

UNDERSTOREY

PRESS KIT



A Short Documentary by

Claire Riverland, Lily Newcombe, Spencer Cameron, & Isabella Sanderson

LOGLINE & POSTER

In the heart of the Malaysian rainforest, tour guides and conservationists strive to rekindle our lost connection to nature by planting seeds of sustainable practices and a love for nature from an early age.

TAGLINE & QUOTES

Rooted Resilience: Voices from the Frontlines of Conservation in Borneo

"No matter how big you are, you still need the little things to help you."
- Bob Zakaria

"We've forgotten that we are part of the ecosystem. We've forgotten to live with the Earth. And I think that's gonna kill us."
- Cynthia Chin

"Small, but important in that, you're planting seeds and you hope that they grow."
- Cynthia Chin



FILM SYNOPSIS

Capturing the passion of Sarawak's driven conservation community, *understorey* explores the adversity and hope in this field. The short documentary encapsulates the constant uphill battle to preserve the magnificent rainforests of Malaysia and its array of creatures, big and small, which inhabit them.

Renowned for its rainforests, Sarawak's lush environment is home to a unique community of wildlife nestled in the jungle's treetops. Hidden behind the biodiverse beauty of the nature sanctuaries, there's a passionate team of individuals, organisations, and the state government, dedicated to nurturing, safeguarding, and conserving the canopies.

Five unique perspectives on the conservation fight emerge from different areas of conservation. From the crux of Sarawak's conservation comes our keystone character, Bob, the senior guide of Sarawak Forestry Corporation (SFC). Bob embodies the local community members of the rainforest - whose connection is ingrained in their way of life. In conjunction with other guide's stories of adversity and expert voices from WWF and WCS - Bob's solution's illuminated; the way to rekindle our lost connection by fostering love of nature from youth and planting seeds of sustainable practices from an early age.

Whilst conservation is a broad concept, the consistent message is simple. Society must band together to preserve the land we live on and the creatures we share it with, the call for action extends beyond the organisations working to introduce sustainable change. *Understory* centralises on the stories of those working at the heart of conservation efforts, whom all share a deep bond with the natural environment, have shouldered the emotional burden, and, yet continue to prevail, knowing there is hope.



PRODUCTION TEAM



Claire Riverland

DIRECTOR / PRODUCER

A filmmaker, actor, and model based in Melbourne, Claire loves all things in front of the camera and behind it. Her main pursuits in are directing and acting whilst she completes her film studies at Swinburne University. Named the "Best Rising Star Director" at the Melbourne Cineverse Film Festival and winning "Best Short Film in Oceania" at WIFA for her 16mm short "Hard to Swallow", Claire hopes to continue to make both narrative and documentary films that tell local and international stories.



Lily Newcombe

DIRECTOR / PRODUCER

Lily is heavily interested in the realm of directing and writing both fiction and non-fiction filmmaking. Her milestones include filming her first documentary, 'understorey', and achieving her first festival selection (MINA) for her poetic experimental film, 'if i knew this was the last time i'd see you'. She adores everything theatre, co-producing/directing, writing plot and acting in Swinburne university's first musical production, 'Meddling with Time'.



Spencer Cameron

CAMERA / EDITOR / SOUND

A visual story-teller and outdoor leader, Spencer loves nothing more than telling stories, capturing moments, and travelling the world. Having a strong connection to nature from a young age, Spencer was keen to capture the sights and sounds of Borneo's lush and spectacular wildlife. Having graduated from film school last year, Spencer is experienced in all departments but primarily works as a producer, sound recordist, and editor for OneHouse Productions.



Isabella Sanderson

CAMERA (DOP) / EDITOR

Loving film and photography since childhood, Isabella's talent for creating beautiful frames shines through in her two recently shot documentaries which have been accepted into Australian and international festivals - "understorey" and "Cornerstone of Melbourne". She loves capturing beautiful architecture, landscapes, and golden sunlight but her love of nature and wildlife made working on this documentary particularly special. Isabella is studying film at Swinburne, where she continues to hone her talent as a DOP for narrative and documentary.



OUR STATEMENT

Our short but heart-filled documentary, “understorey”, was conceived from a university-led study tour from our home city, Melbourne, to the vibrant and lush city of Kuching. The assignment we were given by our tour leaders was to make a short documentary showcasing an aspect of Malaysian culture, particularly something unique to Sarawak, the region where Kuching is located.

Each member of our group immediately gravitated towards the topic of conservation as we all shared an appreciation of nature, a fascination with wildlife and are proud animal lovers. Being able to immerse ourselves in Sarawak’s beautiful rainforests and see their precious creatures under the guidance of locals was a dream come true. Our film shares the lessons we learnt, friendships we made, and wonders we saw with international audiences and Australians back home.

Through “understorey”, we hope to promote public awareness about the beautiful wildlife in the tree-tops of Sarawak and how individuals, government bodies, such as Sarawak Forestry, and conservation organizations (WCS and WWF Malaysia) are working to protect them. Our story seeks to inspire passion for wildlife conservation in global audiences and demonstrate the importance of protecting nature sanctuaries by showcasing the magnificent creatures that inhabit them and their relationship to Malaysian culture.

More importantly, this film explores how the future of conservation relies on the education of youth about the importance of protecting wildlife, preserving nature and developing an appreciation for the environment at a young age is crucial to ensuring conservation efforts proceed. The first step in conservation is making people care about our planet’s health and we hope “understorey” inspires its audiences by showing them what we still have left to protect.

CAST



Bob Zakaria

MALAYSIAN TOUR GUIDE BASED IN BORNEO'S TOP WILDLIFE RESERVES. BOB'S SPECIALTIES INVOLVE OUTSTANDING KNOWLEDGE ABOUT FROG, INSECT, AND BIRD SPECIES AS WELL AS PLANT LIFE.



Mr Ismadi

MALAYSIAN TOUR GUIDE BASED IN BAKO NATIONAL PARK. MR ISMADI IS A THIRD GENERATION GUIDE. HIS KNOWLEDGE IS DEEP REGARDING BAKO VILLIAGE AS WELL AS THE SURROUNDING JUNGLE.



Cynthia Chin

HEAD OF CONSERVATION IN THE SARAWAK CONSERVATION PROGRAMME AT WWF-MALAYSIA.



Lucien Eng

MALAYSIAN TOUR GUIDE BASED IN BORNEO, TRAINED BY BOB ZAKARIA.



Joshua Pandong

HEAD OF THE ORANGUTAN CONSERVATION UNIT AT WILDLIFE CONSERVATION SOCIETY (WCS) MALAYSIA.

BEHIND THE SCENES



link: <https://youtu.be/MOmU15EAXkk>

Above is our short BTS video, which details our journey as filmmakers behind the scenes, edited and shot by Lily Newcombe.

First-time documentary director-producers, Claire Riverland and Lily Newcombe, were thrown into an intense learning experience of having a month to plan, shoot and edit the project. 2 weeks were spent in Melbourne at Swinburne University, planning interviews with conservationists, finding subjects, arranging permits to film in national parks, and hunting down a story. Then, the team of 4 filmmakers (Claire Riverland, Lily Newcombe, Isabella Sanderson, Spencer Cameron) flew out to Malaysia to film at 4 national parks and interview 8 subjects in 10 days followed by a hectic 5 days of editing. However, the exhaustion from the project was greatly outweighed by how rewarding it was.

All filmmakers were Australian students studying a Bachelor of Film and Television at Swinburne University. Claire, Lily, and Isabella were in their second year of study whilst Spencer was in his final year.

KEY FACTS

**GENRE
SUBCATEGORIES** Documentary, Conservation, Wildlife, Student

**TOTAL RUNNING
TIME** 8 minutes

ORGANISATION Swinburne University of Technology

**PRODUCTION
LOCATION** Borneo, Malaysia

ASPECT RATIO 16:9

AUDIO FORMAT AAC

LENGTH Short

**ORIGINAL
LANGUAGE** English

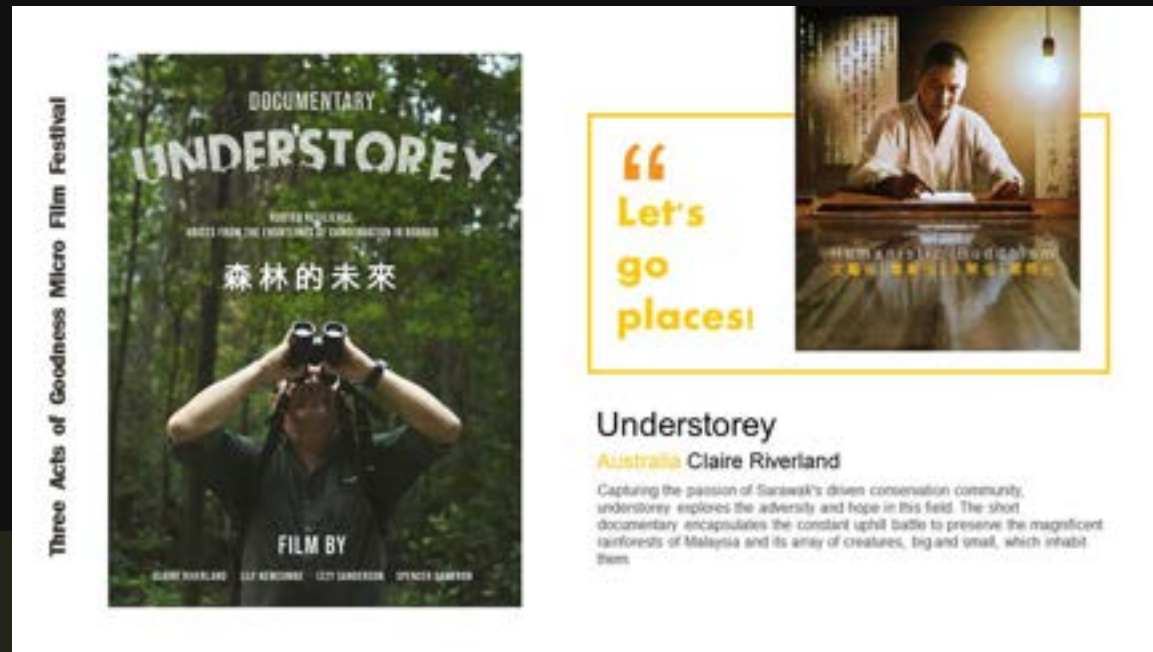
**PRODUCTION
YEAR** 2023

**EXHIBITION
FORMATS** Digital Projection (DCP)

LANGUAGES English

SUBTITLES English

PRESS



BLIA FACEBOOK POST

Official Selection 2024



WILDLIFE VAASA WEBSITE

The Finalists 2024



EARTH STORIES FILMFESTIVAL YOUTUBE LIVESTREAM

Best Documentary 2024

FESTIVALS



**MELBOURNE
DOCUMENTARY
FILM FESTIVAL**

OFFICIAL SELECTION
28th July 2024
Melbourne, Australia



**EARTH STORIES
FILM FESTIVAL**

BEST DOCUMENTARY
2024
Staffordshire, United Kingdom



**WILDLIFE VAASA
FILM FESTIVAL**

FINALIST
September 2024
Vaasa, Finland



**THREE ACTS OF
GOODNESS MICRO
FILM FESTIVAL**

OFFICIAL SELECTION
August 2024
California, USA



**LIFT-OFF
FILMMAKER
SESSIONS 2024**

OFFICIAL SELECTION
March 2024
Online



**MUYUNA - FESTIVAL
INTERNACIONAL DE
CINE SELVÁTICO
FLOTANTE**

OFFICIAL SELECTION
May 2024
Maynas, Peru



CILECT PRIZE

SWINBURNE ENTRANT
2024
Online



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THANK YOU

