“the films show cultural and visual anthropology at their best...”
Karen Nakamura, American Anthropologist

"a vibrant portrait of the course of mental illness, resilience and recovery...”
Byron Good, Anthropologist

AFFLICTIONS:
Culture & Mental Illness in Indonesia

www.afflictionfilmseries.com

PRESS KIT
The first film series on mental illness in the developing world
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction_________________________1
  Shadows and Illuminations___________2
  Ritual Burdens________________________3
  Memory of My Face____________________4
  Family Victim________________________5
  The Bird Dancer________________________6
  Kites and Monsters____________________7
Director Robert Lemelson’s Statement______8
List of Credits_______________________10
Filmmaker Bios______________________11
Production Notes____________________17
Editorial and Post Production Notes______17
Soundtrack Notes_____________________18
Interview with Director Robert Lemelson____21
PR Contact________________________23
“Afflictions: Culture & Mental Illness in Indonesia” is a documentary film series that examines the lives of severely mentally ill people living on the Indonesian islands of Bali and Java. At once scholarly treatises and cinematic narratives captured with Hollywood-quality production values, “Afflictions” is based on more than a decade of clinical ethnographic research conducted by documentary filmmaker and anthropologist Dr. Robert Lemelson.

Each of the six films—“Memory of My Face,” “The Bird Dancer,” “Family Victim,” “Ritual Burdens,” “Shadows and Illuminations” and “Kites & Monsters”—tells the story of the diagnosis, care and treatment an Indonesian suffering from a mental disorder and looks at the impact of culture, family and community on the course of their illness. Themes emerge with universal impact: how family members treat the mentally ill shapes outcomes, both positive and negative; culture has the power to protect and buffer the mentally ill or exacerbate their condition; to understand the experience of the mentally ill, it is essential to understand their cultural universe and values; and finally, pharmaceutical treatment can be effective or unsuccessful.
“Shadows and Illuminations” (34:36 minutes) paints a portrait of Nyoman Kereta, a rural Balinese man in his late sixties who, by psychiatric standards, suffers from a psychotic-like illness. He experiences auditory and visual hallucinations that are a source of great distress, prevent him from tilling his rice fields, and isolate him from his family and fellow villagers. Through the lens of local Balinese standards, he is seen as haunted by spirit visitations that villagers interpret within the frame of their culture and religion.

“Shadows and Illuminations” explores how unusual mental events and behavior can be understood or interpreted in multiple ways outside the confines of western psychiatric diagnostics. It looks at Nyoman’s history of trauma and loss during the politically inspired mass killings that swept through Indonesia in 1965-66, his prolonged sickness from pesticide poisoning, and his treatment by traditional healers. The film illustrates how his wife’s love and support have ameliorated his pain and helped him find peace in life with what the west terms “mental illness.”
“The Bird Dancer” (39:32) tells the story of Gusti Ayu Suartini, a young woman with Tourette’s syndrome from rural Bali. Neither Gusti’s family nor community understands the medical nature of her condition and they pity, spurn or mistreat her.

“The Bird Dancer” examines the impact of societal stigma on the lives of those who suffer from neuropsychiatric disorders and on the severity of their symptoms. Forced to leave grammar school and subjected to countless visits with healers, several of whom perform degrading and painful treatments, Gusti grows increasingly despondent and isolated. An arranged meeting with a happily married and working adult with Tourette’s helps Gusti realize that it’s her family’s and community’s lack of support and understanding that is the source of much of her emotional pain. This knowledge points the way for Gusti to a better life in urban Indonesia—away from her family--where she is able to find compassionate friends and a job to support herself.
“Family Victim” (37:58) presents a portrait of Estu Wardhani, a young man from a highly respected and successful rural Javanese family. At first, Estu suffers from neuropsychiatric symptoms and drops out of college, but adulthood brings growing anger and violence and other anti-social behaviors, an addiction to gambling, an inability to hold down a job, and an unraveling marriage.

“Family Victim” examines a universal predicament: how families and communities interpret and attempt to control troubled and troublesome members and how problematic individuals, in turn, influence their own treatment by their communities. While family and psychiatrists believe Estu is suffering from anti-social personality disorder and traditional healers see him as possessed by evil spirits, Estu blames his family for spoiling and disrespecting him. Only after Estu’s will is broken by a traditional healer, the death of his father from a prolonged illness, and the birth of a second daughter, does Estu realize what it takes to be a responsible adult in a traditional society.
“Memory of My Face” (21:46) looks at the life of Bambang Rudjito, a highly intelligent and urbanized Javanese man in his late 30’s, diagnosed with schizoaffective disorder. The film captures Bambang in a mental hospital with florid psychosis, during bouts of mania and depression, and during remission, when he is capable of clearly articulating his struggles with mental illness.

“Memory of My Face” demonstrates the impact of globalization on how Bambang expresses his illness. His psychotic thoughts and delusions, his understanding and interpretation of his illness and treatment, and his economic livelihood are all deeply entwined in and influenced by globalization. The film follows his treatment with pharmaceuticals, search for meaning in a Muslim religious community, and for reward in the work that he is capable of doing. At the same time, “Memory of My Face” examines Bambang’s relationship with his wife and children and the role they play in his struggle to live with his “mental disease.”
“Ritual Burdens” (24:39) tells the story of Ni Ketut Kasih, a Balinese woman who lapses into mania and depression when the weight of communal ritual obligations and other societal expectations become overwhelming. Ni Ketut is required to spend long hours preparing offerings and conducting ceremonies—normal activities for Balinese women. For Ni Ketut, however, these responsibilities create great stress, resulting in her hospitalization more than 30 times. She withdraws for days and exhibits paranoia and other aberrant behaviors. Her mind becomes filled with unhappy memories of childhood, when her father was imprisoned for political reasons and she was the sole provider for her younger siblings.

“Ritual Burdens” examines how spiritual practices combine with personal schemas of stress to trigger episodes of mental illness. The film also illustrates how a person with a psychiatric disorder, who would most likely end up homeless in the United States, can lead a good life in Bali where cultural emphasis on extended family love and support play a mitigating role.
“Kites and Monsters” (21:32) follows the childhood of Wayan Yoga, a five-year-old boy whose imaginative world includes an obsession with violent, mythical monsters and a passion for dance, kite flying and drawing. He is also diagnosed with Tourette’s syndrome and exhibits the physical tics and vocalizations characteristic of his illness.

“Kites and Monsters” looks at how culture can influence and provide a context for neuropsychiatric symptoms. Wayan’s family understands his condition and guides him away from unproductive behavior. They educate the community about Wayan’s illness and he attends school like other children. Wayan’s symptoms diminish, irrespective of the mixed results from western, Chinese and traditional Balinese treatments. As a young adult, Wayan is headed toward a promising career, creating and flying kites and practicing traditional music and dance rooted in Balinese tales of monsters and spirits.
Dr. Robert Lemelson is a documentary filmmaker and anthropologist whose work focuses on personal experience, culture and mental illness in Indonesia and the United States. “Afflictions: Culture & Mental Illness in Indonesia” is Dr. Lemelson’s second documentary project. His first, “40 Years of Silence: An Indonesian Tragedy” (2009), is a feature-length film about the impact on four families of Indonesian President Suharto’s violent purge of suspected communists.

Dr. Lemelson is adjunct professor in the University of California, Los Angeles’s (UCLA) Department of Anthropology and research anthropologist at the University’s internationally renowned Semel Institute of Neuroscience and Human Behavior in its Center for Culture and Health. He is also the founder and CEO Los Angeles-based documentary film company Elemental Productions, which brings together scholars with Hollywood filmmakers to create educational and impactful content.

Dr. Lemelson began his research into the relationship of culture to psychiatric and neuropsychiatric disorders in 1993, in Bali and Java, as a Fulbright Scholar. The findings from this period form the basis of the two aforementioned documentary projects. He is currently researching and developing a film series about genderized violence and kinship in Indonesia, among other projects.

Dr. Lemelson is the founder and President of the Foundation for Psychocultural Research (The FPR), which advances and supports interdisciplinary research and training in neuroscience, psychiatry and anthropology. He also serves as director, co-vice president and secretary of The Lemelson Foundation, a family foundation promoting innovation and invention in America and the developing world.

Dr. Lemelson’s research has been published in the journals “Culture,” “Medicine and Psychiatry,” “Medical Anthropology Quarterly” and “Transcultural Psychiatry,” among others. He has presented papers at numerous scientific meetings.

Dr. Lemelson received his M.A. from the University of Chicago and Ph.D. from the Department of Anthropology at the University of California, Los Angeles, specializing in Southeast-Asian studies, psychological anthropology and transcultural psychiatry.
One hundred-fifty million people suffer from different types of mental illness in the developing world, where psychiatric treatment is often limited or non-existent. With such daunting statistics, one would expect their recovery rate and outcomes to be deficient. But, the World Health Organization, in a landmark, decades-long research project, found that the mentally ill living in non-industrialized nations actually fare better than their industrialized counterparts where biological approaches to mental illness prevail. On a population level, the mentally ill—including schizophrenics—return to their homes and their jobs more quickly, are hospitalized less frequently and experience less severe symptoms, overall.

In 1996, armed with a Fulbright scholarship, I went to live in Bali and Java, to research the circumstances behind these startling findings, along with the more general question of the relationship between culture and mental illness. At that time, I interviewed many patients. As an anthropologist, I was not only interested in their diagnosis, illness and treatment, but also in their goals and values, in how their illness impacted their self-perception and self-esteem, and how they were regarded and understood by their family and community.

In subsequent years, I returned to Indonesia many times to film mentally ill men, women and children (forming long-term relationships), to record their struggles and defeats and moments of happiness and transcendence. “Afflictions: Culture & Mental Illness in Indonesia,” the first film series on the lives of the mentally ill in the developing world, was born out of this footage.

“Afflictions” evolved into six short films. With the probing and detailed eye of the video camera, the films look at an equal number of Indonesians who suffer from schizophrenia, Tourette’s syndrome and anti-social personality disorder. The narratives are at turns informative, disturbing and even heartwarming.

As the stories unfold, it becomes clear that it is neither their psychiatric diagnosis nor their illness, per se, that is the most troubling to the mentally ill. Rather, it is the response of their family and community to their condition and the depth of their struggle to forge identities that they believe to be valued and valuable.
The “Afflictions” films shine a light on societal issues impacting the experiences—the suffering and the wellbeing—of the mentally ill, some specific to the Indonesian culture and others with global application. Balinese religious symbology, Dutch colonial occupation and Indonesian historical events play a role in the their stories. At the same time, universal concepts rise to the surface: home placement can be more beneficial than institutional care; urban living impacts disease onset and outcomes; and treatment modalities that integrate psychiatric and outpatient treatment can be the most effective.

In the end, it is my hope that the findings clarified and made accessible in “Afflictions” help shape the care and treatment of the mentally ill in Indonesia, in other developing nations and around the world.

LIST OF CREDITS

**Director and Producer:** Robert Lemelson
**Producer and Post Production Supervisor:** Alessandra Pasquino
**Directors of Photography:** Wing Ko, Dag Yngvesson
**Consulting Editor:** Pietro Scalia
**Editors:** Sandra Angeline, Herbert Bennett, Wing Ko, Mike Mallen, Chisako Yokoyama
**Music Supervisor:** Richard Henderson
Composer: Malcolm Cross
**Graphic Designer:** Mike Mallen
**Consulting Psychiatrist:** Mahar Agusno
**Field Researcher:** Ninik Supartini
Dr. Robert Lemelson is a documentary filmmaker and anthropologist whose work focuses on personal experience, culture and mental illness in Indonesia and the United States. “Afflictions: Culture & Mental Illness in Indonesia” is Dr. Lemelson’s second documentary project. His first, “40 Years of Silence: An Indonesian Tragedy” (2009), is a feature-length film about the impact on four families of Indonesian President Suharto’s violent purge of suspected communists.

Dr. Lemelson is adjunct professor in the University of California, Los Angeles’s (UCLA) Department of Anthropology and research anthropologist at the University’s internationally renowned Semel Institute of Neuroscience and Human Behavior in its Center for Culture and Health. He is also the founder and CEO Los Angeles-based documentary film company Elemental Productions, which brings together scholars with Hollywood filmmakers to create educational and impactful content.

Dr. Lemelson began his research into the relationship of culture to psychiatric and neuropsychiatric disorders in 1993, in Bali and Java, as a Fulbright Scholar. The findings from this period form the basis of the two aforementioned documentary projects. He is currently researching and developing a film series about genderized violence and kinship in Indonesia, among other projects.

Dr. Lemelson is the founder and President of the Foundation for Psychocultural Research (The FPR), which advances and supports interdisciplinary research and training in neuroscience, psychiatry and anthropology. He also serves as director, co-vice president and secretary of The Lemelson Foundation, a family foundation promoting innovation and invention in America and the developing world.

Dr. Lemelson’s research has been published in the journals “Culture,” “Medicine and Psychiatry,” “Medical Anthropology Quarterly” and “Transcultural Psychiatry,” among others. He has presented papers at numerous scientific meetings. Dr. Lemelson co-edited “Understanding Trauma: Integrating Biological, Clinical, and Cultural Perspectives,” published by Cambridge University Press in 2007. His edited volume, “Revisioning Psychiatry: Integrating Biological, Clinical, and Cultural Approaches,” will be published by Cambridge Press in 2012. Dr. Lemelson is currently working on an ethnography of mental illness utilizing the “Afflictions” studies as a focal point.

Dr. Lemelson received his M.A. from the University of Chicago and Ph.D. from the Department of Anthropology at the University of California, Los Angeles, specializing in Southeast-Asian studies, psychological anthropology and transcultural psychiatry.
ALESSANDRA PASQUINO
Producer and Postproduction Supervisor, “Afflictions: Culture & Mental Illness in Indonesia”

Producer and postproduction supervisor of “Afflictions: Culture & Mental Illness in Indonesia,” Alessandra has had her hand in numerous motion pictures, documentaries and commercials for leading advertisers through the course of her career. She has held a variety of roles and has worked with such renowned filmmakers as Oliver Stone, Leonardo Di Caprio, Wayne Wang, Klaus Kinski and Gregory Colbert, among others.

Pasquino joined Elemental’s team in 2008. She postproduced “40 Years of Silence: An Indonesian Tragedy,” Elemental Productions documentary about former Indonesian President Suharto’s violent purge of suspected communists. She is working with Dr. Lemelson to develop future projects on culture and mental health around the world.

Pasquino is also an independent filmmaker in her own right and is currently developing her feature debut, “Sky Burial,” a drama about the Chinese invasion of Tibet in the 1950’s, based on the book of the same name by famed Chinese writer Xinran.

DAG YNGVESSON
Cinematographer, “Shadows & Illuminations,” “The Bird Dancer,” “Family Victim,” “Memory of My Face”
Additional Camera, “Ritual Burdens” and “Kites & Monsters”

Dag Yngvesson served as director of photography on the majority of the “Afflictions: Culture & Mental Illness in Indonesia” film series as well as on “40 Years of Silence: An Indonesian Tragedy,” an Elemental Productions documentary film about former Indonesian President Suharto’s violent purge of suspected communists.

Yngvesson was the cinematographer on “Stoked: the Rise of Gator,” a documentary about the rise and fall of skateboard legend Mark “Gator” Ragowski and wrote, produced and edited “Rated X: A Journey through Porn,” about the Los Angeles porn industry. Yngvesson studied film and anthropology at Pitzer and Hampshire Colleges, where he made his first films: “The Kaos Company,” a documentary on squatters in Gothenburg, Sweden, and “Making Skateboards in New Russia,” about skateboarder/entrepreneurs in St. Petersburg after the fall of communism.
WING KO  
**Cinematographer**, “Ritual Burdens” and “Kites & Monsters”  
**Editor**, “Shadows & Illuminations”  
**Additional Camera and Still Photography**, “Afflictions: Culture & Mental Illness in Indonesia”

Wing Ko wore multiple hats on “Afflictions: Culture & Mental Illness in Indonesia.” He was cinematographer on “Ritual Burdens” and “Kites & Monsters,” edited “Shadows & Illuminations,” shot additional footage for several of the films, and served as set still photographer.

Through the course of his career, Ko has collaborated with a who’s who of trendsetting artists, musicians and filmmakers. He worked with Spike Jonze on several music videos and edited the pilot for MTV’s “Jackass,” which Jonze co-created and executive produced. As a founding member of the innovative production company H-Gun, Ko helped create more than 80 music videos for Nine Inch Nails, Sound Garden, Smashing Pumpkins and other top bands of the time. For more than 15 years, he crewed skateboard videos and traveled the globe with world-renowned installation artist Doug Aiken, working on his films “Eraser,” “Into The Sun” and “Electric Earth.”

Ko is currently directing his long-gestating documentary, "The Brotherhood," about the up-and-down lives of three prominent Chicago skateboarders.

PIETRO SCALIA  
**Consulting Editor**, “Afflictions: Culture & Mental Illness in Indonesia”

Pietro Scalia was consulting editor on “Afflictions: Culture & Mental Illness in Indonesia,” providing overall story and editing guidance. He did the same on “40 Years of Silence: An Indonesian Tragedy,” Elemental Productions’ documentary about former Indonesian President Suharto’s violent purge of suspected communists.

Ridley Scott, Oliver Stone, Bernardo Bertolucci and Gus Van Sant are just some of today’s leading directors with whom Scalia has collaborated. Among the many editing honors he has garnered are Academy and A.C.E. Eddie Awards for both “Black Hawk Down” and “JFK” and BAFTA and A.C.E. Eddie Awards for “Gladiator.” Other top editorial credits include: “Goodwill Hunting,” “American Gangster,” “Memoirs of A Geisha” and “Little Buddha,” as well as the highly anticipated 2012 releases “Prometheus” and “The Amazing Spider-Man.”

Scalia earned his MFA from the UCLA Film School, and began his editorial career as an assistant editor with Oliver Stone on “Wall Street” and “Talk Radio” and as additional editor on “Born on the Fourth of July” and "The Doors."
CHISAKO YOKOYAMA
Editor, “Kites and Monsters,” “Memory of My Face”

Chisako Yokoyama edited two “Afflictions” titles: “Kites and Monsters” and “Memory of My Face.” For more than two decades, she has worked as an editor and assistant editor on studio motion pictures, independent features and narrative and documentary short films. Her credits as editor include the English and Japanese language independent films “Saki,” “Takamine” and “Goemon” and as first assistant editor, “American Gangster,” “Memoirs of a Geisha,” “Black Hawk Down” and “Good Will Hunting.” Yokoyama graduated from the film studies program at the University of California at Santa Barbara.

SANDRA ANGELINE
Editor, “Family Victim,” “Memory of My Face”

Sandra Angeline edited “Memory of My Face” and “Family Victim” for Elemental Productions. Angeline’s credits as editor also include “Broken,” “Extreme Makeover: Home Edition,” and other shows for ABC, Travel Channel and The Style Network. She has worked as an assistant editor on the television series “Wilfred” and the feature films “Smart Ass” and “The Odd Life of Timothy Green.” Angeline studied film at CUNY Hunter College, New York and New York Film Academy.

HERBERT BENNETT
Editor, “The Bird Dancer” and “Ritual Burdens”

Herbert Bennett edited “The Bird Dancer” and “Ritual Burdens” for Elemental Productions. He is a two-time Emmy Award winning editor and was instrumental in the postproduction of three Academy Award-nominated documentary films: “Weather Underground,” “Berkeley in the 60’s,” and “Promises.” Herbert lives in Los Angeles, CA, where he edits films and new media.

MIKE MALLEN
Graphic Designer, “Afflictions: Culture & Mental Illness in Indonesia”
Editor, “Ritual Burdens”

Mike Mallen designed the graphics for “Afflictions: Culture & Mental Illness in Indonesia” and edited “Ritual Burdens.” He has been an editor, graphic designer and visual effects artist for the past nine years, working in a wide range of genres including reality television, documentaries and scripted films.
RICHARD HENDERSON
Music Supervisor and Music Editor, “Afflictions: Culture & Mental Illness in Indonesia”

Two-time M.P.S.E and Golden Reel-winner Richard Henderson was the music supervisor and music editor on “Afflictions: Culture & Mental Illness in Indonesia,” steering the overall direction of the soundtrack.

With roots as a musician and writer, Richard has spent nearly two decades working on soundtracks for leading independent films and TV series. He was the music supervisor and music editor on “Bruno” and “Borat: Cultural Leanings of America for Make Benefit Glorious Nation of Kazakhstan,” and music editor on “Corman’s World: Exploits of a Hollywood Hero,” “The Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou,” “Into the Wild” (for which he earned one of his two A.C.E. Golden Reels), the 2012 release “The Dictator,” and, most recently, the HBO TV series “Luck.” He was also music editor and supervisor on “40 Years of Silence: An Indonesian Tragedy,” Elemental Production’s documentary about former Indonesian President Suharto’s violent purge of suspected communists.

In the early 80’s, Henderson played with Jon Hassell’s concert group, which featured Brian Eno and Michael Brook. He followed with composing soundtracks for television commercials and short films and with writing about ethnomusicology, film music and avant-pop (which he continues to do to this day). Richard’s articles have appeared in The Wire (U.K.), Billboard, The Beat, Soma, Escape, LA Weekly and Murder Dog.

MALCOLM CROSS
Composer, “Afflictions: Culture & Mental Illness in Indonesia”

Malcolm Cross was the composer on “Afflictions: Culture & Mental Illness in Indonesia,” as well as for “40 Years of Silence: An Indonesian Tragedy,” Elemental Productions documentary about former Indonesian President Suharto’s violent purge of suspected communists.

Cross has been a professional composer for film, television and stage since 1996. He composed the score for “Oh Saigon,” a documentary broadcast on the Sundance Channel that memorably combined American and Vietnamese music to tell the story of Vietnamese refugees forced to leave their country. He scored the independent shorts “I Dream of Dog” and “Insomniac Obsession,” and wrote the theme and incidental music for the television series “America’s Prom Queen” (ABC Family). Cross’s music has been featured in the television series “Road Rules” (MTV) and “Men in Trees” (ABC) and in the romantic comedy “Something New” (Focus Features).

Past work includes serving as music director for the Cambridge ADC Touring Theater Company and City at Peace Los Angeles and creating original music for touring versions of ’As You Like It’ and ‘Hummingbirds.’ Cross studied music performance and composition in London at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama.
MAHAR AGUSNO
Consulting Psychiatrist, “Afflictions: Culture & Mental Illness in Indonesia”

Mahar Agusno is head of the Psychiatric Department at Sardjito General Hospital and head of the Study Program, Department of Psychiatry, Faculty of Medicine, Gadjah Mada University. He received his M.D. & psychiatric training from Faculty of Medicine, Gadjah Mada University.

Agusno’s long-term service at the community and mental hospital has contributed significantly to his interest in community and cultural psychiatry. After he finished his mandatory service in a mental hospital in Borneo in 1997, Agusno returned to the Department of Psychiatry, Gadjah Mada University to serve as a lecturer. Simultaneously, he worked at the university’s teaching hospital, Sardjito General Hospital. In 2002, Agusno was awarded a Freeman Fellowship to study medical anthropology at Harvard Medical School.

NINIK SUPARTINI
Field Researcher, “Afflictions: Culture & Mental Illness in Indonesia”

Niki Supartini assisted Dr. Lemelson in two research projects about community mental health in Java and Bali. Since 2006, Supartini has served as a mental health and psychosocial consultant for international humanitarian organizations working in post-disaster and conflict areas in Indonesia and Myanmar.

Supartini studied English teaching as an undergraduate at the Yogyakarta Teacher Training Institute and lectured in English for more than ten years before turning her interests to community mental health. In 2004, she returned to school at Gadjah Mada University to earn her Masters Degree in Developmental Psychology. Supartini was honored with a Donald J. Cohen Fellowship in 2006 and East West Center Fellowships in 2006 and 2007.
“Afflictions” was created by a team of noted Hollywood filmmakers working together with leading US and Indonesian scholars in the field of psychology, anthropology and ethnography.

Live action production began in 1997 and wrapped in 2010.

The core US crew traveled to Indonesia, where they interviewed 100 candidates. Based on their stories, six complementary and representative cases were chosen from the group for development into films.

More than 2500 hours of footage was captured over 13 years of research and interviews in Java and Bali.

The US-based crew included a cinematographer and camera operators. They worked side-by-side with local Indonesian sound recordists, interviewers, researchers and additional camera crew.

Many scenes were shot with three cameras in order to capture the points of view of multiple characters from a variety of angles. Early footage was photographed with 16 mm cameras and MiniDVs, with later scenes shot with Sony P2 cameras in HD.

The project was edited in Apple’s Final Cut Pro and required the management of vast amounts of footage accumulated over years of research and filming.

One of the greatest editorial tasks to conquer was to seamlessly intercut footage shot over a long time span on multiple formats.
• The soundtrack succeeds in marrying the two disparate sonic worlds of traditional Indonesian and Western film music.

• The director’s sonic vision was to simultaneously immerse the audience in Indonesia and invoke the storytelling power of a classic, western film score. The final soundtrack includes traditional and native Javanese and Balinese music, songs and instrumentation, along with western music.

• Each film has its own unique character and setting and each score reflects it musically. Kereta and Ni Ketut Kasih (‘Ritual Burdens’) represent older, more traditional values and their scores and instrumentation echo that; Estu (“Family Victim”) and especially Bambang (“Memory of my Face”) depict a younger, more westernized Indonesia, so their scores feature more modern sounds.

• The music is recorded with both traditional Javanese and Balinese instruments including that the gamelan, suling and kendang, as well as the guitar, vibraphone, marimba, glockenspiel and violin.

• Pak Nyoman Wenten, head of the Indonesian Music and Dance program at Cal Arts, contributed his knowledge and experience and is featured throughout the recordings.

• The final soundtrack was recorded live to picture, without any formal notation.
1. What inspired you to create the “Afflictions: Culture & Mental Illness in Indonesia” film series?

According to the seminal studies conducted by the World Health Organization (WHO), the prognosis for patients diagnosed with severe mental illness is significantly better in developing nations than industrialized nations. On a population basis, those in the developing world experience less severe symptoms, fewer subsequent episodes and greater job retention than their western counterparts. This finding is counterintuitive for many reasons, including the greater monetary investment by the west in research and treatment and the economic and cultural barriers to new modalities in psychiatric care in developing nations.

2. How does “Afflictions” break new ground?

“Afflictions” is the first film series on mental illness in the developing world. It is also the first film series to look at the long-term care and treatment of mentally patients in a developing nation and to illustrate the likely reasons for their outcomes.

3. What was the filmmaking process?

As an ethnographic filmmaker, I began the process with a strong vision of what I wanted to investigate, but without pre-conceived notions of the outcomes. I initially interviewed more than 100 potential subjects, culled from clinics, village surveys and personal referrals, and selected six diverse, yet representative cases on which to focus. After lots of hours in the editorial bay, as the research and the overall narrative fell into place, I worked with my crew to arrange additional interviews and activities to fill out the stories.

4. How did you build trust with the films’ characters?

In addition to my work as an anthropologist, I am a trained clinical psychologist and spent several years interviewing and assessing the mentally ill and providing psychotherapy. I learned techniques that I have brought to conducting interviews as a documentarian, including: a nonjudgmental and supportive attitude; a proclivity for remaining silent—especially during long, uncomfortable pauses—to allow my subjects to work through their anxiety and discomfort; and most importantly, the patience to address issues multiple times until the truth becomes apparent to the camera.
5. **What was the most challenging “Affliction” film to direct?**

“Family Victim,” which looks at the life of a troubled and rebellious young man, was perhaps the most challenging film to direct because its subject—Estu Wardhani—is the son of professional colleagues. It was difficult to depict the truth of Estu’s story while at the same time remaining sensitive to his family’s need for privacy and to their desire to protect their reputation.

6. **Why did you choose film rather than the written word as your medium?**

Although longitudinal studies have been written about mental and neuropsychiatric illness in developing nations, there haven’t been any films about the topic. Because of the all-encompassing nature of cinematic language, many of the issues central to achieving better patient outcomes can be expressed more succinctly and directly using a visual medium. In addition, cinema allows audiences to directly and emotionally understand the complex factors that impact the lives of the mentally ill, while introducing a different and unfamiliar cultural setting in which these stories unfold.

7. **Why is “Afflictions” timely and relevant?**

One in 17 Americans live with a serious mental illness¹ and 450 million, worldwide, suffer from a mental or behavioral disorder.¹ It’s a serious global problem that has been supplanted, on the one hand, by concerns about HIV/AIDS, TB and malaria and, on the other, funding shortages. While definitions and diagnoses vary from nation to nation, mental illness has important cross-cultural similarities.

“Afflictions” uses the medium of film to emotionally move mental health policymakers and practitioners, patients and their families. It strives to educate them about other points of view and to inform them about what they can do to improve outcomes for the mentally ill from all socioeconomic backgrounds.

8. **Why is “Afflictions” pertinent to the highly anticipated DSM update?**

In the west, serious mental illness is increasingly viewed through the singular lens of biomedicine, as demonstrated by the contents of the American Psychiatric Association’s (APA) Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM). The APA is currently making final preparations to release, in May 2013, the manual’s first major update in nearly two decades.
"Afflictions," in contrast, is inspired by Harvard psychiatrist and medical anthropologist Arthur Kleinman’s groundbreaking work about the importance of bringing an ethnographic perspective to psychiatric research and practice. The “Affliction” films illustrate the complexity of mental illness, and depict how history, globalization and urban living impact its course. Most importantly, “Afflictions” elucidates how families and society understand, label and treat mental illness makes an enormous difference in patient outcome.

9. Why did Dr. Lemelson choose Indonesia as the location?

Indonesia is a psycho-culturally fascinating nation that sits at the confluence of traditional and modern ways of living. It has attracted many researchers over the years and, as a result, offers a strong foundation for ethnographic study. Indonesia is also an emblematic developing nation, and its research findings are applicable to other developing nations.

“Afflictions” is Dr. Lemelson’s second body of work in Indonesia. The first, the feature documentary “40 Years of Silence: An Indonesian Tragedy,” examines the impact, on four families, of General Suharto’s mass killing of between 500,000 to 1,000,000 suspected communists in 1965-66.

10. How can I see the “Afflictions” film series?

“Afflictions: Culture & Mental Illness in Indonesia” is available for purchase by individual viewers at der.org, amazon.com or at elementalproductions.org. The film is available for educational and institutional purchase at der.org.

11. What is Elemental Productions next project?

Elemental Productions is putting the final touches on "Ngaben: Emotion and Restraint in a Balinese Heart," a short film about the funerary practices in Indonesia and "Standing on the Edge of a Thorn," about a families struggle with poverty, mental illness and the sex trade in Java. Elemental is also currently in postproduction on a feature documentary about gender, violence and kinship in Bali and in preproduction on a short film series about mental illness around the world.

---


PR Contact

Rochelle Winters
Smoke & Mirror Communications
213-250-4603
rochelle@sampr.net