

# CLAUDIO VON PLANTA



**Cameraman / Director / Editor**

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**Nationality:** Swiss

**Date of Birth:** 16/09/1962

**Awards:**

**2006 Emmy Nomination** as director / cameraman with Sorious Samura as presenter for investigative journalism: Living with Refugees

**2006 Winner of One World Media Award** as director / cameraman with Sorious Samura as presenter for best journalism: Living with Aids

**1998 Rory Peck Award + RTS Nomination** as cameraman with Gwynne Roberts as director for one of the best three foreign documentaries: Saddam's Secret Time Bomb

**Education & Courses:**

Editing & Lighting course, National Film School 1994  
Studies in Political Science, Zurich University 1984  
2nd Lieutenant Mountain Grenadiers, Swiss Army 1982

## SUMMARY



As a freelance director / cameraman / editor I have more than 20 years experience in news, documentary and corporate film making. Also, I have valuable experience in DVD production, video streaming, satellite up linking and web design.

As a director / cameraman I have had many commissions by major TV stations. Plus, I have worked as a cameraman and/or editor in partnership with other directors.



I'm used to working in challenging environments world-wide - specializing in conflict zones from the mountains of Afghanistan to the rainforests of New Guinea. My extensive background includes the ability to act alone or as part of a larger production team; to balance determination with flexibility, deliver the footage, and to stay on schedule and within budget whatever the circumstances.

## TRACK RECORD



**2008 TV adverts for UK Army - Afghanistan, Sierra Leone, Bosnia, Kosovo:** The advertising agency Publicis hired me to direct, shoot and edit 36 adverts of 30 and 40 seconds length. The campaign aimed to raise the awareness about peace keeping and reconstruction. We interviewed people who saw the British Army in action. My ability to edit in the field was essential to finish the production within a tight deadline of one month.

(March 2008, UK TV adverts, 36 x 30sec)



**2008 Hull Freedom Trail - UK to Sierra Leone:** an anti-slavery campaign of 24 people from Hull in the UK. They drove five 4x4 vehicles to Sierra Leone where they donated the trucks to humanitarian organizations that focus on anti trafficking. HFT was inspired by William Wilberforce, who initiated the abolition of slavery 200 years ago. Unfortunately slavery is still very wide spread in the 21st century. I directed and filmed [HFT](#) on my own.

(April 2008, released on DVD and in film festivals, 90min)



**2007 Long Way Down - UK to South Africa:** my second three month long motorbike trip with Ewan McGregor and Charley Boorman. I already filmed their first TV series Long Way Round. This time we drove from Scotland across Europe and Africa to Cape Town. I shot and directed about 80% of the series. I also edited and uploaded over 30 video clips for the [BBC website](#).

(November 2007, BBC 2, 6x60min + NatGeo, 10x45min)



**2007 Blood on the Stone - Sierra Leone, Congo, USA:** a Sorious Samura investigation into the certification process of today's diamond trade. This documentary is published on Warner Brother's DVD of 'Blood Diamond' with Leonardo DiCaprio starring as a ruthless diamond dealer during Sierra Leone's civil war in the 90s. [Insight News TV](#) produced the documentary and I got hired as a director/cameraman.

(2+3 March 2007, CNN International, 52 min)



**2006 The Thin Blue Line - Iraq:** as a director/cameraman I followed Karzan Sherabayani reporting on the police in Kirkuk. It's one of the frontlines in Iraq's growing civil war with deadly power struggles between different ethnic and religious groups. We shot this film within a single day. It was a rather tense experience.

(10 January 2007, Channel 4 UK, PBS, AJI, 22min)



**2006 British Army Everest Expedition - Nepal:** in team with [Simon Atkins](#) I filmed and edited 30 short videos about 8 junior soldiers. On a daily basis we uploaded these clips to an [Army website](#) and managed to operate even in snow blizzards and at altitudes of up to 5600m. Our Junior Team clips can be found at the end of the Podcasts list (April 2006)



**2006 Guns for Hire - Congo:** a 2nd documentary filmed in team with [Jim Foster](#). Sam Kiley reports on Conrad Thorpe an ex British Special Forces colonel who trains anti-poaching units in the Virunga National Park. After a decade of civil war they launch a desperate attempt to protect Congo's endangered wildlife, particularly gorillas. (22 May 2006, Sky One, 46min)



**2006 Race to Dakar:** Charley Boorman's ultimate off-road motorbike challenge supported by Matt Hall and Simon Pavey. The 2 weeks endurance ordeal through African deserts is captured not only by [Jim Foster](#) and myself (main cameramen) but as well by producer Russ Malkin, assistant Robin and all 3 bike riders. Injuries, accidents and sleep deprivation turn into major issues. (October 2006, Sky One, 7x46min)



**2005 Guns for Hire - Afghanistan:** a highly topical insight into the secretive world of private military companies including a unique interview in Kabul's Polecharki jail with the infamous American prisoner Jack Idema - an ex US Special Forces who turned rouge. Presented by Sam Kiley, filmed in team with [Jim Foster](#) and produced by [Carbon Productions](#). (15 May 2006, Sky One, 46min)



**2005 UNHCR - Fund raising Video - Colombia:** I filmed several reports about UNHCR's efforts to protect millions of refugees and IDPs (Internally Displaced People). One of the stories focused on the Embera Indians close to the Panama border. It's a drug trafficking route and illegal armed groups are terrorizing the Emberas. (September 2005)



**2005 Neil Morrissey's Excellent Adventure - Jordan:** as a cameraman I follow the British actor Neil Morrissey and his partner Emma on a Bedouin camel trek along the footsteps of Lawrence of Arabia. The 2 week journey through the Jordanian desert at temperatures up to 50 C pushes them to physical and emotional limits. (August 2005, Sky, 46min)



**2005 Walking the Tightrope - Pakistan:** as a director/cameraman I follow reporter Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy looking at the effects of 'War on Terror' in Pakistan. Filming happens at the time of the 7/7 London Underground bombing and we manage to capture a good overview of reasons for fast growing anti-US/UK sentiments and escalating sectarian violence.  
(July 2005, Channel 4 Unreported World, 24min)



**2005 Living with Aids - Zambia:** a film with award winning reporter Sorious Samura about the impact of HIV/Aids in Zambia. For 4 weeks Sorious works as a nursing aid in a government hospital and lives with an HIV/Aids affected family. He tries to find answers how to best combat the further spread of HIV. I filmed and directed this documentary for [Insight News TV](#)  
**Winner of [One World Media Awards 2006](#) for Broadcast Journalist of the Year**  
(27 June 2005, Channel 4 Dispatches, 49min)



**2005 Return to Kirkuk - Iraq:** after 24 years exile Karzan Sherabayani returns to Kirkuk to participate in the first free Iraqi elections. He also conducts a personal opinion poll: Do Kurds want to remain part of Iraq or would they prefer an independent South Kurdistan? An exclusive historic report produced, directed and filmed in collaboration with Karzan.  
(08 February 2005, BBC Newsnight - 16 minutes)



**2005 Land of Missing Children - India:** as a director and cameraman I follow reporter Sam Kiley investigating the trafficking of underage girls into prostitution in India. We start in North West Bengal and end up in the red light districts of Calcutta and Bombay.  
(11 June 2005, Channel 4, Unreported World - 26 min)



**2004 Living with Refugees - Chad:** a film with award winning reporter Sorious Samura living for 4 weeks with Darfur refugees. As a director/cameraman I followed Sorious and a group of refugees from the Sudan/Chad border to the over crowded camp of Breidjing in Chad. The lack of proper registration procedures leads to a lot of hardship. I was assisted by producer George Waldrum of [Insight News TV](#)  
**Emmy Award 2006 nomination for Best Long Format Investigative Documentary**  
(09/12/2004, Channel 4, Discovery Times, CNN 49min)



**2004 Long Way Round:** an epic motorbike journey around the world from London to New York with the actors Ewan McGregor and Charley Boorman. I got involved as a director/cameraman riding a third motorbike. My ability to work on my own was crucial for this 4 month assignment. Official website: [Long Way Round](#)  
**Winner of [Broadcast Awards 2006](#) for Best Multi Channel Programme of the Year**  
(18/10/2004, Sky + Bravo - 7 x 52 minutes)



**2004 Rooted - Sierra Leone:** the 2nd series about British teenagers of immigrant families travelling back to their countries of origine. As a cameraman I followed Horatia to Freetown in Sierra Leone. **Observer:** Possibly Five's best documentary series at present.  
(25/04/2004, Channel 5 - 26 minutes)



**2004 Out of the Shadows - Lebanon:** John McCarthy takes us on a personal journey to Lebanon - a country he has not seen since he was held hostage there for 5 years. Now he is finally prepared to confront the ghosts of his past and meets the Shia of today. I was involved as a cameraman  
(11/04/2004, ITV1 - 52 minutes)



**2003 Rooted - West India:** as a cameraman I follow 11 year old Hemali Shah from Leister. She comes from a Jain family and travels with her mother to Rajasthan where she discovers the roots of her religion. We visit magical tempels in Ranapur and stay with a Jain family in rural areas.  
(2003, Channel 5 - 26 minutes)



**2003 Saddam's Legacy - Iraq:** the last part of a 4x52 min. series commissioned by the BBC and MBC. Filmed all over Iraq in August and September 2003 this documentary focuses on the ethnic and religious tensions that surfaced after the fall of Saddam. I shot and co-directed this film with [Giles Trendle](#), an Arabist and Middle East correspondent.  
(17/05/2004, ITV1 - 52 minutes)



**2003 A Place in France - An Indian Summer:** a Channel 4 docusoap of 8x26 min. Two Brits, Nippy and Nigel, are opening an Indian restaurant in the middle of rural France. With the help of Rezza, an experienced London restaurateur, they are trying to achieve the impossible. I filmed and directed this series in collaboration with Charlie Forman from Tiger Aspect.



**2002 Rooted - Ukraine:** This 26 min. Channel 5 (UK) documentary is part of a children series about youngsters of immigrant families searching for their origins. As a cameraman I followed 12 year old Simon Finkelstein who traveled from the UK to the Ukraine. His grandfather was born in Liviv but got deported by Stalin in 1940. Later he was released and ended up in London after he fought with the Allies during WW2.



**2002 A Place in France:** This Channel 4 docusoap (25x26 min. day time + 8x26 min. prime time) was shot between summer 2000 and May 2002. It's about two Brits - Nippy a Sikh shopkeeper and Nigel a journalist - who are buying and restoring a holiday house in France. As a director, cameraman and translator I worked mostly on my own and had to develop an efficient one man shooting style. The series received great press reviews and attracted up to 3 million viewers. Produced by Tiger Aspect



**2001 Take Away - Sri Lanka and Kerala/India:** 2x26 min. for the Taste Network (UK Cable). As a cameraman I followed 2 UK based Indian cooks to their countries of origin to study the traditional cooking techniques. The comparison of cultural differences was another important element of the programme.



**2001 Saddam's Bomb - Iraq:** A 40 min. investigation for German TV ARD + BBC about Saddam's nuclear weapons programme. The film is based on an eyewitness account of a former Iraqi scientist who claims that Iraq conducted successful underground atomic tests in September 1989. As a cameraman I shot key sequences in Iraq, the UK and the USA.



**2000 Rehabilitation of Child Soldiers - Sierra Leone:** a 9 min. fund raising video for the UK NGO "Catholic Aid For Overseas Development". I used a Mini-DV camera and digitized the footage on location for instant non-linear editing. Despite the very hot and humid climate the DV equipment performed superbly.



**1999 News Features:**  
**A)** 5-minute report for Television Suisse Romande on the fate of 'War Widows' in Nagorny Karabakh / Azerbaijan  
**B)** 5-minute Rowing Report for APTN about a family reunion in a Macedonian refugee camp  
**Arts File:** monthly 5-7 minute features about culture and art for BBC, produced by Sham Ambiavagar. I shot and edited the project.



**1999 Fighting by the Rules:** A 28-minute educational film for the ICRC explaining the history and the relevance of the Geneva Conventions. This compelling video will be used in military academies world-wide. It was a major challenge to find archive footage about wars in the 20th century and to develop a concise but neutral point of view. Gwynne Roberts scripted the film and I acted as producer, researcher, cameraman and editor.



**1998 Saddam's Secret Time Bomb:** A 40-minute Dispatches programme for Channel 4 (UK) on the long-term effects of chemical weapons used against the Kurdish city of Halabja in 1988. With a tiny Sony DV camera I followed the director/reporter Gwynne Roberts and the British geneticist Christine Gosden on a clandestine investigation in Northern Iraq. I shot the most harrowing pictures of my life and the film sold world-wide: CBS 60 Minutes USA, ABC Australia, ZDF Germany etc.

**In 1998 nominated as one of the 3 best foreign documentaries by the [Royal Television Society](#) with a special commendation by the [Rory Peck Award](#)**



**1997 The Cuba Connection:** A 51-minute documentary for HTV (UK). The film tells the story of six idealists building an environmentally friendly cargo sailing boat with recycled scrap metal. Their aim was to establish trade relations with Cuba and protest against the American trade embargo. Filming started early 95 in the UK and ended in December 96 in Havana. I filmed, co-directed and edited this story with a colleague.



**1996 The Saudi Tapes:** a Channel 4 (UK) Dispatches programme about the growing opposition movements in Saudi Arabia. The project includes an exclusive portrait of Osama Ben Ladin, an internationally wanted financier of Islamic terrorism. Employed as cameraman I shot footage in Kuwait and Afghanistan.



**1996 Karzan's Brothers - Escape from the Safe Haven:** A 65-minute investigative documentary for BBC 1 Inside Story. As cameraman and director I used secret cameras and mini DV equipment to film a perilous journey smuggling illegal Kurdish immigrants from Iraq to Britain. Sold world-wide.



**1995 Voices from the Aftermath:** A 30-minute ICRC documentary about victims of war in the Middle East. Employed as cameraman I shot footage in Lebanon, Iraq and Israel.

**1994 Contracts as cameraman:** BBC WORLD, ITN, CHANNEL 4 NEWS etc.  
**Production of several News Features:** DEUTSCHE WELLE TV



**1993 Larisa's War:** A 13-minute ICRC documentary about a Bosnian refugee in search of her family. I shot this report on my own in Bosnia and London. Broadcast at the International Women's Day meeting in Beijing and on numerous news magazine programmes world-wide



**1991 Rebels of the Forgotten World:** A 52-minute one man production for CHANNEL 4. The project is about Papuan OPM Guerrillas who are desperately fighting for independence. This film follows the journey from my initial meeting with the OPM on a clandestine airstrip and how I succeeded in evading capture by the pursuing Indonesian army for more than 6 months. Sold internationally.



**1989 Eldorado Perdido:** A 52-minute documentary for Swiss TV SRG about a Brazilian garimpero trying to find gold in the territory of the Yanomami Indians. I filmed and directed this story with 2 Swiss colleagues.



**1988 Suisse - La Forteresse inconnue:** A 52-minute documentary for ANTENNE 2 (France) about the Swiss army and its system of civil protection. I shot and co-directed this film with a colleague from Paris.



**1986 The Beginning of the End:** A 10-minute story for ANTENNE 2 (France) about a group of Hesb-e-Islami fighters in Afghanistan. My second film shot on Super 8.



**1985 Tanaka - A Samurai in Afghanistan:** A 10-minute story for ZDF in Germany about a Japanese Karate teacher who is training Mujahedins in their fight against the Russian occupation force. Shot on Super 8, it is my first film I could sell to a TV station.