

Off World & DocPoppies present

my Ras Tafari Roots

a film by David Verhaeghe & Karel Michiels

David Verhaeghe seeks to uncover the truth behind the big family secret: was his Italian grandmother the lovechild of legendary Ethiopian emperor Haile Selassie, born Ras Tafari Makkonen and still religiously admired today?

MY RAS TAFARI ROOTS is a fascinating and intensive quest of a young European who searches for his African roots via forgotten family members in Italy and Cyprus. In the end it is the natural mysticism of the Jamaican Rastas that seems to point David towards the imperial family. Will he succeed in discovering the truth about his ancestry?

with Max Romeo, Mystic Revelation of Rastafari, 'brother' Sam Clayton,...

On January 19, 2016 DocPoppies shows My Ras Tafari Roots in:

Bruges	Cinema Lumiere	www.lumierecinema.be
Kortrijk	Budascoop	www.budakortrijk.be
Ghent	Sphinx	www.sphinx-cinema.be
Antwerp	Cartoons	www.cinamacartoons.be
Heist-op-den-berg	CC Zwaneberg	www.zwaneberg.be
Brussels	Cinema Aventure	www.cinema-aventure.be
Leuven	Cinema Zed	www.cinemazed.be
Koersel	The Roxy Theatre	www.theroxytheatre.be



Directed by	David Verhaeghe
Script	David Verhaeghe en Karel Michiels (aka Jah Shakespeare)
Director of Photography	Tom Vantorre
Edited by	Jochen Verstraete
Original music	Skip McDonald
Duration	80 minutes
Technical details	DCP - 5.1 stereo spoken in Dutch and English subtitles in Dutch and French

My Ras Tafari Roots is an Off World production with support from the Flanders Audiovisual Fund and the Belgian Federal Tax Shelter, with the participation of VRT-Canvas



www.offworld.be



www.vaf.be



www.flandersimage.com



www.canvas.be

LONG SYNOPSIS

David Verhaeghe loves reggae music. The songs, simple but straight from the heart, the brilliant expression of authentic suffering. Reggae is sufferer's music. But most of all it is the music of the Rastafarians, the Jamaicans who recognize in Haile Selassie (the former emperor of Ethiopia) the reborn Christ.

When during a reggae concert, an artist asks the audience once again to hail Ras Tafari, David feels the artist is addressing him personally. And when he cries 'Jah!', everyone knows what the answer should be, and they – loudly – shout 'Rastafari!'

With that Ras Tafari (as Selassie was called before he became emperor in 1930) David has a special bond.

Forty years after his mother tried in vain to discover the history of her family, David follows in her footsteps. Was his grandmother, his mother's mother, an extramarital daughter to legendary emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia?

David decides to follow two trails. Through his mother Concetta and family members in Belgium, Italy and Cyprus, he wants to unearth tangible evidence of his grandmother's origins. He hopes to find it in Addis Ababa, capital of Ethiopia, where his grandmother (Nonna) grew up, and his mother was born. The memories of Concetta guide the story. Together, mother and son visit the aged stepsisters of Nonna in Cyprus. The two families have never met and appear to have a different view on the facts.

The second trail brings David to the rastas, followers of rastafari, originating from a Jamaican spiritual movement made popular worldwide by Bob Marley. It were the rastas who indirectly inspired David to unearth his family history. They draw a very different, more positive image of Haile Selassie than he has received from the media. Rastafarian men and women cherish a special bond with Selassie. Some elders can recall meeting the man, others know him by their inner belief and conviction. If Selassie was not Jah (God) himself, then at least the greatest and most enlightened leader the black people have ever known.

More than enough reasons to visit several notorious rastas in Jamaica and in Shashamane, Ethiopia, where back then the emperor gave a piece of land to the people who had supported him during World War II.

As if it were destiny, the rastas bring David in contact with the imperial family, Zarah Yacob in particular, grandson to Haile Selassie and rightful heir to the throne (if Ethiopia were to become a monarchy once more, which is highly unlikely). It's the rastas who complete the circle after arousing David's curiosity before. Natural mystic, in the words of Bob Marley.

ABOUT DIRECTOR DAVID VERHAEGHE

David Verhaeghe obtained his Master's Degree in Audiovisual Arts in 1999 at the KHLim in Genk. During his studies he put together a number of different short films and he was already working at the Flemish public broadcaster, VRT, as an intern. As soon as he completed his studies he was able to start working as a director at VRT. Throughout the years, David has acquired experiences in a number of different fields, from promotion spots to documentaries. In recent years, David has specialized in producing documentaries for Canvas, the more in-depth channel of the public broadcaster, for example "Publiek Geheim", "Belpop", "Wetenschap redt de wereld" and "Triq Slama Mohamed. Reis in vrede" (nominated for Prix Europa). In 2010 he took a masterclass in Storytelling by Robert McKee. "My Ras Tafari Roots" is a project that has been waiting to be told for many years. In 2016 it will finally happen, David will share his story with the rest of the world.

ABOUT PRODUCER OFF WORLD

Off World is an independent production company based in Brussels, capital of Flanders, Belgium and Europe. Off World's main goal is to produce international author documentaries. Over the last few years, the company has built up a large portfolio and a solid reputation as delegate producer and co-producer of many creative and original documentaries.

Select filmography: **Archibelde**, a series by Olivier Magis and Sofie Benoot, VRT- Canvas, RTBF and Playtime Films // **Red Star Line**, a film by Daniël Cattier and Fabio Wuytack, in coproduction with VRT- Canvas, RTBF, Eklektik, RSL Museum – sold in more than 10 countries // **Rêve Kakudji**, a film by Ibbe Daniels and Koen Vidal, in coproduction with VRT- Canvas - Official selection IDFA 2013 // **Reinoud, my sculptor**, a film by Blaise D'Haese, in coproduction with RTBF (3 awards) // **Little Heaven**, a film by Lieven Corthouts, in coproduction with DG-D, Lichtpunt – IDFA 2012 (+20 festival selections/ 3 awards) // **The Boy is Gone**, a film by Christoph Bohn, in coproduction with Simple Production, VRT-Canvas, BRF, RTBF (BE) and SeriousFilm (NL) // **The Last Passage**, a film by Iurre Telleria and Enara Goikoetxea, in coproduction with RTBF (BE) Moztu Filmak, ETB (ESP) and Amo Film, France Télévisions (FR) // **Kongo**, a film by Samuel Tilman, in coproduction with Eklektik (BE), RTBF, ARTE, VRT-CANVAS // **Leaving Mandela Park**, a film by Saskia Vredeveld, in coproduction with Zeppers Film & TV, IKON (NL) and Lichtpunt (BE) // **La Royale Harmonie**, a film by Manu Bonmarriage, in coproduction with RTBF // **The Promised Land**, a film by Luckas Vander Taelen and Pascal Verbeken, in coproduction with Canvas en RTBF // **Paul Dujardin, The Long March**, a film by Manu Riche, in coproduction with Canvas, RTBF, & ARTE // **My Future**, a film by Lieven Corthouts, broadcasted by ARTE, TV5 MONDE, TV3, TVI24,... for the complete filmography, visit www.offworld.be

FOR SCREENERS, MORE INFORMATION OR INTERVIEWS WITH THE FILMMAKERS, PLEASE CONTACT:

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