

# SURVIVING PROGRESS

A Film By  
**Mathieu Roy & Harold Crooks**

86 min, Color, 35mm & Digital, Dolby SRD, 1.85, 2011



## **FIRST RUN FEATURES**

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## **Synopsis**

Technological advancement, economic development, population increase - are they signs of a thriving society? Or too much of a good thing?

Based on Ronald Wright's best-seller "A Short History of Progress," this intelligent, provocative documentary by Mathieu Roy and Harold Crooks explores the concept of progress in our modern world, guiding us through a sweeping but detailed survey of the major "progress traps" facing our civilization in the arenas of technology, economics, consumption, and the environment.

Featuring powerful arguments from such visionaries as Jane Goodall, Margaret Atwood, Stephen Hawking, Craig Venter, Robert Wright, Marina Silva, Michael Hudson, and Ronald Wright himself, this enlightening and visually spectacular film invites us to contemplate the progress traps that destroyed past civilizations and that lie treacherously embedded in our own.

Are the advances in human technology truly advances? Leading critics of Wall Street, cognitive psychologists, and ecologists lay bare the consequences of progress-as-usual as the film travels around the world - from a burgeoning China to the disappearing rainforests of Brazil to a chimp research lab in New Iberia, Louisiana - to construct a shocking overview of the way our global economic system is eating away at our planet's resources and shackling entire populations with poverty.

Providing an honest look at the risks and pitfalls of running 21st Century "software" (our accumulated knowledge) on 50,000-year-old "hardware" (our primate brains), *Surviving Progress* offers a challenge: to prove making apes smarter was not an evolutionary dead end.

## **With Appearances By**

### **Margaret Atwood, Author**

“Instead of thinking that nature is this huge bank that we can just, this endless credit card that we can just keep drawing on, we have to think about the finite nature of that planet and how to keep it alive so that we too may remain alive. Unless we conserve the planet, there isn't going to be any ‘the economy.’”

### **Enio Beata, Sawmill Owner**

“The people responsible for destroying the Amazon are the big farmers, the international corporations. The biggest farmers are senators, deputies, colonels. They're the ones destroying the Amazon forest. Them. Not us.”

### **Colin Beavan, Writer/Engineer/Director for the No Impact Project**

“Before I go around trying to change other people, maybe I should look at myself and change myself and keep my side of the street clean.”

### **Chen Changnian, Professor/Cheng Ming's father**

“Of course there have been some problems as well, for example, the environment.”

### **Chen Ming, Self-Driving Tour Guide**

“I'm like the monk, the master, I'm leading the members to the West, to find out the real meaning of life, to reach true enlightenment.”

### **Victor Zhikai Gao, Director: China Association of International Studies**

“We need to go onto a path of growth and China needs to modernize and industrialize...”

### **Jane Goodall, Primatologist**

“Arguably, we are the most intellectual creature that's ever walked on planet Earth. So how come, then, that this so intellectual being is destroying its only home?”

### **Stephen Hawking, Theoretical Physicist**

“We are entering an increasingly dangerous period of our history. But I'm an optimist.”

### **Michael Hudson, Economic Historian/Former Wall Street Economist**

“Progress has meant: ‘You will never get back what we take from you.’ That's what brought on the Dark Ages and that's what's threatening to bring in the Dark Ages again.”

### **Simon Johnson, Former Chief Economist, International Monetary Fund**

“The bankers can't stop themselves. It's in their DNA, in the DNA of their organizations, to take massive risks, to pay themselves ridiculous salaries and to collapse.”

### **Mark Levine, Group Leader, China Energy Group**

“What is progress ? I think... that's too hard a question.”

**Gary Marcus, Cognitive Psychologist**

“One thing to remember of course about the human mind, is that it’s not that fundamentally different from say, the brain of a chimpanzee.”

**Kambale Musavuli, Friends of the Congo**

“What is interesting is all the money plundered from all the international debts is found in Western banks.”

**Daniel Povinelli, Behavioural Scientist**

“If humans go extinct on this planet, I think what’s going to be our epitaph on our gravestone is ‘Why?’”

**Marina Silva, Senator/Former Minister of the Environment, Brazil**

“It is impossible to defend models that cannot be universally applied because we would have to start from a premise that some people have rights and some don’t. Thus there is no technological problem, but an ethical one.”

**Vaclav Smil, Global Energy Expert**

“We have to use less.”

**David Suzuki, Geneticist/Activist**

“Money doesn’t stand for anything and money now grows faster than the real world. Conventional economics is a form of brain damage.”

**Raquel Taitson-Queiroz, Environmental Police Officer, IBAMA**

“I thought that I could defend my ideas, my ideals, if I was an inspector. What I can do is so small compared to what is going on right now.”

**The students of Jeanne Silva Martin’s class, Escola Fabiano Lozano, Sao Paulo, Brazil**

BOY: When I watch the news on TV, I see that they are deforesting the Amazon and I don’t understand why...

TEACHER: What are the interests behind it?

BOY: Economics.

**The townspeople of Colniza, Mato Grosso State, Brazil**

“This is our life! The forest is like a mother giving milk to her child. Do you have an Amazon forest in your country?”

**Jim Thomas, Activist/ETC GROUP**

“The engineers can try to treat life as though it was some sort of computer or engineering substrate, but ultimately the microbes are gonna end up laughing at them, that life doesn’t work like that.”

**J. Craig Venter, Biologist/CEO Synthetic Genomics**

“By changing and taking over evolution, changing the time course of evolution, and going into deliberate design of species for our own survival at least gives us some points of optimism that we have a chance to control our destiny.”

**Robert Wright, Author/Journalist**

“Half of being God has just been handed to us and then the question is whether we’ll master the other half of being God, the moral half.”

**Ronald Wright, Author**

“We are running 21st century software, our knowledge, on hardware that hasn’t been upgraded for 50,000 years, and this lies at the core of many of our problems.”

## Filmmaker and Crew Bios

### **MATHIEU ROY, DIRECTOR | CO-WRITER**

Mathieu Roy is a Montreal-based filmmaker whose career path has steered him into the worlds of cinema, theatre, opera, TV and classical music. In the process, Mathieu has traveled the world and collaborated with some of the world's most prominent artists including legendary filmmaker Martin Scorsese. His first feature documentary, *François Girard en Trois Actes*, was awarded the 2005 prix Gémeau for best cultural documentary. In 2006, he directed *La Peau de Léopard*, a documentary featuring journalist Pierre Nadeau on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In April 2009, at the opening of the 27th International Festival of Films on Art (FIFA), Mathieu presented *Mort à Venise*, a musical journey with Louis Lortie. The film won the Prix du public ARTV. Mathieu's latest documentary, *Ecclestone's Formula*, is the first project to tell the story of Formula One supremo Bernie Ecclestone. It was broadcast by Radio-Canada in June 2011 and is expected to be seen across the world during the course of the next year. Mathieu's current film projects include his first fiction feature, a family drama and a multimedia project about Martin Scorsese's World Cinema Foundation. Entitled *Toutes les Mémoires du Monde*, the film will feature Scorsese himself as well as Walter Salles, Abbas Kiarostami, Wim Wenders, Bertrand Tavernier, Fatih Akin, Wong Kar Wai and many others.

### **HAROLD CROOKS, CO-DIRECTOR | WRITER**

Harold Crooks is an author and writer/producer whose award-winning and acclaimed documentary film credits include: *The Corporation*; *Karsh Is History*; *Pax Americana And The Weaponization of Space*; *The World Is Watching*; *Bhopal: The Search for Justice*; and the TV series *Black Coffee*. He is a recipient of a Genie Award of the Academy of Canadian Cinema and Television; a Gold Hugo at the Chicago International Film Festival; a Leo Award for Best Screenwriter (Documentary) of the Motion Picture Arts and Sciences Foundation of B.C.; a National Documentary Film Award (Best Writing Category) at 1996 Hot Docs!; a Writers Guild of Canada Top Ten Awards finalist; a Commonwealth Fellowship, India; and a Fund for Investigative Journalism (Washington, DC) travel grant. Crooks also wrote an exposé of the transnational waste management industry, "Giants of Garbage." Crooks also co-wrote, with the artist Medrie MacPhee, *Betting On Love*, a drama telecast on CHUM City TV's Anthology of Love Stories series and Bravo Canada, and starring Ronica Sajjani, Nick Mancuso, Dhirendra and Michelle Nolden.

### **DANIEL LOUIS, PRODUCER**

When Daniel Louis founded the production house Cinémaginaire with Denise Robert in 1988, they had an uncompromising and single-minded mission: to put the film and the filmmaker's vision before everything. Daniel has brought to fruition feature film projects with seasoned directors from both North America and Europe. He won an Emmy in 1990 for the feature film *Vincent And Me*. In 2003, he and Denise Robert jointly produced Denys Arcand's Oscar-winning *Les invasions barbares (The Barbarian Invasions)*. *Surviving Progress* is a typical example of Daniel's vision and tenacity. While listening to his car radio in 2004, he latched onto Ronald Wright speaking about his book, *A Short History of Progress*. Daniel immediately went into what he describes as "a seven-year pregnancy" during which he worked tirelessly to bring the documentary *Surviving*

*Progress* into being. Along the way, Daniel has been made Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres by the French Republic's Minister of Culture. He is a member of the U.S Academy of Television Arts and Sciences; the British Academy of Film and Television Arts; the Academy of Canadian Cinema and Television; and the Cinémathèque québécoise.

**DENISE ROBERT, PRODUCER**

President of Cinémaginaire International, which she founded in 1988 with Daniel Louis, Denise Robert has made her mark in the Quebec and Canadian film industries with the production of numerous world-renowned films. Throughout her career, she has produced or coproduced, with Daniel Louis, more than thirty-five internationally award-winning films, including *The Barbarian Invasions* (Les invasions barbares), which won the Oscar for Best Film in a Foreign Language; Robert Lepage's *The Confessional* (Le Confessionnal); Patrice Leconte's *The Widow of Saint-Pierre* (La Veuve de St-Pierre); Charles Binamé's *The Rocket* (Maurice Richard; Émile Gaudreault's *Mambo Italiano*, which sold worldwide; and *Father and Guns* (De père en flic) which became the top French-language box-office earner in Québec and Canada of all time. She has also worked with Denise Filiatrault, Louis Bélanger, Claude Meunier, Claude Millaire, Léa Pool, Atom Egoyan, Patricia Rozema, Tonie Marshall. She is presently working on *Omertà* and *A Better Life* (Une vie meilleure). Denise Robert is a member of the prestigious Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences, the British Academy of Film and Television Arts and the Académie des arts et techniques du cinema (César).

**MARK ACHBAR, BIG PICTURE MEDIA CORPORATIO, EXECUTIVE PRODUCER**

Mark Achbar has worked in film since 1977. He is one of a wave of influential non-fiction feature filmmakers reaching large international audiences through mainstream theatres, TV, DVD, and the internet. He was behind the two most successful Canadian feature documentaries ever made, as Co-director and Coproducer on *Manufacturing Consent: Noam Chomsky and the Media* and as Co-director, Producer, and Executive Producer on *The Corporation*. His films popularize radical critiques, win dozens of prestigious awards, and gross millions at the box-office. Recently, as executive producer, Achbar has supported: Kevin McMahon's *Waterlife*; Denis Delestrac's *Pax Americana and the Weaponization of Space*; *Fierce Light: When Spirit Meets Action*; *Bananas!*; *From Neurons to Nirvana: Psychedelic Medicine in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*; and *Blue Gold: The Water Wars*.

**BETSY CARSON, BIG PICTURE MEDIA CORPORATION, EXECUTIVE PRODUCER**

Betsy is a producer/production manager/director with over 20 years' experience in documentary film and television. She has produced the films of Nettie Wild (*FIX: The Story of an Addicted City*; *A Place Called Chiapas*; *Blockade*; *Bevel Up*) throughout that time, and has also collaborated for the entire 20 years with filmmakers Gary Marcuse (*Nuclear Dynamite*, *Arktika*) and Hugh Brody (*The Meaning of Life*, *Time Immemorial*). Betsy has recently executive produced with Mark Achbar three theatrical feature documentaries: *Fierce Light* (dir: Velcrow Ripper); *Pax Americana* (dir: Denis Delestrac); and *Waterlife* (dir: Kevin McMahon). Other current projects include: Gary Marcuse's *Waking the Green Tiger* (for CBC's David Suzuki's *The Nature of Things*), Judy Jackson's *War in the Mind* for TVO, and the creation of a Web/DVD history of –

and for – the San of the Kalahari on their South African land claim and the ten years following that event. Betsy was Vice Chair of the Documentary Organization of Canada for six years, leaving the Board of Directors in the fall of 2010. She continues to serve on DOC advocacy committees.

**GERRY FLAHIVE, NFB, PRODUCER**

In a career spanning 30 years with the internationally-acclaimed National Film Board of Canada, Gerry Flahive has produced more than 50 films and newmedia projects on a wide range of subjects, including health care, cultural diversity, criminal justice, national identity, history, communications, diplomacy, globalization and racism. He has produced such hits as *Just Watch Me: Trudeau and the 70s Generation*, winner of a Genie along with the award for Best Canadian First Feature at the Toronto International Film Festival, and, as Executive Producer, *Project Grizzly*, winner of multiple international awards – and inspiration for an episode of “The Simpsons.” Flahive has been at the forefront of the NFB’s innovative work with digital media, producing the groundbreaking multi-platform Filmmaker-in-Residence project at Toronto’s St. Michael’s Hospital, winner of the 2008 Webby Award for Best Documentary Series, against such competitors as MIT Media Lab, PBS and National Public Radio. He is currently producing *Highrise*, a multi-year many-media documentary project looking at global sub/urbanization. Flahive is a frequent contributor to the Toronto Globe and Mail, and has been published in Time, The New York Times, The International Herald Tribune, Toronto Star, Playback, Realscreen, Montage, P.O.V. and The Los Angeles Times.

**SILVA BASMAJIAN, NFB, EXECUTIVE PRODUCER**

Silva Basmajian’s more than 80 NFB films have garnered numerous awards, with screenings at more than 200 international festivals including Berlin, Toronto and Sundance. As Executive Producer of the NFB Ontario Centre, Ms. Basmajian oversees English language production in the province. Since her appointment in 2004, she has explored innovative ways to tell Canadian and international stories, and championed cutting-edge projects like the ground-breaking NFB Filmmaker-in-Residence project at St. Michael’s Hospital; the award-winning mobile series *Shorts in Motion*, in co-production with marbledmedia; and North America’s first interactive dramatic feature film, *Late Fragment*, co-produced with the Canadian Film Centre. Recently, Basmajian co-produced the critically acclaimed *Life With Murder and Triage: Dr. James Orbinski’s Humanitarian Dilemma*. She is also executive producer for *Paris 1919; Fierce Light: When Spirit Meets Action; Examined Life* and the 2009 Hot Docs award-winning *Waterlife* and *Invisible City*.

**MARTIN SCORSESE, EXECUTIVE PRODUCER**

Martin Scorsese is an Academy Award-winning director and one of the most prominent and influential filmmakers working today. He directed the critically acclaimed, award-winning films: *Mean Streets; Taxi Driver; Raging Bull; The Last Temptation of Christ; Goodfellas; Gangs of New York; The Aviator; The Departed*; and in 2010, the box office hit *Shutter Island*. Scorsese has also directed numerous documentaries, including *No Direction Home: Bob Dylan; Elia Kazan: A letter to Elia; A personal Journey with Martin Scorsese through American Movies; Il Miago Viaggio in Italia*; and *Public Speaking*, starring writer Fran Lebowitz. Scorsese’s upcoming feature, *Hugo*, a 3-D



adaptation of Brian Selznick's children book, is due to be released in November 2011. Also set to be released in 2011 is the documentary *George Harrison: Living in the Material World*. Scorsese currently serves as executive producer on HBO's hit series *Boardwalk Empire*, for which he directed the pilot episode. He is the founder and chair of The Film Foundation and The World Cinema Foundation, both non-profit organizations dedicated to the preservation, restoration and protection of film.

**EMMA TILLINGER KOSKOFF, EXECUTIVE PRODUCER**

Emma Tillinger Koskoff is President of Production at Sikelia Productions, working alongside Academy Award winning director Martin Scorsese on all aspects of his many projects. Tillinger Koskoff began her career in the film industry as assistant to director/producer Ted Demme, and worked with him on the critically acclaimed film *Blow*, starring Johnny Depp and Penelope Cruz. While under Demme's wing, Tillinger also assisted on the Emmy nominated documentary *A Decade Under the Influence*. In 2003, Tillinger Koskoff became Martin Scorsese's executive assistant, serving in that capacity for three years. During this period, she assisted on *The Blues*, *The Aviator* and *No Direction Home*. In 2006, Tillinger Koskoff was named President of Production of Scorsese's Sikelia Productions. She then associate produced Scorsese's *The Departed*. Tillinger Koskoff co-produced the director's Rolling Stones documentary, *Shine a Light*. She also associate produced the Oscar-nominated documentary *The Betrayal – Nerakhoon*, directed by Ellen Kuras. In 2008, Tillinger Koskoff co-produced Scorsese's hugely successful psychological thriller *Shutter Island*. Most recently, Tillinger produced Scorsese's documentary on the filmmaker Elia Kazan, *A Letter To Elia*, and served as executive producer for Sikelia productions on Scorsese's upcoming documentary on the writer Fran Lebowitz. She executive-produced Martin Scorsese's *Hugo*.

**MARIO JANELLE, CINEMATOGRAPHY**

Mario Janelle is a cinematographer whose background includes the study of visual arts, most notably light and composition, embodied in a lifelong practice of still photography. His multi-faceted work includes projects in both documentary and fiction realms. Some of his credits include collaborations with François Girard on *Silk* (2nd Unit Director) and Juan Solanas on *Upside Down* (2nd Unit Director and Cinematographer). He is currently putting the finishing touches to his most recent motion picture as Principal Cinematographer: Darrell Roodt's *Winnie*, starring Jennifer Hudson and Terrence Howard. He is also known for his technological inventions in the field of robotic camera platforms.

**LOUIS-MARTIN PARADIS, EDITOR**

Louis-Martin Paradis started his career as an assistant-editor. He worked on more than 40 feature films and over ten TV series. As editor, he collaborated on various films making-of, short films and documentaries such as *Elle est Belle Au Naturel* and *Mort à Venise: Un concert visuel avec Louis Lortie*.

## Filming Locations

CANADA: Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg, Ottawa

BRAZIL: Sao Paulo, Brasilia, Mato Grosso State

CHINA: Chongqing, Hunan Province, Shanghai, Beijing

UNITED STATES: New York, NY, New Iberia, LA, Berkeley, CA, Washington, DC

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES: Dubai

## Festivals

- Toronto International Film Festival
- Vancouver International Film Festival
- Festival du Nouveau Cinéma Montréal
- International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam

## Credits

**DIRECTOR**

MATHIEU ROY

**CO-DIRECTOR**

HAROLD CROOKS

**PRODUCERS**

DANIEL LOUIS, DENISE ROBERT

**WRITTEN BY**

HAROLD CROOKS & MATHIEU ROY

**EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS /**

MARK ACHBAR, BETSY CARSON

**BIG PICTURE MEDIA CORPORATION**

**PRODUCER / NFB**

GERRY FLAHIVE

**EXECUTIVE PRODUCER / NFB**

SILVA BASMAJIAN

**EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS**

MARTIN SCORSESE, EMMA TILLINGER  
KOSKOFF

**EDITOR**

LOUIS-MARTIN PARADIS

**MUSIC CONTRIBUTIONS**

PATRICK WATSON, MICHAEL RAMSEY

**CINEMATOGRAPHY**

MARIO JANELLE

**ADDT'L CINEMATOGRAPHY**

JEAN-PIERRE ST-LOUIS, DANY RACINE,  
MARK ACHBAR

**LOCATION SOUND**

LOUIS PICHÉ, CLAUDE LA HAYE, JOAO  
GODOY

**ADDT'L LOCATION SOUND**

PHILIPPE SCULTÉTY, MARCEL  
CHOUINARD

**HEAD OF RESEARCH**

NANCY MARCOTTE

**POST-PRODUCTION SOUND**

MARCEL POTHIER, CHRISTIAN RIVEST,  
GAVIN FERNANDES, C.A.S.

**POST-PROD. SUPERVISOR**

GUY LANGLOIS