

On Location: Java West of Krakatoa

For \$1,600 per person you can fly round-trip to Djakarta. Throw in another \$1,200 for excess baggage and you could take two 16mm Arriflexes and full film equipment to make a film. Ruffcut Productions did just that late last year and are now completing their one-hour colour documentary – 14,000 feet of film and \$75,000 worth of debt later.

Why do it? For one thing, Indonesia has been practically off-limits to film crews for quite a while, so there is the element of mystery and the unknown. But also, Ruffcut Productions wanted to get involved in production again after doing post-production work for almost five years. Ruffcut's partners (Josef Ruff, Bob Lyons and Tom MacAdam) have extensive film backgrounds covering many areas of film (editing, lab-work, directing commercials and industrials, special effects) so they felt ready to take on such a project. Bob Lyons produced, Josef Ruff directed, Noahiko Kurita was on camera, and an assistant cameraman and production manager was hired in Djakarta.

Their own account of the shoot follows:

"The trip took three months to plan and to obtain permission. Actually, our papers were not quite completed when we left, but we were in a hurry to beat the monsoon season, so we risked all by arriving without a filming permit. It took three days to get the permit after arriving in Java, and only after much desk thumping and waiting outside every civil servant's office in town.

We flew from Toronto early November 23rd via Chicago, Hawaii, Tokyo, Hong Kong, Singapore and Djakarta, with overnight stops in every city, giving us enough time to enjoy them. Our major problem enroute was the 23 pieces of baggage. We were nicely ripped off by Pan American on excess baggage and given an even break by Japan Air Lines, but keeping track of that amount of luggage was a problem. On occasion we had to bribe the customs people to keep the equipment in bond to save checking it out and back in again.

On arrival in Djakarta we made our travel arrangements with a travel office called Pacto, who provided us with a guide and a new Volkswagen bus and driver, booked all our hotels and prepared the itinerary from the list of locations we made up from the scant material we had for research since the Island had been closed to filmmakers for some time and all published material was from the late 60's. The conditions and culture on the Island had changed drastically from what we expected, so we decided to film the changing culture that is rapidly disappearing as Western

industries, fashions and values take over.

Criss-crossing the Island which is only 680 miles long and has a population of 115 million, we shot 14,000 feet of 16mm 7242 and processed it at Technicolor in Hollywood. We were originally going to process in Japan with Far East Labs Ltd. but Japan has a law which requires all film to be screened for pornography before being exported, and in our case we were processing only, which meant the film was to be bench-checked by an inexperienced film-person. So we decided against that and it was taken to Hollywood a week before the crew finished filming at their



A road-building crew

last location in the jungle. Why Hollywood? We don't think there is a lab in Canada that can process 16mm. anywhere near as good as the labs in the States, and we have 2,000 feet processed here to prove it.

We are now into fine cutting the film down to one hour, have arranged for Noel Harrison to do the narration of a script prepared by Joe Hatt-Cook from

Folio Productions Ltd., and are negotiating distribution with two companies. Nothing is finalized yet."

When it is, chances are pretty good you'll get to see this lovely film on television. Beautifully photographed by (Kuri) Kurita, the film is packed with information about Java's history, its cultural heritage, religions, peoples, and the major changes it is facing now. In many ways, the final impression one is left with is unease: the problems are so enormous, the island so overpopulated and underfed, and progress seems to mean American and Japanese businessmen getting rich while the people of Java produce their wealth and get a fraction of it back in the form of United Nations programmes. The film's greatest value lies in getting all this across in only one hour. Hopefully, since knowledge is power, films like this will facilitate desperately needed changes. After all, documentaries are still one of the most potent tools for social change, and **Java West of Krakatoa** proves once again that Canadians can make documentaries better than anyone else. It's no wonder that so many small production houses are involved in shoots all over the world. It's also no wonder that many of them harbour strong resentment towards the National Film Board for being such strong competition to independent producers such as Ruffcut in this area.

Nonetheless, Ruffcut intends to make more documentaries, while financing their bread-and-butter existence with commercials and industrials. If **Java** . . . is any indication of the calibre of work they can produce, they deserve to be encouraged to make many more such films over the years.

Kuri Kurita on camera in a pottery village



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