

THE PEARL OF AFRICA

A story of love hate and being transgender

"A Deadly Serious Tale to Tell"
BBC

"Brave and Powerful"
CNN



a film by
JONNY VON WALLSTRÖM

Sweden – 2016 – Color – Feature 90 min – 2:35:1 – English

PEARLOFAFRICA.TV

PRODUCTION

TITLE

The Pearl of Africa

FORMAT

52 & 90min (2:35:1)

LANGUAGE

English & Luganda

LOGLINE

The Pearl Of Africa captures an intimate struggle for the right to love. Following a Ugandan transgender girl, forced to leave her country, it's an emotional journey of love, hate and being transgender, in one of the worlds most transphobic places.

SYNOPSIS

The Pearl of Africa is a story about Cleopatra Kambugu, a 28 year old Ugandan transgender girl. Biologically born male, but against all odds, transitioning into the woman she knows she was born to be.

Through an intimate fight for love in Uganda, one of the worlds most transphobic places Once named The Pearl Of Africa by Winston Churchill, for it's vast diversity in gender, flora and fauna. We get an insight into what it means to love as trans.

At first Cleo and Nelson, who met 6 months before we started documenting their lives. Seem like any other couple falling in love. But Cleo is a trans activist, and Nelson is a straight guy who used to believe that trans people were abominations. Now they live a quiet life together in a suburb of Kampala.

With pressure from family and society, they struggle to show their love openly, always risking to be attacked. But because Cleo has been on hormones for some time, she's on the outside seen as any other woman. But then, as a result of a much debated "anti homosexuality-law", passed by the parliament of Uganda. Making anybody associated with LGBTI-people into criminals, threatening them with life in prison.

Everything is in one moment turned upside down. As Cleo is outed for being a "homosexual" on the front page of Uganda's biggest tabloids, Red Pepper.



This journey not only brings us closer to the characters, but it also deepens our understanding of love. As they go on this journey, they prepare for the next big obstacle in life, Cleo's sex reassignment surgery. A final piece of the puzzle needed for Cleo to feel whole, but also the first step towards getting back to Uganda.

When she's physically a woman, she is determined to change her gender documents in Uganda. Something that by many is said to be impossible. It would make her the first trans person accepted for her/his true gender identity in Uganda. But before that can happen, their love is put to the ultimate test.

After the surgery Cleo can't move or talk because of the pain. She has to fight off a painful infection that has made her over sensitive to light. Nelson stands by her side, as they live in a small recovery room in darkness for over a week. Together they have to learn how to walk again

The Pearl of Africa captures a struggle that's rarely caught on film. A first hand testament that love conquers all. A documentation of a couple going through their most difficult time. Through an intimate single character perspective and beautiful cinematic visuals, it leaves nobody untouched.

They then leave with no other option but to leave family and Uganda behind, as they go on a life changing journey, not knowing when they will come back to Uganda again.

Unlike many films that explore themes related to human rights, The Pearl of Africa focuses on telling a universal love story in an extreme circumstance. The everyday struggle of living together, falling in love and starting a family. But it does so in the absurdity of having to leave your home and where love is a matter of life and death.

A woman with long dark hair, wearing a dark patterned top, stands on a hill overlooking a city at dusk. The sky is a mix of orange and blue, and the city lights are visible in the distance.

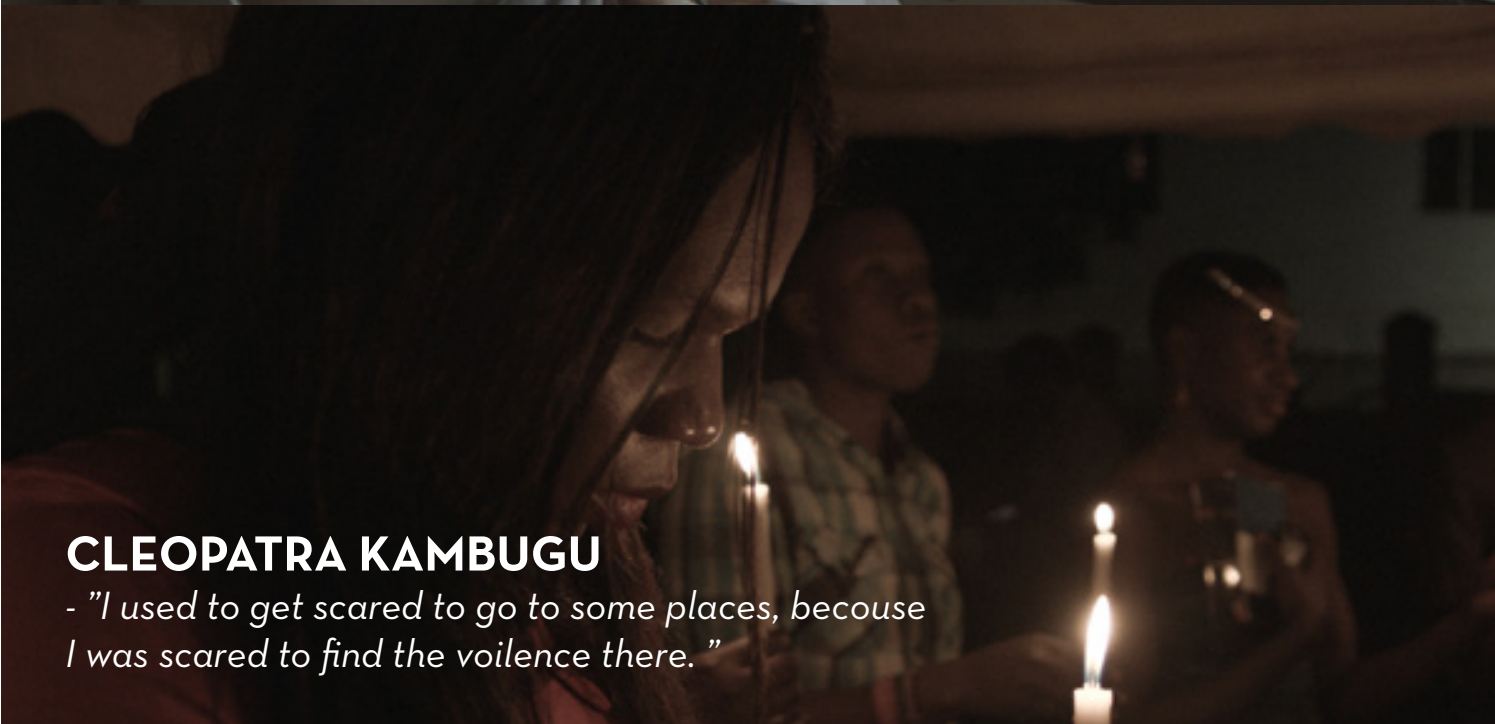
CLEOPATRA KAMBUGU

- "Gender is just another thing, I don't see the importance in it even being a label"

A close-up of a woman looking out of a window. She has a thoughtful expression. The light from the window is soft and warm.

CLEOPATRA KAMBUGU

- "I don't want to go back to what I used to be"

A woman with long dark hair is in the foreground, looking down. In the background, other people are visible in a dimly lit room with candles. The atmosphere is intimate and somber.

CLEOPATRA KAMBUGU

- "I used to get scared to go to some places, because I was scared to find the violence there."

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

The Pearl Of Africa is an intimate and authentic love story about a charismatic trans woman's struggles as a human being like everybody else. I think that many films that are related to stories about transgender people, or black people, often focus on them being different. I wanted to fill that space with a personal love story, where the human is in the centre.

We never tried to explain why Cleo is the person she is. Instead, our focus is on how it is to be her. And how similar we are to each other if we look deep beyond the surface of people.

It's all about acceptance, it's crazy that we still have such a hard time accepting differences in people. Through Cleo's story, I want to highlight both the gender and race discussion, which are important all over the world.

PRODUCER'S NOTE

The Pearl Of Africa has received a number of international attention due to its unique Web series done together with Huffington Post and Nöjesguiden. The web series became the first international recipient of the PPFA Maggie Award for Media Excellence in Global Journalism given in 2015.

Many media outlets has celebrated the project with CNN calling it the "Top African show to ditch House of Cards for". At the same time as we launched the web series, we decided to invite our audience to participate by supporting Cleo's personal fight through a crowd-funding campaign. Instead of raising money for the film, we wanted them to help us raise money for Cleo's sex reassignment surgery.

In February 2015, we successfully raised \$14,000, marking a stepping stone in film history as the first film to use crowd-funding this way. It is a project that was born on the internet and now finally the feature film is about to be released as its audience grew over a span of two years prior to its official release.

TRANSGENDER LAW CENTER

- "Cleo & Nelson's relationship shows something rarely highlighted when talking about transgender people in Uganda"

RUTGERS UNIVERSITY

- "Cleopatra's story really highlights the human dignity it takes to take a stand on a controversial issue".

MAIN CHARACTERS

Cleopatra Kambugu is a 28yrs Ugandan transgender girl, biologically born male, but against all odds transitioning into the woman she knows she was born to be.

In February 2014, Cleo and her boyfriend **Nelson Kasaija** decided to live together and settled in Kampala. They had dreams of starting a family. Because Cleo was on hormones, they could show their love openly. She was seen as any other woman.

But that quickly changed when President Museveni introduced the anti- gay law. The law forced Cleo and Nelson to go into hiding, locking themselves in their homes behind barbed wires. Cleo's mother came with food and supply at night.

"I officially lost my job and several of my family members abandoned me fearing for their safety," narrated Cleo.

The people who had been "outed" were attacked by mobs and illegally evicted. She was forced into hiding to avoid attacks and possible arrest.

"It was a tough time. My mom had to come with food in the nights so that we would have something to eat. People went hungry for days. Unless the attacks reached them so did the lack of food and medicine," she said.

They saw no other option than to get out of Uganda; fortunately, Cleo was offered a job in Kenya at the time.

"I decided to move to Nairobi, Kenya. It gave me not only an income but also a sense of security."

"I want to give the Ugandan people human picture of a transgender person, which I hope The Pearl Of Africa will help me do," Cleo said.

CREW

DIRECTOR

JONNY VON WALLSTRÖM

PRODUCER

ANDRÉ WALLSTRÖM
JONNY VON WALLSTRÖM

EDITOR

JONNY VON WALLSTRÖM
TOM ERNST

SOUND

JONNY VON WALLSTRÖM
CINEAST

ANIMATION

JONNY VON WALLSTRÖM

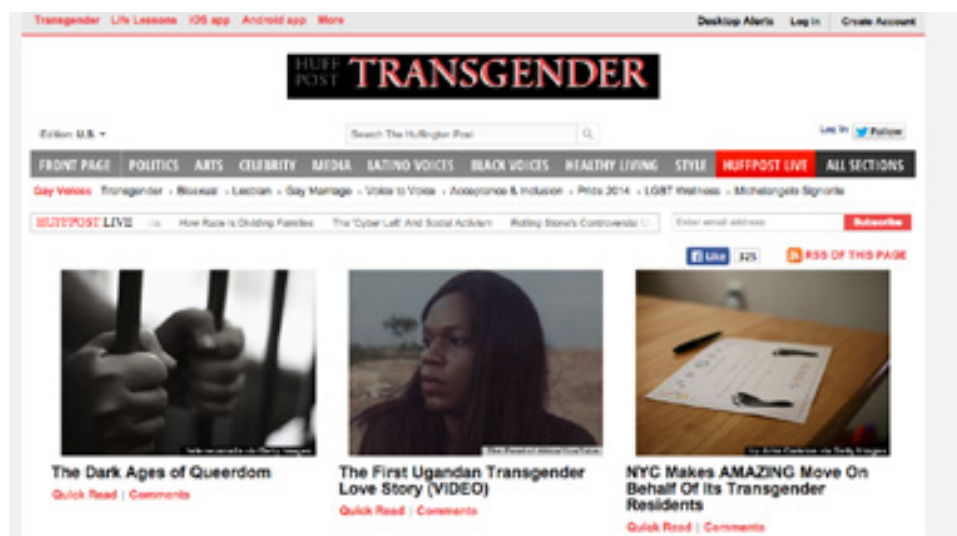
COMPOSER

REBEKKA KARIJORD
JONNY VON WALLSTRÖM

CINEMATOGRAPHER

JONNY VON WALLSTRÖM

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What to watch from Africa

Updated 11:20 GMT (19:20 HKT) February 19, 2015

More from Africa

- Forget 'House of Cards': 8 must-see African shows you NEED to watch**
- Reading this on a computer? Then you (probably) don't live in Africa**
- Source: Nigerian airstrike kills 37 mourners in Niger**
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What to watch from Africa 8 photos

'The Pearl of Africa' – The Pearl of Africa is a beautifully shot seven-part series from Swedish filmmaker Jonny von Wallström. It showcases the highly emotive story of Cleo, a 27-year-old trans woman born biologically male. Shot over 18 months, it takes viewers on an intimate journey with the courageous transgender woman as she searches for answers about her identity, family and the country she was born in.

1 of 8

Hide Caption

Sveriges största Gaynyhetssajt

över 90 000 besökare per vecka

Läs QX Jan 2016 här

Start Nöje GayGalan Blogg Xtra Vimmel Samhälle Kultur GayMag

Foto: Jonny von Wallström

Svensk regissör belönad för hbtq-dokumentär

Under torsdagen hyllades dokumentären *The Pearl of Africa* för dess modiga och ärliga skildring av hbtq-situationen i Uganda.

Det är Planned Parenthood Federation of America som årligen delar ut priser till journalister, aktivister och sociala innovatörer. Den svenska regissören Jonny von Wallström och dokumentärens huvudpersonen Cleo Kambugu tog emot priset för exceptionell media täckning inom global journalistik.

Foto: Planned Parenthood Award

Dokumentären kretsar kring livet i den ugandiska hbtq-rörelsen där titarna får följa transvinnan Cleo. Nedanför kan du se en trailer från den belönade dokumentären.

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ABOUT

POSTED DECEMBER 10, 2014 BY JENNIFER SEFA-SOAKYE

0 COMMENTS

Ugandan Transgender Web Series 'The Pearl of Africa' Debuts

3 Reactions

Last week we reported on *The Pearl of Africa* a groundbreaking documentary series focusing on Ugandan transgender rights activist Cleopatra Kambugu and her decision to transition openly despite rising anti-LGBTQ sentiment in the East African nation. The first installment of the seven-part series has surfaced online this week, offering viewers a firsthand look into the highs and lows of Cleo's life over an 18-month period as captured by Swedish director Jonny von Wallström. The inaugural episode, which clocks in at just over five minutes, introduces us to Cleo and her boyfriend, Nelson. The episode also details the changes that have occurred in Cleo's life in the wake of her public outing in Ugandan tabloid *Red Pepper* and proposed anti-gay legislation from the Ugandan government. There are six more episodes planned for the series, which we'll be posting as they're made available each week. Stay tuned for our continuing coverage and watch first episode of *The Pearl of Africa* below.

»»»Read: Ugandan Transgender Rights Take Center Stage in Documentary Film *The Pearl of Africa*

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Photographer Chris Saunders' Fashion Gangs Of Johannesburg
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Obanji Shanya's New Single 'Feeling The Nuggs'

[Publish Image](#)

'Who you are on the inside is the bigger battle'

Activist Cleo Kambugu talks about what it was like growing up transsexual in Uganda, the challenges she and other sexual minorities face and what she'd like to see from Pope Francis' visit to Uganda.

This clip is from



New trans life line
offers hope when
suicide seems the
only option

Dealine with

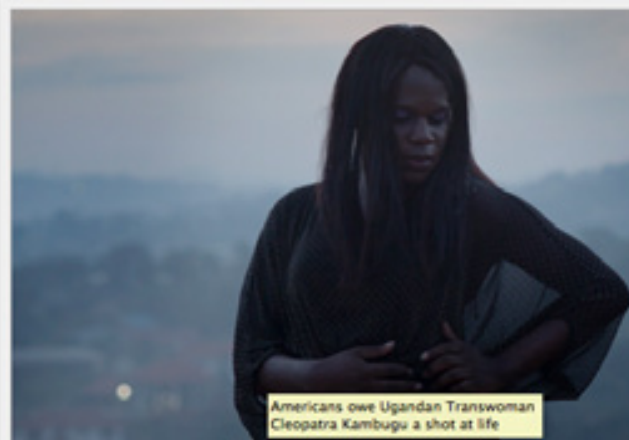
PLANET TRANSGENDER



Rejection of
Transgender in
Arab World

The following lines are to
be my...

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Americans owe Ugandan Transwoman Cleopatra Kambugu a shot at life

The friday Uganda's anti LGBT bill was
passed, I lost my job, and some of my...

December 10, 2014 No Comment Read More

Americans owe Ugandan Transwoman
Cleopatra Kambugu a shot at life



PREMIÄR: NÖJESGUIDEN VISAR TV-SERIEN THE PEARL OF AFRICA

En tv-serie om Cleopatra Kambaga, en 28-årig transkvinnor född i Uganda – ett av världens mest transfoba länder.

SAMHÄLLE

POPULÄRT PÅ NÖJESGUIDEN.SE

MEST LÄST SENAST KOMMENTERAT

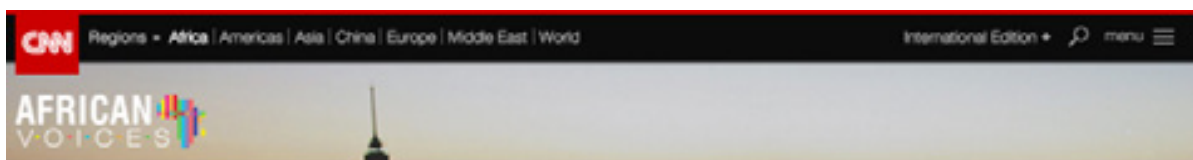
1. Var är brudarna? Så börjar de som tjej ligga med tjejer
2. Så ser du vilvårdad ut trots dåliga vanor – som en äkta parisare
3. Krogens invigaingsriter – hur man lärar en nyutbildad
4. Leave Fridolin alone!
5. Stockholms bästa food trucks

HÅLL ER UPPDATERADE!

GILLA NÖJESGUIDEN!

Vill du få veta precis allt som händer på nöjesguiden.se? Gilla oss på Facebook!

[GILLA](#)

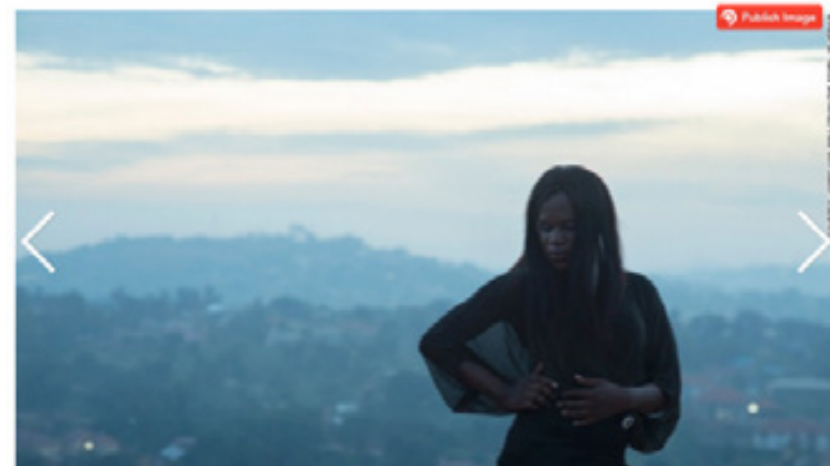


Forget 'House of Cards!' 8 must-see African shows you NEED to watch



By Lauren Said-Moorhouse, for CNN

Updated 1127 GMT (1927 HKT) February 19, 2015



8 photos: What to watch from Africa

"The Pearl of Africa" – The Pearl of Africa is a beautifully shot seven-part series from Swedish filmmaker Jonny von Wallstrom. It showcases the highly emotive story of Cleo, a 27-year-old trans woman born biologically male. Shot over 18 months, it takes viewers on an intimate journey with the courageous transgender woman as she searches for answers about her identity, family and the country she was born in.

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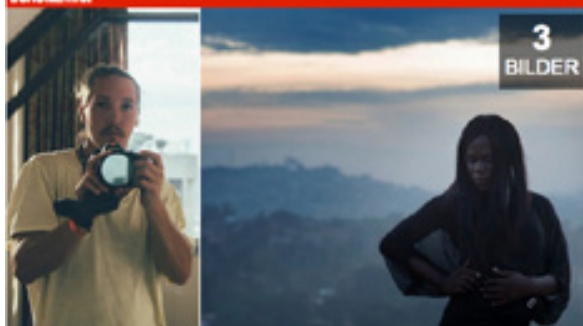


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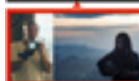
DOKUMENTÄR



3
BILDER

SVENSK DOKUMENTÄR OM LIVET SOM TRANSKVINNA I UGANDA

Nyheter24 har pratat med producenten bakom
uppmärksammas dokumentär



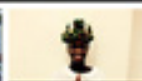
Svensk
dokumentär om
livet som
transkvinna i
Uganda



SD vill betala
invandrare
för att lämna
Sverige



S extremt
douchiga
julkleppar som
tvöslut vis ha



Serien är en tv
skolas två
lyckor

TEMPEN PÅ NYHETER24

DYGN

VECKA

41 950
REAKTIONER

NYHETER
Facebookstatistiken vi
inte längre orkar att se

9273
REAKTIONER

DEBATT
"Det var en gång en
socialistisk man som
hette Den Bizerian"

9154
REAKTIONER

MAKTKAMP24
Stor rörlighet bland
väjarna

8372
REAKTIONER

MODETTE
11 saker du absolut
inte får ge flickvännen
i julklapp

7582
REAKTIONER

NYHETER
"Hemlös" lämnar
själa mot - resultatet
är enormt vackert

SENASTE NYTT

ALLT

NYHETER

SPORT

NÖJE

NYHETER

Så mycket samlades in till
Musikhjälpen
22:49

NYHETER

Facebook-statistik: Sitt ditt

REDAKTIONEN TIPSA



NYHETER
Putin rustar upp
sovjetisk superbass -
bara tiotal mil från
svenska gränsen



ELDSJÄLAR
För Raoul Wallenberg
fanns det inget val

Actualités > TéléObs > Actualités > "The Pearl Of Africa", le combat d'une transsexuelle ougandaise

"The Pearl Of Africa", le combat d'une transsexuelle ougandaise

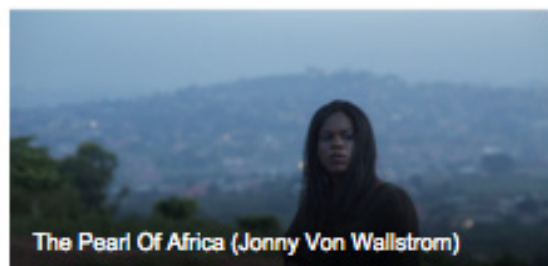
Par TéléObs

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Publié le 06-02-2015 à 11h00

A⁺ A⁻

Dans la web-série "The Pearl Of Africa" le documentariste suédois Jonny Von Wallström raconte le quotidien de Cleopatra Kambugu, une activiste transsexuelle Ougandaise.



The Pearl Of Africa (Jonny Von Wallstrom)

Recommander 95 personnes

PROGRAMME TNT

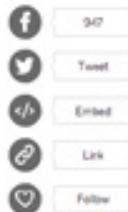
- Camping
- 20:50 Paradis
- Série TV
- 20:50 No Offence
- Série TV
- La France sous les bombes
- 20:50 alliées (1940-1945)
- Documentaire
- Baron noir
- 21:00 Série TV
- Des roses en
- 20:40 hiver
- Téléfilm
- 20:50 Top Chef
- Jeu
- Le nom de la rose
- 20:50 Film
- Prédictions
- 21:00 Film
- Twilight - Chapitre 4 :

The Pearl Of Africa

Stockholm, Sweden

Film

Story Updates 7 Comments 7 Backers 96 Gallery 3



InDemand
\$10,175 USD
total funds raised

Original campaign was 101% funded on February 7, 2015

CLOSED

\$1 USD

Thank You!

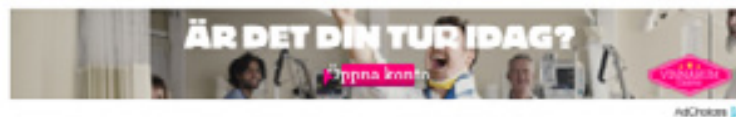
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THE BLOG

Making A Documentary With No Money

01/25/2016 02:23 pm ET | Updated Jan 25, 2016



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Jonny von Wallström

Self shooting director, human rights advocate, farmer and world exploring artist living in Sweden



Making your first feature documentary is hard, and it's a process that you rarely get a close look at. This is why I decided to start documenting my own struggle as a filmmaker.

About three years ago I started working on my debut feature doc called The Pearl Of Africa. Making it seems to be impossible, which is why I decided to create a Vlog about my struggle to make the film.

The first episode explores the nature of creativity. What it means to be an independent filmmaker, and striving for something unique.

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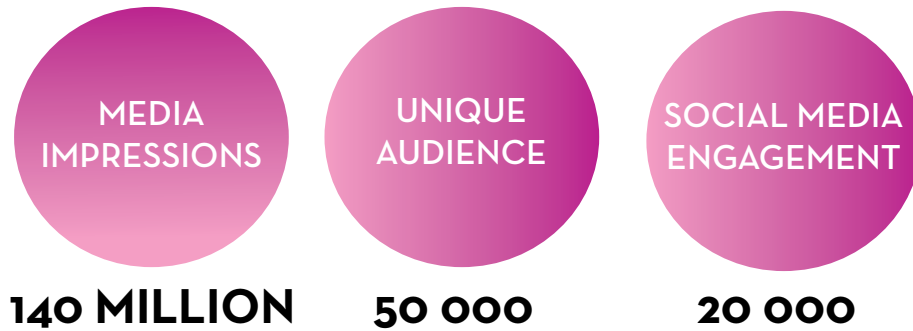


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SOCIAL MEDIA STATISTICS



SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS

 7 200 NEW FOLLOWERS

 17 500 NEW FOLLOWERS

 1400 NEW SUBSCRIBERS

 11 000 UNIQUE VISITORS

 \$14 000 CROWDFUNDED

*- "Top African show to ditch
"HOUSE OF CARDS" for!"*
CNN

*- "That was so beautiful.
I'm tearful right now!"*
@LittleGee10

TODAY +700 NEW FOLLOWERS EVERY WEEK

MEDIA ATTENTION

BBC, HUFFINGTON POST, CNN, THE ADVOCATE, SVERIGE RADIO, DAGENS NYHETER, NYHETER 24, MSN, AOL, QX MAGAZINE, PLANET TRANSGENDER, TÉLÉObs, OKAYAFRICA, THIS IS AFRICA, AYIBA MAGAZINE, TOWLEROAD, KUCHU TIMES, DAILY PLANET, HUFFPOST LIVE, GLOBAL VOICES ONLINE, THE ABSOLUTE, NORRTÄLJE TIDNING, NEWS 24, THE FAB FEMME, DIALAGAI, GAYBLADET, CHICAMOND, TRANSGENDER LAW CENTER ETC.

MEDIA INQUIRIES

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<http://facebook.com/thepearlof africa>

<http://twitter.com/pearlof african tv>

<http://instagram.com/pearlof africa.tv>

<http://youtube.com/creativenorth tv>

Hashtag: #tpoatv

BEHIND THE SCENES - DOCUMENTARY

Making your first feature documentary is hard, and it's a process that you rarely get a close look at. This is why I decided to start documenting my own struggle as a filmmaker.

About three years ago, I started working on my debut feature documentary. For a long time, everything seemed impossible. Then I decided to create a blog about my struggle to make the film.

Watch here: <http://youtube.com/creativenorth tv>
#creativenorth

Directors Bio

Acclaimed self shooting director Jonny von Wallström bursted onto the independent movie scene with his revolution film Zero Silence. Jonny both shot, directed and produced the film which premiered at Sheffield Doc/Fest 2011.

Born 1982 in Sandviken, Sweden, von Wallström studied digital post-production and graphic design before making documentaries.

The Pearl Of Africa is his first feature, premiering in competition at Hot Docs. A film which he directed, shot, edited, composed, animated, co-produced and sound designed himself.

ANECTOTES

CALLING FROM BANGKOK, ASKING FOR 13,000 DOLLARS

At the moment when we were about to pay for Cleo's Sex Reassignment Surgery in Thailand, PayPal blocked our account because they thought that we had been hacked since the transfer came from Bangkok. So while André tried to get hold of PayPal in the last minute, I called all my friends like a madman and asked if they could transfer 13,000 dollars to my bank account.

Haha, what do you think their reaction was? Everyone was absolutely certain that I had been robbed! It didn't sound good at all. Not even to myself. And It could have been a disaster! But luckily for us, PayPal solved it pretty quickly.

MOVING IN WITH CLEO AND NELSON

Cleo and Nelson had just began dating when I started filming The Pearl Of Africa. And you know how it is in the beginning when you've just met someone, everything is new and exciting. But it got to a whole new level for Cleo and Nelson. Especially when this Swedish man suddenly moved into their house and started filming their lives. At that time, Nelson and I didn't know each other so well either. So it must have been so strange for him.

THE STORY BEHIND THE MUSIC

We actually did a web series about the creative process of making this album with Rebekka Karijord. It was a journey that took us to her country home where she, a producer and some musicians made this record together.

I filmed all these songs as they were recorded in a studio. I had worked with Rebekka on my last film, Zero Silence. And For The Pearl Of Africa, we knew that we wanted to use women's voices in the music.

So when we started to look at different options, I started to think of Rebekka again, and how perfect her music would be for this film. The album is about love, and that is what Cleo's story is all about...