FIRE FIRE DESIRE

A FILM BY STEFF GRUBER

KINO.NET presents

GEOFFREY GIULIANO, AWITA RUEANGCHAN
HERMES LIBERTY, NATACHA ORACHA
VANN KONG KIA, JESSICA TERAKUPT
DIETER BALKE, RUSSELL LEIB, DAN KIZER
LAKHENA NIL, JAMES KELLY, DAVID NEWBOULT
FRANK MCGONIGAL, LARRY HAMMELL a.o.

Directed and Produced by **STEFF GRUBER**
Executive Producer **CHRISTOPHER JARVIS**
Executive Co Producer Thailand **RENE APPENZELLER**
Assistant Producer Cambodia **JOE BRYAN BAKER**
Photography by **STEFF GRUBER**
Edited by **DIANA BÄRMANN**
Re Recording Mixer **JÜRG VON ALLMEN C.A.S.**
Casting by **NOIY PASIRI PANA**
Still Photography **LOUIS DEL AMO**
Music **SORN SOLINKA, JANE SAIJAI, KAOTIP TIDADIN, DENGUE FEVER**
Produced by **KINO.NET AG** with **ALIVE MEDIA AG**
RAINFIRE.ASIA INC. and **DROPOUT FILMS**

KINO.NET FIREFIREDESIRE.COM

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FIRE FIRE DESIRE

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Year of production: 2015
Country of origin: Switzerland
Running time: 125 minutes
Shooting locations: Cambodia, Thailand
Language: English
Subtitles: German
Screening Format: DCP 16:9
Genre: Docufiction

Production Steff Gruber

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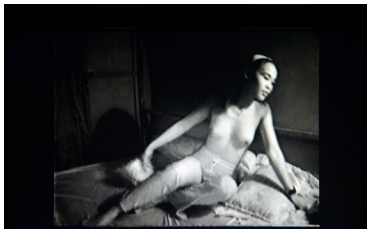
FIRE FIRE DESIRE

A LOVE ODYSSEY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

„It is a subversive act, not to accept aging, but to do something, to return to a better time.“

Martin Suter

SYNOPSIS



Swiss filmmaker Steff Gruber finds a video guide for sex tourists on the internet. He believes he recognizes his Thai ex-girlfriend Malee in the video. He finds himself obsessed with wondering what became of her. Finally, after 25 years, he travels back to Southeast Asia to look for Malee.
This is the beginning of an eventful journey that takes the filmmaker all across Southeast Asia. In his travels, he meets several so-called expats - western emigrants, looking to try their luck in Southeast Asia.
One of these expats recognizes Malee in a photograph, and also remembers her boyfriend as well, the supposed creator of the sex travel video who goes by the name of Roman Guy. Now the search for Malee shifts to a search for Roman Guy.
The filmmaker learns that Roman Guy was very well known in the expats scene at that time, and notorious as well, for his alleged contacts with the CIA. However, he seems to have disappeared over a decade ago.
Meanwhile, old footage that was recorded with a hidden camera in Cambodia in the 90s surfaces. A friend plays the footage for Gruber. It show countless prostitutes and their external circumstances from the time when the UN peace corps of the UNTAC (United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia) were stationed in the country.
In one of the videos the filmmaker finds a further clue to the sought-after Malee.

Gruber‘s film weaves together the different destinies of Asian girls and aging emigrants along with the historical video footage to produce a remarkably complex tapestry of the culturally changing Southeast Asia. The odyssey, which borrows its structure from Joseph Conrad‘s „Heart of Darkness“, ends in the border triangle of Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam. Where the Ho Chi Minh trail once ended, Roman Guy resides in a jungle brothel completely isolated from the modern world. The film ends in an analogy of a Conrad sentence: „Do me a favor: tell them all I‘ve done, everything that you‘ve seen. Because if there is one thing I hate, it is the stench of lies.“

FILMMAKER'S COMMENTARY

„It is for the act of creation that one leaves."
Ways of Escape by Graham Greene

The theme of this film, set against the backdrop of a multifaceted love story, is my personal struggle with my own aging, my longing for my lost youth and the prospect of my remaining years.
The older expats, who have all had to pay their own price to live in this presumed paradise, serve as a mirror to my own life. I'm also preoccupied with the fate of young Asian women alongside western adventurers.
The view through my camera and my attitude at the composing bench is unbiased; I don't classify my actors "good" or "evil". I see myself as a documentarist faithful to the truth. My protagonist quotes Bob Dylan: „The truth has many different levels."
These levels exist in my films to satisfy a dramaturgical principle. Black and white is to me only a property of my cited video material. I dismiss any judgments from the audience. The work must stand by itself.
Today, documentary films committed to investigative journalism come from sensational revelations, where „good" can be clearly distinguished from „evil". This might address the wish of the viewer, who likes to take the side of the "good". But this is not interesting, because the world is far more complex and has many facets. I explore these various levels by the means of film. Subtle portraits result from the many interviews I conducted with expats and Asian ladies. One must listen carefully. Sometimes the core of the statement lies between the lines, or in what is not said.
My camera is my personal microscope, which I use to better understand the world.
I was five years on the road making this movie. These long time observations enabled insights into the characters and the souls of the people I portrayed, that would not have been possible through sporadic contacts. This method enabled me to document the development of the people involved. When I first interviewed him in 2009, the expat George, for instance, was an aggressive sex tourist, whose world turned around solely to satisfy his lust. Four years later, he looks completely changed both outside and inside. Not only does he fight against increa-

sing impotence, he also sees the world through different eyes.
I also changed during the filming. I changed not only by meeting the love of my youth, Malee, and the confrontation with Roman Guy, my alter ego. I also learned I could move my personal limits. Even my point of view, my outlook of the world, is different today, post FIRE FIRE DESIRE.

My film-documented trip through Southeast Asia is also a travelogue through the thoughts of a Lawrence Durrell or a Bruce Chatwin; the images of the outer world illustrate the inner world. The metaphor from Joseph Conrad's „Heart of Darkness", the journey on the river up into the jungle, where the renegade Colonel Kurtz lives as self-appointed ruler, has a place in our cultural heritage. The metaphor has been applied several times in the history of cinema, and has often been used as a dramaturgical structure. Impressive examples include Werner Herzog's „Aguirre, the Wrath of God" and Francis Ford Coppola's „Apocalypse Now". Thus my „Kurtz", Roman Guy, lives on a river in the hard-to-reach Golden Triangle of Cambodia, Vietnam, and Laos. Here, where during the Vietnam War there was once the Ho Chi Minh trail, and where weapons, supplies, and Vietcong fighters were conveyed through areas controlled by the Americans in South of Vietnam, Roman Guy runs a brothel.

In the medium of the film, I invite the viewers to travel with me across Southeast Asia, and to look into various mirrors, which I have discreetly constructed for them on the wayside.
The expat Joe asks in the film: „People go away and disappear and then you've got to find them. Why? Why do you have to find them? It's because you want to know what they know. He knew something I didn't know and I have to find it also."

Zurich, February 2015

STEFF GRUBER BIOGRAPHY

Steff Gruber was born in 1953 in Zurich Switzerland, where he is also living and working today.
Between 1972 and 1979 he attended film seminars and courses at the University of Zurich, ETH Zurich (Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, Zurich) and F+F, Schule für Gestaltung, Zurich (F+F Zurich College of Design). In 1976 he studied Mass Philosophy at the University of Georgia (USA), where he became friends with film director and painter James Herbert.
Since 1978 Gruber has been working as an independent filmmaker. He became internationally recognized for his documentary "Location Africa" portraying the film director Werner Herzog and the actor Klaus Kinski.
Gruber taught at various schools and colleges, for example, he was a lecturer for Film, Video, and Electronic Media at FH Konstanz [Konstanz Technical College] from 1994 to 1997. Besides his various occupations, he also runs the film production company KINO.NET AG.

STEFF GRUBER FILMOGRAPHY

SELECTION

2015 FIRE FIRE DESIRE
Docufiction, DCP, colour & b/w, 125 min.

2011 PASSION DESPAIR
Dokumentary film, DigiBeta, colour & b/w, 94 min.
Gdansk DocFilm Festival 2011

2005 SECRET MOMENTS
Docufiction, DigiBeta, colour & b/w, 82 Min.
SRF (Swiss Television) 2005

1987 LOCATION AFRICA
Documentary film, 16mm, colour, 65 min.
With Werner Herzog und Klaus Kinski
International Filmfestival „Alpinale“, Bludenz 1988
Istanbul International Film Festival 1989
ARD (German Television) 1987

1985 FETISH & DREAMS
Docudrama, 35mm, colour, 82 min.
BAK Quality Award
Festival del Film Locarno 1985 (in competition)
„Mention spéciale“ for artistic originality in the use of documentary and fictive film elements.
Istanbul International Film Festival 1985
Solothurn Film Festival 1986
SRF (Swiss Television) 1990
3sat (German Television) 1990

1980 MOON IN TAURUS
Docufiction, 35mm, colour, 97 min.
BAK Quality Award
Mannheimer Filmtage 1980 (in competition)
International Filmfestival Locarno 1981
South African Film Festival 1982
SRF (Swiss Television) 1987
ZDF (German Television) 1987
RTBI (Belgian Television) 1987
YLE (Finnish Television) 1987

GEOFFREY GIULIANO BIOGRAPHY

Geoffrey Giuliano is an American film actor and author, born in Rochester, New York.
He is best known for his musician biographies of The Beatles members John Lennon, Paul McCartney, and George Harrison, and of musician Pete Townshend. After he became famous in the US, where he portrayed McDonald's advertising figurehead Clown Ronald McDonald for many years, he became a vegetarian activist and apologized publicly for advertising meat consumption.
Giuliano worked as an actor since he was twelve. After graduating with a Master's Degree in Acting and Directing in 1976, he worked in theatres, and as a speaker for radio and audio books.

GEOFFREY GIULIANO FILMOGRAPHY

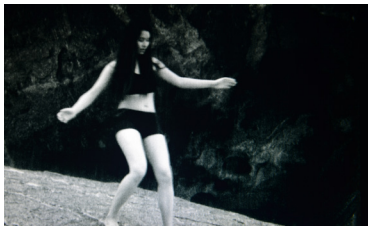
AS ACTOR

2016 THE WAGES OF SIN (pre-production)
Vincenzo, „The Zipper" Terranova
2016 MECHANIC: RESURRECTION (filming) The Man
2015 MONKS & MAMASANS (post-production) Frank the Farang
2015 FIRE FIRE DESIRE Roman Guy
2014 ONE WOMAN Paul Torvelo
2014 PATONG GIRL Yuri
2014 SMING John
2014 LUPIN III Anatoli
2014 SMING THE HUNT BEGINS John The3 Hunter
2013 DRAGONWOLF Brutus (voice)
2013 VIKINGDOM Karl Redbeard
2012 INERTIA Promotional Trailer
2012 THE FAR CRY EXPERIENCE (TV Mini-Series) Deer Boy
2012 THE SCORPION KING 3: BATTLE FOR REDEMPTION (Video) Siris
2010 THE LAZARUS PAPERS Ted McDonald
2010 PYATAYA KAZN One Eye John
2010 CARGO, LES HOMMES PERDUS Enzo
2009 BANGKOK ADRENALINE Harris Dawson (as Liam Noel Harrison)
2005 MYSTERIOUS ISLAND (TV Movie) Captain Li
1968 FIREBALL JUNGLE Beach Stud

KINO.NET AG

PRODUCTION COMPANY

KINO.NET AG is an independent production, distribution and lending company. The company was set up as Vérascope Films in 1989 by the Swiss director and producer Steff Gruber, and rechristened with its present name in 2007.
The aim of KINO.NET AG is to produce innovative auteur films. The company focuses in particular on the realisation of independent cinema and documentary films. The aim of all projects is to oppose the dumbing down of the media and to create artistically valuable films with bold themes.



CAST

GEOFFREY GIULIANO as Roman Guy
HERMES LIBERTY as George
AWITA JASMINE RUEANGCHAN as Malee (old)
NATACHA ORACHA as Malee (young)
ULI STRENGERT
OSCAR SANCHEZ
DONALD SPILKER
JESSICA TERAKUPT
RUSSELL LEIB
VANN KONG KIA
MARC NARIN
DAN KIZER
NOREYA ESKA
DONALD WILLIAM MCDONALD
JOE BRYAN BAKER
LAKHENA NIL
PHILLIP BOYLE
NGUYEN THI HUE
JAMES KELLY
DAVID NEWBOULT
FRANK MCGONIGAL
LARRY HAMMELL
SOKHA HENG
DIETER BALKE
a.o.

CREDITS

Written and directed by	STEFF GRUBER
Photography	STEFF GRUBER
Editor	DIANA BÄRMANN
Re-recording Mixer	JÜRG VON ALLMEN C.A.S.
	SOUND STUDIO DIGITON GMBH
	ZURICH
Producer	STEFF GRUBER
	KINO.NET AG
in association with	ALIVE MEDIA AG
	MEDIA.CH AG
	RAINFIRE ASIA INC.
	DROPOUT FILMS
Chief Executive Producer	CHRISTOPHER JARVIS
Executive Producer Thailand	RENE APPENZELLER
Executive Co-Producer Thailand	EKCHANA NONPALA
Associate Producer Cambodia	JOE BRYAN BAKER
Casting	CHRISTOPHER JARVIS
	NOIY PASIRI PANA
Music	SORN SOLINKA
	DENGUE FEVER
	JANE SAIJAI
	KAOTIP TIDADIN

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