

High risks for Fiji divers in Pacific documentary ‘disturbing’

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PMC Editor

March 6, 2016

Trailer for Le Salaire des Profondeurs, a deeply disturbing New Caledonian film about the fate of Fijian fishermen diving for sea cucumbers.

By Christina Milligan in Pape'ete

The 13th Festival International du Film Documentaire Océanien (Pacific International Documentary Festival) was held recently in Tahiti, attended by filmmakers from throughout the Pacific.



FIFO, as it is known, is an important event for bringing attention to Pacific films which sometimes struggle for attention outside their home territories.

An outstanding example this year was the film *Le Salaire des Profondeurs*, a film from New Caledonian filmmakers Dominique Roberjot and Christine Della-Maggiara. This film explores the fate of Fijian fisherman diving for sea cucumbers in an illegal, unregulated environment which exposes many of them to injury, even death.

It is a deeply disturbing, politically challenging story which deserves a wider audience.

The festival screens a small number of films in competition, with a much wider selection of features and shorts screened outside competition. Prizes are awarded by an international jury, which this year was headed by Abderrahmane Sissako, the Mauritanian director who expressed his deep appreciation for the work that FIFO does, and the connections that he felt between the indigenous people of the Sahara and of the Pacific.

Jury prizes were awarded this year to the New Zealand films *The Ground We Won* and *The Price of Peace*, and to the NZ-Tahitian co-production *Tupaia*. Honourable mention was made of *Le Salaire des Profondeurs*.

And the audience prize, awarded by public vote, went to the New Zealand film *Hip Hoperation*.

A compilation of trailers for the 11 films entered in this year's FIFO in Tahiti.

The Grand Prize was awarded to *Another Country*, directed by Australian Molly Reynolds. This film follows the great Aboriginal actor David Gulpilil back to his home territory and is a searing indictment of the damage done to the Aboriginal people by colonisation.

Co-creator and chair of FIFO, Wallès Kotra, has commented that the festival is “at least as popular with grandmothers as with the young” and visiting filmmakers find this engagement by the people of Tahiti one of the truly charming aspects of this festival.

As New Zealand filmmaker Lala Rolls comments: “These stories are Pacific stories that it is right to share in our own neighbourhood. They help reflect on and build the Pacific community, often with shared heritage, cultural similarities

and values.”

Christina Milligan is a film director and producer, and is also a lecturer in documentary making and screen writing at Auckland University of Technology. She was co-producer of The Price of Peace, one of the jury prize-winners at FIFO this year.

[FIFO 2016 – the 13th Pacific International Documentary Film Festival](#)

[New documentary gives fresh side to Tame Iti story](#)