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# INNOCENTS ABROAD



A Film by Les Blank, Vikram Jayanti, and Chris Simon



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Contact: Laura Schultz at 510/525-0942

# INNOCENTS ABROAD

A Film By Les Blank, Vikram Jayanti, and Chris Simon 84 minutes •16mm• color

#### INNOCENTS ABROAD PREMIERES AT SUNDANCE FILM FESTIVAL

A new film by Les Blank, Vikram Jayanti, and Chris Simon will premiere on January 17, 1992 in Park City, Utah at the prestigious Sundance Film Festival. Innocents Abroad, a delightful light-hearted film about forty American tourists visiting ten European countries in two weeks, will show in competition at the festival with fifteen new documentaries. In a year of documentary riches by other well-known filmmakers such as Errol Morris, Marlon Riggs, Rob Epstein and Joan Churchill, Innocents Abroad stands out with its combination of high comedy and serious social observation.

The film was conceived and produced by Vikram Jayanti, directed and photographed by Les Blank, and edited by Chris Simon. Globus Gateway, the world's largest operator of "Escorted Motorcoach Tours" allowed Les Blank and his film crew complete and uncensored access to "European Horizons" tour number KH1009A. The tour closely follows the nineteenth century traditional "Grand Tour", starting in London and visiting Amsterdam, Heidelberg, the Black Forest, Lucerne, Innsbruck, Venice, Rome, Florence, Pisa, Nice, Avignon, and Paris.

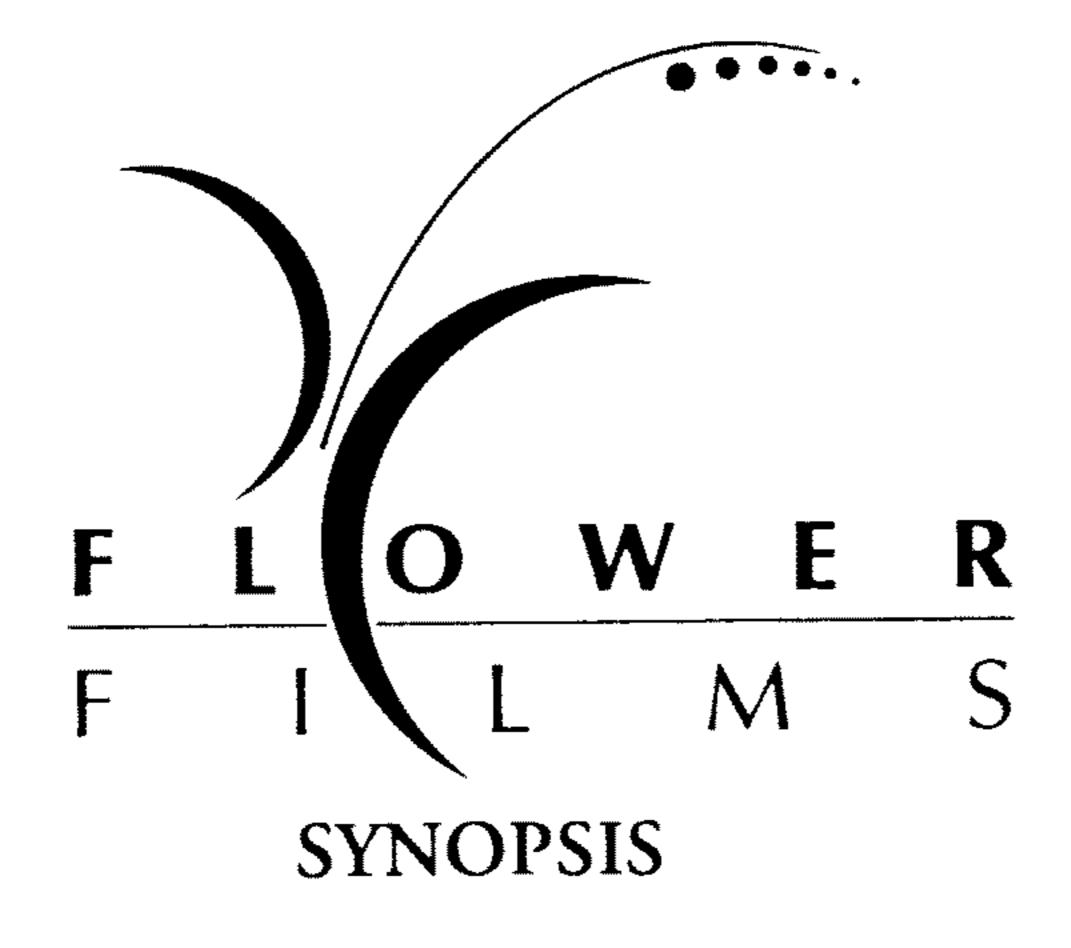
The film takes an amusing look at European and American stereotypes of each other, and examines the implications of high speed, high traffic twentieth century tourism. It chronicles a diverse group of Americans experiencing Europe for the first time, struggling with and laughing about cultural differences, and seeing ancient historical sites and legendary cities. The group includes young couples exploring the world for the first time as well as older couples fulfilling dreams of a lifetime. For Director/Cinematographer Les Blank and Editor/Sound Recordist Chris Simon, the trip was also their honeymoon!

Adding zest to the film is the exciting soundtrack which includes Bob Dylan, Bo Diddley, Fats Waller, Sandy Denny, Jonathan Richman, and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, as well as European folk and traditional music. The film is eighty-four minutes long and is the original uncut version. A sixty-minute version entitled "The Grand Tour" will be showing on the PBS Travel series on February 17, 1992.

# # # #

El Cerrito, California 94530 • Telephone (510) 525-0942 • FAX (510) 525-1204

10341 San Pablo Avenue



"Is it Tuesday? This must be Belgium!"

Globus Gateway "European Horizons" Tour number KH1009A starts off its two-week whirlwind journey in London, with tour director Mark Tinney in charge. Along with forty American tourists, we move quickly into the familiar sites of Europe: the Changing of the Guard in London, windmills and wooden shoes in Holland, castles on the Rhine and in Heidelberg, the Leaning Tower of Pisa and the Roman Colosseum in Italy, and the Eiffel Tower and the Can-Can in Paris. The group shops for cuckoo clocks in the Black Forest, learns yodeling in Switzerland, and listens to lots of history lessons from Mark. There is picture-taking, postcard-writing, food-tasting, currency-changing and adventures in European plumbing and bathroom etiquette!

Tour director Mark Tinney provides the film's viewer with insights into the tourism industry and the dynamics of group activity. Mark jokes that on a good tour, it makes his job much simpler if "they all lose their individuality. One hopes that they don't entirely lose their individuality, but there certainly is a group ethos...much to my relief." He thinks that tours like these can change people's perspective, "...if they've reached the point where they're able to open themselves up to change. Nothing happens if you water a seed which is not viable. It has to be at the point where germination can take place. And I feel my job as tour director in some respects is to be like the gardener with a watering can."

We see Europe from the different perspectives of the people on tour. One tourist sings an Air Force song about bombing Germany while standing in front of Cologne Cathedral, reminiscing about his time in the US military during World War II. Another tourist, standing in front of the Europe's most impressive waterfall, observes; "The Rhine Falls are real nice but they're not as impressive as Niagara. It doesn't knock you out as much." One couple gets lost in Rome, but manages to find their way back to the hotel. "I think I got a little upset," Mrs Howard says while being interviewed about their experience," two people, alone in Rome...."

The second camera unit, comprised of French and Belgian filmmakers, captured impressions from Europeans working and living at tourist hot spots about the tidal wave of idiosyncratic Americans that rush through on buses. Says one restaurant cook in France: "We will prepare fish for them, but always fish without bones, because if there are fish bones, they are annoyed. Perhaps it takes too much time and they don't want to lose any time from their tour." A gondolier in Venice, Italy reminds us that whatever else can be said about them, "If the tourists don't come, we don't eat."

Finally, 24 cities, 3,000 miles and fourteen days later, the tour ends and Mark says goodbye to the tourists, and the Americans head home to the USA and go their separate ways.



#### BACKGROUND ON THE FILM

Innocents Abroad is the second Les Blank film produced by Vikram Jayanti; the first was 1987's Ziveli: Medicine From The Heart, on traditional Serbian music and culture in the United States. Over the last ten years, they have become good friends. During that time, Blank was a presiding influence over Anthropos, the world's largest documentary festival, which was organized by Jayanti in 1987 and 1988, and where Les showed his films and served as a judge.

Ever since moving from Europe to America in 1977, Jayanti had wanted to do a comedy of manners about miscommunications between Americans and Europeans, and when he got funding from the BBC, PBS, LA SEPT in France and WDR in Germany, he was able to present Blank and his new wife, filmmaker and folklorist Chris Simon, with a honeymoon trip to Europe. Some present! Blank and Simon and the rest of the film crew had to get up at 5am every morning to prepare for a day of filming and traveling. While the tourists went to bed after a long day of sightseeing, Blank and Simon were up until 12 midnight interviewing tour director Mark Tinney in his hotel room.

The result is an entertaining and insightful film which showcases Les Blank's unmistakable and perceptive touch. As with films like his popular Garlic Is As Good As Ten Mothers and the lively Gap-Toothed Women, he achieves human interest and sociological insight and at the same time entertains.

Innocents Abroad is a glimpse into the human aspect of one of the world's largest industries. Tourism is both vital to the European economy and controversial - the film was made in the context of very real tensions arising from the impact that mass tourism has had on Europe. Constant traffic and sheer volume of tourists are threatening Europe's ancient monuments, artwork and architecture. Included in the press materials is a recent article from *Time Magazine* about the effects tourism is having on Europe.

#### **BIOGRAPHY**

#### Mark Tinney: Tour Director

Mark Tinney was born in London in 1946 and went to school there until 1954. For several years, he was involved in selling for British companies until, in 1970, he accepted an offer of employment in South Africa, with a landscaping firm. Garden design and construction led to work in desert reclamation projects. After Britain joined the European Community, Mark decided to make use of the opportunity to work and study languages within Europe and it was in 1976, while living in Munich, that he became involved with tourism. Since then, he has travelled during the summer months as a tour manager for a Swiss company and is a veteran of hundreds of tours. In winter, he lives in Suffolk with his wife, Caterina Thiel (also a tour director), and spends much of the time writing. His published works to date include four books as a part of a series on European history-Germany and Switzerland, The Netherlands, France and Italy. He also wrote Follow Me, a lighthearted look at the adventures and misadventures of being a tour director.

#### Vikram Jayanti: Producer

Vikram Jayanti is a documentary film producer who specializes in making films about diverse cultures and social groups, and about people out of their usual element--fish out of water.

His award-winning feature documentaries, which have been broadcast throughout Europe and North American, include: Innocents Abroad (1991); One Generation More (1989), about the Jews of Estonia in the era of Glastnost--made for the BBC and directed by Joan Churchill; In Her Own Time (1986), about anthropologist Barbara Myerhoff's struggle with cancer in the midst of her final field research in Los Angeles, directed by Lynne Littman; and Ziveli: Medicine For The Heart (1987), about Serbian-American folk music and culture in Chicago--directed by Les Blank. Jayanti is also Executive Producer of Last Images Of War, (1992) a film about the lives and deaths of four journalists covering the Afghanistan war, directed by Stephen Olsson and Scott Andrews.

Innocents Abroad and Last Images Of War will both premiere in the competitive documentary category at the forthcoming Sundance Film Festival in Park City, Utah, in January, 1992.

Vikram Jayanti is currently producing another Joan Churchill film, I Am A Sex Addict, a tragi-comedy about sexual addiction in America, for broadcast in late 1992 by the BBC.

As well as making films, Jayanti twice organized and directed the Anthropos International Festival of Documentary Films. Anthropos, which was the world's largest non-fiction film festival, took place in Los Angeles in 1987 (at the University of Southern California) and 1988 (at the American Film Institute). Before becoming an independent producer, Jayanti worked for nine years at the Center for Visual Anthropology at the University of Southern California, as a producer and fundraiser.

Descended from Russian Jews and Indian Brahmins, and educated in England and France, Vikram Jayanti was born to swim in cross-cultural waters. He works out of Los Angeles, through his London-based production company Dox Deluxe Ltd.

#### BIOGRAPHY/FILMOGRAPHY

### Les Blank: Director, Cinematographer

Les Blank is a prize-winning independent filmmaker, best known for a series of poetic films that led Time Magazine critic Jay Cocks to write, "I can't believe that anyone interested in movies or America...could watch Blank's work without feeling they'd been granted a casual, soft-spoken revelation." John Rockwell, writing in The New York Times, adds, "Blank is a documentarian of folk cultures who transforms anthropology into art." And Vincent Canby declared that Blank "is a master of movies about the American idiom."

Born in 1935 in Tampa, Florida, Les Blank attended Tulane University in New Orleans, where he received a B.A. in English literature and an M.F.A. in theatre. In 1967, after two years in the Phd film program at the University of Southern California, he made his first independent film, on Texas blues singer Lightnin' Hopkins. To finance this and other independent films he made industrial films for such organizations as Holly Farms Poultry, Archway Cookies and the National Wildlife Federation. Blank's first independent films began a series of intimate glimpses into the lives and music of people who live at the periphery of American society -- a series that grew to include rural Louisiana French musicians (J'ai Été Au Bal (I Went to the Dance), Dry Wood, Hot Pepper), Mexican-Americans (Chulas Fronteras, Del Mero Corazón), New Orleans blacks (Always For Pleasure), Bay Area garlic fanatics (Garlic Is As Good As Ten Mothers), German Filmmaker Werner Herzog (Burden Of Dreams, Werner Herzog Eats His Shoe), Appalachian fiddlers (Sprout Wings and Fly), Polish-American polka dancers (In Heaven There Is No Beer?), popular rock and roll (Huey Lewis and the News: BE-FORE, and A Poem Is a Naked Person), Serbian-American music and religion, (Ziveli!: Medicine for the Heart), and even gap-toothed women (Gap-Toothed Women).

Major retrospectives of Les Blank's films were mounted at FILMEX in 1977; the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis in 1978 and 1984; New York's Museum of Modern Art in 1979; the National Film Theatre, London, 1982; Cineteca Nacional, Mexico City, 1984; the Cinemathèque Français, Paris, 1986; and at the Independent Film Week, Augsburg, Germany, 1990. Feature articles on Blank have appeared in American Film, Take One, The New York Times, The Los Angeles Times, Image Magazine, Mother Jones, The Village Voice, Rolling Stone, Premiere, Downbeat and Video Review. In 1986, National Public Radio devoted a half-hour special to Les Blank's work. In 1991, CNN presented a three minute segment on Blank and his films. Blank edited the Burden of Dreams book (in 1984), which included his and Maureen Gosling's journals during the making of Burden of Dreams, and critical articles on the film.

Among Blank's numerous awards for single films are the British Academy Award for Best Feature Documentary, 1982, (Burden of Dreams); the Golden Gate Award, San Francisco Film Festival, 1982 (Burden of Dreams); Grand Prize, Melbourne Film Festival, 1985 (In Heaven There Is No Beer?); Special Jury Award U.S. (Sundance) Film Festival, 1985 (In Heaven There Is No Beer?); Grand Award, Houston Film Festival, 1983 (Burden of Dreams); Golden Hugo, Chicago Film Festival, 1969 (The Blues Accordin' To Lightnin' Hopkins); Blue Ribbon, American Film and Video

Festival (Dry Wood, Hot Pepper, Always For Pleasure, Garlic Is As Good As Ten Mothers, Burden of Dreams, Gap-Toothed Women, The Best of Blank, J'ai Été Au Bal, Yum, Yum, Yum! and Marc and Ann).

In 1990, Les Blank received the American Film Institute's Maya Deren Award for outstanding lifetime achievement as an independent filmmaker. In 1989 -1990 Blank was the distinguished filmmaker-in-residence at San Diego State University. Blank was also the Louis B. Mayer filmmaker-in-residence at Dartmouth College and a fellow at the Sundance Institute in Utah (both in 1984). In 1991 he was adjunct professor in film at the University of California, Berkeley. His work has been supported by The National Endowment For the Arts, The American Film Institute, The National Endowment For the Humanities, The Ford Foundation, The Guggenheim Foundation, PBS and the BBC.

#### FILMOGRAPHY OF LES BLANK

1964	Dizzy Gillespie
1968	God Respects Us When We Work, But
1700	Loves Us When We Dance
1969	The Sun's Gonna Shine
1969	The Blues Accordin' to Lightnin' Hopkins
1971	Spend It All
1971	A Well Spent Life
1973	Dry Wood
1973	Hot Pepper
1974	A Poem Is A Naked Person
1976	Chulas Fronteras
1978	Always For Pleasure
1979	Del Mero Corazón
1980	Garlic Is As Good As Ten Mothers
1980	Werner Herzog Eats His Shoe
1982	Burden of Dreams
1983	Sprout Wings and Fly
1984	In Heaven There Is No Beer?
1985	Cigarette Blues
1986	Huey Lewis and the News: Be-Fore!
1987	Gap-Toothed Women
1987	Ziveli!: Medicine for the Heart
1988	Ry Cooder and the Moula Banda Rhythm Aces
1989	J'ai Été Au Bal (I Went to the Dance)
1990	Routes of Rhythm, with Harry Belafonte
	(director and cinematographer in New York and Cuba)
1990	Yum, Yum!
1991	Marc and Ann
1991	Julie: Old Time Tales of the Blue Ridge
1991	Innocents Abroad (filmed for BBC, LA SEPT French TV and
	WDR German TV. To be aired on PBS Travel Series in abridged
	version as The Grand Tour)
1991	Puamana

Works-in-progress: Sworn to the Drum about master Cuban drummer Francisco Aguabella; The Maestro: King of the Cowboy Artists, portrait of the Berkeley artist; Green Warriors: Desperate Measures in Desperate Times about radical environmentalism; and a film about Trinidadian carnival festivals in Trinidad and in Brooklyn.

#### **BIOGRAPHY**

Chris Simon: Co-Filmmaker, Editor, Sound-Recordist

Chris Simon is Head of Production at Flower Films. She first worked with Les Blank in 1980, as folklorist and interviewer for In Heaven There Is No Beer? (about Polish-American Polka Dancing). After finishing her M.A. in Folklore and Mythology from UCLA in 1981, Chris joined Flower Films on a full time basis. As Head of Production she oversees the films from conception to finish; researching and developing potential ideas, fundraising, and coordinating post-production. On location she is the production manager, sound recordist and second camera. She has been involved with all of Les Blank's films since 1980, is credited as co-filmmaker on Gap-Toothed Women, Innocents Abroad, Puamana and Marc and Ann. Chris has recently plunged into editing -- doing several films at once for Flower, including Puamana, a film on Hawaiian composer Irmgard Aluli, and Innocents Abroad, a humorous film about Americans on a "grand tour" of Europe via bus. She has also worked on a PBS series on Cuban music (Routes of Rhythm with Harry Belafonte), as associate producer/folklorist with Chris Strachwitz (Brazos Films) on J'ai Ete au Bal: The Cajun and Zydeco Music of Louisiana, as folklorist for an in-progress work on California's Dustbowl immigrants by Niki Smith, and with Bear McKay of Full Bloom Productions, on a film about the Yupik people of Southwest Alaska. Chris is currently developing a film on women explorers for her own production company, Adventuress.

Previous to working at Flower Films Chris had a varied career as a casino photographer, 21 dealer, librarian, folklore researcher, and Tahitian dancer. In her spare time Chris dances with Hui Pa Hula O' Leianuenue, a prize-winning Polynesian dance ensemble which performs throughout the San Francisco Bay Area. She and Les Blank recently married after 10 years of working together!

# Dox Deluxe presents

#### INNOCENTS ABROAD

A Film by
Les Blank, Vikram Jayanti, and Chris Simon
Produced by Vikram Jayanti
Edited by Chris Simon
Directed by Les Blank
Photographed by Les Blank
Sound Recorded by Chris Simon
Camera Assistant Lou Weinert

Featuring Mark Tinney

## and Tour Group KH1009A

Janis & J.C. Barker
Elsie Boccini
Maude & Ron Cameron
Kenneth Chan & Rowena Wong
Priscilla & Caleb H.Y. Chu
Rose Marie Cocchi
Andy & Rio Denoga
Lee & Evelyn Doll
Betty & Bruce Stacey
Paul & Florence Smith

Chuck & JoAnn Linn
Betty Long
Frank& Penny Moreno
Linda Mudge
Rosemary Mungo
George & Virginia Olson
Mavis & Phil Roberts
John & Gerry Howard
Rosalie & Bob Jordan
Michael & Janet Valentin

Randy Smith & Sharon Kuzma Smith

and Lino Mazzucato

Special Thanks to Globus Gateway

John Martinen
Bonnie Fragman
Colin Algate
Ewen Gillies
Jan Myers
Bill Hughes

Second Unit
Director Miel Van Hoogenbemt
Camera Louis Phillipe Capelle
Sound Recordist Phillipe Selier
Assistant Camera Benoit Dervaux
Production Manager Caroline Strubbe

Assistant Editors

Music Consultants

Music Supervisor Production Manager Additional Sound Recording

Post-Production Assistance

Sound Editing Consultant Translations

Narration by Map by

#### DREAMED UP BY

Re-Recording Mixer
Re-Recording Facility
Laboratories

Timer
Negative Cutter
Titles

Video Mastering Opticals

#### ROAD RUNNER

(E. McDaniel)
Performed by Bo Diddley
Courtesy of MCA Records

#### LISTEN, LISTEN

(S. Denny)
Performed by Sandy Denny
Courtesy of Island Records

#### **VALZER**

(T. & F. Pietrangelo)
Performed by Paul Cianflone
Tony & Frank Pietrangelo
Courtesy of Global Village Music

Marianne Yusavage

Lou Weinert

David Silberberg

Harrod Blank

David Mayers

Rex Doane

Annie Johnston

Dix Bruce

Harvey Shield

Chris Simon

Lou Weinert

David Silberberg

Toni Hanna

Rex Doane

Laura Schultz

Maureen Gosling

Alfonso Montuori

Claire St. Girons

Vikram Jayanti

Andres Montoya

# VIKRAM JAYANTI

Will Harvey
The Music Annex
Technicolor Ltd., England
Monaco Film & Video
George Braun
Sylvia Wheelers
Rock Ross
Maureen Gosling
Monaco Video
Technicolor Ltd., England

#### US ON A BUS

(Seymour & Lawnhurst)
Performed by Fats Waller
Courtesy of BMG Music

#### ROLLIN' ALONG

(L. & R. Smith)
Performed by the Prairie Ramblers
Courtesy of Sony Music Licensing

#### DON'T YOU LEAVE ME HERE

Arranged & adapted by D. Van Ronk By permission of Folklore Music, Inc. Performed by Dave Van Ronk Courtesy of Warner Special Projects

#### BESAME MUCHO

(C. Velasquez)
Performed by Io Giancarlo
& Jyve Tsburilo

#### THANKS FOR THE MEMORIES

(L. Rubin & R. Rainger)
Performed by Mildred Baily
Courtesy of Sony Music Licensing

#### WHEN I PAINT MY MASTERPIECE 'DEED I DO

(B. Dylan)
Performed by Bob Dylan
Courtesy of Sony Music Licensing

(Farr Brothers)
Performed by the Farr Brothers
Courtesy of JEMF

#### VOI CHE SAPATE

(from "The Mrriage of Figaro") (W.A. Mozart)

#### ARRIVAL IN FLORENCE THEME

(J. Cohen)
Performed by Jeremy Cohen

#### LA VITA E BELLA

(C. & J. Falleta)Performed by Carmelo& John FalletaCourtesy of Global Village Music

# L'AGACANTE/VALSE DE MILIEW/

VALSE DU FAUCIGAY
Written & Performed by
Ad Vielle que Pourra
Courtesy of Green Linnet Records

#### GIVE PARIS ONE MORE CHANCE

(J. Richman)
Performed by Jonathan Richman
Courtesy of Warner Special Projects

#### BACK IN THE USA

(Chuck Berry)
Performed by Jonathan Richman
Courtesy of Beserkely Records

# Produced in Association with FLOWER FILMS

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Centre de l'Audio-Visuel a Bruxelles
La Sept, Paris
Thirteen/WNET
WDR (Koln)
and Miel Van Hoogenbemt

Available in 16mm and video from

Flower Films 10341 San Pablo Avenue El Cerrito CA 94530

510/525-0942

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# MANY OF THE TOURISTS IN THE FILM ARE AVAILABLE FOR INTERVIEWS. PLEASE CONTACT FLOWER FILMS IF YOU ARE INTERESTED