Today’s world is full of colonists’ descendants rushing to ex-colonies to make amends. *Stones Have Laws* is a documentary by three Dutchmen set in ex-Dutch Suriname. This bewitching movie enacts a handover of history-creating power. The directors — Lonnie van Brummelen, Siebren de Haan and Tolin Erwin Alexander — spoke with native islanders whose slave forebears haled from Africa. They drew out their stories, proverbs and wisdoms; then transformed them into scenes of drama-recitative set like *tableaux vivants* in scenic exteriors. Riversides; forests; craggy vales.

One foundation myth is a Flood variant. Others feature jungle gods and spirits. The archetype of the white-man slaver is here, now remade into a destroyer of forests. If the movie sounds like a chastisement exercise, it is; but more too. It celebrates a people’s animist creeds and dreams: “The way we are here, things speak to us.” It depicts their nature-based art, craft and fables. (In loving detail a man is observed fraying a palm branch into an ornate mini-arch.)

And it renders truth and history into a vernacular at once free and formalised, jubilant and ironic. In the almost-last scene, characters discuss the documentary itself: its genesis, its agenda, and the possibility, even faint, that it is just a Trojan horse heralding more invasion by the white man and his spirit.

★★★★☆