

BREAKING THE NEWS

PRESS KIT

**Produced and Directed by
Nicholas Hansen**

In association with Screen Australia, Mutiny Media and Film Art Media

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Film Website: www.breakingthenews.com.au

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TECHNICAL INFORMATION

Title: BREAKING THE NEWS

Countries of Production: Australia, East Timor

Length: 53.02 Minutes

Gauge: 1.78 (16:9)

Filmed on Format: DV CAM/HD

Screening format: Digi-Beta (PAL) / HD (PAL)

Official Language: English

Other Languages: Tetum, Bahasa Indonesia, Portuguese

Date of Completion: 21 March 2011

BRIEF SYNOPSIS

Breaking the News gets behind the four years of upheaval following the 2006 crisis in East Timor, to reveal the high cost for truth-seeking journalists at the centre of their country's turmoil.

SHORT SYNOPSIS

Eleven years since the East Timorese successfully voted for independence from Indonesia, *Breaking the News* gets behind the scenes of news and current affairs reportage to challenge those who think a free press automatically comes with independence. What happens to the local journalists when the foreign reporters return safely home after covering each crisis, their stories in the can? Jose Belo and Rosa Garcia are two local journalists enmeshed in the political turmoil of their country, who regularly put themselves and their families at risk by reporting ongoing corruption and injustice.

SYNOPSIS

On 11 February 2008 East Timor's President Horta was gunned down and Prime Minister Gusmao's convoy attacked in a double assassination attempt and suspected coup. The attackers a rebel group, were led by Alfredo Reinado who was killed in the assault. *Breaking the News* includes an exclusive interview with the President's guard who claims he killed the President's attackers.

In 2010, two years after the President's near-fatal shooting and a lengthy trial, just one thing is still missing: the truth. The trial overturned the official version of events and then five months later the President pardons his jailed attackers.

These conflicting narratives are just some of the epic challenges facing local journalists in East Timor. Filmed over four years in Australia's most misunderstood neighbour East Timor, *Breaking the News* explores the high cost of being a truth-seeking journalist in an emerging nation.

Twelve years after the East Timorese successfully vote for independence from Indonesia, Prime Minister Xanana Gusmao warns journalists that they face possible jail in the event their reporting triggers civil unrest. Nevertheless, local journalists Jose and Rosa won't shy away from revealing the hard facts, which in East Timor requires a faith that, in return, the truth protects them. *Breaking the News* gets behind the scenes of news and current affairs reportage to challenge those who think a free press automatically comes with independence.

Local journalists intermittently work for foreign media uncovering tough stories in an unstable environment. While supplementing limited incomes, they also juggle family, personal and political loyalties. What happens to the local journalists when foreign reporters return safely home after

covering each crisis, their stories in the can? Jose Belo and Rosa Garcia are two local journalists enmeshed in the political turmoil of their country. They regularly put themselves and their families at risk by reporting on corruption and injustice.

Rosa is a writer and reporter with the *Timor Post*, a daily newspaper, while Jose is a cameraman and director of *Tempo Semanal*, a weekly newspaper he founded in late 2006. *Breaking the News* has unprecedented access to these journalists and footage of all the crucial developments in East Timor's fragile recent history. We navigate through the 2006 ethnic violence, the international intervention and finally the controversial court findings of the shooting of President Jose Ramos Horta.

One decade after independence the precarious circumstances of both journalists reflect the state of one of the world's youngest democracies. The journalists are painfully aware that the stories they work on will have real consequences both locally and internationally. Professional colleagues and rivals, Jose and Rosa were both activists supporting their fellow East Timorese during the Indonesian occupation. They have witnessed first hand their country's struggles and fled only when their lives were at risk. They are frequently reminded their country is an island shared with Indonesia, whose retreating generals have vowed one day to return.

Breaking the News follows Jose's journey from resistance fighter during the Indonesian occupation when he was translator and cameraman filming combat with the guerrillas to the director of the most successful newspaper in East Timor. Jose is respected and could have a comfortable political career but feels a duty to remain a journalist. He believes in getting close to the trouble to report the truth, but on numerous occasions is tested by the repercussions of his stories. In 2008, after his newspaper turns whistleblower and publishes a series of investigative articles which implicate the Minister for Justice in corruption, the minister brings criminal defamation charges against Jose to silence the newspaper. Concerned his source material will be destroyed Jose protects it by publishing it to Wikileaks.

During the 2006 crisis Rosa had just given birth to her second child. When her newspaper was forced to close after two of her colleagues were badly beaten, Rosa goes to work for an ABC-TV Four Corners crew. Their controversial story 'Stoking the Fires' helped bring down Mari Alkatiri as leader of the East Timorese government. In 2008, two months after President Horta's shooting, a state of emergency is still in place and Rosa is assigned to report from the President's office. She covers his emotional homecoming.

We are there in 2010 as the verdicts into the attempted assassination of President Horta and Prime Minister Gusmao on 11 February 2008 are handed down. The findings overturn the official stories of attempted coup and assassination and threaten the reputations of the East Timorese leadership. The first hand testimony of the President's guard is proven false and the Horta's own accusations are discounted by the court.

In the aftermath local journalists are stunned, Rosa Garcia is surrounded by journalists scrambling for her interpretation of the outcome and later expresses her utter disbelief. A frustrated Jose Belo says that at thirty-eight, he is still trying to understand many things about his country.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Breaking the News is a documentary about journalism in an age of spin and spectacle.

The documentary, filmed over the four years from May 2006 reveals the story of East Timorese journalists at the centre of their country's turmoil and the high cost of bearing witness to the struggles.

Breaking the News brings into sharp focus the conflicting demands of democracy, ethical reporting and the production of news media. The film highlights the difference between the news we witness in our lounge rooms every night and the plight of struggling journalists in the young nations of our region.

Filmed in newspaper offices, in homes and on the street, our observational journey gives some sense of the life for journalists in a developing country. They are often desperately poor and lack even the most basic electronic resources. These journalists feel their responsibilities as actors in a political drama. They are vulnerable to terror and their stories have consequences, for which they must take responsibility.

This project is distinctive for the way in which it forensically addresses the impact and part played by media in the political conflicts occurring in East Timor. This documentary drills down into the worldly issues faced by journalists, while also stepping back to observe the issues affecting their professional and personal lives. We witness the conditions for local journalists and their families struggling to work and survive in a conflict environment.

At the heart of this documentary is a fascinating ambiguity. As we watch the watchers and the news is deconstructed, we are also attracted by the spectacle, complicit in its production; we all want 'a good story'. This film engages an audience in a story of everyday courage.

So much of the 'news view' of nations in our region focuses on a troubled elite: a familiar narrative in the age of celebrity media. *Breaking the News* reminds us to look for what is real, especially in times of conflict, when truth is the first casualty. In the 2006 crisis, there are stark examples where foreign media used unreliable witnesses in their news reports. By contrast, *Breaking the News* goes inside the world of local journalists to show us the ways they report in their country. To develop a critical media these young journalists must somehow become impartial and prepared to

engage the countries resistance heroes in a debate about East Timor's future.

We expose both the challenges facing foreign journalists in producing the news spectacle and the situation for local journalists under political pressure. This arc travels across scenes of violence and disruption to what the news should be: insight, reflection and reconstruction.

Above all, I am moved and inspired by the colleagues I meet in East Timor. They fight for the most basic of civic rights, with limited resources while literally struggling to keep a roof over their heads and feed their children.

CREDITS

PRESENTATION CREDITS

SCREEN AUSTRALIA

and MUTINY MEDIA

in association with FILM ART MEDIA

a film by NICHOLAS HANSEN

END CREDITS

Writer/Director
Nicholas Hansen

Producer
Nicholas Hansen

Executive Producers
Daryl Dellora
Sue Maslin

Script Editors
Annette Blonski
David Tiley

Camera
Nicholas Hansen

Translation
Roberto de Sousa

Translators – East Timor
Merli Alves
Nelson da Cruz

Production Accounting
Jannine Barnes

Transcriptions
SmartDocs

Editors
Nick Calpakdjian
Nicholas Hansen

Photography
Jesse Wright
John Martinkus

Production Stills
Roberto Cuadros
Nicholas Hansen
David Dare Parker
Stephen Tickner
Nick Calpakdjian

Archival Footage
Nine Network Australia
SBS
Stormland Productions
Mark Davis
Max Stahl

News Archive
Jakarta Globe
Fairfaxphotos
Tempo Semanal
Timor Post
Suara Timor Lorosae

News Archive
Jakarta Globe
The Age
Tempo Semanal
Timor Post
Suara Timor Lorosae
Sydney Morning Herald

Narrator
Simon King

Musical Sound Design
Stephen Adam

Guitar
Colin Paul Badger

Xylophone
Nicholas Hansen

Musical Tracks
'Bonita'
'Good Times'
Written by Colin Badger and Paulo Almeida
© Sol Nation 2009

Sol Nation
Paulo Almeida- Vocals
Deline Briscoe- Backing Vocals
Colin Badger- Lead Guitar
Gerald Frederic- Keyboards
Daniel Golding- Bass Guitar
Tim Stewart- Drums
Daniel Mrocki- Percussion
myspace.com/solnation

Sound Post Production
Mnemonic Audio
Clark Randerson

Post Production-Blue Post
Facility Manager - Peter Millington
Colourist - Peter Pilley

Newspaper Staff

Tempo Semanal
Jose Antonio Belo
Antonio da Costa
Aderito do Rosario
Filomenha da Cruz
Julia de Araujo

Timor Post
Rosa Garcia
Jose Maria Ximenes
Mariano da Costa
Mouzinho Lopes De Araujo
Suzana Cardoso
Santina da Costa Araujo

With Thanks

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Carmel McAloon, Cindy Clarkson, Claire Jager, Grace DeMaio,
James Hewitson, Jason South, Jen Hughes, John Hughes, John Lewis, Joel
Maria Pereira, Dr Jose Teixeira, John Hansen, Maureen Hansen, Ivor Thomson,
Helen Day, Karin Altman, Kym Smithies, Lindsay Murdoch, Lisa Speakman,
Ljiljana Puskar, Liz Burke, Marianne Kearney, Martine Perret, Matt Abud,
Michael Brindley, Nelio Isaac Sarmiento , Osorio Da Silva, Peta Mayer, David
Dare Parker, Paul Cleary, Peter George, Philippa Campey, Renato Brandao,
Robert Connolly, Rosario Da Graca Maia, Stephanie March, Stephen Wallace,
Stella Tan, Steve Warne, Stuart Mannion, Terrence Doran, Tito Belo, Tony Diaz

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Legals
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Marshalls & Dent Lawyers

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FILMOGRAPHY, PRODUCER & DIRECTOR

Nicholas Hansen

2011 Producer/Director/Writer

Breaking the News www.breakingthenews.com.au

53 Minutes

Executive Producers: Sue Maslin and Daryl Dellora

2006 Co Producer/Assistant Director/Camera

One Cup

28 Minutes

Location: East Timor

Director: Dominic Allen, Writer: Dylan Tromp

Network: ABC Australia Network

2005 Producer/Director/Writer/Camera/Editor

RASH www.rashfilm.com

73 Minutes

Network: ABC1, ABC2

Distributors: Madman Entertainment, Journeyman Pictures (UK)

2004 Producer/Director/Writer/Camera/Editor

EYE SAW

4 Minutes

DVD: Time To Go John

Distributor: Madman Entertainment

2004 Producer/Director/Writer/Camera/Editor

Urban Express

7 Minutes

2003 Producer/Director/Writer/Camera/Editor

squaring UP

5 Minutes

Screening: Screening Federation Square

AWARDS

2011

Breaking the News – IF Awards 2011 nomination:

National Film & Sound Archive Independent Spirit IF Award

2005

RASH - Best Australian Documentary

Film Critics Circle of Australia Awards (FCCA)

Runner up Favourite Documentary Audience Award - Melbourne International Film Festival 2005

2004

Urban Express - Best Documentary & Melbourne and Sydney audience awards MAFIA (Music and Film Independent Artists) Film

Festival 2004

Urban Express - Audience Award, Open Channel, Love Your Work

squaring UP ATOM Nominated for experimental documentary award

1994

Vena Cava - ATOM Awards Finalist – Student Category

BIOGRAPHIES

Producer/Director, Nicholas Hansen

Mutiny Media Pty Ltd produces and directs the successful outcomes of short and feature documentaries and online storytelling. Principal Nicholas Hansen has 15 years experience researching and making documentaries internationally including East Timor, Indonesia and Fiji. Nicholas co-produced and filmed **One Cup** (2006) a half hour documentary about the Fairtrade system and East Timorese coffee farmers. Nicholas's feature documentary film **Rash** (2005) won the Best Australian Documentary prize at the Film Critics Circle of Australia. RASH premiered at Melbourne International Film Festival, broadcast on ABC1 and ABC2 TV and has sold and toured internationally. Nicholas's short documentary **Urban Express** (2004) won best film MAFIA (Music and Film Independent Artists) Film Festival 2004. His short documentary **Squaring Up** (2003) was nominated for an ATOM experimental documentary award. **Breaking The News** (2011) is a documentary about local East Timorese journalists who a decade after independence still struggle to freely report the ongoing turmoil of their country.

Daryl Dellora, Executive Producer

Daryl Dellora has been making documentaries for many years. His most recent film **Michael Kirby: Don't Forget the Justice Bit** screened on ABC1 in June 2010 it was a finalist in the ATOM 2010 awards. Daryl has been a recipient of an AFC Documentary Fellowship, the Gold Plaque at The Chicago International TV Festival and an Australian Human Rights Award. In 2005 he was accepted to the prestigious Rockefeller Foundation study centre in Bellagio. Daryl co-produced the feature **Hunt Angels** (2006) and was an executive Producer of **Celebrity: Dominick Dunne** (2008). He has worked closely as writer/director with producer Sue Maslin through their company **Film Art Doco** on a raft of documentary films including **The Edge of The Possible**, **A Mirror to the People**, **Conspiracy**, **The Highest Court** and **Koories and Cops**. In 2006 Daryl wrote and directed the new media project www.williambligh.com.au which is currently available on ABC On-Line.

Sue Maslin, Executive Producer

Sue Maslin is an award winning screen producer and Adjunct Professor of the School of Media & Communication, RMIT University. She produces and distributes content across many platforms – cinema, television, web and mobile phone.

Credits include feature films **ROAD TO NHILL** (1995), **JAPANESE STORY** (2003), winner of 26 international awards including the AFI Award for Best Feature Film and **HUNT ANGELS** (2006), winner of the AFI Award for Best Documentary Film. Documentary credits include **THE EDGE OF THE POSSIBLE**, **THE HIGHEST COURT** and **CELEBRITY: DOMINICK DUNNE** which premiered at the Hamptons International Film Festival in the US in 2008. **MICHAEL KIRBY – Don't Forget The Justice Bit** (writer/director Daryl Dellora) was nominated for Best Documentary Biography in the 2010 ATOM Awards.

She has recently completed two transmedia projects which were launched at the 2011 Adelaide Film Festival - **RE-ENCHANTMENT**, with writer/director Sarah Gibson, an interactive documentary project about the hidden meanings of fairy tales; and the augmented reality work, **REKINDLING VENUS In Plain Sight** with screen artist Lynette Wallworth. Together with Daryl Dellora, she established **FILM ART MEDIA**, a rights management company and distributor of quality screen content.

CONTACT INFORMATION for Sales, Publicity and Production

PRODUCER & DIRECTOR

Nicholas Hansen

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MEDIA NOTES

IMAGES - High resolution production images are available on request.

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WEBSITE

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