



BLACK GOLD

A film by Nick Francis and Marc Francis

'Wake Up and Smell the Coffee'

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DOGWOOF

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High-resolution images may be downloaded at <http://www.blackgoldmovie.com/media.php>

The trailer can be viewed at <http://www.blackgoldmovie.com/trailer.php>

www.blackgoldmovie.com
www.dogwoof.com

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THE SYNOPSIS

As westerners revel in designer lattes and cappuccinos, impoverished Ethiopian coffee growers suffer the bitter taste of injustice. In this eye-opening expose of the multi-billion dollar coffee industry, Black Gold traces one man's fight for a fair price.

THE STORY

Multinational coffee companies now rule our shopping malls and supermarkets and dominate the industry worth over \$80 billion, making coffee the most valuable trading commodity in the world after oil.

But while we continue to pay for our lattes and cappuccinos, the price paid to coffee farmers remains so low that many have been forced to abandon their coffee fields.

Nowhere is this paradox more evident than in Ethiopia, the birthplace of coffee. Tadesse Meskela is one man on a mission to save his 74,000 struggling coffee farmers from bankruptcy. As his farmers strive to harvest some of the highest quality coffee beans on the international market, Tadesse travels the world in an attempt to find buyers willing to pay a fair price.

Against the backdrop of Tadesse's journey to London and Seattle, the enormous power of the multinational players that dominate the world's coffee trade becomes apparent. New York commodity traders, the international coffee exchanges, and the double dealings of trade ministers at the World Trade Organisation reveal the many challenges Tadesse faces in his quest for a long term solution for his farmers.

FILMMAKERS STATEMENT:

Marc Francis and Nick Francis

WHY BLACK GOLD?

We were provoked to make a film about coffee after it was announced at the end of 2002 that Ethiopia was facing another famine. Twenty years earlier in 1984, people across the world had been motivated to respond to this crisis by giving aid. The difference this time was that coffee farmers were being caught up in this new food crisis while the global coffee industry was booming.

We wanted to urgently remind audiences that through just one cup of coffee, we are inextricably connected to the livelihoods of millions of people around the world who are struggling to survive.

Coffee is a universal experience enjoyed by billions of people on a daily basis and is part of an industry worth over \$80 billion a year. But the people behind the product are in crisis with millions of growers fast becoming bankrupt. Nowhere more evident is this paradox than in Ethiopia, the birthplace of coffee.

Our hope was to make a film that forced us, as western consumers, to question some of our basic assumptions about our consumer lifestyle and its interaction with the rest of the world.

BLACK GOLD – WAKE UP AND SMELL THE COFFEE

We passionately believe that the language of film is a uniquely powerful medium to communicate to audiences everywhere about an engaging and timely issue that has an impact on the world in which we live. This has been the underlying theme of all of our work. But with BLACK GOLD, we were even more determined to make a film that would reach audiences everywhere and be relevant for all people.

From the beginning we wanted to make a film which, while having a political purpose, was not overly polemic; a film which was observational - giving the viewer the opportunity to draw their own conclusions about what they are experiencing.

In making the film we also wanted to challenge the portrayal of Africa often characterised in the Western media by an overload of de-contextualised images depicting poverty with no link to our own lives.

PRODUCTION NOTES:

ETHIOPIA – THE BIRTHPLACE OF COFFEE

There was an immediacy to this story, so we couldn't wait around for TV commissioning editors to give us the go ahead to make this film. So in July 2003, we pulled our resources together and flew out to Ethiopia.

Together with our associate producer Oistein Thorsen, we travelled to the southern region and found coffee farmers, once the backbone of the country, being impoverished by the fluctuations of the global coffee market. Thousands of families were losing money and fast becoming bankrupt. The situation directly impacted the 15 million people in Ethiopia who depend on coffee for their survival as well as the country's economy that derives 67% of its export income from coffee.

It was not just in Ethiopia that this was happening, but also across the world, where farmers were being crippled by low coffee prices.

TADESE MESEKELA – ONE MAN COMMITTED TO INSPIRING CHANGE

In Ethiopia's capital we met Tadesse Meskela, the manager of the Oromia Coffee Farmers Co-operative Union that represents over 74,000 farmers. He was trying to bypass the international trading system by finding buyers who would pay more for his high quality coffee. For him his work was more than just a job. He was passionate and determined to improve the lives of the thousands of farmers he represents.

We spent several days with Tadesse in the capital and he took us to many places including a tour through the processing plant where hundreds of women work for eight hours a day picking out a few bad beans from the thousands of good ones before they are exported. These women were a key link in the coffee chain and were being paid merely half a dollar a day – a recurrent theme of today's globalisation.

Tadesse's work, his commitment, and the enormity of the situation and task he faces were genuinely awe inspiring – others were replicating his work in the context of the world trade talks in Mexico.

THE WTO PLAYS A MAJOR ROLE

After our first shoot in Ethiopia we flew straight to Cancun to film the meetings of the World Trade Organization (WTO), where pivotal decisions were being made in setting the trade rules that undermine Africa's economy and development. Whilst decisions made at the WTO do not affect the coffee price directly, it was crucial to widen the scope of the film to remind people that in addition to coffee farmers, millions of producers of other commodities are also struggling to survive in the global market. It was at the WTO that this struggle for fairer international trade rules was being played out.

Ministers from across Africa packed out the conference centre calling for an end to subsidies: Rich countries pay their farmers \$300bn in subsidies every year which cripples the ability of developing countries to compete on the international market. At the WTO, ministers from across Africa packed out the conference centre calling for an end to subsidies.

African ministers also expressed how they wanted a fairer system of trade rather than more aid. A 1% increase in the continent's share of world trade would in itself generate \$70 billion per year – five times more than what the continent now receives in aid.

Despite the rhetoric of Europe and the US, there was little or no change in the status quo. As calls for change went unheard – dramatic events took over. For the first time developing countries refused to be forced into signing agreements that were against their interests - and the WTO talks completely collapsed.

Since Black Gold was completed the entire “Doha Development Round” which was supposed to put developing countries at the centre of world trade talks has collapsed and is unlikely to be restarted. A system of trade that is rigged in favour of rich countries still continues.

FINDING THE STORY AND BUILDING THE PRODUCTION TEAM

After Ethiopia and Mexico we returned to London and teamed up with Christopher Hird, our Executive Producer at Fulcrum Productions, to set about financing the rest of the project and making a rough cut. We managed to bring on board an extremely talented editor, Hugh Williams, who has over 15 years of experience in international documentaries. We then spent several weeks in the edit suite developing the Black Gold story.

MORE FILMING NECESSARY TO TELL THE STORY

Through the rough cut, we soon realised that in order to develop the thrust of the narrative we would need to return to Ethiopia to spend more time with the coffee farmers and also our main character Tadesse Meskela.

In order to emphasise the connection between the consuming and producing worlds we also wanted to frame the coffee farmers story in the context of the western coffee consuming world – and scheduled trips to Seattle, New York and Italy.

After receiving a grant from The Sundance Documentary Film Program we soon found ourselves back in the coffee areas of southern Ethiopia. There we found coffee farmers digging up their coffee trees and growing instead the leafy narcotic, chat. In Italy, we filmed the Ethiopian coffee beans arriving at the Illy coffee company and captured the Italian espresso culture. In New York, we filmed the trading floor of the commodities exchange where the price of coffee is established, and in Seattle we followed Tadesse to the largest coffee trade show in the world, where he tried to find new buyers for his farmers' coffee. We also filmed the World Barista Championship where hundreds of baristas around the world gathered to compete in making the best lattes and cappuccinos.

ACCESS DENIED BY THE COFFEE MULTINATIONALS

While in Seattle, we had hoped to interview a spokesperson from the Starbucks Coffee Company at their global headquarters whilst we were filming at the Speciality Coffee Association of

America's trade show which Starbucks were sponsoring. Months before we left London we had tried making contact with them but hadn't had any success. So we approached the head of global press at a panel about "communicating to the media."

Despite promises we received from the head of global press that we would be able to interview an executive - the promise never materialised. None of our phone calls were returned and we left Seattle without the interview.

Together with Starbucks, all the other major coffee companies which we approached - Sara Lee, Proctor & Gamble, Kraft and Nestle - declined invitations to be interviewed for Black Gold.

FINAL CUT

By July 2005, we were back in London working on the final cut. A few weeks later we were awarded a place on the Sundance Documentary Composers Lab. Set in the mountains of Utah, we took part in an intensive workshop to develop musical ideas for Black Gold. It was here that we met Andreas Kapsalis who immediately connected with Black Gold and subsequently went on to score the film.

While our editor Hugh was busy crafting the final cut in London, Andreas uploaded his music files onto the internet from his studio in Chicago which Hugh downloaded into his edit suite. Everything came together just in time for our world premiere at the Sundance Film Festival, and Black Gold has been making waves around the world ever since.

REACTIONS

From the Sundance Film Festival to Hotdocs in Toronto, to New York, New Zealand and Australia – Black Gold has been selling out theatres in every festival.

Audiences have responded in so many different ways: local coffee companies have been giving out fair trade coffee to people in the cinema queues, some have started a Black Gold blend sending profits back to the farmers, while others have taken out adverts in local papers encouraging people to see Black Gold and offering a free cup of coffee with their cinema ticket.

At Sundance someone wrote out a \$10,000 cheque in the Q&A and sent it straight to Tadesse Meskela to help his farmers finish off building a school while others have pulled out stocks in large multinational companies and re-invested them into more ethical trading companies. People are asking questions about buying policies of companies and blogging about their experiences on the internet.

We are often asked about how the large multi-national coffee companies have reacted to the film. The only company whose reaction we are aware of is Starbucks.

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COFFEE FACTS:

Coffee grows in more than 50 countries around the world and employs over 25 million coffee growers.

Coffee is the largest trading commodity in the world after oil, generating annual sales in excess of \$80 billion dollars per year.

Coffee is the most popular drink worldwide. Globally, about 2 billion cups of coffee are drunk every day.

America is the largest coffee consuming nation in the world. It is estimated that more than 100 million Americans drink an estimated total of 400 million cups of coffee a day.

Some estimates suggest that around 3,400 cups of coffee are consumed every second of the day around the world.

It takes fifty coffee beans to brew an espresso and each coffee bean has to be individually hand picked.

Four multinationals, Kraft, Nestle, Proctor and Gamble and Sara Lee dominate the world coffee market.

The price of coffee is established on the major futures exchanges in New York (Arabica coffee) and London (Robusta coffee).

Between 2001 and 2003 coffee prices reached their 30 year low.

Ethiopia is the birthplace of coffee and is known for producing some of the best high grade quality coffee in the world.

Today, 15 million people in Ethiopia depend on coffee for their survival. It accounts for 67% of the country's foreign export income.

An average coffee farmer receives less than 3 US cents for a \$3 cup of coffee.

Ethiopia is one of the poorest countries in the world and is more dependent on emergency aid now than anytime in the last twenty years. On average 7 million people need emergency assistance every year.

If Africa's share of world trade increased by one percentage point, it would generate over \$70 billion per year – five times what the continent currently receives in aid.

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CAST:

TADESSE MESKELA:

www.oromiacoffeeunion.org

"Our hope is one day the consumer will understand what they are drinking. Consumers can bring a change if awareness is given to consumers. It is not only on coffee, all products are getting a very low price - and the producers are highly affected."

On the top floor of an office block in the centre of Addis Ababa in Ethiopia you might find Tadesse Meskela. As the General Manager of the Oromia Coffee Farmers Co-operative Union, Tadesse spends most of his time flying around the world meeting coffee buyers who will pay his farmers a better price than that set by the international commodities exchange.

Tadesse's responsibility cannot be under estimated. He represents 101 Co-operatives and the livelihoods of over 74,000 coffee farmers, which including their families is over half a million people. His relentless determination and drive to help them comes from his upbringing.

He grew up in the countryside outside Addis Ababa in a poor family where for many years they could not afford to buy him a pair of shoes nor give him a packed lunch for school. Every day for several years, Tadesse walked bare feet for two hours to school and two hours home again.

Determined to find a way out of poverty, Tadesse worked hard at school until he won a place at university. By the early 1990s he was working as a senior expert in the state Agricultural Bureau and after a two-month co-operative training placement in Japan, Tadesse was inspired to develop a co-operative union system as a way for farmers to retain the huge sums of money being paid out for the services of middlemen and exporters. In 1999, the Oromia Coffee Farmers' Co-operative Union was established and since then, the Union has facilitated the building of four new schools, seventeen additional classrooms, four health centres, two clean water supply stations, and \$2 million have been returned back to the farmers in the form of dividends.

It was inspiring to spend over two and half years filming Tadesse in Ethiopia, London and the US. His story is the story of an attempt to make globalisation work for the producers behind some of the world's most valuable products. He has found a way around the structures that block farmers being paid a fair price. However, as he says himself in the film, this is not just an issue that affects coffee but all the products coming from the poorest countries in the South.

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PRODUCTION COMPANIES: *Speak-it Films in association with Fulcrum Productions*

CREW:

MARC FRANCIS AND NICK FRANCIS: Directors and Producers

www.speak-it.org

Marc Francis and Nick Francis are independent documentary filmmakers focusing on social, global and human rights stories for international audiences. Through their production company Speak-it, their work has been supported by the Sundance Institute, the Channel 4 British Documentary Film Foundation and the UK Film Council.

Their latest production Black Gold is their first feature-length documentary. It premiered at the Sundance Film Festival and is currently being released for cinema and DVD distribution in North America.

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY:

Nuke UK / 2001

Black Gold / 2006

HUGH WILLIAMS: Editor

www.thecuttingroom.tv

Hugh Williams is a London based editor with over fifteen years of experience. Recently he has worked on a range of feature length documentaries for international broadcast and theatrical distribution. His work is characterised by strong narrative films with engaging storylines.

Selected Editing Credits include:

White King, Red Rubber, Black Death UK/Ger/Bel for worldwide TV & US cinema release. 109 mins. The story of King Leopold II of Belgium's brutal colonisation of central Africa, turning it into a vast rubber-harvesting labour camp in which millions died.

World War 3: Al Qaeda 'The Hidden Enemy' BBC2/Arte/TLC. 60 mins. The most authoritative and revealing account of the secret war between the Western intelligence agencies and al-Qaeda's networks

'Exclusive to Al Jazeera' BBC2/PBS. 60 min. Observational documentary inside the Arabic TV news station during the Iraq war.

CHRISTOPHER HIRD: Executive Producer

www.fulcrumtv.com

Christopher Hird is one of the founders, and joint managing director of Fulcrum Productions, a British independent production company founded in 1986. Fulcrum have made a wide range of factual television and documentaries for broadcasters on both sides of the Atlantic. Until 2004, Hird was chair of the Sheffield International Documentary Festival and is currently chair of the British Documentary Film Foundation and is also a trustee of Writers and Readers International, publishers of Index on Censorship.

Selected credits as executive producer:

The Terror and The Truth (1997), for BBC. 3 x 50 minutes. A series which dealt with the issues of truth, justice and reconciliation in East Germany, Chile and South Africa. Winner: Best Series, European Commission Humanitarian Office,

Belonging, (2002) 1 x 80 minutes Independent feature length documentary following a 29 year old woman, orphaned in Cambodia, who returns to the country of her birth to discover the truth about her past and that of her country.

Shortlisted for the Grierson Award for Best Documentary feature, 2003.

The Luckiest Nut in the World (2003) for Channel Four, UK., Presented by an animated peanut, the film deals with the influence of the IMF, World Bank and WTO. Winner, Best Short Film, Full Frame Festival, 2003.

ANDREAS KAPSALIS: Composer

www.andreaskapsalis.com

Andreas Kapsalis began his movie scoring career at the Sundance Institute, where he was invited as a fellow in 2005 for the composers' forum. This opportunity introduced Andreas to filmmakers Marc and Nick Francis, who subsequently commissioned Andreas to score *Black Gold*.

Although Andreas is fresh to the movie industry, he is no novice to the music industry. Recently featured on NPR and praised by jazz legend Dave Brubeck, Andreas has already received acclaim within the music world. Utilizing his rare eight finger guitar technique, Kapsalis explores classical and Mediterranean styles with his ability to play melody, rhythm, and bass simultaneously. Kapsalis is working on music for future films, and continues to make waves in the music industry.

OISTEIN THORSEN: Associate Producer

After living in Sudan, Ethiopia and Norway Oistein worked on a range of high profile international trade campaigns at Norway's leading development organization. He recently completed a paper on the impact of the coffee crisis in Africa at the London School of Economics. He now works as a programme officer at UK's Voluntary Service Overseas.

BLACK GOLD - FILM CREDITS

Filmed, Directed & Produced by MARC FRANCIS & NICK FRANCIS
Edited by HUGH WILLIAMS
Musical score by ANDREAS KAPSALIS
Graphics WHY NOT ASSOCIATES
Executive Producer CHRISTOPHER HIRD
Associate Producers OISTEIN THORSEN & CLAIRE LEWIS
Website PIXECO

Colourist Nick Adams
Dubbing mixer Robin Fellows
Sound editor Gerard Abeille
Production manager Sandra Leeming
Production assistants Donna Blackburn
Finn Aberdein
Esther Tobin

Assistant editor Jim Dummett
Rob Kendall

Runner Ross Aitken
Additional camera (London) Ben Cole
Additional sound (New York) Sean Clauson

SCORE PRODUCED AT BALLISTO STUDIOS, CHICAGO

Score recordist/mixer Tim Sandusky
Percussion Darren Garvey
Jamie Gallagher

Strings Zach Brock
Acoustic guitar Andreas Kapsalis
Ethiopian music samples Matt Coldrick
Additional music Joe Henson
Kunja Chatterton

Postproduction facilities Aimimage
Nats
Frontline TV

TRANSLATORS

Assefa Feyisa
Andrew Mesfin
Issago Kaloga
Micheal Asfaw
Rachel Blain
Abdullahi Haji
Yoseph Mengistu
Susanna Edjang
Omar Alasow
Rob Schneiderman

Zelalem Banti
Meseret Ashebir
Seyoum Hameso
Candice Blonde
Ormond Uren
Atrie Weno
Assefa Sumoro
Merid Tadesse
Charlotte Haworth Hird

ETHIOPIA UNIT

**Additional Sound
Production Assistants**

Habtamu Haddis
Ayela Abate
Isabel Hallett
Martha Mogus
Ermias Woldeamlak

Drivers

Mesfin Abebe
Mehari Azene
Tamirat Tesfaye

WITH THANKS:

Peter da Costa
Justin Butcher
Dr Tewolde Berhan Egziabher
Prof. Mesfin Wolde-Mariam
Nebiy Mekonnen
Frederick Asamoia Appea
DJ Kin
Nini
Alemseged Tegegne
Meskerem Woldeyohanis
Inger Dybdal
Melaku Getatchew
Jo Hill
Jo Nolan
Kevin McCullough
Anders Dencker Christensen
Rebecca Keatinge

Jon Snow
Dr. Berhanu Nega
Tamrat Giorgis
Wagdi Othman
Filmon Tekle
Belai Limeneh
Getachew Haile
Kerem Temam
Yoseph Assefa
Ras Moya
Dub Gelma
Jack Gold
Max Pugh
Deborah Burton
Matthias Kispert
Bo Illum Jørgensen
Andy Ridgewell

Emi Dagogo
Olly Stern
Madhia Azeem Khan
Phudorji Lama Sherpa
Camilla Turner
Kay Everett
Anthony Wild
Emily James
Gorgui Ndoye
Amachi Ogigua & Mi7
Seyoum Woldehanna
Anna Proulx
Diane Weyerman
Ahmad Ahmadzadeh
Jackie Waldcock
The Community Channel
Oneworld TV
UNECA

Dan McCallig
Nada Jung
Furkan Ali
Sara Gwonyoma
Stefania Buonajuti
Duncan Brooker
Al Green
Julia Francis
Gail Warden
Martin Long
Sacha Puttnam
Shannon Kelly
Atif Ghani
Nestor Osario
Tinderbox café
British Airways
UNWFP

Participating supporters:

Danny Baldwin, Fiona Alty, Shan Stephens, Nicholas Burns, Rachel Blackmore, Rev. Dr Richard Burrige, Paul Nathanail

Featured tracks:

"STARBUCKS" (MECHANICS OF DESTRUCTION) Written and recorded by Matthew "Herbal Tea" Herbert © 2001 Written according to the rules of pccom. Recorded in Swingtime. All sounds made with Starbucks Frappucino and tall latte.

"Wave" Composed by Andreas Kapsalis. Published by Hinos Publishing ©2004 BM Performed by Andreas Kapsalis Trio. From the record entitled Andreas Kapsalis Trio ©2004.

www.andreaskapsalis.com

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**BARRY AMIEL AND NORMAN MELBURN TRUST
WORLD DEVELOPMENT MOVEMENT
CHRISTIAN AID (UK)
NORWEGIAN AGENCY FOR DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION (NORAD)
ANITA AND GORDON RODDICK
NORWEGIAN CHURCH AID
THE DEPARTMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

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Screen South**

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PRESS QUOTES

"Remarkable - A moving but scandalous story. Black Gold has extraordinary power"
DAILY TELEGRAPH

"Black Gold threatens to do for the multibillion-pound coffee industry what Morgan Spurlock's Super Size Me did for fast food: Shock consumers into thinking again about what they are buying.....Starbucks is now spearheading a public relations counter-attack"
THE TIMES of London

"Scathing, Vivid and Galvanising"
TIME OUT (New York)

"...A story as riveting and jaw-dropping as anything currently starring Leonardo DiCaprio"
LA TIMES

"Black Gold tells an unresolved modern version of the age-old David and Goliath story"
THE NEW YORK TIMES

"MESMERIZING... a cup of coffee from the corner shop might perk up one's afternoon, but possibly so on the backs of starving families a world away."
TOM KEOGH, THE SEATTLE TIMES

"As coffee drinkers know, not all beans are equal, but the meaning of inequality gets an entirely different spin in Marc and Nick Francis' handsome and astute doc, Black Gold."
ROBERT KOEHLER, VARIETY

"No mere Western-guilt-inducing harangue, this highly informative documentary by British brothers Marc and Nick Francis is a model of patient storytelling."
ROB NELSON, VILLAGE VOICE

"After watching Nick and Marc Francis' film Black Gold, you might want to add an extra shot of conscience to your cup."
LONDON EVENING STANDARD