

UBUD WRITERS & READERS FESTIVAL 2012.

As if on cue, cleansing rain greeted Bali's cultural Mecca, Ubud, after record crowds of literary lovers had rejoiced in four days of perfect weather and the power of the written word.

Celebrated as, "One of the six best literary festivals in the world", the 9th annual Ubud Writers & Readers Festival delivered its most diverse and event filled program to date from 3rd-7th October 2012.

"Out of tragedy wonderful things may become manifest," said Janet DeNeefe," Director/Founder of the UWRF. "This festival was born out of the Bali Bombings, from a desire to support the community and present our shared culture to the world. By bringing global thinkers together with Indonesian writers to discuss, debate and celebrate literature, in our own way we commemorate this tragic event each year, as well as take steps to co create a positive future."

Beginning with the Gala opening on Wednesday 3rd October in the splendor of the Puri Ubud Palace, home of Ubud's royal family, official guests, local and international writers and festival enthusiasts were welcomed by a poetry reading from leading Balinese female intellectual Cok Sawitri and an inspiring opening speech by Nobel laureate and former president of East Timor Jose Ramos Horta.

The theme for this year's festival Bumi Manusia/The Earth of Mankind has been derived from the Indonesian classic by the iconic figure of Indonesian literature history Pramoedya Ananta Toer. Paying homage to the writer the event included daily readings from his inspiring books, as well as a special evening devoted to his works at the Pura Dalem Temple in Ubud.

This year's festival brought together 140 international writers from 30 different countries, across a diversity of genres and a plethora of styles in events held at 50 different venues across Ubud as well as in Sanur and Denpasar.

Complimenting the strong Indonesian contingent of Riri Riza, Mira Lesmana, Happy Salma, Iswadi Pratama, Saut Poltak Tambunan and Acep Zamzam is a world class line up of international writers – Pulitzer Prize winner Jeffery Eugenides, Chang- Rae Lee, John Pilger, Anna Funder, Krys Lee, Kjersti Skomsvold, Kader Abdolah, Alice Pung and the wildly popular Australian musician, song writer, poet, acclaimed film score composer, script writer, occasional actor and the author of 2 novels, Nick Cave, among others literary greats.

"Our festival celebrates great writing wherever it is found, in books, on screen, in journalism, song or on stage. To find an artist who straddles almost every genre and creates images and narratives of surpassing beauty and emotional intensity in every one of them is rare, and it is an honor to include Nick Cave in this year's festival", said International Program Director – Jeni Caffin.

Highlights of this year's festival included the many of panel conversations amongst writers at the four main venues of the festival, the Neka Museum, Indus, the Left Bank Lounge and the new Rumah Baca/Reading Room, in the inaugural Art & Food Market, a venue where writers and audience can wind down overlooking the gorgeous natural beauty of the Tjampuhan Ridge.

Of particular interest was a panel discussion with Australian icon of investigate journalism and war correspondence, John Pilger, who spoke at length about his career and especially the media corporate giants role and bias in reporting on wars and his relationship and support of Wikileaks founder Julian Assange. On 5th October Pilger also presented his film, "The War You Don't See", and afterwards responded to questions from the enthusiastic, standing room only, crowd.



UWRF 2012 founder Director Janet DeNeefe at Gala Opening, Image Anggara Mahendra.



Nick Cave (Australia) & Jeffrey Eugenides (USA). image Sally May Mills.



Gala Opening Gong Striking, 3rd Oct, Ubud Puri. Image by Anggara Mahendra.



A Kite For Ali Jasmin- 189cmx 130cm Mixed media on paper 2012



This Earth of Mankind Panel, discussion at the 2012 Ubud, Writers and Readers Festival venue at the Neka Museum. image by Stanny Angga



Australian Icon of investigative journalism, John Pilger, (right) with Russell Skelton. image by Stanny Angga.



Jose Ramos-Horta - the Voice of Independence. 2012 UWRWF image by Stanny Angga.

With a strong focus towards its satellite program the UWRF has encouraged other cities around the Indonesian archipelago to adopt similar festivals reflecting their own individual cultural uniqueness. Since the festival's satellite program was launched in 2008, 20 cities nationwide have become hosts to the program, which aims to introduce local writers to the festival and build stronger networking platforms among writers in the region, as well as to discover literary passions and talents in Indonesia.

"Voices From The Archipelago", Fifteen emerging writers from across Indonesia, from as far east as Timor to the western provinces of Aceh, shared center stage in panels and discussions with respected authors from across the globe. Showing support and pride in Indonesian written culture the 2012 UWRF launched new local voices into the literary world.

"I love this festival," said West Papua's first novelist Aprila R. A Wayar, who's debut novel "Mawar Hitam Tanpa Akar" (Black Rose Without Roots) was released in 2008. "This has been my first visit to the festival and it has allowed me a wonderful opportunity to introduce myself to the international literary community. With the URWF satellite program visiting Jayapura next year, the future for West Papuan literary community only becomes brighter."

The success of the satellite program has been revealed by more books being submitted to the festival committee for review and inclusion by local authors, as well as the emergence of the annual Makassar International Writers Festival in 2011, initiated by a loyal participant of the UWRF, Lily Yulianti Farid.

The festival workshop sessions covered memoirs, poetry, fantasy, fiction, screen and travel writing. Presenting a rich program of free events the festival featured a special performance by the renowned Teater Satu Lampung and the famous Gotama Street Party returned on 6th October with Komseni's musical orchestra, Joged Bumbung dance, bands and street poets.

As well as Fringe events, Film program, Children's and Youth programs, Community and Arts program, performances such as a Wayang Kulit, traditional Balinese shadow puppet performance by Bali's most renown dalang (puppet master) Wayan Wija, proved to very popular with the local as well as international audience on Thursday 4th set in the idyllic grounds of Bali's oldest art venue, Museum Puri Lukisan.

Perhaps the most loved, as well as sensational event on the program is the annual International Poetry Slam. The poetry Slam includes writers from across the globe doing performances of their original writings. Open to members of the public the event is judged by a panel of international writers and provided hours of entertaining verve from the soulful to the hilarious and everywhere in between. This year's poetry slam winner was Neil Hall from the U.S.A.

The Book Launch Program in collaboration with all the writers and their publishing houses provided daily book launches at venues around Ubud. Of particular interest to the local culture and art lovers was the launching of 'Balinese Art: Paintings and Drawings of Bali, 1800 – 2010', by Professor and Art Historian Dr. Adrian Vickers from Australia. His book is a comprehensive survey of Balinese paintings from its origins in the traditional village to its present position at the forefront of the high priced Asian art scene.

An important release was "Lontar – The Modern Library of Indonesia". In 2010 the Lontar Foundation of Jakarta, the only organization in the world devoted to the translation of Indonesian Literature, launched the Modern Library of Indonesia, a book series containing the most significant Indonesian Literary works of the 20th century, the most recent release in its ongoing program to publish the translated version of the country's most important works.

"The power of the written word has the ability to transcend and transform," said Festival Director/Founder Janet Deneefe. "In 2012 on the 10th anniversary of the bombings we have brought together brave voices who seek and speak the truth, uniting a neutral global forum, demonstrating their strength and resilience in the face of adversity." duties.