

MUSICWOOD

THE DOCUMENTARY

A MAXINE TRUMP FILM
musicwoodthefilm.com

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CONTACT:

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facebook: facebook.com/Musicwoodthefilm
twitter: @MUSICWOODDoc
trailer: musicwoodthefilm.com

RUNNING TIME:

80 min

LINKS TO FURTHER MATERIALS:

Press Articles: musicwoodthefilm.com/press
Hi-rez Images: flickr.com/photos/musicwood/

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SYNOPSIS

The world's most famous guitar-makers are on a desperate mission: to stop Native American loggers from devastating a primeval forest, threatening their own culture and the future of the acoustic guitar.

Musicwood is about an unknown slice of American history, an unexpected and incredibly serious threat to the acoustic guitar, and a conflict that resists easy interpretations. It is a story where Native American tribes, Corporations, the US Government, and radical environmental organizations all clash in an epic battle over culture and natural resources.

It is about the intersection of people, money and wood. It is a deep look into the so-called "war of the woods", and an upending of our simplistic ways of looking at Native American landowners and Corporations. But most of all, Musicwood is an adventure-filled journey to the remote, primeval and majestic coastal rain forest of Southeast Alaska — and a conflict where it is often hard to tell the good guys from the bad.

This documentary delves into the cultural, spiritual and economic history of the Native American tribes who call Southeast Alaska their home. It begins with the startling revelation that these Native Americans, in negotiations with the government, formed a corporation that is devastating their own homeland — clear-cutting enormous tracts of land with little concern for its impact.

What's more, this devastated land is also part of the Tongass National Forest, the largest National Forest in the USA, and one of the most controversial forests on the face of the earth.

Into this scenario comes an unusual band of world-renowned guitar-makers. The Presidents and CEO's of the biggest and most famous guitar companies on the planet — Gibson, Martin and Taylor — on an impossible mission: to negotiate with the Native corporation and change the way this forest is logged before it's too late for acoustic guitars.

If they don't, and the logging continues unabated, they will run out of acoustic-guitar quality Spruce in less than ten years. The acoustic guitar as we know it will be no more.

Enter Greenpeace, the most radical environmental group in the world, with a daring plan. They want to save this forest at all costs, but are they willing to make deals with their traditional adversaries — American white male CEO's and Native American loggers — to get what they want?

The Musicwood Documentary follows this unique story from the beginning. We travel to Southeast Alaska with the guitar-makers for their meetings with Sealaska, and experience firsthand the intensity and hostility with which they are greeted.

We spend time in the guitar-makers' workshops and factories, witnessing the beautiful tradition of craftsmanship, in which acoustic guitars are still brought to life.

We explore the Tongass National Forest, an ancient forest with trees that can grow for centuries. These are the last of the giant primeval trees to be found in the US, in an incredibly remote and rare forest, only accessible by boats and helicopters. The beauty of this forest, one of the last wild places on earth, is brought to life with astonishing on-the-ground and aerial photography.

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Featuring exclusive performances with some of the most exciting acoustic musicians of the day, Musicwood is a culture clash of staggering proportions. Native American loggers, CEO's with their own agenda, and a radical environmental group, all battling over a forest that is the last of its kind on the planet. Musicwood upends our simplistic view of indigenous peoples and the past, with a story where it's often impossible to tell the good guys from the bad.

The result is a funny, complex and heartbreaking battle over natural resources, and a profound cultural conflict.



(Guitar makers in the Tongass National Forest)

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DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT by Maxine Trump

I was producing a short film on the effect of deep sea trawling on subsistence fishing for the Aleut Eskimos in the Bering Sea of Alaska, when I became fascinated with this unique, incredibly striking, and remote area. While hearing about the destruction of the sea bed I also heard about the very real threat to the destruction on the land, the forests that made up some of the last pristine wildernesses on earth.

The largest environmental group in the world, Greenpeace, approached the guitar industry to vocalize the very real threat of logging on the disappearance of these majestic trees and the loss to the guitar industry, and tell Sealaska what would happen to guitars if they ran out. This new approach to environmental activism felt like a new story, a story that the world didn't know was happening. But what I didn't understand was how long the political battle over the Tongass had taken, and that every stakeholder in the area is fighting for it.

Then the story got even more complicated when Native American rights issues entered the frame. It had originally seemed like a simple story: a ravaged forest whose logging was affecting the acoustic guitar. But the more we looked into it, the more we found it had a thousand characters and a thousand voices. Now we understood why no one had made a film about this region before, the largest National Forest in the USA.

Working with our editor, we simplified the politics as much as possible without doing disservice to anyone's issues, and let the passion, the music, and the spiritual essence of the film take over. We had to make sure we weren't taking on anyone's agenda; we let the facts speak for themselves, and got to the truth of the situation.

The threat to guitars, that for centuries had been made the same way, was integral to this story. Even Gibson Guitars, one of the largest and most well known American brands, had been affected by this very real issue. Could they really have become so desperate in their need for tonewoods, that they had imported illegal wood, supporting a trade that also deals in drug trafficking and human slavery? But could a forest right here in the US have hope, could we save a home grown supply of wood for the guitar industry.

We had to ask other difficult questions, like how could a Native American corporation run by Haida, Tlingit and Tsimshian tribes run out of their own resources by over-logging all of their own trees? It seemed totally incongruous to everything Native Americans stood for, or did it?

The more I learned and read about the Haida tribe, the more I became aware of their culture. Although there is no doubt that the US Government cheated them out of full ownership of all of their original land, I felt I had to look at this story in a different way. The Haida could be seen as a tribe that historically knew how to trade, and were familiar with trading with outsiders. It has been hard, but critical, to try and put emotion aside and see Sealaska for the profit-making corporation that they are. The sad thing is that this corporation represents a minority's voice. With all tribal members as shareholders unfortunately Sealaska's practice of clear cutting represents one viewpoint not shared by everyone. Was this really what was happening? Examining these questions provided for a powerful, unique and rarely heard story.

Music is always used as a powerful vehicle in making opposing sides come together, but the question this time is whether music can save itself.

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MEET THE FILMMAKERS

Director Maxine Trump

Maxine worked for the BBC in London for seven years as a development executive for scripted comedy. This is the first feature documentary Maxine has directed. She has directed a long running series of interstitial social issue documentaries for the TV network TNT in the USA. She has also directed a series of fifteen short interstitials for the network Sundance Channel. Her short film "Silent Life" was nominated at the IFC/ARPA Hollywood film festival. She also made a ten-minute documentary for the MSC campaign expedition to the Bering Sea, Alaska, and a seven-minute documentary for the New York City Greenmarket organization and a short documentary for the FSC. She has won BDA awards for her work in television in the USA, for National Geographic, PBS, BBC America, Animal Planet, etc. She is a freelance director having worked on numerous commercial projects for network TV living in Brooklyn, NY.



Producer and Editor Josh Granger

Josh worked as story producer for the first season of the award-winning real-life series "Random 1" on A&E. He has also produced a number of 60-minute shows for National Geographic Television: an episode of their flagship Explorer series, two episodes of "Dogtown," a special on the stadiums of the World Cup and the Indian Air Force-centered "Mission Udaan." As a producer and editor he has worked for the past 15 years producing and editing documentary programming for channels such as A&E, TBS, TNT, National Geographic and BBC America, worked for 3 years in the marketing department at The Learning Channel and has received two Broadcast Design Awards for his work in television.



Director of Photography

Director of Photography Curt Wallin taught rain forest ecology in Guatemala and Belize before discovering his true calling as a cinematographer. Curt has worked extensively for the International Olympic Committee and filmed over 30 features for them. He has worked as a DP for many broadcasters including NBC, PBS, BBC, Discovery Channel, National Geographic Channel, A&E, History Channel, etc.

Consultants

Native American Consultant Jeremy Katzeek is currently a resident of New York City, but was born in Juneau, S.E Alaska. He is from the Tlingit tribe and of Aleut Eskimo descent. He is a shareholder of Sealaska and has proved invaluable in his ability to provide the Native Alaskan perspective on resources and cultural history within the Tongass..

Forest Biology Consultant Dave Person, is a research biologist who has worked for the Alaska Department of Fish and Game for 17 years and is a resident of Ketchikan, Alaska.

Science Consultant and Curriculum Designer Dr. Colin Beier is a Professor of Ecology at SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry and wrote his doctorate about the Tongass forest.

Website Consultant for Audience Engagement Alice Rothwell developed the award-winning interactive BBC website to build momentum and launch the latest BBC Nature series entitled "Human Planet."

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PRODUCTION CREDITS

Directed and Produced by
Maxine Trump

Edited and Produced by
Josh Granger

Cinematography by
Curt Wallin

Sound Recording
Roger Davis

Additional Camera
Lily Henderson
Ben Donnellon
Sarah Anderson
Maxine Trump
Matthew Dyer
Larry Edwards
Eric Phillips-Horst
Joe Tyler
Adam Walderman

Additional Editing
Maxine Trump

Kaki King performance
Cinematographer
Lily Henderson

Sound
Michael Guggino

Gaffer
Sean Hanley

Grip
John Meese

Production Assistant
P.J.Kryfko

Yo La Tengo performance
Cinematographer
Lily Henderson

Sound
Rich Gin

Camera 2
Eric Phillips-Horst

Gaffer
Zeynep Catal

Camera Assist
Jaymes Westfall

Production Assistant
Sara Subbaraman

Additional Sound
Eric Snyder
Janani Sreenivasan

Music Supervisor
Brandon Mason

Original score by
Clean Cuts Music

Clean Cuts Composers
Chris Kennedy
Austin Caughlin
Louis Weeks

Clean Cuts Music Mixer
Rich Isaac

Post Production Audio
Clean Cuts Music and Sound Design

Supervising Sound Editor
Jared Bartlett

Post Production Audio Supervisors
Jack Heyrman
Paul Perret
Tom Dao

Re-Recording Mixer
Jared Bartlett

Sound Design and Foley
Jared Bartlett
Cadell Cook
John Rigatuso
Archie Moore

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Post Production Audio Coordinators

Tetiana Giovane

Julie Mays

Title Design, Visual Effects & Graphics

Cerebral Lounge

Cerebral Lounge Creative Directors

LeRoy R. Konen, Jr

Giles D'Souza

Cerebral Lounge Designers/Animators

Chris DiNardo

Sheena Callage

Jessica Johnson

Tag Gieselmann

Cerebral Lounge Post Producers

Alissa Liebert

Brent Reese

Cerebral Lounge Post Production

Coordinators

Kate McCoy

Ali Noyes

Additional Graphics

James Crothers

Color Grader

Begonia Colomar

Stills photographer

Hilary Benas

Legal

Chris Perez, Donaldson + Callif

Consulting Producer

Doug Block

Distribution Consultant

Peter Broderick

Editing Consultant

Matthew Hamachek

Consulting Ecologist

Colin Beier

Co-Producers

Jack Heyrman

Lee Konen

DC Collective

Associate Producers

James Crothers

Peter Davis

Dana Deskiewicz

Barbara H. Gray

Jean Lavenant & Alison Green

Stephanie Means

Greg Poulos

Richard Taylor

Digital Consultant

Alice Rothwell

Production Interns

Meredith Watt

Matthew Macvey

Dale Pittner

Production Consultant

Jeremy Katzeek, Tlingit tribe

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