

A man stands on a street corner, leaning against a wall. He is shirtless, wearing patterned shorts and a red shirt draped over his shoulder. A black suitcase sits on the ground next to him. The background shows a building with a balcony and a street sign that reads "Via Mazzini".

should I stay *or* should I go

a film by *and*
nils clauss thomas horat

DEAR READER,

the film SHOULD I STAY OR SHOULD I GO is a short documentary, which has been shot in and around Amantea, Calabria, Italy. The film has been commissioned by Giulio Vita and Sara Fratini, who are the founders and directors of the La Guarimba International Short Film Festival in Amantea. Since the festival is driven by the mission statement of bringing "cinema back to the people and the people back to the cinema," it was our intention from the start to build our film in and around the community of Amantea and Calabria as a region itself.

A very thorough interview below dives into some of the ideas behind and the making of this film. Please enjoy MYTHENFILM & CONTENTED's most recent film.



PLEASE CLICK TO VIEW FILM
ENTER PASSWORD: 20190613_should

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LOGLINE

An 86-year-old local woman, a moody teenager and a Nigerian refugee share their hopes and dreams about where life's journey might take them.

SHORT SYNOPSIS

Apart from calling a small Italian coastal town home, an 86-year-old local woman, a moody teenager and a Nigerian refugee would not seem to have much in common. But once they begin to share their hopes and dreams about where life's journey might take them, their stories surprisingly overlap.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

SHOULD I STAY OR SHOULD I GO is the first collaboration by Korean based German filmmaker Nils Clauss and Swiss filmmaker Thomas Horat. Nils and Thomas met when they participated in the La Guarimba International Short Film Festival in Italy in 2017. After the festival, they were invited by Giulio Vita, the director of the festival, to return in 2018 to create a film in and around Amantea in Calabria, Italy. This is what originated this film.

Migration has been part of everyday life for the poor in Calabria and the Italian South since the 19th century. Unlike in the pre-war periods, the bulk of migration from the second half of the 20th century was mainly from small

towns and villages in rural areas of southern Italian regions including Sicily, Calabria, Abruzzo and Campania. People from those areas migrated primarily in search of a better living conditions and a higher income.

SHOULD I STAY OR SHOULD I GO started as a project meant to look at the phenomenon of Italian migration with a specific focus on the element of return. By focusing on a range of individuals around the city of Amantea, we wanted to see what kind of impact migration had on the region and which conflicts arose upon the migrants temporary or permanent return.

Nevertheless, this turned out to be only one part of the story of the final film. When we met Stanley Eboigbe from Nigeria during the casting process, we were inspired to follow up on the story of Italian migration. We wanted to see why that own experience of so many Italians, has not been helpful to make things easier for recent refugees who come and try to make a living in Italy. Daniele Chiodo, one of the three main characters, says in the film: "We were migrants too. We were possibly worse than them. We have to earn millions just to be happy. It's like a circle. They come here, and we go away. And then we can't find a job here. It's a huge mess. Come on, what does it mean that now we don't want to host them?"

At first sight Daniele, Saveria and Stanley have nothing in common due to their different backgrounds, but by sharing their hopes and dreams about leaving or staying in Italy, their stories surprisingly overlap. For example Saveria, who has lived as an emigrant in Venezuela for a big portion of her life, in a way shares the same feelings as Stanley about living in Italy after her return. For her like Stanley it is difficult to relate to the local people who have never left Italy, or even the region of Calabria. This kind of feeling of

alienation or clash of two different value systems is what this film focuses on. By showing the gap between the life experiences between the "here" (in Italy) and "there" (outside of Italy) and the distinction often made between "us" and "them", the film intends to show how emigrants, immigrants and migrants share a lot of the same issue. Although what creates the difference is the social, economical and political perception within each individuals surrounding habitat.

In contrast to those three different stories being told other Italian emigrants and African refugees also have a presence in the film. Based on a more photographic portrait style approach, which pays tribute to the work of contemporary photographers Jeff Wall and Stephen Waddell, we stage a range of scenarios within the film, where people hide their identities by either facing away from camera or by covering their faces. An Italian news reel at the beginning of the film explains how Italian emigrants were not welcome to Switzerland when the country closed its borders to Italy in 1965. While we hear very hostile comments by some Swiss people being interviewed on the street, the news footage overlaps with those identity hidden portrait shots, which create a feeling of shame. Then those Italians, who have been ashamed living as emigrants overseas obviously build an arch to the refugees, who currently seek asylum in Europe and have to face a lot of xenophobia. This is why in shame they turn away from the camera lens in those stylized portrait shots. Aesthetically, this approach also allows us to break with more traditional concepts of documentary based storytelling and hopefully contributed to shape a less linear film.

Thank you very much,
Nils & Thomas

CREDITS

Documentary | Color | 1.78 (16 x 9 VIDEO) | 19' 08" |
Italy, Switzerland, S. Korea | in Italian and English with
English subtitles | 2019

a MYTHENFILM production
in association with CONTENTED

main cast
SAVERIA BRUNO, DANIELE CHIODO, STANLEY EBOIGBE

produced By: **THOMAS HORAT**

co-produced by
NILS CLAUSS

executive producer
GIULIO VITA, SARA FRATINI
(La Guarimba International Film Festival)

writer **NILS CLAUSS & THOMAS HORAT**
director, cinematographer, editor, colorist **NILS CLAUSS**
co-director, sound recordist, co-editor **THOMAS HORAT**
sound assistant **SÀNDOR FEGYVERNEKY JR.**
production coordinator **DIANA SCALFATI**
production assistants **CATERINA BONORA, PAULA
GRIGORE, ALEX SPAGNOLO**
sound designer **DOMINIK DI ROSA**
re-recording mixer **OSWALD SCHWANDER**
graphic designer **ADRIAN ELSENER**
translators **LUIGI AGAZIO, ALESSANDRA ALTOMARE,
SIMONE COLISTRA, ANNAMARIA CRAPAROTTA,
CAMILLO FRANCESCO PASTURA, ELEONORA PETRULLI,
SERENA VILLELLA**
subtitler **MARTA MIQUEL IRIARTE**

with the music
GIOVANE FUORICLASSE by **CAPO PLAZA**
SAD! by **XXXTENTACION**
KALASH by **MWAKA MOON FT. DAMSO**
ISSA GOAL by **NAIRA MARLEY x OLAMIDE x LIL KESH**
live performance by **PINO SANTORO**

with special thanks to:
**NEIL ARDIFF, CEDRIC ARNOLD, NEIL DOWLING,
PAOLA FORNARA, NAYRA SANZ FUENTES, JAY HUBERT,
BAYA KHODJA, UDO LEE, ABRAHAM LIM, SALOME
PITSCHEN, CORINA SCHWINGRUBER ILI, FREDERIK
SØLBERG, WOLFGANG WIEDERHOFER.**

**DIEGO ALBERTANI, PIERPAOLO ANDREANI, DEREK
BECK, TERESA BRUNO, DANIELA BUGLIONE,
CAMILLE CARMONA, THE CLASH, PABLO CRISTÓBAL,
CATIANA DATTOMA, JUDE DRY, GIDIO FIORE, MARIA
DEGTIARENKO, SERGIO GABRIEL DURRÉ IRIZAR,
YOUNGSOOK KIM, KYA LOUM, RONNY RUIZ MATEO,
MARTA MIQUEL IRIARTE, SAM MORRILL, MIKEL
MURILLO, IBRA NDIAYE, ALICIA VICTORIA PALACIOS
THOMAS, GIUSY PERNA, FRANCESCA PIAZZA, FRANZ
XAVER RISI, MARTINA AND SABRINA ROCCHETTA,
ALEJANDRO RONDA, EMANUELE ROSSO, NOÉMIE
ROUSSELIÈRE, SARA SCHÄR, SIGNORE SCONZA, ELISA
TALENTINO, YURI VALERI, FILIPPO VITA.**

with sincere thanks to:
**THE PEOPLE AND REFUGEES FROM AMANTEA AND
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ELSENER.**



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"Add brief testimonial on the film by an influential person"



NAME

position



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INTERVIEW

HOW DID THIS FILM COME ABOUT?

► 7 The origin of this film was the 2017 edition of the La Guarimba International Film Festival in Amantea, Italy. Both Thomas and I, had screened one of our short films in the documentary competition. The week in Amantea was a unique experience for both of us. La Guarimba cannot only take pride in being a great film festival, but also a community of many exceptional people, who are interesting and pleasant to meet. After the event, I thought that the positivity we experienced during the festival, was a great foundation for getting anyone interested involved in collaborating together on a film. I sent out an email to everybody who I had met in Amantea anticipating a huge response. Unfortunately, what I was hoping for did not match with reality - hardly anybody replied to my emails. Thomas however, sent an immediate and very positive response. So, both of us and later on some other people discussed the idea of making a film together. It was initially not clear if it would be made in Europe, Italy, Asia or anywhere else.

A couple of months passed when Giulio Vita, the festival director of La Guarimba, approached me asking whether I would be interested in making a film in Amantea in 2018 in which the La Guarimba would take the role as an executive producer. Since I was given 100% creative freedom, I happily agreed to his plan. Then I got back to Thomas to see whether he still was interested to be involved in the film project. This is how it all started and how SHOULD

I STAY OR SHOULD I GO became our first collaborative work. End of July 2018 both of us returned to Amantea and shot the film.

WHAT WAS THE REASON FOR MAKING THIS FILM? WHAT DID YOU WANT TO ACHIEVE WITH THIS PROJECT?

By making a film in Italy, we really wanted to address a topic, which adds value to a current social or political debate in Italy. La Guarimba itself has a strong political approach. The festival does not shy away from confronting ultra-conservative and right-wing establishments within the country. Giulio Vita makes this clear during his festival opening speech each year. Other than that, we also felt the importance to take a close look at the community in Amantea. Therefore, we asked ourselves what everyday people who live in Italy have on their minds. What do they care about? What drives them? Obviously, the refugee crisis has brought a lot of change to Italian communities. Since the boats started to arrive from Africa, the long established Italian community in Amantea has been living side by side with a whole other community of African refugees. Therefore, we were curious to see how this change affects the daily life in this small coastal town.

It was never our initial intention to make a film related to the refugee situation. In the past years refugee experiences and the challenges coming from their relocations, which have such a strong global impact, have been covered by many different media outlets. The situation has been especially well represented in documentary film. If you take a film like FUOCOAMMARE by Gianfranco Rosi for example, I feel that this topic has been communicated in the best possible manner. The film really pays justice to

illustrating the tragedies which recur on the open sea, but also succeeds to embed these cruel personal fates into a border Italian context. As a big fan of this film, I always felt that this story has been told so well and that there would not be much to add.

But what we felt has not really been covered so well within this broader context, is the fact that many Italians have a migration background as well. Therefore, one could assume, Italians can relate to the circumstances of refugees, who now enter the country. We started the film based on this idea. We were especially interested in Italians, who return to Italy after they had migrated somewhere else. Saveria Bruno, the 86-year-old lady that is one of the three main characters in our film, is the example character for that type of migration movement. What defines the fate of those Italian emigrants, who once left since they could not find any work in the Italian South, is summarized by young Daniele Chiodo, who is one of the other main characters in our film: "A lot of them come back, because in the end you miss your home country. There is always the desire to come back." And Saveria follows up on that by saying: "We've always been Italian. We never thought about giving up our citizenship. Our constant thought was to return to Italy, we didn't want to die over there. To us Italy was something we had in our blood. I never betrayed Italy." So many Italians have emigrated across the world, but what has been always important to them was the return after their departure. Emigrating to them was just a temporary thing. Based on this our initiative concept was primarily focused on the element of return and which affect that would have on the returnees and the communities around them.

But when we met Stanley Eboigbe from Nigeria during our casting process, we felt that we could really counter that

position effectively within the scope of the current refugee crisis. By juxtaposing the current wave of immigration into Italy with the waves of Italian emigration in the past, we saw a lot of potential to take this film into a different direction and tell a story, which we believe has not been covered yet. Daniele Chiodo sums up really nicely in the film what after all turned out to be the core idea of our film: "We were migrants too. We were possibly worse than them. We have to earn millions just to be happy. It's like a circle. They come here, and we go away. And then we can't find a job here. It's a huge mess. Come on, what does it mean that now we don't want to host them?"

Further, to clarify the main positions based on our three main characters in the film, it is helpful to take a look at the meaning of the words "immigrant", "emigrant" and "migrant". Whereas an "immigrant" would be a person, who moves to another country, and "emigrant" would be someone who leaves a country. Different to that the word "migrant" refers to people, who settle in a new place, but don't want to call attention to where they came from or where they are going. So, whether we see someone as an immigrant, emigrant or migrant really depends on the point of view, the point of departure or the actual process. Based on this and the fact that our film is shot in Italy, the above linguistic definition identifies Stanley as an immigrant, Saveria as an emigrant and Daniele as a migrant. This explains our choice of characters. Depending on one's point of view these three words can be used interchangeably. This is why the stories our three characters tell, overlap based on the content, but also stylistically since in parts we deliberately juxtaposed one of the three person's interview soundbites with supplemental footage of one of the two others.

IT IS PROBABLY THE EASIEST TO MAKE A FILM WITHIN YOUR OWN PERIPHERY. HOW WAS IT TO WORK IN A DIFFERENT CULTURE AND LANGUAGE SYSTEM?

For Thomas, this was a little bit of a different story. Thomas has been born in the German part of Switzerland and merely works as a filmmaker in Switzerland. He speaks Italian to some extent, which was a good foundation for us to make this film. I have lived in Korea for the past 14 years and made most of my films in Korea and other parts of Asia. I speak Korean, English and German, but no Italian, which is probably not the best precondition for making a film in Italy. Therefore, language was obviously a challenge and each step of production needed additional help in terms of translation. Especially for interviews, I find it crucial to interact sufficiently with your interviewees. But if you can't communicate in the same language, the interview questions need to be pre-written for someone with the language capabilities to conduct an interview. In those instances, I found it generally wise to select very social people to conduct those interviews. We were really lucky for Giulio, Diana and Paula to help us out with the Italian interviews. All of them really have those special personal skills to pull-off a good conversation with anybody. So, our interviewees and interviewers really connected so well. Despite being filmmakers our interviewers were engaging with him our interviewees like they had known each other for long. We were really happy with those results.

For all the additional footage - besides the interviews - it can be tricky if you shoot something, but don't really understand what is going on because of not understanding the language. For example, when Stanley and an Italian man were suddenly discussing very loudly on the street, I had no idea what had happened and why they had such

a huge argument. I only felt the importance and while I was filming I had to follow the mood mainly through their gestures and temper. The process of handling a camera in this kind of moment is suddenly more passive and observational, but what I like is how you are also guided by your senses.

What stood out the most was how much operating film sets in different countries is connected to and influenced by the local culture. Throughout the past 14 years I have spent in South Korea, I have very much adapted to a Korean working style, which is fast, precise and based on long operating hours. I clearly see the negative side effects in Korea, where people are expected to work a lot of overtime. It was then alienating to me during the shoot in Italy to have to call it a day when I actually wanted to keep going as I felt there is still time that could be put to good use. For this particular film while planning, I anticipated that it would take 4 or 5 days maximum in total. The slow progress was quite frustrating to me during the shoot and in my resentment I felt that the Calabrian life-style did not allow us to get things done sufficiently fast. For long stretches things didn't seem to keep moving and I was not pleased being told so many times to come back later. Nothing seemed really fixed or actually agreed upon, so that we could rely on it. Within these circumstances, I found it really hard to get my head around and have enough faith that we will finish our film on time. The original intention was to wrap up the shoot before the start of the festival, enjoy the festival and then head home. Also, my family from Korea came to join me during the festival and I really was not prepared to work during that time as I had to take care of my kids and we had other plans. Thomas was part of the jury during the festival and also had other engagements. After all we spent 11 shooting days to make this film and we finished on the very last day of the

festival. But we made it and this is all that matters after all.

TELL US ABOUT YOUR APPROACH TO FILMMAKING AND HOW THAT WORKED OUT FOR THIS SHOOT.

In our films both Thomas and I put people at the heart of storytelling. And we identify with the underdog rather than the person who is always in the spotlight. This is a theme that has recurred in most of our previous work. *SHOULD I STAY OR SHOULD I GO* also follows this general concept. All of the three main characters in our film are very genuine and down to earth people. They all seem to look at work as the foundation to live a successful life and the core backbone for their own and their families happiness. This is probably why Saveria and her husband left Italy, this is why Stanley left Nigeria and this is why Daniele has plans to leave Italy as well.

But it is not only their life and their stories, who we personally identified with. It is also the region of Calabria in the South of Italy, who we connected with in terms of our filmic approach. Next to Sicily, Abruzzo and Campania, Calabria is one of the poorest regions in Italy and due to that poverty, the bulk of migration from the second half of the 20th century was mainly from those areas. People here really had no work and since then have always been in search of better living conditions and a higher income. Because of that struggle it is sort of ironic that most of the refugees end up in those areas where work is much more scarce than in the much more prosperous northern regions of Italy. At some point Daniele summarizes this kind of depressing situation, which people have to face in the South of Italy: “Because if you stay here, you will never live your life to the fullest. It’s a little odd. This means that something doesn’t work in the South, that down

here we are a little forgotten.”

The fact that they are “a little forgotten” gives us as filmmakers a reason to put them on the agenda and use the film as an opportunity to make their voice heard and address their challenges. This is what Thomas and I connect with as filmmakers, who mainly work in the field of documentary film. Whether it is in Italy, Switzerland or Korea, these are the stories we are interested in telling. In a way, this is also what put La Guarimba International Film Festival on a map. It was a brave move by Giulio Vita to start a film festival in a small provincial town like Amantea, a place where hardly anyone is interested in cinema. But together with Sara Fratini he founded the festival based on a dream to bring cinema back to the people and regular people back to cinema. I see Vita in a way like a guerrilla when it comes to festival organizing and Giulio’s political idealism is what keeps La Guarimba strong. As filmmakers, we connected with Giulio’s approach right away when we visited La Guarimba for the first time in 2017. This is also why we have been honored to shoot the opening film for the 2019 edition and from the beginning felt at home creating a film, that speaks to us, but also connects with the idealism of the festival itself.

Giulio who was born in Italy, but emigrated to Venezuela, in many ways also shares the stories we tell in the film. Personally, this also ties indirectly into my story of emigration since I left Germany in 2005 and started a new chapter in my life living in Seoul, South Korea. Although, I am well aware that I emigrated from an economical very stable country in Europe to a very economical stable country in Asia. Therefore, the question of “Should I stay or should I go” despite being very universal, highly differs from person to person and in particular based on the circumstance of the country one decides to leave and the country one eventually enters. But when we tie it to the topic of migration in a broader sense,

personally it is something I could really relate to and which helped me to follow my general approach to filmmaking also with this film.

THE FILM PLACES THE CURRENT REFUGEE CRISIS WITHIN A HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF ITALIAN EMIGRATION. HOW DOES THIS HELP US TO UNDERSTAND THE PRESENT BETTER?

Italy has a long history of emigration. Migration has been part of everyday life for the poor in Italy since the 19th century. To bring this into context the film starts with a news reel, which talks about the struggle of Italian migrants trying to make a living in Switzerland in the 1960s. The film opens with the following lines: “To recall the past and understand the present. Let’s go to Switzerland, 1965, Chiasso, next to the Italian border, and see what happened to Italians who were there.”

We all know that migrational movements have not started with the current refugee crisis. Mankind has always been on the move. Migrational movement has mostly been driven by economical and environmental circumstances or warlike events. During these kind of incidents national borders loose their legitimation for those who are in need and at the same time are enforced by those, who don’t want to or can’t deal with sudden migrational shifts. To value migrational movements, it is important to understand that there are always different points of views when it comes to the distribution of resources and that usually only few feel that they are in a position to share if they don’t have to.

Therefore, the biggest challenge is to try to look at it from a from a more neutral stance and try to understand for example the immigrant from Nigeria as much as the fishermen on Lampedusa, who might fear to loose parts

of his pension, if his country is not able to financially deal with the current wave of immigrants. Based on this wide spectrum of personal needs, which are only indirectly triggered by waves of cross-border migration as the actors that create the conditions making migration necessary are actually to blame – the problem can't be solved by the negation of borders and governmental institutions. Although if we follow the heated discussions between the left and the right, often this is the foundation on what some of their arguments are based on. Needless to say, I don't support the racist and polemic argumentations of the conservative right-wing coalition with Matteo Salvini as the Minister of Interior. But in general, I think, it is fair enough to say that almost every country is trying to block migrants from entering their country. One has to say though, as Stanley also points out in the film, that there is a certain injustice in the distribution of the refugees among all the countries in the EU and that Italy similar to Greece as a country in more closer reach to where most of the refugees in Italy come from, is too much left alone with the problem within the EU. But if we take that argumentative route and make that comparison, we would also really need to understand the situation of each EU country and its own history and actually available resources. Alone if one takes a look at the economical situation in Europe for example, some countries like the North-Western region of Europe have the resources to manage the migrational waves far better than other countries like in the South-Eastern part of the Union. I think that those countries should take more responsibilities. Certainly, the complexity of the challenge is not appreciated with simple solutions such as totally closing or opening borders. What could not be more clear though is that having hundreds of people drown each day in the ocean on their way to Europe – and those trying to help threatened with 10 years of imprisonment as in the case of Captain Rakete – is utterly inhumane

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and unfortunately shows the true European values as they appear to be today.

Therefore, in the film we did not really intend to point our finger at Italy and argue that Italians through their own history of emigration should have more empathy to cope better with the current wave of immigrants entering their country. Instead, I see this as a problem that addresses all countries in the EU and even all nations worldwide, but really depending on each countries situation and their resources in order to help and solve this crisis.

THE FILM BREAKS WITH A LINEAR DOCUMENTARY APPROACH THROUGH THE USE OF STYLIZED PORTRAIT IMAGES. CAN YOU TELL A LITTLE MORE ABOUT THIS?

Aesthetically speaking, since the making of my trilogy including BIKINI WORDS, LAST LETTERS and PLASTIC GIRLS, I tried to break with a more standardized form of documentary filmmaking. I have been trying to explore what sometimes is categorized as being a hybrid film. A format that generally combines documentary with more narrative film elements. In contrast to those three different stories being told, we made use of more stylized fictional portrait shots within the film. Based on my own background in photography, I wanted to pay tribute to the work of contemporary photographers Jeff Wall and Stephen Waddell. Like in some of their work, we staged a range of scenarios within the film, where people hide their identities by either facing away from the camera or covering their faces. An Italian news reel at the start of the film explains how Italian emigrants have not been welcome to Switzerland when the country closed its borders to Italy in 1965. While we hear very hostile comments by some

Swiss people being interviewed on the street, the news footage overlaps with those identity portrait shots, which creates a feeling of shame. Then those Italians, who have been ashamed living as emigrants overseas obviously build an arch to the refugees, who currently seek asylum in Europe and have to face a lot of xenophobia. This is why in shame they turn away from the camera lens in those stylized portrait shots. Hopefully this message is clear and also helps, like in my previous work, to shape a less linear and more interesting film.

WHAT ARE YOU WORKING ON NOW AND PLAN TO DO NEXT?

Together with Neil, who is my business partner at CONTENTED, we are currently working on a campaign in India for the hotel chain Hilton. In terms of non-commercial work, we started the ball rolling on a new feature film project with the working title MATRYOSHKA. Currently we are still re-drafting the script.

Thomas has just finished another feature documentary, which is called THE RETURN OF WOLVES. The film will be in the cinemas in November and hopefully will receive some spotlight at the festivals this and the upcoming year.



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THANK YOU

We are looking forward to hearing your thoughts and discussing any ideas on how to share the above interview. If you have any further questions, please don't hesitate to ask. Sincerely, Nils & Thomas

BIOGRAPHY

Based in Seoul, South Korea, Nils has shot, directed and edited a number of award-winning music videos, short, feature and documentary films, which have been screened at various international festivals or distributed online. He created a number of hit music videos like "Senior Living" for the Norwegian band Röyksopp which was selected for the prestigious Saatchi & Saatchi's New Directors' Showcase at Cannes and received a nomination at the UK Music Video Awards.

Thomas Horat calls himself "a self-taught filmmaker" and after a few advances in filmmaking, he started out in 2003 with his debut feature documentary "Wätterschmöcker", which has been successfully shown in cinema across Switzerland and Austria. The movie has also been presented at several festivals around the globe. His second feature film "Alpsummer" was also successfully shown in Switzerland and has won several awards in the USA. Today Thomas works as a filmmaker, who directs and records sound. But sometimes he also wears the hat of a distributor or producer in order to support short films.

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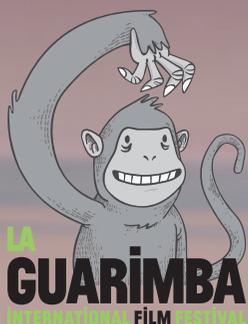
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