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UN CERTAIN REGARD

Raya Martin's
INDEPENDENCIA



INDEPENDENCIA

a film by Raya Martin

International Sales & Festival MEMENTO FILMS INTERNATIONAL

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Independencia is part of the Artscope Label.
*Some films deserve special attention and delicate care,
Artscope films are exceptional, true works of Art.*



Synopsis

Early 20th century Philippines.

The sounds of war signal the arrival of the Americans. An aging mother and her son flee to the mountains, hoping for a quiet life. One day, the son discovers a wounded woman in the middle of the forest, and decides to bring her home.

Years pass. The man, the rescued woman and their child live in total isolation from the growing chaos all over the country. But a coming storm soon threatens their existence, and American troops draw nearer...

Interview with Raya Martin

What is the historical context in Independencia, compared to your previous film A short film about the Indio Nacional?

The movie *Indio Nacional* shows the premises of a revolution against the Spanish domination. Historically, this revolt led to the Declaration of Independence, granted by Spain in 1898. But simultaneously, Spain lost the war against the United States and we were sold to them. From there on, the United States refused to validate our Declaration of Independence and entered our country by force, to annex us. The Philippines were then part of the United States. The story of *Independencia* is set in the context of this second colonization. The USA disguised their imperialism behind talks about rescuing us, under the pretences of divine intervention. The president William McKinley once declared that he was praying to get answers on the fate of the Philippines. One must believe that God told to him to destroy everything and to replace the Spanish colons.

When the Spanish arrived in mid sixteenth century, they built inside our cities. The population fled to the mountains, it was a form of resistance: the insurgents and proletarians decided to live outside. History repeated itself when the Americans started to occupy the towns in the beginning of the twentieth century. It is an intuitive thing, I guess: the memory of colonization has created a tradition of resistance. This spirit is commonly found in the oral culture.

How long have you been working on Independencia and on the project of a trilogy on the history of the Philippines?

I started to work on *Independencia* when I was at the Cinefondation, around the time of the release of *A short film about the Indio Nacional* (2005), the first part of a series of historical films set in the different times of struggle in the Philippines. I should have replaced the word trilogy by series; if I didn't do so, it is because in the historical chronology there have been three different invaders in the Philippines: Spain, the United States and Japan. Besides, the term colonizing should be understood in a supple

way. The times of struggle spread before and after the traditional chronology, notably during the pre-colonial period and under the regime of Marcos.

In the Cinefondation, I wrote a short but detailed treatment on the story of the mother and son. It was a pattern of simple actions (eating, breathing, walking) and notes on the mood of natural elements, such as the wind, the water, the skies...I wanted to shoot rapidly, live in the mountains with a 16mm camera and a small crew, in a rather documentary style, but this never happened. So the project became a part of the struggle series. Meanwhile, my intentions changed. The idea was not to simply imitate the style of a particular period but to follow the evolution of a film director, from the silent films to the talking pictures. The studio component was therefore introduced, and I started to work on a more conventional script. That was three years ago.

Why did you choose the aesthetics of the studio era?

In the Philippines, the story of cinema parallels the one of the colonial situation. The origins of Filipino cinema come from the Spanish masters. On the opposite, the most influential structure, which still resonates today is Hollywood. *Indio Nacional* and *Independencia* are both about the history of our country and the history of the cinema of our country. Formally *Independencia* mimics the aesthetics of studio films during the American occupation, whereas the story focuses on the resistance during the same period. The idea was to expose the Hollywood substrate and subvert it to redefine our struggle. The fake newsreel in the middle of the film is a good example: it is based on the true story of an American and the death of a local boy. This segment is similar to the intermission that we had in the theaters at the time.

Can you describe the effects you used to give this studio look to the film?

In the beginning, I was looking for an old studio film effect, in which the image

would tremble inside the frame. But it soon appeared that making static shots from start to end would have its limits. Neither did I want a massive studio in which the camera could easily evolve, like in the American musicals. We had to take into account the limits of filmmaking of that time and add to them the limits of a poor national cinema like ours. The idea of a studio answered the imaginary based on certain knowledge of the style and techniques of that time. But it was never too conceptual. Just like *Indio Nacional*, it didn't matter to have a perfectly documented aesthetics, but rather a mix of the techniques and style of that era and my own artistic formation. These scenes speak to me as if they were both personal and national chronicles.

In the film, storytelling has a great role, everyone has his or her own stories. Curiously the moments of storytelling are the most realistic parts in the film, where everyone is delirious, dreaming, fantasizing...

Storytelling took a big part in my childhood. My dad used to work for the biggest children's book publisher. He was not just a writer but also a storyteller. I grew up in an almost fantastical environment, but always rooted in practical details. I think this is very Filipino. Later, when I traveled in the country, I found out that our people love to tell stories, and

that they are very good at it. Our national psyche is founded on a narrative structure. This can be seen in our cinematographic tradition. This is why it was important for me to include this element. The aesthetics of Hollywood is finally a rather superficial component, as opposed to the narration, which is by all means Filipino, something of a fluid trip, dreamy and sensual. Personally, I like to hear stories because my vision of storytelling is not common. Most of the time, I have problems connecting things; my own logic is never in the right spot. Things I imagine end up in a completely different place. This is something quite magical.

Did you have specific visual references?

Yes, the photo studios in the early 20th century with painted backgrounds, so typical of an era. The mixture of exteriors and interiors mostly intrigues me. Matte paintings are associated to natural elements, like plants or floors. There is something quasi-hollywoodian in this artificiality. In television, people expect a naturalism that interacts with the elements of the studio. I wanted this artificiality to work with something truly natural, like an intimist film in the woods.

Interview by Eugenio Renzi and Antoine Thirion for Shellac



Raya Martin (Director)

Born in 1984 in Manila, Philippines. Graduated from the University of the Philippines Film Institute in 2005. Worked as writer and researcher in local television, newspaper, radio and online magazines.

His short film “Bakasyon” won the Ishmael Bernal Award for Young Cinema at the 2004 Cinemania International Film Festival, and his documentary “The Island at the End of the World” won Best Documentary at the 2005 .mov International Digital Film Festival.

“A Short Film about the Indio Nacional (Or The Prolonged Sorrow of the Filipinos)”, his first feature film, won Best Film at the 2006 Pesaro Film Festival. His second feature “Autohystoria” was awarded Best Film and Best Director (Digital Lokal) at the 2007 Cinemania International Film Festival. It also received a Special Mention at the Festival International du Documentaire de Marseille.

He is the first Filipino filmmaker to be accepted in the Cinéfondation Résidence of the Cannes Film Festival. A retrospective of his works have been featured in Paris, Buenos Aires, Mexico City, and Las Palmas de Gran Canarias.

His previous work, “Now Showing”, is part of the 40th Directors’ Fortnight of the Cannes Film Festival 2008. Martin is also a recipient of the 13 Artists Awards of the Cultural Center of the Philippines. Two of his films, namely Independencia and Manila are selected in the Cannes Film Festival, Official Selection 2009.



Cinematografica (Producer)

Based in Manila, Philippines. Born under the partnership of director Raya Martin and producer Arleen Cuevas when they met in Berlinale Talent Campus in Berlin Film Festival 2005. Their first film feature, “A Short Film about the Indio Nacional (Or The Prolonged Sorrow of Filipinos)”, co-financed by the Hubert Bals Fund, is garnering critical acclaim from international film festivals and won the Lino Micciché Award at Pesaro Film Festival 2006 in Italy.

Their latest projects include, “Now Showing”, selected in the Director’s Fortnight, Cannes Film Festival 2008, “Next Attraction”, which won Grand Jury Prize at Cinemania Film Festival in 2008 and “Independencia”, which is currently selected in Cannes Film Festival, Official Selection, Un Certain Regard 2009.

CIF’s vision is to create and promote Filipino independent films for the world.

Cast

Sid Lucero (Son) is a young Filipino actor gaining wide-acclaim for his off-beat character roles. He recently won Best Actor for the Urian Awards and Tanglaw Awards 2008 for the film “Selda”. He is also nominated in the Star Awards 2008 for Best Actor in “Tambolista (Drumbeat)”. In 2007, he won Best Breakthrough Performance for the film “Donsol”.

Tetchie Agbayani (Mother) is a film and television actress in the Philippines. She was nominated as a Best Supporting Actress for the Famas Awards in 2007 for the film, «Close to you».

Alessandra de Rossi (Stranger) is an award-winning young Filipina film and television actress. At 16, she won Best supporting actress for the film “Azucena” for the Famas Awards and Best Supporting Actress at the Metro Manila Film Festival for “Hubog” in 2001. She starred in the critically acclaimed films “Muntig Tinig (Silent Voice)” and “Homecoming”. She also starred in the Singaporean film, “The Maid”.



Jeanne Lapoirie (Cinematographer)

One of the leading French cinematographers. She studied at Louis Lumière from 19882 to 1984. She then started working as a caméra assistant with Thierry Arbogast, and her first film as a DOP is, «Les Roseaux Sauvages”. She is best known as the Director of Photography of Francois Ozon’s films, including, «8 Femmes», «Under the Sand» and «Time to Leave». She was nominated for best cinematography for Cesar («8 Femmes»). She has photographed over 50 films, and her most recent films in France include «Possibility of an Island», «Actresses», «La Promenade» and «Parc».



Cast and Crew

Producer
Delegate Producers
Production Company

Arleen Cuevas
Antoine Segovia, Christophe Gougeon
Arte France Cinema, Cinematografica (Philippines),
Atopic (France), Razor Film (Roman Paul, Gerhard Meixner / Germany),
Volya Films (Denis Vaslin / Netherlands)
Ramon Sarmiento, Raya Martin
Jeanne Lapoirie
Digo Ricio
Armi Rae Cacanindin
Lutgardo Labad
Ronald de Asis and Arnel Labayo
Jay Halili
Sid Lucero, Tetchie Agbayani, Alessandra de Rossi, Mika Aguilos
Winner, Best Project, Cinemart 2008,
Prince Claus Film Fund,
Fonds Sud Cinema, World Cinema Fund,
Hubert Bals Fund, Global Film Initiative

Scripwriter
Director of Photography
Production Designer
Assistant Director
Music
Sound
Editor
Cast
Awards
Recipient of the film grants



design: la gachette

cinéma de la ville d'ATOPIC

arte

razor
FILMPRODUCTIONS

VOLVA



CINEMART

Fonds
National Cinéma



Ministère de la Culture

Ministère de la Culture

Ministère de la Culture

Ministère de la Culture

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