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Jim Taihuttu

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**AS A DIRECTOR,  
 I ASK A LOT OF  
 MYSELF, MY TEAM  
 AND MY ACTORS**  
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Diving deep into complex history, sub-cultures and the psychology of his protagonists is essential for Dutch-Moluccan film director Jim Taihuttu (44). He counterbalances this when he's pursuing his other passion: touring the world as a DJ. **Text** Marieke Verhoeven **Photography** Ester Gebuis

**W**hat role did cinema play in your childhood? My father is a huge cinephile, so, growing up, we were always watching films together. I remember seeing quite serious ones such as the German classic *Der Blechtrommel* (*The Tin Drum*) and the dystopian *Blade Runner* at a young age and being completely invested in them. When I saw a documentary on how *Back to the Future Part II* by Steven Spielberg was made, I thought: I want to do that too someday. Luckily, my parents always supported me when it came to following my dreams and never expected me to choose a 'safe' career path. They were very young when they had me and raised me with a lot of freedom; it took them another 12 years before my sister – and, then later, my brother – were born. Being

a single child for the first decade of my life never bothered me; I was a dreamer, playing with LEGO, watching TV and travelling to different worlds in my mind. Music always played a big role in our home as well; both my father and brother are professional musicians.

**You became an entrepreneur in your early twenties. Why and how?** At the HKU University of Arts in Utrecht, where I was studying Media, I met fellow student Victor Ponten and we became close friends. In 2004, we decided to start our own creative agency, Habbekrats. The early 2000s were a golden age for Dutch ad agencies such as KesselsKramer and 180 Amsterdam, and we saw a niche creating content in the music industry and more specifically

Dutch hip-hop, a scene that was also blooming at the time. Since I was also DJing under the name Jim Aasgier, I already had a large network in that world. We began making music videos for upcoming Dutch artists such as The Opposites and De Jeugd van Tegenwoordig, which led to bigger commercial assignments. Making music videos was a great way for us to test cinematic techniques and creative ideas, which eventually led to our first feature film in 2011, called *Rabat*. It's essentially a story about friendship as it follows three Dutch-Moroccan friends during a road trip to Morocco. But it also tells a larger story about what it means to grow up between two different cultures and feel like you don't really belong to either one of them. »





**Is that something you've experienced yourself too, being Dutch-Moluccan?**

I certainly felt like an outsider as a child, growing up in a segregated environment in the city of Venlo in the south of the Netherlands. I've always felt strongly connected to my Indonesian heritage in a positive way, and I've travelled to Indonesia often. While making my film *De Oost* ('The East'), a film about the battle for independence in Indonesia, on Java, my wife and I decided to stay in Bali with our four sons, because it was easier to travel back and forth from there. We enjoyed it so much that we decided to move there full-time. The Molucca Islands, where my grandfather is from, are also part of the Indonesian archipelago, which is why I experience a deep connection to my roots there.

**Is there a common thread in your oeuvre?**

I pondered that question recently and realised that my main characters are all young men who are searching for themselves and have a complicated relationship with their father. I personally have a great relationship with my dad and my sons, but I've seen the negative impact of

a distorted or absent bond between sons and fathers in my surroundings. My next project, however, is a series for Dutch TV that centres on a Dutch-Indonesian woman who inherits a family home in Indonesia and decides to move there with her daughter. I'm excited to tell a story from a woman's perspective for a change.

**What kind of director are you?** One who asks a lot of himself, his production team and his actors. I take my research very seriously, work long hours and require my actors to do the same. Marwan Kenzari, for example, who played a professional kickboxer in my film *Wolf* and who's also a close friend, trained every day for a year to perfect his boxing moves and became super fit. Jim Deddes lost a lot of weight and worked tirelessly on his Rotterdam accent for *Hardcore Never Dies*, a film about the Dutch hardstyle music scene of the 90s. I don't like to order people around or to push them to do things they're not comfortable with; it's more about getting them as excited as I am to give it their all. And in general, I prefer to work on small and more intimate sets, so I have more flexibility to make last-minute changes.

**You're also part of Yellow Claw, a successful DJ duo with fans around the world. How did that come to be?**

I formed Yellow Claw in 2010 together with my two friends Bizzy and Nils Rondhuis, initially as a theme DJ-night at Amsterdam's Jimmy Woo club. We shared a love for trap, hip-hop, dubstep and hardstyle music, and our unique blend of these genres became a hit, first by making remixes for other artists and later in our own tracks. Bizzy left the group in 2016 to pursue his solo career, but I still tour the world with Nils in between film projects. In general, I'm a very calm person, but I'm a sucker for hardcore music and I love being on stage, hyping up a crowd. We have a very

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loyal fan base, especially in Asia and the US, for which we're incredibly grateful.

**How do you maintain a healthy work-life balance?**

Living in Bali certainly helps. The first thing I do in the morning is go for a walk on the beach with my dog. I still travel quite a bit, but thankfully, I'm a great sleeper and not easily stressed. When I'm home, I try to be fully present with my family. Being surrounded by nature automatically calms me and for my sons, it's such a blessing being able to grow up here. For them, it's simply their everyday reality, but I try to remind them frequently that they're very lucky to be living in paradise. «



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1.50 EUR / VAT 9%		24.00
Net total:		22.024
Subtotal:		24.006
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