

# DOCUMENTARY PROPOSAL

## Mengejar Ombak (“Chasing Waves”)

Directed by  
Tyrone Lebon and David Arnold

Producer Laurence Ellis



### Summary

*Mengejar Ombak* is a 60-minute documentary feature that offers a close and personal insight into the life of the young and extremely talented Indonesian surfer, Dede Suryana. The film explores how a young Muslim can negotiate the rapid cultural changes occurring to his parents' way of life brought on by the ever-increasing influences of Western culture; how the dreams of a young man from a developing country are reconciled with the multi-million dollar industry that facilitates them; and how Indonesia itself negotiates the financial, cultural and environmental effects of these changes.

Opening in Dede's hometown of Cimaja, a small fishing village in South-West Java, the film follows Dede across five continents over the course of one year. Hotly tipped as 'the' Asian up-and-coming sports star of the future, his personal struggles and triumphs will come not only in competition, but in his response to new places and cultures, the volatile situation in Indonesia, financial gain, and the growing attention he receives. How will he manage? Will he embrace or reject the encroachment of Western values on his life? Moving from this central narrative, the film interweaves interviews with leading cultural, political, historical, and industry figures to explore the underlying issues Dede's story raises.

*Mengejar Ombak* is not merely a simplistic portrayal of a competition with winners and losers, nor is it a naive tale of small-village heroes against the villains of globalisation; rather, it is an insight into the life of a young man attempting to assimilate the challenges to his faith and identity, a personal journey that gives us a wider vision of the many changes occurring in developing countries today.

## **Background: Dede, Surf Companies and Indonesia**

### *Dede Suryana*

Dede grew up in a small fishing village in South-West Java, his parents were both rice farmers, and he is the youngest of their seven children. He went to school at the local Mosque and was brought up with his parents' traditional values. At the age of seven he was given a secondhand surfboard, and he soon became the best surfer in Cimaja, winning many of the locally organized competitions. At twelve he took his first trip to Bali, Indonesia's surf capital. It was here that he caught the attention of the surf community, including Rizal Tanjung, Indonesia's top surfer at the time. Not long after, Rizal alerted Hurley, a Nike-owned Californian Surf company, of Dede's talent. At the age of 16, with sponsorship from Hurley, Dede moved to Bali. It was here that he began his long and arduous journey, adapting to the challenges (both in and out of the water) of becoming a professional surfer. Career highs so far include beating Kelly Slater in the final of the 'Todd Chesser Memorial Contest' in Hawaii - while still only 18!

He is currently the only Asian on the W.Q.S. (World Qualifying System) attempting to qualify for the prestigious Association of Surfing Professional's (ASP) World Tour. If he succeeds he will be the first Asian to do so in ASP history.

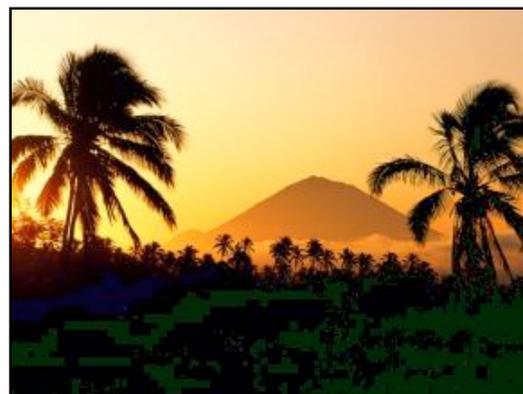
### *Surf Companies*

Sponsorship from one of the large American or Australian surf companies is the principal means by which young Indonesian surfers are able to obtain the financial support necessary to compete: typically a place to stay in Bali, a small allowance, and free branded clothing and equipment. Those that excel in Bali are allowed to journey further afield and to enter international competitions, where the prize money and media coverage is far greater than those in Indonesia. The surf company gains publicity for their brand and the young surfers are provided with what they need to pursue their ambitions; it appears to be a mutually beneficial relationship.

### *Indonesia*

The backdrop to this seemingly straightforward relationship is the complex country of Indonesia, a place defined by contrasting images: one half idyllic beaches, reefs, and unexplored paradise, and the other half a disparate nation troubled by corruption, poverty, terrorism, and natural disasters. Dede's past, present and probable future is used to highlight how the national condition influences the lives of each Indonesian individual, and explain how tourism generally, and surf tourism in particular, has played a significant role in the creation of this present-day Indonesia.

Dede is about to begin his second season of international competition: the most significant point of his surfing career to date. What happens in the coming year will have deep repercussions not only on his future as a professional surfer, but also on the rest of his life; and it is this story and the questions that it raises that we are documenting.



## Setting, Cinematic Style, and Music

From a base in Bali, Indonesia, the film follows Dede across five continents as he travels to competitions in Java, Australia, California, Hawaii, Japan, France, Spain and the UK. Stylistically the film will reflect the pace of Dede's life: by turns fast moving and hectic and at other times leisurely and reflective.

The film exploits a mixture of cinematography, editing styles, and original music to build this contrast. For example, mixing up: beautifully rich 16mm and super-8 footage of Dede's idyllic life at the beach with raw and personal documentary footage captured on the move with the latest cinema-quality High Definition video (on the JVC 101E HDV camera).

The combination of many varied settings with the mix of photographic styles employed ensure that *Mengejar Ombak* is visually stunning and, more importantly, a stylistic aid to the conceptual goal of this project; contrasting the romance of Dede's traditional homeland with the underlying realities of the rapid changes occurring in Indonesia and beyond.

Ever since the 1950's, when surfing first developed a musical style to call its own, music has always occupied an integral part of Surfing and it's culture. *Mengejar Ombak* follows in this tradition with a moving soundtrack giving an eclectic mix of sounds, from lazy instrumental hip hop beats, following the rhythm of the waves with some delicate lo-fi guitar or just kicking back on the beach to some skanky Dub reggae classic; *Mengejar Ombak's* sounds are as varied and captivating as the locations that it depicts.



## About the Filmmakers

David Arnold and Tyrone Lebon have been close friends since they were 13 years old. They began working together while attending school in England and completed their first project for TV, a surf film called *Dave's Indo Tour* in 2001. The film has been shown at film festivals in England, was recently selected for serialization by MTV Asia.

David and Tyrone directed, produced and edited this film and the experience proved of inestimable value, not only allowing them to get to grips with the full process of independent filmmaking, but also granting them the opportu-

nity to navigate thoroughly the production possibilities and difficulties of Indonesia as a site for future projects.

David has been based in Jakarta for most of his life. He began surfing as a teenager and with this skill in hand he has traveled extensively throughout Indonesia, Europe and Australia (making friends with Dede almost ten years ago). He was educated in England and recently graduated with a BA in Religious Studies from the University of Newcastle. Since finishing his education and returning home, he has worked as a director for production companies in Jakarta.

Tyrone has been involved with filmmaking and photography from a young age. He has gained invaluable experience through assisting his father, a successful music video director, fashion photographer, and feature film D.O.P. Tyrone recently graduated with an MA in Social Anthropology from the University of Edinburgh and is currently editing a self-funded documentary about New-York-based fashion photographer, Mario Sorrenti. He has published documentary, portrait and fashion images in a range of magazines, including i-D (London), Pen (Japan), and Streetwear (Germany), shot for clients such as Stussy UK and Vivienne Westwood, and has a short film about Dede (made in collaboration with David) touring the world as part of i-D magazine's current exhibition, 'Identity Now'.



Photos for Stussy and Vivienne Westwood