

THE WHICKERS

FILM & TV FUNDING AWARD
FINALISTS 2022

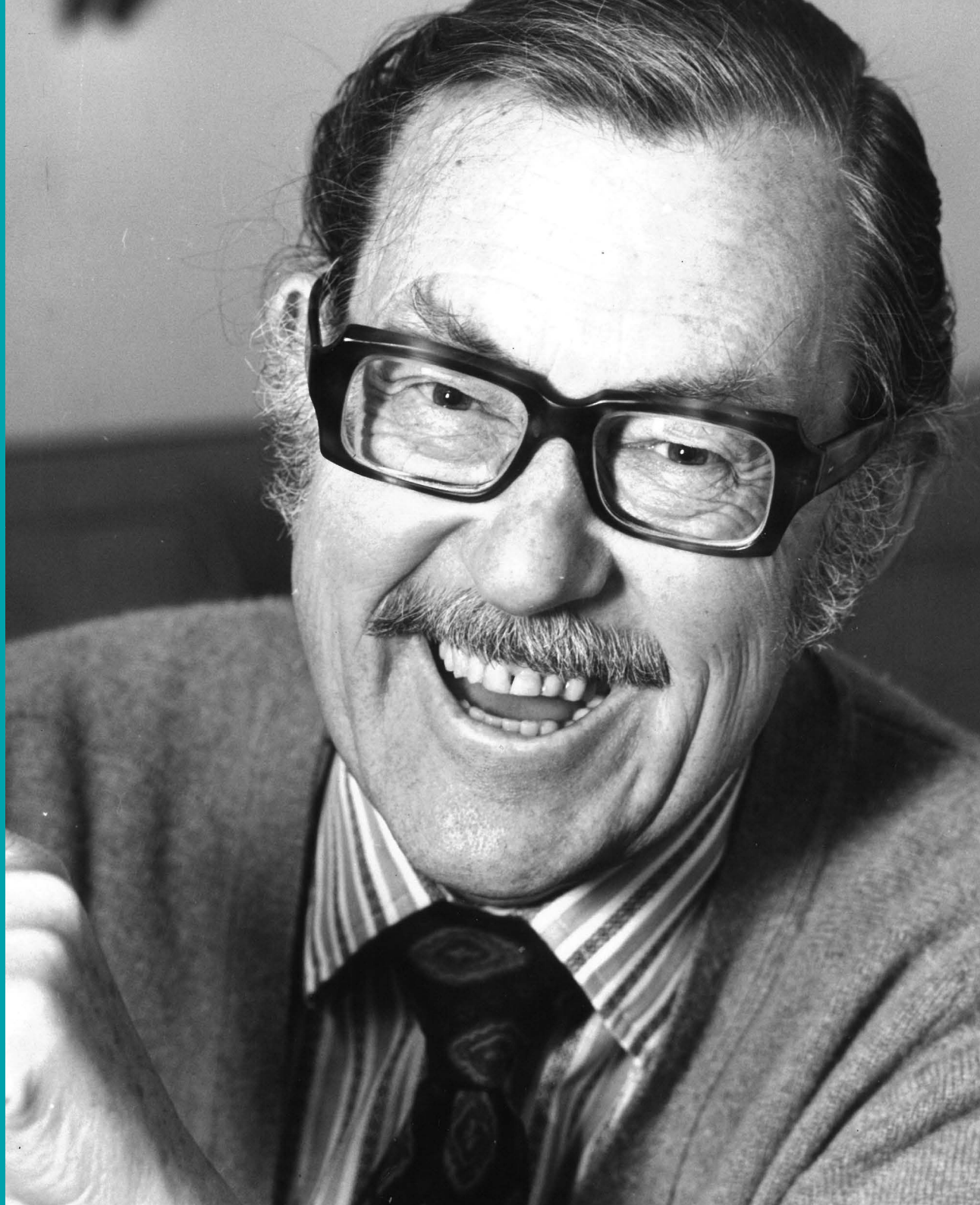
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ABOUT THE WHICKERS

The Whickers were established in 2015 to fund and recognise original and innovative documentary. We seek to use the generous legacy of our namesake, pioneering broadcaster Alan Whicker, to support emerging film and audio documentary-makers in the funding and production of director led programmes.

The Whickers are comprised of two annual awards: the Film & TV Funding Award and the Radio and Audio Funding Award (RAFA).



ABOUT THE FILM & TV FUNDING AWARD

The Film & TV Funding Award is awarded annually to an emerging filmmaker from anywhere in the world with the most promising pitch for a director-led documentary, which fulfils our core criteria. With a main award now worth £100,000 and a runner-up contribution of £20,000, The Whickers Film & TV Funding Award is one of the most significant documentary awards in the world.

The Whickers Pitch will be held in person at Sheffield Doc/Fest on Sunday 26th June at 3:15pm and the winner will be announced at the Doc/Fest Awards Ceremony on Thursday 28th June from 6:30pm.

OUR JUDGING CRITERIA

DIRECTOR-LED STORY

- » Storyteller with demonstrably strong interviewing skills
- » Demonstrates passion for the subject whilst retaining fair-mindedness
- » Demonstrates a real sense of independence
- » Personal but not partisan
- » Wry humour welcome
- » Strictly no 'Whicker impersonations'

ENGAGEMENT

- » Unique access to engaging characters in unusual or inaccessible locations
- » Allows contributor's story to emerge in their own words
- » Demonstrates a flair for coaxing the human spirit into revealing itself
- » The author demonstrates intimacy with but does not overshadow the subject

CURIOSITY

- » Spirit of inquisitiveness that leaves viewers wanting more
- » Tells us about something new and unexpected about the world
- » Excites wonder
- » Understands how wit can illuminate the toughest or most nuanced real life drama

ORIGINAL USE OF TECHNOLOGY

- » Breaking new ground or using existing means of production in a refreshing new way

NOT PARTISAN

- » No campaigning, pre-set agendas or political theories.

OUR JUDGES

Who will be awarded the coveted £100,000 Film & TV Funding Award to make their first feature-length documentary? Meet the stellar line-up of judges who will decide.

From broadcast to online streaming platforms, distribution to festivals and multi-award winners, our judges cover all corners of the industry, and bring a wealth of expertise to the table. They are on the look-out for the next best international, emerging talent.



OLI HARBOTTLE

Oli has been at Dogwoof since 2006, and was part of the original team who made the decision to specialise in documentaries the following year. As Head of Distribution and Acquisitions, he is responsible for acquisitions and overseeing all film releases.



KATE TOWNSEND

Kate is a prolific director and producer who joined Netflix in 2017 after creating a vibrant palette of work during her time at the BBC. Kate has worked on many successful Netflix projects such as *Fyre*, *The Devil Next Door*, *Tell Me Who I Am*, *Don't F**k With Cats* and *Tiger King*.



JO LAPPING

Jo is Head of Factual Acquisitions at the BBC. She has worked with Storyville, the BBC's international documentary strand, developing, commissioning and producing documentary films since its launch in 1997.



MAK CK

Mak has filmed in 30 countries across 5 continents, directing documentaries for international broadcasters including Nat Geo, Discovery and Channel News Asia. He has directed and produced 3 award-winning feature length documentaries.



JANE MOTE

Jane is a journalist, storyteller, TV executive, and a champion for the power and accessibility of documentary. As Consultant Editor at The Whickers, she nurtures and supports new audio and film documentary-makers who share a curiosity for the world.



NICE LADIES

Presented by: Mariia Ponomarova, Director

Country: Ukraine / Netherlands

Language: Ukrainian, Russian, English, Dutch

Stage: Early Production

Runtime: 80 min / 52 min

Total Budget: £320,000

Secured Budget: £65,000

Looking for: Funders, Broadcasters,
Distributors.



MARIIA PONOMAROVA

DIRECTOR

Production Company:
Dutch Mountain Film

Contact:
mariia@ponomarova.com

DIRECTOR BIO

Mariia Ponomarova, born in Kyiv in 1991, is a Ukrainian film director, screenwriter and artistic researcher living and working in Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

SYNOPSIS

A rare and remarkable team of cheerleaders called 'Nice Ladies' from Kharkiv, Eastern Ukraine are preparing to compete in the European championship. Combatting social stigma and self-doubt, they are getting ready to fight it out against much younger competitors in the only category available to them, '25+' (their average age is 65). Then the Russian invasion of Ukraine throws any plans they have made into chaos. Although their city is flattened, their spirit is not. Will cheerleading help them to power through these times of trauma and separation?

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

When I started this project, I wanted to make a film that highlights the ambitious Ukrainian collective that inspires me as a woman and as a filmmaker. And now, in times of war, I believe that women-led stories of resilience are needed even more than ever.

The path of Sveta, who got separated from her city, her team, and her self-realisation is empowering. It provides a perspective that audiences around the globe need: an empathetic look at the woman who is not taking arms. A woman who saves her grandchild and guards what is dear to her - her own passion, her own dignity, her meaningful connections, and her own strength. With or without war, every day for the Nice Ladies is a fight. They fight external expectations, self doubt and the image of being just another 'passive grandma'. If Sveta and her team members can 'fight back', so can I and a generation of women my age.

On a personal level, I would like to tell the story of the Nice Ladies to look at my own fears. I would like to deconstruct them through a cinematic journey full of sisterhood, in which we strive to live and stay valid no matter how old we are, despite horrific events of war and displacement. By doing this myself, I hope to confront my fear of one day becoming just another lonely, forgotten and misrepresented ageing woman.



RE-EVALUATION

Presented by: Toby Bull, Director

Country: UK

Language: English

Stage: Late Development

Runtime: 90 mins

Total Budget: £400,000

Secured Budget: £100,000

Looking for: Development and Production
Funding, Sales Agents and Distributors



TOBY BULL DIRECTOR

Production Company:
Snowstorm Productions

Contact:
hello@bulltobybull.com

DIRECTOR BIO

Toby Bull is an award-winning English filmmaker whose short films have screened internationally at festivals like Visions du Réel, Viennale, MoMI First Look, and Hamptons IFF, and who is currently making work about his parents' untimely deaths and their participation in a secretive psychotherapy movement.

SYNOPSIS

Grieving his parents' untimely deaths, filmmaker Toby Bull seeks solace from their diaries and home videos. Instead, he uncovers a horror story. Their archive seems to reveal the ongoing trauma of childhood abuse – and their hope of healing through a secretive psychotherapy movement called Re-Evaluation Counselling. Interviewing his parents' surviving friends and undergoing RC therapy himself, Toby grapples with this controversial organisation, in the hope that it will help him to re-evaluate the past he thought he knew.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Be it wolves on cave walls or skeletons in the closet, humans have always made images of our deepest fears in the hope of overcoming them.

When I was five, I'd watch TV and see my reflection in the glass. I'd turn off the set and stand still, but my reflection would move without me. I'd smash the TV but it would repair itself, my reflection smiling back malevolently. Night after night, I'd wake up screaming in bed. One morning, Mum suggested I draw my nightmare. We made piles of pictures and she papered my bedroom walls with them. I slept soundly again.

I returned to this memory aged 27, exploring my parents' diaries. They'd died from cancer fifteen years earlier but meticulously documented their lives via writing, photos, and video. Mum's journals detail the violence and emotional abuse they both faced as kids. Dad's photos show him meeting Mum and falling in love. And their home videos show their journey through "Re-Evaluation Counselling," a controversial therapeutic method where they recovered traumatic childhood memories and re-enacted them, hoping to loosen their grip on the present.

I first picked up a camera around the time I discovered my parents' archive. Learning about who they were, I suddenly felt anger over them abandoning me. I felt sadness and missed them, too. I hadn't articulated these feelings since becoming an orphan at 12. Editing what they recorded, using RC's methods, and reconnecting with my parents' friends today, I'm finally finding images for these emotions.

A woman wearing a bright yellow headscarf and a patterned garment is shown in profile, looking towards the right. She is standing in a rural, dusty environment with a corrugated metal structure and a bicycle in the background. The sky is overcast.

LE SPECTRE DE BOKO HARAM

Presented by: Cyrielle Raingou, Director

Country: Cameroon / France

Language: Haoussa / French / Mandara
/ Kanuri

Stage: Early Production

Runtime: 75 mins

Total Budget: £247,800

Secured Budget: £128,697

Looking for: Funds, Broadcasters, Sales
Agents, Distributors, Festival Strategies.



CYRIELLE RAINGOU

DIRECTOR

Production Company:
Label Vidéo

Contact:
dcyrielle2@gmail.com

DIRECTOR BIO

Cyrielle Raingou is a Cameroonian filmmaker who grew up in a small; village on the Nigerian /Cameroon border. She holds Masters degree in Law and in Documentary Film Directing.

SYNOPSIS

A group of six children attend school in the small village of Kolofata, in the far North of Cameroon. They were victims of the Boko Haram terrorist group before being rescued by Mr Lamine, a teacher who is now trying to fast track their education so they can pick up on the life they've lost. The kids muck about, race donkeys, mould model tanks out of plasticine and talk amongst themselves about the horrors they have seen, with a chilling clear-sightedness. Meanwhile, armed militia continue to circle their village, ready to defend it from the next attack.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

To talk about the importance of education, I couldn't find better characters than Mohamed, Ibrahim and Falta. I focus on the daily life of these children, who are still keeping this innocence, this carefree attitude and this unshakeable joie de vivre which contrasts strangely with

the traumatic atmosphere of that space. Their positive energy, their desire to succeed with their study is inspiring. It is very fascinating for me to capture the vision of a world through children's gaze. Their way of representing their environment is largely influenced by their imagination, which is akin to surrealism and magical realism.

Visually, *Le Spectre de Boko Haram* navigates between the busy daily life of Mohamed, Ibrahim and Falta; and some mystical and surrealistic scenes, punctuated by their appalling horror tales. We plan to explore magical realism by playing with the elements to enhance our artistic creation.

In the same way, we intend to capture the very essence of Kolofata's soundscape. Landscape populated with the sound of domestic and wild animals, a wind that blows with the seasons, an imam that calls to prayer, the soft and dry sound of a dead leaf when it is walked on; gun fires...

Today I am convinced that diving into the world of these children would be embellished with beautiful encounters, dotted with games, dreams and learning. At the same time, it makes me delve into my childhood memories back to Cameroon, my carelessness, having myself grown up in the same rural area thirty years earlier.



TWO MOUNTAINS WEIGHING DOWN MY CHEST

Presented by: Viv Li, Director

Country: China / Germany

Language: English / Chinese / German

Stage: Late Development

Runtime: 90 mins

Total Budget: £397,951

Secured Budget: £39,741

Looking for: Funders, Broadcasters,
Distributors, Sales Agents.



VIV LI DIRECTOR

Production Company:
Corso Film

Contact:
vivienne.lwr@gmail.com

DIRECTOR BIO

Viv Li is a Chinese filmmaker. She likes to joke, but please take her seriously.

SYNOPSIS

Raised as a tomboy during the conservative 1990s in China, Viv Li now lives in the progressive city of Berlin. Following her encounters and journey back to Beijing, the film takes a witty yet sharp look on how two polarized cultures and political systems are affecting the way we live, while providing a humorous dialogue between the two societies, and within Viv herself.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

While I was growing up in China, there were many taboos. My curiosity and overseas experience have brought me close to many of them. In this project, I am challenging sensitive topics with myself as a character and my life as the background. I decided to be honest and merciless to myself, in order to document without the higher hand of the filmmaker, and to create an intimate experience for the audience. I have also set my mind to use humour as a subtle yet effective tool to address delicate themes, such as queer community, personal

emotions and the political landscape of China. A lighthearted personal story will transform itself into a genuine dialogue between China and the west, meanwhile reflecting on our modern society today.

As a Chinese filmmaker and comedian living in the diaspora, I always wanted to make a film about China that is relatable and refreshing. But my story represents a familiar journey to many people around the world. Globalisation makes us floating and free, but also brews an identity struggle greater than ever. Through this film, I will meditate on my own belongings, and reconnect with a place I was once so close to. In times of a global pandemic and technology mania, we are experiencing a kind of isolation that we are more helpless of. I hope that my film can create a shared experience, contributing to more communication between East and West in an engaging and thought-provoking way.



OUR HOOLOCKS

Presented by: Chinmoy Sonowal & Ragini Nath, Co-Directors

Country: India

Language: Assamese

Stage: Early Production

Runtime: 70 mins

Total Budget: £265,00

Secured Budget: £35,000

Looking for: Funds, Broadcasters,
Co-producers



CHINMOY SONOWAL & RAGINI NATH CO-DIRECTORS

Production Company:
Liminal Picture Production

Contact:
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raginee.nath@gmail.com

DIRECTOR BIOS

Ragini Nath is a documentary filmmaker from Northeast India whose work is a medley of visual imagery and reflective storytelling on resource politics and climate justice.

Chinmoy Sonowal is a filmmaker exploring visual storytelling through creative documentaries, with a keen interest in the environment and wildlife.

SYNOPSIS

Sidhanta, a fisherman in Assam, has been fighting to protect the Hoolock Gibbons, India's fast-vanishing ape species, in his village. However, this endearing tale of human-animal coexistence is threatened when a nearby oilfield disrupts the delicate ecosystem and his relationship with the Hoolocks, who are dying at an alarming rate.

DIRECTORS' STATEMENT

Growing up in the Northeast Indian state of Assam, we often sang rhymes which valorized the man-animal relationship. In the Anthropocene era, how an endangered species of apes shares a thriving relationship with the local villagers despite ecological challenges, captivated our interest

to explore the story. However, we have come to understand that 'simple' narratives surrounding environmental issues in rural areas aren't so sharply delineated. Our story revolves around the circumstances locals are faced with in the wake of resource development and how their survival meshes with another species that can't negotiate for themselves. We stand witness to a quickly devolving situation that continues to change. This project has been a means for us to connect back with our roots and go beyond its facts to be more experiential in its tonal and structural elements.

Our Hoolocks is a story that plays among many interrelated themes. It raises many crucial questions pertaining but not limited to human-animal coexistence, climate change, destruction of biodiversity, expansion of oil fields and the ensuing corruption in the region and most importantly - the dwindling population of an endangered species. *Our Hoolocks* is not a film on the victims of the climate crisis and destructive industrial development. It is rather a portrait to understand our critical connection to the environment more profoundly and empathize with the need for change.

EXTENDING OUR BURSARIES

So far, 2022 has seen us extend our highly successful bursary scheme to two more areas of the world where development funding for independent filmmakers is very limited for cultural or economic reasons. We are pleased to announce our partnerships with Durban FilmMart Institute in South Africa and Close Up Initiative, which supports filmmakers from South West Asia and Arab North Africa.

The first scheme, which has been running at DocEdge Kolkata in India for three years, has led to award winning films such as *Children of The Mist* (right), which has won several awards after premiering at IDFA in 2021. You can find out more by visiting our website at whickerawards.com.



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Sheffield
2022 DocFest
June 23-28