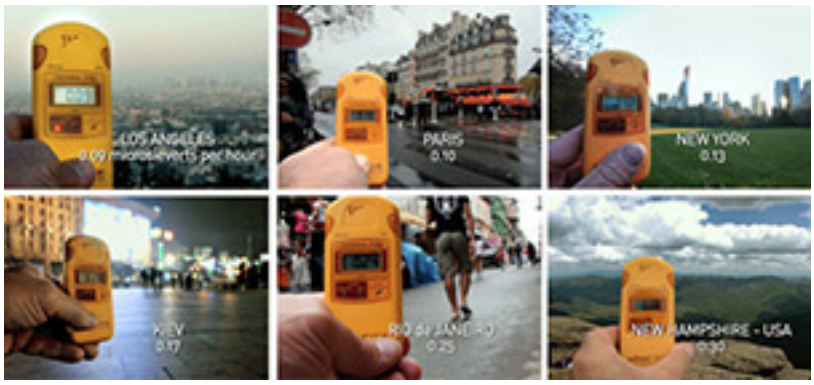
'Pandora's Promise' director talks about Fukushima

MARI YAMAGUCHI, Associated Press

Dressed in white hazmat coveralls and carrying a dosimeter, documentary film director Robert Stone ventured into the damaged Fukushima nuclear plant's exclusion zone a year after a massive earthquake and tsunami triggered meltdowns in three reactors. As he encountered abandoned homes, shops and toppled cars in the scene in his new film "Pandora's Promise," Stone asked a traveling companion, "So, are you still pro-nuclear?"

Stone, a British filmmaker based in New York, confronts viewers with the thorny question of whether nuclear energy should be abandoned because of the Fukushima disaster. His answer is no, because he believes nuclear energy can help solve climate change. Stone was clear about that when he started making the film before the March 2011 meltdowns at Japan's Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear plant. He raises the question as he interviews respected environmentalists who are pro-nuclear, and visits Chernobyl and Fukushima himself to see the aftermath of their disasters. He also travels to major cities around the world, carrying his dosimeter and comparing radiation figures.



"As somebody who was making a documentary that is advocating for more nuclear power, going to Fukushima was deeply disturbing and very emotional," Stone told The Associated Press in a recent interview during a visit to Japan to promote his film ahead of its Japanese opening in February. "You read the dosimeter, you take the readings around and it's not what it should be," he said of his Fukushima visit. "What disturbs people there is that they want everything to be as it was, and it's not."

He found himself torn between his rational half which said nuclear energy makes sense, and his emotional half which warned him of radiation and told him he should

leave the zone immediately. He compared that reaction to the people he met in Fukushima during his visit, including evacuees who nonchalantly smoked cigarettes outside their temporary homes but refused to let their children play outdoors. The film incorporates such mixed feelings "because those are my own feelings as well," he said, acknowledging that he used to be anti-nuclear until he decided that the movement against climate change wasn't going anywhere. His 1987 Academy Award-nominated first documentary "Radio Bikini" was an anti-nuclear film.

Stone said many people expected him to abandon his latest film after the Fukushima disaster, but he continued with it "to say what a lot of people believe but they haven't stood up and said." He now thinks that the Fukushima crisis even reinforces his case.

In the 87-minute film, environmental activists, authors and experts including Stewart Brand, Gwyneth Cravens, Michael Shellenberger and Mark Lynas argue that nuclear power can be safer and more pro-environment than fossil fuel. Anti-nuclear activists like physician Helen Caldicott are portrayed as alarmists and given little space.

He urges Japan to use the Fukushima crisis as a chance to refine its technology, science and engineering to build the world's best reactors instead of withdrawing from nuclear power.

Stone said he hopes the film, which was much talked about at the Sundance film festival in June, will be well received and prompt a discussion in Japan.

"I suspect there are a lot of people in Japan who will quietly acknowledge that this is the way to go, but they are just waiting for somebody to stand up and say it. So I think we'll get support," he said.

To learn more about the film visit...

http://pandoraspromise.com [1]

Source URL (retrieved on *07/24/2014 - 5:22pm*):
http://www.chem.info/articles/2013/10/pandoras-promise-director-talks-about-

fukushima?qt-most_popular=1

Links:
[1] http://pandoraspromise.com