

The Elephant Has **FOUR** Hearts

Nyau Masks and Ritual

Douglas Curran's experiences with Nyau (a secret men's society of the Chewa people of Malawi), plunged him into an underworld; a world of inverted logic populated by unruly ancestor spirits and ferocious beasts. For the Chewa, life does not exist merely within the living, but extends forward to those not yet born, and backwards to the world of the



ancestors, the guardians of the 'miyambo", the rules of Chewa morality. As an initiated member of this society, Curran was charged by the Nyau elders with recording the pantheon of spirit entities that populate this universe, the world of Nyau and Gule Wamkulu, "The Great Dance".

For early Christian missionaries and British colonial administrators, Nyau was an exhibition of "obscenity, sensuality and cruelty," "a national evil". Despite concerted efforts to ban the community performances of Nyau masks and dancers, Gule Wamkulu has survived to retain its hold on the spiritual imagination of the rural Chewa.

Over a period of nine years, Curran created a stunning and never-before-seen record of the Chewa masks and village rites "The Elephant Has Four Hearts" is now a feature length documentary that immerses the viewer into the community psychodrama of dance and ritual that is "The Great Dance".

Feature length documentary filmed in HD format on location in Malawi and Mozambique

Production and Direction

Douglas Curran is internationally recognized as an author, photographer and visual anthropologist. For over twenty five years he has documented a wide range of exotic people and their beliefs, ranging from UFO cultists in Washington to charismatic tent preachers in Florida. Acclaimed author Tom Wolfe wrote, "...Curran is not only a photographer..but a reporter and an extremely gifted one..." In addition to his life as an artist/photographer, Curran has maintained a career as a stills photographer for major motion picture studios.

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Roger Williams brings with him over twenty years of production experience in the motion picture and television industry. As founder of Image Pacific Communications he oversees one of Canada's largest independent production facilities and includes among his international clients TSN, Discovery Channel and many motion picture studios.

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"A Nyau is driven by spirits...Nyau dancers are not human beings...they are spirits."



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