

Facts for your success

- A groundbreaking depiction of life in the Americas before 1492
- Dual focus: how Europe changed America and vice versa
- 3D graphics and VFX technology evoke long-lost landscapes and civilizations

AMERICA BEFORE COLUMBUS



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The New World and the Old knew nothing about one another until they met in 1492. After their encounter, they would never be the same again... The arrival of Europeans in the Americas made a dramatic impact there and triggered an ecological revolution known today as “The Columbian Exchange.” But what did the Americas really look like before 1492? And how did the Columbian Exchange transform life not only in the New World but in the Old as well?

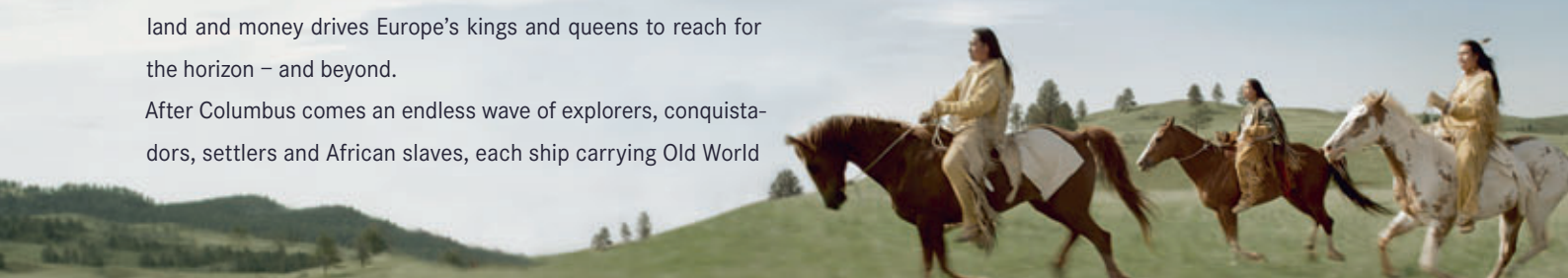
This documentary takes us back to the year 1491. The Americas are already old continents inhabited by a hundred million people living in complex urban societies and civilizations such as the Cahokia, Inca, and Beni. Europe in 1491 is a very different place, busy and crowded, its forests cleared for agriculture, its rivers fished empty and polluted. The elite’s greed for more power, land and money drives Europe’s kings and queens to reach for the horizon – and beyond.

After Columbus comes an endless wave of explorers, conquistadors, settlers and African slaves, each ship carrying Old World

plants, animals – and disease. In the first 150 years of contact, entire civilizations are wiped out by “accidental biological warfare.” Imported animals spread throughout the land, while European wheat and weeds conquer the continent. Back in Europe, the introduction of New World plants such as maize and potatoes revolutionizes agriculture and the diets of Old World nations. By the 18th century, the Columbian Exchange is in full swing. The settlers didn’t discover a New World; they created one – in their own image.

This thought-provoking documentary is produced by Gruppe 5 for ZDF in association with National Geographic Channel US, Arte, SBS-TV and ZDF Enterprises. It combines expert interviews with footage of original locations, spectacular aerial shots and staged recreations with 3D graphics and VFX technology.

ZDF Enterprises | 04_10



Format Author and Director Produced by Executive Producer	Documentaries		Address ZDF Enterprises Sales, Merchandising and Coproductions Lise-Meitner-Strasse 9 D-55129 Mainz
	2 x 52' HD Cristina Trebi Gruppe 5 Filmproduktion Bernhard von Dadelsen, Peter Allenbacher, Kathleen Cromley, Uwe Kersken		Contact programinfo@zdf.de www.sales.zdf-enterprises.de Phone: +49 (0) 6131 - 991 281 Fax: +49 (0) 6131 - 991 259