

A GLOBAL WAKE-UP CALL
FROM THE REMOTE PACIFIC



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PRESENTS

EATING UP EASTER

PRESS NOTES

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LOGLINE & SYNOPSIS

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Logline:

In a cinematic letter to his son, native Rapanui (Easter Island) filmmaker Sergio Mata'u Rapu explores the modern dilemma of his people as they face the consequences of their rapidly developing home.

Synopsis:

In a cinematic letter to his son, native Rapanui (Easter Island) filmmaker Sergio Mata'u Rapu provides a global wake up call from the remote pacific. His film explores how their people - descendants of the ancient statue builders - are facing the consequences and dilemmas of rapid development of their home, and are recycling traditions in a bid for environmental sustainability.



DIRECTOR'S NOTES

For the last 50 years, my island – my culture – has been used as a cautionary tale of human's ability to destroy our planet. Film cameras have pointed away from our thriving community and instead focused on our moai, stone statues representing our ancestors and a mysterious past. Journalists' pens wrote about the destruction of our island, the death of our people, the demise of a great civilization. But they got it wrong. We, the Rapanui, are still here. We were not able to tell our story then, but today we are.

The catalyst to start this project was when I came across an news article in 2011 explaining that Hawaii only had enough food reserves for 1 week. If the airport was destroyed, if a storm seized all naval traffic, food would become a huge issue to the more than 1 million residents and visitors. I turned the same question to my island, Rapa Nui (Easter Island). How long did we have before my people went hungry? I knew our demand for external products was high, but I didn't know how much. As I learned more about how little we grew (because building cabins for tourists was more lucrative) and how much we imported (which contributed heavily to the buildup of trash on the island), I realized that the story was not in food security but in the rapid development of a tiny island in the middle of the Pacific.

The misrepresentation of my culture has been the fuel behind my interest in telling stories. But as I dug deeper into the problems and complexities of living on a remote island, I found universal qualities reflected in the wealthiest continents on the planet. The truth is that we are all the same, living on our own little island in the vast universe. But our story is not a cautionary tale, because we are still alive, we hold the power to correct our course in history as my ancestors did.

Days before picture locking the film, of what would be the end of a 6-year process, I heard news from the island. Mama Piru, one of our central characters, had passed away at the young age of 60. Our hearts broke and our minds went blank. What will we do without her driving energy to care for our planet? Who will pick up where she left off? Days of numbness finally brought the answer – we will, we must. This film is dedicated to her and to our ancestors who navigated through the rough seas and brought our people closer to the light beyond the horizon.

Hai Mahatu. Amu'a.
Sergio Mata'u Rapu

RAPA NUI

*Additional context for the setting of **EATING UP EASTER***

Rapa Nui (also known as Easter Island) is the most remote island in the Pacific, nearly 2,500 miles from the closest metropolitan city of Santiago, Chile. This is nearly the same distance between Honolulu, Hawaii and Los Angeles, California. The island is most known for the moai, giant stone statues that were built by the ancestors of the current population.

Dutch explorer Jacob Roggeveen spotted Rapa Nui on Easter Sunday of 1722; thus giving it the name Easter Island. As of 2018, Chile officially changed the name of the island to Rapa Nui, though most of the world still refers to it as Easter Island.

Rapa Nui is small; only 63 square miles. If you compared the size of the whole island to that of the city of Chicago, Rapa Nui could fit into it 3 times (Chicago is 227 square miles). It takes 20 minutes to drive from one end to the other end of the island. There is only one airport with one runway. The island has no deepwater ports, meaning that people and cargo arriving from ships have to be transferred to smaller tenders to get on shore.

In the last 10 years, the island's tourism has exploded. In 2012, the Chilean census reported 5,167 people living while the national park reported approximately 56,749 tourists arriving yearly (1 local to 11 tourists). Today, officials estimate there are close to 8,000 people living on the island and approximately 120,000 tourists per year (1 to 15 ratio). This has had a huge impact on the island's resources and drastically changed the community.

The island produces 20 tonnes of rubbish a day. The Orito recycling plant processes 40,000 plastic bottles a month. The "recycling plant" does not really process the waste received into reusable material because the technology is not available on the island, rather it just packages the recyclable materials to ship them back to Chile for processing. The plant was recently renamed the Orito gathering plant, rather than a recycling plant.





MAMA PIRU

Mama Piru runs the recycling plant on the island – a place where recycling is collected sorted, compacted, and when all goes well, sent back to mainland Chile. A long time champion for the island's environment, she spends her free time cleaning up plastic that has washed ashore. Although she lives far from town in the pristine countryside with her French husband, Francis, she is committed to helping her fellow islanders learn how to recycle in today's world. Every year she is a prominent participant in the Tapati Festival, a two-week cultural celebration on the island, that she believes unites her people and keeps them connected to their ancestors. Yet, today, the event also brings thousands of tourists and trash more than doubles. To solve these issues, she is determined to re-teach ancient values and knowledge about re-using trash and seeking long-term sustainable solutions. In addition, she must find a way to maintain enough workers at the recycling plant despite the backbreaking work and low pay.



SERGIO RAPU HAOA

Sergio was one of the first Rapanui ever to be educated in the United States. He received a master's degree in archeology and came back to the island to put his studies to work, restoring many of the statue sites that are standing today. Sergio also became the first native governor of the island. Today he embraces development in its ability to raise the quality of life for his people. He is building a new shopping center in the middle of town to provide more products and services for the local islanders as well as create jobs for them. Still a leader in his community, he is also concerned with the protection of language and the nourishment of his culture, and he cares deeply about the future of his people. His multiple interests at first may appear conflicting, but in his mind all lead to the education, improvement of life and perseverance of his people.



MAHANI TEAVE

A professional pianist who has performed the world over, Mahani left the island at a young age to be trained by musicians in Chile and the U.S. But, each time she returned to her island, she was shocked by the changes newfound wealth and materialism were bringing in and she felt she needed to make a difference here, where she is from. She realized the best way to help was to start with the children – to give them more opportunities and train them to make decisions about how to consciously face development. With her partner, Enrique, she began a free music school to provide a safe space and teach traditional values to the island's youth.

The school is free so that parents will get involved, rather than send a check. Parents, working together to support the school, are creating unity where it once was lost and that impact is spreading out to the community. But, they are running out of money and without a physical location, the logistics of running the school are getting difficult. To continue, they need to raise the one thing that they are struggling against, money.



ENRIQUE ICKA

A well-known and loved island musician and a structural engineer trained in Chile, Enrique is just as passionate as Mahani about his people. As he grew up, he watched alcoholism and materialism divide his community and his family. Once himself in a similar situation, he feels for the island's children, many of who are isolated and abandoned. He is passionate about reviving the values of the past and re-instilling the importance of unity and community in his people. Together with Mahani, he has started a music school and an NGO made up of young Rapa Nui professionals that is now poised to address the multitude of challenges the island is facing as it rapidly develops. To reduce costs in building the school and the workspace for the NGO, he is drawing on his engineering training to construct it sustainably, repurposing garbage like plastic bottles and car tires to build the walls.

PRODUCER/DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Native Rapanui Producer/Director Sergio Mata'u Rapu is the only Easter Islander working in production in an English speaking country. He has spent the last 15 years shooting, and producing documentaries that have aired on the History Channel, Travel Channel, National Geographic, and NOVA. Through his work, Sergio aims to show the diversity of life through thought-provoking media to inspire resolutions to social, economic, and environmental conflicts.



PRODUCER/WRITER'S BIOGRAPHY

Elena Rapu is an anthropologist and filmmaker. She received her MA in Anthropology from SUNY Binghamton, specializing in the Pacific. She has 15 years of experience on Easter Island working in archaeology, the hotel industry, and guiding tours. She is passionate about exploring the complex realities faced by living cultures as they grow and change in a globalized world.



CREW CREDITS

Director: Sergio M. Rapu

Executive Producers: Leanne Ferrer, Gordon Quinn, Betsy Steinberg

Producers: Elena Rapu, Sergio M. Rapu

Editor: Liz Kaar

Writer: Elena Rapu

Director of Photography: Jeff Saunder

Camera Operator: Mark Mostad

ABOUT MUSIC BOX FILMS

Music Box Films is a North American distributor of acclaimed international, independent, and documentary features. Recent releases include Kirill Mikhanovsky's *Give Me Liberty*, Francois Ozon's *By the Grace of God*, and Levan Akin's *And Then We Danced*. Upcoming releases include Werner Herzog's documentary *Nomad: In the Footsteps of Bruce Chatwin*, Haifaa Al-Mansour's *The Perfect Candidate*, Pablo Larraín's *Ema*, Justine Triet's *Sibyl*, and Brian Welsh's *Beats*. Music Box Films is independently owned and operated by the Southport Music Box Corporation, which also owns and operates the Music Box Theatre, Chicago's premier venue for independent and foreign films. For more information, please visit www.musicboxfilms.com

ABOUT KARTEMQUIN FILMS

Kartemquin Films is a not-for-profit collaborative center for documentary media makers who seek to foster a more engaged and empowered society. In 2016, Kartemquin celebrated 50 years of sparking democracy through documentary. Best known for producing *Hoop Dreams* and *The Interrupters* among over 50 other documentaries that examine and critique society through the lives of ordinary people, Kartemquin has won almost every available prize for documentary filmmaking, including multiple Emmy, Peabody, duPont-Columbia and Robert F. Kennedy journalism awards, Independent Spirit, IDA, PGA and DGA awards, and an Oscar nomination. A revered resource on issues of ethics and storytelling, Kartemquin is internationally recognized for crafting quality documentaries backed by comprehensive audience engagement, and for its innovative programs and advocacy designed to elevate the documentary community. www.kartemquin.com

