



7915 KM

Director: Nikolaus Geyrhalter, Austria, 2008, 105 minutes

The title, '*7915 KM*', refers to the length of the legendary Paris to Dakar Rally as it was raced in 2007 from Lisbon, Portugal to Dakar, Senegal. This would be the last race through the North African desert due to fears of terrorist attacks. *7915 KM* is not about the race, however, but about the places that the race passes through. This road documentary begins where the cars and motorcycles leave their dust clouds behind, with the people who live along the route in Morocco, Mauritania, Mali, and Senegal.

The contrast between the motorized visitors and the local population is striking. The camera encounters men, women, and children who have stories about daily life, their work, happiness, worries and hopes. Meeting them eye to eye, they set the film's pace. We meet a girl and her goat (named Rally) in a small Moroccan village; Saharawi soldiers who have been guarding a stretch of desert for decades, its borders still undefined after the Spanish colonizers withdrew; a Mauritanian caterpillar driver who must feed his family though he reached retirement age years ago; the owner of a movie theatre in Mali who attempts to compete with the booming DVD and internet market by showing 'white porn' from the 70s; and a young Senegalese woman who gives a tour of houses being built by villagers working in Europe.

One local is surprised that the racers trust their navigation systems more than his knowledge of the land. Another local comments 'how rich the whites must be that they can just drive around all

day.' Many of the people want to immigrate to Europe, assuming they would have a chance at a better life there. As one person comments, 'Europeans don't have to do anything. They're all rich and just enjoy life.'

The film is worth it for the cinematography alone, which captures such diverse and gorgeous geographies as the Moroccan desert, the deserts of the Saharan Republic, and the lush lands in Senegal.

DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Producer, director and cameraman Nikolaus Geyrhalter was born in Vienna in 1972. At the age of twenty-two he founded his own production company (Nikolaus Geyrhalter Filmproduktion). Among his films are the award-winning *Pripyat*, *Our Daily Bread* and *Elsewhere* and his latest film is *7915 KM*. In 2003 Nikolaus Geyrhalter received the Austrian State Award for Film Art.

SCREENING PARTNER

DOUGLAS WILLIAMS
Photography
Videography