

UNDERPASS

WE SURVIVE BECAUSE OF EACH OTHER



TECHNICAL DETAILS

Original Format: HD

Screening Formats: HD, DigiBeta, BetaSP, DVCam, DVD

Sound Formats: LTRT and 4.0 Surround Sound

Running time: 15 minutes

Genre: Drama (live action)

LOGLINE

1992, San Diego. A family of Cambodian Khmer Rouge survivors finds hope when they reach out to a young illegal immigrant.

SYNOPSIS

1992, San Diego. A family that survived the Cambodian Khmer Rouge has rebuilt their lives over the past 15 years, operating a donut shop and establishing themselves in the community.

The son, Sann, is still tormented by his memories of the killing fields of Cambodia. He copes with his anger and confusion by painting elaborate and violent graffiti murals on a city underpass.

When his mother reaches out to a young illegal immigrant from Central America, Sann's anger and fears rise to the surface, and he must confront them head-on without destroying his own family.

He learns that true forgiveness and healing must begin with himself.

AWARDS

The Caucus Foundation

Largely made possible by a generous Caucus Foundation student filmmaker grant, 2007.

CineWomen NY

Finalist, Cinewomen NY "Someone to Watch" award, 2006.

USC School of Cinematic Arts

Recipient of the Samuel & Lorenza Gary Award.

National Theater Owners Association

Partially made possible by a National Theater Owners Scholarship, 2006-2007.

REVIEWS

CriticSociety.com looks at Underpass...

"The director has said that this story is quite personal to her heart and you can notice that in every carefully set-up scene, not only because of how well-handled every detail is, but because of the instantly palpable sentiment that she imbues within her frames.... [Underpass] flows effortlessly and captivates us by saying so much with so little."

Read entire review: <http://www.criticsociety.com/review.asp?id=2466>

- José Ruiloba, Critic

Cinewomen NY looks at Underpass...

"I was moved by [Underpass], and the story was well presented, the acting was very good, the cinematography was great. Congrats!"

- Maria Cabrera, CineWomenNY Board Member

Feminist Review looks at Underpass...

"I would recommend Underpass because it is a reminder of what America really is - a melting pot of different cultures.... Watch Underpass for a glimpse of the real USA."

Read entire review: <http://feministreview.blogspot.com/2007/07/underpass.html>

- Patricia Ethelwyn Lang, FeministReview.org

SCREENINGS

Upcoming:

Los Angeles Asian Pacific Film Festival, May 2008
Newport Beach Film Festival, April 2008
DisOrient, April 2008
Linda Vista County Fair Film Dialogue, April 2008
Method Fest, March 2008
Riverside Film Festival, March 2008

Past Screenings:

Sedona Film Festival, 2008
CineQuest San Jose Film Festival, 2008
Platforma Video7 Film Festival, 2007
Arpa International Film Festival, 2007
San Diego Asian Film Festival, 2007
Big Bear Lake Film Festival, 2007
San Diego County Fair - "Filmmaker's Dialogue" 2007
ReelStories - 4 USC Thesis Films Directed by Women, 2007
Riverside Multicultural Youth Festival, 2007
"Waging Peace" - CineWomenNY Screening Series, 2006



UNDERPASS

WE SURVIVE BECAUSE OF EACH OTHER

PRINCIPAL CREDITS

CREW

Writer/Director	Rain Breaw
Producers	Mary Posatko Larry Bryant
Animator	Andrew Huang
Cinematographer	Charlene Sun
Editors	Chris Cloyd Melanie McGraw
Production Designers	Akkara Srauy Jemima De Vera
Art Director	Dina Gachman
Sound Designers	Kevin Thompson Roozbeh Dadvand
Composer	Chanda Dancy

CAST

Sann	Tony LaThanh
Ma	Mony Sing
Sann's Sister	Jenn Wong
Ana	Vanessa Born
Nasim (police officer)	David Mersault
Border Patrol	Mirron Willis

RAIN BREAW, DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Underpass began as a feature screenplay (*City Heights*) about my personal experiences in high school. I attended one of the most diverse schools in the country - a school that was home to students recently come to the US from Afghanistan, Somalia, Ethiopia, Cambodia, Burma, Vietnam, Laos, Mexico, China, the list goes on. Almost every student at the school had experienced war, genocide and/or impossibly inhuman living conditions first-hand, and had survived it with their families.



I was one of the few white, American students in the school. And yet, in a way, I had less than my classmates. My mom and I were alone, struggling every day to eat, maintain dignity, and survive. But I had three close friends - one from Cambodia, one from Vietnam and one from Afghanistan - whose families welcomed me, opened their hearts to me, and gave me a sense of home and community.

Underpass morphed dramatically through production and during editing. The original story was about the relationship between the two girls - the outsider, Ana, and the daughter of the Cambodian family. In searching for an actress to play the mother in the film, however, I was fortunate enough to be able to cast Mony Sing, a non-actress who responded to a research request I posted on a Cambodian community list-serv. Mony is an actual Khmer Rouge survivor, and her willingness to share her memories really impacted our entire cast and crew. She brought so much to this film that it changed in her presence - it became a story of the relationship between mother and son.

More than anything, this film has been an emotional journey for me. In many ways, my own personal story has made it onto the screen (heavily disguised in the form of a story about a Cambodian family that survived genocide). The more personal this film became, the more important the crew, especially Mary Posatko (producer), Andrew Huang (animator), Akkara Srauy (production designer and consultant) and Charlene Sun (cinematographer), became in really helping me clearly identify the story and emotional beats we were trying to put on the screen. This film has been a genuine collaboration, and it has been an honor to work with an entire crew that willingly jumped in on the challenge to create an emotionally charged 15 minute film on a miniscule budget.

The opportunity to bring stories like *Underpass* to life is exactly why I am making films. It is a chance to lift people, to reveal just how much impact we have on each other as human beings, and how connected each person is to each other.



I look forward to sharing this film with audiences at festivals, and am looking forward to springing from this film to its feature version, *City Heights*, which focuses on an Afghani family and the daughter's American girl-friend.

UNDERPASS

WE SURVIVE BECAUSE OF EACH OTHER

TECHNICAL STATEMENT - HD AND ANIMATION

The animation in Underpass is central to the emotional arc of the story. Not only are the animation sequences literally memory sequences (flash-backs, if you will), but they are also about the amorphousness of memory, about how memory is crafted by the one doing the remembering, and is never really quite “accurate.”

Examples of how this plays out in the animation sequences can be found in the details. The Khmer Rouge soldiers are faceless - all they have are dark red eyes. Every character, whether a soldier or not, wears a black Khmer Rouge uniform. The exception is the baby, who is swathed in a white rag, too young to remember the pain and therefore maintaining her innocence.

In addition, the sound design blends the real-life sounds of the underpass with the remembered sounds of Cambodia. If you listen carefully, you won't be sure if you've heard a machine gun or a helicopter, a bird or a train squeak.

The blending of the animation throughout Underpass, combined with our budgetary limitations, dictated that we should really consider digital video options for our production and finishing format.

We tested 24p DV, HDV and HD equally, and found that HD not only offered the greatest possibilities in really blending the live action and animation (a necessity for the emotional story to really succeed), but also gave us the opportunity to really use the medium to tell the story.

Video often succeeds quite well with a grainier, “raw” look (*Collateral*, *Apocolypto*, *28 Days Later*). We wanted, however, to emphasize the “home-like” quality of the donut shop. Our HD tests confirmed that HD, given proper attention to lighting, lenses and production design, can take on a softer, gentler look that gives a dramatically different emotional feeling than the more common gritty look.



Ultimately, HD proved to be the correct medium for this story. On film, the entire movie may have felt a little too slick and epic. On HD, it maintains the raw, personal feeling that is so important for the theme, but also has great beauty throughout the imagery.



CREW BIOGRAPHIES

Writer/Director, Rain Breaw



Having just completed her graduate degree at the USC School of Cinematic Arts, Rain Breaw is beginning her career as an independent producer/director. She has produced numerous short films, including the award winning *Thermopylae* and *Archer House*. Before *Underpass*, Rain directed a comedic action short a-la "Alias" titled *Secret Agent*.

Underpass is very close to Rain's heart because it is loosely based on her experiences during high school and inspired by a few amazing individuals who offered her support when it seemed they had nothing left to give.

The production of *Underpass* was largely made possible by the honor of three awards, a sizable grant from The Caucus Foundation, a scholarship from the National Theater Owner's Association, and the Samuel & Lorenza Gary Finishing Fund.

Prior to embarking on filmmaking, Rain taught interactive and web media at multiple community colleges in the New England and Upstate New York region, and curated a new media center at Vassar College known as the Media Cloisters, presenting the innovative learning model of the Cloisters national conferences and assisting in the development of a new teaching/learning model.

Rain is producing a feature film, *Mr. Sadman*, which goes into production on August 4, 2007. She is also actively working on a feature with her writing/producing partner, Julie Sifuentes. She and Julie will be shooting a promotional video for this project, *Bearing it All*, in September, 2007, after which they will begin securing financing for production.

Animator, Andrew Huang



Andy Huang has directed and animated short films that have received national and international recognition. His past animated work has been showcased at the Smithsonian National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. and the Chicago International Children's Film Festival.

Andy's latest independent film, *Doll Face*, was accepted into the Official Selection for the Annecy International Animated Film Festival in France, as well as the Electronic Theater for SIGGRAPH 2006 in Boston.

Having completed his Bachelor of Fine Arts at USC in May, 2007, Andy continues to produce animation and motion graphics.

bios continued...

CREW BIOGRAPHIES (CONTINUED)

Producer, Mary Posatko



Mary Posatko is a recent graduate of the USC School of Cinematic Arts. A strange mix of culture junkie and social activist from a young age, Mary grew up in Delaware studying SNL, MTV and PBS, often re-staging bits with friends for her own camera. She has always been interested in ourselves as viewers and the role of culture and media in identity and self, which fed her study of Semiotics at Brown University.

After moving to LA in 2000, Mary worked as a homeless intake counselor in LA's Skid Row, and ran a program for youth at risk of gang involvement in West LA. Wanting to find a way to tell the stories of those she'd met, she worked in news, documentary and drama production at KCRW (public radio), and on several documentaries for HBO. Currently, Mary is completing two of her own feature screenplays and preparing a feature documentary about a subject very close to her family.

Cinematographer, Charlene Sun



Charlene Sun is an independent cinematographer and digital artist. She has been interested in filmmaking since childhood, and her love for film has steadily grown since then. She received a B.A. in Theater Arts with a film concentration from Cornell University. Charlene has had an extensive presence online as a digital artist, her work defined by the quality of lighting in her digital paintings. She has also served as cinematographer on two beautiful short films, *Underpass* and *Marwa*. Charlene has also gaffed and 1st AC'd multiple short films, and has recently used her medical background (she is a doctor) to produce material for two medically oriented industrial videos.

Editor, Chris Cloyd



Born on an Army Base in Kansas, Chris grew up in Ft. Collins, Colorado. It was here that his interest in the arts was cultivated. Having caught "the bug" while working for a local theatre company, he moved to Omaha, NB in 1998 to study acting and directing at Creighton University where he received his B.F.A.

Chris moved to Los Angeles in 2004 and is currently pursuing a Master of Fine Arts degree in production at the University of Southern California's School of Cinematic Arts. He has worked in almost every capacity of production and has written and directed several films. Last year he was awarded the Jeffrey Jones Scholarship for Writing for his work on the screenplay *Yasin* (the short film played in the 2007 Berlin Film Festival). Chris is currently in post-production with his short thesis film, *Coons*.

CAST BIOGRAPHIES



Sann (lead), Tony LaThanh

Originally from the Bay Area, Tony was on a crash course for law school. He was studying at Berkeley when he decided to take an acting class - as preparation for a career where it would be his job to have people believe and trust him. As destiny would have it, Tony fell in love with the craft and decided to forgo the riches afforded a legal degree. He moved to Los Angeles and promptly booked his first job: substitute teacher. Tony's work includes: *Drake and Josh* (Nickelodeon), *The Naked Ape* (dir. Dan Mellitz), currently on the festival circuit, and *Rolling* (dir. William Saleeby), winner of the San Francisco Indie Fest Audience Choice award.



Ma, Mony Sing

Mony Sing and her family fled Cambodia at the height of the Khmer Rouge. Today, Mony lives with her husband near Long Beach, CA, and participates in a community of people working toward emotional healing around the Khmer Rouge. She is working to make available the amazing artwork of her friend Ngeth Sim, a Cambodian artist living in France. Mony also returns frequently to Cambodia, where she works with children, specifically HIV/AIDS orphans. Mony's remarkable story was an inspiration to the entire cast and crew of *Underpass*. This was Mony's first experience acting.



Sister, Jenn Wong

Jenn has worked and studied in San Diego with the Playwrights Project at the Old Globe, the San Diego Black Ensemble, and the La Jolla Playhouse. She is one of the founding members of the Asian Repertory Theater in San Diego (sdAART). Jenn is the eldest in a first generation multi-lingual, multi-cultural American family. Currently a veejay on TommorrowPictures.TV, Jenn hosts segments of "Kill MTV." She is an original member of The Bare Naked Bards, an LA based sketch comedy group.



Nasim (police officer), David Mersault

David is a North Dakota native, former boxer, political candidate, Congressional Aide, and elementary school teacher, as well as a Chicago Golden Gloves Boxing Champion. Having spent several years in the vibrant Chicago theatre scene, David's favorite roles include *Bent* (Max), *Terra Nova* (Scott), *Julius Ceasar* (Cassius), *Reservoir Dogs* (Mr. White), *Red Dragon* (Jack Crawford) and *The Crucible* (John Proctor). David also appeared in *Edward II* with Ammar Daraiseh, *Just Say No* with Greg Louganis, and held a recurring role on CBS's *The Guardian* as Gene Everton, City Attorney.