

The Propagandist

The Netherlands, 2024, 112 mins.

A film by
Luuk Bouwman

PRESS NOTES

World Premiere

International Documentary Film Festival 2024 | International Competition

Press materials can be downloaded [HERE](#)

Contacts

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Screenings

132



Foto: H. Berssenbrugge, Den Haag

16 Nov 2024, 10:00 Pathé City 7 – Press & Industry

16 Nov 2024, 20:00 Carré – World Premiere

17 Nov 2024, 18:15 Pathé City 5

18 Nov 2024, 14:00 Pathé Noord

19 Nov 2024, 20:30 Ketelhuis 1

21 Nov 2024, 12:30 Tuschinski 4 (talk with news magazine *de Groene Amsterdammer*)

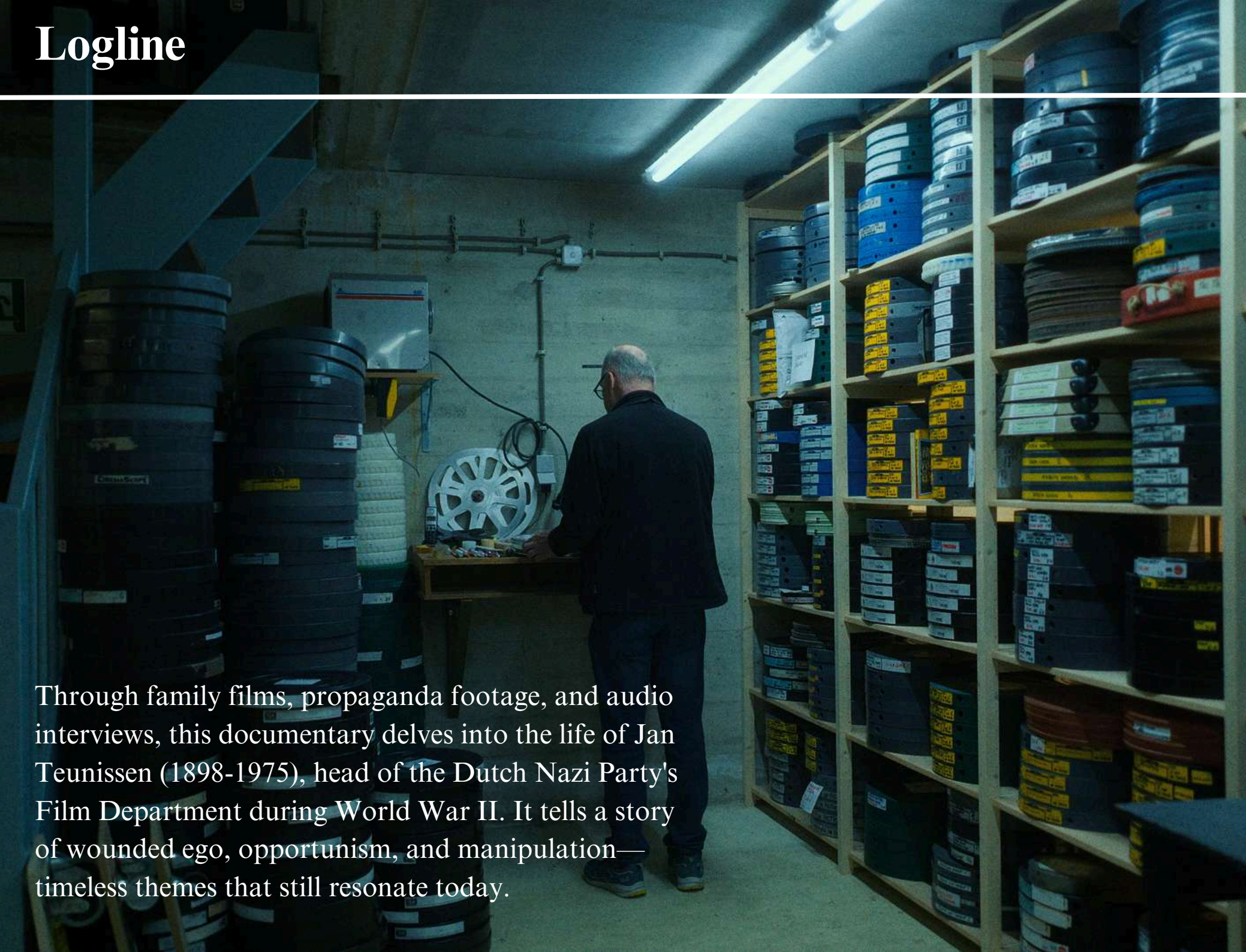
22 Nov 2024, 20:00 De Balie Grote Zaal

23 Nov 2024, 13:45 Tuschinski 1

WISSEN
REGISSEUR

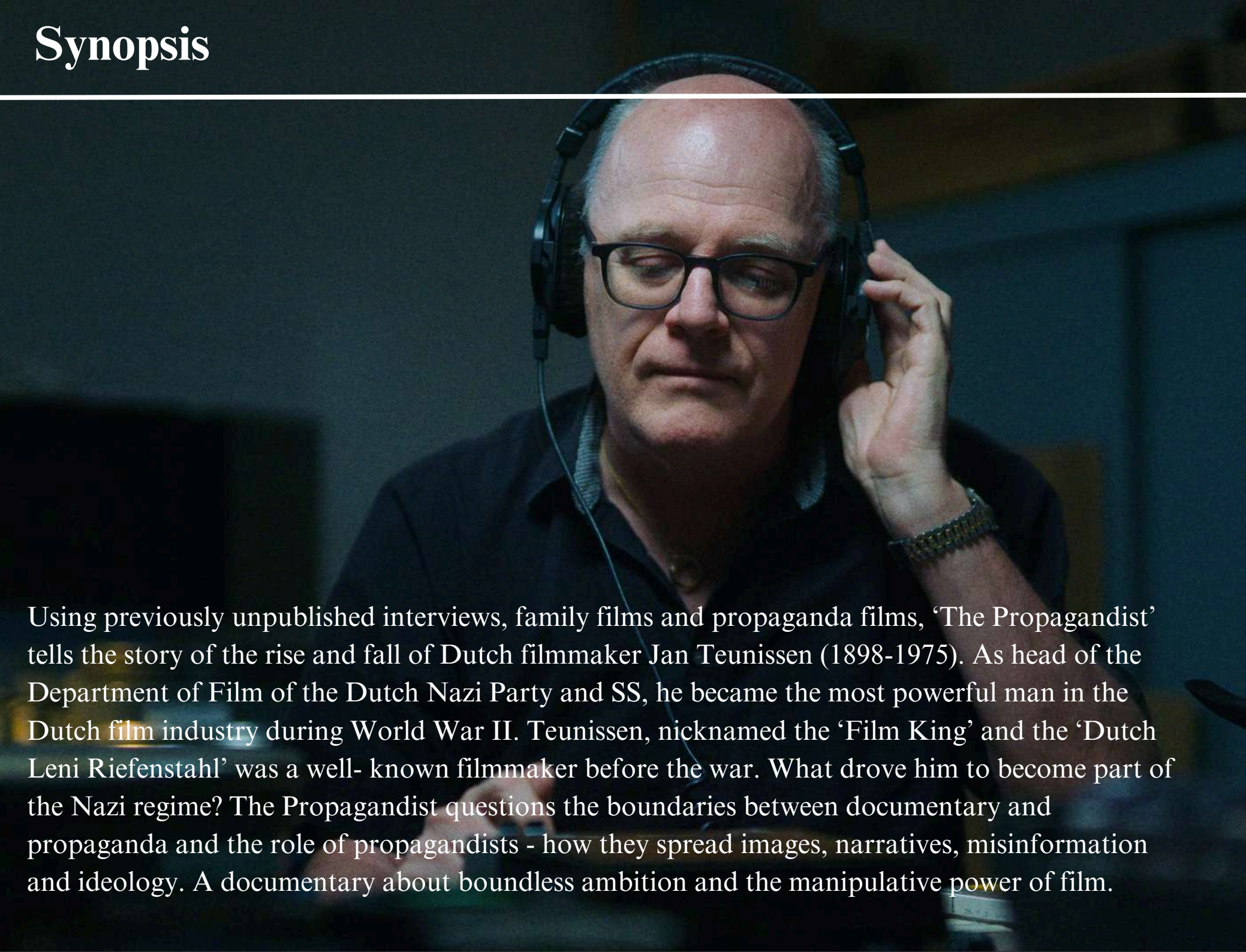
Lange Voorhout 62 - Den Haag

Logline



Through family films, propaganda footage, and audio interviews, this documentary delves into the life of Jan Teunissen (1898-1975), head of the Dutch Nazi Party's Film Department during World War II. It tells a story of wounded ego, opportunism, and manipulation—timeless themes that still resonate today.

Synopsis



Using previously unpublished interviews, family films and propaganda films, 'The Propagandist' tells the story of the rise and fall of Dutch filmmaker Jan Teunissen (1898-1975). As head of the Department of Film of the Dutch Nazi Party and SS, he became the most powerful man in the Dutch film industry during World War II. Teunissen, nicknamed the 'Film King' and the 'Dutch Leni Riefenstahl' was a well-known filmmaker before the war. What drove him to become part of the Nazi regime? The Propagandist questions the boundaries between documentary and propaganda and the role of propagandists - how they spread images, narratives, misinformation and ideology. A documentary about boundless ambition and the manipulative power of film.

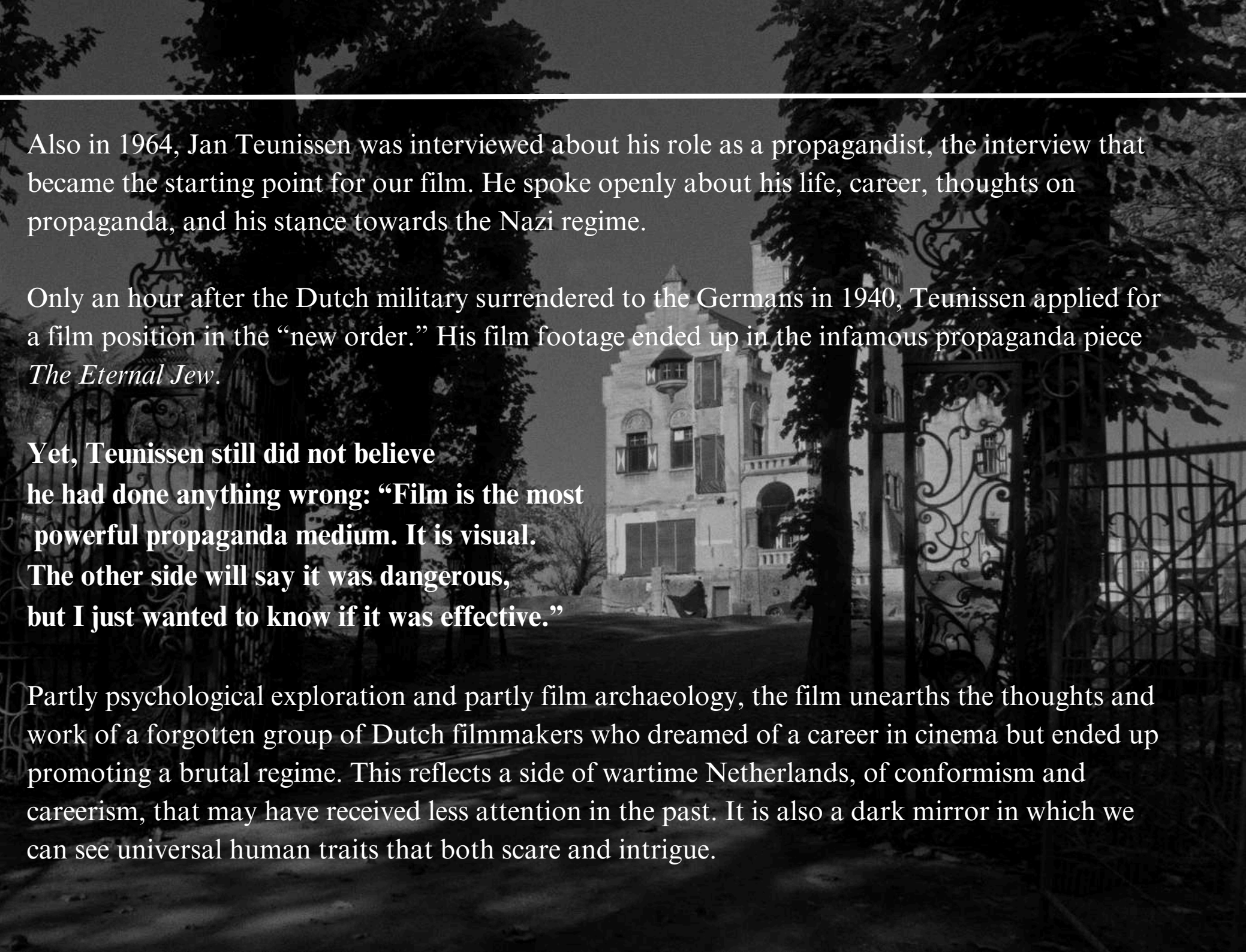
Director statement

‘Without artists, designers, writers, and filmmakers, the propaganda machines of authoritarian regimes could not exist. These propagandists are often hidden in the shadows. But who are they, and how does one become a propagandist filmmaker for the Nazis?’

After finishing my previous film *All Against All*, an archeology of fascism in the Netherlands, I discovered a seven-hour-long interview with Dutch National-Socialist filmmaker Jan Teunissen. This interview, along with the simple ‘whydunit’ question, became the starting point for *The Propagandist*.

More questions arose: was our film's main character, National-Socialist filmmaker Jan Teunissen, an ideologue or mostly an opportunist? What propaganda techniques did he and his colleagues use to manipulate public opinion? Have these techniques changed significantly over time? And where is the boundary between documentary and propaganda films?

In a 1964 interview, the most famous Nazi filmmaker, Leni Riefenstahl, attempted to whitewash her role in the *Third Reich*. She claimed that *Triumph of the Will* was not propaganda: “Everything in it is true. And it contains no tendentious commentary at all. It is history. A pure historical film... it is cinema vérité. It is, therefore, a documentary. Not a propaganda film.”



Also in 1964, Jan Teunissen was interviewed about his role as a propagandist, the interview that became the starting point for our film. He spoke openly about his life, career, thoughts on propaganda, and his stance towards the Nazi regime.

Only an hour after the Dutch military surrendered to the Germans in 1940, Teunissen applied for a film position in the “new order.” His film footage ended up in the infamous propaganda piece *The Eternal Jew*.

Yet, Teunissen still did not believe he had done anything wrong: “Film is the most powerful propaganda medium. It is visual. The other side will say it was dangerous, but I just wanted to know if it was effective.”

Partly psychological exploration and partly film archaeology, the film unearths the thoughts and work of a forgotten group of Dutch filmmakers who dreamed of a career in cinema but ended up promoting a brutal regime. This reflects a side of wartime Netherlands, of conformism and careerism, that may have received less attention in the past. It is also a dark mirror in which we can see universal human traits that both scare and intrigue.

The team



Director Luuk Bouwman has made several feature-length documentaries, including *Gerlach, the last farmer* (2023, IDFA Best Dutch Film Award) with Aliona van der Horst, *It Is True But Not Here* (2017) about artist- and cult-musician Dick Verdult and *All Against All* (2019) about the rise of fascism in the Netherlands, which premiered at IDFA and for which he was awarded the IDFA Stipend 2023. His documentaries are driven by extensive research and long-term engagement with his subjects, revealing processes and mechanisms.

Timeline

2023 *Gerlach, the last farmer*, 78' directed by Luuk Bouwman & Aliona van der Horst. Produced by Docmakers for KRO-NCRV. World Première IDFA 2023, winner IDFA 2023 Best Dutch Film Award.

2019 *All against All*, 103' directed by Luuk Bouwman. Produced by Doc.Eye Film for EOdocs. World Première IDFA 2019.

2017 *Dick Verdult, it is true but not here*, 70' directed by Luuk Bouwman. DocFeed Best Documentary Award, nominated for the Margaret Mead Filmmaker Award, theatrical release in Mexico, Colombia, Argentina.



Producer Ilja Roomans works for Docmakers: a collective of the award-winning documentary filmmakers Aliona van der Horst, Suzanne Raes, Sanne Rovers and Yan Ting Yuen. She has 20 years of experience producing both national productions and international co-productions, and is a member of the EAVE Network and the Documentary Branch of AMPAS. Ilja also produced Luuk Bouwman's previous film *Gerlach, the last farmer* (2023) that he co-directed with Aliona van der Horst, winner of the Best Dutch Film Award at IDFA 2023.

In 2023, Ilja produced Suzanne Raes' previous film *Close to Vermeer*, which was the only Dutch feature-length documentary that qualified for an Academy Award for Best Documentary Feature, following successful theatrical runs in the Netherlands, United States and Germany. *Close to Vermeer* has been sold to 15 countries to date. Ilja also produced *Master of Light* (2022) by Rosa Ruth Boesten, together with Roger Ross Williams and Anousha Nzume: nominated for 3 Emmy Awards and won multiple awards, among them SXSW 2022 Best Documentary Feature, San Francisco Film Festival McBaine Documentary Feature Award, Sheffield DocFest 2022 Best First Feature Documentary Award and the Cinema Doc Eye Spotlight Award 2023. The film was sold globally to HBO Max.

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Credits

The Propagandist is a Docmakers production **in co-production with** HUMAN **supported by**, The Netherlands Film Fund, The Netherlands Film Production Incentive, NPO-fund, CoBO, Beeld & Geluid

Directed by Luuk Bouwman

Written by Luuk Bouwman and Rik Binnendijk

Produced by Ilja Roomans

Line producer Lieke van den Ouwelant

Editor Sander Vos NCE

Music Mathilde Wantenaar and Tijmen van Tol

Cinematography Jan Pieter Tuinstra

Sound Jillis Schriel

Research Rik Binnendijk and Egbert Barten

Image research Gerard Nijssen

Voice-overs by
Anniek Pheifer
Vincent Rietveld
Jaap Spijkers
Raymond Thiry

Sound design by Mark Glynne

Music production by Igor Wouters

Credits

Color grading Qianwei Tong

Assistant editor Sandro Ligtenberg

Co-editor Luuk Bouwman

Finishing Jan Jaap Kuiper

Post production producer Natasja Möhrs

Commissioning editor HUMAN,
Willemien van Aalst



human

NL FILM
FONDS

NL FILM
INCENTIVE



fonds

