



# LETTER FROM A FRIEND

a film by  
Renato Unterberg & Stefanie Weberhofer

# SYNOPSIS

An Austrian Singer-Songwriter leaves home and makes his way to India.

*Letter from a Friend* is a musical road movie, a journey told entirely through songs laid over Super 8 film, hardly a word spoken. Captured in over six years of travel, concerts and album recording, it is an intimate portrait of a young musician looking for truth by going abroad. A story deeply personal yet a gift to everyone, it is a homage to the art of music and film-making, picturing the beauty of a unique friendship, the joy of travelling - and a farewell that might be final.

# SYNOPSIS (GERMAN)

Ein österreichischer Singer-Songwriter verlässt sein Zuhause und macht sich auf den Weg nach Indien. *Letter from a Friend* ist ein musikalischer Roadmovie, ein Film, der durch Songs erzählt wird - es wird kaum ein Wort gesprochen. Gedreht in über sechs Jahren auf analogem Super 8 Material bei Konzerten und Reisen, zeichnen die Aufnahmen ein intimes Porträt eines jungen Musikers, der im Unterwegssein nach Wahrheit sucht. Eine Geschichte, die zutiefst persönlich und dennoch ein Geschenk an alle ist. Eine malerische Hommage an die Liebe zum Musik- und Filmschaffen, an eine einzigartige Freundschaft - und an einen Abschied, der vielleicht für immer ist.

# REVIEW (GERMAN)

Wer nicht reisen kann braucht Filme. Einen Film wie diesen, so frisch, so voll mit dem Geruch von Zuckerrohr, von Gischt und Meerbrise, vom Staub auf den Straßen Maharashtras. Die Songs von Renato Unterberg entfalten einen Sog, der mich wünschen lässt, ich könnte sie immer wieder hören. Die Bilder der Super-8-Kamera von Stefanie Weberhofer eröffnen mir diese Welt, in der der Fahrtwind durch das offene Zugfenster hereinströmt: Bilder als Speicher voll lebendiger Erinnerung. (Gabriele Mathes)

# SPECIFICATIONS

Production year: 2021  
Length: 55 minutes  
Genre: music film, road movie, essay film, artist portrait  
Shooting format: Super8, color and black/white  
Projection format: DCP  
Languages: Austrian, English  
Subtitles: English

# CREDITS

Idea & Realisation: Renato Unterberg, Stefanie Weberhofer  
Music: Renato Unterberg  
Cinematography: Stefanie Weberhofer, Renato Unterberg  
Film processing: Stefanie Weberhofer



# BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The two filmmakers – who are cousins – started doing films together when they were children. Filmmaking has always been like a game for them and over the decades they never stopped playing. The first scenes of this project were done to test analog cameras and hand-processing techniques, they continued recording scenes on analog film for music videos and live visuals and collected hours of analog material for Unterbergs future musical projects.

Only on the way did they realize that this journey would take a completely different direction. While travelling India Unterberg came into contact with Tibetan Buddhism and over the course of several years his interest shifted from living the extrovert life of a musician to a life dedicated to spiritual growth. Unterberg stopped pursuing his artistic career, deleted his music videos from the web and started studying and practicing Buddhism full time.

The film Letter from a friend is the only occasion to see his music videos and tells the story of his personal transition by using his own songs as a narrative. All film material that was captured during these years of music making and travel was hand-processed in the darkroom by Stefanie Weberhofer at filmkoop wien - an artist run film lab in Vienna, Austria.

The movie was realised with a total budget of around 3.000 Euro, half of it was funded by the City of Salzburg, Austria, the rest was financed by the filmmakers themselves with the support of their friends and families.



# RENATO UNTERBERG

Renato Unterberg, \*28. Oktober 1988, is an Austrian musician, composer and filmmaker.

After more than ten years in the art and culture scene in Austria, 7 studio albums with various musical projects and as a solo artist as well as over 200 national and international concerts and a couple of short films, Unterberg met Tibetan Buddhism on a journey to India.

In spring 2015 he decided to engage more intensely with Buddhist meditation practice and study, living for almost three years in Tushita Meditation Center in Dharamsala, India - the exile of the Dalai Lama, where he guided meditations in the various courses that were offered for travellers.

In 2017 he released his fourth solo album Letter from a friend at the Donauinselfest in Vienna, Austria.

For the last 3 years Unterberg has been studying Buddhist philosophy at Istituto Lama Tzongkhapa in Italy and Nalanda Monastery in France. In November 2019 he led the meditations in the legendary November Course at Kopan Monastery in Kathmandu, Nepal. This course, which has been taking place annually since 1971 with around 250 participants lasting for over a month, has been a worldwide magnet for people on a search for spiritual growth for decades.

He is now on the verge of returning to Dharamsala, India, to study Tibetan language full time, in order to pursue his study of the Tibetan Buddhist tradition.

## INTERVIEW

**2019 „The most important thing is to listen, says songwriter and meditation teacher“**

<https://martarajkova.com/the-most-important-thing-is-to-listen-says-songwriter-and-meditation-teacher/>

**At home you had your own band, thousands of fans, beautiful and comfortable life. Yet, you withdrew from all this and went to a meditation center in India. How did you end up there?**

I always wanted to be a musician or an actor, to entertain people and do things that are beneficial for others. I had the luxury to do what I liked for a very long time: I had good financial background, I could create music, I was on stage performing. However, the more I kept doing this, living the rock`n`roll lifestyle, the more I felt the urge to find something beyond that.

So, after a while I asked myself, "ok, what`s next?"

# STEFANIE WEBERHOFER

Stefanie Weberhofer, \*14.3.1988 is an Austrian filmmaker and media artist. She works with Super8, 16mm and 35mm film and explores various DIY techniques in order to create short films and works for the realm of Expanded Cinema.

## FILMOGRAPHY & SCREENINGS

*Kopierwerk* (AT 2020)

distributed by sixpackfilm, Viennale, Diagonale, Vienna Shorts, Oberhausen, Ann Arbor, EXis Seoul, Edinburgh International Film Festival (selection), Cork International Film Festival, Kasseler Dokfest, Curtocircuito, Alternative Film / Video Festival, ...

*As Tides Go By* (AT 2018)

This Human World, Analogica, Laboratorio Experimental del Cine, Cinema Next Special, Moviate Underground Film Festival, Dresdner Schmalfilmtage, the 8 fest Toronto,...

*Look How Beautiful the Light Moves* (AT 2016)

Oberhausen, Moviate Underground Film Festival, Cinemística, the 8 fest Toronto, Experimental Superstars,...

*Dissolved* (AT 2015)

Antimatter [Media Art], European Media Art Festival, Cinema Next, Process Festival, Festival International Signes de Nuit, Sydney Underground Film Festival, Bideodromo Festival, Staunton International Film Festival, Haverhill Experimental Film Festival, Moscow International Experimental Film Festival, PROCESO DE ERROR 3º Festival Internacional de Video Experimental, Golden Reel International Underground Film Festival, The Montreal Underground Film Festival, Back up Weimar, New York City Independent Film Festival, Alchemy Film Festival, Hubert Sielecki Preis,...

## CONTACT

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