

A short film by Lucky Kuswandi

STILL

“Distance never closes in a standstill”

INDONESIA / USA
15 minutes, MiniDV (Color), No Dialogue
2005 © Lucky Kuswandi
<http://www.fridayni8htfilms.com/still>

International Contact:

Lucky Kuswandi
Sungai Sambas 9 No 9
Jakarta – Indonesia 12130
P: + 62.813.195.28098
F: +62.21.739.3422
luckycinema@yahoo.com

United States Contact:

Frameline
Maura King - Distribution Director
145 9th Street, Suite 300
San Francisco, CA 94103
P 415.703.8650 x 306
F 415.861.1404
maura@frameline.org
<http://www.frameline.org>

*“Visually haunting...
conjures up a surprisingly entertaining sense of angst and desolation”*
THE BAY AREA REPORTER

“Reeling with unspoken power... to see it is to be moved by it.”
BLADE

*“Beautiful and Powerful... every frame reflects sensuality and fragility at the same
time.”* THE JAKARTA POST

OFFICIAL SELECTION

in chronological order

4th Q! Jakarta Gay & Lesbian Film Festival
Indonesia, November 2005 (Opening Night)

7th Jakarta International Film Festival
Indonesia, December 2005

4th Bangkok Experimental Film Festival
Thailand, December 2005

24th San Francisco International Asian American Film Festival
USA, March 2006

2006 Cinemasia Film Festival
Amsterdam – Netherlands, March 2006

21st Turin International Gay & Lesbian Film Festival
Italy, April 2006

22nd VC06 Los Angeles Asian Pacific Film Festival
USA, May 2006

5th Pink Screens Film Festival
Brussels - Belgium, May 2006

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

32nd Seattle International Film Festival
USA, May 2006

18th NewFest: New York Gay & Lesbian Film Festival
USA, June 2006

30th Frameline San Francisco LGBT Film Festival
USA, June 2006

14th Artfilm International Film Festival
Slovakia, June 2006

XI. LGBT Film Festival
Budapest, Hungary July 2006

29th NYC Asian American International Film Festival
New York, USA July 2006

24th Outfest Los Angeles Gay & Lesbian Film Festival
USA, July 2006

10th Thai Short Film & Video Festival
Bangkok, September 2006

2006 Copenhagen Gay & Lesbian Film Festival
Denmark, October 2006

7th DC APA Film Festival
Washington DC, USA October 2006

17th Hamburg International Gay & Lesbian Film Festival
Hamburg, Denmark October 2006

19th Image+Nation: Montreal LGBT Film Festival
Montreal, Canada November 2006

4th Fusion: Los Angeles LGBT People of Color Film Festival
Los Angeles, USA December 2006

2006 Asian Queer Film & Video Festival
Tokyo, Japan April 2007

CAST
(in order of appearance)

Guy..... JASON WOO
Cruising guy #1..... JASON MARCOS
Cruising guy #2..... SIRI LERDSIRISOPON
Cruising guy #3..... CHAN TAI
Cruising guy #4..... DAVID LATO
Cruising guy #5..... KIRK DUNGCA
Twin #1..... JOHN SHIRAGA
Twin #2..... MICHAEL SHIRAGA
Cowboy/Seducer..... SEAN LEWIS
Guy with cap/Bride..... KEN CHAU
Dancer..... ROBERT ATILANO
White shirt guy #1..... DAVID SCOTT
White shirt guy #2..... MIKE DAVIES
Guy with towel..... JOE GALLAGHER
The Figure..... KEITH JENNINGS
Father..... BRETT C. SHIM

FILMMAKERS

Director..... LUCKY KUSWANDI
Writers..... LUCKY KUSWANDI & JASON WOO
Producers..... LUCKY KUSWANDI & JASON WOO
Executive Producer..... DIANA WIDJAJA
Director of Photography..... LUCKY KUSWANDI
Editor..... ANDREA FOLPRECHT & LUCKY KUSWANDI
Music by..... KELLY SALLOUM
Cello Performance..... JONATHAN BEARD
Make-up..... CHRIS MILLS
Production Assistants..... SIRI LERDSIRISOPON
PEI-YING LIN
MICHAEL
SHIRAGA
Festival Manager..... JOHN BADALU
Graphic Design..... JULIANA SUTARMAN

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TAGLINE

Chronicling a young man's coming-of-age experience running away from home, *Still* traces the physical and emotional landscapes the troubled soul treads in his journey towards self-discovery, acceptance and connection with his father.

SYNOPSIS

A gay teenager detached from his surroundings, Guy (Jason Woo) runs away from home to escape the idle stillness of his life. He is unaware of his purpose in life, and is desperate for a human connection, some kind of a substitute for love - something he never receives from his absent, distant father, whom he never fully knows or understands. Guy takes the train towards a beach town and checks into a dilapidated motel, roaming the barely-alive streets aimlessly and cruising through life's clichés only to find discomfort and disillusionment.

Bored and lonely, he seeks solace through the only way that he is familiar (and capable) of: sex with strangers. He finds himself in a bathhouse, consisting of long, dark hallways filled with other desperate, lost men. He meets an older man (Keith Jennings) who wants to care for him. The older man wraps Guy in a tight, tender embrace, but this exhausts him. It reminds him of his own father's possessive dominance, and his resistance and emotional pain force him to confront that ominous figure that's been haunting him.

In the end, Guy is transported to a dream-like encounter with his father (Brett C. Shim) in a cold, deserted beach. Guy finally has to make the choice in taking the laborious first step to close the distance between them standing still, and face the trouble he has been trying to elude.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

In a strange way, I never felt the line between life and art as much dissolved as it is in making this film. The parallel lives that our main character and I lead... I myself did not know the answer to these feelings of discontentment, of detachment.

When Guy embarks on his journey, he finds temporary sanctuaries. They do not offer him happiness but somehow they keep him alive. At the end he is exhausted, and he finds himself by the sea. Suddenly he cannot breathe. He is dying to take that first step, to break the invisible glass of his aquarium. And so he sits in his Ferris wheel, and it keeps on moving. For the first time he understands what being alive is.

Lucky Kuswandi

PRODUCTION NOTES

Part narrative and part experimental, *Still* brings to screen the internal monologue and emotional landscapes of a young gay man's journey to self-discovery, love and re-connection with his father.

Based loosely on the lives of two filmmakers LUCKY KUSWANDI and JASON WOO, *Still* is shot on Canon GL2 digital camera with available lighting. Juggling the responsibilities of producer, writer, actor, director and soundman, the two-men crew shot the short film over a period of nine months while working and going to school.

The project started in early 2004 when the two friends had suffered emotional setbacks in their lives. Lucky had lost his father to cancer the year prior and Jason had just been "outed" to his traditionally conservative parents.

Inspired in the moment by a collection of poems that Jason had written (opening prologue *Fishes* was one of them), Lucky proposed a visual and emotional exploration of Jason's work, on a short film. While they were throwing ideas at each other, Lucky feverishly scribbled chicken-scratch notes on the back of the coffee receipt.

Train station. Boy. 18. Alone.
Waiting. Writing. Running away. From home? Family?
Could be gay? Could be running for a while?

Everything is nothing. Everyone is nothing. The world is nothing.
Ferris wheel.

Having made three short films, Lucky began to contemplate on the complication of logistics. Should it be shot in color or black and white? In film? Who'll play Guy? Where can they get the money? How long will it take?

"Originally, we thought of using 16mm black & white film because of its grainy and somber quality. But wanting financial freedom and with no full script, we just went ahead to do a test shoot on the first scene, at the train station," Lucky offered.

With the chicken-scratch notes of a script, they threw caution and the reality of logistics to the wind, and proceeded to shoot at the crack of dawn the next Saturday morning with digital video. A stage monologist, Jason offered to take on the role for the test-shoot. Unexpectedly, as they watched the day's footage, they found what they were looking for. "To my surprise, the digital video does not give a realist quality that I fear. By manipulating the shutter, f-stop, and the condition of light at the location, we did pull it off," Lucky recalls. Satisfied with the footages they had, they began drafting their script.

But as they resumed shooting, the first sign of trouble began to appear when the two filmmakers disagreed creatively on the final draft of the script. Coming from the stage,

Jason had primarily used words and dialogues to tell a story in his monologue shows. His heavy narrative style contrasted Lucky's more visual and experimental approach.

"We had such intense arguments that we weren't talking for a while. In the end, we realized that we learned how to set aside our differences to pursue this common goal. And we still went through re-writes after re-writes. Sometimes, right to the second before we shot the scene itself," Jason says of the frustration.

The second set of problem occurred as they began shooting. While shooting with digital affords the filmmakers cost and artistic advantages, the decision came with other limitations and challenges. "Of course, the color palette became a concern, and I had to find the specific locations possessing the colors that would work for the film," Lucky says.

Scouting locations became a major endeavor for the project. "Locations are equally, if not more, important than the script," Jason explains, "The emptiness of the motel room, the cold end-of-the-world beach, the seductive and ominous green of the sex club... they are characters in their own right."

Searching for the perfect locations can oftentimes be tedious and intense, as Lucky had experienced first-hand. "I was up at the top of Angeles Crest Highway top when suddenly, my car just stalled. This was nearing sundown. By the time the tow truck came by, it was nighttime. I was alone and it was pitch black. Looking back, it was really funny because we ended up not even using the shots we took there," Lucky says.

With personal and professional responsibilities to fulfill on weekdays, the shoots had to be done on free weekends. This causes an unforeseen problem.

"One thing that became readily apparent was Jason. He works a model and he adopts different looks frequently. His hair could be short now and then long the next month. We shot for over 7 months, which prove to be a challenge to keep that sense of continuity for our character," Lucky recounts.

With no real cast and crew, the filmmakers were able to shoot guerilla style. "We're able to bypass a lot of process and people, and just do it. Jason would walk around, talking to the camera pretending to be a tourist. And the next second, he would totally be in character. That's how we managed to shoot the Ferris wheel scene," Lucky smilingly says, "It would have cost us *a lot* of money. Money we don't have."

Typical to many productions, the filmmakers hit major roadblocks on their scripts throughout the shoot. "It's flawed, in many ways. For one, because the story is so personal for both of us, we sub-consciously began to impose our own values onto him. It became apparent that this is not about me, not about us anymore. And so, the story changes. It changes and changes, even when we're halfway into the shoot," Jason says.

“There was a lot of trial and error. The characters of the father figure (KEITH JENNINGS) and real father (BRETT C. SHIM), which are central to Guy’s quest, doesn’t even come until later on our process, for one,” Lucky confesses.

But the script was not the only stumbling block they faced. As they finished shooting, Lucky became concerned of the film’s flow as he tried to edit the film himself, with no luck. “We basically have a solid beginning and ending and great sums in between, but they did not make into a whole,” Lucky recalls of his exasperation.

It was at this point when Jason encouraged Lucky to bring ANDREA FOLPRECHT (Editor), whose work on a close friend’s short film had impressed both filmmakers, on board. “She makes the film dynamic and cross-cut scenes to create a complete story,” Lucky says.

When it comes to scoring the film, Lucky is very specific. He had previously scored the film with temp music. “I was looking for something that would paint the internal monologue of the main character. I wanted something slightly quiet... My reference was Arvo Part.” But without financial and legal support, Lucky decided to seek out composers to create original music instead. After collaborating with a string of talents, Lucky was on the brink of giving up finding the perfect soundtrack when KELLY SALLOUM (Composer) volunteered to score the film without pay unless they decided to use the music.

Stepping up to the challenge, Kelly scored the sex scene first which eventually became the theme throughout the film.

Lucky explains, “What I love about Kelly is that she understands the character completely but she never goes to the predictable route. She disregards what she sees on screen, and composes only through the character’s heart. The temp music I gave her for the sex club scene was Massive Attack. The heavy beats and electronic twitters were obvious choices for such dark, sleazy moment... but Kelly decided to create a more romantic, lonely, somber music, using solely piano and cello.”

Yet there was still something missing when the puzzles had been pieced together.

Coming back full circle like Guy sitting on that revolving Ferris wheel in the final sequence, the filmmakers returned to the source for inspiration – Jason’s poetry. Inserting *Fishes* as a prologue to set up the mood and context of the film, *Still* was finally complete.

BIOGRAPHY

Lucky Kuswandi: Director/Producer/Writer

Born and raised in Jakarta, Indonesia, Lucky Kuswandi graduated from the Art Center College of Design, Pasadena with a Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree in Filmmaking in 2003. He has directed four short films, mostly exploring the ideas of urban alienation and disconnection. In 2006 he is invited to participate at the Berlinale Talent Campus. He is currently developing his first feature film, *In the Absence of the Sun*.

Filmography

Miss Indonesia (2007) – In Development

Support of the Hubert Bals Fund – Rotterdam International Film Festival

Winner Best Script – Jakarta International Film Festival Script Development 2006

In the Absence of the Sun (2007) – In Development

Winner Best Project – Produire au Sud (Bangkok) – 2006

Official Selection – Produire au Sud (Nantes) – 2006

Official Selection – Boracay Co-Production Meeting (Philippines) – 2006

Official Selection – Jakarta International Film Festival Script Development 2005

Still (2005)

Black Cherry (2005)

56th Berlin Film Festival, Berlinale Talent Campus # 4 (Competiton - Food, Hunger & Taste Program)

59th Cannes Film Festival, Short Film Corner (Marché du Film)

Opening Night 4th Q! Jakarta Gay & Lesbian Film Festival 2005, Indonesia

Official Selection Synch Festival 2005, Greece

Official Selection 4th Bangkok Experimental Film Festival, Thailand

Official Selection GirlPride Asia 2005, Malaysia

Marie! (2004)

Official Selection 10-Minute Film Festival 2005, Taiwan

Love Ridden (2003)

Official Selection Wilmington Film Festival 2003

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

Jason Woo: Actor/Writer/Producer

Still is Jason Woo's first starring role and second screenplay collaboration with Lucky Kuswandi. Jason developed his craft as a stage monologist and spoken word performer. Having worked as writer/editor for college publications – *The Sentinel* and *Daily Trojan*, and websites – *ChopBlock.com* and *Fridae.com*, Jason is also the founder and lead facilitator of the APA Writers Workshop @ USC. As a model, Jason has appeared in national print and TV commercials for Honda and Lifetime television.

An Honors graduate from University of Southern California, Los Angeles, in Communication and Political Science, Jason is currently completing a full-length monologue show and his first book of poetry. As a screenwriter, he has been chosen to participate in the prestigious Independent Film Productions (IFP) Project: Involve / Los

Angeles 2006. As an actor he has won a full-year acting scholarship at the East West Players. Born in Indonesia and raised in Singapore, he calls Hollywood, California home.

Credits

Miss Indonesia (2007) – In Development

Support of the Hubert Bals Fund – Rotterdam International Film Festival

Winner Best Script – Jakarta International Film Festival Script Development 2006

Still (2005)

Marie! (2004)

Official Selection 10-Minute Film Festival 2005, Taiwan