

A man in a red shirt is seen from behind, looking through a telescope at a starry night sky. The Milky Way galaxy is visible in the background. The scene is set in a dark, open landscape with some low hills or dunes. The overall mood is contemplative and focused on astronomy.

ALBERT LIN  
THE LOST  
PEOPLE OF  
ARABIA

**PICA**  
**PICA**  
FILMS

An aerial photograph of a desert landscape in northern Saudi Arabia, showing ancient stone structures. The structures are built from dark, rectangular stones and are arranged in various patterns, including a prominent circular structure on the right side. The surrounding terrain is sandy and hilly, with some areas appearing to be excavated or cleared. The overall scene is bathed in a warm, golden light, suggesting a sunset or sunrise.

**In the remote corners of northern Saudi Arabia, undisturbed for millennia, lie strange shapes and patterns built from stone on a monumental scale. Now, Albert Lin, with a team of international archaeologists and utilising the latest in technology, will reveal the societies who built them.**

A man is shown in profile, looking down and to the right. He is wearing a dark cap with a bright blue headlamp. The background is dark, with a faint light source visible in the bottom right corner. The overall mood is focused and mysterious.

***I have always been inspired to learn about ancient and dwindling cultures because every time I uncover a lost city or find an ancient tomb, I find a lost piece of myself.***

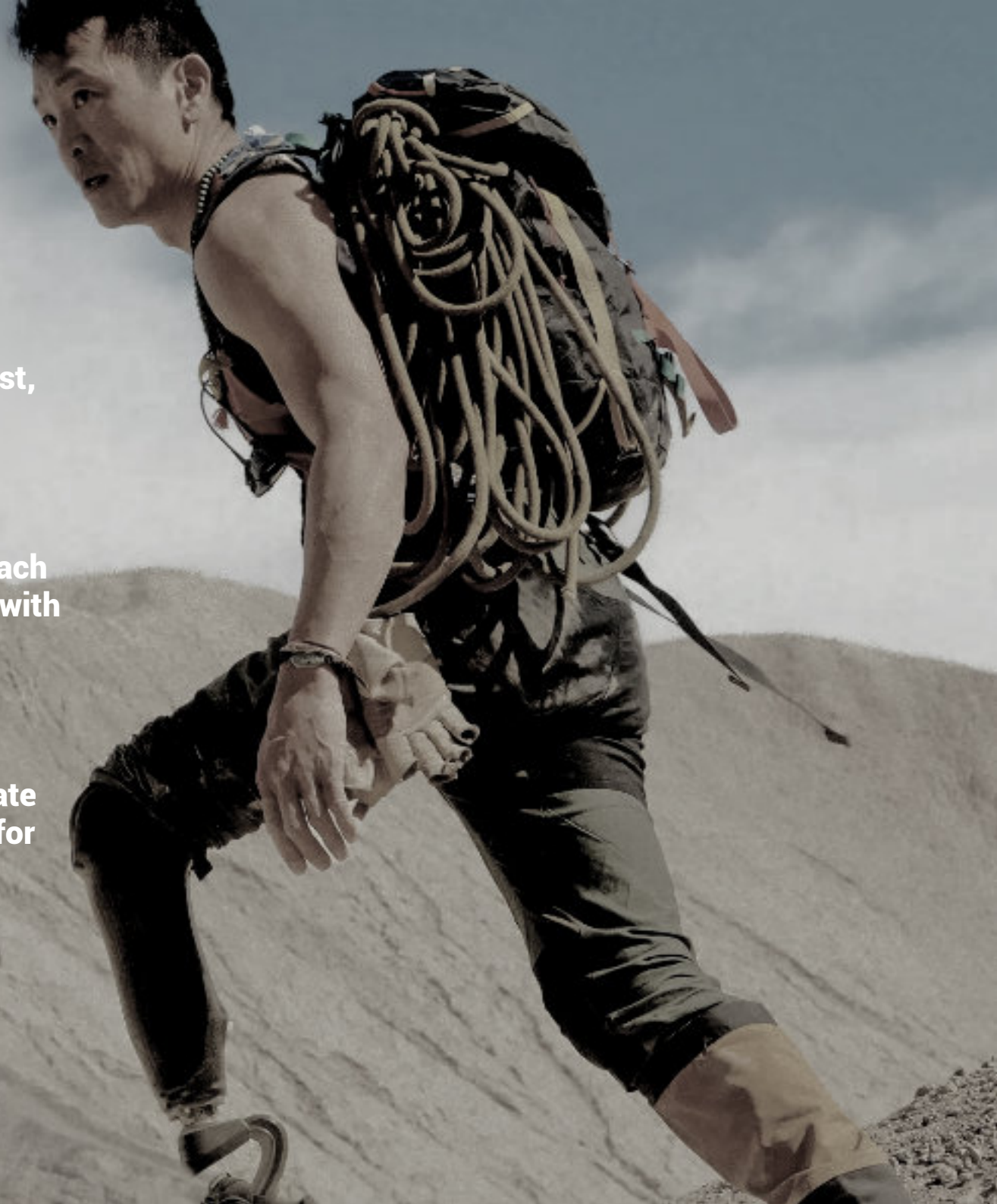
*Alin*

# ALBERT LIN

Albert Yu-Min Lin can be described in many ways: explorer, engineer, scientist, Dad. He has an energy, curiosity and optimism as big as the world he is continually exploring.

He is best known for his unique approach to exploration, combining **technology** with **storytelling** to inspire curiosity and conservation.

As an amputee, from a near-fatal car accident in 2016, he has aimed to create broader access to quality prosthetics for the global adaptive community.





# VISUALSKIES

**Albert's trusted partner in the field is Visualskies, led by Joseph Steel.**

**Powered by drones, LiDAR and photogrammetry, Visualskies are world-leading experts in 3D/4D scanning. As technology pioneers, Visualskies has become a powerhouse hybrid studio, bridging the gap between physical reality and digital worlds.**

**Albert's innovative use of LiDAR as a tool in archaeology has given him some of his greatest insights into our shared human story and is a pillar of his approach to uncovering our ancient past.**



***The tools that we have access to now in this new age of exploration is truly profound. Archaeological sites that would have required years and years of field work can now be mapped in a single afternoon.***

**Joseph Steel, Visualskies**

A person wearing a red helmet and a red life vest is navigating a turbulent white-water rapids. The person is seen from behind, leaning forward as they move through the churning water. The background shows dark, rocky terrain and the white foam of the rapids.

# ADVENTURE+

**At Pica Pica, adventure is in our filmmaking DNA but we believe that adventure is made stronger when it has a genuine purpose driving it.**

**We call this Adventure+.**

# EDITORIAL PILLARS

We guarantee that each episode:

**1.** Will begin with a **crystal-clear mission**: a contract between Albert and the viewer.

**2.** Will unfold like a **detective story**: each new scene providing another chance for Albert to propel the narrative forward.

**3.** Will be driven by dynamic, **adventure-led actuality**. Albert will travel through stunning landscapes to near-inaccessible and remote places – ‘the journey there’ will lead to adventure.

**4.** Will have less scripted narration and more on-location **thought track**. Recording Albert's reactions and thoughts *on-the-go* means we capture a more authentic and heartfelt narration.

**5.** Will have **no PTCs**. Albert's relationship with the camera and the audience grows naturally out of the scene so that the audience is there with him. Sometimes even a glance to the camera is enough.

**6.** Will **never have static interviews**. Archaeologists are Albert's partners, who allow narrative exposition but never in a ‘teachy’ or ‘professorial’ way.

**7.** **Nothing will be faked**. These are Real-world discoveries with the archaeologists that made them.

**8.** Will feature **Indigenous voices** alongside Albert's voice. We hear from our guides and locals to learn their perspective and knowledge of the landscape they live in.

# THE STORY

Across the vast, virtually uninhabited deserts of Saudi Arabia, colossal and mysterious stone structures are known to Bedouin as "*the works of old men*".

Who built them and for what purpose?

Because Saudi Arabia was closed to archaeologists, these massive structures could only be observed remotely, using Google Earth.

**Their origins could only be guessed at.**

Now, as the kingdom lifts its veil, a select group of archaeologists from Australia and France have been granted access.

In just a few archaeological seasons what they have uncovered is nothing short of extraordinary: **revelations have emerged from the desert** that challenge everything we thought we knew about some of our earliest steps as humans, as they piece together a missing fragment of our shared **human story**.

# THE TIMELINE

giant **kite**-shaped hunting traps built in precise and intricate patterns

**mustatil** shared communal ritual structures arrive on the landscape. Showing ritual use of upper cranial elements of horned animals.

this continues for centuries - seemingly content and stable society - but then **suddenly stops**

nothing new found on the landscape - for a thousand years. A millenium long '**dark age**'

a huge flourishing of activity across the landscape - the rise of oasis settlements at **Tayma** and **Quarrayah**

does a climate change event destroy this civilisation for good?

6000 BCE

5000 BCE

4000 BCE

3000 BCE

2000 BCE

1000 BCE

discovery of **circular stone dwellings** and mass graves at Harrat Urwayid

**Petroglyphs** show range of fauna in the landscape: antelope and cattle, perhaps indicating different climate than today.

explosion of monument building across the landscape - a **funerary landscape** of strange pendant-like shapes but this is not communal worship - these are tombs for individuals

# THE PROPOSAL


Across 2x60' episodes Albert Lin takes the audience on an epic and universal story of us.

These are dynamic, actuality driven films, full of emotional heart, **high-stakes adventure**, wild landscapes and crammed with incredible **archaeological firsts**, made by a creative team with adventure in their DNA.

Using **state-of-the-art volume screen reconstructions** and **pin-point accurate photogrammatic CGI** to bring these ancient and enigmatic people to life.

Albert is seeking out an **emotional connection** to these lost people, reaching his hand out across millennia to gain an understanding of who were the builders of these awe-inspiring structures.



An aerial photograph of a desert landscape featuring numerous ancient petroglyphs. The petroglyphs are etched into the dark, volcanic sandstone and include various geometric shapes, lines, and circular motifs. Some larger figures resemble stylized human or animal forms. The surrounding terrain is arid, with sparse, low-lying vegetation and a winding path or road visible in the upper left. The overall scene is a vast, open desert with a high density of archaeological sites.

***It's a spectacular landscape, incredibly dense archaeologically speaking, you know in Khaybar alone we're talking about 150 - 160 thousand archaeological structures just in a 20,000 sq km area.***

***Prof. Hugh Thomas***

# EPISODE BREAKDOWNS

## EPISODE ONE THE RISE OF A CULT

We delve deep into our ancient past and extend our knowledge of our earliest steps as we move from hunter gatherer into pastoral herder, around nine thousand years ago. This is a story of a people who moved into a landscape in northern Saudi Arabia, settled and then made gigantic ritualistic stone structures.

**BACKGROUND:** In the neolithic, we humans learn to farm, herd animals, gain more control of our food sources. This has always thought to have originated in the Levant in what is called the fertile crescent; an area spanning modern-day Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, and Syria, but now **archaeologists are making startling discoveries that challenge that** and extend the boundaries of the fertile crescent south in to Saudi Arabia.

**OPENING:** Beneath a starry sky, lit by torches, people gather for a ceremony, the cranial elements of horned animals skulls are held aloft.

Albert is heading into the remote corners of northern Saudi Arabia.

He is travelling with Jane McMahon, an archaeologist who has discovered **stone dwellings, in the volcanic boulder fields of Harrat Uwayrid** from eight thousand years ago. Albert's LiDAR team are coming with him.

We journey to the far reaches of time to uncover the society who constructed these stone dwellings, how they lived, ate, traded, used the landscape, honoured their dead and why they constructed monumental ritual sites. Who were these people?

**New discoveries come thick and fast** the Australian team have made a startling discovery: nearby the circular stone dwellings a mass grave containing eleven individuals who died around eight and half thousand years ago. We reveal new evidence of how these ancient people lived and died.

### **Key stories:**

Neolithic settlement – the stone circle houses -  
Harrat Uwayrid  
Mass burial sites  
Desert Kites  
Mustatil

## EPISODE TWO

### THE TOMB BUILDERS

**BACKGROUND:** At the beginning of the 3rd millennium BCE, after a thousand years of silence, a sudden flourishing society emerges in the harrats and deserts of northern Saudi Arabia. This previously unknown society builds **simply extraordinary structures, the likes of which, have never before been seen.** Who built them and why?

Archaeologists are now **scrabbling to uncover more about this enigmatic society.**

These tomb builders are different from their ancestors of a thousand years before: these tombs honour individuals. We discover how these tombs are entwined with the landscape – vast funerary avenues that act as way markers between oases or guide herders to high pastures.

We discover brand new evidence - traces of bronze age settlements – what can these findings tell us about these people? **Are these settlements the lost cities of the tomb builders?** Why in the first millennia did this society disappear? Could it be linked to the global 3.2K event – did climatic disaster finish them off?

**OPENING:** a 1920s British biplane carrying mail from Aden flies over northern Saudi Arabia, below, the pilot spots strange and **enigmatic shapes on the desert floor**, like keyholes or pendants, they are isolated and remote, he makes note of his coordinates as he flies north. Albert climbs a rocky volcano at sunrise – the vast expanse of desert rolls out beneath him – he contemplates how entire societies can be snuffed out like a candle and lost to the mists of time.

#### **Key Stories:**

Harrat Khaybar

Jabal Abyad Volcano

Hail sites

Pendant tomb Funerary Avenues

# THE DISCOVERIES





## Desert Kites 9000BCE-6000BCE

Mysterious, beautiful and enigmatic; these **massive prehistoric hunting traps** are found across the volcanic lava fields of northwestern Saudi Arabia and Jordan.

They date back to **between 11,000 and 7,000 years** and are often visible only from the air. The piled rocks form long, funnel-shaped stone walls that converge into enclosures or pits designed to trap herds of wild animals, such as gazelles.

Research shows that the kites were often built strategically along landscape features, taking advantage of topographical changes, and sometimes incorporated into later, more complex, cultural landscapes.



## Pendant Tombs 3000BCE

While the Neolithic saw the rise of massive, collective ritual places, the later Bronze Age (c. 3rd millennium BCE) saw a shift to funerary avenues often constructed as long paths lined with thousands of **individual tombs**.

These massive, intricate and beautiful tombs, varying in design and complexity are perhaps the most enigmatic of the discoveries archaeologists have made in Saudi Arabia. They indicate a high degree of **social complexity**, organized ritualistic behaviour and a shared cultural landscape among Bronze Age pastoralists in northwest Arabia.

## Stone Circle Dwellings – Circa 6000BCE

So little is known about the society or even the origins of the people that built these structures. What we do know is that at around the end of the sixth millennium BCE during the neolithic, people arrive on this landscape and build dwellings with circular stone walls, with an entrance and a hearth in the centre. From the objects archaeologists have found inside, we know that these people **travelled and traded**, tended to herds of goat and cattle and for **a thousand years or more seem settled**.





## Mustatils 5300BCE

Incredible stone structures called Mustatils begin to be constructed across the landscape in the fifth millennium BCE. A mustatil is simply a rectangle (it literally means rectangle in Arabic) and the walls of these structures, up to 500 metres long, have two short ends with a maze-like entrance at one end and a ritual chamber at the other. They were first excavated in 2021 and archaeologists found ritual deposits of only **upper-cranial skull parts of horned animals** - mostly gazelles, cattle and goat. It is a staggering discovery. The size, and energy to build these structures - thousands of tonnes of rock - means this society placed huge importance on the complex, probably communal, **ritual sacrifice** of animals.

# KEY CONTRIBUTORS



**Prof. Hugh Thomas** has been a huge part of the recent discoveries made in Saudi Arabia and took over leading the project from Prof David Kennedy in 2021. His main areas of study are the Neolithic to Bronze Age monumental landscapes of Saudi Arabia, specifically the transition from a ritual to funerary landscape that occurred in the region between c.5000-2800 BCE.



**Dr Melissa Kennedy** is an archaeologist with over 15 years of field and research experience in Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and Saudi Arabia. She is a Research Fellow at the University of Western Australia on the Aerial Archaeology in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Project (AAKSA) and a lecturer in Archaeology at the University of Sydney, as well as Co-Director of PAKEP.



**Jane McMahon** is working as an archaeologist and GIS analyst on the Aerial Archaeology in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (AAKSA) Projects. Her PhD research is investigating recently discovered Neolithic structures known as 'Standing Stone Circles'.



# **PRODUCTION TEAM**

**Pica Pica Films was founded in Bristol, UK in 2025 to make high-end documentaries for broadcast and theatrical release.**

**Our goal is to make films which tell human stories that deepen our understanding of the world and of one another. We believe in documenting people whose actions spark meaningful change in the communities and environments around them. We strive to give a platform to voices seldom heard.**

**At the core of Pica Pica Films are Director, **Stephen Shearman**, Producers, **Matt Fletcher** and **Nadine Tayar** and Director of Photography, **Ossian Bacon**. Together, they bring decades of experience in crafting hugely successful documentaries with global reach, produced for leading broadcasters and theatrical audiences worldwide.**

**We believe that documentaries can inspire hope and drive change.**

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