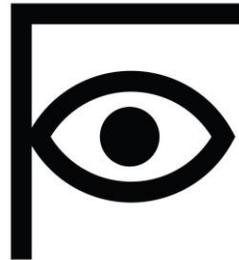


DREAM WITH YOUR EYES OPEN

**BYRON BAY
INTERNATIONAL
FILM FESTIVAL**



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MEDIA RELEASE

Michael Franti's Stay Human to open Byron Bay Film Festival

The musician Michael Franti holds a special place in the hearts of the people of Byron Bay: he has played Bluesfest multiple times and his relaxed, rootsy persona embodies the alternative lifestyle and liberal ethos of the beachside town.

So a film marking Franti's directorial debut is a natural choice to open Byron's 12th film festival in October – and its optimistic, inclusive themes make it an ideal fit for the Red Carpet Gala evening that kicks off the 10-day event. Stay Human sees Franti combining the roles of troubadour and social activist: he travels to meet and mix with everyday folk the world over, from Bali to the Philippines to South Africa – sharing their songs and stories, his very presence heartening those who gather around.

In the film he seeks out some very special people – change-makers in their communities, leading selfless and purposeful lives that symbolise what it means to be fully human.

Among them is Robin Lim, a midwife who opened a birthing clinic in the aftermath of a devastating typhoon in the Philippines; Steve & Hope Dezember, a young couple whose love carries them through Steve's battle with a degenerative brain disease; Arief Rabik, an environmental scientist in Bali perfecting bamboo products to curb deforestation; and Sive Mazinyo and Busisiwwe Vazi, who inspire the community of Port Elizabeth through music and education.

In what seems at times a world of suffering and cynicism, Franti finds cause for optimism in these useful, productive lives. They represent, he says, the best qualities of human beings and show us what it takes to stay human. Their passion, creativity, service to others and optimism make them a positive force in the world, improving the lives of those around them and giving their own lives fulfilment and meaning.

Franti brings a palpable joy to his concerts – high energy blends of hip-hop, rock, folk, reggae and electronic music – and he brings the same transformative and uplifting vibe to his documentary film – though he admits, even he sometimes struggles to remain positive, to stay human.

Indeed, it was those challenges that gave the whole project its juice:

"Struggling with the challenges of the world I began filming this documentary, telling the stories of heroic everyday people who helped me to discover more deeply what it means to be and stay human," he says.

Along with albums and concert tours under the same title, Stay Human is part of what has become his mission – to motivate people to hold on to their humanity amidst the turbulence and of the modern world. "I've travelled the globe making music and throughout the years I've always hoped that it could inspire small steps towards making the world a better place," he says.

The result is a film that overflows with life, with joy, music, fun, laughter and positivity. It is in itself an embodiment of full, well-rounded humanity, and something of a guiding light.

Tickets for Stay Human and the festival's Gala Opening Night party on October 12 are on sale at BBFF.com.au