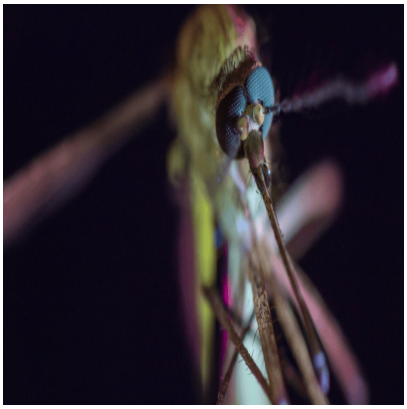


The AFI DOCS Interview: MOSQUITO Director Su Rynard

Description

Posted by Larry Gleeson

MOSQUITO is an urgent report from the frontlines of humankindâ??s millennia-long war against the tiny creature that is one of the biggest threats to the survival of our species. The film is by turns taut, suspenseful, frightening and full of vital information, including the efforts of scientists to keep this deadly menace at bay.

Directed by Su Rynard, MOSQUITO world-premieres at AFI DOCS on Thursday, June 15. AFI spoke with Rynard about the film.

AFI: What led you to pursue documentary filmmaking?

SR: After graduating from art school I began making video art, then short dramatic films, then feature dramas and documentary. Truthfully, sometimes all of these things happen at the same time! What I love about documentary is that it brings me into worlds that I would otherwise never have access too. It forces me to face things that are outside my comfort zone, to ask questions and search for meaning in every situation. My role as a director is to translate this into something the viewer can experience, intellectually, emotionally and viscerally.

AFI: What inspired you to tell this story?

MOSQUITO is the brainchild of Yap Films producers Elizabeth Trojian and Elliott Halpern, produced for Discovery Channelâ??s Discovery Impact strand. Elizabeth was inspired to come up with the idea of a film about mosquitos, growing up with a South African stepfather who had experienced malaria firsthand. I was lucky in this case that the project came to me. As a filmmaker, Iâ??m interested in the human relationship with the natural world, and much of my work over the last 15 years has explored this question. MOSQUITO looks at the ways humans drive some species to extinction while making the world a better place for mosquitoes, and especially the ones that spread disease. In short, much of the mosquito problem is a human-made problem. Given that we are at a critical time ecologically, these are exactly the kind of questions that are really worth exploring.

AFI: How did you find the subjects in your film?

SR: Team work. Film is a visual medium, so Iâ??m always looking at subjects who, in addition to being great characters, are engaged in film-able events that are interesting to watch. Associate producer Alex Ranken works all over the world, and had great connections in the countries where we were shooting, so we engaged people to work locally and research several candidates that we could then interview. Researcher Wendy Kirschner found ingenious ways to track down many of the people in our film. This ranged from cold-calling famous scientists, to creating a flyer and poster campaign that reached into the hearts of communities, and speaking with medical professionals willing to refer a patient who could share their story.

AFI: What was a particular obstacle you faced while making the film?

SR: Health and safety issues were paramount in filming MOSQUITO. We were filming in Brazil, Puerto Rico and Florida at the height of the Zika epidemic. We also filmed in Kenya in an area where we were exposed to active malaria cases. We are incredibly fortunate to come from Canada where we have full, top-notch health care benefits available to us, so we were able to access all the medical precautions available. There are, however, no vaccines or drugs for many mosquito-borne diseases like West Nile or Zika, to which we were exposed. We used insect repellent and all other recommended individual precautions. Despite our efforts, we were bitten by mosquitoes. In the end, it was luck that brought us all home safe and sound.

AFI: How do you want audiences to walk away from MOSQUITO?

SR: MOSQUITO is a cautionary tale. Todayâ??s world is a global community â?? and with interconnectedness comes many benefits but also many challenges. There are no borders that will protect you from disease. One person with a highly contagious disease anywhere in the world can affect the health of potentially everyone on earth. So we have to think about how we live and use the planet. Otherwise, we will never solve the mosquito problem.

AFI: Why is DC a valuable location to screen your film?

SR: One of our scenes is shot in DC, featuring Public Health Entomologist Andy Lima, who shows us how urbanization can create new habitat for mosquitoes. People will be surprised and amazed to learn, from a mosquito perspective, what is really going on in DC! Importantly, we really want to bring the film and its message to the attention of policy-makers and public health authorities, so itâ??s great to be exhibiting the film in a prestigious festival in the U.S. capital.



(Source: blog.afi.com)

Category

1. #AFI
2. #AFIDOCS

Date Created
June 2, 2017
Author
hollywoodglee