

LAST PARADISE

An eco adventure story of innovation and inspiration



page 18: Icebreaker FPC

45 YEARS in the pipeline and four years to put together the story behind the making of NZ film, Last Paradise, is almost as impressive as the movie itself.

In the beautiful wilderness of New Zealand, when necessity was the mother of invention, a maverick bunch of kids had a dream that would change the world. In 45 years of stunning original footage, Last Paradise follows the adventures of early adrenaline seekers and joins them on the roads less travelled to discover the world's secret paradises.

Last Paradise is the untold story of extreme sports innovation from its naive beginnings to the cutting edge of what it is today. Between the lines is a shocking revelation of a wilderness lost, but through the same story a science to save it is discovered.

Clive Neeson, a New Zealand consultant physicist believed so much in the project that he took a second job and sold some of his assets to put up the \$500,000 it would take to get the film finished. Born in Eastern Africa to wildlife cinematographer parents, Neeson moved to New Zealand as a child. He began filming when he was

15 years old and by 17 knew he wanted to make a movie, and what that movie would ultimately look like. Fast forward 40 years and a chance meeting with a film restorer while working at Peter Jackson's Park Road Post Production Studios at the time of King Kong was the final impetus Neeson needed to finish "Last Paradise".

Voted the "worlds best ecoadventure film" at the 2010 X-Dance Festival and described by viewers as the best advertisement ever made for New Zealand, the Last Paradise chronicles the birth of adventure sports from the 60's onward. Featuring many of Neeson's childhood friends mixing good old NZ ingenuity, new technologies, adventurous minds and fearless lads, Last Paradise delivers a story of innovation, discovery and adventure that engages you from start to finish.

The story begins in a beautiful New Zealand, during the innocence of the 1960's, no barriers and few people. It is here that the characters discover the world's most extreme wilderness as the perfect environment to experiment with adrenaline.



Images: from the film 'Last Paradise'

It started with surfing, with these young friends travelling the world chasing bigger and better waves in places no one had ever surfed, and that led to the evolution of everything from snowboarding to bungy jumping. There were also more modest advances, like fashioning their own leg ropes and using a sink plunger to mount a mast and sail to his surfboard to make a wind surfer – which worked surprisingly well.

“All the people in this movie had pretty deprived backgrounds, they invented their own games and own toys and through a lifetime they turned



it into not only a mainstream interest but one of the biggest industries in New Zealand” comments Neeson.

Around 70 per cent of the footage was shot by Neeson, but he also knew other people who were documenting what was going on back then, and set about tracking down their film. “I did a deal with them to remaster all their footage, which was mostly rotting anyway in dark closets.”

“It was very expensive to film then. It was a huge incentive to make sure of every shot you took. It wasn’t always easy because it was a month or so before you got the film back and knew whether you even had the right or wrong settings on the camera. It cost me two hours of digging potatoes to pay for every minute of film. It wasn’t just building the camera, it was building all these automatic shut-off devices, so if you had a wipe-out, it’d immediately stop the camera from

running. Nowadays you wouldn’t worry. You’d just erase it and start again. It was about saving film and conserving film” explains Neeson.

The footage from the 60s and 70s is stunning, whether it’s surfing at Raglan or remote parts of Australia, to hang-gliding above the Tasman Glacier and the Southern Alps, which is taken from Michael Firth’s 1970s hit hang-gliding and ski adventure “Off the Edge,” which was expressly remastered for Last Paradise.

These characters embody the greater themes Neeson wants to

express: that their relationship with the wilderness is now reflected in their current attitudes to the environment. The warning is implicit: that if we continue in the downward spiral of isolating children from the wilderness, there will be a consequence in future attitudes to the environment.

While this untold story of extreme sports, and the action are riveting, Neeson says the main objective of the film is to celebrate New Zealand’s “extraordinary physical beauty”, its “scientific legacy”, and the country’s innovators.

“The purpose of the movie is to educate on science and innovation. To recruit the younger generation back into science and make it cool again, because it’s through science we will find painless solutions to the problems we face in the world.”



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