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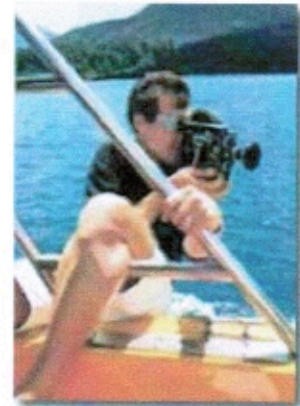
## Motion Picture Imaging

DOCUMENTARY

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### Sea, salt and scars on National Geographic documentary

Director/cinematographer Robert Chappell expects to have permanent scars to remind him of **Beyond Indonesia**, a three-part documentary made for National Geographic Asia by Singapore-based The Moving Visuals Co. The documentary follows a group of people as they travel 5,000 nautical miles by boat to various remote locations in Indonesia on a marine and cultural expedition. Several times, despite meticulous planning, Chappell had to haul equipment over a mile of treacherous mud and coral at the Bajau fishing village, which is literally built on a tidal coral reef. Hence the scars.



▲ Robert Chappell

Chappell did not consider using anything but film for **Beyond Indonesia** (working title). He felt that even the best digital video cameras would have difficulty handling the extreme contrasts created by the dry season's hot tropical sun on the reflective water. He also did not trust electronic equipment to withstand the inevitable rough treatment and exposure to damp salty conditions.



▲ Robert Chappell shooting in the Bajau village, Sampela, Indonesia

Executive producers Galen Yeo and Khim Loh first approached marine conservationist Francis Lee about visually documenting Indonesia's stunningly beautiful marine parks as part of Lee's next expedition. Lee subsequently approached National Geographic. "Yet **Beyond Indonesia** transcends the marine or natural history documentary genre and unfolds instead as a story about people," said Yeo, who notes that The Moving Visuals Co. is one of the few production companies in the region working with National Geographic. "It's about how they have made a choice to

conserve marine resources, and how they have to grapple with tricky conservation issues such as balancing this against tourism and the loss of people's livelihoods."

Using film also suited the *cinema verité*, naturalistic style, chosen to make the audience feel part of the expedition. Genuine candid moments could be captured with the press of a film camera button, unlike with video.



"I decided on an Arri SR11 but it is hard to find one set up

for Super 16mm. Therefore I opted for an Aaton LTR54 for my main camera, with two Bolex cameras modified for Super 16 as my backup cameras," said Chappell about the equipment he chose. "I had to forego the opportunity to use film time code, but I gained in flexibility and reliability. The Bolex cameras proved invaluable as they allowed me the freedom to try shots that would be too risky for the main camera, such as being suspended at water level in front of the bow, moving around the deck during rough seas, and being hand held in small dugout canoes."



▲ Robert Chappell shooting the marine scientist going for another dive

He estimates that about 30 percent of the film was shot on these two spring driven Bolex cameras, including time lapse sequences, created by leaving the camera set up for up to 12 hours. He would not have left the SRII unguarded - nor high end digital video equipment - but the production would still be able to continue if a Bolex was damaged or stolen.

Chappell used [Eastman EXR 50D film 7245](#), [Kodak Vision 250D film 7246](#) and [Kodak Vision 800T film 7289](#). The lights on board were rarely used because he seldom had access to electricity.

"Kodak stock seems to resist heat fogging and in this production I knew that there would be weeks at a time when the film would be exposed to high temperatures. I have also found that since the introduction of Kodak EXR stocks I do not have to worry about colour variations between different batch numbers."

**Beyond Indonesia** was edited on an Avid and the negative was cut based on the offline EDL. The conformed negative was then telecined on a Spirit telecine. Cutting the negative and doing the telecine in sequence invariably leads to electronic correction later to perfectly match the scenes, but Chappell strongly believes it is the only way to get a top quality result.

## Production team

### **Beyond Indonesia (working title)**

Producer	<b>Millie Phuah</b>
Director/DOP	<b>Robert Chappell</b>
Underwater Camera	<b>Andre Hedinger</b>
Sound Recordist	<b>Adim Suctpto</b>
Production Manager	<b>Yusuf Sarangalo</b>
Editor	<b>David Hewitt</b>
Production Company	<b>The Moving Visuals Co.</b>
Executive Producers	<b>Khim Loh, Galen Yeo</b>

## Film data

### **Robert Chappell**

Robert Chappell has been based in Indonesia for eight years and has earned a reputation for creating captivating portraits of the country. He shot and co-produced *In Our Water*, which won an Emmy for Best Documentary and was nominated for an Oscar. Earlier work included Errol Morris's *The Thin Blue*, which earned a number of accolades from critics, and he also directed the high-profile *The Sorceress of Dirah*, a collaboration with Javanese theatre artist Sardono Kusumo that screened in HDTV on NHK. Chappell has been involved in projects for the BBC, Channel 4, Discovery, HBO and PBS, and has directed two feature films, *Diamond Run* and *Fugitive Outrage*.