

Diamond Road

99 minutes, 2008, Canada/U.S.A./Australia/Europe

Bullfrog Films

Director: Nisha Pahuja and Manfred Becker

Languages: Various

Objective but humane, the documentary *Diamond Road* connects the lives, interests and transactions of the individuals that dig, polish, trade and purchase diamonds. The film effectively shows the role played by a digger in Sierra Leone, an adolescent cutter in India, the manufacturing dynasty (also in India), the dealer in New York, and the intermediate buyer/seller in Antwerp. These individuals are part of a globalized profit making market that enables these ancient crystallized carbons to be found in one place, cut in another, and purchased through dealers and auctioning houses with a simple exchange of phone calls.

*Diamond Road* likewise presents the challenges and duplicity behind the selling and purchasing of these gemstones. These situations are portrayed, for example, through the stories of the underpaid digger in Sierra Leone and Martin Rappaport, a former diamond broker with a mission to make the diamond industry a fair trade market. Their stories reveal the suffering, poverty and underdevelopment of mining communities that have sometimes been ripped apart by resource financed violent conflicts such as the 1990's Sierra Leonean civil war. The precarious situation of the mining communities is shown to be perpetuated by the greed and corruption of government officials, exporters that have monopolized the passage of these gems into the international market and buyers with the power-but lack of willingness-to make the industry accountable for the monitoring of diamond mining and trading.

The bonus material in the DVD related to Sierra Leone richly enhances the information on the illegal transactions of those involved in the digging, transporting and selling of the diamonds to buyers. Viewers willing to learn more about the personal and dangerous world of this illegal and corrupt world in that country may also find National Geographic's fifty-six minute documentary *Diamonds of War: Africa's Blood Diamonds* (2007) of interest. The brevity of the latter, however, hinders it from demonstrating the globalized and intricate nature of the trade, with its pros and cons in the way that *Diamond Road* accomplishes it.

Despite the richness of the information provided to the viewer, the aim of this documentary is too ambitious for a 99 minute feature. The amount of issues and stories covered represent a plethora of subjects that is not well balanced throughout the film, leaving a multitude of unanswered questions. For instance, in the introduction to the Mehtas- one of India's manufacturing dynasties- the narrator states that one of the reasons why the diamond cutting industry has been so successful in that region is because it is managed by a small handful of families. This statement challenges various existing conceptions of capitalist diversifications and competition as something good compared to monopoly, which is seen as hindering the emergence of independence and minor competitors as well as wealth

distribution. And yet beyond mentioning the subject, *Diamond Road* does not address this contradiction.

Greed and profit are the common denominators to all the transactions of the major players in the global diamond industry. *Diamond Road* fails to name these factors although the bulk of its information points towards it. In not doing this it loses the opportunity to powerfully address these matters.

Overall, *Diamond Road* is an interesting documentary that showcases the transactions in the global market of the diamond trade as well as some of the human stories behind it. But its aim is too grand and in little time covers too many subjects that could have been explored more effectively through an episode series rather than within one feature film.

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