



*with Director Scott McQuaid*

The initial idea of the 'Dark Gift' documentary was just to be a reference point for silek harimau practitioners within our *aliran* (tribe).

I just wanted to have a visual document of the *pesilats* (silat players) that had gone before me so I had a reference but then from a very small project it started to expand into this epic documentary that took over seven years for me to shoot and produce.

It started with me just shooting footage of seminars and collecting some archive footage of my teacher's Grandmaster Adityo Hanafi and Maha Guru Richard Crabbe de-Bordes. Then during my *merantau* (right of passage) which took me across Indonesia and Asia for two years I shot as much footage as possible. From *randai* performances of silek and its dances, to establishing shots of the Sumatran jungle and the Minangkabau houses and its general landscape right across Indonesia into Jawa and Bali.

While I was in Yogyakarta shooting footage and researching at the temple Borobudur I remember an encounter I had with a snake. I was doing the pan-out shot of one of the buddhist figures at the temple and I saw something move in between legs and looked down to see a black as night snake. Now I learned long ago that anything bright and colourful in the wild can be dangerous but maybe not fatal, but anything that is black you should run like fuck. However this snake was right beneath my feet and I'm guessing its reflexes are quicker than mine so I just froze while it passed through my legs and slipped into a crack within the temple walls. As I watched disappear into the wall I was thinking what a great shot but dared not move. Lots of Indonesia is still very raw and wild so this is regular for the people there and since moving from

Hong Kong to Malaysia, even I have become accustomed to seeing a few monitor lizards, monkeys and snakes on my way to work. So just know that when you see that zoom out shot of the Buddhist statue in the film, that's when a *naga* (snake) is lurking beneath my feet.



I had spent four days on a boat traveling to Rinca island to shoot Komodo dragons in the wild and I got some great photos and video. But whilst editing the camera chewed up the tape and screwed up the footage which I was gutted about.

I wanted everything to be authentic and original footage, to show the West real images of the Minanagkbau. Apart from the archive footage of some fight demos, everything else is my own footage. I didn't want to show a Bengal tiger. I wanted a genuine Sumatran tiger so I had to go to a Sumatran tiger reserve and film the tigers there. I actually waited three hours before I got some decent shots of the tigers moving and play fighting that features in the documentary. Every animal, landscape and still photo is authentic to Sumatra; there's no doubles or substitutes.

The first bit of footage I ever released to the public was in 2005 on YouTube, which was the scenes of me fighting my student *pesilat* Ian Llewellyn in Lake Maninjau in the Minang province. We had traveled from Bukittinggi after shooting some

*andai*

silek the night before, but we made the mistake of trying some local Sumatran coffee and that gave us nasty food poisoning. Maybe it was the water but we were not in good shape when we shot that demonstration.

However the shots looked good and that footage once put on YouTube really got a lot of attention and that's when I kinda knew that this documentary needed to expand and become a documentary for the general public as opposed to something that was just personal for *harimau pesilats*.

I had hours of footage from Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Hong Kong and even stuff in China, Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos which was never used because it didn't really link to the subject but the footage was still shot.

I visited Ghana in 2003 to study with my teacher Maha Guru de-Bordes and we shot his interview at his house or should I say palace. I remember it was in October; one of the hottest periods to be in Ghana and we had to turn off the fans in the room because it was interfering with the sound, so Guru and I were just sweating like hell as we shot this segment. I remember Guru saying in between takes "Scotty your killing me here, man."

