

CRYPTOPIA: BITCOIN, BLOCKCHAINS AND THE FUTURE OF THE INTERNET



I am a Melbourne-based media entrepreneur/filmmaker and have been working on this story for about 6 years. In 2009, I published an academic paper about alternative currencies as part of my Finance MBA at Oxford University and started to get interested in Bitcoin in 2013. Production of the largely self-funded micro-budget independent documentary “**Bitcoin: The End of Money As We Know It**” commenced in early 2014 which was also supported by a crowdfunding campaign which helped the release of the film to go viral on illegal pirating platforms in mid-2015 and to win four awards at international film festivals (as the first-time filmmaker). The film was subsequently licensed to 20+ countries incl. China, Kenya, Sweden, Singapore, Mexico, Lithuania, and on major VOD platforms.

Since then, the industry has grown by a factor of 100, fortunes were made ... and lost. Countries that once banned Bitcoin are now openly supporting this innovation. Banks that once lobbied against it are creating their own cryptocurrencies today. And technologists consider the underlying “Blockchain” system to be the most significant invention since the Internet, which could decentralize existing power structures and challenge global tech corporations.

#CryptopiaFilm explores this evolution in-depth. We benefited from the relationships we built with the thought leaders, billionaires and journalists in this emerging industry since 2014. For example, as an only film crew, we have been given access to a decommissioned military bunker in a secret location in Switzerland, where allegedly 10% of all Bitcoins worth billions of dollars are secured. We were also able to visit the Computer History Museum in Silicon Valley and interview the co-inventor of the Internet who draws parallels and sets the historical context for this new technology.

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While my first film was low budget, talking-heads heavy and very academic, **#CryptopiaFilm** achieved a budget 8 times higher with the help of Screen Australia, A German broadcast coproduction, a much bigger crowdfunding campaign and industry backing. This allowed us to tell our story in a more ambitious cinematic universe. Elaborate 3D animations were created to illustrate blockchain's inner workings. We fly 5-person crews into a remote part of Switzerland to a secret location. We filmed consistently with two 4k cameras and partially even in 8k resolution. Furthermore, we opted for a more personal style i.e. "Torsten, the filmmaker taking the audience on a journey through this industry and it is ambitious"

Finally, this documentary represents a new way to connect with the audience. We have built our audience for more than five years and have test screened an extended cut in Sydney, Adelaide, Perth, Brisbane and Auckland. We have closely monitored audience feedback and incorporated it into the final cut. By doing this we have increased the net promoter score (NPS) to 69. Furthermore, we successfully acquired nine corporate sponsors and a university as commercial supporters for the world premiere at ACMI's Treasury Theatre in Melbourne. We are negotiating with various non-profits about bringing the film to smaller cities (E.g. CPA accountants in Townsville) and are planning a world tour to Europe, America and Asia with the help of global sponsors. For us, connecting with start-ups, the professionals working with blockchain technologies, big corporations exploring the space and the private investors interested in sovereign money are more important than traditional film festivals. Our cinema-demand distributor is Perth-based Demand Film.

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In the old model, filmmakers begin with their next project after the production is done and maybe a festival premiere. For this film, 5 years in the making, we expect to be involved with distribution for more than a year including a world tour as well as with other conferences and events. We will not rush with VOD and TV distribution.