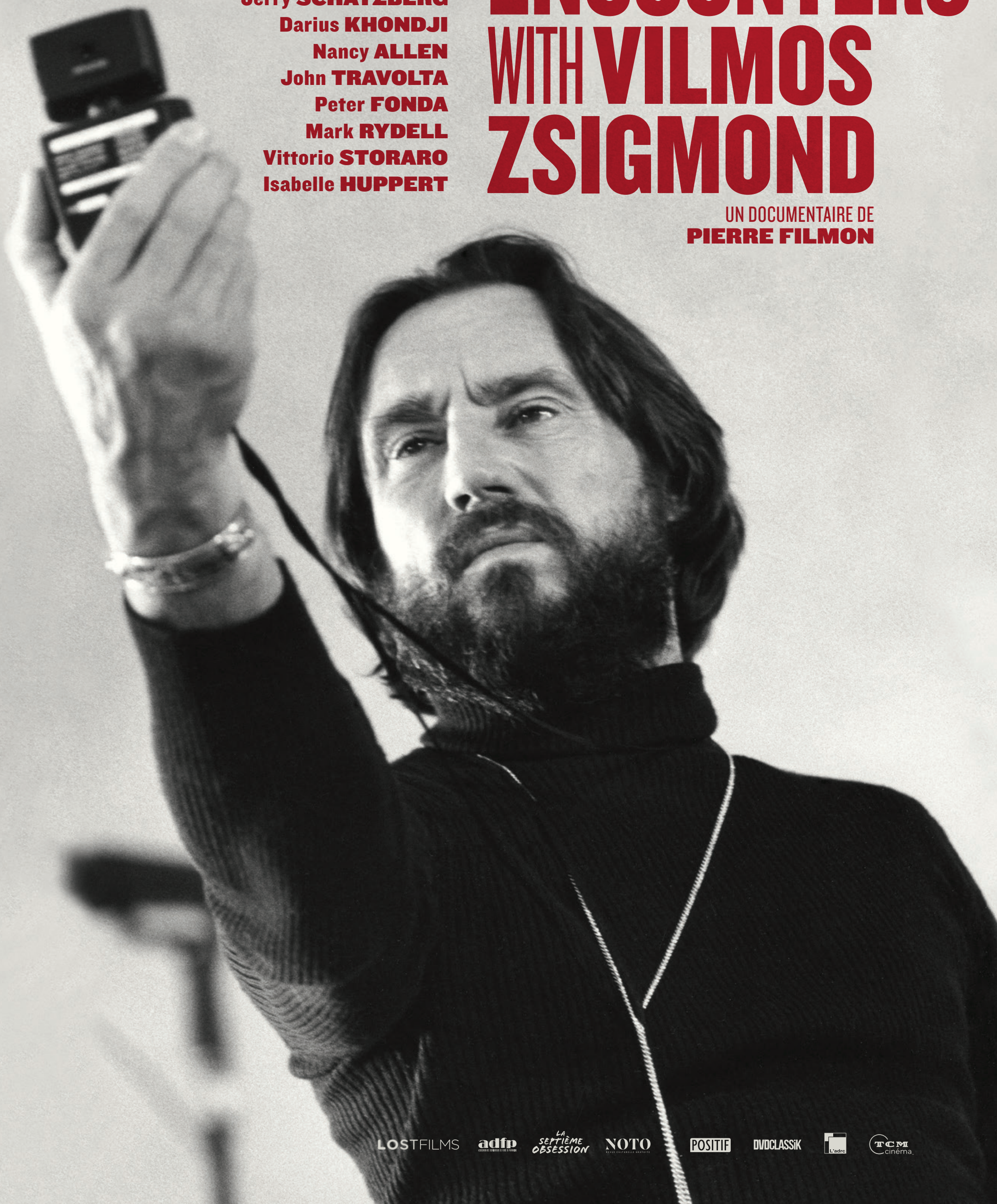




Vilmos ZSIGMOND
John BOORMAN
Jerry SCHATZBERG
Darius KHONDJI
Nancy ALLEN
John TRAVOLTA
Peter FONDA
Mark RYDELL
Vittorio STORARO
Isabelle HUPPERT

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS WITH VILMOS ZSIGMOND

UN DOCUMENTAIRE DE
PIERRE FILMON



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OBSESSION

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L'adre

TCM
cinéma

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS WITH VILMOS ZSIGMOND Is an encounter of another kind. An encounter between the “Last of the Mohicans”, legendary American cinematographer, Vilmos Zsigmond, aged 83, and a young French director, Pierre Filmon who in 2013 asked Zsigmond if he would film his first full length feature (A Dream Last Night) in Florida. Whilst they are waiting for financing, another film, an unplanned fruit of their encounters, will see the light of day. A film where this time the cinematographer will be in front of the camera. Filmed in Paris, Italy, California and the country where he was born, Hungary, between May 2014 and March 2016, **CLOSE ENCOUNTERS WITH VILMOS ZSIGMOND** is a documentary, a journey with the most brilliant man from behind the scenes along with his director, actor and cinematographer friends.



NEW HOLLYWOOD

1970. After the New Wave drastically changed cinema the world over, with new producers and new ways of filming, Hollywood and its studios, aware of the success of films from the Old Continent, also sees the arrival of a new generation of promising producers and a whole new way of making films. 1970. Birth of New Hollywood: Dennis Hopper, Peter Fonda, Robert Altman, Michael Cimino, Bob Rafelson, Hal Ashby, Jerry Schatzberg, Francis Ford Coppola, Peter Bogdanovich, William Friedkin, Martin Scorsese, Steven Spielberg, George Lucas, Brian De Palma, Paul Schrader or Terrence Malick take fresh look at society, changing Hollywood's styles and drastically reducing production costs by using actors from their own generation and new technicians. The influence of their films is significant. 1970. Birth of Pierre Filmon. Twenty years later, he's a self-taught film buff and an avid cinema-goer. He's fascinated by images and passionate about the great cinematographers: Edouard Tissé, Karl Freund, Gregg Toland, James Wong Howe or Jack Cardiff, inseparable from the producers they work with. In New Hollywood, an unusual and unpronounceable name catches his attention: Vilmos Zsigmond. Emblematic Director of photography in the seventies, Vilmos Zsigmond brings his very own personal touch to The Hired Hand (1971), McCabe & Mrs Miller (1971), Scarecrow (1973), Deliverance (1973), The Sugarland Express (1974), Obsession (1976) and The Deer Hunter (1978). That same year he won an Oscar for best cinematography for the second film he'd worked on with Steven Spielberg. This documentary's name is taken from the original English-language title of that film, Close Encounters of the Third Kind.

—
“In my opinion,
The Sugarland Express
is the perfect example
of a film where a director
and a cinematographer
have worked marvellously
well together.”
—



VILMOS ZSIGMOND

Vilmos Zsigmond was born in Szeged (Hungary) in 1930. At the age of twenty-five, having graduated from the Academy of Drama and Film in Budapest, he went to work at the Hunnia Film Studio as 1st AC, cameraman and director of photography. In 1956, along with his friend, László Kovács, he chronicled the Revolution in Budapest, fled, and then crossed Europe with their film under their arms, en-route to the United States. In New York, László and Vilmos work in photo studios or laboratories before heading off to try their hand at the cinema industry on the West Coast. In 1963, Vilmos films The Sadist (the first American film he worked on as a DoP) but under the name William Zsigmond (as with a whole series of small budget sixties horror films). It's Peter Fonda who “gave him back” his first name in 1970 when he took him on board to work on the first film he directed: The Hired Hand. For four decades, up to and including his work with Woody Allen in 2010 on You Will Meet a Tall Dark Stranger, Vilmos Zsigmond's name will be linked to those of the most renowned film directors. McCabe and Mrs. Miller, Images and The Long Goodbye (Robert Altman), Deliverance (John Boorman), Scarecrow, Sweet Revenge and No Small Affair (Jerry Schatzberg), Sugarland Express and Close Encounters of the Third Kind (Steven Spielberg), Cinderella Liberty, The Rose, The River and Intersection (Mark Rydell), The Last Waltz (Martin Scorsese), The Deer Hunter and Heaven's Gate (Michael Cimino), Witches of Eastwick (George Miller), Fat Man and Little Boy (Roland Joffé), The Two Jakes (Jack Nicholson), Maverick and Assassins (Richard Donner), The Crossing Guard (Sean Penn), The Ghost and the Darkness (Stephen Hopkins), Jersey Girl (Kevin Smith), Melinda and Melinda and Cassandra's Dream (Woody Allen).

WORDS ON IMAGES

The director and cinematographer should be dancing together, they should be just as much as the director has to be dancing with the actors. And when that dance starts, the cinematographer has to be the one that captures that dance.

PETER FONDA

With László Kovács We decided to call our style “Poetic Realism”. The poetry is in the lighting and in compositions. We tried to make our compositions look like paintings. I was especially inspired by Rembrandt, Georges de La Tour, Caravaggio and mostly the Dutch painters... My photographic style is not so different from other cinematographers I like. I mean for example, László Kovács, Haskell Wexler, Owen Roizman, and talking of Europeans, Vittorio Storaro and Darius Khondji. We all have that same kind of style...

VILMOS ZSIGMOND

Vilmos is not just a photographer. He's a thinking photographer because he was always suggesting an idea and I knew that he read the script. He was interested in what we were going to shoot, about the script and the acting. He was always worrying about what the audience was going to think which you don't find everybody that aware of.

JERRY SCHATZBERG

Many movies are shot more beautifully than they should be. I can tell a cinematographer is good when his work, his style match with the story he tells. It's easy to make pretty images but sometimes it ruins the movie and people will not feel what the story is about. With all the new digital tools, you can enhance the colour, trick, push everything and make pictures look overly stylised.

VILMOS ZSIGMOND

LETTER TO VILMOS

Vilmos, what I miss the most is no longer seeing you in real life. I wanted to make this film for you, with you. I wanted to film your friends and celebrate you with them. I wanted to tell the whole world about what you meant to cinema and what you meant to me. It's hard to talk about you in the past tense. You inspired a whole generation of cinematographers and brought dreams to so many cinema fans. With Charlotte, my film editor, when I'm checking a cut or improving a scene or adjusting a music track, you are right there on the screen, so very much alive.

Where should I start? With Darius Khondji, without whom I would never have met you and who sent you my scenario? In autumn 2013, upon my invitation, you came to Paris to talk to the audience at the Grand Action cinema between screenings of Heaven's Gate and Deliverance. Jean-François Stévenin, Pierre-William Glenn and Marc Olry were there. I'll never forget the dinner the two of us shared when I made you laugh with the story of my first love affair in Budapest. We hit it off straight away. I knew I had to make this film about you. You gave me your trust, without really knowing me, simply because you liked my scenario and the characters. You really wanted to take on the cinematography of my film. I can now say that each time we met, I could feel you getting weaker and I could see you struggling harder and harder to stay with us to finish the film. You gave me everything you had to give. In my film, in your film, I would like to give back all that you gave me and bring you back to life for those who knew you or for those who did not have that chance. You are no longer here with us but you will be born again every time this film is shown.

Pierre Filmon, January 2016



PIERRE FILMON

Pierre Filmon was born in Angers in 1970. At the age of 22, after studying literature and music, he filmed his trip across China on the Trans-Siberian Railway using a 16mm camera. These images led to his first short film China Blues (1996). This is followed by The Nuptials (1999) based on Chekhov and First Came the Silence (2002) with Rüdiger Vogler. His three short films are showcased at festivals in France and abroad and win several prizes before being released in French cinemas in February 2004. Whilst working as a projectionist at the Grand Action cinema in Paris, Pierre develops his documentary or fiction feature projects. Papa est mort, his first short documentary film, is presented at the Clermont-Ferrand and Pantin festivals. In summer 2016, he'll be shooting his first full length fiction film, Long Time No See, produced by Paprika Films and starring Mélanie Doutey, Jonathan Zaccai and Jean-François Stévenin.

—
“When someone asks me
which one of my films
is my favourite, I ask that
person to tell me which one
is their favourite.
Nine times out of ten,
they say The Deer Hunter.”
—

SÉLECTION OFFICIELLE
FESTIVAL DE CANNES 2016
CANNES CLASSICS

Hommage à Vilmos Zsigmond
CINÉMATHÈQUE FRANÇAISE
Juillet 2016

Festival International du Film de
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CLOSE ENCOUNTERS WITH VILMOS ZSIGMOND

A documentary by Pierre Filmon

France - 2016 - 80 min - Color - DCP Print 2K
English, Italian and French spoken
World Premiere
Festival de Cannes - Cannes Classics

SYNOPSIS

Without Vilmos Zsigmond (who died on January 1st, 2016), American cinema of the seventies would not have been the same. Invited to Paris in 2014 to talk about his career, this legendary cinematographer accepts to find himself in front of the camera for an encounter of another kind.

CREW

Production : FastProd, Lost Films and Radiant Images in cooperation with TCM Cinema
Written and directed by Pierre Filmon
Cinematography : Olivier Chambon (Paris-Budapest), James Chressantis (USA), Luca Coassin (Rome)
Sound : Pascal Ribier (Paris)
Tad Chamberlain (USA)
Editing : Charlotte Renaut
Music : Samy Osta

WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF

Vilmos Zsigmond (A.S.C.) and John Boorman, Jerry Schatzberg, Nancy Allen, John Travolta, Peter Fonda, Isabelle Huppert, Michael Murphy, Ivan Passer, Mark Rydell, Richard Donner and Susan Roether Zsigmond, and the cinematographers, Pierre-William Glenn, Darius Khondji, Bruno Delbonnel, Dante Spinotti, Vittorio Storaro, Caleb Deschanel, Stephen Goldblatt, James Chressantis and Haskell Wexler.