Gebrueder Beetz Filmproduktion (Beetz brothers film productions) has produced more than 150 high-quality and feature film documentaries and recently also added the business segment fiction for the national and international market. According to the leading industry publication Realscreen, the company is one of the top 100 most important independent production companies worldwide. The productions compete regularly at all international A-festivals and have won numerous respected awards – including three Grimme Awards, the Cinema for Peace Award, three British Independent Awards, the Prix Europa, the Hot Docs Filmmakers Award, and the IDFA Special Jury Award. In 2013, the beetz brothers' co-production *Open Heart* was even nominated for an Academy Award, and in 2014, the documentary *The Wagner Files* was nominated for the International Emmy Award for Best Arts Programming.

submarine

Submarine is an Emmy Award-winning production studio that produces feature films, documentaries, animation and transmedia from their studio's in Amsterdam and Los Angeles. Submarine has established itself as an innovative company, mixing traditional and interactive storytelling, all with an international focus. The company works with talented and acclaimed directors who explore the boundaries of the moving image. Submarine was founded by co-managing directors Femke Wolting and Bruno Felix in 2000. Wolting and Felix are experienced in bringing together international co-productions, and collaborating with co-producers, broadcasters and distributors from around Europe and the United States including VPRO, BBC, HBO, ZDF, Arte, Channel 4 and many others. Submarine produced the hybrid animation/live action film *Last Hijack* that premiered at the Berlinale 2014 and the Emmy Award-winning companion transmedia experience *Last Hijack Interactive*. Most recently, the new film by Peter Greenaway, *Eisenstein in Guanajuato*, premiered in the International Competition at the Berlinale 2015.

MAIN CREDITS

Directed by Pieter-Jan De Pue

Produced by Bart Van Langendonck

Co-producers Christian Beetz

Morgan Bushe

Femke Wolting

Bruno Felix

Director of Photography Pieter-Jan De Pue

Script Pieter-Jan De Pue

David Dusa

Editors David Dusa

Stijn Deconicnk

Composer Denis Clohessy

Supervising Sound Editor / Sound Design Robert Flanagan

Voice Over Sohrab Nazari

Voice Over Text Herwig Deweerdt

Pieter-Jan De Pue

SAVAGE FILM

Producer Bart Van Langendonck

Line Producers Tatjana Kozar

Xavier Rombaut

FASTNET FILMS

Producer Morgan Bushe

SUBMARINE

Producers Femke Wolting

Bruno Felix

GEBRÜEDER BEETZ

Producer Christian Beetz

FILMPRODUKTION

Creative Producer Kerstin Meyer-Beetz

EYEWORKS

Producer Peter Bouckaert

IN COPRODUCTION WITH

ZDF Martin Pieper

Canvas Reinhilde Weyns

Ingrid Lanckmans

Marc Coenen

IKON Margje de Koning

IN ASSOCIATION WITH

Arte

Telenet/prime

Sciapode

POST-PRODUCTION

Jenny O'Brien

Tatjana Kozar

MUSIC

Set The Controls For The Heart Of The Sun

Pink Floyd

Written by Roger Waters

Published by Westminster Music Ltd./Essex Music

Performed by Pink Floyd

(P) 1968 Pink Floyd Music Ltd under exclusive license to
Parlophone Records Ltd @Warner Music Group Company

Concerto in D for 3 violins

1064: III. Allegro (Johann Sebastian Bach)

(reconstructed from Concerto for 3 harpsichords in C) BWV

Performed by Elizabeth Wallfisch/Pavlo Beznosiuk

/Catherine Mackintosh/Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment

Courtesy of Erato/Warner Classics (P) 1993,

Warner Music UK Ltd, a Warner Music Group Company

Over the Mountains the Helicopters Circle

Yuri Kirsanov

From the album "Time has Chosen Us" 1987

Фонограмма «Над горами кружат вертолеты»,
по лицензии ФГУП «Фирма Мелодия» (P), 2015 г.

Phonogram «Nad Gorami Kruzhat Vertolioty»,
under license of FSUE «Firma Melodiya» (P), 2015.

Ay Saraban

Performed by Marina Golbahari

Hanoz Bar Lab Man

Bewafa Yaram

Emshab Az Bada Kharabam Kon

Shab Hai Zolmani

Ahmad Zahir - Producer RJ Studio

Orgasm – No Time – The End (Da Boy Tommy Remix)

Performed by White Knight (1998)

Used under license from Phase One Network, Inc.

The Sea

Walter Hus

Courtesy of Walter Hus (2015)

CONTACT

PRESS

Sundance Film Festival

Susan Norget Film promotion
NY: 212-431-0090

Susan Norget
susan@norget.com
c. 917-833-3056

Keaton Kail
keaton@norget.com
c. 510-501-2914

PRODUCTION

Savage Film
info@savagefilm.be

WORLD SALES

Films Boutique
info@filmsboutique.com

Sales Executive
Jean-Christophe Simon
simon@filmsboutique.com

US SALES

UTA
Bec Smith
smithb@unitedtalent.com







TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

duration: 1h27min (24fps)
original language: English, Persian
negative format: Super 16
screening format: DCP
aspect ratio: 1.85:1
sound: 5.1

A SAVAGE FILM PRODUCTION IN CO-PRODUCTION WITH FASTNET FILMS, GEBRUEDER BEETZ FILMPRODUKTION, SUBMARINE, ZDF, CANVAS, IKON IN ASSOCIATION WITH ARTE, EYEWORKS, TELENET PRIME, SCIAPODE WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE FLANDERS AUDIOVISUAL FUND (VAF), THE BELGIAN TAX SHELTER FOR FILM FINANCING, THE NETHERLANDS FILM FUND, LE CENTRE DU CINÉMA ET DE L'AUDIOVISUEL DE LA FÉDÉRATION WALLONIE-BRUXELLES ET DEVOO, BORD SCANNÁN NA HÉIREANN – THE IRISH FILM BOARD, MEDIA PROGRAMME OF THE E.U., BELGIAN DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION – DGD, FEDERAL PUBLIC SERVICE FOREIGN AFFAIRS, FOREIGN TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION IN COLLABORATION WITH FLANDERS IMAGE, AFGHAN FILM & AFGHAN MINISTRY OF CULTURE AND INFORMATION, BELGIAN EMBASSY IN KABUL AND THE BELGIAN MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

SAVAGEFILM

gebrueder**beetz**
FILMPRODUKTION

FASTNET
FILMS

submarine

eyeworks

IKON

CANVAS

ZDF

arte

VAF
FILM

FÉDÉRATION
WALLONIE-BRUXELLES

DEVOO

ifb
IRISH FILM BOARD
BORD SCANNÁN NA HÉIREANN

NL FILM
FONDS

MEDIA
EUROPE LOVES CINEMA

flanders®

FILMS *Boutique*

deBuren

BELGIAN
TAX
SHELTER

