

JULIE GAYET & NADIA TURINCEV
PRESENT

TRIBECA
FILM
FESTIVAL

Where do you belong in a country built on your people's ashes?



THE RIDE

A FILM BY
STÉPHANIE GILLARD

SALES CONTACT

Rouge International - Thomas Lambert
thomas@rouge-international.com
www.rouge-international.com

PRESS CONTACT

Magali Montet
magali@magalimontet.com
magalimontet.blogspot.com

JULIE GAYET & NADIA TURINCEV
PRESENT

TR|BECA
F|LM
FEST|VAL

THE RIDE

A FILM BY
STÉPHANIE GILLARD

87 Min - France / USA - Color HD – 1:77 - 5.1 - 2016

www.rouge-international.com

STYLE

The film only spans the time of the ride and focuses on a few of the riders. Step by step, we follow the events and difficulties of this adventure, using a direct, observational style. By shooting this way, the film focuses on the stories and emotions that surface during the journey, and in turn, cinematically places the audience in the moment. No voice-over, no archives, no «specialists» or «historians», no political speeches... History is told here by today's Native Americans, with their own words.

The film tries to get close to their humanity, by their words, their moves, their silences, their looks, their hesitations, their emotions and their laughs. The stories they tell us are often atrocious but never maudlin. They have their unique style, a form of comedy close to the black humour, mixed with distance.

The visual context is very strong: Lakota riders that arise in the Great Plains, along a highway, between gleaming trucks and gas stations. All along the film we are in this opposition between nature, the open land on which they once lived, and the disposable, plastic universe of today's America. Barbed wire fences are everywhere as boundaries that the tribe cannot cross, even on their own reservation.

Music accompanying the film is very important: country music they listen to, traditional songs and round dances they sing with the drums.

SYNOPSIS

The Ride takes us along the annual 300-mile journey through the South Dakota Badlands, where young Lakota Sioux ride horseback and reflect upon the history of their ancestors, many of whom were massacred at Wounded Knee in 1890. This intimate, stunningly photographed account captures the thoughts and emotions of the young riders and the guidance and wisdom of the adults.



STÉPHANIE GILLARD

INTERVIEW

How did you get to know about the Sioux memorial ride which takes place every year in December?

I have long been captivated with Jim Harrison's books. I wanted to make a documentary about him and especially about his vision of history in the USA and how the Indian genocide is the original sin of this country. In 2009, I came across a photography book by Guy LeQuerrec for which he had written the preface. I discovered powerful pictures from this annual ride.

One of them depicted Sioux Riders braving blizzards on horseback, riding down a snow covered hill, their faces covered with iced-over bandanas and ski masks. In another one, the riders held feathered staffs high in the air as they rode along an icy road, followed by a long line of old Chevys. Another one of them reminded me of a photo by Edward Curtis.

I found these pictures really moving, as if the US history was springing up on the side of an interstate road, in a country where you are always told there is none.

It was miles away from the usual "clichés" I was used to hear about Native Americans nowadays. I saw pride, I saw people fighting for their culture, not even in a political sense, but above all for themselves.

I immediately thought that I wanted to meet the people who were doing that and searched everywhere for a way to get in touch with them. Even though these photos dated from 20 years ago, I knew that this journey was still happening each year. Eventually, I found a phone number on Facebook. When I called, a woman told me that if I was interested, I only had to come.

How did you manage to be accepted by the Sioux people?

As I wanted to be part of it, I went on the Ride for the first time in December 2009. I was a bit shy, I knew I was a foreigner to everybody, but I became more familiar with the participants day after day. I slept in the same gyms, I helped with the horses and meals whenever possible and I listened to them, laughed with them. I really wanted to live the adventure with them. Every day, they offered to let me ride a horse, but I didn't feel legitimate enough for that commemoration. In fact, I felt more like a representation of the enemy. They reassured me, saying that the ride was all part of the process of forgiving and remembering. Nevertheless, I preferred to jump in a different pick-up truck every day and speak with the support crew. In Throughout the process, I discovered their stories, their points of view, the paths they had taken and why they chose to go on this journey.

One day, a rider told me that he had found a horse, and that I should saddle it and take the reins. What followed was seven hours straight on a trail with -17°F temperatures and sleeping in a car at the Big Foot Pass, despite the snow seeping inside. Christmas was on





The Ride has just been selected for the Tribeca Film Festival in New York. What are your expectations regarding the American audience and their reactions? Is there a political dimension to your movie?

I am excited because TFF is a great festival! I am also anxious as I wonder how people will react to a French woman dealing with the US history. However, showing the film in the US is really important to me. This film is about the Ride itself, but it is also about the event that the riders commemorate: Wounded Knee is the last massacre that sealed the end of the Indian wars. It's not just any event and the film is very political because of this historical context. The film is about how history has shaped the present. On this journey, the riders tell us about their life and about what happened on the same route 125 years ago. They talk about what the United States have done to their nation and its representatives for generations: evangelism, acculturation, deletion of the language, theft of land continuing insidiously.

During the 15 days of the Ride, the participants raise their heads high and are not in the miserable state in which they are so often depicted. They are no longer victims, assisted, alcoholics, unemployed, suicidal, people with no future and no culture. They are rather facing the cold, blizzards, snow, hunger, as well as the eyes of others. They are courage, solidarity and dignity. Galloping through the Great Plains, they become, for two weeks, the members of a nation that once was free.

the following day with an actual Blizzard. We had to wait for hours in the wind, holding the horses so that they don't run away. Finally, after feeling like we had survived a bitter-cold version of hell, we found our paradise at a tiny gas station. In this case, paradise consisted of a liter of java, a pack of chips and cigarettes. I think the Ride stole my heart that day and now I can't imagine being somewhere else for Christmas. I had an idea of the severity of this journey when I undertook it, but it was well beyond what I imagined.

In February, I went there for a second time. I toured three reservations in an effort to see again everyone I met on the Ride.

This second meeting was even more powerful. They were surprised and happy to see me again, especially the children. People usually do not come back for a visit. Many on the reservations feel that the world is not interested in them. They also were excited that I brought them some of the photos I had taken, as most of the media come and leave without showing any of what they filmed or photographed.

I did the Ride again in December 2010 and came back over the summer 2011 to spend more time with the Lakota people and learned more about their daily routines and lives. We have kept in touch since then... They have become my second family.



They pull themselves together in their history so it is not forgotten, to forgive, too, to say the importance of memory and to transmit it to the younger generation, together with their values. This ride is not an act of protest, it is a path to become themselves, to become Lakota. The journey follows a trail of tears but it is lived by the riders as a joyful moment and it makes it a very compelling and uplifting story. Hence, it is also important to the world, because it shows a great example of humanity, generosity, courage and wisdom, at a time where those values tend to be forgotten around the world.

Your movie is visually stunning, especially given the fact that you only had a couple of weeks to shoot it and conditions were difficult. Can you tell us more about the experience on set?

We were a small crew of 4 people: Martin de Chabaneix, the cinematographer, Erwan Kerzanet, the sound engineer, Carla Fiddler, a Lakota rider who became a friend, was our driver and I. In November, I introduced my team to some of the riders and we went on the same road so that they would know the places the riders go across. We almost made a story board of some shots we wanted in specific places... Even though we knew that our plans would be all scrambled by reality, to make it different.

You don't know which roads the horses are going to take as the scouts are different every day and from one year to the other. They follow the road according to their memory of the geography, and the landscape changes each year depending on whether there is snow or not. You don't know what the weather will be like. A blizzard would have changed the features of the ride and would have complicated the shooting as Martin's fingers would have probably frozen! Not to mention that Jimmy had an accident and had to go to hospital in Rapid City for 2 days, and AJ had to go to a funeral... In documentary filmmaking, you can't hold people against their will and things can change from one second to the other on such a ride.

Besides these unexpected events, the main difficulty for the camera and for the sound were horses and pick up trucks. We are not in a fiction, so we would never know what the horses would do or where the pick ups would park, keeping their engine on... On the second day, after the sequence with the bronc, Erwan decided to record all the sound with the boom.

Another difficulty was the end of the ride as it is always very sudden. After the riders arrive at Wounded Knee, there is a gathering at Little Wound School in Pine Ridge. The next day there is a ceremony at Wounded Knee Cemetery but it is impossible to film because it is sacred. After that, the riders jump in their cars and go back straight to their home. For the Standing Rock Riders, it takes more than a 6 hour drive. So I decided to stop the film at the gathering in Little Wound School. It made sense to end the film with this circle dancing as this shape is important in the Lakota tradition and also because one origin of this massacre was because their ancestors were dancing the Ghost Dance.

There is one sequence which is particularly memorable, in which the three young boys in the car are watching and commenting a movie we never get to see. Which movie was it?

Little Big Man by Arthur Penn. The kids had brought along a DVD of the film. On that cold resting day in Bridger, there was nothing to do. So they crashed into our pick up truck and started watching it. We had to go to the gas station so we took them with us. I was driving but I had seen this film so many times when I was a kid that I remembered it just by its soundtrack. I felt this had to be in the film: young kids watching the moment their ancestors defeated the US army. I glanced at Martin and Erwan to start have them film this and I was only playing with the sound button of the player, depending on whether I wanted their reactions or the film sound...

In all your documentaries, children seem to have an important place in your work. Could you explain why?

I get along with kids and teenagers really easily, I don't know why... It is true that there is not much else in common in my films (Football, Tuaregs, Native Americans and Fencing...). I just can tell you that Jesse has the same kind of mischievous look as Souley in Little Princes and the Sand School, or Stanjik in Lames Ultramarines. The funny thing is that film after film, my "hero" is getting older, as if I were filming the same kid growing around the world. All of them are strong characters who have a goal and want to create their future. They are still innocent, but this mischievous look they have might tell me that they are aware of the difficulties of life and that they know how to play with them.

I was particularly inspired by the Lakota youth that I met during my visits: the candid smile of Jesse and his love for horses, Wolf's laugh when he sings in the heart of the night, Carla's doubts about her future, T.C.'s seriousness as he considers joining the army, Chang who was looking for me each time he wanted to play a game, and Ramey who always invited me to dance - I spent magical moments with all of these young people. Throughout the Ride, we laughed, cried, got hungry and cold together. I heard their voices, their doubts and their stories. Though they are so young, they often astonished me with their maturity, especially after a childhood where they were given little hope for a bright future. I asked myself how can one live with this strange duality: to be American and Sioux at the same time, to keep that question silent while often not knowing the answer.

STÉPHANIE GILLARD

BIOGRAPHY

Stéphanie Gillard was born in 1973 in Paris. After studying law, she pursued a film degree at ESAV in Toulouse, and started working as an assistant director and production assistant. Thereafter she produced and directed her first documentary, «Une histoire de ballon», about the meeting point of oral tradition and soccer culture in Cameroon (aired on Arte, TV5, RTBF, France Ô, NHK ; Etoile de la SCAM 2007, Special jury prize at the international sports film festival - Palermo 2007). She directed a second documentary in 2009 in coproduction with France Ô, «Les petits princes des sables» (special jury mention for documentary at the international Pan-African Film festival of Cannes 2009 ; Second jury prize at the Caméra des Champs film festival 2010). Her third documentary, «Lames Ultramarines», is about young fencers from the French West Indies who dream of joining France National épée team (coproduction France Ô, Best documentary prize FEMI-Guadeloupe 2016). The Ride is her first feature documentary which will be theatrically released.

FILMOGRAPHY

- 2015 **THE RIDE**
Feature documentary 87' (Rouge International)
- 2014 **LAMES ULTRAMARINES**
Documentary 52' (Palavire production – France Ô)
- 2009 **LES PETITS PRINCES DES SABLES**
Documentary 52' (Ekla Production - France Ô - TV5)
- 2005 **UNE HISTOIRE DE BALLON**
Documentary 54' (Oz - Arte - France Ô - TV5 - NHK)



**DIRECTOR**

Stéphanie Gillard

WRITER

Stéphanie Gillard

FEATURING

Jesse James White, Jimmy White,
Manaja Hill, A.J. Agard,
Ron His Horse is Thunder

CINEMATOGRAPHER

Martin de Chabaneix

SOUND

Erwan Kerzanet
Serge Rouquairol
Eric Tisserand

EDIT

Laure Saint-Marc

MUSIC

Vincent Bourre

PRODUCTION

ROUGE INTERNATIONAL
Julie Gayet & Nadia Turincev

COPRODUCERS

EZEKIEL FILM PRODUCTION
Antoun Sehnaoui

CINÉ 8

Etienne Mallet, David Gauquié, Julien
Deris, Franck Elbase, Nicolas Lesage

**WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF
EQUIDIA LIFE**

**WITH THE SUPPORT FROM
CNC**

PROCIREP - ANGOA
MOULIN D'ANDÉ-CÉCI



ROUGE
INTERNATIONAL

ezeziel
FILM PRODUCTION



EQUIDIA



PROCIREP

ANGOA

Moulin d'Andé-Céci
Centre des écritures
cinématographiques

www.rouge-international.com