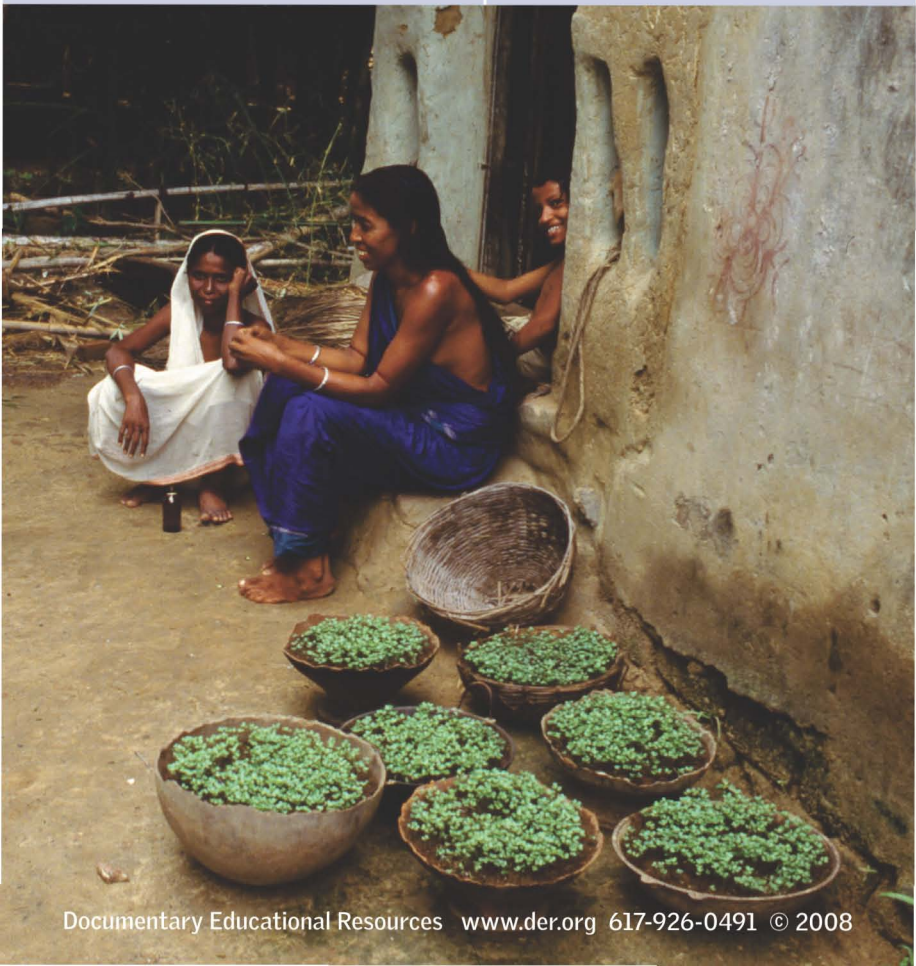
Documentary Educational Resources

New Releases | FALL 2008



Balkan Rhapsodies: 78 Measures of War
by Jeff Daniel Silva
color, 55 min, 2008

Using the 78 days of NATO bombings of Former Yugoslavia (March 24 - June 10, 1999) as a structural reference point, *Balkan Rhapsodies* explores the post-trauma of the ordinary Yugoslav citizens caught in a web between the politics of former president Slobodan Milosovic, the Albanian separatist movement, and the United States led NATO coalition.

Just weeks after the NATO bombardment had ended, American-born filmmaker Jeff Silva set out on a journey in attempt to understand the causes of another inexplicable war in the Balkans and to explore the complexities of life in Serbia and Kosovo. Inspired by the musical form from which it takes its name, *Balkan Rhapsodies* weaves video material collected over years - archival footage, interviews, re-enactments & appropriations, and footage from Silva's travels - into a seventy-eight part episodic structure. The film creates a melodic echo that reflects a political and social imperative beyond the historical moment of its focus, and into our present day crises in Iraq, Afghanistan and beyond.

Abloni
by Alexandre Oktan, produced by Médiatique Inc.
color, 52 min, 2005

You give an old shirt or dress to a charity. Then, you forget all about it. Yet - without knowing it - you have had a huge impact on people you don't know, people throughout the world; and that impact is not all good. By following the strange, colorful, unpredictable voyage of one second hand shirt, *Abloni* reveals how the second hand clothes business creates a livelihood for a whole chain of wholesalers and retailers; how it supports charities and recycles waste products in rich countries; how it destroys the textile industries and traditions in poor countries; how it revolutionizes style and fashion in places as far away as a small village in central Togo; how wearing the simplest bit of clothing - like a second hand shirt from Canada - becomes, in an African village, a political, economic, and cultural statement; and how it has led, too, to the birth of a new hybrid African style, creatively mixing western fashions with local textiles and patterns.

Macaques
by Anne Zeller
color, 53 min, 2008

Macaques presents an overview of the genus Macaca, beginning with a discussion of their place in the primate order and their adaptability. Their potential for eating a wide variety of foods and living in both temperate and tropical environments at a variety of altitudes means they are very similar to humans in their ability to exploit a range of habitats. The video covers 6 species of the approximately 18 types of macaques. Material on sexual dimorphism, locomotion, male-female relations, infant care, diet, group social patterns, grooming and communication is covered for each group, pointing out the differences and similarities between the species. Footage from free ranging and captive situations is used and the impact of captivity on behaviour is mentioned. Commentary about conservation issues and the imapct of humans on the animals is also included.

Asmara, Eritrea
by Caterina Borelli
Tigrynia, Italian and English; with English subtitles
color, 63 min, 2008

Asmara - capitol of the East African nation of Eritrea - is recognized as an architectural gem. In this film Asmarinos from different walks of life guide us through the streets of their city and bring us to places of their choice. In doing so, and by talking about "their own" Asmara, each person locates personal memories in public spaces investing the urban environment with individual meanings. Through their narrations - a chorus of different experiences embodying the nation - the country's history from colonialism to independence comes to life.

The Ballad of Esequiel Hernández
by Kieran Fitzgerald
color, 86 min, 2007

In 1997, no one in the small town (pop. 100) of Redford, Texas knew that U.S. Marine teams, fully camouflaged and armed with M16 rifles, had been secretly deployed to their section of the border. On the evening of May 20, 18-year-old Esequiel Hernández Jr. left his house to graze his family's goats, taking with him, as usual, a .22 rifle to keep away wild dogs. That night, Hernández would become the first American killed by U.S. military forces on native soil since the 1970 Kent State shootings.

Narrated by Tommy Lee Jones (a native of West Texas whose film *The Three Burials of Melquiades Estrada* was inspired by the Hernández shooting), *Ballad* features a full array of remarkably candid accounts from three of the four Marines on the fatal mission; Esequiel's family, friends and teachers; Marine Corps investigators; FBI investigators and defense attorneys. The film also makes use of military investigative video and audio recordings of radio communication between the Marine team and their commanders before Hernández was shot. *The Ballad of Esequiel Hernández* tells a frightening and cautionary tale about the dangers of using military as domestic law enforcement.

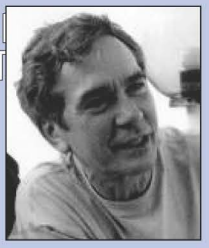
Stories from Myanmar
by Participants of Yangon Film School Workshops & Lindsey Merrison
color, 170 min on two DVDs, 2008

Since its inception in 2005, the non-profit organisation Yangon Film School has brought together experienced filmmaking tutors from around the world and young Burmese men and women with some prior experience in the media for residential training in all aspects of filmmaking – from screenwriting to editing – with a particular focus on documentary.

DVD 1 contains the work of 12 new participants from The Art of Documentary Filmmaking Beginners Workshop 2007, who were given the opportunity to grapple with the technical, artistic and ethical aspects of the genre by producing their own short documentaries on the topic of Children in Myanmar. This DVD contains their first film exercises: *Stories from the Princess Hotel*; their final films: *Children in Myanmar*; and a short film, *About the Beginners' Workshop*.

The *Stories of Change* on DVD 2 are projects by students of several YFS courses completed during The Art of Documentary Filmmaking Stage Two in 2007.

FILMMAKER SPOTLIGHT
Ákos Östör
Hungary



ÁkosÖstörisanan thropologist,filmmakerandauthor.WhileatHarvardUniversityinthe1970sand80s,hemadeseveralfilmsincollaborationwithRobertGardnerandAllenMoore.Sincethenhehascontinuedmakingfilms,withLinaFruzzetti(ofBrownUniversity)ashisprimarycollaborator.ThefilmsÖstörandFruzzetticreatetogetheraremarkedbyahighdegreeofcollaborationwiththepeopletheyfilmandcolleaguesinthefield(amongthemAmandinaLihamba)aswellasotherfilmmakers,suchasAlfredGuzzettiandShawnHainsworth.Currently,Östörteachesanthropologyandfilmstudiesat Wesleyan University, where he has been since 1988.

Seed and Earth
by Lina Fruzzetti, Alfred Guzzetti, Ned Johnston, & Ákos Östör
color, 36 min, 1995

Made by a team of distinguished filmmakers/anthropologists, *Seed and Earth* is a film about everyday life in rural West Bengal. It follows the daily schedule of the families of two brothers who live side by side and cooperate in many daily activities. We see how gender and age determine work, ritual and leisure activities. Janta is a prosperous, multicaste village that derives its livelihood from agriculture. Rice, the main crop, is cultivated in small plots. The working day starts early with men ploughing and women beginning preparations for cooking. The ritual cycle of the village moves from brief daily prayers to big village-wide celebrations lasting several days. Seasonal worship of the gods and numerous life cycle rituals complete the sacred year. Eating, washing, gossiping, visiting -- the fabric of daily life is captured eloquently on film with no intrusive narration.

Khalfan and Zanzibar
by Lina Fruzzetti, Alfred Guzzetti, & Ákos Östör
color, 25 min, 2000

Three separate topics are woven together in this innovative video: the life and work of Khalfan Hemed Khalfan, founder of Zanzibar's Association of the Disabled; scenes from the lives of Zanzibar's disabled (training for job skills, a class for deaf children, a soccer scrimmage), and the history and culture of Zanzibar.

The video is not a portrait film pure and simple: its departure is to place the protagonist in Zanzibar culture, history, ethnicity, religion and everyday life. It intersperses interviews, scenes of Mr. Khalfan's daily chores at work and at home, handicapped people at work and leisure activities, and footage of Zanzibar (with innovative use of superimposed texts discussing history, ethnicity, politics, and Islam). The challenge of the video is to integrate, through visual form and style, the diverse materials mentioned above, in a single unfolding film structure.

Fishers of Dar
by Lina Fruzzetti, Ákos Östör, & Steven Ross
color, 38 min, 2001

Fishers of Dar is an ethnographic film about the fishermen and women of downtown Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. It explores the continuity and integrity of traditional fishing practices in new, contemporary settings. Dar es Salaam is a metropolis of 3 million people yet the city's demand for fish is entirely met by equipment, methods and tools that have been used here for hundreds of years.

Also available from DER is the *Pleasing God* trilogy of films, by Ákos Östör and Robert Gardner. For more information on these and other films, please visit our website at www.der.org

Rhythms of Earth The Choreometrics Films of Alan Lomax and Forrestine Paulay

DVD produced by John Bishop
color, 156 min + extras, 1974-2008

Alan Lomax and his associates, beginning in the late 1950s undertook a monumental study of the relationship between style in song and dance cross-culturally. It began with Cantometrics which developed a common language description for the many variables in performance style in the diverse cultures of the world and measured how those variables clustered geographically and in relation to means of subsistence and aspects of social organization. Choreometrics continued this investigation into dance and movement.

At a primal level, *Dance & Human History* is a whirlwind trip through the enormous variety of dance, music, costume and public presentation of culture around the world. More profoundly it represents decades of work to find an appropriate descriptive language for dance and movement at a cross cultural level, to perceive the patterns that differentiate cultures, and to relate them to basic elements of culture.

Choreometrics has special meaning for a generation of ethnographic and documentary filmmakers who contributed their work to this global sample because it is one of a few, and certainly the most ambitious, efforts to discover meaning in footage beyond the story a filmmaker constructs. As Alan wrote with Irmgard Bartenieff, and Forrestine Paulay in *Dance Style and Culture*: "We regard the vast, endlessly provocative, prejudice-laden, existing sea of documentary footage as the richest and most unequivocal storehouse of information about humanity. We do not agonize over its limitations or those of the persons who shot or edited it. We come to it with an observational approach like that used by the ordinary person in everyday life, which enables him to differentiate constantly between different classes of visual experience and to behave appropriately in relation to these varieties of experience."

When initially released, these programs were only available as 16mm film prints, and not available at all for the last ten years. This DVD brings together the best telecine transfers of the four films with a cluster of supplementary videos and texts to contextualize the films. The DVD contains the following:

Dance & Human History (1974) 40 min - This film examines two important parameters in the Choreometric study, the dominant trace form of the movement and single/multiple articulation of the torso, and relates them to geography and type of society.

Palm Play (1977) 27 min - This film examines the use of the palm in dance cross-culturally.

Step Style (1977) 30 min - Examines the use of the foot in dance cross-culturally.

The Longest Trail (1984) 59 min - This film uses Choreometric data as evidence that the Americas were populated by Siberian hunters.

- Alan Lomax in conversation with Robert Gardner from *Screening Room* (1975) 34 min
- Forrestine Paulay interview (2006) 17 min
- Interview with anthropologist and biostatistician Michael Flory (2008) 16 min
- Global Jukebox programmer Michael Del Rio in conversation with Michael Flory (2006) 22 min
- Global Jukebox demonstration (1993) 10 min

This disc also contains 177 pages of written material as PDF files, including:

- Transcriptions of *Dance & Human History*, *Step Style*, *Palm Play*, and *Screening Room*
- Handbook for *The Longest Trail* - by Alan Lomax and Forrestine Paulay
- Performance Style Research - article by Anna Lomax Wood that contextualizes the Choreometrics project and contains extensive bibliographies.
- "Choreometrics and Ethnographic Film" - article by Alan Lomax
- "Toward an Ethnographic Film Archive" - article by Alan Lomax
- "Alan Lomax: a Remembrance" - article by John Bishop

Sharing Paradise
by Amelia Hapsari
color, 60 min, 2007

Above the water, Balobaloang looks like an ideal tropical paradise with blue sky, coconut trees, and crystal water. However, another picture is revealed under the water, where coral reef is destroyed and fewer and fewer pristine habitats exist. Traditionally, people who live in small islands in Indonesia fish using sustainable fishing methods. This has allowed marine resources to be conserved and to be shared by the inhabitants of the islands. However, dynamite and cyanide fishing has introduced another kind of economy. The cargo ship owners, who receive revenue from transporting goods from one island to another, are supposed to offer loans or jobs to others who have less income. Yet, corruption and a high overseas demand of fish have made it impossible for traditional fishermen to receive a fair share of their paradise. Collaborating with the fishermen, the filmmakers confront the perpetrators and attempt to understand the reasons for these dangerous new methods that threaten Balobaloang's sustainable way of life.

After Passing
by Hu Tai-Li
color, 11 min, 2007

In *After Passing* (11 min, 2006), a follow-up of the previous documentary, *Passing Through My Mother-in-Law's Village*, Hu Tai-li returns to Liu Ts'o Village to screen *Passing Through...* for the village residents, and reports to her deceased mother-in-law the changes caused by the newly built expressway. In the wake of its construction, the villagers have created a new lifestyle under an overpass, exhibiting human beings' great ability to adapt to the changing environment. This DVD contains both films and a 20-page essay by the filmmaker, providing background ethnography of this project.

Land-Divers of Melanesia
by Kal Muller in collaboration with Robert Gardner
color, 34 min, 1972

To ensure a good yam crop, men of Pentecost Island in Melanesia attach vines to their ankles and dive headlong from a wooden tower over 100 feet tall. Those who dive say the fall clears their mind. The vines are relatively elastic and the ground is softened so injury is rare. For Pentecost Islanders the annual dive takes an appropriate place among many other rituals and ceremonies such as blessing the taro crop, circumcising young boys and feasting with relatives, all of which keep them in touch with the forces that control the world in which they live.

African Carving: A Dogon Kanaga Mask
by Thomas Blakeley & Eliot Elisofon in collaboration with Robert Gardner
color, 19 min, 1974

The Kanaga mask is used in deeply sacred rituals by the Dogon people of Mali. Carving this mask is as important a ritual as the ceremonies in which the mask is used. The carver, a blacksmith, finds the proper tree and, in a secret cave outside the village, he shapes the mask with gestures which repeat the movement of the dancers who will wear it. When a dancer wears the Kanaga mask he becomes the Creator symbolically. He touches the ground with his mask and directs the soul to Heaven. Although these dances are now frequently performed for the public, the meaning of Kanaga is retained by the Dogon who fear, respect and depend on the the power of the mask.

Born Into Struggle
by Rehad Desai
color, 52 min, 2004

Filmmaker Rehad Desai takes us on an intimate journey mapped out by the scars etched into his family's life from having a father who was intensely involved in politics. Barney Desai was a political hero during South Africa's struggle for freedom, yet as a father he was damagingly absent emotionally. Rehad spent most of his young life in exile and became politically active himself. On this intensely personal journey into his past, Rehad realizes he is following in his fathers' footsteps as he reviews his relationship with his own estranged teenage son.

Peacing It Together
by Erik Paulsson and Nova Ami
color, 29 min, 2008

Converging on a secluded island off the west coast of Canada, a group of Israeli, Palestinian, and Canadian teenagers participated in a unique peace and filmmaking camp. Organized by the Peace It Together Society, the three-week experience brought together bitter enemies from across the globe to the forests of British Columbia where they learned to live and co-create inharmony. During their stay they participated in dialogue sessions before being divided into small groups to collaborate on films about the Middle East conflict. Through the lens of a camera they created seven short films that reflected their lives, fears, and hopes.

This double-disc set contains these seven short films, as well as *Peacing It Together*, a 29-minute documentary which follows the students on their remarkable and inspiring journeys. Also included is an hour-and-a-half of additional footage, featuring workshops, discussions and additional interviews. An extensive teacher's guide is available for classroom use.

Housemoving w/ The Psychic Parrot
by Derek Lamb
color, 8 min, 1968

Housemoving is a documentary short depicting the journey of a 19th century farm house as it is sawed in half and relocated by flatbed truck from Arlington, Massachusetts to nearby Belmont. For this film, Lamb employed a hybrid of stop-motion animation and live action to condense several months of activity into only 8 minutes.

This DVD also includes *Psychic Parrot* (26 min, 1975), a short film about a talking parrot with psychic powers who predicts the end of the world. The parrot has never before been wrong in its predictions so the people of Earth prepare for the day when the world would end. The film is a comedic parody of the pomposity and pretense of the American TV news system.

These films, both previously unreleased, are now available exclusively through DER.

For more information and to view our complete catalog of films, visit our website:
www.der.org

Documentary Educational Resources is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization founded in 1968 and incorporated in 1971 for the purpose of producing and distributing cross-cultural documentary film for educational use. We were early innovators in developing 16mm film and media based curriculum for classroom use. Our company focus, then and now, is to support filmmakers who have long-term commitments to the people that they film. We find that filmmakers who work collaboratively with their subjects produce film with integrity.

It is also our focus to distribute media that has the power to overcome barriers to cross-cultural understanding. Media can be the first step in growing sensitivity and awareness of other cultures. This in turn may lead to tolerance and acceptance and eventually give way to appreciation and admiration of other cultures.

Our archive is one of the most historically important resources of ethnographic film in the world today. In 1975 DER co-founders John Marshall and Timothy Asch were key figures in establishing the Human Studies Film Archives at the Smithsonian Institution and their bodies of work are among the most significant ethnographic collections within the HSFA. We continue to collaborate with the Smithsonian on the use of our films for research. Our films have been screened everywhere, from villages and refugee camps in Africa, Native American reservations, to classrooms, museums and theatres worldwide.

If you have further questions please visit our website

www.der.org

Or contact us by email, fax, phone or mail

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