



Festival del film Locarno  
Official selection

PRESS KIT

2014  
SWISS  
FILM AWARD  
WINNER  
BEST SHORT FILM

# THE

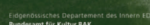
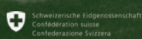
# GREEN

# SERPENT

of vodka, men and distilled dreams

Written, edited and directed by BENNY JABERG Cinematography JOONA PETTERSSON Sound recording and edit, re-recording mix XAVIER THIEULIN Music MARGEL VAID Additional cinematography, picture design, sound composition BENNY JABERG Producers TANYA PETRIK, GUILLAUME PROTSENKO, BENNY JABERG a MIRUMIR FILM STUDIO and BENNY JABERG production with the financial support of THE MINISTRY OF CULTURE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, ACCENT BANK, MIGROS KULTURPROZENT, SUCCES CINEMA

[www.thegreenserpent.ch](http://www.thegreenserpent.ch)



# THE GREEN SERPENT

of vodka, men and distilled dreams

a film by Benny Jaberg

21 minutes, DCP 24/25 fps, 1.78:1, 5.1, Switzerland/Russia 2013

Russian with English, German or French subtitles, [www.thegreenserpent.ch](http://www.thegreenserpent.ch)

World premiere: 66° Festival del film Locarno 7-17 | 8 | 2013

Awards (selection): «Quartz» Swiss Film Award 2014 for best Swiss short film of the year, «Boccalino d'Oro» independent critics award for the best short film in Locarno, «Cadrage» Zürich Film Award, «Best short film» darklight festival Dublin, Ireland, «Honorable mention» VIDEOEX Experimental Film & Video Festival 2014, Zurich, Switzerland, «Best short documentary», Bushwick Film Festival 2014, Brooklyn, NY, USA, «Best short documentary», 12e Festival international Signes de Nuit 2014, Paris, France

«Best film I saw in Locarno, by some margin.»

Neil Young (Hollywood Reporter amongst others)

«Best short film of the year.»

Michael Pattison (Indiewire, Senses of Cinema, Eye For Film)

«It sways over the limitations of the short film.»

Pascal Blum (Tages Anzeiger)

## LOGLINE

An introspective cinematic journey tracing the thin line between transcendental inspiration and bleak visions evoked by the spirit of vodka.

## SYNOPSIS

THE GREEN SERPENT takes us on a journey into the depths of intoxication: drinking vodka as a transcendental experience. Bitten by the green snake, people enter a twilight zone. The beauty of life becomes indistinguishable from a devastating void where inspiration and destruction equally form.

During this cinematic anti-postcard trip through the Russian winterland, we meet the actor Aleksandr Bashirov, the poet Mstislav Biserov and the physicist Nikolai Budnev. They reveal their relationship with vodka; the inner struggles and the pursuit of divine spirits awakened by drinking.

This brusque Cinemoem explores the potential of vodka to extend the world beyond religion and materialism. THE GREEN SERPENT is a meditation on drinking, an ode to passion not only for inebriated barflies, but for everyone driven by a sense of wonder and a desire for ecstasy.

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## DOWNLOADS

Filmstills, press kit and dialogue list available at [www.thegreenserpent.ch](http://www.thegreenserpent.ch)

## SYNOPSIS (DEUTSCH)

THE GREEN SERPENT nimmt uns mit auf eine Reise in die Tiefen des Rausches: Wodka-Trinken als transzendente Erfahrung. Der Biss der grünen Schlange lässt einen in einer Zwischenwelt zurück, in der das Erfüllende kaum vom Zerstörenden zu trennen ist. Die Grenze zwischen bereichernder Inspiration und bedrohlichem Abgrund verschwimmt.

Auf diesem Anti-Postkarten-Trip durch das winterliche Russland treffen wir den Schauspieler Aleksandr Bashirov, den Poeten Mstislav Biserov und den Physiker Nikolai Budnev. Sie erzählen von ihren Erfahrungen mit "dem Wässerchen"; von den inneren Kämpfen, die mit dem Trinken einhergehen

Das kantige Cinépoem ergründet das Potential von Wodka, die Welt jenseits von Religion und Materialismus zu erweitern. THE GREEN SERPENT ist eine Reflexion über das Trinken. Eine Ode an die Leidenschaft, nicht nur für Trinkwütige, sondern für all jene, die angetrieben sind von Neugier und von einer Sehnsucht nach Ekstase.

## SYNOPSIS (FRANCAIS)

THE GREEN SERPENT nous emmène dans les profondeurs de l'ivresse: boire de la vodka comme expérience transcendante. Le serpent vert mord et la pénombre se fait. La beauté de la vie devient alors indissociable d'un vide dévastateur, où l'inspiration et la destruction sont symétriques.

Durant ce voyage cinématographique à travers l'hiver russe, loin des images de carte postale, nous rencontrons l'acteur Aleksandr Bashirov, le poète Mstislav Biserov et le physicien Nikolai Budnev. Ils nous dévoilent leur relation à la vodka, le combat intérieur et la poursuite d'esprits divins réveillés par la boisson.

Ce Cinépoème abrupt explore le potentiel de la vodka à étendre le monde hors du cadre de la religion et du matérialisme. THE GREEN SERPENT est une méditation sur l'acte de boire, moins un hymne aux piliers de bars qu'une ode à tous ceux qui cherchent le merveilleux en espérant trouver l'extase.

## DIALOGUE LIST

00:00

Title cards:

Mirumir Film Studio and Benny Jaberg  
with the support of the Ministry of Culture of  
the Russian Federation present

a film by Benny Jaberg

THE GREEN SERPENT

01:01

Title card (here only the English translation):

Vodka is a universal remedy for all diseases;  
it endows strengths and courage,  
excites the imagination and knocks you out;  
with its help it's possible to see  
a green snake and even white elephants.

—  
1883, Strekoza "Dragonfly" magazine

01:27

Mstislav Biserov:

"It's fucking torture to be sober.  
All-night vigil in front of a monitor.  
All that shit pisses you off,  
it's all so fucking pitiful.

You have nothing to laugh about,  
you're a nervous wreck.  
Sure, you could write a great line,  
but fuck! It doesn't work.

Your fingers just stagger foolishly  
across the crooked keys.  
You're as fucking stressed out  
as an orphaned squirrel.

Various plans buzz  
through the depths of your mind.  
It's so fucking hard to be sober,  
just totally impossible."

02:32

Aleksandr Bashirov:

I remember the first time I was drunk. It was in

6th or 7th grade. My friend and I drank  
spirit from lemon peels. We were sitting by  
the fence at the zoo, and we were happy and...  
it was snowing. We were able to realize our  
dream of being grown-up men. Really brave.

03:07

Mstislav Biserov:

When I drink vodka I first have various  
thoughts. And that inspires me. When I have an  
idea I start writing, and while I'm writing  
the alcohol in me starts boiling. And then I start  
typing, reading it to myself and even laughing  
about it.

03:28

TV:

What a rascal! Wait, girls! Where are you going,  
girls? Wait!

03:49

Aleksandr Bashirov:

Although I'm a public figure as an actor and  
director, I'm quite a shy guy, and that's why I  
drink. I'm a... shy person. Drinking frees me in a  
way from my vague anxieties about myself and  
other people. It helps me. I want to change real-  
ity or the person who is with me, so everything  
becomes more honest. By drinking I deprive  
myself of the right to exist. To me it's a door  
that leads to a magical world which can also be  
horrible.

05:14

TV:

Yes, that's her... Seleznyova...

05:27

Nikolai Budnev

The most important part of our research deals  
with the special subject of astroparticle phys-  
ics. At Lake Baikal we carry out experiments  
whose purpose is to research strongly ex-

tra-terrestrial objects by measuring neutrinos. It is true that the particular emotional condition of someone who has been consuming vodka can stimulate new thoughts and inspire visions. At times the brain becomes deeply engrossed in something, and vodka helps to calm the flow of thoughts. Vodka stimulates the imagination. Every single glass of vodka is traversed by large numbers of neutrinos, but there is no interaction. Unfortunately.

07:30

Aleksandr Bashirov:

For many Russians drinking replaces their search for identity. When they drink the most important thing is to enter a magical state and develop telepathic abilities. They don't even need to talk, because they understand each other just by saying, "Hm, hm." "Are you my friend?" "Yes. Hm." The next phase is even more magical, because then they can teleport. You drink at one location and end up at another location. A unique experience worldwide. It's something absolutely every Russian can do.

08:53

Mstislav Biserov:

I watch all these... Soviet children's films while drinking vodka. And then I go to bed.

09:17

Aleksandr Bashirov:

I meant the degree of drunkenness when your thoughts go wild and you start rambling and lose control... I believe that realm is ruled by other laws, the laws of nightmare. It promotes creativity by eliminating all limits. The past and the future exist simultaneously. What you experience is a collage, a phantasmagoria of the world you are otherwise familiar with. Sure, when I wake up I have withdrawal symptoms. I become a masochist. I only allow myself to drink water. I suck straight from the tap. In that condition you feel like annihilating mankind. You feel sorry for every little puppy, every little bird that's freezing. You immediately want to run out and scatter berries for the birds. And at

the same time you want to wipe everyone out with a flame thrower or drop a fucking atomic bomb on everyone. You wish there was an asteroid that would smash the earth to smithereens, yet you want to console every crying baby and put cream on its sore butt. Stuff like that. When you are steamrolled by this contradictory state that only comes with symptoms of withdrawal... That is the moment when I'm able to write my anti-folk tales.

11:51

Aleksandr Bashirov:

With vodka it's just like with sex or perfume. It depends on the mood, on the particular situation. You enter eternity.

12:36

Nikolai Budnev:

I entered another world and joined forces with dark matter. The problem of dark matter is especially puzzling and difficult. It is unclear where it really is. The amazing part is that dark matter can theoretically exist everywhere, even inside us.

13:02

Aleksandr Bashirov:

What is consciousness? Is it those twinkling neurons or what? We should realize that the harmonizing of our own biomass with the four elements, earth, water, fire and air... is only possible thanks to the 5th element: quintessence. Quintessence is the Latin word for the fifth element. The divine.

14:11

Aleksandr Bashirov:

You can turn everything, even food, into an addiction and become a fucking pink elephant. You can turn everything into something that destroys your life. It is part of that multi-faceted poisonous crystal, as we call it. You do that... with other people. You interact with others when you drink and when you have sex. But in

the course of time this connection weakens.  
Because if you don't... It's all quite egoistic.  
And since it's egoistic it is parasitic. In the end,  
everything is suicide. Or murder. It is destruc-  
tive. It is destruction. Because if we aren't con-  
structive there is no love and also no future.

16:43

Aleksandr Bashirov:

For some, sex lasts two minutes. It's the same  
with intoxication. Two minutes of boozing and  
you're already... a piece of shit, nothing more.  
That extreme... can be reached very quickly.  
But it isn't the goal. It's only a means to... es-  
cape responsibility. To think about nothing  
more. Yes, well... To forget yourself. As Shake-  
speare put it: "To be, or not to be... To die, to  
sleep..." or... And so on. The monologue is well-  
known.

17:56

Mstislav Biserov:

"The night will cover me with a white blanket.  
The snowstorm will cover my tracks.  
I will die quietly in the gutter,  
humbly and inconspicuously.

The ice in my eyes will twinkle  
in the purest shade of blue.  
And my smile will be terribly charming  
on my snow-covered face.  
The wind will open my shirt and  
reveal scars on my tortured arms.  
The white scars of internal battles  
on my sliced arms.

The enlightenment and naive appearance  
of my pose are quite impressive.  
I look carefree and beautiful.  
I am hardly recognizable.

Everything will be right and clear.  
The gate of wisdom will open...  
That is exactly what a fool like me needs.  
Cover my tracks, snowstorm!"



## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

THE GREEN SERPENT was shot in January 2013 under extreme conditions, including average temperatures of -15°C, and mainly edited during a five-week journey on the Trans-Siberian Railway. At our starting point in Moscow, I met my collaborators for the first time, the Finnish cinematographer Joonas Pettersson and the French location sound recording artist and re-recording mixer Xavier Thieulin. We traveled all the way to Olkhon, an island on Lake Baikal, with stops in Murmansk – the largest city north of the Arctic Circle – St. Petersburg, Kotlas, Tomsk and Irkutsk, covering a distance of over 15,500km, searching for the soul of vodka and filming the people who drink it.

Vodka and Russia are an old cliché, for some even a joke, or a tragedy. But vodka in Russia runs deeper. I'd never been to Russia and knew little about Russian vodka culture aside from what I'd read. My journey, and therefore my film, was driven by a desire to find a different Russia – a Russia outside the clichés, the postcards or the myopic views that people often project onto the country. My film explores how drinkers aren't always feeble, violent characters, but rather people with perhaps too much sensitivity.

As I endeavored to find this other Russia, I contemplated who would be my guides. Who are the most sensitive and reliable barometers of a society and its cultural habits? Scientists probably, and for me, as someone interested in the artistic practice even more so, artists. Artists act like mirrors: they reflect life. The fate of the artist is to be highly sensitive and to produce something out of that sensitivity; I wanted to channel that into my discovery and storytelling about vodka. So I decided to talk first with poets, actors and musicians. As Russians, these artists would guide me, sharing their own experience with the pleasures and perils of drinking vodka.

Andrei Tarkovsky writes in his book «Sculpting in Time» about his film heroes: 'I have always wanted to tell of people possessed of inner freedom despite being surrounded by others who are inwardly dependent and unfree; whose apparent weakness is born of moral conviction and a moral standpoint and in fact is a sign of strength.' From this point of view, I wanted to explore the strength of people who are imprisoned by their desire – whether we

see it as healthy or not. At the very beginning I told my crew: let's avoid social romanticism, suspend our judgment, and explore.

Driven by an interest in those substances that enhance life, I intended to show human nature through a prism where vodka is a catalyst for emotions and thoughts. Are we looking for ecstasy and finding escapism? Where does the longing for distraction transform into numbness? Does the lack or absence of something lead us humans to stumble and seek refuge in substances? Drunk or sober, which is the 'real' person? According to who? To explore these questions, I sought passionate vodka drinkers. Those who walk a thin line between euphoric inspiration and bleak visions of a more psychotic nature. On this epic and somewhat utopian journey I traveled thousands of kilometers into the depths of mother Russia only to realize that my film is – despite cultural differences – a very personal one close to home. It's not a film about solutions or defining statements. Because to me, there are none.

THE GREEN SERPENT is a reflection on our behavior as human beings who live contradictory lives – often on the edge of addiction, tinkering with substances able to elevate our spirits and drag us down. The seductive nature of addictive substances and their effects on our lives are often shown and treated in an awkward, moralizing way. As if everybody who cannot 'control' him or herself is weak. As if every form of addiction must be viewed in medical terms – something to be identified and 'fixed.'

Drinking liberates and condemns at the same time. Like everyone on this journey I experienced intense hangovers, naively promising that I'd never drink again. It's impossible to avoid the aggressive but deep-hearted hospitality of the Russians – especially when it comes to vodka. There was no way to hide. So we embraced the 'Stanislavski system' of drinking and filmmaking at the same time. I repeatedly allowed the green snake to bite me and realized I could easily maintain this cycle indefinitely. With the 'opokhmelitsya' – the first drink after a hangover – one feels alive again. Euphoric. Maybe more than ever.

Drinking befalls one. It's probably a bad excuse, but I most often believed the 'theory' that to drink vodka



is to walk that fine line between divine inspiration and utter loss – while walking home each night at ease, for some elusive moment, with the world and what was left of me.

Drinkers die sooner. Alcohol destroys individuals and families. It is the most common and accepted drug of all. It is indefinitely destructive, more so than any other drug. There is no romanticism about this. But like Aleksandr Bashirov in my film says: ‘There are many sides to the same crystal.’

Oscar Wilde wrote: ‘We are all in the gutter – but some of us are looking at the stars.’ **THE GREEN SERPENT** is an introspection about people who drink to catch a glimpse of those stars. To celebrate the dark festival that is life we drink to forget ourselves. To be transformed by the rebirth after the hangover. Sin and redemption, again and again, through the catalyst that is vodka. **THE GREEN SERPENT** is an attempt to capture this cycle of life.

Benny Jaberg

## CREDITS

With the participation of  
(order of appearance)

Mstislav Biserov  
Poet, Murmansk

Aleksandr Nikolaevich Bashirov  
Actor and director, St. Petersburg

Nikolai Mikhailovich Budnev  
Director of Research and Development Center  
of Applied Physics, Irkutsk State University

Written, edited and directed by  
Benny Jaberg

Cinematography  
Joona Pettersson

Sound record and edit, re-recording mix  
Xavier Thieulin

Music  
Marcel Vaid

Additional cinematography, picture design,  
sound composition and Korg MS-20 sounds  
Benny Jaberg

Producers  
Tanya Petrik, Guillaume Protsenko, Benny Jaberg

Production assistant  
Alexandra Marchenko

Research assistant  
Ekaterina Okhonko

On set interpreter  
Alexandra Marchenko, Guillaume Protsenko

Transcriptions and translations  
Alina Lobzina

Technical post production support  
Fabian Wegmüller

Color grading  
Patrischa Freuler

Title and graphic design  
Gregor Huber, glashaus, Zürich

Subtitling  
Film und Video Untertitelung, Berlin

Post production facilities  
Color grading at Plan B Film, Zürich  
Re-recording mix at SDS Studios, Bern  
DCP manufactured at Redsmoke Productions, Zürich

With the financial support of  
Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation  
Accent Bank, Russia  
Migros Kulturprozent  
Succes Cinema

This movie was produced within the Cinetrain 2013:  
„Russian Winter“ project  
[www.cinetrain.net](http://www.cinetrain.net)

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ISAN 0000-0003-8E45-0000-9-0000-0000-A

THE GREEN SERPENT  
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## FESTIVAL AND SPECIAL SCREENINGS

22e Nuit du Court de Lausanne  
Cinéma Pathé Les Galeries, Lausanne  
Program: NATURE HUMAINE Humain, trop humain  
Friday, November 22, 22h30, Galerie 7  
Friday, November 22, 00h30, Galerie 6  
PDF program  
[www.base-court.ch](http://www.base-court.ch)

Experiments In Cinema v14.2  
Special Presentation: VIDEOEX: SWISS EXPERI-  
MENTS 2006–2016  
Wednesday, April 17, 2019, 8:45pm  
Albuquerque, New Mexico, USA  
[www.experimentsincinema.org](http://www.experimentsincinema.org)

KinoKonkav Short: Pre-Art Shorts Night  
Tuesday, June 12, 2018, 20:00  
KinoKonkav, Gerbergasse 30, Basel

20th VIDEOEX Experimental Film & Video Festival  
2018  
Wednesday May 30, 2018, 21:00  
KinoX  
Kunstraum Walcheturm, Zürich  
[www.videoex.ch](http://www.videoex.ch)

31th International Short Film Festival Berlin  
November 12, 2015, 18:00 h, Babylon - Kino 3  
November 14, 2015, 18:00 h, Central Kino 1  
[www.interfilm.de](http://www.interfilm.de)

26th New Orleans Film Festival  
October 14-22, 2015  
New Orleans, USA  
[www.neworleansfilmfestival.org](http://www.neworleansfilmfestival.org)

29th Montenegro Film Festival  
August 1-7, 2015  
Herceg Novi, Montenegro  
[www.ffhn.me](http://www.ffhn.me)

13th International Festival Signes de Nuit,  
Edition Lisboa, Portugal, June 2-7, 2015

15th annual Fargo Film Festival  
International documentary shorts competition  
Wednesday, March 4, 10:50am  
Fargo Theatre  
Fargo, USA  
[www.fargofilmfestival.org](http://www.fargofilmfestival.org)

Careof // Organization for Contemporary Art  
Screening Swiss Videoartists  
Saturday, February 21, 19.00  
Via Procaccini, 4  
Milano, Italy  
[www.viavai-cultura.net/evento/134](http://www.viavai-cultura.net/evento/134)  
[www.careof.org/EN/contacts.html](http://www.careof.org/EN/contacts.html)

February 13/15  
Filmgilde Biel  
Biel, Switzerland  
[www.filmgilde.ch](http://www.filmgilde.ch)

12e Festival international Signes de Nuit  
Compétition internationale Cinéma Transgressif N. 8  
Sunday December 14, 20:00  
Cité Universitaire de Paris, Maison du Norvège  
Paris, France

Alternative film/video festival 2014  
New Swiss works  
Friday December 12, 19:00  
Akademski filmski centar, small theatre  
Belgrade, Serbia  
[www.alternativefilmvideo.org](http://www.alternativefilmvideo.org)

Bucharest International Experimental Film Festival  
BIEFF 2014  
International Competition  
December, 10-14  
Cinema Studio & Elvira Popescu  
Bucharest, Romania  
[www.bieff.ro](http://www.bieff.ro)

16th International Film Festival Bratislava  
Competition of Short Films  
November, 8 - 14  
Bratislava, Slovakia  
[www.iffbratislava.com](http://www.iffbratislava.com)

Impakt Festival 2014  
Program: Panorama #2 Memorizing Morals  
Friday, October 31, 17:00  
Filmtheater 't Hoogt  
Utrecht, The Netherlands  
[www.impakt.nl](http://www.impakt.nl)

17th annual Antimatter media art festival  
Program: Scattered in the Wind

Saturday October 25, 21:00  
at Deluge Contemporary Art  
Victoria BC, Canada  
[www.antimatter.ws](http://www.antimatter.ws)

shnit International Shortfilmfestival  
Sunday October 12, 15.00  
Fassbinder Cinema Club [fassbinder.ru](http://fassbinder.ru)  
Moscow  
[bern.shnit.org](http://bern.shnit.org)

Bushwick Film Festival  
Sunday October 5, 2pm  
Radio Bushwick  
Brooklyn, NY, USA  
[www.bushwickfilmfestival.com](http://www.bushwickfilmfestival.com)

27th Helsinki International Film Festival - Love & Anarchy!  
Tuesday September 23, 15:45  
Cinema Dubrovnik (Andorra)  
Eerikinkatu 11, Helsinki, Finland  
<http://hiff.fi/en/elokuvat/short-but-true/>

20th Encounters Short Film and Animation Festival  
Friday September 19, 10:30  
Watershed Cinema 3  
Bristol, UK  
<http://encounters-festival.org.uk>

4th Swiss Film Panorama São Paulo  
Sunday August 03, 17:00  
CineSesc Cinema,  
Rua Augusta, 2075, Cerqueira César, São Paulo,  
Brazil

Goethe-Institut London  
June 19, 19:00  
50 Princes Gate, Exhibition Road, London

MakeDox Creative Documentary Film Festival 2014  
June 14 - 20  
Skopje, Macedonia  
[www.makedox.mk](http://www.makedox.mk)

Huesca International Film Festival 2014  
June 19, 20:00, Teatro Olimpia de Huesca  
Huesca, Spain  
[www.huesca-filmfestival.com](http://www.huesca-filmfestival.com)

VIDEOEX Experimental Film & Video Festival 2014  
Saturday May 24, 18:30, Saturday May 31, 18:30  
Festivalkino Cinema Z3  
Kunstraum Walcheturm, Zürich  
[www.videoex.ch](http://www.videoex.ch)

Visions du Réel  
Festival international de cinema  
Nyon, Switzerland  
Shown in the Etat d'Esprit section as part of KINO-  
POEZD: RUSSKAYA ZIMA  
Wednesday, April 30, 21:30, Salle de la Colombière  
Thursday, May 01, 16:00 Capitole 2  
[Link to website](#)

Darklight Festival REBOOT  
Festival of Independent Creativity  
Dublin, Ireland  
Sunday 27th April  
[Link to website](#)

The Wisconsin Film Festival  
April 03, 21:15, UW Cinematheque  
[Link to website](#)

Bradford International Film Festival BIFF  
Sunday 30th March, 15.30, 2014, Pictureville Cine-  
ma  
[Link to website](#)

True/False Film Fest  
Columbia, Missouri, USA  
February 27 - March 2, 2014  
[Link to website](#)

International Short Film and Animation Festival of  
Barcelona MECAL  
March 23, 2014  
[Link to website](#)

Solothurner Filmtage 2014  
January 25, Pan Short program, 20:30, Capitol  
January 29, Pan Short program, 17:45, Canva  
[www.solothurnerfilmtage.ch](http://www.solothurnerfilmtage.ch)

Jihlava International Documentary Film Festival  
2013  
October 26, 20:30, DIOD  
[www.dokument-festival.com](http://www.dokument-festival.com)

International Short Film Festival Winterthur 2013  
November 8, 19:30, Casino Theatersaal  
November 9, 17:00, Theater Winterthur  
[www.kurzfilmtage.ch](http://www.kurzfilmtage.ch)

International Premiere  
Vancouver International Film Festival 2013  
First screening: September 30, 09:00 pm at International Village #8  
Second screening: October 08, 10:00 am at Vancity Theatre

World Premiere  
66° Festival del film Locarno 7-17 | 8 | 2013  
First screening: August 13, at 16:15 at the Rialto 1  
Repetition: August 15, at 14.00 at Rialto 1

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Screenings in the course of the Kurzfilmnacht Tour 2014  
[Link to website](#)

Friday April 11, 20:15 Kino Schloss, Aarau  
First program starts at 19:00

Saturday April 12, 20:15 Kino Orient, Wettingen  
First program starts at 19:00

Sonntag, April 13, 20:15 Kino Odeon, Brugg

First program starts at 19:00

Monday, April 14, 20:15 Frick's Monti, Frick  
First program starts at 19:00

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Screenings in the course of the Swiss Film Award nominees week 2014

Geneva, Cinémas du Grütli  
March 19, 17:15  
[www.cinemas-du-grutli.ch](http://www.cinemas-du-grutli.ch)

Zürich, Filmpodium  
March 21, 21:00  
[www.filmpodium.ch](http://www.filmpodium.ch)

## PRESS

### INDIEWIRE REVIEW

,Among Locarno's Short Films, Vodka and Sorcerers'

BY MICHAEL PATTISON

AUGUST 21, 2013 2:00 PM

[Link to whole article](#)

One of the best films I saw at Locarno Film Festival this year was a mere 20 minutes long. Part of the Fuori concorso Shorts section, *The Green Serpent: Of Vodka, Men and Distilled Dreams* (a Swiss-Russian co-production) documents the merits and demerits that vodka holds for three Russian men -- actor Aleksandr Bashirov, poet Mstislav Biserov and physicist Nikolai Mikhailovich Budnev. Written, directed and co-produced by Benny Jaberg, the film had me in stitches as it repeatedly nailed, with both poignancy and hilarity, that relatable contradiction that follows an alcohol binge: emotional fragility and a sympathy for something as banal as a fluffy pet on the one hand, and a desire to see humankind annihilated on the other. Receiving its world premiere at Locarno, Jaberg's film is also a coincidental ode to the recently deceased Russian filmmaker Alexey Balabanov, whose last film *Me Too* (2012) also saw a trio of vodka-swilling men in a doomed pursuit of happiness.

Casually strolling along to the first public screening of *The Green Serpent*, I was surprised to find myself in a queue that extended well beyond the door to the street outside. Literally the last person allowed in, I sat in the stuffy pot of discomfort that was Cinecentro Rialto's 180-seat auditorium, sweating like there was no tomorrow. The uproarious laughter didn't help. But the capacity attendance spoke of an enthusiasm for short films that to this Englishman was as welcome and invigorating as it was alien. In Locarno at least, the public seem game for anything.

Tages Anzeiger

Excerpt of the festival review

BY PASCAL BLUM

NOVEMBER, 2013

A film more worthy of an award was «*The Green Serpent*» by the Zurich based filmmaker Benny Jaberg: *The Journey to the end of the Russian night* is centered around men and their Vodka. Virtually drinking itself into inebriation, the film expands into an experimentally shimmering night opera. It sways over the limitations of the short film format toward a visual delusion where white elephants appear.

## DIRECTOR

Born 23 March 1981 in Baden, Switzerland, Dual Swiss and German Citizen

I studied at the Zurich University of the Arts (ZHdK), where I graduated in 2010 with a Master of Arts in film directing. My first feature length and award-winning documentary for cinema «Daniel Schmid – Le chat qui pense» premiered at the 2010th Berlinale and has been shown at numerous film festivals worldwide. 2013/14 with «The Green Serpent – of vodka, men and distilled dreams» I won the Zurich Film Award and the Swiss Film Award «Quartz» for the best short film amongst other national and international prizes. 2014 Grant of the Aargauer Kuratorium: six month studio scholarship in London. 2014 «prix netzhdk» advancement award. 2014 Founding of MINUSMINUS Film GmbH. 2015 world premiere of the feature length fiction anthology film/ collaborative work «Heimatland» aka «Wonderland» in the course of the international competition of the Festival del Film Locarno. «Heimatland» was nominated for best picture at the Swiss Film Awards and won the Zurich Film Award «Cadrage» 2015, the Bern Film Award 2015 and the Prize for a Film Relevant for Society at Max Ophüls Prize 2016. 2020 German Camera Award for my work for «Not Me – a Journey with Not Vital» in the category documentary. 2021 Nomination best cinematography at Swiss Film Awards with «Not Me». 2021 Working grant Covid-19 of the city of Zurich, Project/work grants by The Landis & Gyr Foundation and the Aargauer Kuratorium.

I'm currently writing my first fiction features «Aheym» and «Everything That's Lost».

Furthermore I'm collaborating with my co-director and filmmaker Maurizius Staerkle-Drux on the essayistic documentary for cinema «Brave New Switzerland» that explores the seminal CRISPr-gene editing technology and its impacts on individuals and the collectives of societies alike (Ensemble Film, Zürich).

In addition to developing and fleshing out my own films, I occasionally work as a cinematographer for other directors and realize projects at the borderland to the visual arts, for example in the course of the collaborative long-term archive art project [www.stillunddunkel.com](http://www.stillunddunkel.com), which we present as the audiovisual performance of the same name.

I'm a father of a daughter. I'm living and working in Zurich, Switzerland.



Member of the European Film Academy EFA, the SFA Swiss Film Academy and the Swiss filmmakers Association ARF/ FDS.

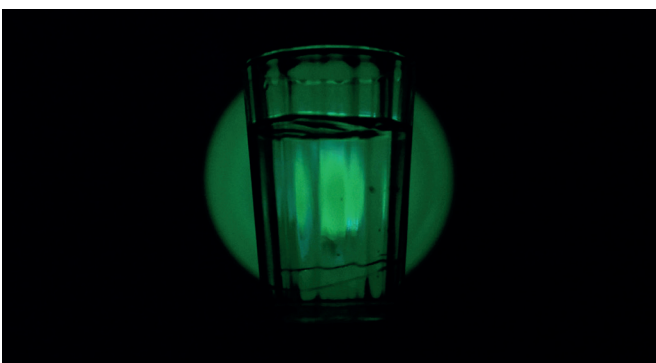
## Films as writer and director (selection)



2015 «Wonderland/Heimatland»  
Episode film for cinema,  
Drama, 99 minutes (one episode), DCP  
Position: writer, director, co-editor  
[www.heimatland-film.ch](http://www.heimatland-film.ch)

A hurricane of catastrophic proportions is brewing over Switzerland. The last five days of the country are imminent. A state of emergency begins. While Rosi creates her own reality and simply closes her windows, stores are being looted. Goran and Peter try in vain to leave the country, and Sandra, a Police-woman, takes refuge in her own emotional disaster. If the insurance companies don't provide security, the Swiss will have to create their own places of refuge. But for those who may survive what does the future hold?

Ten directors of a new generation of filmmakers tell how differently Swiss people cope with the worst imaginable disaster; the fact of being dependent on other countries.



2013 «The Green Serpent –  
of vodka, men and distilled dreams»  
Short documentary, HD/DCP, 21 minutes  
Position: writer, director, editor, producer  
[www.thegreenserpent.ch](http://www.thegreenserpent.ch)

Premiere: 66° Festival del film Locarno 2013  
Awards (selection): «Quartz» Swiss Film  
Award 2014, «Boccalino d'Oro» independ-  
ent critics award for the best short film  
in Locarno. «Cadrage» Zürich Film Award/  
short film price of the city of Winterthur.  
«Best short film» darklight festival Dublin.  
«Audience Award of the Ville de Nyon» at  
the Visions du Réel Festival international  
de cinema in Nyon 2014 for the compilation  
film «Kinopoezd: Russkaya Zima» that con-  
tains «The Green Serpent» amongst six  
other shorts. «Honorable mention» VideEx  
International Experimentalfilm & Video Festi-  
val 2014, Zurich, Switzerland. «Best Docu-  
mentary Short Film», Bushwick Film Festival  
2014, Brooklyn/New York, USA. «Best short  
documentary» 12e Festival international  
Signes de Nuit, Paris, France

THE GREEN SERPENT takes us on a journey into the depths of intoxication: drinking vodka as a transcendental experience. Bitten by the green snake, people enter a twilight zone. The beauty of life becomes indistinguishable from a devastating void where inspiration and destruction equally form.

During this cinematic anti-postcard trip through the Russian winterland, we meet the actor Aleksandr Bashirov, the poet Mstislav Biserov and the physicist Nikolai Budnev. They reveal their relationship with vodka; the inner struggles and the pursuit of divine spirits awakened by drinking.

This brusque Cinemoem explores the potential of vodka to extend the world beyond religion and materialism. THE GREEN SERPENT is a meditation on drinking, an ode to passion not only for inebriated barflies, but for everyone driven by a sense of wonder and a desire for ecstasy.

«It sways over the limitations of the short film.»  
– Tages Anzeiger

Festivals (selection): Locarno International Film Festival, Vancouver International Film Festival VIFF, Jihlava International Documentary Film Festival, Internationale Kurzfilmtage Winterthur, True/False Film Fest, Bradford International Film Festival, Encounters Short Film and Animation Festival





2010 «Daniel Schmid – Le chat qui pense»  
 Co-directed by Pascal Hofmann,  
 documentary for cinema,  
 HDCAM/Super16/etc., 83 minutes  
 writer, director, cinematographer, editor  
 Premiere: Berlinale 2010  
 Awards: Babelsberger media prize 2010  
[www.danielschmid-film.com](http://www.danielschmid-film.com)

Daniel Schmid, who grew up during the 1940s in a Belle Epoque hotel at Flims in the Grisons mountains, already succumbed to the powers of his imagination as a child. Spurred by his grandmother's fantastic stories, he made the hotel foyer his stage and its international array of guests his protagonists. Daniel Schmid became a storyteller – and remained one all his life.

A kaleidoscopic cinematic exploration of the eventful life and legacy of Daniel Schmid, the outstanding Swiss film director.

«A declaration of love to cinema and the longing that it evokes.»

– Tages Anzeiger

Festivals (selection): Dok.Fest Munich, Doku.Arts International Festival for Films on Art Amsterdam, Dokumentarist Istanbul, 46a Mostra Internazionale del Nuovo Cinema Pesaro (Italy), Jerusalem Film Festival, Pusan International Film Festival PIFF (South Korea), 38th Telluride Film Festival (Colorado, USA), Chicago International Film Festival, Vancouver International Film Festival VIFF, Montréal Festival du Nouveau Cinéma, Festival International de Cine de Morelia (México D.F.), 24e FIPA Festival Int. de Programmes Audiovisuels Biarritz (France), 33th Goteborg International Film Festival, 13th Thessaloniki Documentary Film Festival (Greece), 13th Buenos Aires International Film Festival of Independent Cinema Bafici (Argentina)

«A web of light and air, a colorful reminiscence, a poem of melancholia, a collage of art and kitsch, pathos and protest – a film like a séance..»

– Der Tagesspiegel

«Hofmann and Jaberg offer a moving portrait with a cinematic style all their own.»

– Chicago Sun-Times

«A film like in a trance, mysterious surface of existence, memory and nostalgia: with their kaleidoscopic documentary Pascal Hofmann and Benny Jaberg succeed to craft a sympathetic portrait of the Swiss director.»

– Filmdienst

«I can't remember the last time I was so affected by a screen portrayal of an artist's life and work. (...) Brilliant, funny, stirring, self-deprecating, idealistic, diva-ish – a worthy salute to Schmid, as is this outstanding documentary.»

– Strange Flowers blog



2008 «Unfall» aka «Accident»  
 Short film (fiction), Super16, 5 minutes  
 Position: writer, director, co-editor

A car wreck lies in the middle of a meadow. A severely injured young man is talking to a motionless passenger. A stray dog appears. «Unfall» tells the story of a parting of two friends.

«Great cinema can be as simple as this.»

– Werner Herzog



2006 «Wintersong – a film on Dakota Suite»  
 Co-directed by Pascal Hofmann, music  
 documentary, DV/16mm/Super8, 51 minutes  
 writer, director, cinematographer, editor  
 Premiere: visions du réel 2006, festival  
 international de cinéma, Nyon, Suisse  
 Awards: Documentary award of the Alexis  
 Victor Thalberg foundation, Honorable men-  
 tion at visions du réel, [www.wintersong.ch](http://www.wintersong.ch)

2004 «Following»  
 together with Christoph Brünggel  
 video, 5:16 minutes

Exhibited in the course of «Beastly/Tierisch»  
 May 30, 2015 to October 4, 2015  
 Fotomuseum Winterthur (Main Gallery & Gallery)

«Beastly/Tierisch» was curated by Fotomuseum  
 Winterthur (Duncan Forbes, Matthias Gabi and Dan-  
 iela Janser).

Chris Hooson's haunting past makes him pick up his guitar again and again and what emerges is as fragile as life itself. In «Wintersong», the songwriter talks about his family, his musical work, and his day job as a social worker. The mournful music and lyrics of Chris Hooson are combined with rich imagery, creating space for the music to rise in and flood through organically. The film shows the close relationship of art to every day life. «Wintersong» delivers an insight into the source of inspiration of an exceptional musician.

Festivals (selection): idfa International documentary film festival (Amsterdam, Holland), North by Northeast (Toronto), EuroDok, European Documentary Film Festival, (Oslo, Norway), Dokfest, Intern. Documentary film festival Muncich, IndieLisboa Lisbon International Independent Film Festival (Portugal),

«In a better world, music television would look like this.»

– Joerg Adolph

«Rich in ideas.»

– Peter Liechti

«A clear vision of a film that integrates with both the inner spirit and outer reality of its subject. As though the filmmakers and the musicians were all brothers cut from the same cloth.»

– Peter Mettler

## CREW

Joona Pettersson  
Cinematography

Pettersson was born 1983 in Helsinki, Finland. He studied cinematography at the All-Russian State Institute of Cinematography (VGIK) in Moscow and video art at the École Nationale Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs (ENSAD) in Paris.

Pettersson's movies has been seen in international film festivals like Clermont-Ferrand Film Fest, Sheffield Doc/Fest and Edinburgh Film Fest. He works also in the fields of photography and projection design.

Pettersson has visited over 60 countries and he speaks fluently Finnish, Russian, English and French.

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Xavier Thieulin  
Sound recording and edit, re-recording mix

Xavier Thieulin is a sound director. Graduating in 2007 with a Master in Sound Engineering from the ENS Louis-Lumière, Xavier started working in the French film industry. He specializes in postproduction for feature films (which have been selected in Cannes, Toronto and Durban Film Festivals). He also works for documentary makers, on sound design for exhibitions, and teaches sound in foreign countries. Xavier resides between Paris and Berlin.

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## CONTACT

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## WEBSITES

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[www.thegreenserpent.ch](http://www.thegreenserpent.ch)



Festival del film Locarno  
Official selection

DIALOGUE  
LIST

# THE

# GREEN

# SERPENT

of vodka, men and distilled dreams

Written, edited and directed by BENNY JABERG Cinematography JOONA PETTERSSON Sound recording and edit, re-recording mix XAVIER THIEULIN Music MARGEL VAID Additional cinematography, picture design, sound composition BENNY JABERG Producers TANYA PETRIK, GUILLAUME PROTSENKO, BENNY JABERG a MIRUMIR FILM STUDIO and BENNY JABERG production with the financial support of THE MINISTRY OF CULTURE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, ACCENT BANK, MIGROS KULTURPROZENT, SUCCES CINEMA

[www.thegreenserpent.ch](http://www.thegreenserpent.ch)

