

OFFICIAL SELECTION
hotdocs
2023 OUTSPAKEN OUTSTANDING

OFFICIAL SELECTION
DOXA
2023



SILVICOLA

A FILM BY
JEAN-PHILIPPE MARQUIS

PRODUCTION, DIRECTION, CINEMATOGRAPHY: JEAN-PHILIPPE MARQUIS MUSIC: SAMUEL LAFLAMME SUPERVISING SOUND EDITOR: OSCAR VARGAS
EDITING: JEAN-PHILIPPE MARQUIS EMMET WALSH DRONE OPERATOR: SCOTT BELL COLOR GRADING: JF ROBICHAUD



PHOTOGRAPH BY MARIE SAUARD

PRESS KIT – *SILVICOLA*

Contact: Jean-Philippe Marquis (Producer and Director)

Email: jpmarki@gmail.com

Phone: 514-250-1454

Title: *Silvicola*

Format: 4K (4096 × 2160)

Run time: 80 minutes

Release date: April 2023

Trailer: <https://bit.ly/44dvloj>

Synopsis (SHORT VERSION - 39 words)

An unusually intimate glimpse into the people, processes, and paradoxes of modern forestry practices, *Silvicola* is a sensorially immense contemplation on the psychic entanglement of humans, machines, and nature, set amongst the sprawling forests of the Canadian Pacific Northwest.

Synopsis (LONG VERSION - 145 words)

Set amongst the rugged forests and shorelines of the British Columbia, *Silvicola* is a tableau of the complex web of cultural and economic forces which compel and constrain modern forestry practices. A story told through the eyes of an eclectic mix of characters whose lives and livelihoods are intimately entangled with the forest, *Silvicola* employs sinuating vignettes and industrial soundscapes to explore the tensions and dilemmas between commodification and conservation. Contemplative and sensorially immense, *Silvicola* embeds the viewer within remote spaces and worksites normally hidden from view, from the verdure of old growth canopies to the destructive gigantism of mechanical harvesting to the numbing rhythm of sapling nurseries. A study of both our connection and disconnection with the forest, *Silvicola* is a film which demands a rethink of the divisions between natural and industrial worlds by spotlighting the hidden labour and logics of modern forestry.

Award

John Kastner Award – Hot Docs 2023

Jury statement: “Many films ask the question, how are we meant to exist upon a living being, our Earth. This is a masterwork of patience and complexity that doesn’t seek easy answers, and for that we lean in with humility and heartache. This is a film that holds questions we should all be asking ourselves.”

Main Credits

Production, Direction, Cinematography: Jean-Philippe Marquis

Editing: Jean-Philippe Marquis and Emmet Walsh

Music: Samuel Laflamme

Supervising Sound Editor and re-recording Mixer: Oscar Vargas

Color grading: JF Robichaud

Drone operator: Scott Bell

Director's Bio

Jean-Philippe Marquis is a documentary filmmaker and director of photography based in Bella Coola, British Columbia. He has ten years of cinematography experience on documentaries and television series. As a director, his documentary work is often non-linear, and dwells on themes of contested geographies and resource extraction. He has made short films in Palestine, Congo-Kinshasa, and Cameroon, and has filmed extensively throughout Yukon and Western Canada.

Jean-Philippe's most recent work is *Silvicola* (Hot Docs, DOXA 2023), a feature-length documentary offering an unusually intimate glimpse into the people, processes, and paradoxes of modern forestry practices. *Silvicola* was produced with support from the Canada Council for the Arts, the BC Arts Council, and the NFB. An alumnus of the Hot Docs Accelerator program (2018), Jean-Philippe is the recipient of a Leo Award for Best Cinematography on a Documentary Series (2018) as well as an IDRC Award for International Development Journalism (2012). He holds degrees in journalism from Concordia University and anthropology from Université de Montréal.



Filmography

Silvicola, 80 min, 2023.

Official selection Hot Docs 2023.

Official selection DOXA 2023.

Line in the Sand, (co-director with Tomas Borsa) 80 min, 2015.

Audience Choice Award, 2016 Glasgow Document Human Rights Film Festival.

Best of the Fest Award, 2016 Haida Gwaii Film Festival.

Official Selection, 2016 Artswells Festival.

Kienze, 40 min, 2013.

Official Selection, 2013 Quebec International Ethnographic Film Festival.

Official Selection, 2015 Ljubljana Days of Ethnographic Film Festival.

Abed's Silent Fight, 28 min, 2010.

Official Selection, 2012 Quebec International Ethnographic Film Festival

Production Notes

Inspiration

The inspiration for this film grew from my own experience, having worked in the forestry industry for many years. Over the years, the sheer scale of clear-cut logging that I witnessed left a powerful impression, and I wanted to find some way of documenting and sharing these images with a broader audience. At the same time, I found myself fascinated by the personal histories and perspectives of people involved in various aspects of the industry.

Living in isolated bush camps amongst loggers, fallers, treeplanters, and a motley crew of others, I was all-too-aware of the internal dialogues and dilemmas that stemmed from participation in an industry whose practices were anything but sustainable. Getting to the heart of these incongruencies required that I avoid reproducing a generic ‘good guy, bad guy’ dichotomy. As such, *Silvicola* is neither a polemic nor a factually-driven investigation of the forestry industry, so much as a love letter to the forest, driven by the reflections of people whose identities are deeply rooted in it.

By centring the voices of forestry workers themselves, I hope to have captured some aspect of the nuance to their lived experiences, and of the wisdom that comes with such direct experience. For me, there is something altogether more powerful in hearing a millwright or retired logger call for a rethink of forestry practices than, say, a spokesperson from an environmental NGO.

Production and editing

As a full-time Director of Photography, I tried to compose each shot with intent, and from the outset, the idea was to create a slow, atmospheric, and broadly observational film. While the terrain often made it challenging, I employed a tripod as much as possible, and took a patient approach, allowing scenes to unfold organically. The end result is a highly-geometric film with plenty of wide shots and action within each frame.

Silvicola was produced with the help of a relatively small team. While this introduced certain challenges, it also afforded me considerable creative control and, above all, *time*: without the need to coordinate a larger crew, I was able to experiment with different angles, to improvise, and be creative in my approach to capturing footage. As a non-linear film composed of overlapping vignettes, the process of editing often felt like a giant puzzle. The narrative structure took shape through collaboration with co-editor Emmet Walsh, and relies heavily on the use of contrast, juxtaposition, and intrigue.

Music and soundscape

The soundtrack to *Silvicola* was created by Samuel Laflamme, who composed ‘to picture’. The idea was to create something at once ethereal, rhythmic, and industrial in tone, and which matched the scale of the visuals. As Samuel explained, ‘The sound palette was developed using a series of analog modular synthesizers... I wanted to create a sense of emotional distance, an almost spiritual or astral point of view’.



Silvicola_1: Faller harvesting a large fir tree on Vancouver Island, British Columbia.



Silvicola_2: Tree-planter at work in a steep cut block on the west coast of Vancouver Island, British Columbia.



Silvicola_3: Retired faller Joe Saysell splitting firewood at his home on Vancouver Island, British Columbia.



Silvicola_4: Tourists posing with Big Lonely Doug, a famous Douglas fir located near Port Renfrew, British Columbia.



Silvicola_5: Haida weaver Todd DeVries *Giihlgigaa* harvests a strip of cedar bark near Squamish, British Columbia.



Silvicola_6: Nursery workers transplanting young tree seedlings near Vancouver, British Columbia.