

A Hanuman Films Production

ផុតហ្វីលចុងក្រោយ
THE LAST REEL

A Sotho Kulikar Film



CONTACT DETAILS

A Hanuman Films Production

A Sotho Kulikar Film

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Technical Details
Language: Khmer
(English or French subtitles)

Genre: Drama
Duration: 105 mins
Colour: 2K DCP
Screen Ratio: 1:1.85



The Last Reel looks at the legacy of the trauma and terror that families suffered under the Khmer Rouge and the impact it has had on subsequent generations. The dark past is like a shadow that stalks the characters in this film. Parents are haunted by the horrors they witnessed and their children are unwittingly shaped by the psychological scars they bear. *The Last Reel* is an honest portrait of contemporary Cambodia, a country beautiful and beguiling, but home to a people in need of speaking, in need of sharing, in need of healing.

It's a powerful story of a family torn apart by the Khmer Rouge genocide and their coming together to heal. The debut film from Director Sotho Kulikar, this is one of the first feature films to be directed by a Cambodian woman. This beautifully shot and moving film weaves in Cambodia's past, present and future against a backdrop of gorgeous scenery, complex character portrayal and a compelling history that take the audience deep into the heart of the country and its people. Hearts, that were once broken, but now shine bright, strong and resilient.

LOUNG UNG
AUTHOR, *FIRST THEY KILLED MY FATHER*





SYNOPSIS

Sophoun, the rebellious daughter of a hard-line army Colonel, lives her life for the moment, hanging out with a local gang. But when her father returns home with another arranged marriage proposal, Sophoun flees her imploding home and seeks refuge in a derelict cinema. There, she is shocked to discover an incomplete 1970s melodrama from pre Khmer Rouge times, a film which starred her now desperately ill mother as a glamorous young woman. A story from a different world, a different time.

With the help of the cinema's elderly projectionist, Sophoun re-makes the missing last reel of the film, reprising

her mother's role. By premiering the completed film forty years later, she hopes to remind her mother of a life she'd once lived, and to mend the psychological scars that still haunt her. The old film, however, poses more questions than it answers. The promise of the Cambodian film industry and its newest star was cut short in 1975 by the brutal Khmer Rouge regime which specifically targeted actors and filmmakers as enemies of the people. Remaking the movie offers Sophoun an opportunity to dictate her own destiny but at the cost of uncovering some painful truths about her family and their past.

BACKGROUND

Between 1975-1979 the Khmer Rouge devastated Cambodia. An estimated 1.8m people, one quarter of the population, were killed or died. In the decade before the Khmer Rouge, Cambodia produced over 300 films. Only around 30 of these films survive. Filmmakers and actors were amongst those specifically targeted by the Khmer Rouge.

The Last Reel was shot on location in Phnom Penh, Battambang and Siem Reap, Cambodia, between May and July 2013.

A man and a woman are shown in a dimly lit room, looking at a wall covered with various posters and photographs. The man, on the right, is leaning in and pointing at a poster with his right hand. The woman, on the left, is looking up at the same poster with a focused expression. The room has a warm, yellowish light, and the wall is cluttered with posters, some of which appear to be movie posters. The overall mood is one of intense interest and discovery.

“ONE OF THE MOST AMBITIOUS CAMBODIAN
FILMS TO BE MADE IN RECENT YEARS.”

FILM BUSINESS ASIA

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

The Last Reel portrays my belief in the overwhelming human need for stories and storytelling as part of the reconciliation process towards restoring a country and a culture that was devastated by genocide and war. It takes courage to open our hearts and minds, and to relive what has gone before. It's crucial that we Cambodians unlock our painful past and find an inner strength to share our stories with each other and the world beyond.

Visually, the film offers an opportunity to explore a number of different worlds. There is the lyrical melodrama of the film-within-the-film. In contrast to this is the frantic and confusing contradictions of contemporary urban life in Phnom Penh. With the rural pagoda and temple sequences, the characters are caught between the tranquility of the Cambodian countryside and the brutality of its past. In between these three worlds is the empty space (both metaphorically and visually) of

the abandoned cinema. The cinema is one of the central themes in the film and exists, like the blank screen within, as a place onto which the characters project their fears and dreams.


The Last Reel is a story of love, sacrifice and forgiveness, redemption and recognition. Sophoun, the central character in *The Last Reel*, learns to confront the past in order to learn from it. History has left its scars on her parents' generation in a way that continues to impact on the present. People of my parents' age still live with the trauma they went through. We grew up like orphans, with only one parent or in the shadow of parents who behaved in ways we couldn't understand.

On a personal level, it has been an incredibly emotional journey to make this film. My father, Om Channy, was killed by Khmer Rouge soldiers for the 'crime' of being a civilian pilot and many of my extended family died at the hands of the regime. *The Last Reel* is dedicated

to my father. On a very deep and personal level, it expresses my love for him and my grief that he was unable to be part of my life. I was two years old when he was taken away from us. Some of the events in the film are eerily close to my mother's life: like Sophoun's mother in the film, the Khmer Rouge took away the love of her life.

Making *The Last Reel* has also been a real challenge as a first-time female director, as Cambodia remains a male-dominated society. So you have to work twice as hard to be heard, to earn respect and to ensure the predominantly male crew responds to your creative needs. But most of all, I want to unite Cambodians, make them proud of their country and remind them that the genocide did not take away our identity or dignity. I believe *The Last Reel* can help the rebirth of a film industry that was devastated by war and genocide.

SOTHO KULIKAR

A woman with dark hair tied back, wearing a white button-down shirt with a tie-front and sunglasses hanging from the neckline, is smiling and talking to a man. The man is wearing a dark cap and a red and white checkered scarf. They are outdoors in a dry, grassy field. In the background, another person wearing a similar checkered headscarf is visible. A semi-transparent dark box with white text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

“THE LAST REEL IS REALLY ABOUT THE OVERWHELMING
HUMAN NEED FOR STORIES AND STORYTELLING AS A PART
OF THE RECONCILIATION PROCESS.”

SOTHO KULIKAR

WRITER'S STATEMENT

A colleague introduced me to Cambodian cinema history by taking me to an abandoned 1970s cinema across the road from the University where he taught in central Phnom Penh. The auditorium was being used as a car park for hundreds of motorbikes. Of the dozens of cinemas from the 1960s and 70s, only one still shows films regularly. The others have long since been converted into karaoke TV halls, snooker halls, and hotels with one even providing shelter for more than 200 families.

Some time later I went to an exhibition of old movie posters, assembled by Davy Chou, the French-Khmer director of the documentary *Golden Slumbers*. There I was introduced to Dy Saveth and told that she was the only professional actress who escaped being killed by the Khmer Rouge - she'd fled to France before the fall of Phnom Penh and returned to Cambodia in 1993. Not long after I wrote in my notebook: "What if a film from those times was discovered by a young Cambodian, hidden away in one of the old cinemas? What would it mean to them? What would they do with this discovery?"

Between 1965 and 1975 over 300 feature films were produced in Cambodia. It was the golden age of Khmer cinema. But only around 30 of those films survive. The

industry, like the rest of the country, was devastated by civil war, the Khmer Rouge regime and a generation of conflict. In a country reeling from the aftermath of the conflict, looking back is associated with a terrible past. And yet, for a while, Phnom Penh was known as "The Pearl of Asia", with a vibrant cultural scene, film stars and a future that looked bright.

Ironically, as a foreign visitor, you are more exposed to the Khmer Rouge period than if you are a young Cambodian where it is rarely discussed and only recently started featuring in school history texts. For the foreign visitor, S-21 the infamous torture and execution centre, or Choeng Ek (better known as The Killing Fields) are high on the list of 'attractions'.

For the generation which survived this period, every person and every family lived with their stories and their secrets. As a writer, I was interested in the process of peeling back these layers of stories and secrets and exploring how this process might help to initiate a dialogue between an older generation, and the young generation of Cambodians who tend to look to the future without guidance and a sense of their past.

At the time I was following the Khmer Rouge Tribunal and investigating mental health issues in Cambodian

society, particularly untreated post-traumatic stress and illnesses that have no Western terms to describe them. It was clear that trans-generational transmission of mental illness was one of the long-lasting affects of Cambodia's civil war, and the brutal Pol Pot regime. While young people in general think that Cambodia has finally moved out of the shadow of the Khmer Rouge genocide, the impact of that time is still manifested in relationships between parents and their children, alcohol and substance abuse, and gender based violence. I therefore wanted to write a story that accurately reflected contemporary life for Cambodian youth, but also to use film and the film industry as a means of interrogating the country's past.

Truth and reconciliation commissions and tribunals (like those in Cambodia and also Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka, South Africa and Rwanda) are about finding out what happened by talking to the generation that went through the experience. I was interested in what you then do with the truth once it has been discovered and what the truth means to the generation which comes after. Sophoun, the central character in *The Last Reel* learns that there are many versions of the truth, but more importantly, discovers that in the space between them lie the source for a thousand stories which still need to be told.

IAN MASTERS



PRINCIPAL CAST

MA RYNET (SOPHOUN)



Ma Rynet is from Battambang and has been interested in the performing arts since childhood. She was trained as a folk dancer before becoming a professional actress. She received her break in Cambodia on the hit TV series, *AirWaves*, followed by the film *Indochina* where she played a Vietnamese step-wife of a French Colonel.

DY SAVETH (SREY MOM/SOTHEA)



Dy Saveth is a renowned Cambodian actress. She starred in several films throughout the 1960s including *The Snake King's Wife*, and *Twilight*. After the Khmer Rouge takeover in 1975, she escaped to France and then to Hong Kong before returning to Cambodia in 1993 where she continues to work as an actress and as an ambassador for Khmer filmmaking.

SOK SOTHUN (VICHEA)



Sok Sothun graduated as a film director in Moscow in the 1990s, but pursued a passion for scriptwriting afterwards. Over the years he has written two Cambodian feature films, *Preah Kor Preah Keo*, and *The War of the Twin*. He lived through the Khmer Rouge regime and the period of extreme poverty which followed.



HUN SOPHY (Colonel Bora)

Hun Sophy starred in *Clash of the Empires* (2012) and *Holly* (2006) both filmed entirely in Cambodia and has acted in many television dramas and Cambodian feature films.



ROUS MONY (Veasna)

In 2013 Rous Mony starred in the feature film *Ruin* which won the Special Jury Prize, New Horizons at Venice Film Festival. In 2014 he also featured in *Gems on the Run* produced through 391 films in Cambodia.

CAST & CREW

MAIN CAST

Sophoun
Veasna
Vichea
Colonel Bora
Srey Mom

Ma Rynet
Rous Mony
Sok Sothun
Hun Sophy
Dy Saveth

SUPPORTING CAST (in order of appearance)

Vendor
Veasna's Gang

Sambath
Cupper
A Khla
A Khla's Gang

Moto Rider

Radio Announcer
Camera Crew
Bride
Groom
Sothea
Khmer Prince
Evil Prince
Peasant Warrior

Soldier A
Professor Socheat
Archivist

Som Srey Ya
Nop Narong
Rith Tola
Soung Makara
Kao Channa
Sarann Narun
Phon Panha
Doung Chakriya
Jimmy
Long Vanneth
Chea Lykheang
Chhem Rattana
Leng Mutarak
Hean Bunna
Seng Sin
Yus Chandara
Sinat Hin
Tha Rith
Sum Meta
Kong Ouen
Ma Rynet
Piseth Reach
Nuth Sophal
Young Vichea
Sean Seang Hay
Keo Bunthea
Khloot Rattana
Bey Pheaseth

CREW

Director
Original Screenplay
Producers
Executive Producers
Associate Producers
Director of Photography
Sound Recordist
Editor
Composer
Sound Designer
Assistant Director
Production Design Supervisor
Unit Production Managers
Location Manager
Location Assistant
Production Supervisor/Accountant
Production Assistant / Travel Coordinator
2nd Assistant Director
Camera Assistant
Make-Up Designer

Sotho Kulikar
Ian Masters
Ian Masters
Sotho Kulikar
Murray Pope
Sotho Tan
Lloyd Levin
Chris Wheeldon
Elain Youn
Nick Ray
Olaf Hirschberg
Sotho Vaddana
Annabelle Ray
Julian Ray
Bonnie Elliott
Greg Burgmann
Katie Flaxman
Christopher Elves
Brooke Trezise
Rick Beecroft
Ian Bailie
Christopher Zaryc
Jennifer Cornwell
Nick Ray
Meas Bophea
Sophanne Mak
Sinat Hin
Hem Nerom
Prom Marty
Som Srey Ya



