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HEADSHOT

A Film by Pen-ek Ratanaruang

Thailand-France / 105 mins. / 1.85:1 / Color / Dolby SRD / In Thai w/English subtitles

A Kino Lorber Release

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SYNOPSIS

Present day Thailand is rife with corruption. Tul, a straight-laced cop, is blackmailed by a powerful politician and framed for a crime he did not commit. Disillusioned and vengeful, he is soon recruited to become a hitman for a shadowy group aimed at eliminating those who are above the law.

But one day, Tul is shot in the head during an assignment. He wakes up after a three-month coma to find that he sees everything upside-down, literally. Unaware of whether the condition is medical or a result of karmic retribution, Tul begins to have second thoughts about his profession.

But when he tries to quit, roles are reversed, and the hunter becomes the hunted. Then he meets a girl who turns his world even more upside down. Can Tul find redemption from the violence that continues to haunt him?

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Although the film *Headshot* is based on a novel written a long time ago, the political aspect of it is still true of our country today, if not truer. Politicians, military generals and wealthy businessmen, with their wealth, education and power, still write the laws and live above them. And common people like us must get used to it. Corruption, when exercised by this ruling class, is accepted as the norm in this democratic society. So instead of education, intelligence and humanity, we use tricks, threats, blackmailing and weapons to build our kind of democracy. Come election time, a hitman can make a better living than a salaryman. And it doesn't look like change is going to happen anytime soon.

As for the upside-down vision as experienced by our protagonist, his story can be interpreted as the inevitability of karmic retribution. How can one find redemption in such a situation? I believe that it's not being a good Buddhist, but by accepting the consequences of our actions.

Human beings are all sinners. Innocent or not we are sinners one way or another. Sin is a natural part of our karma. And our karma is what makes us who we are.

Pen-ek Ratanaruang
June 2011

KINO LORBER

i n c o r p o r a t e d

CREDITS

Writer/Director
Pen-ek Ratanaruang

Based on the novel by
Win Lyovarin

Producers
Pawas Sawatchaiyamet
Raymond Phathanavirangoon

Associate Producers
Emilie Georges
Tanja Meissner

Director of Photography
Chankit Chamnivikaipong

Editor
Patamanadda Yukol

Production Designer
Wittaya Chaimongkol

Costume Design
Visa Kongka

Sound Designer
Akritchalerm Kalayanamitr

Music
Vichaya Vatanasapt

CAST

Tul
Nopachai "Peter" Jayanama

Rin
Sirin "Cris" Horwang

Joy/Tiwa
Chanokporn "Dream" Sayoungkul

Torpong
Apisit "Joey Boy" Opasaimlikit

Dr. Suang
Krerkkeiat Punpiputt



DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Pen-ek was born in Bangkok in 1962. He spent eight formative years in his late teens and early twenties in New York City, where he studied at the Pratt Institute, majoring in Art History. He went on to work as a freelance illustrator and graphic designer. Back in Thailand, he was appointed Head of Art at the Leo Burnett agency and spent five years as an art director before directing TV commercials.

He made his debut as a feature film director in 1997 with a movie that broke the mold of Thai cinema, and has since produced a stream of innovative films. He is one of the handful of directors who have helped to reinvent the Thai film industry since its slump in the 1990s, and has pioneered both the trend of looking back at retro Thai pop culture for inspiration and the expansion of Thai cinema into the realms of international casting and coproduction.

His films have been screened in festivals around the world, and he has picked up numerous festival prizes.

FILMOGRAPHY

- 2011 *Headshot*
- 2009 *Sawasdee Bangkok*/segment "Silence" - Toronto Film Festival
Nymph – Cannes Un Certain Regard
- 2007 *Luminous Sound* – short
Ploy – Cannes Directors' Fortnight
- 2006 *Total Bangkok* – short
Twelve Twenty – short
Invisible Waves – Berlin Competition
- 2003 *Last Life in the Universe* – Venice Upstream
- 2002 *Mon-rak Transistor* – Cannes Directors' Fortnight
- 1999 *Sixtynin9* – Berlin Forum
- 1997 *Fun Bar Karaoke* – Berlin Forum



CREW BIOS

Pawas Sawatchaiyamet (Producer)

Born in Bangkok, Pawas Sawatchaiyamet started his career as an art director at Siam Studio, one of the earliest and biggest advertising companies in Thailand. Pawa attended the New York Institute of Technologies where he pursued his Masters Degree, concentrating on Film and Television production. He returned to Thailand and in 1999 he made his debut as a feature-length film art director with *Sixty-nine*, where he collided with director Pen-ek Ratanaruang, whom he has continued to work with ever since. 2004 saw Pawas working as Production Designer on *Les Fils du vent* (Sons of the Wind), a foreign production shot in Thailand. Later in 2006, Pawas started his own company, Local Color Films. *7 Nights*, a film by Cannes's Grand Prix Award Winner Naomi Kawase, was one of the early films he produced. Soon after, Pawas embarked on another project, producing *Sawasdee Bangkok*, a collection of nine short stories depicting Bangkok from different perspectives. His previous producing credit includes Wisit Sasanatieng's *Red Eagle* and Pen-ek Ratanaruang's *Nymph*.

Raymond Phathanavirangoon (Producer)

A film producer and an international film festival programmer, Raymond Phathanavirangoon is currently an official delegate for Cannes Critics' Week and the Program Consultant for the Hong Kong International Film Festival. He also acts as a creative consultant for the Asian Film Awards as a reading committee member for the Hong Kong-Asia Film Financing Forum (HAF). Previously, he served as international programmer for the Toronto International Film Festival. Prior to that, he was the Director of Marketing and Special Projects for international sales agent Fortissimo Films. In 2007, he was a member of the Teddy Jury at the Berlin Film Festival, and in 2010 a member of the Antalya Film Festival's international jury. His producing credit includes Kiyoshi Kurosawa's *Tokyo Sonata* (2008, associate producer), Pang Ho-Cheung's *Dream Home* (2010, co-producer), and Boe Junfeng's *Sandcastle* (2010, associate producer). He was a moderator for the Cannes Producers' Network Breakfast Meetings in 2009, and has spoken on panels at festivals world-wide.

Chankit Chamnivikaipong (Cinematographer)

One of Thailand's most experienced cinematographers, Chankit entered the industry as an assistant cameraman at Salon Films Thailand. He later became a producer at JWT, and is currently Managing Director at The Film Factory. He has previously photographed *Fun Bar Karaoke*, *Sixty-nine*, *Mon-rak Transistor*, *Ploy* and *Nymph* for director Pen-ek Ratanaruang. His other credits include Nonzee Nimibutr's *Okay*, *Baytong*, and Jira Maligool's *The Tin Mine*.

Patamanadda Yukol (Editor)

M.R. Patanamadda Yukol is the daughter of one of Thailand's most famous filmmakers, M.C. Chatrichalerm Yukol. She is a much sought-after editor of TV commercials and feature films, and she is Pen-ek Ratanaruang's trusted editor who has worked on all of his films, from *Fun Bar Karaoke* to *Headshot*. She also edited her father's films, including *The Legend of Suriyothai* and the *King Naresuan* series.



CREW BIOS (CONT'D)

Wittaya Chaimongkol (Production Designer)

Wittaya Chaimongkol graduated from the Faculty of Decorative Arts at Silpakorn University. He first came into the production design field by working as an art director and production designer assistant for Pawas Sawaschayamet at the Third Dimension company. They both worked on every movie by Pen-ek Ratanaruang since the very start of his career. Other than film production, he also works in the advertisement field on well-known commercials. After over ten years of art direction experience, Wittaya became a production designer on films such as *The Golden Riders* (2004), *Luang Pee Teng 2* (2008), and *Deep in the Jungle* (2009).

Visa Kongka (Costume Designer)

Born in 1977, Visa graduated from the Fine Arts Department of Prasarnmitr University. She has supervised wardrobe for most of Pen-ek Ratanaruang's films, including *Sixtynin9*, *Mon-rak Transistor*, *Last Life in the Universe*, *Invisible Waves*, *Ploy*, *Nymph*, the short film "Twelve Twenty", and many of his TV commercials.

Akritchalerm Kalayanamitr (Sound Designer)

Akritchalerm Kalayanamitr has a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Political Science/International Affairs from Thammasat University and originally intended to join the diplomatic corps. But a strong interest in film sidetracked him into studying filmmaking in the US. After graduating from film school in 2000, he was active in the "underground" filmmaking scene in the San Francisco Bay Area. Upon his return to Thailand, he taught at the school of audio engineering and worked with director Apichatpong Weerasethakul for the first time on 2004's *Tropical Malady*. His recent credits include Anocha Suwichakornpong's short "Graceland", Pen-ek Ratanaruang *Ploy*, Apichatpong Weeraethakul's *Syndromes and a Century*, Aditya Assarat's *Wonderful Town* and *Anat (t)*, a sound installation with Koichi Shimizu, among others.

Vichaya Vatanasapt (Music)

Vichaya Vatanasapt was born in Bangkok, Thailand in 1974 and received his Bachelor degree in Architecture at the King Mongkut's Institute of Technology, Ladkrabang in 1996. He was founder of the indie girl-fronted band "La ong Fong" (1996-1997), a member of the ska jazz band "T-BONE" (1998-2009), and a founder of the electronic dub lounge band called "The Photo Sticker Machine" (since 1999). Also in 1999, he founded the acclaimed Hualapong Riddim, a music label and production house that scored films such as Pen-ek Ratanaruang's *Last Life in the Universe* and *Invisible Waves*, as well as the hits Rahtree: *Flower of the Night*, *Bangkok Traffic (Love) Story* and *4bia*, among many others.



CAST BIOS

Nopachai “Peter” Jayanama (Tul)

Nopachai “Peter” Jayanama was born on November 21, 1973. He earned much praise for the role of a dashing general in the historical epic *King Naresuan* in 2007 and that of a ruthless villain in *Angulimala* in 2003. Pete runs his own graphic design company and appears in TV commercials, TV series and music videos. Since 2009's *Nymph*, he has also worked with director Pen-ek Ratanaruang on *Sawasdee Bangkok* (segment “Silence”) as well as the filmmaker's latest, *Headshot*. He starts in *King Naresuan Part IV*.

Celine “Cris” Horwang (Erin)

Celine “Cris” Horwang was born on July 5, 1980. She studied dancing since she was five years old and enrolled at the Aree Dance School. She then went on to study in the US at both the Walnut Hill Performance Arts School in Boston and the California Institute of Arts in Los Angeles, majoring in dance. After returning to Thailand, she began teaching dance classes at International School of Bangkok (ISB) while modeling and DJ-ing at Fat Radio. Cris became one of Thailand's most popular stars after starring in the 2009 blockbuster hit *Bangkok Traffic (Love) Story*. She is now one of the most sought-after personalities in Thailand.

Apisit “Joey Boy” Opasaimlikit (Torpong)

Apisit “Joey Boy” Opasaimlikit was born into a Thai-Chinese family. He started listening to hip-hop when he was 14 years old. In 1994, he was signed to Bakery Music, where he released his self-titled EP. “Fun, Fun, Fun”, his 1995 single with Canadian reggae artist Snow, was a major hit in Thailand. In 2000 he moved to GMM Grammy, where he now runs his own record label, Gancore Club, and produces other artists. Joey Boy was among the music artists participating in *Ramakien: A Rak Opera*, a rock-opera adaptation of Thailand's national epic at the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, New York in 2006. In the same year he made his feature film debut in *The Possible*, which was followed by the blockbuster comedy *Lung Pee Tank 2* in 2008. He is currently directing his first feature film, the zombie comedy in *Gancore Kud*.

Chanokporn “Dream” Sayoungkul (Joy/Tiwa)

Chanokporn “Dream” Sayoungkul was born on February 1, 1985. She graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts, Communication Design at the School of Architecture and Design, King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi. She has modeled in magazines and photoshoots for brands such as M.A.C.'s Fabulous Feline collection, LulaRock and Nunatanan, among others. *Headshot* is her first feature film role.



OF CRIME, CORRUPTION, AND KARMA: An Interview with Pen-ek Ratanaruang

Does this upside-down vision condition exist in real life?

Win Lyovarin, the writer of the novel we adapted the film from, sent me a newspaper clipping several months ago about a guy who reads and writes upside-down. The man is now in his 60s, I think. That's as close to an upside-down vision as I've ever heard of. But someone actually seeing things upside-down, I don't know...

Talking about Win Lyovarin, what is it about crime noir that attracted you? Did it originate from Lyovarin's original story?

It's the mystery, cigarette smoke, beautiful women, ugly men, nice clothes, betrayal and perhaps the fact that the heroes of those films or novels are usually ordinary guys who find themselves in really extraordinary situations and have to try to survive.

Lyovarin wrote this novel, *Fon Tok Kuen Fah*, after being inspired by American film noir from the James Cagney, Humphrey Bogart and Robert Mitchum era. He mentioned this very explicitly in the foreword of the novel. So yes, it originates from the novel.

So to adapt to a noir milieu, did you consciously decide to make this film a departure from your recent output?

Stylistically, every film of mine is dictated by the script. It just so happened that my last 3-4 films had been scripted mostly by me from my own original ideas, so they looked and felt more or less similar. HEADSHOT, on the other hand, was scripted from a novel written by someone else with a very clear intention to be a crime noir. So we made a conscious decision to conform to that style.

In HEADSHOT, corruption seems to infect the very core of Thai society and politics. How much does it reflect your own belief about the present situation in Thailand?

Corruption seems to be at the very core of Thai society and politics for as far back as I can remember. And I don't think it will disappear anytime soon. This, in my opinion, comes from the fact that our country has given in to democracy without being really ready for it. Most of the people in our country are still poor, under-educated and unable to think about things beyond the simple rule of putting food in their mouths and surviving. But at one point in our country's history, a group of men, educated in Western countries, overthrew the government and embraced a system called democracy, thinking that it would make Thailand as civilized as those countries they were educated from (a form of inferiority complex, I think). And it's been downhill ever since.

No matter what Tul does, violence always seems to catch up with him, How much do you think this has to do with fate as opposed to karma?

[Rhetorically] What's the difference between fate and karma?

But do you think of the upside-down vision as Tul's karmic retribution?

It may be, it may not be. But for sure, it's something that enlightens him. Having this upside-down vision means that Tul is forced to look at the world, and life, from a different perspective, both physically and psychologically. And this is what makes him quit his profession. But as Buddhists, we believe that you get what you give. If we give kindness unto others, we get kindness back from others. In Tul's case, he sins. And his most obvious sin is killing, so there is only one way he can find redemption.

This is your second film in a row with Nopachai Jayanama (not counting your short with him in SAWASDEE BANGKOK). Has he in some ways become a muse for you?

In my past 14 years of filmmaking, I have yet to find a Thai actor with Nopachai's intelligence, instinct, and commitment. And since our last outing, NYMPH, we've become good friends. This helps him to understand more about where I'm going with this film, and it helps me to know what he needs from me to do his job well.