

Behind the Shadows

color, digital video, documentary

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Cinematography by Yuri Denysenko

Behind the Shadows documents the plight of **I Wayan Wija¹** a Balinese Dalang (Puppet Master) who is determined to preserve the ancient art of **Wayang Kulit²** by infusing it with new stories and exotic animal puppets. In the face of new technology bearing down on his paradise island, Wija struggles to reconcile his western influences with his traditional upbringing which results in a most unusual mixture of art, culture and religion and just plain entertainment.

(1) *I Wayan Wija is one of the most popular Dalangs (shadow puppet master) in Bali, performing nearly every night of the year. In addition to the traditional shadow puppetry, Wija has also pioneered "Wayang Tantri," a kind of Aesop's fables of traditional Indonesian stories for which he created new animal puppets including giant dinosaurs. Wija is a master of designing new types of puppets with up to five rods held in one hand, which allows for extreme subtlety of motion.*

(2) *The wayang kulit (shadow puppet, literally "leather images") tradition is one of the oldest theatrical forms, dating back to 1200 AD, and yet it still remains one of the most popular forms of performance in Bali and Java. In its traditional form, it is both entertainment and religion, using classical texts and story lines in many languages and formats to convey everything from high moral lessons to low humor. The puppeteer sits behind a screen that is illuminated by an oil lamp, manipulating ornately carved hand-puppets and casting their shadows on the screen. Musical accompaniment is provided by a virtuoso chamber gamelan, which follows the puppeteer's every move.*



SUMMARY

