

Press Release



For immediate release

Zooscope's *A Campaign of Their Own* opens with international premier at Visions du Réel

The film by Lionel Rupp and Michael David Mitchell is selected for international competition at Visions du Réel with a premier on April 22

Director's Statement by Lionel Rupp

Bernie Sanders' campaign for US President should be taken in the historical context of populist political movements and their combat to fight for the interests of everyday citizens, along the same line as the Occupy Wall Street movement. The core principles of the 99%ers resonate throughout Sanders campaign, especially his focus on reducing the gender, race and economic inequalities in American society. Indeed, Bernie always spoke with in the third-person plural "us"—becoming a certain incarnation of the will of the people—instead of using the "me" of most presidential candidates. Through the film, the spectator experiences the enthusiasm he evoked in the first part of the film during the New York Primaries from up close, as his supporters come out en masse to the rallies and work hard to spread his message on the streets.

But as the events of 2016 unrolled, his campaign eventually got hijacked by this "us," as his supporters virulently protested his endorsement of Hilary Clinton in Philadelphia. Herein lies the meaning of the title *A Campaign of Their Own*—Bernie's people ended up going further than Bernie himself could go, becoming a sort of monstrosity-campaign without structure or defined form, without a leader and therefore pulled in every direction by the citizens who composed it. In this second half of the film a kind of cinematographic typology—an opposition between exterior and interior—becomes increasingly apparent. The exterior is both the physical space behind closed doors and high fences occupied by the disorganized and angry activists, and the ideological space where the hyper-control of the optics inside the convention and call for party unity did not leave any room for the opposing voices—ultimately silencing Bernie and burying his vision to transform the US.

Producer's Statement by Michael David Mitchell

A Campaign of Their Own is a political thriller. And while our protagonists are real, everyday activists, there are many moments in the film where the cinematographic quality is closer to fiction than to the documentary form. We achieved this closeness with the subject matter through Lionel's camera work and vision, and because our small team embedded ourselves into the lives of a handful of fervent Bernie Sanders supporters. We accompanied their emotional rollercoaster, starting with the greatest of hopes leading up to the New York Primary all the way to their devastating disappointment at what they felt was the deception by the Democratic National Convention.

This filmic immersion into a populist political movement of the like the United States hasn't seen for a generation is an emotionally gripping dissection of the mechanisms by which political activists can become disenchanted with their democratic institutions. *A Campaign of Their Own* bears witness to a specific moment in American politics that echoes the timeless and never ceasing struggles of the common people everywhere to have their voices heard and their concerns addressed. This is truly independent cinema: It is a film made from the bottom up, and it was impossible to do it any other way.

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