



Transcript: Taken from [alifeintravel.net](http://alifeintravel.net)

## Ep 2: Jason Chan & Christian Lee – Finding their groove

*(Intro music begins)*

*Hi, I'm Siew Hoon and welcome to 'A life in travel', conversations with people whose lives have been changed by travel. This season is brought to you Expedia Group – Bringing the world within reach.*

*In this episode, find out how two filmmakers found their groove in travel, and went on to write, act in and produce a film that not only changed the way travellers saw Okinawa, but injected a sense of pride among locals in their own island's unique heritage and food. Above all, 'Jimami Tofu' is a story about love, food, family and friendship.*

*(Music fades)*

SHY: Good morning, Jason and Christian.

Jason: Good morning, Siew Hoon.

SHY: Welcome to the studio.

Christian: Good morning.

SHY: Before we get to 'Jimami Tofu' the movie, let's first talk about how you both got into making movies. Jason, you were a family GP [General Practitioner] in Perth. That's all I remember about you, and you gave up medicine for acting.

Jason: That's right.

SHY: I bet your parents were really thrilled by that.

Jason: They didn't talk to me for about three or four months. Maybe? [laughs].

SHY: [Laughs] Oh, just three or four months?

Jason: It wasn't that bad, they were actually –

SHY: So they were very understanding parents.

Jason: Yeah, I think they saw that I was always interested in the arts. I did acting at school, the musical theatre, shows and things. But they never expected that I would really give something like medicine to go pursue it.

SHY: How long were you a GP?



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- Jason: It was a six-year course and then you have to do one year of internship and then three years of extra training to become a GP. I saw that as my only way out because if you don't train to become a GP in Australia, you can't practice at all. Just with your internship, you can only practice in the hospital. So, I got out after three years of full-time GP and then I continued to practice, on and off, for another 10-15 years.
- SHY: Wow. The pain of medicine was enough for you to give it up for acting, for the love [laughs]. Was the pain greater than the love of acting?
- Jason: It was both. There was pain involved, it's not an easy job and I admire all my friends and colleagues who continue doing it. You really give your life to medicine. When I was at night training for acting, I remember crawling around on the floor pretending to be a snake or a lizard or whatever, and just thinking *wow, my friends are doing real things out there. I'm just playing like a kid*. But, I loved it. So that was my path. I decided that even though I was at that time living off about \$50 a week, I was so happy.
- SHY: What was the first acting gig that you got that made you realise, *Gosh, I've made it*, and breakthrough and your parents started talking to you, really?
- Jason: I think (after the making of) 'Jimami Tofu' [laughs].
- SHY: Oh, come on [laughs]. You were one of the Power Rangers, weren't you?
- Michael: I don't know if they ever thought I made it, and I think I struggle with that myself as to what's a real achievement as an actor – when can you really call yourself an actor – for a long time. A lot of the work that you do you, I felt anyway, I think the both of us felt like this: You sort of turn up and you get told where to go, what to say and eventually that's what drove us into directing and writing our own stories, because we felt like acting is actually just a very small part of the story. We wanted to start having more say in the entire story and that's why even though I worked in a lot of other shows, I really felt dissatisfied with it all.
- SHY: You wanted to control your own life and your own narrative, the stories that you wanted to tell. Which is why you set up Bananamana Films?
- Jason: That's right.
- SHY: So Christian, let's talk about you. What did you have to give up to do what you love?
- Christian: I wish that I could say, like Jason, I had a huge challenge that I had to give up. But I gave up one dream, which was to be a rock star, to then be an actor. For



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nine years, I played in a rock band, which I played the bass. So, it was during the time when Green Day, No Doubt and Cake and all these bands out of California – where I (was) born and raised – were up and coming, getting big record deals and these (sic) world tours. Our only problem is that we had 10 friends from high school, (with a) full horn section and we refused to break up, we refused to get rid of the horn session and use session players. We had to stay together as a 10-member group and we had this very eclectic funk/ska/reggae quirky music. To put in context, someone wrote a review that our lead singer, if he could be a purple Muppet, that's how he sounded [laughs].

SHY: [Laughs] Okay –

Christian: Needless to say –

SHY: What was the band called?

Christian: It was called 'Lawsuit'.

SHY: Oh okay. I'm glad you gave it up, actually [laughs].

Christian: [Laughs] Me too.

SHY: With a lead singer that (sic) sings like purple Muppet and a name like 'Lawsuit' –

Christian: It was really difficult because I also wanted to pursue acting, but a lot of theatre jobs that you would get, you have to perform on a Friday/Saturday night, but every Thursday/Friday/Saturday was always gigging with the band.

SHY: The call for acting was stronger, then?

Christian: It was, yeah. I was quite happy that the band dispersed and then I just kept saying to myself *can I see myself playing these same songs?* Nine years – it's a lot of club gigs to play. These same songs on a bigger stage, just doing that same thing, I'd just be miserable. So, that's then when I just packed up my bags. I had a nest egg, I think I had mentioned that to save up that nest egg, I sold advertising. I did advertising sales for broadcaster CBS in America and then just saved a nest egg and then moved to New York. Didn't know anyone, just packed my bags and went hunting for a good acting teacher.

*(Music break)*



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SHY: Both of you are now doing what you love, you've come to that point. We talked about 'Jimami Tofu', right? We met first though, when I was looking for inspiration for the theme of my conference, which was 'Find Your Groove' in 2011. I recall writing in my 2010 year-end article at that time, and I said, "Online or offline – it will be about each of us finding our groove next year in our business and personally, because the messier and noisier things get, the more the need to pick and choose what works for you." Tell us how that theme resonated with you that year.

Christian: It really did. Let's just say online for us really meant digital, and the revolution of what digital was allowing everyone to do, including us wanting to be filmmakers. It really levelled the playing field for anyone who wanted to enter in, to now be able to make content very affordable. So, the only thing getting in our way was just by doing it. With that, that year having done that really fun sketch with you, we realised, *hold on, we do love travel. We do love our company, but we love storytelling. Why don't we really, really pursue storytelling?* Actually, I think it was you who said, "You guys ought to tell some stories and so, that for us –

SHY: So, I am the one to blame for all these.

Christian: You are –

Jason: Yes –

Christian: – thanks, a lot.

Jason: – I'll tell my parents [laughs].

Christian: I'll tell my bandmates. So, finding your groove (was) about really truly doing what we wanted to do because the timing was right with the digital transformation and movie production.

SHY: Jason, I remember you guys pitching an idea, a business idea at our competition that year, which was the fact that you're going to do this really short snappy travel videos about what to do in places. Tell us where that went and maybe that was the beginning of the journey to 'Jimami Tofu'?

Jason: Well, thank goodness. The VCs [venture capitalists] that year told us it was a terrible idea, because we could never scale it. We were shocked. It was a horrible pitch, it was an amazing experience for us because we learnt a lot about entrepreneurship, what VCs are looking for and what businesses are good. Having said that, we went off and tried it anyway, and we travelled around and we made these short little travel videos about how to get here, how to get there.



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SHY: I saw some of them.

Jason: The sort of stuff that now you can see every single day on YouTube, but at the time we were starting, YouTube had just really started as well. We were putting it up on our channel, our Bananamana TV YouTube channel was actually doing quite well. We were one of the first partners in Singapore and we got a lot of subscribers. I remember we went to Kuching and we did some travel videos about Kuching and at the same time, Christian had written a short film called –

Christian: – ‘Flower’.

Jason: – ‘Flower’, yes.

We went there and we thought *while we're in Kuching, why don't we just go to a little school and, with two actors, let's try and make a short film?* It took us about six months to gain enough courage and momentum to do that. But we went there, we did it and we had also filmed about 12 other little travel shorts. When we came back on the plane, we were very silent and I turned to Christian and I said, “Hey dude, which part did you like more? The travel videos, which is pretty fun. Like we're travelling, we're making videos, or, the short film which took a lot of work, a lot of planning, it's very stressful. He said, “Short film. How about you?” and I said, “Yeah, me too”. [Gasp] We're in trouble [laughs].

SHY: Moment of truth, really.

Jason: Yes, it was great. So, we got back and we decided, *I think in order to do this, we have to stop taking clients.* Like we said in that ‘Groove’ video –

SHY: – and you fire at me, basically.

Jason: We didn't find you, you fired us –

SHY: [Laughing]

Jason: – you just had a very sneaky way of doing it. We decided there and then that we would just do this. Tough journey though [laughs].

SHY: You gave up the corporate gigs, gave up the money-making machine, and just pursued your own creative dream.

Jason: That's right.

Christian: It was a piece of philosophy we followed and we sort of adapted it, which is *would you do it for free?* That's how you find your passion. So, we took that a notch up, which is *would we pay to do it?* and in the case of the short film that we shot (in) Kuching, we pretty much paid for it. We raised the money, paid the actors, but we



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loved every bit of it. So, we always put ourselves through this philosophical filter if an opportunity comes up and we say *would you pay for it, Jason?* If the answer is a resounding *Yes, I'd absolutely pay for it*, we know that that's something we truly are passionate about wanting to do.

SHY: What if you are really passionate about lots of things though, because a lot of artists –

Jason: You'd be proud [laughs].

SHY: – are passionate about a lot of things. Somebody once told me – I think was an artist who said – “You know, passion can make you really poor, because you love doing things so much that you actually would pay to do it”. So, how do you draw the line?

Jason: I have no idea. I think we're lucky in that sense that we don't have that many passions. There a lot of things we wouldn't pay for. There are a lot of things I'd do for free, but there's not a lot that I would pay for. Maybe they need to notch it up a little bit – *would you pay a lot to do this?*

SHY: Yeah, that's a qualifier.

Jason: Maybe that's how we can filter it.

SHY: So (you) began the journey to making 'Jimami Tofu' because you then realised the moment of truth in Kuching was that your preferred making short films (and) storytelling versus travel videos. So firstly, Christian, for people who have not seen it – and I'm sure a lot of people have seen it since its release, tell us what the movie is about.

Christian: 'Jimami Tofu', which is our debut feature film, is a romance film that integrates Okinawan food. Their dynastic food is intertwined within the love story and it follows a Singapore chef and a Japanese food critic, and their love story and love triangle that interweaves the dynastic food. Jason plays the lead, I play a supporting role. With 'Jimami Tofu', we pretty much put on that DIY cap where we did a lot.

SHY: Yeah, you did everything.

Christian: We leveraged technology, so we wrote it, produced it, directed it and acted in it. Jason actually composed all the original scores for it, we edited it together and now we're out there hustling and doing distribution, in which, it's the longest running film in Singapore cinemas.



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(Music break)

SHY: Jason, I was listening to Sir Tim Waterstone. He created Waterstone books (sic) – amazing entrepreneur – and he was speaking about how he started the bookstore and his love for books, and the moment he learned when it wasn't that important what a book is about, but what it actually meant, and everyone takes different meanings from books or different meanings from movies. What did you want 'Jimami Tofu' to mean to viewers?

Jason: That's a great quote, just thinking about it more. I think one of the biggest satisfactions that we have now is being outside the cinema after an audience has watched it and meeting people afterwards, and them coming up to us and thanking us for various reasons. "Thank you for reminding me about my father," "thank you for reminding me about my hometown," about family, about true love, about doing what you love. I think it's something that we discovered; I don't think we necessarily consciously knew what we wanted to achieve in terms of what it would mean for other people. It was always going to be what it meant for us, which was, this is our love letter to Okinawa, how we felt there and also in a sense, our love letter to hometowns.

But, when people started having these reactions, we fell in love with another part of movie-making which is the response. I think this is very true for theatre where people say, "I'm in love with being on stage because you get that response," is real-time reaction with an audience. We're getting that now with the movie by being there and people always ask us, "Why you're there? You have to turn up to every screening? OMG," and we think *why wouldn't you? This is amazing*. We meet so many people, and their responses and experiences after the movie and their sharing of those experiences with us is so incredibly satisfying that we could just go on and on and on.

SHY: In the digital world though, responses are almost instantaneous, you get reviews from everyone these days. That's online, that's immediate and all that. So, what's the difference between a response that you get live versus what you get on your website?

Jason: It was very different because it's in person. I think that personal experience and the shared experience is very powerful. Sometimes we'll sneak into the theatre at the end, and we'll watch the entire audience in certain scenes. Them being moved together is very powerful, they laugh together or they cry together. Seeing men cry is very powerful to us, and that obviously can't happen when we distribute digitally. I think this is one of your questions later about Netflix and all



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these digital channels, but we've discovered that we're in love with this kind of film presentation and the experience together as a community that we want to keep doing this for a long time.

SHY: We'll get back to the scaling bit then, because love is tough to scale [laughs]. We think.

Jason: [Laughs] We'd all love to scale that.

*(Music break)*

SHY: How did the journey begin? You were approached by the Okinawa Convention and Visitors Bureau to make a destination movie. What happened from there?

Christian: Every year there's the Asia Television Forum and at one point, Jason had this dream of *wouldn't it be great to shoot a film in Japan?* and of course, being a supportive partner, I said, "Yes, let's figure out how to do that." So, we ended up going to every single prefecture booth that has tax incentives if you film or shoot there. We kept going to the Okinawan one because they had the biggest subsidy grant, but every year we would just be meet and greet them and then we would invite them to the mixer over at the Singapore booth which would play the trailers of all the different Singaporean content, and up came our content. Each time it was, Jason in 'Perfect Girl', or Jason and I in 'What Do Men Want?' – these are some of our earlier pieces of content.

Then it was one where we did a pilot for an action-thriller in which [laughs] Jason and I of course, starred in it because it's really cheap to hire free actors. We're there on-screen beating each other up and they're, "Oh, sugoi! Oh!", drinking their wine (and) just like, "This is you!" [laughs] We just really love making content – at the time it was for the web – and so, what that led to was a formal invitation: "We would like to invite you for a week full-paid trip to scout and recce Okinawa to see if you could use Okinawa as a backdrop for one of your many dramas. You and Jason can be doing something," [laughs].

SHY: [Laughs] Yeah, like fighting or –

Christian: It led to that and just at the end of that five-day trip, we had the idea for 'Jimami Tofu' that night. We knew exactly what we wanted to do, whether we're going to get to do it was a much bigger challenge.



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SHY: The movie was more than using Okinawa as a backdrop. I watch a lot of movies and lots of destination movies, where movies are set in a place and that place becomes the backdrop. But this movie is really to me, infusing Okinawa into everything – the themes of food, the family, the romance, the nature scenes, it's sort of infused. So, it's like you could take this movie and tell it anywhere, like you said, it's a story about neighbourhoods, isn't it?

Christian: Yeah, let's connect the dots a little bit. When we did 'Travel Now' it was always the concept of off the beaten track to get to know the real place that you go and travel to. With Okinawa, we went, met and tasted the real food and really got out of the touristy areas, and that's what we fell in love with. Immediately we said we have to make a movie about this. In hindsight, it really is connecting the dots, putting that off the beaten track because we really focused on parts of Okinawa that you have to travel to, and it's the real Okinawa. You get to really meet the community and the characters, not just the main characters but the whole community. That's the birth of the whole story and I feel a huge accomplishment in having captured that.

*(Music break)*

SHY: Music is a big part of your lives, wannabe rock star, sorry [laughs] –

Christian: [Laughs] A failed rock star.

*(Music from 'Jimami Tofu' film score plays)*

SHY: – you wrote the score to 'Jimami' which is beautiful and haunting.

Jason: Thank you.

SHY: What was the inspiration for that?

Jason: There was no inspiration. The inspiration was just banging my head against the wall night after night after we'd finished the final cut. I got into it early on when we were doing our first sitcom drama for TV, *(music ends)* and we tried to put already written music into it, and it just never fit. Christian said to me, "Well, you play the piano, can't you do something?" –

SHY: [Laughs] DIY?

Jason: – and I said, "Well, we're doing everything else. Okay, I'll have a bash at it," and I got out the ukulele and I only knew three chords at the time, and made a little



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theme song up and showed him on Monday. He said, “All right, you're writing all the music from now,” and I was like *oh great*. That was really stressful. Then we did ‘Perfect Girl’ (and) that was stressful too, but a beautiful experience and then each time I was learning more and more about how to compose. Again nowadays, it's amazing because you can have an orchestra at your fingertips. I just play the keyboard, but I can play through the keyboard and a computer and entire orchestra.

SHY: It's amazing what technology can empower creators like yourself if you're really creative about it, to do what you've done.

Christian: It unlocks raw talent. I didn't know he studied some composing, but even if you do study composing – and we have a lot of composer friends – it's to be able to find the through line on an emotional storytelling level. Because Jason is such a wonderful actor, as well as writer and director, when we have the story out, he literally plays a scene out or plays the whole film, and the ideas come. But he knows the emotional arcs and journey, so he can write like it's just customised music to the teeth on an emotional level. I recognised that right away and like, “You're writing all the music. You're amazing, Jason. Keep going. Keep going. Hoo hoo hoo hoo.”

SHY: Plus, it's free.

Jason: Yes.

*(All laughing)*

Jason: That's the best part that he's not mentioning.

Christian: Even more important.

SHY: Today we talked about, yeah you have to be creative, you have to be able to recognise the emotional undertones of a story, but it's about being digitally savvy and tech savvy and I think you guys are quite amazing. A lot of tech entrepreneurs I meet come with ideas, and then they create great products but then they die, because they don't get it distributed. How do people like yourself get your films distributed? Are the odds stacked against independent filmmakers?

Jason: Absolutely. It's a really, really good question again, because it's shifted our lives. We have looked at all the challenges of distribution, and when we stack them all up, we realise that there's no point in us making anything else. I mentioned before one of our series got onto Netflix, ‘Perfect Girl’ actually, which was only a web series, but it was picked up by Netflix. (It) went global, put us in the papers,



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but didn't really free us up to do a lot more other than that. With more and more streaming platforms, they're going to pay less and less, not more.

You think that you're going to have all this creativity and everyone's going to pay for content. But actually most of them are still losing money, they're bleeding, they're just trying to get market share. Disney's opening up, every single studio wants to open up their own, and you're competing for the same amount of eyeballs.

SHY: That's interesting because for me as a consumer, I think all these streaming services are fantastic for me –

Jason: They are.

SHY: – but are also fantastic for filmmakers. Because suddenly somebody from Mexico or Iran is able to get their movie seen by masses. I think that's a good thing, but you're saying actually maybe that's –

Jason: Maybe, maybe not. They can get their movie seen by masses maybe, but actually the more streaming there is and the more product there is, the less likely you are ever going to get seen. So it gets back to the old days when it's just about great curation, and (with) Netflix, you find that a lot of these streaming platforms only offer up a small bunch of stuff to you unless you know exactly what you want, and often even if you do you can't find it on that platform. You have to keep going elsewhere.

SHY: To just belabour that point, it tends to send you down the same rabbit warren actually.

Jason: Yes, that's right.

SHY: It doesn't really –

Jason: – offer you new things.

SHY: Yes.

Jason: I think that's a whole new market that's an opportunity, is curation. Curation of everything – travel, with content as well –

SHY: Again, we are talking about the noisier and messier it gets, the more you need not only to find your groove, but you have to help your customers find their groove.

Jason: That's right, yeah.



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SHY: For them to find what it is they love, but also expand the horizons. Not just feed them down the same rabbit warren.

Jason: I think that's why things like conferences still work. Events still work.

SHY: Live events still work, yeah.

Jason: People love them and that's what we discovered with our film as well. Essentially our film, although it's in cinemas, we're sort of independently releasing with a partner and we're controlling the release. So, we get to turn up, we get to sell some merchandise, we get to meet everyone there. Essentially, it's an experience and people are loving that, they are coming out to the film and saying, "Oh, I love that I can meet the directors afterwards and I love that we can chat to them. We can even buy a T-shirt and support them," and then we brought that to the next level which is that 5D dining experience –

SHY: Yes, I wanted to get into that. How did you come up with that idea? How did you execute it and how is it selling?

Jason: Well, it's almost sold out. It was part of the Singapore Food Festival. What we decided to do was we wanted to serve all the food from the movie to the people as they were watching the film. As the food comes out on the screen, which is cool because, we always found that everyone wanted to eat all the food after the film. They're like, "Where can we go for Okinawan food?", and there's one diner in Singapore I think that does Okinawan food, but we thought wouldn't it be great if we can just give it to them right there and then where they can eat during the movie.

SHY: I think it's brilliant because every time I watch that movie – I think I've seen it three times – I get really hungry. So, I tell my friends please eat before you come to the movie.

*(Music break)*

SHY: You guys are basically looking at monetising, I use tech term, to monetise the content that you've created and explore different angles of what they call ancillary revenue to feed what you love. And live events, you think, live experiences is a good thing. But again, I'm going to go back to that VC that told you when you pitched your 'Travel Now', how do you scale that? How do you scale that personal, live experience? How do you scale love?



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Christian: One way is to go to the OTTs [over-the-top] and you do a one-time deal and get your money and just try and get it to as many deals as you can.

SHY: Okay, OTT?

Christian: But OTT is over-the-top –

Jason: – streaming.

Christian: – so streaming like the Netflix and online platforms. So, what we try to do and what we're in the midst of doing, is taking this live experience that we enjoy so much and it really much goes with the reason why we created the film. Now it's just matching people that like that type of film to, which we found here in Singapore, and then scaling that to other territories. But, how do you do that? How do you do live events and scale that? So we're trying to leverage technology to create the ability for partners and other people to take that same live experience with 'Jimami Tofu' and other films, and create that interactive (experience) with food and the event experience, that live experience with a movie. So, it's a little bit early to talk about how, because we haven't released it. But let's just say –

SHY: Okay, that's under wraps.

Jason: [Laughing]

Christian: Yeah, it's under wraps and it's got us so excited that we're spending all our focus on this before we do our next film project, which we have all lined up. We have the whole shape of the next film project lined up, but this comes first.

SHY: So, you want to solve a distribution problem for independent filmmakers before you get into making more content that sits out there because it's so much content out there.

Christian: Yes.

SHY: Let's then talk about another trend in funding because you chose to go independent because you want to control your own narrative. A lot of independent music makers/content creators now have come up with ways to raise funds. You have Amanda Palmer (in) 2012, she started a campaign on Kickstarter to record her album and she raised \$1.2 million. It was the highest ever raised, then I heard in a podcast interview that she actually lost money on the project because she didn't factor in postage [laughs]. So, \$1.2 million and she still lost money. Now what she's doing is that she's trying another (site)



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patreon.com which allows content creators to create subscription services, so your fans actually pay for you to create what you love.

What do you think of those kind (sic) of models? Have you considered some form of crowdfunding to do what you love?

Jason: I think it's great that there's this sort of platform out there for us. It didn't make sense because I think we don't have any friends [laughs]. We didn't have many fans.

SHY: [Laughs] I saw on Facebook – you have many friends.

Jason: We have some friends on Facebook. But when you don't have many fans and no one really knows who you are and you start out, why should they pay for your content? It just doesn't make sense, so we decided that early on that we would get some fans. We didn't know how to get them yet, but we decided first, we've got to make good content. Look at any great band, the Beatles were gigging for years. So, we look at this, turning up to event screenings and everything. This is our gig, we're gigging as a band and we get to meet people and, believe it or not, we're getting fans.

There are fans now that have bought out whole cinemas for the 'Jimami Tofu' screenings and they've bought a whole pile of stuff afterwards just because. They said, "No, I just want to support you." In fact, it came from an idea one night when someone just said, "Well, how do we support you guys?" and we didn't know. We realised that there was no avenue for people to support us if they wanted to, and then as we kept doing screenings, someone actually one night said to Christian who was wearing the 'Jimami Tofu' t-shirt, "Can I buy that?"

SHY: [Laughs] We get that too.

Jason: Oh, yeah okay. Let's make it, next week we have t-shirts.

SHY: Take my shirt.

Christian: I took my shirt off.

Jason: [Laughs] We should have. But next week, we have t-shirts and we sold out the next week, and I thought this is amazing that people actually want to support. But we never had an avenue before and so we gave them the ability to support just by saying. Now all we say is, "Look, if you want to support us, we have t-shirts, we have the score, and we have a script." The score is a CD, like who has a CD player nowadays? But do you know what? People buy the CD more than anything else.



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SHY: Really?

Jason: They said, "I don't even have a CD player, but I want to remember the film and remember this experience," and then we printed out the script. Again, it was something that we didn't want to just make a blu-ray or a DVD, because then it's gone and no one will come to the experience again. We said look, *these are things that are ancillary to it, but can still produce some revenue and support us*, and we always do really good sales.

*(Music break)*

SHY: What about tours? I know that your movie has inspired a lot of people to go to Okinawa, some of my friends said they went to Okinawa based on the movie. Have you thought about 'Jimami Tofu' tours, like Harry Potter tours are huge?

Jason: Yes.

Christian: Absolutely. Okinawa is very difficult to get around, so when we had friends who went over at first, they said, "Well, we saw Okinawa but looked nothing like what was in the movie."

SHY: I think you raised expectations.

Christian: Yeah, we realised that well, let's create a map of all the places that inspired us; the places that we ate, some of the places that we shot at, and then let's figure out how to do a 'Jimami Tofu' the movie tour. We feel that the branding's great and everyone's looking for great experiences, surely if they've seen the film they're going to want to go on this tour. It's still in the works, we're trying to find partners who can do the execution. But whenever we send that map to people they said, "I went here, checked, went here, went here," and so (with) the map alone, they're just DIY their own 'Jimami Tofu' the movie tour.

SHY: If there's one lesson you've learned from this whole process, what has it been?

Jason: Think outside of the box, and also that Singapore is not a small market. We were told all the time as independent filmmakers, "Oh, you know Singapore is so small, you've got to make your movies for somewhere else, and (for) bigger markets and you've got to put famous people in them," blah, blah, blah. When our film kept playing, and playing, and playing in cinemas – we're now in our second year – we realised that, what are we? Five point something million? That's not small and when your film is playing to the demographics that we're playing to, we



*Transcript: Taken from [alifeintravel.net](http://alifeintravel.net)*

turned out at ourselves one night and we said, “I think we could maybe reach one, maybe two million people here.” That's a lot and if we do that, we've got a career.

So that's when we started to change our mind about what a market means, and gosh if a small percentage of that buy t-shirts and some CDs, we've got something going. We don't even have to look beyond our borders. So, it started to make us realise that markets are huge. The world is huge and just putting it on a streaming platform, that doesn't mean much. You've got to still promote (and) curate for people and bring people to your product. That's another yeah –

Christian: – and probably the biggest thing we've learned through this whole process is once you find your groove, stay true to it. In terms of when we tell a story, we don't look the numbers – if we put this star in it, is it going to do something wonderful in the box office? No, we look for the actors that can act, that we like, that get the story. We find our groove, we hold onto it and we execute all the way through. That has proven time and time again to be successful for us. So (it's) whether you measure success in a small group that really connects with your material or the world.

You just can't worry about scale this (or) scale that and chase the money. You really have to just hold on to your groove. As we move into this next venture, with a startup with a great product, there's going to be a lot of tempting offers. But what we have learned is we (need to) hold onto why we're doing it, why we found that groove, why we're groovin' this way, (and) we will succeed and be happy at it.

SHY: Fantastic. I'm going to end this with a rapid-fire (round of) questions. So, favourite family holiday?

Jason: You go first.

Christian: [Laughs] Great. My favourite was actually going to Hawaii. It's the birthplace of my mum, so my two little daughters got to see where their grandma grew up. It was just really enjoyable to see family.

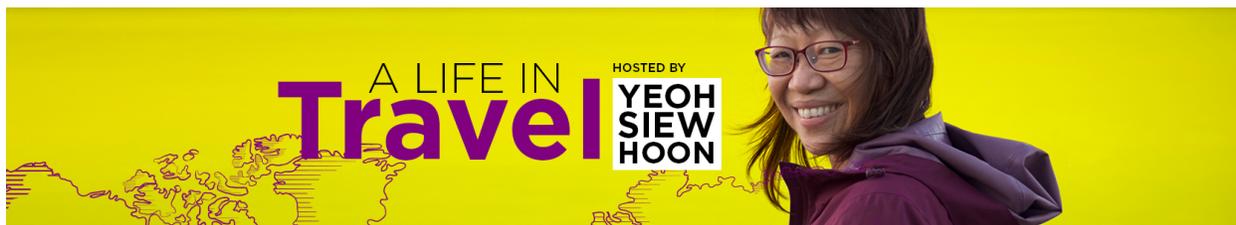
SHY: Hawaii and Okinawa, pretty –

Christian: – Hawaii and Okinawa (are) very similar, yeah.

SHY: Jason?

Jason: My direct family, or like what's a family holiday?

SHY: Your favourite family holiday.



*Transcript: Taken from [alifeintravel.net](http://alifeintravel.net)*

Jason: My favourite family holiday, actually I think it was when I was a child. We went to – there were two – one time when we went to Europe and we're on one of those packaged tours (where we) had to wake up really early every morning. I was fascinated, fascinated with history for the first time because in Australia, we don't have many historic buildings (that are) past 200 years. I was fascinated that these things were really alive a thousand years ago –

SHY: – and that opened your eyes to travel, basically.

Jason: Yes, yes –

SHY: That changed your life, you would say.

Jason: – absolutely. One other one was (when) we went to Disneyland and that changed my perception of the fact that though travel, of course, is the ultimate thing you want to do, that even a facade can take you somewhere. Disneyland and Epcot Center, they're all just facades –

SHY: That is interesting.

Jason: – but it inspired my imagination. I loved it and that's when I really started to fall in love with the fact that films can take you somewhere, even though you're not there. It's your imagination.

SHY: It's such a contrast – Europe and Disneyland – and yet, you found that common theme that it's about places that can inspire you or spark your imagination. All right, favourite travel movie?

Christian: 'Jimami Tofu', for me.

Jason: [Laughing] ... biased.

SHY: Other than 'Jimami Tofu'.

Christian: No, no, and I speak because of the achievements, and so the confidence it's given both of us, because I don't feel like we're anywhere near finished telling stories, making movies and continuing this journey. So, if that was the film that I could only watch, I would choose that because it's the one that empowers me the most.

SHY: That was going to be my next question. What's your favourite travel movie?

Jason: I don't know how to define a travel movie, because a lot of the movies I watched when I was younger were foreign movies, and to me they were travel movies because it was taking me somewhere else. In that sense, I love 'Cinema



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Paradiso' and 'Love Letter', the Japanese movie which was our inspiration to, when we were making 'Jimami Tofu'.

SHY: I was going to ask if you were stranded on a desert island and you could only take one movie with you, what would it be, and he's answered 'Jimami Tofu'. Unless there's another movie you want to throw in.

Christian: 'Siew Hoon Goes on Holiday with Jason and Christian'?

*[All laughing]*

Jason: – or a documentary about how to survive on a desert island? [Laughs]

Christian: That would be useful.

Jason: Actually, 'Love Letter' is one of my all-time favourite films.

SHY: We're going to end this on a fun note. Humour me, because I've forgotten the song that you made me sing, in that opening video in 2011 for Web In Travel.

Jason: You sang it, so you should be able to repeat it –

SHY: No [laughs], I don't –

Jason: – we didn't sing it.

Christian: 'Groove Tonight'? Or 'Groove This Morning'? 'Groove Tonight'.

Jason: 'Groove Tonight'.

SHY: I think it's 'Let's Groove Tonight'. Let's sing a few bars of that, (just) the two of you. I'm sorry, you don't come into the studio and get away with not singing.

Christian: We need the lyrics really quickly, huh?

Jason: Do you remember it at all? It was –

Christian: Do you have it?

Producer: [Whispers] Copyright.

Jason: Oh yes, yes.

Christian: Oh, copyright. Ok. [Singing] Rasa sayang hey, rasa sayang sayang hey, hey lihat nona jauh, rasa sayang sayang hey.

Jason: Rasa sayang..

SHY: [Laughing]



*Transcript: Taken from [alifeintravel.net](http://alifeintravel.net)*

Jason: I can't remember the lyrics.

Christian: Copyright? I think 1920? What? –

Jason: Maybe not. [Singing] Happy birthday to –

SHY: – and that will be the score to the movie of 'Siew Hoon Going on Holiday with Jason and Christian' –

Jason: – because 'Rasa Sayang'.

*[Jason and Christian laughing]*

SHY: – 'Rasa Sayang', feel the love. Thank you, Jason and Christian for that wonderful conversation and inspiring me to making (sic) good content. But it's not enough to only make good content, right? You got to work at it, work at it to spread that content and spread that love. Thank you.

Jason: That's right.

Christian: Thank you so much.

Jason: Thank you so much, Siew Hoon.

*(Music begins)*

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