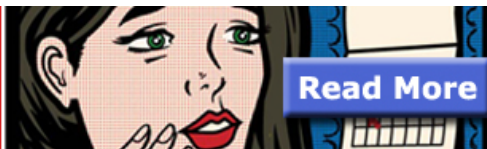


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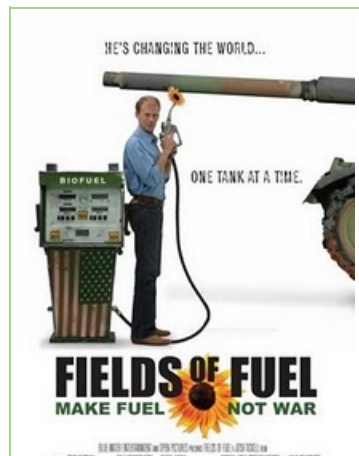
A Filmmaker's 'Fields of Fuel'

AnswerTips-Enabled

by Greg Reitman

Published on Reuters

Filmmaker Greg Reitman's first-hand account of the journey that led to his Sundance Award winning feature documentary, FIELDS OF FUEL.



Four years ago, I met environmentalist and filmmaker Josh Tickell at the Temecula Valley Film festival where we had both been invited to showcase our films. At the time, I had just finished my first documentary film "Hollywood's Magical Island-Catalina," which won the Audience Award and was syndicated nationally on PBS. while Josh was finishing the festival tour of his short film, "The Veggie Van Voyage."

At the festival, we showcased and marketed our films together and began our friendship as I became truly amazed at Josh Tickell's devotion to the environment and his cause towards cleaner energy. After twelve months of discussions about politics, family, religion, and, of course, the environment, Josh finally convinced me to join forces with him in producing the feature documentary film, 'Fields of Fuel':

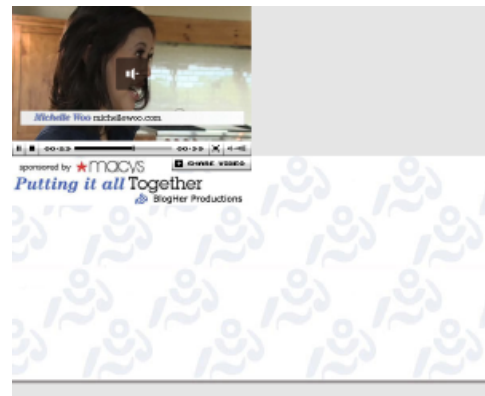
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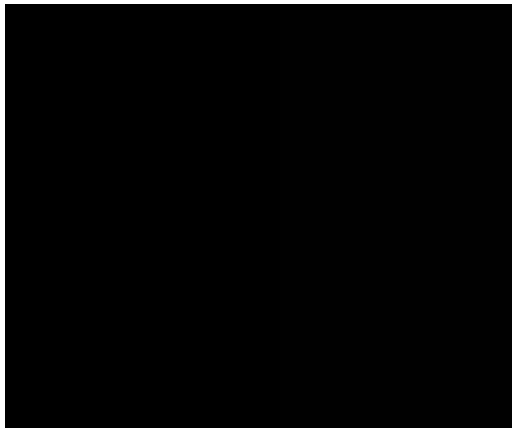


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I had no idea what I was getting involved with or the impact that this film would ultimately have worldwide. Over the next three years, we made numerous trips. Our first was to Portugal where we filmed the 'Peak Oil' Conference and interviewed experts like Colin Campbell and Mathew Simmons. These experts talked convincingly about Peak Oil and the reluctance of governments to accept this idea. I remember, in particular, Mathew Simmons' comment that, if the world were to understand that there was not enough oil to meet demand (Peak Oil), the resultant impact on the world's markets and the potential for escalating chaos could be exponential.

We flew from Portugal to Germany. The MAN Museum was a top priority, as Josh wanted to document the story of Rudolf Diesel and his diesel engine. Going through the archive and seeing the first diesel engine was electrifying. Even more electrifying was the revelation that the engine was designed to run on *vegetable oil* - a fact which had been pushed under the rug.

When we returned to America, Josh was ready to take his historical Veggie Van (the subject of his short film) back on the road. We gathered our supplies and coordinated the trip so that each stop would allow for the van to run on biodiesel (i.e. used vegetable oil) and soon, we were on the road with the mission to meet and film the legendary music singer/songwriter Willie Nelson.

As we drove across the country in the historical Veggie Van, we were greeted by hundreds of average Americans who were mesmerized with the flower van powered by biodiesel. We reached Dallas Texas where we interviewed Willie Nelson at the famous Carl's Corner home of the Bio Willie station and continued on to Josh's home state of Louisiana where we interviewed a legal expert on petroleum use and environmentalist activists.

While in Louisiana, we experience the threat of a hurricane. Fortunately, it changed direction and we continued our journey across the heartland of America through Colorado to Utah and back home to California, which was then followed by the hardship of Hurricane Katrina.

Until that time, I hadn't realized the global impact of our carbon footprint or the road Josh Tickell was climbing toward energy independence. Josh went back to his home state of Louisiana where he coordinated a relief mission to bring food and water to the survivors of Katrina. I flew onto New York to meet with Bill Clinton and to take part in the inaugural Clinton Global Initiative. I participated in climate program and met with Amory Lovins, a world renowned environmentalist expert. Amory talked about renewable solutions and the role government plays in the energy world. It was at that point I realized the role of government and how the film we were making touched on these crucial issues.

Josh and I regrouped in Los Angeles and flew out the next week to the motor city of Detroit to interview its automakers. At the International Automotive Show, we were greeted by gas guzzling cars and by the absence of the Big Three who were unwilling to participate in our project. I remember Josh filming the Hummers, and the security guards racing after us with questions about our film.

We managed to leave the show with our footage intact. The next day, I received another call from their security to meet with us. We were, however, already on a plane for to Washington, DC, which ended up being our most important shoot.

We had interviews with congressman, senators, the CIA and Department of Defense. No Republican, at that time, was willing to go on camera and talk about energy and the climate problem. That was when we knew we were touching on a nerve that affected every US citizen. I recall, in particular, an interview with former CIA Director Jim Woolsey who shed light on national security, our dependence on foreign oil and how tied the US government was to Middle Eastern oil interests.

On the return trip, I talked with Josh about the role of government and how each citizen played a part in the responsibility of their government. He began researching the globe on these issues and we headed to Sweden, the first country to announce its intention to become energy independent

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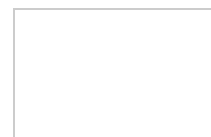
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by 2020. We included the Environmental minister of Sweden in our footage as well as at the Swedish Int'l Auto Show. At the show, we saw flex fuels car reaching 60-100 mph per gallon. We also interviewed Stat Oil which talked about how their company worked with automotive companies to certify the fuel standards to make their country energy independent, while our own government was increasingly perplexing us with their resistance to change.

Upon our return, Josh became adamant that we document the green movement in the USA and create a storyline that was shaped with empowerment and hope, rather than doom. We made a point to film the alternative energy movement, where we learned of a company called Solazyme that makes biodiesel from carbon waste water (i.e. algae into fuel).

This was a critical point in the story: the idea of sustainability and finding an alternative energy which would not deplete our natural resources or our food supply.

To that end, I became empowered to help Josh complete his vision of *Fields of Fuel* as I realized this was an issue that affected everyone. The journey was hard and arduous but was well worth taking. Most rewarding was the 2008 Sundance Audience Award; the idea that people voted for our film and, thereby, had voted for their elected representatives to a stand on the idea of preservation and balance on an issue that affects us all.

Fields of Fuel will be released theatrically in mid-September. To learn more about the film you can go to www.fieldsoffuel.com.

Guest contributor Greg Reitman is the founder of Blue Water Entertainment, Inc., an independent production company focusing on environmentally conscience entertainment. Regarded as Hollywood's "Green Producer," Reitman produced the 2008 Sundance Audience Award-winning feature documentary "Fields of Fuel;" wrote, produced, and directed the feature documentary "Hollywood's Magical Island - Catalina" and is currently in production on a new feature documentary film, "Rooted in Peace."

To learn more about Greg Reitman:

- www.bluewatercompany.com
- www.fieldsoffuel.com
- www.gregreitman.com
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