

Speech by Loo Shun Ming, Producer and Director on the occasion of Launch of Documentary Film on Gawai Antu by Yang Amat Berhormat Datuk Patinggi Tan Sri Premier of Sarawak on Tuesday, 10.30 am, 20th September 2022 at Borneo Cultures Museum, Kuching.

YANG AMAT BERHORMAT DATUK PATINGGI TAN SRI DR ABANG HAJI ABDUL RAHMAN ZOHARI BIN TUN DATUK HAJI OPENG, THE PREMIER OF SARAWAK

YANG AMAT BERBAHAGIA PUAN SRI DATUK AMAR HAJJAH JUMA'ANI TUN TUANKU HAJI BUJANG

YANG BERHORMAT DATUK AMAR DOUGLAS UGGAH EMBAS, DEPUTY PREMIER AND YANG BERBAHAGIA DATIN DOREEN MAYANG

YANG BERHORMAT TAN SRI DATUK AMAR AWANG ASFIA AWANG NASSAR
THE SARAWAK STATE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY (DUN) SPEAKER
AND

YANG BERBAHAGIA PUAN SRI DATIN AMAR FATIMAH MOHAMAD ISKANDAR

YANG BERBAHAGIA DATUK PATINGGI TAN SRI (DR) ALFRED JABU ANAK NUMPANG

YANG BERBAHAGIA TAN SRI DATO SRI EMPIANG ANAK ANTAK

YANG BERHORMAT DATUK SERI ABDUL KARIM RAHMAN HAMZAH
MINISTER OF TOURISM, CREATIVE INDUSTRY AND PERFORMING ARTS
AND YANG BERBAHAGIA DATIN SRI HAJJAH ZURAINI JABBAR.
YANG BERHORMAT MENTERI MENTERI
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RAKAN-RAKAN MEDIA, TUAN-TUAN DAN PUAN-PUAN SEKALIAN.

Good morning, everyone. Thank you for taking the time to be here today.

My team and I are truly honoured to be able to share this film with all of you.

Gawai Antu opens up the spirit world to the Ibans. And for us, the filmmaker, it opens up the world of imagination.

The story centered around the Jabu family organising Gawai Antu in the Gensurai longhouse in Betong, Sarawak. We were told that Gawai Antu might only be revealed to the Ibans once in a lifetime. Yet, as I spent more time with the Jabu family and the locals, it struck me that I was in the middle of a bigger story.

It took an immense amount of effort to work on this cultural documentary because of the magnitude of Gawai Antu. We spent 14 days shooting in Betong and Gensurai longhouse and another ten days filming some b-rolls. In post-production, we sifted through hundreds of hours of footage, hundreds of pages of transcriptions, and an abundance of information.

From shooting, scriptwriting, editing, and even music and color grading, my team and I felt like we were straddling two worlds - the spirit world and the human world.

- It is a story about the pride of the living Ibans, who are the guardians of their rich cultures and identity.
- A story about the mythical world in the jungles of Borneo.
- And ultimately, a story about respect and unity between the living and the dead.

Once, the Ibans were known as feared head-hunters. Today, in a way, they are still head-hunters, but they are headhunting the right people to continue their stories. My team members and I were happily being head-hunted by Datuk Patinggi Alfred Jabu and Tan Sri Empiang to work on this very meaningful project. They have given us tremendous support and creative freedom in everything we do — our greatest gratitude and appreciation to Datuk Patinggi Alfred Jabu and Tan Sri Empiang.

The credit list is far too long. But, there are a few notable mentions that I need to highlight. I'd like to express my gratitude to executive producer Barbara Dubah Jabu. The project would have been impossible without your hard work.

Special thanks to Temenggong Richard Mulok, former Temenggong Nunong, Mejar Riman PGB, and Mr. Bandang Numpang for advising the most complex ritual and cultural protocols, Ms. Susie Wong, who took up one of the most challenging roles in the film, all the characters in the film, Director of Photography Mr. Tang Keng Hong, scriptwriter Mr Allan Baddock, Mr. Martyn Gillman for audio post, Mr. Nick Atkinson for voiceover, and everyone who has involved directly or indirectly in the making of the documentary film – Gawai Antu.

Last but not least, to the Gensurai longhouse community, this film is specially dedicated to you.

The personal journey of mine has taught me many life lessons. If I may leave you with some thoughts:

Who are we without culture?

Who are we without stories?

Who are we without identity?

I hope you will enjoy this documentary – Gawai Antu. Thank you. Selamat menonton.