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A truly special  
cinematic experience."  
- Indiewire**





# SAMSARA

**van Ron Fricke & Mark Magidson**

**Release: 19 december 2013**

2011 | 100 minuten | Super 70 mm Panavision | Dolby Digital

Samsara, een film van Ron Fricke (Koyaanisqatsi) en Mark Magidson die eerder samen de bekroonde films Baraka (1992) en Chronos (1985) maakten, is een ongekend zintuiglijke ervaring. Samsara is Sanskriet voor 'het eeuwig draaiende rad van het leven' en is het vertrekpunt van de filmmakers.

Gefilmd over een periode van bijna 5 jaar en in 25 landen toont Samsara ons heilige plaatsen, rampgebieden, industriële landschappen en natuurwonderen. Samsara is een film zonder dialoog en beschrijvende teksten en is daardoor niet een traditionele documentaire maar een werk dat de toeschouwer inspireert, geholpen door de sublieme beelden en zinnelijke muziek die het oude en het moderne vermengt. Hierdoor nodigt Samsara ons uit om onze eigen interpretatie te geven aan deze prikkelende reis over de wereld.

De film is geheel op 70 mm formaat gefilmd: extra scherpe details en intense kleuren. Samsara is vanaf 19 december te zien in de bioscoop en in een aantal zalen in een 70 mm projectie.

**SAMSARA** wordt in Nederland gedistribueerd door ABC/Cinemien.

Beeldmateriaal kan gedownload worden vanaf: [www.cinemien.nl/pers](http://www.cinemien.nl/pers) of vanaf [www.filmdepot.nl](http://www.filmdepot.nl)

Voor meer informatie: ABC/ Cinemien | Anne Kervers | [anne.kervers@filminc.nl](mailto:anne.kervers@filminc.nl) | 0616274537 | 020-5776010 (Cinemien)



**Directed and photographed by**

Ron Fricke ([links](#))

**Produced by**

Mark Magidson ([rechts](#))

**Edited by**

Ron Fricke, Mark Magidson

**Original Music composed by**

Michael Stearns

**Original Music composed by**

Lisa Gerrard, Marcello De Francisci

**Concept and treatment written by**

Ron Fricke, Mark Magidson

**Musical Direction by**

Michael Stearns, Mark Magidson

**Production Coordinator**

Michelle Peele





## Ron Fricke

Ron Fricke is a meticulous filmmaker who has mastered a wide range of skills. He is especially well known for his groundbreaking work with time lapse photography and large format cinematography.

Ron's versatility allows him to carefully sculpt his films during each phase of their development. In his early work as director of photography, co-editor and co-writer for *Koyaanisqatsi*, a renowned nonverbal art film with music by Phillip Glass, Fricke experimented with many previously obscure film techniques. He used time-lapse, slow motion and optical phase printing to present familiar images from a new perspective. *Koyaanisqatsi* won a 1983 Filmex Audience Award.

Indulging his passion for 70mm, and determined to make life-affirming films, Fricke proceeded to direct and photograph *Chronos* (1985), a 45min nonverbal, IMAX format film that won the Grand Prix Award at the first Festival International Omnimax de Paris (1987). Fricke worked on several other IMAX format films including the night sky short *Sacred Site* (1986) which he directed and photographed.

*Baraka*, also shot in 70mm, develops the themes of interconnection and transcendence which Fricke began to explore in *Chronos*. Fricke directed, photographed, co-edited, and co-wrote *Baraka*. *Baraka* received numerous festival awards including the International Critics Award (FIPRESCI) for Best Picture at the Montreal World Film Festival and was nominated by the A.C.E. for Best Documentary Editing.

Over the last decade, Fricke has directed and photographed national commercials for Isuzu, Jeep, Holland America, Star Alliance and Nokia, among others. He was director of photography on Francis Ford Coppola's HD experimental feature film project *Megalopolis*. He was also a second unit director of photography for Lucasfilm Ltd. on *Star Wars Episode III*.

Ron directed, photographed, co-edited, and co-wrote *Samsara*. Fricke conceived the film as a guided meditation on the cycle of birth death and rebirth. Fricke writes about his work:

“I feel that my work has evolved through *Koyaanisqatsi*, *Chronos* and *Baraka*. Both technically and philosophically I am ready to delve even deeper into my favorite theme: humanity's relationship to the eternal.”

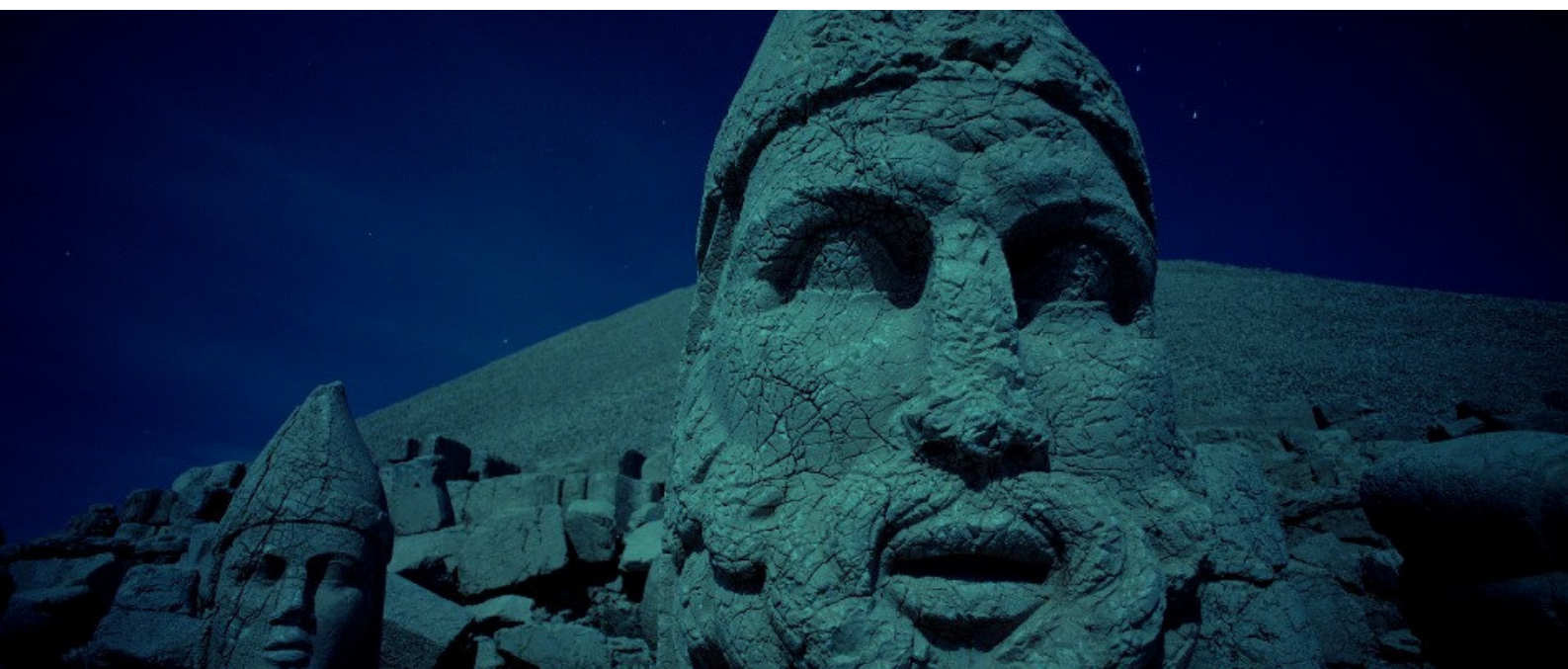
## Mark Magidson

In the broad landscape of independent film production Mark has emerged as a unique producer who has undertaken artistic projects that are epic in scale, entail great technical complexity and innovation, and transcend an ordinary view of the world.

An inventor and industrial designer with a diverse technical background, and equally comfortable in both creative and producing roles, Mark is a hands on filmmaker who is deeply involved in all aspects of his projects, including concept development, editing, and music, as well as managing production. In the course of the last 3 decades he has taken crews to over 50 countries in search of profound and one of a kind imagery.

As co-Producer of the IMAX film *Chronos* (1985) (Grand Prix du Jury Award at the Festival International du Film Omnimax de Paris, 1987) he pioneered a conversion of the film to the new 870 format that expanded its availability beyond the IMAX theater group, a protocol that was later widely emulated.

After the completion of *Chronos*, Mark and Director Ron Fricke began developing the 70mm feature project that was to become *Baraka* (1992). Three years and 24 countries in the making, the critically acclaimed film won numerous awards including the FIPRESCI (International critics) Award for Best



Picture at the Montreal World Film Festival. Mark also received a nomination for Best Documentary Editing from the A.C.E. as well as the Award of Excellence from the U.N.

In 1995 he produced and directed *Toward the Within*, a theatrically released feature length documentary about the world music group Dead Can Dance and singer/composer Lisa Gerrard. Lisa is one of the composers on *Samsara*.

In 2008 he pioneered a first of its kind film to digital scanning process for the Blu-ray release of *Baraka*, the resulting Blu-ray described by critic Roger Ebert as “the finest video disc I have ever viewed or ever imagined” and “by itself sufficient reason to acquire a Blu-ray player”.

*Samsara* has been in production for almost 5 years.





## Interview: Ron Fricke & Mark Magidson

Bron: [www.indiewire.com](http://www.indiewire.com)

### **'Samsara' Director and Producer On Globetrotting Across 25 Countries to Shoot Their Follow-Up to 'Baraka' on Gorgeous 70mm**

Filmed for over five years in 25 countries and on 70mm, "Samsara" can most simply be described as an experience. There are no words, just a driving score; no characters, just startlingly honest portraits; no sets, just a global stage.

The title, a Sanskrit word that translates into "the ever turning wheel of life," is the center point around which a 99 minute series of moving images revolves, each one remote, unusual, and absolutely beautiful in some way. Sound like a tall order? It is.

Director and cinematographer Ron Fricke and producer Mark Magidson are practiced at this nonverbal visual art form, though. In fact, having together made two other films of the same breed before – "Chronos" (1985) and "Baraka" (1992) – it's safe to say they've mastered it. Here, the two discuss how they made their creation about creation.

**Added with your past two films, "Samsara" is your third time producing this sort of visual global journey. What's new about it?**

**Magidson:** The films have the same approach and style of filmmaking, but they're based on different overall concepts. There's a lot more portraits in this film than "Baraka." It's a lot more about people in a way, wouldn't you say?

**Fricke:** "Baraka" was about humanity's relationship to the eternal, you could say. And "Samsara" – another guided meditation, I like to call it – is on the subjects of birth, death and rebirth. It's all about

how things are interconnected, the flow.

**That's no small theme. How do you even begin tackling an idea like that?**

**Fricke:** Well, we knew how we wanted to open and close the film – with monks making the sand mandala. Once we shot it, we knew we were in great shape.

**Magidson:** Getting the bookends sounds good in theory, but you have to get out there, and it has to rise to a level of visual stature. But it did. We had one shot at it, and that was very stressful, but we pulled it off. Once that was done, I think we were a lot more relaxed making this film than "Baraka." We knew the structure was in the bag.

**Fricke:** It was just a matter of moving around the planet to work on our content. No screenplay, no scenario; a concept. But we knew we could do it.

**Magidson:** We were pretty fearless.

**And then you continued to film for five years. Without a cast of characters or narrative arc to follow, do you ever begin to feel lost trying to sort through that enormous amount of footage?**

**Fricke:** Really, the image is the main character. It's about the essence of these places and portraits.

**Magidson:** It's like still photography, this imagery. It has an energy and power within it, and that's what you're making the film with. We're out for so long, but when you average it out, it's not a lot of content per location. It takes a lot to build up that kind of dazzling visual imagery to make a film like this work for 99 minutes.

**Fricke:** That's why we shot it in 70 [mm film]. It gives you the fidelity that digital can't match.





**70 mm film is hardly ever used anymore, but you still prefer it over filming in digital?**

**Magidson:** Well, we sort of had the best of both worlds. Mark, you can better explain this...

**Fricke:** Yeah, the concern with digital was like digital everything – your iPhone, whatever. It's just going to be obsolete in 12 months. And when you're off going to 25 countries, you don't want your material to be outdated in short order. Film holds up forever, and 70 is such a beautiful, classic widescreen, sort of the "Lawrence of Arabia" aspect ratio format. But then instead of outputting it to film as we did with "Baraka," we took it into a digital environment and scanned into a massive file of imagery at super high res, which allowed us to refine the imagery in a way we can't in film. So it's the best of old technology and new technology.

**Fricke:** We could take the birds out or the cars or wires that were just kind of knocking the shots off a little bit.

**So you do all of the editing yourselves?**

**Magidson:** We edit it. We're the editors. That's where the film is made.

**Fricke:** It's real personal.

**Magidson:** We [edited it] with no sound or music. We had this zen approach and wanted to keep the film in the middle, in the flow.

**Yes, there were times when it felt like the film was beginning to comment on something, but then it would immediately segue into a different group of images. There really was no agenda or point you're trying to make?**

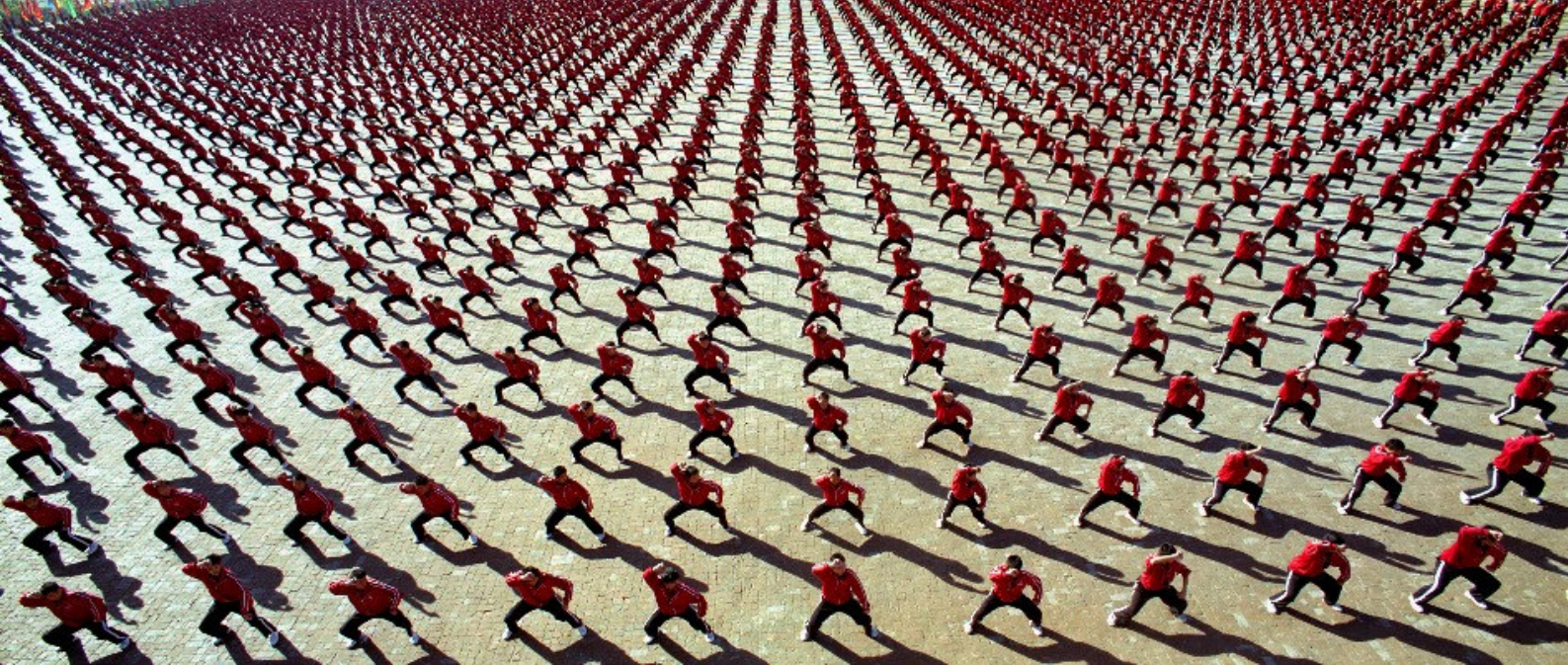
**Fricke:** We tried to steer it so it didn't get to be too preachy or narrative. We're not shooting documentaries. There's no point here other than that there's so many pathways for people to be reborn or do work on themselves. It's just up to you to find them.

**Magidson:** We're just trying to reveal something that you feel, something about the connection to the phenomenon of life that we all share. You want everyone to feel that they're a part of that.

**Either physically or socially, there's remoteness about each of your images, something that we don't confront every day, if ever. How do you find these people and places?**

**Fricke:** YouTube. YouTube was our best friend.

**Magidson:** We don't drag everybody and the equipment anywhere without a really strong target list of main visual objectives that have been worked out in advance. But there are those moments you find



that you didn't know about, and that's a big part of it, too.

**Fricke:** There's a portrait we did of this gang member who was full body tattooed, done with an ink pen when he was in jail. We were at his apartment in L.A. thinking we were going to do another one of these portraits where they stare into the lens. But then his wife brought out this little baby, and he just turned into tattoo daddy. He was just gaga – it was incredible. So we set up as fast as we could and he just kept going with that baby, and we didn't have to say anything. It was one of those happy accidents.

**You said this film was more about people than your others, and these portraits definitely conveyed that. Are most of them accidents like this, or did you plan them?**

**Fricke:** The portraits are all posed in front of the camera, and they're just told to stare into the lens and don't blink. The blinky ones don't work. Like the shot with the Geisha, she was a pro, and we hired her. But right in the sweet spot of the shot, she started to tear up because of the makeup and the lights. And I was just thinking, God, is she really doing what I think she's doing? Yes, yes, don't blink! I couldn't believe what I was looking at. The camera is taking the audience right up to her and squeezing that tear out. It has feeling.

**One of the most difficult parts about any sort of project or work of art is knowing when to stop. How do you know?**

**Fricke:** It's like a painting, you're right. You just keep working on it. Maybe we ran out of money, or I don't know why. I could have gone on.

**Magidson:** But films take up a big space in your life, with families and everything else. Like for me, when "Baraka" was done, I thought I can't do this again. It's just such an ordeal to finish one of these



films.

**Fricke:** It's a little different, these projects. It's a lot of work.

**After all of this labor and love, do you have any regrets?**

**Fricke:** North Korea. I keep thinking about it.

**Magidson:** We tried for two years to get in to film these mass games and performances they have. Everybody gets dressed up, and it would have just been an amazing visual extravaganza, but we couldn't get it to go through. We got close. We were working with the U.N., but being American was two strikes against us already.

**Fricke:** It's a treasure there. That thing is so beautiful, what they do, and the West hasn't seen it yet. But North Korea isn't going anywhere, either.

**Magidson:** Maybe the next film.

