26th European Film Awards
European Documentary 2013
THE ACT OF KILLING

DIRECTED BY: Joshua Oppenheimer, Christine Cynn & Anonymous
PRODUCED BY: Signe Byrge Sørensen
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY: Carlos Mariano Arango de Montis & Lars Skree
EDITOR: Niels Pagh Andersen
PRODUCTION DESIGNER: Anonymous
ORIGINAL SCORE: Elin Øyen Vister

Production:
Final Cut for Real
Forbindelsesvej 7
2100 København Ø
DENMARK
tel. +45 3 543 60 43
byrge@final-cut.dk

Press:
Final Cut for Real
Forbindelsesvej 7
2100 København Ø
DENMARK
tel. +45 3 543 60 43
maria@final-cut.dk

World Sales:
Cinephil
18 Levontin St.
Tel Aviv 65112
ISRAEL
tel. +972 3 566 41 29
info@cinephil.co.il

In a country where killers are celebrated as heroes, the filmmakers challenge unrepentant death squad leaders to dramatise their role in genocide. The hallucinatory result is a cinematic fever dream, an unsettling journey deep into the imaginations of mass-murderers and the shockingly banal regime of corruption and impunity they inhabit.

Director’s Statement:
In February 2004, I filmed a former death squad leader demonstrate how, in less than three months, he and his fellow killers slaughtered 10,500 alleged ‘communists’ in a single clearing by a river in North Sumatra. When he was finished with his explanation, he asked my sound recordist to take some snapshots of us together by the riverbank. He smiled broadly, gave a thumbs up in one photo, a victory sign in the next.

In 2012, I met Anwar Congo and the other leaders of Indonesia’s Pancasila Youth paramilitary movement.

THE ACT OF KILLING was made in collaboration with an Indonesian crew that must remain anonymous for their safety.

Joshua Oppenheimer

Filmography:
1997 THESE PLACES WE’VE LEARNED TO CALL HOME, short
1997 THE ENTIRE HISTORY OF LOUISIANA PURCHASE
2001 LAND OF ENCHANTMENT, short, co-directed with Christine Cynn
2003 THE GLOBALIZATION TAPES, doc., co-directed with Christine Cynn
2007 SHOW OF FORCE, short

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2007 SHOW OF FORCE, short
L’ESCALE  
STOP-OVER

WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY: Kaveh Bakhtiari
PRODUCED BY: Elisa Garbar, Heinz Dill, Olivier Charvet & Sophie Germain
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY: Kaveh Bakhtiari
EDITOR: Kaveh Bakhtiari, Charlotte Tourres & Sou Abadi
ORIGINAL SCORE: Luc Rambo

In Athens, Amir, an Iranian immigrant, has a modest flat which has become a place of transit for migrants who like him have chosen to leave their country. But Greece is only a stop-over, all of them hoping to reach other Western countries. They find themselves stuck at Amir’s, hoping for ID documents, contacts and the smuggler to whom they might entrust their destiny.

Production & Press:
Louise Productions
Avenue de France, 60
1004 Lausanne
SWITZERLAND
Tel. +41 21 624 61 16
Fax +41 21 624 00 16
info@louiseproductions.ch

Production:
Kaleo Films
24, Impasse Mousset
75012 Paris
FRANCE
Tel. 33 1 48 01 86 50
contact@kaleo-films.com

World Sales:
Doc & Film International
13, rue Portefoin
75003 Paris
FRANCE
Tel. +33 1 42 77 56 87
sales@docandfilm.com

Director’s Statement:
Thanks to my last short movie, LA VALISE, I was invited to several film festivals and thus had the opportunity to travel around the world for the first time in my life. Crossing borders when travelling to my destinations, I couldn’t help thinking that a decade earlier I had no passport and that no country recognised me as one of its citizens.

When I was invited to a festival in Greece, I received a phone call and learned that my cousin, whom I hadn’t seen for years, had left Iran illegally. He managed to reach Turkey and made it to Samos Island, where he was eventually imprisoned. We met in Athens upon his release. He took me to his ‘home’, a small flat rented by Amir who was also accommodating other illegal migrants.

I rediscovered the impenetrable world of illegal migrants, smugglers and destinies suspended in time. I had access to this world through my cousin, but above all because the migrants considered me an alter ego: someone who had succeeded, who had been accepted, adopted and educated by the European continent.

This privileged position was certainly the main reason that motivated me to make this movie, which I shot from an intimate perspective, eating and sleeping next to them for several weeks.

Thanks to this perspective the audience gets under the skin of the migrants throughout the film. What will happen the day no migrants want to knock on our door anymore? Could it be the warning sign that it is now our turn to leave our country and become migrants?

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For many years, I have been looking for the missing picture: a photograph taken between 1975 and 1979 by the Khmer Rouge when they ruled over Cambodia... On its own, of course, an image cannot prove mass murder, but it gives us cause for thought, prompts us to meditate, to record history. I searched for it vainly in the archives, in old papers, in the country villages of Cambodia. Today I know: this image must be missing. I was not really looking for it; would it not be obscene and insignificant? So I created it. What I give you today is neither the picture nor the search for a unique image, but the picture of a quest: the quest that cinema allows.

Rithy Panh
Filmography:
2000 QUE LA BARQUE SE BRISE, QUE LA JONQUE S'ENTROUVRE
2003 THE PEOPLE OF ANGKOR, doc.
2005 THE BURNT THEATER, doc.
2006 PAPER CANNOT WRAP UP EMBERS, doc.
2008 THE SEA WALL
2010 DUCH, MASTER OF THE FORGES OF HELL, doc.
2011 SHIIKU

Production:
CDP
25, rue Gambetta
92100 Boulogne
FRANCE
tel. +33 1 46 05 00 22
fax +33 1 46 05 02 59
cdp@cdpproductions.fr

World Sales:
Films Distribution
34-36, rue du Louvre
75001 Paris
FRANCE
tel. +33 1 53 10 33 99
fax +33 1 53 10 33 98
info@filmsdistribution.com

Press:
Laurence Granec & Karine Menard
5, bis rue Kepler
75116 Paris
FRANCE
tel. +33 1 47 20 36 66
laurence.karine@granecmenard.com
Founded in 1988, the European Film Academy (EFA) now unites 2,900 European film professionals with the common aim of promoting European film culture. Throughout the year, the EFA initiates and participates in a series of activities dealing with film politics as well as economic, artistic, and training aspects. The programme includes conferences, seminars and workshops, and a common goal is to build a bridge between creativity and the industry. These activities culminate in the annual presentation of the European Film Awards.