

Tensions rise as Majuro's residents await the big premiere at MIR

Latest movie makes it into top Pacific festival

Ainikien Jidjid ilo Bon (The Sound of Crickets at Night) is on a roll. Last week, producers Jack Niedenthal and Suzanne Chutaro received news that the New York City-based Moondance International Film Festival gave it an award and accepted it for showing on September 14.

This week brought news that the Hawaii International Film Festival has also accepted the film for showing in October. Niedenthal and Chutaro submitted earlier films they made to the Hawaii festival without success.

This is the 32nd annual Hawaii International Film Festival, which runs from October 11 to 21.

It is also scheduled to show at the Guam International Film Festival, which is in its second year.



Anikien Jidjid Ilo Boñ's cast members Salome Fakatou (Kali), Banjo Joel (Jebuki) and Toufina Fakatou (Mani) sit out in the cool night listening to the sound of crickets at night. The movie is scheduled to premiere on September 7 at the Marshall Islands Resorts Melele Room. Photo: Suzanne Chutaro

Poetry meets history in film

The new film by Jack Niedenthal and Suzanne Chutaro, *The Sound of Crickets at Night*, marks a new chapter in the history of Marshallese film. This meditation on loss and emotional deprivation represents the first attempt to articulate on the screen the pain the Marshallese have endured for generations and continue to endure in the 21st century. It is also a movie that is both beautifully imagined and sensitively composed: attributes that make it the first cinematic poem to come out of the Marshall Islands, and the single most ambitious film originating in this country to date.

As those of us familiar with previous work by Niedenthal and Chutaro know only too well, the greatest strength of these filmmakers is their ability to tell a

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story in a way that is uniquely Marshallese. Combining traditional stories with contemporary issues, these storytellers have produced a phenomenally successful trilogy that blends entertainment with poignant social commentary. *The Sound of Crickets at Night* takes this strength further by telling a story that links contemporary social issues facing the Marshallese youth with the history experienced by their elders. Delving deep into the emotional worlds of two characters — young girl Kali whose family has left for Arkansas in search of a better life and her grandfather Jebuki who had once left Bikini “for the good of mankind” — the film reminds us of the painful truth that

history tends to repeat itself. Jebuki's longing for Bikini parallels Kali's melancholy at the breakdown of her family. Kali and Jebuki are thus not merely relatives; they are two human beings sharing the fate of many in their country — the fate of living in exile.

It is not merely the story the film tells, however, that sets it apart from the other Marshallese films made to date; the way in which this story is told is equally innovative. Relying less on conventional dialogs and more on purely visual montages used in flashback sequences with little spoken word, this movie reaches a new level of visual storytelling previously unseen in Niedenthal's and Chutaro's work. The use of close-ups, handheld camera, perceptively composed shots of the environment, and archival footage give the film an authentic, almost documentary, feel. It is thanks to these devices that the viewers come to recognize that in spite of the film's fictional nature, the issues it explores are very real — indeed existential — for the Bikinian people.

The Sound of Crickets at Night is a film that has a lot to offer to film audiences both in the Marshall Islands and abroad. It articulates the pain experienced by generations of Marshallese in a way that allows the domestic viewers to see their own suffering recognized on the screen, while giving foreigners a glimpse into the emotional worlds of the Bikinians.

What both domestic and foreign audiences will come to recognize by the end of this film is that the history of Marshallese exile is not merely history; it is also the present.

Producers tell a Bikini story



Alison Kelen in his costume as Wodejabato.

From the award winning creators of the films *Na Noniep*, *Yokwe Bartowe* and *Lañinbwil's Gift* comes a film that explores the tribulations of a family of nuclear survivors from Bikini Atoll.

Ainikien Jidjid ilo Boñ (*The Sound of Crickets at Night*) is the story of a family displaced as a result of nuclear testing on Bikini Atoll and now living in exile on Ejit Island on Majuro.

Kali, a darling-though-curious 10-year-old Bikinian girl, watches in dismay as her mother and father argue bitterly, then finally separate and leave

the island. Kali is left alone to care for her elderly grandfather, Jebuki, who has been hiding a life-threatening illness. But Kali deteriorates, refusing to eat, work or play and Jebuki fears for his granddaughter's wellbeing should he die. In desperation, he summons the power of Wodejabato, an ancient deity from Bikini Atoll.

The film was made by Microwave Films of the Marshall Islands, which is a locally-based film production company.

Actors in this film are mostly from the Bikinian community that resides in exile on Ejit Island of Majuro Atoll.

Ainikien Jidjid ilo Boñ

From the creators of the popular Lijimu trilogy:

The Sound of Crickets at Night

The award-winning and much sought after film by international film festivals premieres on Friday, September 7, at the MIR's Melele Room.

Adults \$4, children 12 and under \$2

Sept 7: 8, 10pm. Sept 8: 2, 4, 6, 8, 10pm. Sept 9: 2, 4, 6, 8pm.
Sept 14: 6, 8, 10pm. Sept 15: 2, 4, 6, 8, 10pm. Sept 16: 2, 4, 6, 8pm.

DVD of the movie not available until March, 2013