

A Space Time Films production

In Association with  
Kulturfolger Productions  
Ford Foundation JustFilms  
Narrow Vision Endeavors

# HUMBOLDT USA

Directed by G. Anthony Svatek



89 minutes | USA | 2026

World Premiere - Visions du Réel, International Feature Competition  
North American Premiere - Museum of the Moving Image's First Look

Stills [Available Here](#)

## Publicity

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## Info & Sales

Space Time Films - [info@spacetimefilms.co](mailto:info@spacetimefilms.co)

## **LOGLINE**

Countless places across the United States still bear the name of Alexander von Humboldt — queer naturalist, visionary ecologist, now largely forgotten. The longing filmmaker uses three of them as unlikely common ground, weaving Humboldt's own words through present-day lives: urban activists greening neglected neighbourhoods, scientists scanning redwood forests, hunters returning bighorn sheep to protected land. Across generations and landscapes, HUMBOLDT USA asks what remains of a vision of "interconnectedness."

## **SYNOPSIS**

Long before today's hyper-globalized and technologized world - the internet, rapid transit and AI - 19th century German naturalist Alexander von Humboldt made a radical proposal while moving through the Americas: "everything is interconnectedness." His ideas planted the seeds for Western environmentalism and the study of ecology, earning him enormous world-wide fame, just as the European colonies began to gain independence. No other person's name has been given to as many places, species, and things - none of which Humboldt ever saw or named himself.

Despite Humboldt's reputation fading into history, we live with his legacy in our contemporary conceptions of nature and science. Set in three of these placenames in the United States, the film explores his influence embedded in today's technology, landscape and infrastructure.

In the rural high Nevada desert of Humboldt County, we follow two biologists working outside the scientific ivory tower: Ed is a cross between an office clerk at the state's Wildlife Department and a modern cowboy; Emily is the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe's environmental director who uses satellites to monitor the ecological health of the reservation. Together, they employ helicopters to perilously capture bighorn sheep from remote Nevadan mountains and release them on the Reservation with satellite-tracking collars around their necks. As the ten-year research project unfolds, questions arise about the bighorn sheep reintroduction's ultimate goals: with non-tribal hunting groups shouldering the costs, which community is set to benefit most - Paiute tribal members, or outside sports hunters?

It is the height of summer in Buffalo, NY. Humboldt Parkway resident Terry Robinson and his wife Marcia Ladiana, a retired air quality scientist and leukemia survivor, lead the fight against the infamous eight-lane highway that destroyed a once vibrant green space. Terry believes that the state's massive plan to cap a short portion of the road will cement a regressive "mid-century car-centric mindset" in perpetuity. Marcia, distrustful of the data released in the states' air study, takes matters into her own hands by setting up sensors to monitor pollution around their house. Meanwhile, Angel Artis educates visitors at the adjacent science museum about the upcoming solar eclipse in Buffalo, as her fellow neighbors gather in the museum's Hall of Extinction to

attend community meetings about the expressway. A sense of historical alignment overcomes East Buffalo.

A group of tech engineers arrive in Humboldt Redwoods. The team's leaders, Chris Birke and Emily Soward, lug three dozen GoPros into the ancient woods to capture as much visual detail of the ecosystem as possible. Frustrated by the human-centered tech innovations of Silicon Valley, they aim to create a dataset based on nature - as opposed to data scraped off the internet - and train artificial intelligence on it to create "organic algorithms." In the process of attempting to scan and capture a city block size area of Humboldt Redwoods, the engineers find themselves enmeshed in the complexities of doing field work, as well as the ever-growing threat of large-scale logging companies. Meanwhile, local park ranger Griff Griffith uses his TikTok fame to educate his followers on the troublesome history of the redwoods coast - despite algorithms stifling his messaging. Our protagonists struggle to escape the unrelenting reach of Silicon Valley, even in this most remote ecosystem.

Through a braided narrative, the film follows these everyday Americans attempting to make sense of, and protect, the environments around them. Throughout the film, the director's narration, in the form of a fraught love letter, conjures up the ghost of Alexander von Humboldt and details from his life, drawing connections between his ideas and modern-day environmentalism, while complicating his legacy - neither colonial agent nor sentimental hero. It is this tension and exploration of nuances that continues to echo in the film's three narratives.

What arises is a kaleidoscopic vision of archaic, emerging, and occasionally absurd strategies to "preserve" nature in America, asking whether the tools used to understand the world meet the scale of our ecological crises today.

## **DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT**

HUMBOLDT USA interweaves three narratives that explore elements of Alexander von Humboldt's legacy on American nature, environmentalism, and technology - from conservation to restoration, technological infrastructure to human exploration, and environmental justice and land rights. These themes are drawn out through juxtaposition, as well as narration that directly comments on Humboldt's legacy.

The film formally represents Humboldt's concept of "everything is interconnectedness" - an overly broad proposition that nonetheless revolutionized Western science, before being eclipsed by Darwinism. As the film progresses, its form mirrors the annihilation of place and time, reflecting modern technological and infrastructural interconnectedness that contributes to our alienation from the natural world.

At the film's core, viewers are asked to question notions of "nature" and "environmentalism" in order to spark imaginations and encourage action. In an effort to break up entrenched beliefs that the environmental crisis is solved by consumerist and individualistic means, HUMBOLDT USA celebrates the multiplicity of ways in which Americans relate to and protect nature - even

within frameworks that contribute to the unfolding crises. By acknowledging the complications that arise within each story, the film encourages us to feel radical empathy for people struggling to achieve similar goals beyond our respective social, political, and environmental spheres.

Alexander von Humboldt and I share biographical parallels - a focus on environmental topics in our work, biculturalism, queerness, even the same birthday. This proximity is a launching-off point for the film's critical inquiry into American Nature and its eurocentric paradigms, which Humboldt embodies so well: Enlightenment scientific data-collecting, and romanticized, mediated experiences, and it provides an opportunity to interrogate my own experience as a gay European-American environmentalist and filmmaker. Humboldt becomes a foil for pushing against the dominant Western scientific paradigm from within.

The narration's tone is self-reflexive, drawing parallels between the circumstances of Humboldt's epoch and mine. This serves multiple purposes: from establishing a relation to Humboldt, to critiquing the dominance of colonial and polluting infrastructure, to showing how technology changes our sense of space. Humboldt and I share an approach of constant code-switching and questioning - by connecting with his outsidership as a traveling gay colonial figure, I ask how his insights, 200 years later, may be useful or harmful in untangling ourselves from the technological web.

## **FILMMAKER BIOS**

### **DIRECTOR, WRITER, PRODUCER, CINEMATOGRAPHER, EDITOR**

#### **G. Anthony Svatek**

Raised in the Austrian Alps, Brooklyn-based filmmaker G. Anthony Svatek crafts films that probe humanity's fractured relationship with the natural world. Specialising in documentary and experimental film, Svatek's work has screened at the New York Film Festival, International Film Festival Rotterdam, Visions du Réel, DOC NYC, and beyond. His directed work includes HUMBOLDT USA (2026), TESTUDO HERMANNI (2023, sixpackfilm), and SOME THOUGHTS ON THE COMMON TOAD (2023), narrated by Tilda Swinton, and .TV (2018). He has also collaborated as editor on CONTRACTIONS (2024, NYT OpDocs, dir. Lynne Sachs) and as associate producer on LITTLE, BIG, AND FAR (2025, NYFF, dir. Jem Cohen). Working under his production company Kulturfolger Productions, Svatek has directed and produced commissions for BBC World News, New York Magazine, and the New York State Parks Department. He serves on the Advisory Council at UnionDocs in Brooklyn.

### **PRODUCER**

#### **Elijah Stevens**

Elijah Stevens is a documentary producer based in New York City. He has produced TIME AND WATER (Sundance 2026), BARBARA FOREVER (Sundance 2026) which won the Jonathan Oppenheim Editing Award at Sundance and Teddy Award at Berlinale, and LANDSCAPES OF MEMORY (True/False 2026). He associate produced HOLLYWOODGATE (Venice 2023; BBC Storyville), KING COAL (Sundance 2023, POV), and the Oscar-nominated FIRE OF LOVE (Sundance 2022, National Geographic Documentary Films), amongst other credits. Elijah's

work has been supported by Sundance, IDA, the Inmaat Foundation, IDFA, DOK Leipzig, The Gotham, DocsBarcelona, DOC NYC, DOK.Forum, and Ji.hlava, among others. Elijah was a 2019-2020 fellow in the UnionDocs Collaborative Studio, and is a 2025-26 Sundance Producers Lab fellow.

## **CINEMATOGRAPHER, CO-PRODUCER**

### **Sean Hanley**

Sean Hanley is a documentary cinematographer versed in longitudinal vérité projects but with a concentration on creative non-fiction and experimental techniques. Therefore, his work has screened across a spectrum of festivals, from Sundance to MoMA's Documentary Fortnight. Recent credits include Judd Ehrlich's JANE ELLIOTT AGAINST THE WORLD (2026, Sundance), Debra Granik's series CONBODY VS. EVERYBODY (2024, Sundance), and Jay Arthur Sterrenberg and Kelly Anderson's EMERGENT CITY (2024, Tribeca). He has held a long and productive collaboration with experimental documentarian Lynne Sachs starting with YOUR DAY IS MY NIGHT (2013, MoMA Documentary Fortnight), TIP OF MY TONGUE (2015, Closing Night of MoMA Documentary Fortnight), and most recently CONTRACTIONS (2024, True/False). His short films as director often navigate landscape, place-making, and the experience of the non-human. They have screened at the Ann Arbor Film Festival, the Edinburgh International Film Festival, the New Orleans Film Festival, and the Science New Wave Festival. He is a member of the Documentary Cinematographer's Alliance.

## **EDITOR, SOUND DESIGNER**

### **Kaija Siirala**

Kaija Siirala works in documentary media as a picture editor, sound designer and educator. She has a keen interest in process-based collaboration and storytelling that pushes against the bounds of classical narrative structures. Films she has worked on have screened at the National Gallery of Canada, True/False Film Festival, Camden International Film Festival, MoMI First Look, Hot Docs, DOCNYC, Big Sky, AFI fest, IDFA, DOK Leipzig, Flaherty Seminar 2023 and as a New York Times Op-Doc. Her credits include FEET IN WATER, HEAD ON FIRE (2023), THE WORK (2022), OPEN WATER (2020) and others. She holds an MFA in Integrated Media Arts from CUNY Hunter College.

## **COMPOSER**

### **Celia Hollander**

Celia Hollander is a Los Angeles based composer, producer and performer. She has composed original music for feature films including UNION COUNTY (Sundance 2026), GOOD ONE (Sundance 2024) and DAD & STEP-DAD (2023), as well as for short films, television, theater, dance, art installations and VR projects. Her discography features releases on Leaving Records, Longform Editions and Recital and she has performed at venues including 2220 Arts & Archives (LA), Public Records (NYC), Grace Cathedral (SF), Basilica Hudson (NY) and Bond Chapel (CHI). She has taught acoustics and composition at the Herb Alpert School of Music at California Institute of the Arts, where she completed her MFA in Music Composition and Experimental Sound Practices.

## **COLORIST**

### **Natacha Ikoli**

Natacha Ikoli is a professional colorist, and has a rich background in media studies. Born in Kinshasa, she initially pursued Cinema and Performing Arts in Paris, before earning a BA in Media and Film Production in London. Recent credits include THE OLDEST PERSON IN THE WORLD (Sundance 2026), UNION (Sundance 2025), JOONAM (Sundance 2023), INVISIBLE BEAUTY (Sundance 2023), 32 SOUNDS (Sundance 2022), SHUT UP AND PAINT (Tribeca 2022). Known for her extensive experience and unique artistic vision, Natacha Ikoli has established herself as a respected figure in the film industry, enhancing the emotional depth and visual appeal of the projects she undertakes.

### **Credits**

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### **HUMBOLDT USA**

#### **Written and Directed by**

G. Anthony Svatek

#### **Produced by**

Elijah Stevens

#### **Cinematographers**

Sean Hanley

G. Anthony Svatek

#### **Editors**

Kaija Siirala

G. Anthony Svatek

#### **Executive Producer**

Heather A. Baldry

#### **Produced by**

G. Anthony Svatek

#### **Co-Produced by**

Sean Hanley

**Original Music**

Celia Hollander

**Sound Designer**

Kaija Siirala

**Colorist**

Natacha Ikoli

**Featuring**

Angel Artis

Chris Birke

John "Griff" Griffith

Emily Hagler

Ed Partee

Terry Robinson

Emily Soward

**Also Featuring**

Ernest Hagler

Zamoni Jefferson

Marcia Ladiana

Brittany Partee

Jennifer Partee

Jennifer Roberts

Morgan Thompson

Kaylie Wilmot

Terry Wright

**Additional Writing by**

Kaija Siirala

**Writing Consultants**

Elaine Sheldon

Elijah Stevens

Kathy Sirico

**Dramaturgist**

Bernadette Weigel

**Additional Cinematography**

Anna Scime

**Titles**

Zachary Nichols

**Archival Producer**

Elijah Stevens

**Additional Archival Research**

Monica Berra

**Historical Advisor - Alexander von Humboldt**

Dr. Sandra Rebok

**Historical Advisor - Humboldt Parkway Buffalo**

Dr. Jennifer D. Roberts

**Post-Production Assistant**

Ezra Key-Cohen

**Production Support - Buffalo**

Jason Livingston

**Production Support - Nevada**

Alex Cunningham

Dana Toth

**DI Facility**

Nice Dissolve

**DI Supervisor**

Pierce Varous

**Post Production Sound Finishing**

PostWorks New York

**Supervising Sound Editor & Re-Recording Mixer**

Christopher Koch, CAS

**FX Editor**

Eric Di Stefano

**Mix Technician**

Rae King

**Post Sound Producer**

Emily Gilmer

**Chief Audio Engineer**

Phil Fuller

**SVP of Sound Services**

Jay Rubin

**Narration Recording**

Brent Chesanek

Jairo Garcia

Christopher Koch, CAS

**Narration**

G. Anthony Svatek

**Songs**

“Heart of the Andes”

Composed by Celia  
Hollander

“We Wish Peace”

Composed by Celia  
Hollander

“Angel”

Composed by Celia  
Hollander

“Birds Electric”

Composed by Celia  
Hollander

“Habitat”

Composed by Celia  
Hollander

“Eclipse”

Composed by Celia  
Hollander

“America”

Composed by Celia  
Hollander

“Drive-Thru”

Composed by Celia  
Hollander

“Rehearsal”

Composed by Celia  
Hollander

“Heavy Air”

Composed by Celia  
Hollander

“Virtual Natural”

Composed by Celia  
Hollander

“Future Petroglyphs”

Composed by Celia  
Hollander

“Closing Time”

Composed by Celia  
Hollander

“Drone Tone”

Composed by Celia  
Hollander

“Last Thing”

Courtesy of Comfort Cure

“Alexander”

Composed by Celia  
Hollander

“Talking Redwoods”

Composed by Celia  
Hollander

“On The Beat Beat”

Courtesy of Augustine Y  
Sumo

**Legal Services**

Film Arts Legal, PLLC  
Stephen Darren Holmgren

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Max Collins  
Sierra Club's William E. Colby Memorial Library  
Steve Lazar, The Humboldt Project  
Western Village Inn & Casino

**Additional Materials**  
The Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley  
Bibliothèque Nationale de France  
Biodiversity Heritage Library  
Deutsches Textarchiv  
Freesound  
Gary Bloomfield  
Humboldt Museum, Winnemucca, Nevada  
Library of Congress  
The Metropolitan Museum of Art  
Musée d'histoire des sciences de la Ville de Genève  
NASA  
New York State Department of Transportation  
Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin  
Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Nationalgalerie / Karin März

**Alexander von Humboldt excerpts from:**  
Tagebücher der Amerikanischen Reise, 1799-1804  
Kosmos: Entwurf einer Physischen Weltbeschreibung, 1845-1862  
Reise in die Äquinoktial-Gegenden des Neuen Kontinents, 1859  
Essai Politique Sur l'île de Cuba, 1826

**Buffalo Billboard Haiku**  
"In the Sun's Absence"  
Phoebe A. Cohen  
Jason Livingston

**This Project Was Filmed and Edited on the Unceded Territories of the**  
Northern Paiute, Western Shoshone, Southern Paiute, Wiyot, Yurok, Tolowa, Sinkiyone, Munsee

## Lenape, and Haudenosaunee

### The Filmmakers Wish to Thank

Tahiti Abdul  
Christopher Allen  
Suzie Albright  
Kalli Anderson  
Emily Apter  
Paula Arroio  
Kazembe Balagun  
Diane Becker  
Albert Behar  
Silke Beinssen-Hesse  
Amy Biber  
Andrew Blum  
Pavel Borecky  
Shane Boris  
Dorothea Braemer  
Tom Brook  
Caitlin Brzezinski  
Julian Burlacu  
The Buffalo Zoo  
Rob Burton  
Paolo Calamita  
California State Parks  
Chris Cascarano  
Esy Casey  
Colleen Cassingham  
Brent Chesanek  
Carolina Chimoy  
Edo Choi  
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The Coffin Club  
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Emily Collins  
Kathleen Crosby  
Mason Cruz  
Alex Cunningham  
Tristan Daley  
Andreas Daum  
Gregory Delaney  
Sue Ding  
Christian Dobosiewicz  
Dale Dobson  
Caroline Doherty  
Sara Dosa  
Johnny Dunn  
The Ecological Archive

Eastside Parkways Coalition  
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Sarah Ema Friedland  
Ivana Formanová  
Leah Galant  
Erin Gates  
Cinthia Gill  
Alexander Glandien  
Hilary Go  
Kirk Gordon  
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Debra Granik  
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Amanda Hammett  
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Humboldt Redwoods State  
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Paul Hüttinger  
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Amanda Katz  
Ondrej Kazík  
Kyla Kegler  
Dana Sue Kimball  
Henry Kinder  
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Buffalo Museum of Science  
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Nevada Bighorn Unlimited  
Nevada Department of  
Wildlife  
Niagara Aquarium  
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Steve Nichols  
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Emily Packer  
Otilia Padua  
Kacey Page  
Asimaki Alfa Pagidas  
Jo Ellen Pellman  
Peak Design  
Peppermill Casino  
Sierra Pettengill  
Eric Phillips-Horst  
Barbara Pichler  
Rosa Prosser  
Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe  
Mia Quinn  
Restore Our Community  
Coalition  
Lisa Marie Russo  
Redcrest Resort Gift Shop  
Soheil Rezayazdi  
PJ Rountree

Aaron Sachs  
Lynne Sachs  
Petr Salaba  
Amanda Salazar  
Sanctuary Forest Mattole  
River Watershed  
Clara E. Sander-McDonald  
Rüdiger Schaper  
Scheels  
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Ekrem Serdar  
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Rainer von Zastrow  
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James Wasserman  
Laura Wasserman  
Mimi Wilcox  
Matt Wolf  
Winners Casino  
Margaret Wooster  
Chloë Wragg  
Chloe Zimmerman

**Dedicated to**  
Gudrun Seidenauer  
Wolfgang Wenger

**In Loving Memory of**  
Sebastián Lasaosa Rogers

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