

TROPHY



TROPHY takes an in-depth look at the hunting industry in America and Africa through the eyes of the passionate, committed individuals and organizations that drive it. While mainstream media tends to focus on the sensationalism and controversy surrounding trophy hunting, our film digs deeper into the innovative ways that commoditization and regulated hunting of animals can conserve and sustain endangered species. By speaking to hunters, breeders, outfitters, scientists, lawmakers and more, our film explores a cross-section of the industry, unraveling the complex and often misrepresented consequences that imposing economic value on animals can have on conservation.

Though environmentalists and animal rights activists emphatically implore hunters and outfitters to stop killing big game animals the last thing someone who wants to save those animals should advocate is the end of hunting as without hunting there would be no incentive for investing in game. Without an economic support many species in South Africa would already be extinct or on the verge of extinction. One notable animal that might already be extinct if not for hunting revenues is the white rhino.

Indeed, despite rampant poaching, South Africa is currently home to 90% of the world's rhino population. The country has used breeding programs supported by hunting to bring back sable, bontebok, wild ostrich, Cape mountain zebra, black wildebeest and many other species from the brink of extinction and has successfully reintroduced them into areas where they had become locally extinct.

If one wants to see the results of outlawing hunting simply look at Kenya, which banned all hunting in the 1970's and has since lost 85% of its game animals. Professor Melville Saayman, an economist from South Africa's North West University puts it this way: "Kenya banned hunting and currently have a huge game poaching problem, so much so that some of their species face total extinction. Case studies from South Africa have shown that as soon as the hunting of a species is allowed it leads to breeding as well as conservation of the particular species."

In South Africa, private enterprise owns four fifths of all game animals within the country and more than three times the amount of land set aside for conservation by the government. Close cooperation between the hunting industry and the national parks service has benefitted both parties. South African National Parks CEO, Dr. David Mabunda said, "There are people who criticize hunting, but have little knowledge of its contribution to conservation. Hunting is a component of modern wildlife management and it is often used to maintain a healthy population of animals where reserves are too small to allow natural regulation of populations."



A major landholder, John Hume is a perfect example of how private enterprise is contributing to conservation in South Africa. Hume's farm is home to over 1100 rhinos making it the largest privately-owned rhino population in the world. An entrepreneur, conservationist and controversial figure, Hume believes legalizing trade in rhino horn is the one and only way to save the rhinoceros from extinction. His theory is that by periodically harvesting the horn from living rhinos, breeders like himself could undercut the black market and make poaching economically unfeasible.

Hume has been financing his large rhino breeding operation with money he earned in real estate but time is running out for his farm and the rhinos that live on it. Though he has harvested rhino horn worth tens of millions on the black market—currently stored in various South African banks— he can't sell any of it to support his farm unless the laws surrounding trade in rhino horn are changed.



Apart from documenting Hume's farm, Trophy will also feature an outfitter or game reserve operator who would allow us to follow their regular operations and get a view inside running a business that does both hunting and bio-tourism. Here we will show how money collected from hunting not only supports the outfitter himself but also a wide range of local people. This could be in the form of meat donations to local communities or simply seeing ways the hunting drives tourism dollars into the economy.

We are also choosing between several candidates to spotlight the American hunting family in our film. We've encountered many people who learned to hunt with their father and are now passing down the tradition to their children. Though our ideal "American Hunter" protagonist may go on rigorous trips to hunt prize specimens he also makes time to take his children to the range and to hunt locally. We'd like to follow our protagonist family on a trip to Africa where the children will hunt big game for the first time so we can tie in the narrative of the lifelong American hunter to the industry in Africa.

This family would also ideally have or be in the process of building a trophy room so we can tie in with one of the many trophy room designers we have met during our time at the SCI conventions. Increasingly hunters are looking for elaborate installations of hunting trophies that mimic the experience of seeing the animals in the wild. One of the clients we encountered told us, "When people walk into my room I want them to feel like they were on the hunt with me and understand the experience of taking the shot." This desire to share the connection with the outdoors is what is at the heart of so many people's desire to hunt.

Overall, we want to have a journey through the world of the hunting industry from a variety of on-the-ground perspectives and capture how putting economic value on game animals and better understanding sustained utilization supports conservation.



Photos courtesy of Brent Stirton

THE TEAM

SHAUL SCHWARZ (Director)

Shaul Schwarz was born in Israel in 1974. An award-winning photographer and filmmaker, he started his photography career in the Israeli Air Force. Shaul is a contract photographer for TIME Magazine, and his work has also appeared in major international publications such as National Geographic, The New York Times Magazine, Geo, Paris Match, Stern, El Pais, GQ, Marie Claire and Newsweek, among others. His latest documentary, NARCO CULTURA, screened at prestigious international festivals such as Sundance, Berlinale and Hot Docs and was released theatrically by Cinedigm.

REEL PEAK FILMS (Production Company)

Reel Peak Films helps magazines and newspapers produce films with journalistic integrity and cinematic quality. Founder Shaul Schwarz partners award-winning still photographers with seasoned film editors and producers to create content for online publication. This process provides legacy media with web films that enrich reader experience and stand up alongside top-quality written journalism. Reel Peak also produces documentary features, commercials and television content.

PARTS & LABOR (Production Company)

Established in 2004, Parts & Labor is a New York-based film and TV production company with over a decade of experience in director-driven, collaborative filmmaking. Integral to the company's vision is an unwavering dedication to each project, respect for the process, and a true love of film.

Previous Parts & Labor productions include Mike Mills' BEGINNERS starring Ewan McGregor and Christopher Plummer (which won the Academy Award for Best Supporting Actor for Plummer); Aaron Katz's COLD WEATHER; Ira Sachs' KEEP THE LIGHTS ON; Kelly Reichardt's OLD JOY; David Lowery's AIN'T THEM BODIES SAINTS, starring Rooney Mara, Casey Affleck and Ben Foster; Shaul Schwarz's documentary NARCO CULTURA; and Andrew Dosunmu's MOTHER OF GEORGE.

In 2014, Parts & Labor released Ira Sachs' critically-acclaimed LOVE IS STRANGE starring John Lithgow and Alfred Molina through Sony Pictures Classics, and Adam Rapp's LOITERING WITH INTENT starring Marisa Tomei and Sam Rockwell through The Orchard. Matt Ross' debut feature FRANK & LOLA starring Imogen Poots and Michael Shannon recently wrapped production; Robert Edwards' WHEN I LIVE MY LIFE OVER AGAIN starring Christopher Walken and Amber Heard is currently in post-production; and most recently, Robert Eggers' haunting period horror film THE WITCH, premiered at the 2015 Sundance Film Festival 2015 where it won the Best Director Award and was acquired by A24.

Additionally Parts & Labor founded Creative Alliance, an international development and production company based in Copenhagen, with some of Scandinavia's most prominent filmmakers. Through this partnership, Parts & Labor is currently in development on projects from Danish filmmakers Lone Scherfig, and Per Fly, among others.

This Summer, Parts & Labor will be going into production on Joshua Marston's untitled feature starring Rachel Weisz and Michael Shannon and Andrea Arnold's AMERICAN HONEY followed by Fly's political thriller BACKSTABBING, Bill Paxton's THE BOTTOMS as well as Ira Sachs' THE SILENT TREATMENT.

PULSE FILMS (Production Company)

Pulse is an integrated production company who produce award winning feature films, television, commercials, music videos and branded content. Focused on talent-driven storytelling, Pulse has offices in London, New York, Los Angeles and Paris.

In 2011, Pulse released SHUT UP AND PLAY THE HITS about the final days of LCD Soundsystem, directed by Dylan Southern and Will Lovelace, as well as Edward Lovelace and James Hall's Katy Perry film, PART OF ME. Pulse went on to produce WHO IS DAYANI CRISTAL? starring Gael Garcia Bernal, which opened the World Documentary Competition at Sundance 2013. 2014 will see the release of the Nick Cave documentary 20,000 DAYS ON EARTH, which premiered at Sundance and won awards for Best Directing and Best Editing. Most recently Edward Lovelace and James Hall premiered their latest film THE POSSIBILITIES ARE ENDLESS about musician Edwyn Collins and his recovery from a devastating stroke. The film premiered at SXSW Film Festival 2014 to widespread critical acclaim, receiving a 5 star review from The Guardian. Other credits include the Grammy nominated and Grierson Shortlisted Blur documentary NO DISTANCE LEFT TO RUN, THE ROAD TO REDROCKS, THERE ARE NO INNOCENT BYSTANDERS, WEREWOLVES ACROSS AMERICA and LOOK BACK, DON'T STARE. This year will also see the release of the Kevin Smith endorsed dark-comedy THE DIRTIES, marking Pulse's first film acquisition through its distribution division.