



CHRIS RAINIER

vision quest

RAINIER'S LAST TRIBES

The leeches in New Guinea are worse than the malaria, avows **Chris Rainier**. The photographer has suffered both in his stalwart effort to document the island's tribes, but those afflictions seem a small price for the magnificence of his new book, *Where Masks Still Dance*, to be published by Bulfinch this fall. This hallucinatory image of a riverside initiation rite is the book's cover, and one of 110 plates. "I wanted to take masks, and the other artifacts of tribal culture, out of the museum,"

explains Rainier. "I wanted to show who makes them and how they're used—to breathe spiritual life back into them."

For Rainier, that commitment took on the kind of urgency that compelled turn-of-the-century photographer Edward S. Curtis to make his record of American Indian culture. "Even in the ten years I've been going to New Guinea, I've seen profound changes," he says. "The Japanese and Malaysians are cutting down the rain forests, and CNN has arrived by satellite dish. I've seen people in grass skirts watching the O.J.

Simpson trial." Yet Rainier arrived in time to make first contact with some of the tribes he photographed. Says the photographer, "The idea was to do an art book that also had anthropological value."

● *Rainier shot with a Hasselblad 500C and 50mm f/4 Zeiss Distagon wide-angle lens. The exposure was 1/30 second at f/11, handheld, on Kodak Tri-X; off-camera fill flash was provided by a softbox-diffused Norman 400B strobe.* ★

MONITOR BY RUSSELL HART