

WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY: SIMON SCHNEIDER

CO-WRITTEN BY: LIA KULAKAUSKAS

PRODUCED BY: MAXWELL KAGAN

CINEMATOGRAPHY BY: ELIOT GRIGO

EDITED BY: JASON LUO



# DEGREE OF CERTAINTY

A 15 min AFI Conservatory Thesis Film



**50 YEARS AGO, A SMALL  
GROUP OF PEOPLE HAD THE  
CHANCE TO SAVE THE WORLD.**

**THEY DECIDED AGAINST IT.**

**AND CREATED THE MASSIVE  
ENVIRONMENTAL AND  
MISINFORMATION CRISIS WE  
LIVE IN TODAY.**



# STORY



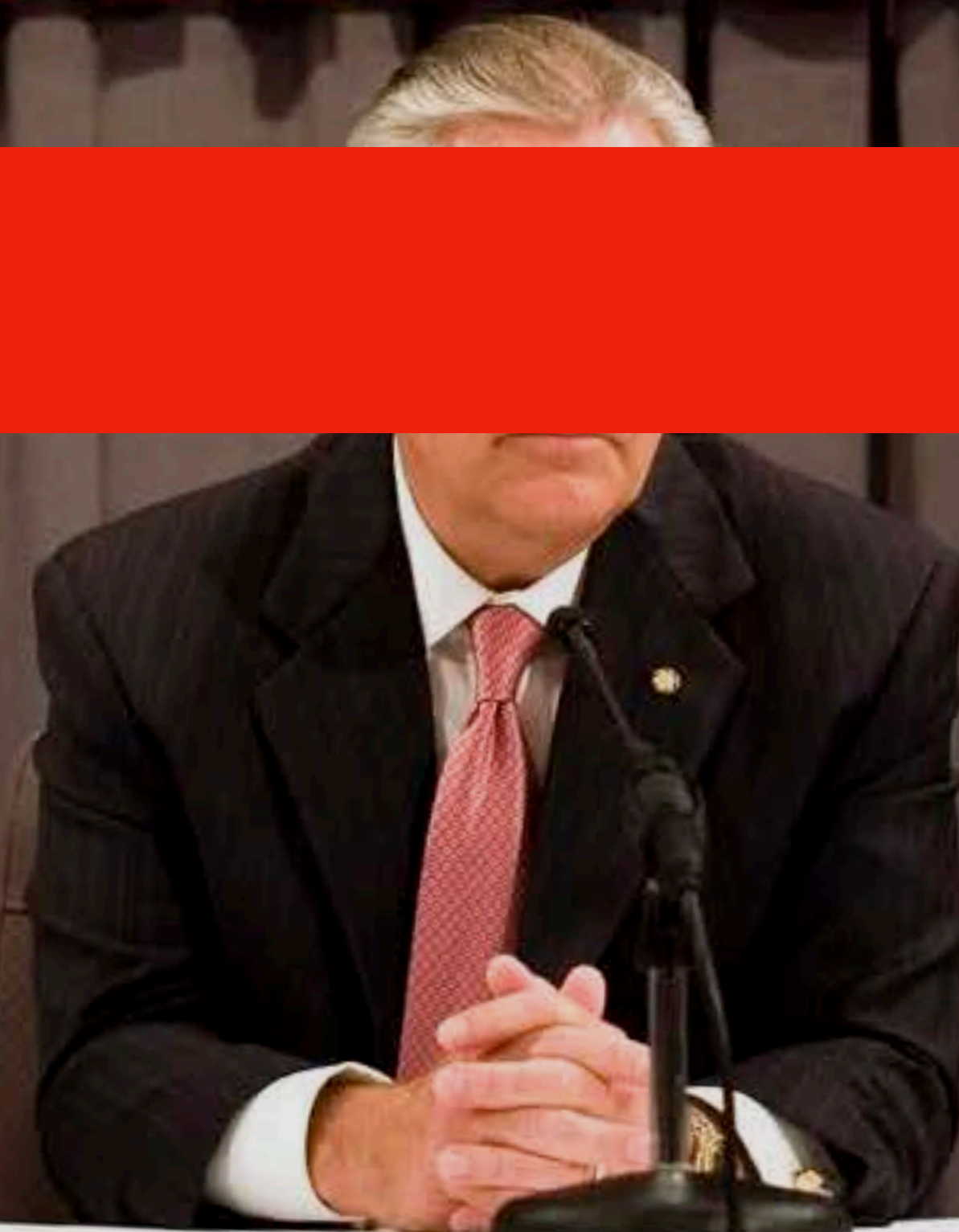


In the early 1980s, Jackson Miller, a young risk analyst at a major US oil company, fears for his job when the company finds itself in an economic crisis due to a major oil glut. But when he hears about the latest findings of the climate research division, which has found evidence of a catastrophic rise in global temperatures caused by the combustion of fossil fuels, Jackson decides to write a comprehensive report on the subject. He wants to prove to the management that he is indispensable to the company in these difficult times. But driven by his own economic survival and concerned about everyone's future, he realizes too late that his report has become the basis for a powerful climate denial campaign that forces him to decide which side of history he wants to be on.



ExxonMobil

HISTORY





In the late 1970s, Exxon was the largest energy company in the world and was eager to move away from oil to become a modern and progressive energy company. The company's own research department was leading the development of renewable and alternative energy sources. Part of this vibrant scientific hub was a team of climate scientists who not only founded their discipline but discovered the man-made climate crisis with highly accurate and sophisticated studies. However, during the 1980s oil glut, instead of using this knowledge to complete the energy transformation, Exxon's management took a conservative backswing and widened its oil operations, lobbying against fossil fuel legislation and launching one of the biggest misinformation campaigns against their own scientific findings that persists to this day.



## Directions for climate research

Climate science is experiencing rapid development, but it is important to ensure that research is directed to the most pressing policy needs. Progress has been made in generating new knowledge and in better understanding the science of climate change, but we must ensure that research is directed to the most pressing policy needs.

Research should address policy needs. The most pressing policy needs are: (1) understanding the science of climate change, (2) understanding the impacts of climate change, and (3) understanding the options for reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

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## Unsettled Science

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## Apocalypse no

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"The story of Exxon is the origin story of climate denial."

— Amy Westervelt, Journalist

Who told you the earth was warming... Chicken Little?



## Science: what we know and don't know



As the debate over climate change heats up, science is being used to support various positions. It is important to understand what we know and what we don't know about climate change.

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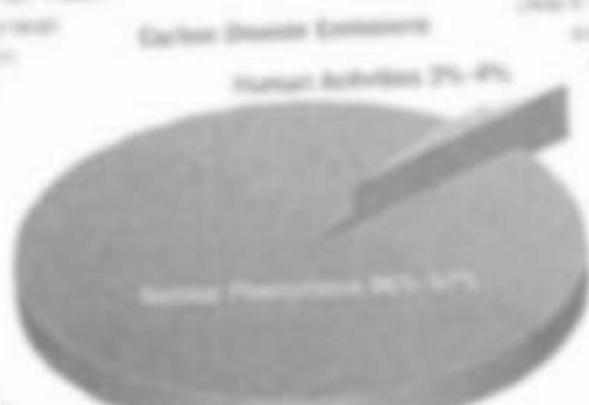
## Lies they tell our children

I don't have a future

I don't have a future. With wars, famine, and disease, the future is bleak. The world is a dangerous place, and I don't know what the future holds for me.

## Tomorrow's energy needs

The great fight for the environment is not just about saving the planet, but also about ensuring that we have enough energy to meet our needs for the future.







**OBJECTIVE**



"As a son of a judge and a psychologist I learned early on that we can only deal with the problems of our time if we agree on a common factual basis. Coming from this academic environment it is hard to bear how we as a society have discredited and politicized the work of scientists in recent years. This trend, which has been significantly intensified by the COVID-19 pandemic, is extremely worrying and one of the biggest threats to our liberal democracies. I deeply believe that we can only overcome the defining crisis of our time if we can solve the misinformation crisis and find a common factual base rooted in science. I believe in the power of cinema to let us create a collective experience that makes the pressing issues of our time emotionally tangible. I'm convinced that only when we as humans look at ourselves and examine the problems of our time, a collective will for change can emerge."

– Simon Schneider, Director & Writer



# REFERENCE FILMS



*A gripping thriller that explores the corporate structures that lead to self-centered and short-term thinking on a big scale.*



*A grounded, realistic and relevant investigative drama with a deep emotional impact.*



*An illustration of human terror and complacency, through the tension of what is on screen, and off screen.*



**TEAM**







# SIMON SCHNEIDER

## DIRECTOR & WRITER

Graduated 2021 with a Bachelor's degree in film directing from ifs international film school Cologne, Germany. He worked as a director and writer for German public television and participated in the young filmmakers program TP2 Talentpool. His short film **MADE IN GERMANY** won the 2022 Audience Award at the Max Ophüls Preis Film Festival and the Fest Award at the FEST New Directors New Films Festival. His work has been screened at film festivals worldwide and been broadcasted on networks like ARD, ARTE and Disney+. Since 2023 he is a directing fellow at the AFI American Film Institute Conservatory, Class of 2025.

### FILMOGRAPHY (EXERPT)

**SILENT** Director

Horror | 9 min | 2024

AFI American Film Institute Conservatory

**I'M WITH YOU** Director

Drama | 18 min | 2019

Ifs internationale filmschule köln GmbH

**RANDOM ACT OF KINDNESS** Director, Writer

Comedy/Satire | 12 min | 2023

AFI American Film Institute Conservatory

**WHILE WE ARE HERE** Director, Writer, Producer

Comedy | 7 min | 2018

Ifs internationale filmschule köln GmbH

**MADE IN GERMANY** Director, Writer, Producer

Comedy/Satire | 24 min | 2022

Ifs internationale filmschule köln GmbH

**TRUE** Director, Writer, Producer

Thriller | 20 min | 2018

Dare-To-Fail-Production GbR

### AWARDS (EXERPT)

Artist Scholarship of the DAAD German Academic Exchange Service 2023 | Fulbright Scholarship Nominee for Foreign Students 2023  
AFI Scholarship 2024 | Audience Award Winner, Film Festival Max Opühls Prize for "Made in Germany" 2022 | Jury Prize Winner: Best Middle length Film, Filmfest Bremen for "Made in Germany" 2023 | Producers Network Award Winner, Robert Bosch Foundation for "Made in Germany" 2020 | Pitching Award Winner, FEST New Directors New Films Festival for "Made in Germany" 2020



# LIA KULAKAUSKAS

## CO-WRITER

Holds a Bachelor's in Audiovisual Studies from the University of São Paulo, Brazil. Since college, she has worked in different storytelling roles as an editor, writer and director. Her works cutting films include internationally renowned features, such as MADALENA and PENDULAR. She also edited TV-Shows for HBO, Paramount as well as the Netflix original series 3% and KISSING GAME. GROUNDED, her first short film as a screenwriter, was screened internationally and won the Audience Award in Tiradentes. She is one of the directors of FERAS, a series in which she also collaborated as a screenwriter. Kulakauskas created and directed the two-season documentary series PAPERBACK TRAVEL. Since 2023 she is a screenwriting fellow at the AFI American Film Institute Conservatory, Class of 2025.

### FILMOGRAPHY (EXERPT)

**DEEP TISSUE** Writer  
Action | 9 min | 2024  
AFI American Film Institute Conservatory

**PLATINUM** Writer  
Drama/coming-of-age | 13 min | 2024  
AFI American Film Institute Conservatory

**INVISIBLE GIRL** Writer  
Dramatic Comedy | 12 min | 2024  
AFI American Film Institute Conservatory

**FERAS** Writer, Director, Editor  
Dramatic Comedy | TV Series, 13 x 30 min | 2019  
MTV Brasil

**GROUNDED** Writer  
Comedy | 15 min | 2014

**COPAN** Director, Writer  
Documentary | 13 min | 2007

### AWARDS (EXERPT)

Fulbright Scholarship Award for Foreign Students 2023 | Best TV Series Editing Award at Brazilian Critic Awards for "Kissing Game" 2020  
Best Film Editing at 11th Curta Taquary (Brazil) for "Tower" 2017 | Tribeca Film Institute Mentorship Award at BRLab 2016  
Audience Award at Tiradentes Film Festival for "Grounded" 2014 | Language Research Award at the Brazilian University Film Festival for "Copan" 2007







# MAXWELL KAGAN

## PRODUCER

Holds a Bachelors degree in Media Storytelling from New York University's Gallatin School of Individualized Study. He has an extensive background working in film and TV development at companies such as Marc Platt Productions and Sight Unseen. Prior to enrolling in AFI's producing program, he spent three years working in entertainment law and management for artists including Charlie Puth and Lauren-Spencer Smith. Since 2023 he is a producing fellow at the AFI American Film Institute Conservatory, Class of 2025. There his script, HUNDRED MILLION DOLLAR MAN, was an official selection of the 2025 AFI Thesis Committee.

### FILMOGRAPHY (EXERPT)

**HUNDRED MILLION DOLLAR MAN** Writer  
Comedy | 15 min | 2024  
AFI American Film Institute Conservatory

**END OF THE WORLD** Producer, Writer  
Comedy | 10 min | 2024  
AFI American Film Institute Conservatory

**CLIFF** Producer  
Comedy | 10 min | 2024  
AFI American Film Institute Conservatory

**AVEC LE TEMPS** Producer  
Drama | 2 min | 2023  
AFI American Film Institute Conservatory

**RANDOM ACT OF KINDNESS** Producer  
Comedy | 12 min | 2023  
AFI American Film Institute Conservatory

**OUT OF BREATH** Media Coordinator  
Documentary | 90 min | 2022  
GTN Creative, LLC

### AWARDS (EXERPT)

Scholarship by the AFI American Film Institute Conservatory



# ELIOT GRIGO

## CINEMATOGRAPHER

Originally from Rockport, Maine, Grigo received a BFA in Film, from Syracuse University in 2017. He studied 35mm filmmaking in Prague at FAMU, and attended photographic workshops at Rochester Institute of Technology and Maine Media. Since then, Grigo has worked in New York with brands such as Nike, Calvin Klein, and Christian Dior, while shooting narrative shorts. Most notably, LA MUJER DE HECTOR (HECTOR’S WOMAN), which premiered and was nominated for ‘Best of Festival’ at the 2021 Palm Springs International Film Festival; a winner at the 2022 Miami Film Festival; and received a 2022 Vimeo Staff Pick. Since 2023 he is a Cinematography Fellow at the AFI Conservatory, Class of 2025.

### FILMOGRAPHY (EXERPT)

**THE SCREEN** Cinematographer  
Experimental | 2 min | 2024  
American Film Institute Conservatory

**FINDING BEAST** Cinematographer  
Documentary | 18 min | 2022  
FOFIF, Olivia Accardo

**CLASSMATES** Cinematographer  
Drama | 19 min | 2022  
Columbia University

**KNOCK** Cinematographer  
Horror | 9 min | 2021  
Independent

**HECTOR'S WOMAN** Cinematographer  
Drama | 18 min | 2019  
Columbia University

**FOR MY LOVERS** Cinematographer  
Drama | 10 min | 2016  
FAMU, in association with Barandov Studios

### AWARDS (EXERPT)

Nominated for ‘Best of Festival’ at Palm Springs International Film Festival 2021 | Winner of WarnerMedia One Fifty Award for ‘Hector's Woman’ at Miami Film Festival 2022 | Winner for 'Best Documentary Short' at Kino Short Film for ‘Finding Beast’ 2021  
Winner for 'Best Short Film' at New Faces New Voices for ‘Hector's Woman’ 2021 | Winner for 'Best Director’ at Tide Film Festival 2022  
Honorable Mention at the Woodstock Film Festival for ‘Hector's Woman’ 2021







# JASON LUO

## EDITOR

Recent graduate of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Film, Video, New Media, and Animation. Co-founding Dope Film Studio with like-minded filmmakers, he has pursued projects offering many creative and commercial opportunities. Skilled as an editor, sound designer, and cinematographer, Jason's portfolio includes award-winning short films FOUND YOU and PERSONA, with FOUND YOU being a 2022 Independent Shorts Awards finalist. Since 2023 he is a editing fellow at the AFI American Film Institute Conservatory, Class of 2025.

### FILMOGRAPHY (EXERPT)

**BRING MY GRANDMA BACK!** Editor  
Comedy | 10 min | 2024  
AFI American Film Institute Conservatory

**PROSPECT** Editor  
Drama | 11 min | 2024  
AFI American Film Institute Conservatory

**RANDOM ACT OF KINDNESS** Editor  
Comedy | 12 min | 2023  
AFI American Film Institute Conservatory

**FOUND YOU** Editor, Cinematographer  
Drama | 6 min | 2022  
Dope Film Studio

**FIVE POINT SEVEN** Editor, Cinematographer  
Thriller | 14 min | 2022  
Dope Film Studio

**PEGASUS** Editor, Cinematographer  
Horror | 8 min | 2018  
School of the Art Institute of Chicago

### AWARDS (EXERPT)

Annual Award Finalist, Independent Shorts Awards for "Found You" 2022



# AFI AMERICAN FILM INSTITUTE CONSERVATORY

The American Film Institute is a non-profit organization that champions the future of the moving image as an art form and believes in the revolutionary power of visual storytelling to share diverse perspectives, inspire empathy and drive culture forward. The AFI Conservatory is the graduate-level program inside the institute that trains the future generation of narrative filmmakers. It counts Ari Aster, Patty Jenkins, Darren Aronofsky, Edward Zwick, Terrence Malick and David Lynch as Alumni and is ranked the #1 film school in America.

The AFI thesis film is the crowning achievement of this two-year tenure and showcases in a rigorous nine-month collaborative process the mastery of filmmaking achieved by each fellow. The 15-minutes films are showcased each year at AFI FEST, get screened at national and international film festivals and receive recognition worldwide.

AFI thesis films have been awarded with 18 Student Academy Awards, 2 Academy Awards and 10 Oscar nominations. Notable AFI Thesis Films include Ari Aster’s breakout debut short THE STRANGE THING ABOUT THE JOHNSONS, the Academy Award nominated film DAY ONE, Max Barbakow and Andy Siara’s THE DUKE, Chloe Okuno’s SLUT and Halyna Hutchins’ film HIDDEN, along with Leo Behrens’ SKIN, which just won the Gold Metal at the 2023 Student Academy Awards.

All AFI thesis films can be watched at [www.watch.afi.com](http://www.watch.afi.com)



## Alumni Recognition

Last Five Years

After their MFA film school training, AFI Conservatory filmmakers go on to make enormous cultural impact that resonates and endures far beyond the halls of AFI

Academy Awards	15 Nominations 4 Wins
Emmy Awards	87 Nominations 19 Wins
Major Festivals	350 Alumni on 481 Films

AFI DOCS AFI FEST Berlin Cannes London New York Sundance  
SXSW Telluride Toronto Tribeca and Venice  
Festivals updated as of Jan. 1, 2024  
Awards updated as of Mar. 11, 2024



# CONTACT

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PRODUCER

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