



HIPPO KING



Written and directed by **Will and Lianne Steenkamp**
Executive producers: **Andrea Gastgeb, Sabine Holzer**

1x52 min.
4K, 5.1 and Stereo

A giant hippo bull – a king amongst the largest concentration of hippos on this planet – has an incredible story to tell.

A story normally hidden from human eyes and almost always misunderstood – because his secret life happens beneath the water and under cover of darkness. For the first time ever, we reveal the true character of one of the planet's largest land mammals as we follow the life story of the 'Hippo King'.

BECOMING A GIANT

Our story begins when the hippo king is just a few weeks old; a tiny calf, surrounded by three-ton giants. His home, at the far end of Africa's Great Rift valley, in Zambia's Luangwa valley, is not the easiest place to grow up. The first weeks of life are the most dangerous; in water and on land, predators watch his every move. He is kept safe by his mother but it is his father, the pod's dominant bull, who will teach the youngster what he needs to survive. He watches his father fight the biggest battles – and then practices his own skills with other calves.

LIVING WITH GIANTS

As a teenager, he is banished from his natal pod. Too young to become a king, he spends several years in different pods as a submissive male. Injuries and death threaten those that dare to stand up to the local dominant bulls. Eventually, he takes the risk, challenging the dominant male on his own territory. But he is beaten, injured and forced to leave.

In the dry season, the Luangwa valley's rivers shrink rapidly. Food is scarce. With almost no grass left, the young bull is close to starvation, forced to forage

even in daytime. But a weak hippo of any size can become the target of hungry lions. Despite the dangers, this hippo endures.

A GIANT KING

By the time the next dry season hits, the hippo has recovered from past deprivations. He's now fully grown and strong enough to take on the leader of a pod. He has chosen his opponent wisely; an aging, battle-worn, dominant male. The fight is brutal, but youth conquers all.

Today, the hippo who grew up in Rift Valley is in the prime of his life, a giant hippo king with power over a dozen cows and youngsters. Now, his calves watch the battles he fights to retain the title of Hippo King. And just like he once did, they spar together in preparation for their own battles. He knows what lies ahead of them: the beatings, the dangerous encounters and the months of starvation. He has been through it all and he knows, more than any hippo, what it takes to become a giant king in Zambia's Luangwa valley.

State-of-the-art 4K resolution, high speed cameras and the latest military-rated high definition thermal technology, will immerse audiences in the unique, secret world of the 'Hippo King'.

A Terra Mater Factual Studios / Skyland Productions / Into Nature Productions production in co-production with Doclights/NDR Naturfilm and THIRTEEN Productions LLC in association with PBS, CPB and WNET

