

Each Morning of the World #06  
Southeast Asia PhoNographic Mornings #11/20  
Batanta Island ~ Raja Ampat ~ West Papua  
«A walk into the Spirit Jungle»  
Burt Gregory

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These are the sounds of the most remote place I have ever heard. I have recorded in over 100 countries, and in my travels I have never seen a place so untouched by man, so uninhabited and equally uninhabitable. The sheer limestone islands that give way to tropical hardwood forests make it very difficult to make landfall in most instances. This natural barrier has preserved an amazing variety of birds, salt water crocodiles, and marine life. Batanta Island is one of the few places on the planet where you can see the Red Bird of Paradise and the even more elusive Wilson's Bird of Paradise.

In a multi-day ocean kayak journey I searched the cliffs for a place to land. After hours of paddling with sharks, an endless variety of fish, and giant manta rays, I found an opening in the jungle, and a small beach to land upon. After securing my vessel, I entered the game trail into the jungle, to find a Nautilus shell propped against a large piece of driftwood. I took this as a symbol that I had stumbled upon a very special place. As I stepped over the shell, every hair on my body stood up and I started buzzing. I paused and had a quick word with the spirits, to inform them that I only had come to listen to their beautiful jungle. I felt no menace or anything negative, just a strong presence that was impossible to ignore. I walked into the swampy thickness of the Spirit Jungle.

I walked hours in, until I could proceed no more, waist deep in muck, audibly far enough away from the surf. I spent the entire day here, and was entertained by a vast variety of birds, giant owl-eyed butterflies, and various other creatures. There was not a moment that I felt the energy from the spirits go away. As the sun dipped over the horizon, I made my way back to my kayak, and the moment I stepped back over the shell, everything was calm again. I gave my thanks to this special place, and with a full heart and many hours of recordings I loaded my dry bags and set off into open ocean, headed back in the dusk to my larger boat, thankful for the rising moon to give the ocean some visual texture.

After speaking with locals on a nearby island, apparently this place is indeed where the spirits of the islands live, and most will never think of walking down that path. This recording is built from multiple weeks of recording on Batanta Island, but the composition is meant to signify this one special journey into the Spirit Jungle.

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Burt Gregory

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Born in San Francisco, CA, I was constantly entranced by the then-vibrant collection of street musicians all over the city. I started making crude recordings at a young age and followed that path into making field recordings of musicians in other countries, mainly the middle east at first. I was then guided into the film aspect of sound and have worked on a wide array of film and TV projects, but still retain the

focus of recording music and wildlife. I have recorded in over 100 countries and still counting. I record specialty audio for "The Amazing Race", collecting music and ambiance from all of the countries visited on each season of the program. I am currently building projects based on music and language preservation on the African Continent. I live in Brooklyn, NY.

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