

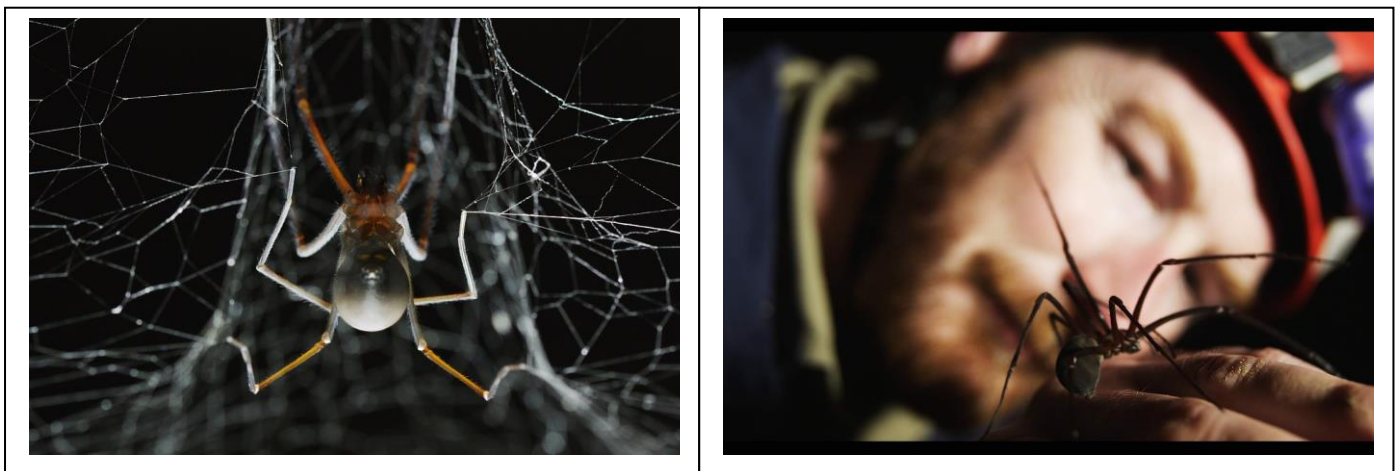


Hidden beneath the World Heritage mountains of Tasmania, giant prehistoric spiders the size of dinner plates seek kinky love in the dark... Neil Gaiman brings a real-world “*Charlotte’s Web*” into our world of rapid change.

The **Tasmanian Cave Spider** has a leg-span of 18cm (seven inches). A holdover from the first age of the dinosaurs and the splitting of the continents, it also has a *very* kinky love life. The quirks of over 200 million years of evolution are shown via a 25+ year scientific research project and seven years of subterranean filming to capture rare prehistoric spider mating rituals in Australia’s deepest caves.

Through award-winning cinematography, ***SIXTEEN LEGS*** looks at the challenge, humour and science of capturing something never-before-filmed, against all the odds!

*A film by Niall Doran and Justin Smith.*



## **SIXTEEN LEGS - SYNOPSIS**

***Featuring: Neil Gaiman, Kate Miller-Heidke, Stephen Fry, Tara Moss, Adam Hills, Mark Gatiss and scientific researchers and experts from around the globe.***

Journey into a world like no other, where giant prehistoric spiders the size of dinner plates seek kinky love in the dark. As the world rapidly descends into the next period of global mass extinction, a message of hope comes from an unlikely hero: a creature, often unfairly reviled, that has survived prior mass extinctions and climatic change in a magical ecosystem hidden beneath the World Heritage mountains of one of the world's last great wildernesses. With spectacular imagery and a dark-fantasy twist by master story-teller Neil Gaiman, this real-world “*Charlotte’s Web*” brings a story of stability and solitude into our world of rapid change. Award-winning cinematography documents the 25th anniversary of scientific research into animals that outlasted the dinosaurs, survived the splitting of the continents and have endured the entirety of human civilisation in Australia’s deepest caves. From the visually stunning wilderness of Tasmania to an underworld few people have seen, this film excites and inspires modern audiences with the joy of adventure in the natural world, and celebrates the wonder of an ecosystem that preceded us and may still outlast us.

- **WINNER: Gold Award – Australian Cinematographers Society 2016**
- **WINNER: 4x Awards of Excellence & 1x Award of Merit Special Mention – Accolade Global Film Competition 2017** (Documentary Feature, Natural History, Cinematography, Editing & Score)
- **WINNER: Accolade Global Film Competition Humanitarian Award 2017 - Outstanding Achievement**
- **WINNER: Frack Fest Multimedia Film Festival 2017, USA** (Best Documentary)
- **WINNER: 8x Awards of Excellence – Impact DOCS Global Competition 2018** (Documentary Feature, Natural History, Direction, Originality, Script/Writing, Cinematography, Editing & Score)
- **FINALIST: Jackson Hole Wildlife Film Festival 2017** (Best Educational Film)
- **FINALIST: Leonardo Da Vinci Film Society/MIFF Awards 2017, Italy** (3x categories: Best Film, Best Documentary & Best Score)
- **OFFICIAL SELECTION: Santa Barbara International Film Festival 2017**
- **OFFICIAL SELECTION: Environmental Film Festival in the Nation’s Capital, D.C. (DCEFF) 2017**
- **OFFICIAL SELECTION: Philip K. Dick Film Festival 2017, New York**
- **OFFICIAL SELECTION: Nayri Niara Good Spirit Festival 2019, Australia**
- **OFFICIAL PRESELECTION: New Zealand International Film Awards 2017**
- **First public screening personally hosted by George R. R. Martin (Game of Thrones) in Santa Fe 2016**
- **SPECIAL EVENT TOUR: Breath of Fresh Air (BOFA) Film Festival 2017 – Tasmania**
- **SPECIAL EVENT TOUR: Wildscreen Festival University Tour – United Kingdom 2018** (Bristol, Nottingham, Oxford, Imperial College, University College London & the Royal Zoological Society).
- **SPECIAL EVENT TOUR: Palace Cinemas, ExiMAX & CMAX – Australia 2018-19** (including special introductions from Neil Gaiman, the Office of the Chief Scientist, the Governor of Tasmania, the Queensland Museum, the WA Screen Academy, the Cave Divers Association of Australia and local researchers, educators and presenters).
- **SPECIAL EVENT: International Congress of Speleology 2017.**

- **SPECIAL EVENT: American Museum of Natural History (NYC) 2018.** Special public screening, co-hosted with the New York Entomological Society.
- **SPECIAL EVENT: Dark MOFO Festival 2018, Museum of Old and New Art (MONA)**
- **SPECIAL EVENT: Marakoopa screening series 2019.** Supported by National Science Week.
- **SPECIAL EVENT: Australian Speological Federation 2019.** Including the launch of the Australian Cave Animal of the Year Program.
- **SPECIAL EVENT: From the Heart Film Festival 2019 (Kangaroo Island, presented with Richard Harris, joint Australian of the Year for the Thai Cave Rescue).** Supported by National Science Week & the South Australian Film Corporation.
- **SPECIAL EVENT: International Congress of Arachnology 2019, Christchurch, New Zealand.**
- **SPECIAL PREVIEW: National Convention of Churchill Fellows 2019, Winston Churchill Memorial Trust** (plus following regional screenings).
- **Global broadcast versions in collaboration with National Geographic Channel and ARTE**
  - **FINALIST & SPECIAL COMMENDATION (broadcast version): Television Documentary Translation Award, France 2018**
  - **OFFICIAL SELECTION (broadcast version): Wildlife Film Festival Rotterdam 2018**

## Associated materials:

### **16 Legs: Spider Love (behind-the-scenes short doco)**

- **WINNER: 2x Awards – Gold Award Winner and Award of Distinction - Australian Cinematographers Society 2014 & 2015**
- **WINNER: Accolade Global Film Competition Humanitarian Award 2016 – Award of Distinction**
- **WINNER: 2x Awards of Excellence – Accolade Global Film Competition 2016 (Documentary Short, Natural History)**
- **FINALIST: Banff Mountain Film Festival, Canada**
- **FINALIST: Jackson Hole Wildlife Film Festival, USA (Marian Zunz Emerging Filmmaker Award)**
- **FINALIST: CINE Golden Eagle Finalist 2016, 59th CINE Golden Eagle Awards, Washington DC**
- **FINALIST: Frack Fest Multimedia Film Festival 2015, USA**
- **FINALIST: New Zealand Mountain Film Festival 2015**
- **OFFICIAL SELECTION: Breath of Fresh Air (BOFA) Film Festival 2015, Australia**
- **INTERNATIONAL PITCH SELECTION: Sunny Side of the Doc 2014, France**

### **SIXTEEN LEGS: Enter the Cave Exhibition**

- **Special Event Tour: Australia 2014-17 (Hobart 2014, Naracoorte 2015, Ulverstone 2015-16, Launceston 2016, Kangaroo Island 2016, Sydney 2016-17 & Penrith 2017).** Supported by the Australian Department of Education, Festivals Australia & the Tasmanian Community Fund.
- **WINNER: Project of the Year 2016-17, Kangaroo Island, South Australia**
- **SIGNATURE EVENT: Australasian Cave and Karst Management (ACKMA) Conference 2015**
- **SIGNATURE EVENT: International Congress of Speleology 2017**
- **SPECIAL EVENT: Jean Cocteau Cinema – Halloween Display 2016, Santa Fe, New Mexico, USA**
- **SPECIAL EVENT: The Australian Science Festival, Australian Museum 2016, Sydney.**

- **SPECIAL EVENT: SPIDERS ALIVE! Exhibition, Australian Museum 2016-17, Sydney**
- **SPECIAL EVENT: Dark MOFO Ogoh display 2018, Museum of Old and New Art (MONA)**
- **SPECIAL EVENT: Children's Festival 2019, Tasmanian Museum & Art Gallery (TMAG)**
- **SPECIAL PREVIEW: Australian Assoc. for Environmental Education (AAEE) Conference 2014**



- ***"A playful, stunning documentary... as epically gorgeous as it is fantastically artful."*** – Edhat Review, Santa Barbara International Film Festival.
- ***"A beautiful nature documentary, expertly presented... a masterful feat captured with resonance!"*** – True/False Film Festival.
- ***"Your story brought a charming, creative and delightfully humanizing dimension to spiders which - from the survey comments we've seen so far - audiences enjoyed immensely."*** – Barbara Stauffer, Session Chair – Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History (D.C).
- ***"I don't think it could ever be said that the work of Attenborough will at any point be irrelevant – but, like all art, there is always room for adaptation and imagination. SIXTEEN LEGS arguably does just that."*** – Wild Melbourne Review, Melbourne test screening of the rough cut.
- ***"Even those of you who don't like spiders will find this story so charming... It's beautiful. They are so elegant, and they move so gently. Astonishing creatures, fascinating!"*** Gillian O'Shaughnessy, ABC Radio Perth.
- ***"This documentary has got rave reviews around the world... You're not overselling it, it looks spectacular!"*** Jules Schiller, ABC Radio Adelaide.
- ***"Mission accomplished: you've changed my mind. I will give spiders a second chance... I like them now. It's happened!"*** Teri Campbell, RTR FM 92.1 Perth.
- ***"Giant Tasmanian Cave Spiders and NEIL GAIMAN!! What more could you possibly want???"*** – GEORGE R.R. MARTIN (*Game of Thrones*).





#### TRAILER:

- [www.facebook.com/BookendTrust/videos/1188773601161623](https://www.facebook.com/BookendTrust/videos/1188773601161623)
- [www.youtube.com/watch?v=hjaUKceiPiQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hjaUKceiPiQ)

#### BEHIND THE SCENES CLIPS:

- [www.youtube.com/watch?v=iiSmQyIY53M](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iiSmQyIY53M)
- [www.youtube.com/watch?v=5sfr-TX17KE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5sfr-TX17KE)
- [www.youtube.com/watch?v=m7hwUf0QKxM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m7hwUf0QKxM)

#### REVIEWS & INTERVIEWS:

- Review from the Santa Barbara International Film Festival:  
<http://www.edhat.com/site/tidbit.cfm?nid=181548> *[copy attached as link is offline]*
- American Association for the Advancement of Science (Publishers of *Science*):  
[www.aaas.org/news/science-documentary-just-time-halloween](http://www.aaas.org/news/science-documentary-just-time-halloween)
- Review/interview from *Wild Melbourne*:  
<http://wildmelbourne.org/articles/shedding-light-on-the-shadows-the-art-of-seduction-in-a-sunken-world>
- *Australian Geographic* article:  
<http://www.australiangeographic.com.au/topics/wildlife/2017/05/cave-spiders>
- *Pop Culture-Y* review from Melbourne:  
<http://popculture-y.com/2017/03/review-sixteen-legs/>
- ABC Radio National interview (Australia) - AUDIO:  
[http://mpegmedia.abc.net.au/rn/podcast/2017/03/bfl\\_20170304\\_1005.mp3](http://mpegmedia.abc.net.au/rn/podcast/2017/03/bfl_20170304_1005.mp3)
- ABC Neil Gaiman interview (Australia): <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-01-17/author-neil-gaiman-drawn-to-film-about-tasmanian-cave-spider/6020080>
- Australian Cinematographers Society article on the filming:  
[http://www.bookendtrust.com/images/pdf/acs\\_lowres.pdf](http://www.bookendtrust.com/images/pdf/acs_lowres.pdf)

## STORY & FILMING:

- This is a never-before-told story of a weird underground world dominated by the love-lives of giant prehistoric spiders the size of dinner plates.
- These are still-living prehistoric animals that outlasted the dinosaurs, survived the splitting of the continents, and have endured the entirety of human civilization within some of Australia's largest and deepest caves. These animals were the first web-spinners on the planet and are at the apex of this extraordinary ecosystem, which in turns influences the wilderness above them.
- The documentary has exclusive access to deep research with a global scientific pedigree. The 25th anniversary of research on these giant animals reveals that they break the rules compared to their surface cousins: they have a very unusual mating strategy that allows the males to survive in the dark, their young take 9 months to emerge from the egg-sacs (instead of 4-8 weeks), they have structurally and chemically unique egg structures to allow the eggs and young to develop for so long, and the adult spiders live for decades (instead of 2-3 years).
- This story is told from one of the world's last great wildernesses, a visually stunning and unbelievably beautiful landscape that meets the highest number of criteria for World Heritage Listing of anywhere on the planet.
- Filming has been undertaken in some of Australia's deepest and most spectacular caves. These are 'Restricted Access', which means they are not open to the public or media due to the high conservation value of the caves themselves, and the fact that only the most experienced cavers can safely access them (only 72 people are allowed access per year). We have been granted exclusive access to film in these highly fragile and dangerous underground environments.
- The journey of the film takes us (actually and figuratively) from the 'normal' and more readily understandable realms of the surface world into the dark recesses of the deep caves. We start on the surface and we head deeper and deeper, encountering the distinct and different conditions, creatures, obstacles and challenges that are found in each stage of this progression underground.
- Each stage helps lay the pathway for the next - taking viewers from a world of familiarity into one that is very alien, but acclimatizing them at each step so that increasingly weird things start to feel normal. Viewers will feel as though they have been on a caving expedition, travelling deeper and deeper before returning to the surface, while also becoming more deeply enmeshed in the finer detail and science of this unusual world along the way.
- The footage has been captured over seven years in 5K resolution. This cinematography has already won a Gold Award from the Australian Cinematographers Society.
- This is a real-life tale of deep science told with a dark fairytale twist by master story-teller and best-selling international author Neil Gaiman (*Doctor Who*, *Coraline*, *American Gods*). The celebrity and pop-culture appeal of the project is increased with atmospheric vocals from chart-topping Australian singer Kate Miller-Heidke and contributions from Stephen Fry, Tara Moss, Mark Gatiss, Adam Hills, and Polly Adams (daughter of Douglas Adams - author of '*Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy*' and '*Last Chance to See*').

- Ground-breaking input has also been added from scientific teams in Australia, New Zealand, the USA, the UK, Germany and Argentina - including experts from Oxford University (UK), Cornell University (US) and the American Museum of Natural History, which places this unique story about one of the oldest Australians into a global scientific context.
- The film is supported by extensive additional products, including two hardback books, teacher and student educational packages for different ages, an extensive online multimedia archive, a behind-the-scenes film that is also a multi-award winner, and a travelling exhibition that has already toured Tasmania, NSW and South Australia (where it was named the Kangaroo Island *Project of the Year*).
- At a time when we are bombarded by messages of doom and gloom, this is an antidote to excite and inspire modern audiences with the joy of the natural world.

#### FILM MAKER BIOS:

**Dr. Niall Doran** (writer, producer, co-director): A zoologist and film-maker, Niall founded the Bookend education program with international best-selling author Bryce Courtenay in 2008. He was the 2012 Australian Geographic Conservationist of the Year, the 2012 inaugural awardee of the Breath of Fresh Air (BOFA) Film Festival Award for Innovation in Filmmaking, a 2016 Screen Producers Australia 'Ones to Watch' Awardee, and a 2017 Churchill Fellow – which led to him working with the BBC on the production of *Doctor Who*.

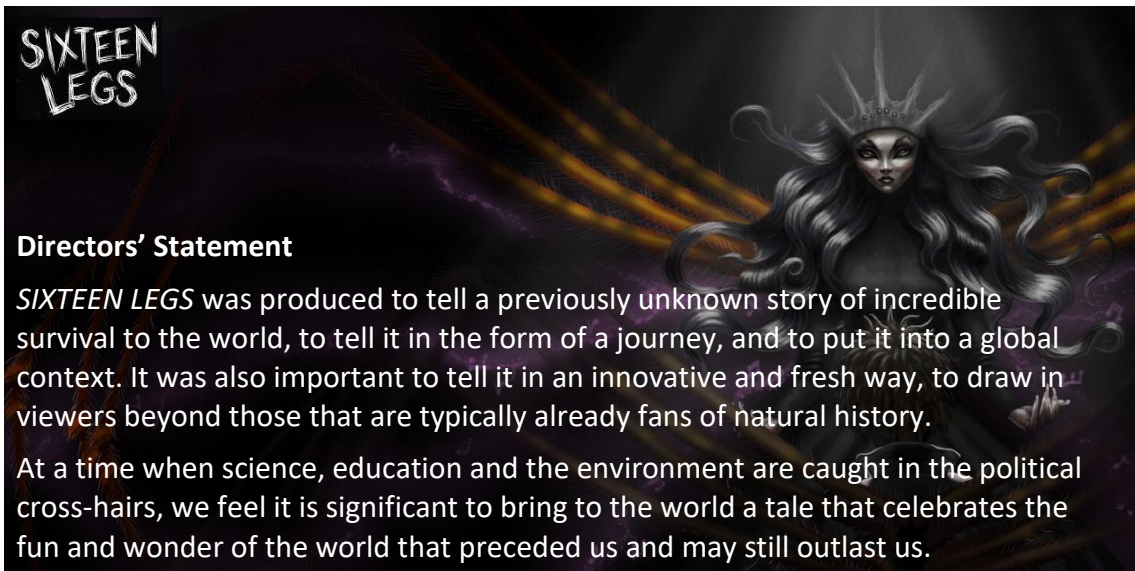
**Justin Smith** (co-director, editor): Justin has dipped his toes into a variety of production work including directing OBs, short films, television adverts, comedy & more. Despite having written and directed two theatrical comedies, editing remains a passion.

Prior to SIXTEEN LEGS, both Niall and Justin worked on the short film “16 Legs: Spider Love”, which told the challenges of the making of the feature version. This had a highly successful global festival reception (including at Banff and Jackson Hole), and the cinematography won multiple awards.

**CONTACT:** Dr. Niall Doran [nd@bookendtrust.com](mailto:nd@bookendtrust.com) +61 409 222 133

**WEBSITE:** [www.sixteenlegs.com](http://www.sixteenlegs.com)

**SOCIAL MEDIA:** [www.facebook.com/BookendTrust](https://www.facebook.com/BookendTrust) **Twitter:** @BookendTrust #SixteenLegs



**SIXTEEN LEGS**


**Directors' Statement**



*SIXTEEN LEGS* was produced to tell a previously unknown story of incredible survival to the world, to tell it in the form of a journey, and to put it into a global context. It was also important to tell it in an innovative and fresh way, to draw in viewers beyond those that are typically already fans of natural history.



At a time when science, education and the environment are caught in the political cross-hairs, we feel it is significant to bring to the world a tale that celebrates the fun and wonder of the world that preceded us and may still outlast us.



# Santa Barbara International Film Festival Review 2017



Santa Barbara Weather: 63.0°F | Humidity: 76%  
 Pressure: 30.03in (Steady) | Conditions: Clear  
 | Wind Direction: South | Wind Speed: 0.0mph  
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February 1 - 11, 2017  
 Denzel Washington Emma Stone Ryan Gosling  
 Casey Affleck Michelle Williams Jeff Bridges

## Sixteen Legs

updated: Feb 12, 2017, 10:22 AM

By Celina Phillipson, Edhat Staff

Directed by Niall Doran, Justin Smith

Written by Niall Doran

Starring Neil Gaiman, Stephen Fry, Tara Moss, Adam Hills, Kate Miller-Heidke  
102 min

Country of Origin: Australia

*Sixteen Legs* is a playful, stunning documentary that brings to light an untold story of one of the oldest species on our planet found deep in the dark caves of Tasmania, Australia. And before you write this film off for its creepy, crawly subject matter, *Sixteen Legs* is as epically gorgeous as it is fantastically artful.

With Neil Gaiman (British author of works such as *Coraline* and *Stardust*) offering a dark-fantasy twist with his sultry poetry matched to enchanting animation, *Sixteen Legs* defies the normal nature documentary, giving viewers a whimsical transition between the facts and interviews. Directors Doran and Smith have absolute knowledge of their subject matter, splicing in interviews from arachnophobes to spider specialists, allowing the viewer to get comfortable as they approach the main topic of the film - kinky spider sex.

Before the intense shots and dissemination of their twenty-three years of research happens, *Sixteen Legs* begins with broader subject material - going from the history of Tasmania itself as a World Heritage listing, Tasmanian Aboriginal cultural significance, background information of geoformations of caves, each zone of the cave and the species found there, to finally - cave spiders, found in the deep caverns where there is no light whatsoever. It isn't until over halfway through the movie that the spider scenes begin, giving the viewer thorough knowledge on cave ecosystems and their fragile beauty.

*Sixteen Legs* puts forth unprecedented knowledge in the mating cycle of the cave spider, *Hickmania troglodytes*, a prehistoric species the size of a dinner plate that has survived the splitting of the continents. Because of their ancestry, their research has filled in the gap for other entomologists.

In the question and answers session after the film, Dr. Doran discussed the trials of this fascinating story that needed to be told to celebrate the fantastic, and often, over-looked world around us. His findings in the cave spiders mating cycles was published in 2001, and the idea to share it with the world in the form a film came about ten years ago. After five years of conceptualization and waiting for the proper technology to be created, the film took five years to film and create. Because the cave spiders life can span decades, shooting the mating scenes took two years, with the first year producing no results. With camera crews spending three months continuously in the caves, tight squeezes that press into your rib cage if you breathe, and Tasmanian conservation restrictions that allow a maximum of 72 people to enter specific caves a year - the film certainly had struggles to overcome.

Ultimately, the film ends on a note to urge us to be aware of the world's fascinating beauty, remarking on the fast paced anthropomorphic change on the surface while the spiders continue their slow, cyclical life cycles. Film profit goes to the research and cultivation of science, including international educational field trips through Doran's non-profit organization [Bookend Trust](#).



Director/Writer Niall Doran introduces the film and has a Q&A afterwards



Researcher and Sixteen legs Co-Director Dr Niall Doran and spider (Photo: Joe Shemesh/Bookend Trust)



Tasmania - more than just the spiders (Photo: Joe Shemesh/Bookend Trust)



Cave spider dismantling a cave cricket before consumption (Photo: Bookend Trust)



LOST - Production Art by Jodee Taylah (Photo: Bookend Trust)





*"A playful, stunning documentary... as epically gorgeous as it is fantastically artful."* – Santa Barbara International Film Festival

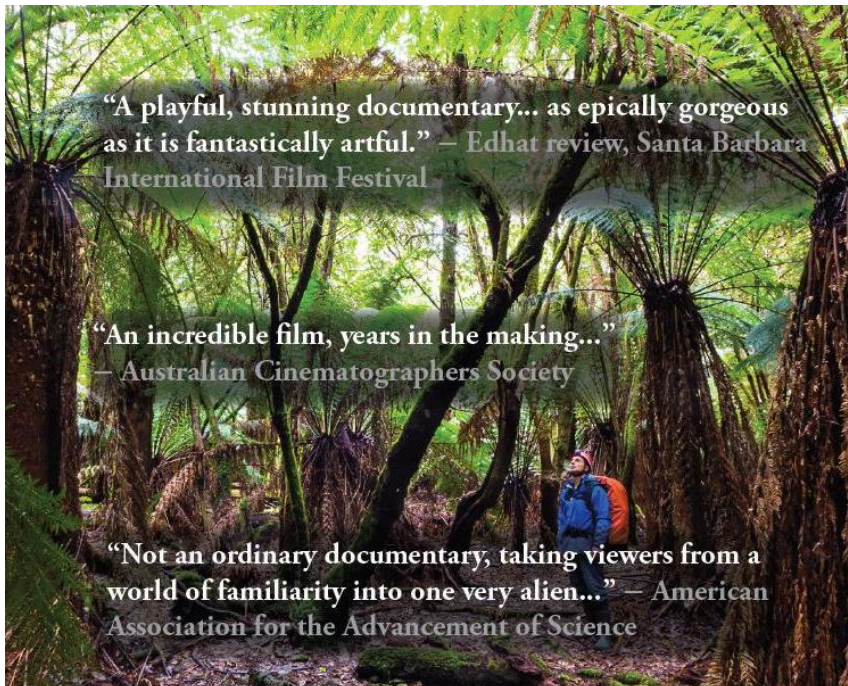
NEIL GAIMAN BOOKEND TRUST  
**SIXTEEN  
LEGS**

A real-world 'Charlotte's Web' featuring **Neil Gaiman, Kate Miller-Heidke, Stephen Fry & Tara Moss** in a feature-length adventure based on the critically acclaimed short film **'16 Legs: Spider Love'**.

*"Giant Tasmanian Cave Spiders and Neil Gaiman!! What more could you possibly want???"*  
– **George R.R. Martin**  
(*Game of Thrones*)







"A playful, stunning documentary... as epically gorgeous as it is fantastically artful." – Edhat review, Santa Barbara International Film Festival

"An incredible film, years in the making..." – Australian Cinematographers Society

"Not an ordinary documentary, taking viewers from a world of familiarity into one very alien..." – American Association for the Advancement of Science

# SIXTEEN LEGS

Giant  
prehistoric  
spiders  
seek  
kinky  
love

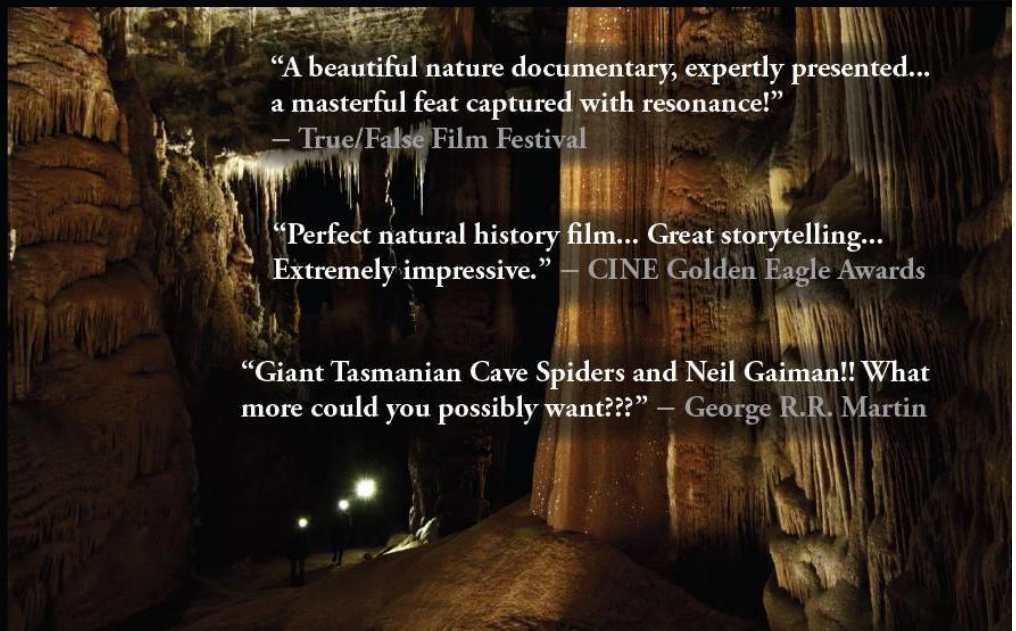
A real-world 'Charlotte's Web' featuring  
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in a feature-length adventure based on the  
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Award of Excellence  
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2014



Award of Distinction  
Australian Cinematographers Society  
Wildlife & Nature Cinematography  
2015



"A beautiful nature documentary, expertly presented... a masterful feat captured with resonance!" – True/False Film Festival

"Perfect natural history film... Great storytelling... Extremely impressive." – CINE Golden Eagle Awards

"Giant Tasmanian Cave Spiders and Neil Gaiman!! What more could you possibly want???" – George R.R. Martin

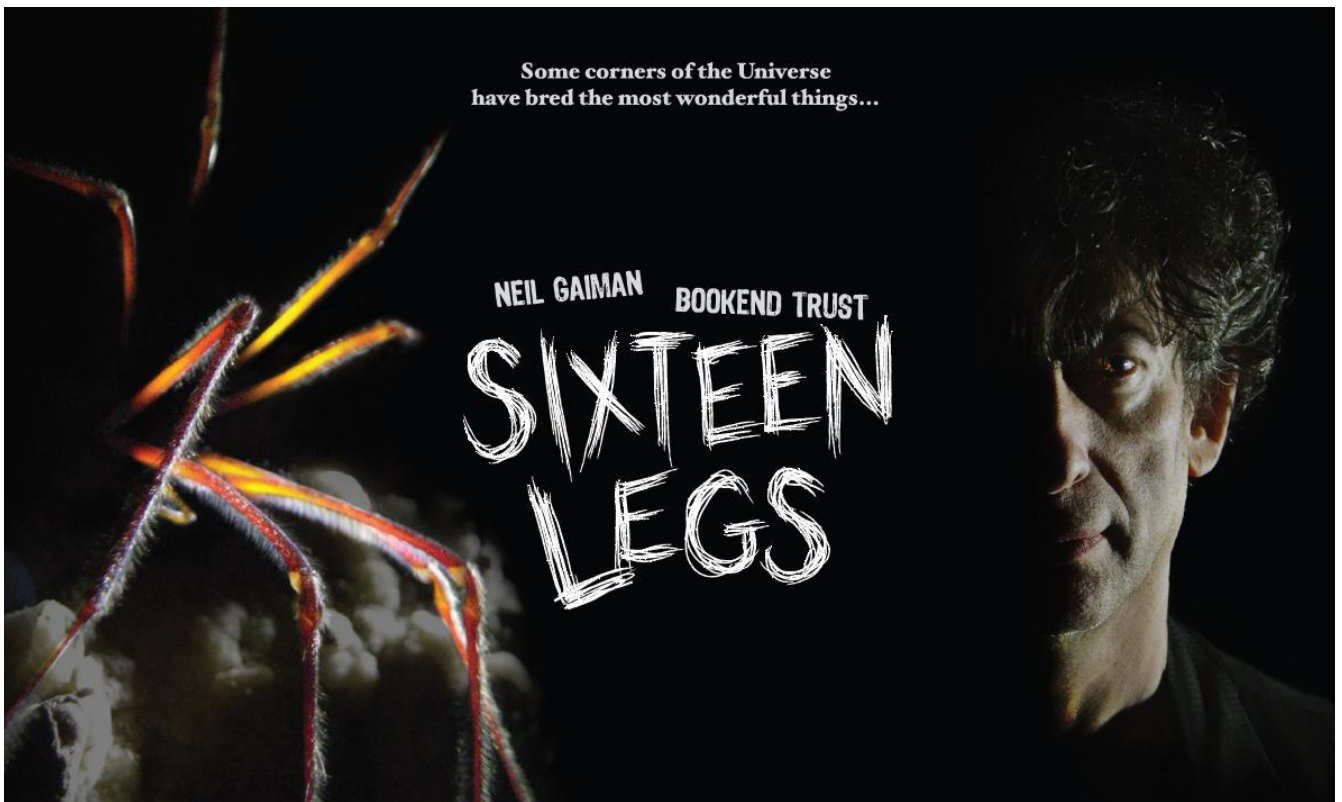
BE PART OF THE EMERGENCE: [WWW.SIXTEENLEGS.COM](http://WWW.SIXTEENLEGS.COM)

Bookend  
Trust









The Bookend Trust is the educational arm of the Pennicott Foundation, and undertakes charitable programs to inspire students with the natural world. Our recent projects have provided opportunities for impoverished students to access education to escape the trap of people trafficking in Thailand, have helped students install alternative power supplies for medical equipment in remote Fiji (providing both medical benefits and a means of transitioning Fijian communities away from fossil fuels to renewable energy systems), have involved disadvantaged students undertaking endangered animal surveys across Australia, and have even flown students to Antarctica in exciting, inspiring career-development programs.

