

Mongrel Media Presents

# **A CRUDE AWAKENING: THE OIL CRASH**



A Film by Basil Gelpke and Ray McCormack

(2006, 85 mins, Switzerland)

Distribution

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## **Short Synopsis**

“A CRUDE AWAKENING ...” is an enlightening, intelligent, and profoundly shocking documentary feature film about how the citizens of planet earth are sucking dry our most valuable and non-renewable natural resource: oil.

Wonderfully crafted by award-winning European filmmakers Basil Gelpke and Ray McCormack, it shows you needn't be a conspiracy theorist to see a connection between America's current obsessions with the Middle East and national security, and the world's looming oil crisis. The frenzied search for alternative sources of energy now being pursued by the largest multi-national energy corporations and academic institutes makes it clear they also believe a crisis is fast approaching.

Candid and thought-provoking interviews from the worlds' top experts make it abundantly clear that we are dangerously close to the bottom of the barrel. However, whilst hinting at just how dark the post-oil world could be, this highly entertaining yet disturbing exposé provides not only questions but a glimmer of possible solutions to the most perplexing and important economic, environmental and public policy issue of our time.

## **Background to the Production**

“A CRUDE AWAKENING ...” depicts our dependence on oil and how profoundly the world is set change in the next 20 years as oil starts to run out.

It explains the phenomenon of peak oil, first developed in the 1950's by Dr. M.K. Hubbert. In 1956, when Hubbert predicted that the U.S., having reached the peak of oil discovery in the 1930's, would, inevitably, reach a peak of production, he was almost laughed out of his profession. At that time, the USA was the worlds' largest producer of oil. When his prediction, that the U.S. would reach this peak in 1970 turned out to be accurate, the world was awash in Middle Eastern oil and not that many people noticed. U.S. production has, however, continued to decline ever since and the country now imports more than two-thirds of its oil and has only 2% of the world's oil reserves.

Hubbert also predicted the world peak in oil for the late 1990's based on the indisputable fact that global oil discovery peaked in 1956. Many of the people featured in the film believe that the worldwide peak in oil production is occurring right now. They explain that the oil shocks of the 1970's and the worldwide recession that followed together with some technological advances pushed the peak back by a few years from Hubberts original prediction of a worldwide peak in 1996, which he made more than 30 years ago.

In 2002, when director Basil Gelpke, a TV journalist for more than a decade, first came across the phenomenon in a briefing paper from a Sydney-based hedge fund, he began to dig further and soon came to the conclusion it was the most important story he had ever come across.

Since then several teams have shot at more than 50 locations in 8 countries on 4 continents to assemble the footage for the film.

## **FAQ answered by Ray McCormack \*\***

*1. Describe your movie using in a paragraph or less.*

It's a political documentary that demonstrates the world can never produce any more oil than it is producing now and looks at what this means for us all. It's all the more convincing because the people that tell us how dark the future might turn out to be are not deep greens or survivalists but political scientists, academics, and even a Republican, all of whose politics could only be described as conservative. It's the most frightening film in which I've ever been involved.

*2. Is this your first film in the festival? (Or the first film you have) Do you have any other festival experience? If you're a festival veteran, let us know your favourite and least-favourite parts of the festival experience.*

Yes, 1<sup>st</sup> film at the festival and first film as (joint) director and so first film that's had a festival life. Favourite part is seeing a full house for your film. Least favourite is the guilt at knowing I've burnt more non-renewable kerosene to attend the festival myself.

*3. Could you give me a little look into your background (your own personal biography, if you will), and what led you to the desire to want to make film?*

I've been a producer for almost 20 years and my fellow producer/director on this film, Basil Gelpke is a veteran of TV documentary. In 2002, he read a briefing paper from an Australian investment fund that explained the Peak Oil phenomenon, which the film deals with. He thought it the most urgent and shocking revelation he had come across in more than a decade of TV journalism and resolved to make a documentary feature about it. In the last century, I took time out from film production to gain a degree in Environmental Policy with the intention of making this type of film.

*4. While you were making the movie, were you thinking about the future release of the film, be it film festivals, paying customers, critical response, and so forth?*

Yes, we knew we would have to launch the film on the festival circuit to get attention. We were ready with an early version of the film for SXSW 2006, where the film had its' world premiere.

*5. How did this project come to fruition? If you could, please provide me with a rundown, start to finish, from your involvement.*

My fellow director really got going on the project in 2004 before my involvement. He was in the middle of researching the topic when one of his regular clients needed 2 TV docs in a hurry. So he was able to partly fund the first part of the shooting (Azerbaijan, Germany, USA, UK, Venezuela) by making these docs. I then became involved - putting together a very rough cut - with a lot of holes it - with which we raised more private investment to complete shooting (USA, Ireland, Switzerland) and basic post-production. We sent a rough cut to SXSW and - thank you Matt Dentler – we were invited to compete there. As soon as the SXSW line-up was announced, we were getting calls from sales agents and were then able to go back to our investors for funds to complete post-production (colour correction, upconversions, etc.,) and clear rights to music and archive. I think you can manage a production in this way when you're making a documentary, in fact it's an advantage not to have shoot it all in one period.

*6. What was the biggest challenge in the production of the movie, be it principal photography or post-production?*

Turning a dry, didactic, intellectual subject into a compelling film. To a large degree, we feel we've done that. The only thing that's missing is Al Gore!

*7. Please tell me about the technical side of the film; your relation to the film's cinematographer, what the film was shot on and why it was decided to be photographed this way.*

For cost and convenience reasons, we shot on videotape: IMX, a new format, which is a slight improvement on Digi-beta, and, where we couldn't find an IMX camera, we shot on Digi-beta. Because it was shot over time and all over the world, we worked with our co-director, Reto Caduff and several cinematographers: two 1<sup>st</sup> units shooting interviews and several 2<sup>nd</sup> units shooting background footage and time-lapse.

*8. Talk a bit about the festival experiences, if any, that you have had with this particular film. Have you had any interesting audience stories or questions that have arisen at screenings? (This can also apply to non-festival screenings as well, if you have had one.)*

Well we're still waiting for someone to give us a hard time at a Q&A, every time so far it's been very pleasant. We do tend to get asked similar questions, which is not

surprising. Basil tends to try to provoke people by saying that he hasn't changed his lifestyle since making the film. The trouble is, it's not that easy, we're all so dependant on oil.

*9. Who would you say your biggest inspirations are in the film world (directors, actors, cinematographers, etc)? Did you have any direct inspirations from filmmakers for this film in particular?*

I grew up, cinematically speaking, watching the American new wave, which started with Bonnie & Clyde and ended with Heavens Gate. So all those directors, actors and cinematographers who made those films remain an inspiration and an influence from Arthur Penn to Martin Sheen to Nestor Almendros. Oh, we're talking about Docs here so D.A. Pennebaker too, of course. For this particular film, Sergei Eisenstein, Godfrey Reggio and Errol Morris were the ones we stole ideas from. We apologise to them unreservedly. ;-))

*10. How far do you think you would want to go in this industry? Do you see yourself directing larger stories for a larger budget under the studio system, or do you feel that you would like to continue down the independent film path?*

Well, I'll stick to docs as a director, so it'll probably be independent film anyway, but it looks like there are some great people working at the specialist labels within the studios, so, never say never.

*11. Please tell me some filmmakers or talent that you would love to work with, even if money was no object.*

It would be great to work with composer Philip Glass and his film scorer and conductor, Michael Riesman. We were able to license some of their work for this film but it would be even better to have them involved the whole way through a project.

*12. Do you think that you have "made it" in this profession yet? If you don't believe so, what do you think would happen for that moment to occur?*

You're only as good as your last film /record /book so I don't think you ever "make" it.

*13. How important do you think the critical/media response is to film these days, be it a large production, independent film or festival title?*

Probably not as important as it used to be because of the internet. For doc films though, it's terribly important until word of mouth takes over. Every doc film needs both critical acclaim and great word-of-mouth to succeed.

*14. Do you have an opinion on the issue of "A Film by (Insert Director Here)" ? Is this something you use? Many people collaborate to make a film yet, usually, the director is the final word on the production.*

We did say this in our film but we did write, produce and direct so, in this case, it's probably justified? I think this works both ways: if a film is a stinker, the director usually gets all the blame too.

*15. What would you say to someone on the street to see your film instead of the latest blockbuster playing at the multiplex?*

Just for a change, go and find out what's really happening in the world instead of trying to escape from it. It's more frightening than any horror movie you'll see in there.

*16. No doubt there are a lot of aspiring filmmakers at film festivals who are out there curious about making a film of their own. Do you have any advice that you could provide for those looking to get a start?*

Don't do it, get a sensible job – listen to your mother, for once!

*17. And finally...what is your all time favourite motion picture, and why?*

So hard to say, it's a toss up between Apocalypse Now - which demonstrates the insanity of war so well, and, at the same time, is a critique on empire - and Badlands, which has wonderful acting, cinematography, everything. Documentary: any Errol Morris film, but Thin Blue Line and Fog of War really stand out.

\*\* Thanks to Canadian journalist, Jason Whyte for the questions.



## **Selected Press Quotes**

### **SALON**

“Terrific! Will scare the living crap out of you...one of the most important films of the year”

### **AUSTIN CHRONICLE**

“Hard-hitting! ... the most important documentary this year”

### **VARIETY**

“Grabs and sustains attention!”

### **MELBOURNE AGE**

“Incisive and terrifying”

### **NEWPORT DAILY NEWS**

“Enlightening! Intelligent! Profoundly shocking!”

### **THE SCOTSMAN**

“Gripping!”

### **ONELINER**

Riveting! \*\*\*\*

### **E-FILM CRITIC**

“Startlingly well-made ... Entertaining ... Outright compelling!”

## A Crude Awakening - Festival History

<b>SXSW</b>	World Premiere – in competition
<b>HotDocs</b>	Canadian Premiere - in competition
<b>Newport</b>	New England Premiere – official selection
<b>Maui</b>	Hawaii Premiere – official selection
<b>Galway</b>	European Premiere - <b>Winner, Audience Award</b>
<b>Auckland</b>	New Zealand Premiere – official selection
<b>Wellington</b>	South Island Premiere – official selection
<b>NZ Travelling Festival</b>	official selection
<b>Melbourne</b>	Australian Premiere – Top Ten Audience Poll
<b>Tahoe/Reno</b>	Nevada Premiere – <b>Winner, “Best of the Fest”</b>
<b>Edinburgh</b>	U.K. Premiere - in competition
<b>Zurich</b>	Swiss “Vorpremiere” – official selection
<b>Vancouver</b>	British Columbia Premiere - in competition
<b>Woodstock</b>	NY State Premiere - official selection
<b>Warsaw</b>	Polish Premiere - in competition
<b>Bergen</b>	Norwegian Premiere – <b>Winner, Youth Doc Award</b>
<b>Milwaukee</b>	Wisconsin Premiere - in competition
<b>Sheffield</b>	English Premiere – official selection
<b>AFI Fest</b>	West Coast Premiere – official selection
<b>Leeds</b>	West Yorkshire Premiere – official selection
<b>Copenhagen (cph-dox)</b>	Danish Premiere – official selection
<b>Cardiff</b>	Welsh Premiere – official selection
<b>Resfest</b>	London Premiere – official selection
<b>Anchorage</b>	Alaska Premiere - official selection
<b>Santa Fe</b>	New Mexico Premiere - official selection
<b>Solothurn</b>	Swiss Premiere - official selection
<b>Buenos Aires</b>	Argentinian premiere – in competition

## **Basil R. Gelpke – Executive Producer / Director**

Basil Gelpke was born 1962 in Basel, Switzerland. After his studies in Social Anthropology, Economics and in the production of scientific films, Basil soon became fascinated by all kinds of moving images. He started his career in advertising but soon changed profession becoming one of the youngest journalists to ever work for Swiss television. Among his first assignments was a highly acclaimed interview with Lisa Minelli.

In 1987, at a time when CNN had just started to broadcast, Basil became interested in round-the-clock television news coverage and joined Europe's first TV news channel, the European Business Channel where he was soon promoted to become EBC's Paris correspondent. During his time at EBC, Basil also reported from South-East Asia. He was one of the first journalists to venture into Cambodia after the fall of the Khmer Rouge.

In 1990, he moved to Cologne to become the producer of Tacheles, a weekly political talk-show on German television. There he worked closely with host Johannes Gross, a legendary personality in German journalism.

Whilst in Cologne he also compiled his first one-hour documentary "The Artificial Paradise" on behalf of Germany's WDR channel. This film, about the history of LSD and its Swiss inventor, Albert Hofmann, later got nominated for Germany's prestigious Grimme awards.

In 1992 as an advisor and senior editor he became involved in setting up Germany's first truly 24-hour news channel, n-tv, in Berlin.

In 1993 Gelpke returned to Zurich, Switzerland where he was one of the journalists to start NZZ Television, the TV department of Switzerland's oldest and most respected newspaper. On behalf of the Neue Zuercher Zeitung he compiled dozens of TV documentaries in the years to follow: mostly on topics of Science, Economics, Medicine and Technology.

Basil still occasionally works for NZZ Television. In October 2005 his latest documentary about the little known cloning of animals in Texas ([www.nzz.ch/format/broadcasts/broad\\_504.html](http://www.nzz.ch/format/broadcasts/broad_504.html)) was shown on national TV in Germany and Switzerland.

Basil also has a track record in producing reality TV programs. Through his company Lava Productions Ltd he was the Executive Producer of the legendary “Survivor” TV series in Switzerland (“Expedition Robinson”) and Germany (“Inselduell”). The three series he was responsible for attracted record-breaking ratings between 1999 and 2001.

Basil became interested in the state of the world’s dwindling oil reserves after reading a paper from a Sydney-based hedge fund back in 2002. He’s been laughed at about his obsession with the peaking of oil production many times but lately more and more people seem to understand and share his concerns.

## **Ray McCormack – Producer / Documentary Director**

Together with Basil Gelpke of Lava Productions AG, Zurich, he has recently made his feature directing debut, completing the documentary, “*A Crude Awakening – The Oil Crash*” which has screened at a host of festivals around the world including **SXSW** (World Premiere), **HotDocs**, **Galway** (Audience Award) **Melbourne**, **Edinburgh**, **T-RIFF** (Best of the Fest) and **AFIFest**.

Since 1996, Ray has produced commercials and corporate films for many of the worlds leading advertising agencies and their clients, including Audi, Ford, Nestlé, Pepsi and Mercedes.

Since 1989 he has produced, and occasionally directed, music videos, arts & entertainment programmes for TV and documentaries including producing the award winning, feature documentary, “Welcome to The Cheapseats”. His clients have included the BBC; Fugitive TV; and Propaganda UK - where he also worked as head of production. Artists he has had the pleasure of working with include Sir Paul McCartney, Queen and Kylie Minogue.

Ray is a graduate of the **MEDIA** training and development programme, **EAVE**, and has an Honours degree in Environmental Policy and Management from Guildhall University.

**Block credits**

**Written, Produced and Directed by**  
Basil Gelpke and Ray McCormack

**Co-Director**  
Reto Caduff

**Director of Photography**  
Frank Messmer

**Director of Photography, USA**  
Daniel Pfisterer

**Additional Photography**  
Jim Bowen & Richard Grell

**Editor**  
Georgia Wyss

**A LAVA Productions AG production**

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## **Participants**

### **Wade Adams**

Director of the Center for Nanoscale Science & Technology  
Rice University, Houston, Texas

### **Abdul Samad Al-Awadi**

Kuwaiti Oil Consultant

### **Roscoe Bartlett**

Scientist, Congressman, Republican, Maryland

### **James Blackwell**

Oilfield Technology Consultant and Engineer, Caracas

### **Robert Bottome**

Economist, Caracas

### **Colin Campbell**

Oil Geologist, Consultant to Amoco, Fina, Exxon, Mobil, Petro-consultants, Shell, Statoil, Total.

Founder of ASPO, [www.peakoil.net](http://www.peakoil.net)

### **Fadhil Chalabi**

Director CGES, London  
Former acting Secretary-General of OPEC  
Former Head of Iraqi Central Bank, Former Iraqi Oil Minister

### **Don Clarke**

Oil Geologist, California Department of Oil

### **Marcello Colitti**

Energy Consultant, former CEO, Enichem, Italy

### **Alberto Quiros Corradi**

Industrialist, Caracas

### **Robert E. Ebel**

Head of Energy Program at the Centre for Strategic and International Studies  
Washington D.C.  
Former CIA and U.S. Government Official

### **Mir-Babayev Mir-Yusif Fazilogly**

Oil Historian, Baku, Azerbaijan

### **Daniele Ganser**

Senior Researcher, Center for Security Studies (CSS), ETH Zürich  
Head of CSS Business of Peace Research

**Luis E. Giusti**  
Director, Royal Dutch Shell  
Former CEO of PDVSA, Venezuelas' national oil company  
Consultant to CSIS, Washington D.C.

**David L. Goodstein**  
Vice-Provost, Professor of Physics and Applied Physics  
California Institute of Technology

**Terry Lynn Karl**  
Professor of Political Science, Stanford University, California

**Araman Medezuleyev**  
Oilfield Operations Manager, Baku

**Jack Meyer**  
Farmer, Carriage Driver, Intercourse, Pennsylvania

**Franklin M. Orr, Jr.**  
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**Sherry Phillips**  
Mayor, McCamey, Texas

**Matthew David Savinar**  
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**Matt Simmons**  
Founder and Managing Director of Simmons & Co, Texas  
Energy Investment Analyst, Adviser to George W. Bush, Author, 'Twilight in the Desert'

**Alfred M. Spormann**  
Professor of Environmental Microbiology Departments of Civil & Environmental  
Engineering, and of Biological Sciences, and of Geological and Environmental  
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Stanford University, California

**Manouchehr Takin**  
Upstream Energy Analyst, CGES, London

**Rodney Wilson**  
Professor of Economics, Institute for Middle East and Islamic Studies  
University of Durham.

**Louis Woodward**  
Rancher and Oil Producer, McCamey, Texas

**Gary Yannibelli**  
Hummer Dealer, Houston, Texas



## **Production Team**

### **Associate Producer**

Linda Litowsky

### **2nd Unit Directors**

Steve Mencher, Daniel Pfisterer

### **Additional Photography**

Tim Kos, David Merkofer

### **Sound**

Robert Porter, Heinz Kurz

### **Assistant Editor**

Florian Nussbaumer

### **Production Assistance**

Florian Nussbaumer, Gabriela Padron

### **Research**

Fuad Akhundov, Reto Caduff, Basil Gelpke, Patrick Held, Rolando Loewenstein,  
Linda Litowsky, Steve Mencher, Jeevan Sellappah

### **Archive Research**

Basil Gelpke, Ray McCormack, Steve Mencher, Linda Litowsky, Dave Room,  
Cristina Schnyder, Ulrich Tilgner

### **Music Supervision**

Ray McCormack

### **Art Direction & Graphics**

Melinda Gelpke

### **Online Editors**

Michael Hertig, Georgia Wyss

### **Colorist**

Roger "Somme" Sommer

### **Sound Design**

Daniel and Stefan Faesch

### **Sound Mix**

Daniel Faesch

## **Music**

Oilcrash 7, Oilcrash 20, Oilcrash 25,  
Oilcrash 26, Oilcrash 26, Oilcrash 41,  
Oilcrash 44, Oilcrash 47, Oilcrash 49.

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Composed by Daniel Schnyder [www.danielschnyder.com](http://www.danielschnyder.com)

Recorded and mixed by Urs Wiesendanger

Soprano Sax, Tenor Sax, Flute: Daniel Schnyder

Percussion: Robert Mark

Vibes, Marimba: Thomas Dobler

Violin: Jonathan Allen, Juliana Georgieva

Viola: Rumjana Naydenova

Cello: Daniel Pezzotti

Bass: Dariusz Mizera

Dust Of Peace, Suburbia, Daylight, Drilling, PS Desert, PK Song, Texas, Old Times,  
Hubbert

Composed, Performed and Recorded by Philippe Kuhn

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A Brief History of Time, Closing, Company,  
Compassion in Exile, Facades, In the Summer House,  
In the Upper Room, Mindwalk, Phaedra

Composed by Philip Glass

© 1982, 1984, 1986, 1989, 1990, 1992, 1993, 1999 Dunvagen Music Publishers Inc.

with additional music from

Georg Friedrich Händel, Camille Saint-Saens, Franz Schubert

## **Archive and Library Film**

American Petroleum Institute  
Alegria Productions, Paris  
Archival Film Services, Rockville  
Artbeats, New York  
Basil Gelpke, Zurich, private archive  
Blackbox AG, Zurich  
British Defence Film Library, Buckinghamshire  
Creole Petroleum Corporation  
Chevrolet Motor Company  
Dvidshub  
Encyclopaedia Britannica Films  
Exxon Corporation, Houston  
Ford Motor Company  
GS Productions, Kuala Lumpur  
Interface Media Group, Washington D.C.  
Jamison Handy  
Lava Productions AG, Zurich  
Michael Hubbert, San Francisco, private archive  
NARA, National Archives, Washington D.C.  
NASA, Washington  
National Archives of Azerbaijan, Baku  
National Geographic Digital Motion, Washington  
New Media Productions, Tehran  
Neue Zürcher Zeitung Television, Zurich  
Oil Industry Information Committee  
Prelinger Archives, [www.archive.org](http://www.archive.org)  
Richtman Pictures, Zurich  
Shell Oil  
Standard Oil Company, Indiana  
Syncrude Ltd, Alberta  
Telepool, Zurich, Munich, Los Angeles  
Topic Film AG, Zurich  
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ZDF Enterprises, Mainz

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