

Lobster Tales

*The story behind the film
by director/co-producer
Celia Tait*

Lobster Tales took 'on and off' a year to research and develop and another year to make.

The intention was to make a fresh 'animal meets people' documentary. Wherever possible we viewed the world from 'craycam', the lobster point of view. "Anthropomorphic!" I hear the purists cry. Unashamedly 'yes' is the answer. The intention was to entertain and to put the heart beat back into an animal that is now an economic commodity and 'gold mine' for thousands of people. Lobsters after all not only taste good, they are fascinating creatures in their own right.

And so to the challenges of filming an intimate portrayal of this underwater nocturnal crustacean that spends much of its time hidden away in crevices and reefs well away from human sight. I can think of easier animals to film.

Much of the footage was filmed in the wild in the waters off the Arolhos Islands and Perth. Filming at sea is always challenging and night dives were energised with the knowledge that tiger sharks share the waters. We experienced the usual run of logistical challenges – boat generators blowing up on us out at sea in the middle of the night, underwater camera problems, a stormy day of chronic sea-sickness and of course that irritating discovery of diving down to the bottom of the reef to find no cast in sight. In audible range yes – but in camera view – no.

To help the story along we filmed some footage in more controlled circumstances in a tank at the Watermans Fisheries Research Lab. A limestone reef was designed and created and a cast of 20 lobsters of varying ages and sizes recruited. The tank, housed in a tiny tin room, became home to a small production team through the storms of winter and into the boiling heat of summer. For the lobsters it was akin to a Lobster Hilton with room service, regulated water temperature, regular clean-outs and a predator free environment. For the crew it was a waiting game of obsessive proportions. Waiting for those magic moments. Notwithstanding scientific input from crayfish scientists from around the world, no-one could really illuminate us on when a lobster is going to mate, moult, spawn or fight. It was just a question of being there at the right time or rather, stretching a budget to breaking point so that we could pay a crew to be there at the right time.

The human cast were chosen to celebrate difference in personality, gender, age and cultural background. The intent was to explore their philosophies and relationship to the environment and to the animal they exploit. Playful, ironic, laconic – a celebration of a unique bunch of Western Australians who have all built their lives around the lobster, and follow it to the end of the world.

Please note – none of the recruited cast were eaten in the making of this film.