



Official Selection 2014  
**sundance**  
film festival



Internationale  
Filmfestspiele  
Berlin

# WE COME 友谊 AS FRIENDS

from the director of Darwin's Nightmare  
**Hubert Sauper**



# WE COME AS FRIENDS

een film van Hupert Sauper

110 minuten | 2014 | Frankrijk, Oostenrijk | Engels, Chinees, Arabisch gesproken | Nederlandse ondertiteling

TE ZIEN VANAF 8 OKTOBER

## Distributie

Deze film wordt uitgebracht door



Wiepko Oosterhuis  
Arie Biemondstraat 111  
1054 PD AMSTERDAM  
t: +31 (0) 20 820 49 40  
e: w.oosterhuis@onsneteindhoven.nl

## Pers & marketing

Voor meer informatie over de film kunt u contact opnemen met

### Film Incompany

Anne Kervers  
e: [anne.kervers@filminc.nl](mailto:anne.kervers@filminc.nl)  
t: 06-16274537

Petra van Horsen  
e: [petra.vanhorsen@filminc.nl](mailto:petra.vanhorsen@filminc.nl)  
t: 06-55574720



## SYNOPSIS

Met een onooglijk zelfgebouwd vliegtuigje dringt filmmaker Hubert Sauper binnen in Zuid-Sudan. De burgeroorlog, die al decennia lang duurt, heeft elke modernisering tegengehouden. Door het gebrek aan wegen is het bijna alleen mogelijk om met een vliegtuigje te reizen; de stammen wonen nog in hutten van leem en stro. Zuid-Sudan lijkt de laatste 'frontier'. Een ongerept gebied vol grondstoffen en oneindige vruchtbare grond, met onwetende "inboorlingen" als enige belemmering.

In deze arena lijkt alles samen te komen. De film is zowel een magische tijdreis door het verleden als een surreële sciencefiction waarin 'aliens' met de nieuwste technologie een planeet overnemen voor zijn grondstoffen. Analfabete krijgers die decennialang hun geboortegrond hebben verdedigd, ondertekenen contracten waarmee ze hun land voor altijd kwijt zijn. Chinezen bouwen glanzende high-tech compounds voor de oliewinning en dumpen het afval buiten het hek. Het zijn de lokale politici die hun land de modernisering in willen jagen en de buitenlandse ondernemers, politici en missionarissen die hen daar graag bij willen helpen.

WE COME AS FRIENDS is een film van Hubert Sauper die in 2004 de met een Oscar genomineerde documentaire DARWIN'S NIGHTMARE maakte. Met WE COME AS FRIENDS keert hij terug naar het Afrikaanse continent en maakte opnieuw een zinderend en overweldigend documentair epos. De film werd zowel op het Sundance filmfestival als het internationaal filmfestival van Berlijn bekroond.

## HUBERT SAUPER

film director, writer, actor, producer



Hubert Sauper was born in Kitzbühel/Tyrol, in the Austrian Alps. He lived in Great Britain, Italy, the USA, and then France for ten years. He studied film directing in Vienna (Univ. of Performing Arts) and in Paris (Univ. de Paris VIII.) and graduated with a B.A. (Mag. Art). Hubert teaches film classes in Europe and the USA. KISANGANI DIARY (1998) won numerous International Film Prizes and DARWIN'S NIGHTMARE (2004) was nominated for an Academy Award. He has also written and directed other works including ALONE WITH OUR STORIES (2000) and ON THE ROAD WITH EMIL (1993). His latest documentary WE COME AS FRIENDS was awarded at both the Viennale & Biennale this year and is currently an EFA nominee.

### Childhood, Early life

Hubert was born in the Tyrolean Alps, Austria in 1966 as son of inn keepers, musicians. His father, Anton Hubertus is a writer and painter. Maria, his mother, is a passionate singer and works occasionally on humanitarian missions in the Balkans.

Hubert lived his entire adult life in Italy, Southern California - USA, Great Britain, Tanzania, Zaire (now DR Congo) Sudan, South Sudan. His more or less permanent home is since 1995 in Paris, France.

### Education

Studied photography in the US, then film directing at the University of fine arts in Vienna, as well as the Université de Paris 8, and as a guest student at the FEMIS after receiving an ERASMUS grant. Thesis of Cinema: "Film as testament" study of three last films of the directors Cyril Collard, Andrej Tarkovsky and Joris Ivens ("Die Verdichtung"), published in Vienna. Hubert graduated with special mention as director from film school, receiving a university degree as bachelor of the arts.

### FILMOGRAPHY (as writer and director)

ON THE ROAD WITH EMIL (1993, Documentary, Austria, 30min 16mm)

SO I SLEEPWALK IN BROAD DAYLIGHT (1994, fiction, Austria, 55min, 16mm)

LOMOGRAPHER'S MOSCOW (1995, Documentary, Russia, 30 min, for TV)

ALONE WITH OUR STORIES (2000, Documentary, France, 60min, DigiBeta, for TV)

DARWIN'S NIGHTMARE. (2004, Documentary, France/Austria/Belgium, 107min, 35mm)



# Interview with the director

In 'We Come as Friends,' Hubert Sauper Takes Flight to Survey the Pain Below in Sudan  
By NICOLAS RAPOLD JULY 31, 2015, The New York Times

There's no shortage of jaw-dropping moments in Hubert Sauper's new film, "We Come as Friends," an illustrated essay on contemporary colonialism. But the most haunting may be a lightning-streaked nighttime visit to a South Sudanese tribal leader. Mr. Sauper brandishes a copy of a contract to confirm a terrible truth, and the leader's moistening eyes and dejected bearing say everything. The old man has signed away hundreds of thousands of acres of land to a Texas firm.

"This was history unfolding in its best and most sarcastic form in front of my camera. And then the storm came," Mr. Sauper said in a Skype interview from Paris. "As a filmmaker, it's too good to be true. And it's terrifying."

It's one example of how Mr. Sauper, the Austrian-born director of "We Come as Friends," portrays complicated contemporary realities through vivid and industrious reportage. Ten years ago his Academy Award-nominated documentary, "Darwin's Nightmare," sifted through the wreckage of globalization by way of the fishing export industry in Lake Victoria, the impact on local Tanzanians, and a fast-and-loose subculture of Russian cargo-plane pilots.

Mr. Sauper's nonfiction films are an elegant hybrid of voracious, colorful portraiture and nery investigation. "We Come as Friends" was ranked among the best of nonfiction in 2014 by the British Film Institute's Sight & Sound magazine and reaches American theaters on Aug. 14.

Flying a "tin-can" plane he built himself, the filmmaker barnstormed across Sudan for two and a half years. "The starting point of the film was to track the psychology or pathology of colonialism," Mr. Sauper said. "I didn't know how much of it I would find in our days, in real life."

He visited a cross-section of people, all part of history unfolding for better and worse: Sudanese



losing their homes to rapacious development and war, confident Chinese engineers affirming their country's superpower destiny, Texas missionaries working to clad villagers in socks and other clothing, and a warlord turned politician who can't remember the national anthem.

The plane afforded a rapid means of exit from all this when necessary, as well as being a potent metaphor for all-access Western influence. (He keeps the craft at his farm in France, complete with airstrip.) Far from a pitying superficial travelogue, Mr. Sauper's film gives a rare sense of human beings bearing the brunt of greater historical forces and powerful interests. He depicts a clash between indigenous cultures and wildcatting foreigners that has a long history in Africa.

Mr. Sauper, who studied film in Paris, traced his deep-seated attraction to the collision of cultures back to his childhood in Austria. Raised amid picture-perfect mountains, he hung around his parents' inn as a boy.

"The little inn was populated by crowds of American soldiers who had just bombed Vietnam and came to this green beautiful place to cool off," Mr. Sauper recalled. "I grew up with the soldiers. I grew up in America in a way."

Mr. Sauper spoke of his childhood and his journeys in the same warm, amiable tones of a dinner-table conversation, with the Paris dusk falling gradually behind him in the Skype interview. But "We Come as Friends" entailed no small amount of risk. Masked gunmen, malaria, a broken propeller and parasites that sidelined him to a wheelchair were among the hazards.

More trouble may be yet to come, if experience is a guide. After "Darwin's Nightmare," Mr. Sauper said, he and associates faced threats from the Tanzanian government and spent three years dealing with court cases.

"I was attacked in France by an obscure group of people for having made a fiction film and sold it for millions as a documentary," Mr. Sauper said of one effort to denounce his 2004 film as staged. He was aided in his defense by the filmmaker Barbet Schroeder ("Terror's Advocate"). After that ordeal, Mr. Sauper kept his plans for the next film as secret as possible, even when requesting

financing.

No less bold than "Darwin's Nightmare," "We Come as Friends" modulates its difficult subject matter with a faintly ethereal tone, part of a consistent aesthetic. The sense of Mr. Sauper as a man visiting from a "spaceship" — the plane is even named "Sputnik" — is a recurring motif, with the rise and fall of flight scenes punctuating the intimate interviews.

"All his films, they fall away into being dreamscapes at times," Kevin Macdonald, who directed the Uganda-set "The Last King of Scotland" (2006), said in a phone interview. "It's extraordinary. I don't think there are other documentary filmmakers that can take factual material and make it seem so dreamlike."

Yet "We Come as Friends" is firmly rooted in reality. The "land grab" confirmed in the nighttime scene with the tribal leader has occurred frequently, in Sudan and elsewhere, said Anuradha Mittal, executive director of the think tank Oakland Institute, which has studied such issues.

"It's not one of a kind — it's not a small trend; it's widespread," Ms. Mittal said of the kind of "resource theft" that Mr. Sauper depicts.

All of which makes this intrepid filmmaker, both analytical and lyrical, hard to classify. Told of a film textbook that divides the history of nonfiction filmmakers into explorers, reporters, painters, advocates and so on, Mr. Sauper remembered the credit bestowed on a past collaborator, the writer Nick Flynn.

"There is a nice term called a 'field poet.' "



## Cast and Credits

|                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| Director:              | Hubert Sauper   |
| Screenwriter:          | Hubert Sauper   |
| Producers:             | Hubert Sauper, Gabriele Kranzelbinder                   |
| Cinematographers:      | Hubert Sauper, Barney Broomfield                        |
| Editor:                | Hubert Sauper, Cathie Dambel, Denise Vindevogel         |
| Production Management: | Stéphanie Bourdin, Marie Tappero                        |
| Music :                | Slim Twig   |
| Sound Design:          | Veronika Hlavatsch                                      |
| Sound:                 | Xavier Lieberd  |
| Sponsors:              | ARTE, Canal plus, Eurimages, OFI, Film Fund Vienna, ORF |