

in the absence of the sun

a lucky kuswandi film
produced by john badalu
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Winner

Produire Au Sud (Best Film Project)
Bangkok World Film Festival 2006

Official Selection

Produire Au Sud – Festival des 3 Continents (Nantes) 2006
Boracay Co-Production Meeting
Cinemanila Film Festival 2006.

In Competition

Feature Script Development
Jakarta International Film Festival 2005

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Introduction

A tender, melancholic night is experienced through the eyes of three sleep-deprived, restless spirits as they struggle to find themselves in this ever-changing jungle of Jakarta. Battling their past baggage, present confusions, and future hopes, they are driven to resolve their open-heart yearnings through the people they share the night with along the way.

Synopsis

It is one of those nights in Jakarta. The sun quietly goes to sleep and the rain begins to drizzle. The buildings are blinking, accompanied by the traffic that never dies down. On such harsh, unforgiving streets, some sell flowers, others sing with their guitars. Some sell their bodies, others sell their souls. Underneath the glowing streetlights, three intimate stories are told simultaneously, mirroring each other to create a kaleidoscopic harmony.

A high-spirited woman returns home after living abroad for ten years. Calling Jakarta “home” is ironic, since she feels foreign and unable to function. She is jet-lagged and culture-shocked, surrounded by a conservative and pressuring society that discourages her individuality. Refusing to surrender to the city’s set of rules and imperatives, she decides to escape tonight through a reunion with a clandestine lover from her past. She needs to see him because he reminds her of that part of life she’s unable to let go; one where everything seemed freewheeling and possible. The night becomes her search of a new ground through an introspection of her previously disillusioned, gradually-dissolving home.

A self-proclaimed hopeless romantic decides to lose his virginity tonight. He is 24 and gay, yet never experiences love or lovemaking with another man. He never feels at home to the city’s defined but inauthentic gay life. He yearns for a prince charming who will sweep off his feet and rescue him from his misery. However, the clock is ticking and tonight he will turn 25. In an attempt of desperation, he decides to leave home and searches for that figure whom he’ll give his body to as his greatest birthday gift, even if it means losing his soul along the way.

A young man has just lost his father. The death shocks him but never brings the sadness he expects. Being an only child in such conforming Indo-Chinese society, he is already expected to fill into his father’s shoes, yet he is still attempting to find the source of his unexpressed grief. Overwhelmed, he decides to seek out the answer by exploring his own father’s mysterious figure. This search transports him from his cold yet secure upper-class home to a volatile, dingy local bar where his father used to frequent. In this most unlikely honest place, he will encounter a lower-class lounge singer that he instantly feels connected to. Only through this woman will he be able to identify the happiness, desperation, and the longing of his own father.

In such hours where the sun is absent, these souls will find a new sense of beginning. There is a new home to rest on even though the sun will rise again and the city will everlastingly change. It is a glimmer of new possibilities, and as the day begins again the three sleep-deprived spirits will finally be able to close their eyes.

Director's Statement

Nighttime is an uncertain, fragile moment. Because it is dark, it creates desperate times when suddenly people reveal their masks, their true selves. They behave according to their carnal desires, but only temporarily. Because as the day begins again, they put on their masks (and behavior). Suddenly their own identity becomes a big blur.

Jakarta is an uncertain, fragile city. It is definitely moving towards an exciting direction, but none of us know what direction it is. Everything is in transition... from the government, the mixed-up culture, even the houses that come and go thanks to the big damaging flood every five years. It is a place where everything clashes without its own sense of identity. Since everything is a big blur, the only thing one can do is to just live in the moment, and to take the most out of the city when we can. Some does it to the extreme of damaging the city, but some enjoys the fulfillment the city does offer, even though it happens in flashes of seconds.

Nighttime in Jakarta can be somber and depressing. But it produces some of the most magical, transitional little moments especially for those who cannot sleep. Those who are forced to experience the disappearance of the sun. Those lonely sleepwalkers who are looking for an escape, a temporary sanctuary, so that the next day they can regain themselves again, put on their masks, and continue their lives toward uncertainty.

Lucky Kuswandi

Producer's Statement

Jakarta is probably like New York City to Americans. Everybody has a dream to go there and become successful. Many stories can be told from all different perspectives. Like many other big cities, the people who live in it somehow feel alienated and lonely. It's a universal theme that anybody can relate to.

Jakarta is actually the main actor of this film *In The Absence of The Sun*. Jakarta city in this film will have a different look. Rainy, grey, depressing but romantic. You can find some crowds any time of the day. It's lively 24 hours. Insomniac is a new religion for some people. I'm trying to produce a film that will make the Jakartans hopefully have another opinion about this city. Furthermore, it is set in Jakarta and not Bali. People tend to think Indonesia is Bali, an endless white sand beaches with coconut trees. So, this film will show that there are other big cities with the urban lifestyle as well.

The film will be shot mostly in the evenings to show more on the nightlife but not necessarily the glamour side of it. Nights in Jakarta can be spent in cheesy bars but also outdoor places that haven't been exposed very often. Told through three young main characters from very different background, it represents some of the young generations today. With the dream casts of some famous Indonesian celebrities like Nicolas Saputra, Shanty, and Fachri Albar, this will attract the young crowds who are the main moviegoers in Indonesia.

One of the character is a gay guy. Gay issues are still sensitive in this most populated Moslem country. It will create a controversy but at the same time it will be a good selling point. It has become a hot issue for the past few years.

The reason why I want to attach to this project is because I like Lucky Kuswandi's short films (*Black Cherry* and *Still*). *Still* has been screened in a handful film festivals worldwide. He is one of the few directors who can visualize delicate mood successfully in a film. He is definitely a name to be noted in the future. After working in the film promotion and festivals, I think it's time to move on to the production side. Being a producer will be the one that I would like to become. And I think *In The Absence of The Sun* will be a good start for myself.

John Badalu

Production Details

Country of Production: Indonesia

Format: HD

Estimated Running Time: 90 minutes

Estimated Budget: EURO 304,000

Production Schedule

	Stage	Estimated Dates
1	Screenplay (Final Draft)	May 2007
2	Development	Oct 2006 – May 2007
3	Pre-Production	August – October 2007
4	Production	November 2007
5	Post-Production	December – March 2008
6	Release	May 2008

Lucky Kuswandi

Writer & Director

Lucky Kuswandi was born and raised in Jakarta, Indonesia. He went to Los Angeles to study filmmaking and received a Bachelor of Fine Arts from the Art Center College of Design, Pasadena. He has produced and directed four short films that has been widely received and screened in film festivals worldwide. Ever since he returned to Jakarta in 2005, he has become one of Indonesia's most promising young filmmakers. For the past two years, he has been selected to participate in the tightly-competitive Jakarta International Film Festival Script Development Program. In 2006, he won the coveted title of Best Film Project for his script of his upcoming feature film "Miss Indonesia." Earlier in the same year, he also was invited to be a part of the prestigious Berlinale Talent Campus. He was selected among more than 6000 applicants around the world. Currently, Lucky works in Jakarta and is preparing his first feature film "In the Absence of the Sun."

Filmography

Miss Indonesia (2009 – upcoming feature film)

Supported by the Hubert Bals Fund

Winner Best Film Project at the Jakarta International Film Festival 2006 (Script Development Competition)

In the Absence of the Sun (2008 – upcoming feature film)

Winner Produire au Sud (Bangkok) for Best Film Project 2006

Official Selection Produire Au Sud – Festival des 3 Continents (Nantes) 2006

Official Selection Boracay Co-Production Meeting (Cinemanila Film Festival 2006)

Official Selection Jakarta International Film Festival 2005 (Script Development)

Still (2005 – 15 minutes, miniDV)

North American Distributor: Frameline

4th Q! Jakarta Gay & Lesbian Film Festival 2005

7th Jakarta International Film Festival 2005

4th Bangkok Experimental Film Festival 2005

24th San Francisco International Asian American Film Festival 2006

Cinemasia Film Festival 2006

21st Turin International Gay & Lesbian Film Festival 2006

22nd VC06 Los Angeles Asian Pacific Film Festival 2006

5th Pink Screens Film Festival – Brussels 2006

59th Cannes Film Festival – Short Film Corner 2006 (Marché du Film)

32nd Seattle International Film Festival 2006

18th Newfest: New York Gay & Lesbian Film Festival 2006

Frameline30: San Francisco International LGBT Film Festival 2006

14th Artfilm International Film Festival – Slovakia 2006

XI. LGBT Film Festival – Budapest 2006
24th Outfest: Los Angeles Gay & Lesbian Film Festival 2006
29th NYC Asian American International Film Festival 2006
10th Thai Short Film & Video Festival 2006
2006 Copenhagen Gay & Lesbian Film Festival
17th Hamburg International Gay & Lesbian Film Festival 2006
7th DC Asian Pacific American Film Festival 2006
19th Image+Nation: Montreal LGBT Film Festival 2006
4th Fusion: Los Angeles LGBT People of Color Film Festival 2006
Tokyo Asian Queer Film & Video Festival 2007

Black Cherry (2005 – 5 minutes, 16mm)

Synch Festival 2005, Greece
4th Q! Jakarta Gay & Lesbian Film Festival 2005
4th Bangkok Experimental Film Festival 2005
GirlPride Asia 2005, Malaysia
56th Berlin Film Festival, Berlinale Talent Campus # 4 (Competition –
Food, Hunger & Taste Program) 2006
59th Cannes Film Festival, Short Film Corner 2006 (Marché du Film)

Marie! (2004- 8 minutes, super 8mm)

10-Minute Film Festival 2005, Taiwan

Love Ridden (2003 – 20 minutes, miniDV)

Wilmington Film Festival 2003
Best Actress Director's Choice MiniDV Film Festival 2003, Los Angeles

John Badalu

Producer

His long list of experiences in the film industry need not to be proven anymore. The first introduction to the film industry started in 1999 as a volunteer at *Jakarta International Film Festival* (JIFFEst). The year 2000 marked his significant contribution as the curator and operational staff of the *British Film Festival* in Jakarta and Operational Manager for JIFFest. Being a freelance journalist, he has written film reviews in many different media i.e. The Jakarta Post, Koran Tempo, Kompas, Djakarta Magazine and many others.

His ambition goes on to be one of the founders of Q-Munity that is responsible for the annual *Q! Film Festival* (the biggest gay and lesbian film festival in Asia since 2002. It is the only film festival of its kind in the most populated moslem country of Indonesia. Since 2004, the festival has toured to 3 other cities in Indonesia) and *Moonwater Film Festival* (showcasing Chinese and Chinese diaspora films since 2004). With Teater Utan Kayu, he is also setting up *The Slingshort*

Film Festival, an international short film festival focusing on South-East Asian short films coming up in November 2006.

As a jury, Mr. Badalu has served as a Teddy jury in *Berlin Film Festival* in 2003 and 2006. He also works as a film programmer focusing on South-East Asian Films for festivals like: *Rome Asian Film Festival*, *Turin Gay and Lesbian Film Festival*, and *Hamburg Gay and Lesbian Film Festival*, *Cinemasia Film Festival* (Amsterdam), *Mix Brasil Film Festival*, *Art Film Festival* in Slovakia, and *Transgender Film Festival* (Amsterdam).

In promoting Indonesian films abroad, he has succeeded to put a pavement of Indonesian films into festivals like Director's Fortnight Section in *Cannes Film Festival*, *Pusan Film Festival* in South Korea, *Shanghai Film Festival*, *Barcelona Gay and Lesbian Film Festival*, *Sydney Film Festival*, *Pink Screens* in Brussels, *Cork Film Festival* in Ireland just to mention a few. As an international publicist he is handling films of Kalyana Shira Films (*The Courtesan*, *Stringless Violin*, *Arisan!*, *Joni's Promise* and *Love For Share*), Salto Films (*Whispering Sands*, *The Rainmaker*, *Waking Banyu*), Reload Pictures (*9 Dragons*), Metaphor Films (*Suitcase*), and fridayni8htfilms (*Black Cherry*, *Still*). "Love For Share" was in the Market Screening in Cannes Film Festival 2006.

Being appointed as the secretary of *Indonesian Film Committee* (Komite Sinema Indonesia or KISI), with other people in the film industry, he is now proposing a new law draft on film policies to the government.

Sitting in the producer's chair, he has 3 upcoming film projects under his belt: *In the Absence of the Sun* by Lucky Kuswandi (First time director), a new film by Ria Irawan (Also a first time director. Title yet to be confirmed), *Jakarta 2005* by Ravi Bharwani (*The Rainmaker*).

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The Production Company

Founded in 2006, fridayni8htfilms is active in producing that hopefully are as vast and fascinating, as filled with possibilities as a wonderful Friday night could be. It is one of those nights when less are obliged to wake up early the next day, therefore one could easily let go and do whatever one feels. We support works that are carefree, passionate, and uncompromising. Our office is based in Jakarta, Indonesia, and *In the Absence of the Sun* will be the first feature film we produce.

For Further Information

fridayni8htfilms

Perkantoran Permata Senayan Blok E / 39

Jalan Tentara Pelajar

Jakarta Selatan 12210

Indonesia

info@fridayni8htfilms.com

<http://www.fridayni8htfilms.com/>

fax: + 62 21 739 3422

Lucky Kuswandi – Writer & Director

+62 813 195 28098

luckycinema@yahoo.com

John Badalu - Producer

+ 62 813 166 15975

johnbadalu@gmail.com

johnbadalu@fridayni8htfilms.com