PRESS KIT FOR

First Footprints
20,000 YEAR OLD FOOTPRINT
WILLANDRA LAKES, NEW SOUTH WALES
Loglines

First Footprints
For the first time on television over 50,000 years of Australia’s ancient past is brought to life through the world’s oldest oral stories, new archaeological discoveries, stunning art, cinematic CGI and never before seen archival film.

Episode 1: Super Nomads
Over 50,000 years ago people made the first open sea voyage in human history to discover Australia: an island continent full of deadly megafauna and strange plants that had been evolving in isolation for 65 million years.

Episode 2: The Great Drought
When the last ice age hit Australia 30,000 years ago, sea levels dropped 130 meters below today’s level. Deserts devoured 90% of the continent. The greatest drought in human history lasted 10,000 years, yet people thrived.

Episode 3: The Great Flood
From 18,000 years ago melting polar ice caps began drowning 25% of Greater Australia. New Guinea and Tasmania became islands. This was a time of war, ingenious inventions, spectacular art and new nations.

Episode 4: The Biggest Estate
When much of the world embraced agriculture the First Australians rejected it. They chose instead ingenious land management systems like fire stick farming to transform the harshest habitable continent into a land of bounty.
First Footprints is the untold story of humankind’s original pioneers. New DNA evidence shows Aboriginal Australians were the first modern people out of Africa. To get to Australia from the shores of Asia they made the first open ocean crossing in history. Here they conducted the world’s earliest burials with grave goods, etched the earliest depiction of the human face, engraved the world’s first maps, made the earliest paintings of ceremony and invented unique technologies such as the returning boomerang.

Australia is home to the oldest living cultures in the world. Over fifty thousand years ago, well before modern people reached America or dominated Europe, people journeyed to the planet’s harshest habitable continent and thrived. That’s a continuous culture stretching back ten times the antiquity of ancient Egypt.

Across Australia there are millions of prehistoric paintings, engravings and archaeological sites. The continent is one giant canvass telling an epic story of endurance in the face of terrifying megafauna, catastrophic droughts and rising sea levels.

As the series travels through time we learn of the adaptations that enabled survival of the last ice age, which started 30,000 years ago. The knowledge of water sources, the spiritual and cultural knowledge enshrined in The Law meant people were able to live through the ice age even in the driest and harshest environments.

As sea levels rose from 15,000 years ago a quarter of the continent was flooded but the weather improved. A regular monsoon across the north led to cultural explosions and astounding art. The flooding of coastal plains created conflict over land and even pitched battles. Tasmania and New Guinea were separated from the mainland and diverse cultures developed all around the coast.

In the centuries leading up to European contact over 200 nations and cultures covered the continent. All were managing the land to sustainably provide for their future. It was the biggest estate on earth.

At all of the key sites a strong bond has developed between Aboriginal Elders and archaeologists who share knowledge about the ancient past. For the first time on television the world’s oldest oral stories, new archaeological discoveries, stunning rock art, a wealth of never seen before archival footage and cinematic CGI reveal the epic migrations, struggles to survive and technological breakthroughs made between 50,000 years ago and the arrival of Europeans in 1788.
NED GRANT, PITJANTJATJARA ELDER
KOONALDA CAVE, SOUTH AUSTRALIA
Episode Synopses

1. Super Nomads
Discovery and Dispersal 50,000 - 30,000 years ago

In the earliest long distance migration of modern humans from Africa, the First Australians arrived here over 50,000 years ago. To get here they had to make the first open sea crossing in human history. They found Greater Australia, with New Guinea joined to the mainland - a virgin continent full of weird and deadly megafauna, deserts and glaciers. The near intact skeleton of Mungo Man from 42,000 years ago, the oldest homo sapien found outside Africa, reveals tantalizing details about early life and spiritual belief systems.

The First Australians were great stonemasons, hollowing out caves into important spiritual monuments and inventing ground edged axes. They engraved the world’s earliest maps and made the first image of the human face in the world. Trade networks soon criss-crossed the land and innovations in art and technology spread rapidly. An art style known as the Archaic Face is found over thousands of kilometres, right across the deserts of West and Central Australia. Against the odds the First Australians occupied every available niche and thrived.

As evidenced through oral histories and engravings across the continent, this is the time when creation stories and Songlines describing land forms, boundaries and kinship systems came into being.

MUNGO MAN, LAKE MUNGO, NEW SOUTH WALES PHOTO: JIM BOWLER
INSET: GABARNMUNG, JAWOYN COUNTRY, NORTHERN TERRITORY
2. The Great Drought
The Last Ice Age 30,000 – 15,000 years ago

For thousands of years people lived with Australia’s strange and ferocious megafauna like the six metre giant lizard megalania and the marsupial lion. But all these beasts went extinct during the last ice age. In Australia sea levels dropped to 130m below today’s level and deserts spread from 60% to 90% of the continent. Temperatures were 6 degrees colder, it was dry and windy and lasted over 10,000 years. It was the biggest drought ever experienced by people.

As conditions worsened, people adapted to the new environments in innovative ways. In many parts they became desert people with new technologies like the grindstone. At the Willandra Lakes footprints from 20,000 years ago show people thriving even at the height of the ice age. People recorded every water source and passed the information on through Songlines – the oral transmission of important cultural and spiritual information. This information, codified into The Law, was the blueprint for survival through this punishing drought, even in places we can’t live in today. 20,000 years ago people crossed the treeless plain of the Nullarbor to visit Koonalda Cave and mark their presence at the height of the ice age.
3. The Great Flood
Global Warming Floods the Continent
18,000 – 5,000 years ago

From eighteen thousand years ago, melting polar ice caps began drowning 25% of Greater Australia.

On the Nullarbor up to 100 kilometres of coast was swallowed every generation. The Wadi Nyi Nyi Dreaming Story of the Pitjantjatjara tells of this great flood and how the Ancestral Beings stopped it, possibly the oldest religious story in the world. Similar Dreaming stories are found all around Australia. Across the north of Australia the warming weather brings a regular monsoon. In the Kimberley and Arnhem Land there were cultural explosions in art and technology.

The astounding Gwion figures in the Kimberley and the Dynamic art of Arnhem Land gives us a detailed insight into a rich life 12,000 years ago.

Boomerangs were invented, then discarded across the north, as trees replaced grassland. As rising seas flooded coastal plains, conflict and even pitched battles between groups of warriors appear in the art. The earliest battle scenes in the world are in Arnhem Land. Conflict over land appears to have led to the death of Narrabeen Man, the earliest evidence of ritual killing in Australia. His skeleton was found under a bus stop on Sydney’s northern beaches. The rising seas filled a river valley to create Sydney harbour, a rich environment where permanent occupation developed. New Guinea and Tasmania were permanently cut off. The isolation of the Tasmanians had profound consequences on diet, language and technology.
4. The Biggest Estate
Sustainably Transforming an Entire Continent
9,000 years ago – 1788

Over 9,000 years ago agriculture started in different parts of the planet: The Middle East, China and Greater Australia in the Highlands of New Guinea, still then attached to the mainland. As seas rose agriculture spread to the Torres Strait Islands but on mainland Australia people rejected it. They chose instead to carefully manipulate the available natural plants and animals to greatly increase their food resources. In Queensland’s rainforest people learned how to remove the poison from some of the forests most abundant toxic nuts. In Victoria a huge communal aquaculture system was engineered. Thousands of people lived in stone houses in settled villages.

Fire stick farming was used all around Australia to create habitats that encouraged particular plants and animals. Eucalypt forest everywhere was burned to create deliberate grass lanes that were used to lure and trap kangaroos.

Here, people created something unique in human history: they transformed an entire continent into the biggest estate on earth - fully sustainable into the future until outsiders arrived. First Maccassan traders from Indonesia, then the Dutch, followed by the English who came to stay in 1788.
The making of First Footprints

Martin Butler

In 2008 Bentley and I were filming in the middle of Western Desert with a large gathering of Martu, archaeologists and anthropologists. Around the campfire at night we asked lots of questions about the ancient past. How long had people been here? What was Australia like when they first arrived? How did they get here? How did they survive the ice age?

The answers astounded us – the long and fabulous story of the Aboriginal presence on this land – the achievements, the struggles and the triumphs was a story that needed to be told.

But first we had another documentary to make and spent the next 2 years making Contact.

When we finished we spent a year reading, researching, and doing pilot shoots. With enthusiastic support from Traditional Owners and archaeologists around the country, Alan Ersen at the ABC, Hélène Coldefy at ARTE and Julia Overton at Screen Australia we managed to raise the budget for a three part series to be titled First Footprints.

By late May 2011 we had scheduled the shoot of a lifetime: We were invited to 15 locations by the Traditional Owners and archaeologists all around the country. These were the sites of the best rock art, with the best experts in some of the most beautiful and exotic locations to be found.

First stop was Dampier on the Pilbara coast. We had come to film the fantastic engravings all over Murujuga (the Burrup peninsula), only accessible by boat or chopper. This was mining boom central, the pokiest motel room was $250 a night, and the only food in town was from the bar of the Mermaid Inn. It was always packed with miners and ‘skimpy’ (barmaids in underwear). Modern Australia meets it’s ancient past. A short chopper ride away is the glory of Murujuga where the largest gas refinery in the southern hemisphere threatens to engulf prehistoric masterpieces.

Photographer Murray Fredericks came with us and produced some breathtaking timelapses of the engravings. He spent several days perfecting the shot of the refinery and the Climbing Men panel. One of the great juxtapositions of Australia – the power of the modern economy and the value of heritage.
Our second trip was a fantastic tour of the rock art of Arnhem Land with Sally K May, Wilfred Narrawidj and Paul Tacon. The warmth of the relationship between Sally and Wilfred, the exchange of knowledge and Wilfred’s powerful storytelling were precisely what we had hoped for. The intrepid Paul Tacon clambered over the escarpment at Kakadu to show us the exquisite art of the Dynamic period.

Field trips across the north and in the western deserts are all organised in the winter months, so between June and September we had a packed schedule. Our next trip took us on a 6,000 km road trip in 10 days, from Lake Mungo in New South Wales right across to the Western Australia border.

We were to meet up with the Elders from Tjuntjuntjura in the Great Victorian desert that straddles WA/SA border. After collecting archaeologist Scott Cane on the way we found ourselves driving deeper and deeper into the desert in a once in a hundred year downpour that turned the desert into a sea of wildflowers but made the dirt tracks extremely treacherous. We had hired a huge new Korean four wheel drive which had a computer display of the traction on all four wheels. For hours the computer was flashing urgent warnings as most of the time at least one and often all 4 wheels lost traction.

It wasn’t particularly dangerous as there was nothing around, only low shrubs on either side. At one point around midnight I lost control and did a 180 degree turn. No harm done, except to my bush driving reputation.

The Pitjantjatjara had brought a rifle and the entire desert was filled with rabbits. In no time every vehicle had a brace of rabbit carcasses in the back.

The scariest moment of the shoot came in Tasmania. We had finished an extremely successful five day shoot with the delightful Colin Hughes and Richard Cosgrove, and on the last night Colin asked to borrow the hire car to meet up with some mates.

The next morning we were due to fly out from Flinders Island to Launceston for connecting flights home. 9, 10, 11 o’clock came and no sign of Colin, or the car. We’d already missed our scheduled flight from Flinders, but managed to book a small charter plane that should just make the connecting flight. Eventually a sheepish Colin turned up (heavy night, overslept!) and we pile into a tiny six seater, with another passenger. He needs to be dropped off on a smaller island on the way back to the mainland.

As we approach for landing, there’s a strong side wind and the pilot struggles to keep the plane steady. About 15 metres from the ground a huge gust knocks the plane sideways and tips the wing up at least 45 degrees. Bad moment. He guns the engines and we abort the landing, just. The young pilot looked a bit worried to me, but he coolly turned and landed on the grass emergency runway. I never did like small planes.

In July we met up with the Jaywon and a major archaeological team at spectacular Gabarnmung on the Arnhem Land plateau. This is remote country, the only way in is by chopper, an hours flight from Katherine.

It was sheer joy to film at Gabarnmung. Margaret was extremely knowledgeable, generous and emotional. The relationship with the archaeologists was warm and collaborative, and the cave itself is exquisitely beautiful. Murray shot a series of superb timelapses at this very special place, capturing a timeless monument to our ancient past.

By October we had to stop our shoot because Bentley’s second son was due.

We started scripting and by January, editing began in earnest.

We spent the year 2012 (and more) editing First Footprints. Tania Nehme edited 3 episodes and Pete O’Donoghue edited episode 2.

Tania had cut Contact and she is a brilliant editor. Her ability to visualise the right mood for the sequence and in particular her use of archive to invite the viewer to imagine the ancient past are crucial elements in the storytelling. She deserves a special mention in the making of First Footprints.
While the edit progressed we continued filming.

On our trip to PNG we met up with the irrepressible Herman Mandui. A larger than life character with his bright red mouth from constantly chewing beetle nut, he led us through the crowded streets of Mt Hagen to find rural peace at Kuk. Even today not much has changed in the 9,000 years since agriculture began here.

As we walked into the municipal offices for Mabuiag in the Torres Strait searching for our local contact Cygnet Repu, we were confronted by a most unusual mural. A huge warrior dragged a vine behind him that had 6 human heads threaded through it. Local legend has it that some centuries back a huge warrior did make a name for himself by collecting human heads. What surprised us was the celebration of such a gruesome past. When we asked Cygnet about it he didn’t back away – nonchalantly explaining how the heads were separated from the bodies.

On trips to Gunditjmara country in SW Victoria, to Malanda in north Queensland and to the Bowen Basin in Queensland we encountered some wonderful characters who had worked together for years and established a great rapport.

In Sydney we only had one weekend to shoot before Jo McDonald went overseas. It just happened to be one of those Sydney weekends where it rains all the time.

After gamely dodging in and out of caves all day Gadigal Elder Allen Madden and Jo McDonald were soaked. But we had one more site that we needed to film at (the engraving of the Endeavour) and only a couple of hours of daylight left. And it was still raining incessantly. When we tentatively suggested that maybe we could film anyway they were up for it and delivered an account of Cook’s 1770 visit in fully engaging detail with great turn of phrase in the darkening rain storm in Kuringai National Park. It was their passion for the story that shone through.

By the middle of 2012 we successfully lobbied the ABC and other investors that First Footprints should run over four episodes – we had such a wealth of material and the structure is much better over four episodes.

The making of First Footprints would not have been possible without the contribution of time and knowledge from the communities and archaeologists we worked with. They encouraged us, pointed us in the right direction, introduced us to colleagues and friends and most of all shared their stories with us. We are extremely grateful.

This has been a long, ambitious and hugely enjoyable project to make. I’d like to thank my partner Bentley Dean for his audacious approach to filmmaking and being such a stimulating travelling companion. We had a ball making this film.
Cygnet Repu, Prof. Ian McNiven and Bentley Dean
Mask Cave, Torres Strait, Queensland
Director’s statement

Bentley Dean
“There’s a lot of spiritual issues on this land and they are alive.”
- Wilfred Hicks, Wong-Goo-Tt-Oo Elder

Like many Australians I grew up knowing little about the tens of thousands of years of history of this continent.

While working as a production assistant at Film Australia in 1992, ethnographic film maker Ian Dunlop asked me to make an inventory of all the Commonwealth Film Unit’s anthropological films before being sent to the National Film and Sound Archive. What I glimpsed in those archives was another Australia – the one before Europeans arrived.

Fifteen years later, having spent much of my time making films in what I thought were more interesting countries, a good friend invited me on a helicopter heading into the Wollemi wilderness just west of Sydney. Alongside Elders and other archaeologists, Professor Paul Tacon was rediscovering rock art everywhere. Once thought too rugged for people to live, the team was finding the Wollemi to be a cultural highway with engraving designs found as far away as Central Australia. Here was evidence that people had been communicating over thousands of years over vast distances – right up to recent times. One evening around the campfire Wiradjuri archaeologist Wayne Brennan explained to us the meaning of an ancient idea - *Birrung Burrung* – literally the moment when ripples in a pond cease, allowing one to see deep into it. Clearly my trip was no joy ride. I was invited because I was a filmmaker – who now felt an obligation to use his skills to help make something that looked deep into the past. But I couldn’t figure out how. What do you see on screen? From which perspective?
When Martin Butler asked if I would make *Contact* with him I leapt at the opportunity. Spending night after night deep in the Western Desert with people who had grown up living just as their ancestors had done for thousands of years made this country’s deep history seem tangible and above all human - full of emotion, memory and profound sense of place. Martin and I realized that any story about the past had to be about people and their ties to country. And like *Contact*, told from an Indigenous perspective.

But there was another layer to the story - a scientific one. We found that all around the country Traditional Owners had been collaborating with archaeologists for decades to try to answer questions like: How long had people been here? How did they get here? What was Australia like when they first arrived? How did they survive the ice age and massive global warming? The answers were incredible.

Joining together the world’s oldest oral histories with the latest science - often in the field as discoveries were being made - would become a key component of our narrative style.

Because film and photography were invented while many Aboriginal People were still living traditionally, Australia has the richest archive of images of pre-colonial life in the world. Most of which has never been seen on television. With the permission of the communities in the films we incorporated the archive not just to reflect oral histories and archaeological evidence, but to illustrate the poetry of life itself. Seeing such detailed skill, comfort, pride and play over the course of four hours of television, one gets a hint of the countless unique civilizations that flourished here over tens of thousands of years.

Another strong element in bringing to life stories from the ancient past were the Dreaming stories Elders told us, stories that had been passed down through hundreds of generations. On the cliffs of the Nullarbor, Pjtjantjara Elders told us about the Wadi Nyi Nyi, a Dreaming Story which includes a description of the rising sea levels that followed the end of the last ice age. The water stopped at the cliffs 6,700 years ago, so the Wadi Nyi Nyi has to be at least that old. Similar stories of a great flood occur right around the country. This continuity of knowledge exists nowhere else in the world. Some stories are secret and sacred, but wherever we went, open knowledge was always shared with generosity and patience.

To make sure we got stories right we sent roughcuts of the series to all the communities we filmed with. They made corrections when we were wrong or too revealing, and told us when we were right. They told us the films we were making filled them with pride. It’s difficult to describe what this means to us. The people we met while making *First Footprints* have left us with a profound sense of respect for this land and those who have understood it for an unimaginably long period of time.

I still feel like I’m looking at ripples, but I now know the pond is deep indeed.
WatChing arriVal of stranGers
ernabella, south australia
Characters

Warren Clark, Roy Kennedy, Noel Johnson and Patrick Lawson, Elders and Rangers from the Willandra Lakes World Heritage Area
All are active in preserving the site of Mungo Man who at 42,000 years is the oldest modern human found outside Africa. They are working on a suitable resting place for the remains discovered at Lake Mungo.

Prof. Jim Bowler, Geologist
Discovered Mungo Lady and Mungo Man. Until then scientists had thought people had been here for a mere 12,000 years.

Dr Michael Westaway, Biological Anthropologist
We found Michael tirelessly digging at the bottom of a pit in the red dirt in tropical Queensland as well as gently revealing the secrets of the oldest known Australian.

Dr Sally K. May, Archaeologist
Has worked for many years with the Gunbalanya and Kakadu communities. With Traditional Owners she has ambitious plans to expand the surveying for rock art in Kakadu.

Margaret Katherine, Jawoyn Elder
Has an electric personality and deep knowledge of culture. A generous visionary for her people and a brilliant storyteller around the campfire.

Ben Gunn, Rock Art Specialist
First identified the attributes of Genyornis in the painting at Gabarnmung. One of a handful of paintings of Australia’s megafauna.

Dr Bruno David, Archaeologist
from Monash University who’s team found a ground edged axe from 35,000 years ago and the oldest dated painting in Australia.
Prof. Jean-Jaques Delannoy, Geomorphologist from the University of Savoie, France. It was his work that revealed the shelter at Gabarnmung was man made.

Prof. Jean-Michel Geneste, Archaeologist and Director of Centre National de Préhistoire, France, responsible for both the Lascaux and Chauvais cave sites. Loves working in Australia because “Here the sites are really living. That’s the difference.”

Dr Ken Mulvaney, Chief Archaeologist for Rio Tinto has been an enthusiastic advocate for the preservation of the engravings at Murujuga. He has devoted much of his career to working with Traditional Owners to record and understand them.

Wilfred Hicks, Wong-Goo-Too Elder has worked with Ken for many years to record and protect the art for future generations.

Prof. Peter Veth, Archaeologist from the University of Western Australia. It was Peter’s knowledge and enthusiasm about this subject that helped inspire us to make First Footprints. He told us what to read, gave us contacts and throughout the scripting was an invaluable consultant.

Timmy Patterson, Geoffery Stewart, Jimmy Morgan and Ben Brown The Martu men we met in the Western Desert. Recording their discussion about Songlines around the campfire as the desert night descended was a special moment. The sound and rhythm of the language carried a serenity and a connection that was poignant. Particularly as this would be Jimmy’s last trip to his country – he passed away shortly after filming.

Colin Groves, Aboriginal Heritage Officer for the Tasmanian Aboriginal Land and Sea Council A superb guide with an infectious passion for his work.

Dr. Richard Cosgrove, Archaeologist at La Trobe University who has worked in Tasmania, tropical Queensland and now France.
Ronald Lami Lami  
Namunidjbuk Elder has been collaborating for years with  
Professor Paul Tacon  
from Griffith University, to reveal the splendour of the rock art on Ronald’s country. Paul holds the first chair in Rock Art in the country and has set up campaigns to preserve it.

Rebecca Budby and Gary Hardiman, Barada Barna researchers and Dr Scott Hocknull, Paleontologist from Queensland Museum were engaged in a huge dig in the middle of the Bowen Basin in Queensland searching for megafauna and human remains. Scott is young, dynamic, hard working and may have history changing dates when the final results come in.

Daryl Pappin, Mutthi Mutthi and Dr Nikki Stern, archaeologist at La Trobe University is another long term collaboration. Daryl is studying archaeology. Nikki and he have ambitious plans to survey the entire system at Lake Mungo.

Kumbaya Girgiba and Thelma Judson are two Martu women who have taken us out to their desert country a few times. It’s great to see their total comfort in this harsh environment and their infectious and constant laughter.

Pitjantjatjara Elders Roy Underwood, Ned Grant, Fred Grant and Lennard Walker took us to the Nullarbor and to Koonalada Cave. They speak little English and have continued much of their traditional lifestyle.

Archaeologist Dr Scott Cane and initiated Pitjantjatjara man Ian Baird have established a deep respect and rapport with the men over many years of collaboration. Scott is writing a companion book for First Footprints.

Sylvester Mangolamara, Albert Peurmora and Albert Bundamurra, Wunambal Gaaumbera Traditional Owners are immensely proud of their Gwion art heritage and have been working with a major archaeological team, including Dr June Ross and Prof Mike Morwood to interpret and firm up the dates for the art.
Dr Philip Jones from the South Australia Museum knows more about the spread of boomerangs than anyone, and his museum has the best collection.

Gadigal Elder Allen Madden has a wealth of information about life in the ancient past in the Sydney basin. He has worked with archaeologist and Rock Art Specialist Dr Jo McDonald for many years.

Ru Kundil is a Kawelka Elder from the Highlands of Papua New Guinea. Evidence of agriculture from over 9,000 years ago has been found on his land and he is immensely proud. As a student Herman Mandui worked on the excavations. He is now the Government’s chief Archaeologist and the Director of the National Museum and Art Gallery of Papua New Guinea.

Cygnet Repu is Quarantine Officer on Maubiag a fine singer, and very knowledgable about Torres Strait Islander history. With Professor Ian McNiven from Monash University the coming of agriculture to these islands has been dated.

Professor Bill Gammage, historian and author of “The Biggest Estate – How Aboriginal people made Australia” won the Prime Minister’s Literary Award for Australian History.

Mamu Ngadjon-Jii Elder Ernie Raymond is a Park Ranger in Malanda Falls, proudly revealing his rainforest to visitors.

Gunditjmara Elder Ken Saunders was generous with his knowledge of the ancient past. The Gunditjmara community are very active in preserving and sharing their heritage.

Shaun Namarnyilk, Marius Namarnjilk, Ashley Nayilibidj and Nipper Gumurdul, are Fire Rangers at Gunbalanya in Arnhem Land. They love their work.

Wik Elder Silas Wollombi is over 80 but that didn’t stop him passionately retelling the story of the Dutch visit to his country in 1606.
The Crew

Martin Butler - Director/Producer/Sound

Martin Butler studied politics and economics at Oxford University and then went to work for the manager of The Who. In 1981 he migrated to Australia and spent the next 25 years as a long form current affairs television producer. He spent 6 years at Four Corners as both field producer and Associate Producer, pushing the boundaries of TV current affairs with ‘dinner party’ debates, producing an independence activist from New Caledonia to make his personal and very powerful story, and recognizing the power of pictures to influence debate. He produced Frozen Asset in 1989, the Tony Jones film that helped save Antarctica from mining.

When Foreign Correspondent started with it’s brief to tell international stories through people and their lives Martin jumped on board. The blend of serious journalism and sequence driven filmmaking mirrored his work aspirations. Now with two children he couldn’t travel and for 10 years served as Supervising and Associate Producer, pulling other people’s stories together from some of the most exotic locations in the world.

Then Dateline at SBS offered Martin a job producing a new crop of video journalists, most of whom seemed to have come from the first series of Race Around the World. It was a stimulating time – the video journalists were young, brash and, using new technology, wanted to push the boundaries of what stories could be reported. We reported from inside the detention centre on Nauru, on war crimes in Rwanda and Iraq, atrocities in Abu Ghraib and revealed the torture and rendition of Mamdouh Habib.

The experience of producing well over 100 hours of quality television in his time at the ABC and SBS has given Martin a finely tuned sense of conveying information in a clear and engaging way.

In 2007 Martin left the public broadcasters and entered the perilous world of independent documentary. Luckily he teamed up with former Dateline colleague Bentley Dean and went on to make Contact (2009) - a film about the last first-contact in the Western Desert of Australia - and First Footprints (2013).

He plans to continue working with Bentley for as long as he can put up with it.
Awards

**Frozen Asset**
Gold medal best documentary
NEW YORK FILM AND TELEVISION AWARDS

**Nauru Detention Centre**
UN MEDIA PEACE PRIZE,
GEORGE MUNSTER AWARD FOR INDEPENDENT JOURNALISM

**The Trials of Mamdouh Habib**
UN MEDIA PEACE PRIZE,
GEORGE MUNSTER AWARD FOR INDEPENDENT JOURNALISM

**Abu Ghraib**
WALKLEY AWARD

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**Contact**
Co-winner, Best Documentary,
SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL 2009
Best sound in documentary,
AUSTRALIAN SCREEN SOUND
Best Feature Documentary,
SCREEN CRITICS OF AUSTRALIA
PRIME MINISTER’S HISTORY PRIZE

**Frozen Asset**
Gold medal best documentary
NEW YORK FILM AND TELEVISION AWARDS

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UN MEDIA PEACE PRIZE,
GEORGE MUNSTER AWARD FOR INDEPENDENT JOURNALISM

**Abu Ghraib**
WALKLEY AWARD
Bentley Dean - Director/Producer/Cinematographer

Bentley studied Philosophy and Politics at Sydney University and Film and Television at the Victorian College of the Arts.

In 1997 he participated in the Australian Broadcasting Corporation’s inaugural series of *Race Around the World*. Every 10 days over 100 days, 8 filmmakers chose a country, a story and how to tell it. It saw Bentley hanging out with the Saami in Arctic Finland, nomads in the Gobi Desert and Spencer Tunick beginning his *Naked States* tour of the USA. He won first prize for delivering stories late. The freedom and confidence gained on *Race* spoiled him for life.

From 1998 he worked as a freelance director and cameraperson making numerous music videos and short stories focusing on music and the arts.

In 2001 he started working for SBS TV’s international news and current affairs program, *Dateline*. His feature stories were often characterised by long-term observation and intimate access. They included portraits of Venezuela’s president Hugo Chavez, the Zapatista guerrilla spokesperson Subcomandante Marcos, Colombian presidential candidate Ingrid Betancourt, kidnapped by the FARC guerrillas. His report on human shields in Iraq was made into the documentary *Baghdad or Bust* for the BBC.

In 2002 he filmed and directed *Anatomy of a Coup*, the story of Venezuela’s dramatic 48-hour coup. It won Best Political Documentary at REAL: Life in Film.

In 2003 he filmed and co-directed with Curtis Levy *The President Versus David Hicks*. The feature documentary followed Terry Hicks from the working class suburbs Adelaide to Pakistan and Afghanistan trying to understand how his son ended up in the legal limbo of Guantanamo Bay. It won the AFI Award for Best Documentary and the TV Week Logie for Most Outstanding Documentary.

In 2007 he made *Jon From He Come*, a 35 minute video installation about Tanna Island Cargo Cult exhibited with Ben Bohane’s *The Black Islands* at the Australian Centre for Photography.

His feature length film about the love story behind the 126 day Lima hostage crisis *The Siege* premiered at the Sydney film Festival in 2007 and was nominated for 2 AFI awards.

In 2008 he co-directed *A Well-Founded Fear*, exposing the death and persecution suffered by asylum seekers deported by the Australian government to countries such as Afghanistan and Syria. It was the first time he collaborated with his cinematographer brother Marden Dean who won the Australian Cinematography Society award for Best Cinematography.

In 2009 he filmed, directed and produced the feature documentary *Contact* with Martin Butler. In 1964, deep in the Western Desert of Australia, a group of Martu women and children made contact with white men for the first time. The moment was filmed and in a story telling *tour de force* Yuwali recounts the horror and amazement of coming into contact with modern Australia. The film won the Gold Hugo for Best Television Production & Best Documentary – Social/Political; Ecumenical Dialogue Award, Planete Doc Review Film Festival, Poland; Best Feature Documentary, Film Critics Circle of Australia; NSW Premier’s History Prize for Multimedia; Foxtel Documentary Prize, Sydney Film Festival; Best Achievement in Directing for Documentary, Australian Directors Guild; Best Achievement in Sound for a Documentary, Australian Screen Sound Guild; Best Documentary, Miradas Film Festival, Canary Islands; Best Documentary-Pacific/Oceania, Annu-ru Aboro Film Festival, New Caledonia; Bronze award for Cinematography Documentaries-Cinema and TV, Australian Cinematographers Society; Best Feature Documentary, AFI; Excellence in Journalism in Indigenous Affairs, Walkley Award; the Prime Minister’s History Prize; and several more.

He is developing more projects with Martin Butler. Too much fun not to.
Man taking the view north from Poka Mann Range, Central Australia.
Julie Nimmo - Indigenous Consultant

Julie Nimmo, of the Wiradjuri Nation NSW, has been writing and directing factual television since 1996, with a keen interest in the human dynamics that play out in politics, history and the arts. As a television journalist and independent documentary filmmaker, Julie has produced and directed award winning television in Australia and abroad including Russia, New Caledonia, South Africa as well as Paris where she made the documentary Songlines to the Seine in 2006. Early in her career, 2002, she became the first Indigenous Australian to win a Walkley Award for No Fixed Address an SBS documentary that captured the plight of homeless kids living on the streets of Sydney.

Julie also wrote & directed the two hour SBS TV history series ‘Pioneers of Love’ 2006. Since then she has series produced ABC’s Message Stick and executive produced at Goolarri Television in Broome. In 2008 the ABC broadcast her observational documentary The Intervention; Katherine, NT which charted the first year of the Intervention in four remote Aboriginal communities. Recently becoming a mother, Julie now works as a consultant and researcher, happily supporting other filmmakers in their ambitions.

Wayne Denning – Multimedia and Online Content Producer

Wayne Denning is the Managing Director of Carbon Media Events. Carbon Media Events Pty Ltd is a new media agency and content creator based at QUT Creative Enterprise Australia, Brisbane since October 2007. The only one of its kind in Queensland, Carbon provides a unique offering as a privately owned and operated Aboriginal business. Offering an all-in-one service, Carbon develops screen media strategies, produces and edits digital content, designs productions and distributes media to clients on-air, on-line and on-mobile.

Carbon’s recent credits include daily web coverage of the 2008 United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in New York, the first six hours of live concert programming recorded from the Tamworth Country Music Festival, and coverage of the Queensland Indigenous Golf Championship. Each of these series were screened on Foxtel and Austar via NITV Channel 180.
Professor Peter Veth - Archaeology consultant

Professor Veth is a leading Archaeologist with the University of Western Australia. Peter has been party to groundbreaking archaeological discoveries throughout Australia, Island Southeast Asia and the Aru Islands. He started pioneering work in the Western Desert 30 years ago resulting in some of the oldest dates for desert peoples. With colleagues he excavated in Maluku Province of eastern Indonesia and then East Timor - where the teams have subsequently discovered evidence for maritime skills over 40,000 years old and Pleistocene-aged rock art.

With doctoral candidates sites have been excavated on Eddie Mabo’s islands (Mer and Daur) to discover the first reported pottery and the earliest dates for agriculture in the Torres Strait and the actual remains of HMAV Bounty on Pitcairn Island. Recently with the co-discovrer of Lake Mungo (Jim Bowler) - the earliest occupation of Northwest Australia has been found at Lake Gregory - near Wolf Creek Crater.

Peter has surveyed parts of the Canning Stock Route over 50 times since 1980 and has worked with many traditional custodians, some of who only left the area in the 1960s. The last desert people featured in Contact have worked with Peter to document their deep-time archaeology and Jukurrpa (Law) through all of this time.

Peter has won a range of awards including the James Cook University Excellence in Research Award (1993); 12 Australian Research Council Grants (1993-2013) and was elected a Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities in 2005. He currently holds a (Profssorial) Discovery Outstanding Researcher Award and is the inaugural Kimberley Foundation Ian Potter Chair in Rock Art. He recently was conferred the Bruce Veitch award for Excellence in Indigenous Engagement by the Australian Archaeological Association.

Peter has always worked closely with Indigenous communities – aiming to bring their knowledge systems and ownership of cultural heritage together with good archaeology.
Tania Nehme – Editor Episodes 1, 3 & 4
Tania has collaborated as a picture and sound editor on several award winning feature and documentary films including The Quiet Room, Alexandra’s Project, The Old Man Who Read Love Stories, The Tracker, Ten Canoes, One Hand Clapping, Contact and The King Is Dead! She has over 20 years experience cutting independent films working in a wide variety of genres including TV series, dramas, documentaries, award winning shorts, promotional trailers and digital stories.

Tania’s awards include an Australian Film Institute (AFI) award for Ten Canoes starring the Ramingining Community in Arnhem Land, an Inside Film (IF) award for The Old Man Who Read Love Stories starring Richard Dreyfuss, Hugo Weaving and Timothy Spall, and two Critics Circle awards for Ten Canoes and The Balanda & The Bark Canoes which she co directed with Molly Reynolds and Rolf de Heer.

Contact is an exceptional film about 17 year old Martu woman Yuwali recalling her first contact experience in 1964. Directed by Bentley Dean and Martin Butler this story won Best Feature Documentary at the 2010 AFI awards and was also awarded the prestigious Prime Minister’s History Prize in 2010. First Footprints is a return to working with the dynamic duo.

Tania is currently cutting the feature film Charlie’s Country for writer, director Rolf de Heer.

Peter O’Donoghue – Editor Episode 2
Peter O’Donoghue is an award-winning editor, director and writer based in Sydney, Australia who has been working for the past several years on projects in Australia, New Zealand, China, the U.S. and the UK.

Peter’s first long-form documentary as director, Happy Everyday, was filmed in Beijing and Shanghai and is about to be released by PBS International. His collaborations with German-born NZ director Florian Habicht have also been garnering much acclaim worldwide: their 2011 feature film Love Story (set in New York) won Best Film, Best Director (Florian) and Best Editor (Peter) at the 2011 NZ Film Awards; and their new collaboration – part ‘rockumentary’, part ‘a day in the life of Northern England’ – is a UK production chronicling the iconic Brit-pop band Pulp and their enigmatic frontman Jarvis Cocker.

Bentley Dean and Martin Butler’s landmark Australian documentary series First Footprints (2013) represents Peter’s first move from film to series television editing, his work here including a cut down of the 4 episodes for Australian broadcast to 2 episodes for Arte France. In addition to other film and TV editing work, Peter has also directed 2 short films, developed 2 feature scripts and collaborated unofficially on numerous projects of filmmaking colleagues.
MURRAY ISLAND MAN WITH MALU DRUM
MER, TORRES STRAIT, QUEENSLAND.
Antony Partos - Composer

Antony Partos is one of Australia’s most awarded film composers. His passion lies in creating innovative scores that morph acoustic with an eclectic mix of bespoke elements. His feature film credits include the Sundance Festival winning film, Animal Kingdom (starring Guy Pearce and Oscar nominee Jacki Weaver), The Home Song Stories (starring AFI winner Joan Chen), Disgrace (starring Oscar nominee John Malkovich), Unfinished Sky and Accidents Happen (starring Oscar Winner Geena Davis).

Animal Kingdom, The Home Song Stories and Unfinished Sky have all won Best Original Score at Australia’s most coveted AFI awards.

His passion for creating evocative scores for TV drama include the highly awarded series The Slap (Winner APRA-AGSC 2012 Screen Music Awards Best Television Theme and Best Soundtrack Album), MABO (Winner APRA-AGSC 2012 Screen Music Award Best Music for a Mini-Series or Telemovie), RAKE (Winner 2011 AGSC Award for Best Music for a Television Series) and the ABC production CROWNIES.

His most recent projects include Australia’s first indigenous drama series Redfern Now as well as the critically acclaimed tele-movie Devil’s Dust.
World Firsts of the First Australians

The first modern humans to leave Africa
Recent DNA evidence dates this back to over 70,000 years ago.

First open sea crossing in human history
People made the journey to Australia from South East Asia over 50,000 years ago.

Oldest modern person found outside Africa
Mungo man is 42,000 years old.

First depiction of the human face
Over 70 faces are found across the Murujuga Peninsula dating between 25,000 and 35,000 years ago.

Largest Gallery in the world
Murujuga has approximately one million engravings over 300 square kilometers.

Oldest maps in the world
Detailed engravings show water sources throughout the Western Desert.

Oldest paintings of ceremony
The exquisite Gwion figures of the Kimberley are about 12,000 years old.

Oldest depiction of sound
The dashes coming out of the “Dynamic Figures” in Arnhem land are about 12,000 years old.

The earliest battle scenes in the world
About 6,000 years old, found in Arnhem Land.

Invention of the returning boomerang
This extraordinary feat of complex physics is unique to Australia.

City with most indigenous art in the world
Sydney has at least 3,000 rock art sites.

Oldest oral histories
Such as the Wadi Nyi Nyi which describes the rising seas that occurred between 18,000 and 6,700 years ago.

Longest continuing cultures
And going strong.
Links

First Footprints Site
www.abc.net.au/firstfootprints

Mungo National Park
You have arrived at one of the world’s very special places. Aboriginal people have walked here at Mungo in the footsteps of their ancestors since the Dreamtime.
www.visitmungo.com.au

Sahul Time
Sahul Time is an ongoing project to create a visual, interactive representation of the Earth’s history. Imagine we could go back in time and view the ancient Earth from space... What would we see?
http://sahultime.monash.edu.au/

Place, Evolution and Rock Art Heritage Unit (PERAHU)
http://www.griffith.edu.au/humanities-languages/school-humanities/research/perahu
www.youtube.com/protectrockart
www.protectaustraliasspirit.com.au

Connecting Country: The Jawoyn Homeland Project
http://connectingcountry.arts.monash.edu.au/

Oldest dated painting in Australia found at Gabarnmung
www.academia.edu/3107260/A_28_000_year_old_excavated_painted_rock_from_Nawarla_Gabarnmang_northern_Australia
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Technical Details

Durations:
Episode 1 Super Nomads 56:43
Episode 2 The Great Drought 56:40
Episode 3 The Great Flood 57:20
Episode 4 The Biggest Estate 57:45

Shooting format: HD

Archival: Colour and black and white 35mm, 16mm and 8mm film

Screening formats: HDCAM SR, Digibeta

Aspect Ratio: 16:9
Credits

Credit line for the production
A Contact Films production in association with Screen Australia, Screen NSW, Screen Queensland, ARTE France and the Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Credit line for publicity
CONTACT FILMS
SCREENEN AUSTRALIA NATIONAL DOCUMENTARY PROGRAM
SCREEN NSW, SCREEN QUEENSLAND in association with ARTE FRANCE and the AUSTRALIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION present “FIRST FOOTPRINTS”
original music ANTONY PARTOS sound design WES CHEW, TOM HERDMAN
sound recordist MARTIN BUTLER cinematographer BENTLEY DEAN
editor TANIA NEHME, PETER O’DONAGHUE
written directed and produced by MARTIN BUTLER and BENTLEY DEAN

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Complete credits

In Memory of
Wilfred Narrawidj, Jimmy Morgan, Paddy Japanangka Lewis,
Johnny Jupurrla Angus and Jeffery James

Narrator
Ernie Dingo

Written, Produced & Directed by
Bentley Dean & Martin Butler

Editors
Tania Nehme
Peter O’Donoghue

We thank all of the individuals and communities who shared their stories with us
Warren Clark, Patrick Lawson, Noel Johnson, Roy Kennedy,
Willandra Lakes World Heritage Area Elders Council,
Jim Bowler, Michael Westaway, Sally K May, Wilfred Narrawidj,
Gunbalanya Community,
Margaret Katherine, Jawoyn Community, Ben Gunn, Bruno David,
Jean-Michel Geneste, Jean-Jacques Delannoy, Wilfred Hicks, Ivan Dale,
Yindjibarndi Aboriginal Corporation,
Ngarluma Aboriginal Corporation,
Murujuga Aboriginal Corporation,
Ken Mulvaney, Timmy Patterson,
Martu Community,
Peter Veth, Geoffery Stewart, Ben Brown,
Wiluna/Bondini Communities,
Colin Groves,
Tasmanian Aboriginal Land and Sea Council,
Richard Cosgrove, Ronald Lami Lami, Paul Taçon,
Northern Land Council,
Gary Hardiman, Rebecca Budby,
Barada Barna Community,
Woora Consulting Staff,
Stacey Budby, Frank Budby, Scott Hocknull, Harvey Johnston, Steve Webb,
Darryl Pappin, Nikki Stern, Kumpaya Girgiba, Thelma Judson, Roy Underwood,
Ian Baird, Scott Cane, Fred Grant, Ned Grant, Lennard Walker,
Tjuntjuntjara Community,
Gavin Peel, Tyson Mowarin, Sylvester Mangolamara,
Wunambal Gaambera Aboriginal Corporation,
Albert Peurmora, Albert Bundamurra, June Ross, Mike Morwood, Philip Jones,
Allen Madden, Jo McDonald, Denise Donlon, Ru Kundii, Herman Mandui,
Kuk Community,
Cygnet Repu,
Mabuiag Island Community,
Terence Whap, Ian McNiven, Ernie Raymond,
Mamu/Ngadjon – Jii Community,
Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation,
Ken Saunders, Shaun Namarnyilk, Marius Namarnjilk, Ashley Nayilibidj, Nipper Gumurdul,
Syd Laker, Bill Gammage, Ronald Lami Lami, Silas Wollombi,
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Sound: Martin Butler

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Archaeology Consultant: Professor Peter Veth

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Time-lapse Assistant: Wayne Batistic

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Indigenous Archive Coordinators: Kerri-Lee Harding, Pam Hegarty
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Additional Transcriptions: Sam Zubrycki, Janita Suter, Kim Traill
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Megafauna CGI Visual Effects: Matt Drummond, Hive Studios

Concept and Matte Painting: Animal Logic

Matte Painting: Charles Santoso

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Compositors: Guido Wolter

VFX Producer: Niki Bern, Jeremy Kelly-Bakker

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Sound Post Production: Carbon Media

Sound Mixer: Sonar Sound

Sound Design: Wes Chew

Dialogue Editing: Wes Chew, Tom Herdman Foley, Blair Slater, Andrew Simmons, Dan Johnston, Duncan McAllister

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Additional Narration Recording: Miranda Culley

Composer: Doug Hampton, Hamdon Studios

Score Mixers: Sonar Music

Composer: Antony Partos

Cello: Anna Martin Scrase

Vocals: Richard Green

Music Recorded and Produced: Wes Chew, Thom Kellar

Lawyer: Stephen Boyle

Indigenous Protocols: Terri Janke

Auditor: Christopher Coote & Co

Completion Guarantor: FACB, David Noakes
With Thanks to
Ngaanyatjarra Media, FPCC Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park, Lea Gardem,
John Dallwitz, Simon Drake, Anna Nolan, Naomi Wanner, Jean Halliday, Ian Dunlop,
Sid Anderson, Judy Toohey, Bettina Dalton, Chloe Rice, Niki Lamplough, Sue Muggleton,
Ray Whear, Philip Batty, Mary Morris, Val Brown, Richard Mintern, David Brooks, Kylie Simpson,
Shaun Angeles - Arrernte Elders Program - Institute for Aboriginal Development, MacDonnell
Shire Council, Peter Johnson, Sue Davenport, Richard Fullagar, Otto Sims, Bentley James,
John Ogden, Warlukurlangu Artists Aboriginal Corporation, AIATSIS, Curtis Levy, Brett Dalzell,
Robert Paton, Jonathan Nadji, Dennis Cooper, Bevan Stott, Dudley Petrick, Sonja Chalmers,
Buku-Larrnggay Mulka Centre, George Aldridge, Eric Keidge, Will Stubbs, Damian Cole,
Jack Golson, Tim Denham, Damein Bell, Thomas Day, Bob Connolly, Helen McConnell,
Åsa Ferrier, John Mulders, Laurence May

Music
Sambzi 3, Gumi Ha, Dema, Music of the Marind Anim,
Verschueren Collection 1962 (PAN RMP 4018)
Still Images Courtesy of
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Kuk Archive-Australian National University, Naomichi Ishige,
Cairns Historical Society,
California Academy of Science,
John Oxley Library (SLQ),
Queensland Museum Collection,
Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology,
Ian McNiven,
Leiden University KITLV,
Missionaries of the Sacred Hearth - Tilburg Netherlands,
The Metropolitan Museum of Art,
TropenMuseum Amsterdam,
Ursula Frederick
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Damon Smith Productions, Firelight Productions, Nomad Films International, Robert Tonkinson, AIATSIS
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Aborigines of the Sea Coast and Tumanu’s People,
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