

## Raymond RED



# Camera Obscura • Kamera Obskura

**Feature** HDU / 35mm 80min.

**Budget**

US\$54,000 (HK\$418,500)

**Funds Secured**

US\$24,000 (HK\$186,800)

**Producer**

Raymond RED

**Co-producer**

Roger GARCIA

**Production Company**

MistulangPelikula Productions

**Partner Attached**

Modern Films, Hong Kong/USA

**HAF Goals**

Funds, Post-Production Possibilities

### ■ Introduction ■

*Kamera Obskura* was originally conceived as a short film to be filmed on super-8mm format, and made in the tradition of vintage silent films, akin to the look and language of classic German Expressionist films such as *Metropolis* and *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari*.

Upon further development of the script, the concept evolved into an impressionistic narrative feature offering a futurist-dystopian view of a Philippine corporate setting. Designed as a microcosm of the present day structure of the Philippines, it exposes the ills plaguing the nation's politics, economy, mass media and society as a whole. It reveals how any average Philippine person's life can be manipulated by the inner workings between these linked elements.

### ■ Director/Producer ■

**Raymond RED** was born in Quezon City, Philippines in 1965. He studied painting and photography at the University of the Philippines College of Fine Arts, and at the University Film Center where he made his first super-8 films in the early 1980s. He further studied filmmaking at the Mowelfund Film Institute and won top prizes at major local short film competitions and international festivals.

A leading figure in the independent alternative filmmaking scene in his country, he became the first Filipino to be invited for the prestigious Artist-in-Residence Grant in Berlin by the German Academic Exchange Institute (D.A.A.D.) in 1991. He is best known for his features on heroes of the Philippine Revolution around 1900. The first was *Bayani* (Patriot), produced by ZDF German Television in 1991-92, and premiered at Berlin Forum for Young Cinema. The second was *Sakay* (1993), which won seven major awards at the Manila Film Festival.

In 1997, Red made his first television feature *Kamada*, a special presentation produced by Filmex and GMA Network. The film was awarded the Best Television Special by the KBP (Philippine Broadcasters Association). He also has the dis-

inction of being the first and only Filipino to win the prestigious Palme d'Or Award at the Cannes International Film Festival 2000 for his short film *Anino* (Shadows).

*Makapili* (Collaborator) the last of his trilogy now in pre-production, won the Hubert Bals Fund at Rotterdam.

### ■ Co-producer ■

**Roger GARCIA** was born in Hong Kong. His work as a film producer includes many short films in Hong Kong in the 1980s, and independent features *Macao, oder die Rückseite des Meeres* (Ombra, producer), *Sand* (Modern Films, producer), documentary *Happy Berry* (Modern Films, producer) and studio films in the US *The Big Hit* (Columbia TriStar, co-producer), *The Disciples* (Viacom, executive producer, story writer). He recently completed *Chinese Box Home Movies* (co-creator) and commentary with Wayne Wang for the DVD release of *Chinese Box*. Garcia was director of the Hong Kong International Film Festival, and has been Guest Programmer for festivals in San Francisco, New York, Switzerland and Italy. He served on the juries of the Hawaii International Film Festival 2003 and Hong Kong International Film Festival 2004. As a film critic, he has written and broadcast for *Variety*, *Film Comment*, *Far East Economic Review*, National Public Radio (US), Radio Television Hong Kong and many others. He has edited and written books for the British Film Institute, *Cahiers du Cinéma*, *Edizioni Olivares* and the Hong Kong International Film Festival. He was most recently featured in *Screen International* (UK, June 2004) and *Film Comment* (US, September 2004).

### ■ Production Companies ■

Red's **MistulangPelikula Productions** and **Modern Films HK/US** are co-producing the project and intend to shoot in HDU and 35mm film and post-produce in HD format. They are seeking post-production funding and technical support to bring the project to a final release in 35mm film format.

**Modern Films** produces independent projects in the USA and Asia. It emphasizes work with strong filmmaker authorship

and original style. Latest productions include the Thai documentary *Happy Berry* (2004) by Thunskana Pansittivorakul. The film won the Grand Prize at Taipei Documentary IFF, and was screened in Hong Kong, Rotterdam, and at the Los Angeles Asian American. In post-production by Modern Films is the Filipino horror noir *Gogon*, directed by Rico Ilarde. The company is also developing *Orientalism Yours*, a film about the Chinese American icon, Anna May Wong. Its other project featured in HAF 2005 is Pang Ho-Cheung's *Marriage Proposal*.

## ■ Synopsis ■

The film progresses by following a lone character, seemingly an innocent (and also ignorant and naïve) prison convict who has been in isolation in his totally enclosed prison cell for years. He has only observed the real world outside from the dark confines of his isolation cell, where he views the scenery projected on the prison walls through the magic phenomenon of "camera obscura". His long isolation has in effect transported him into the future, and he experiences the present reality only through the small hole in the wall, which acts as a kind of cinema projector. His curiosity leads him to chip away on the weakening hole in the wall until it is big enough for him to escape. He then heads towards the metropolis, and there he finds amusement in an old movie camera he steals from a thrift shop. This now becomes his eye to the world, as he finds himself intimidated and alienated in unfamiliar territory.

In his misadventures in the outside world, he is exposed to the ills plaguing the social system. He is confused and bewildered in a world of corruption, deceit, exploitation, and abuse of power. He gets entangled with an array of mysterious and devious characters, all using him for their personal gains to climb up the corporate ladder. The climb is symbolized through the representation of different floor levels in a central building where most of the film is situated. With his camera, he is able to interact with the different dark characters, some using and abusing him, others pushing him up further into influential positions. He is exposed and enmeshed in the vicious ties between politics, "show business", and the corruption that fuels them. Towards the end, he ironically finds himself in the center of the chaos for the succession of power, himself a candidate for the corporate presidency.

The film ends with a mystic twist as he leaves in the middle of all the power struggle, and wanders back into the unknown zone of the city, searching for his point of origin, his dark cell, the "Kamera Obskura" that "vomited" him out to the real world.

## ■ Director's Statement ■

In all the years of making independent alternative films, I could not be more passionate than in these trying times. As world cinema shifts anew, so does Filipino cinema, as it is said to be dying. Many of the new emerging filmmakers in the Philippines, as well as those progressive veterans, believe that if that is so, then so be it, as it will finally have its chance for a rebirth. So we continue to persist and exist outside of the mainstream film industry and move on to do innovative films unlike anything ever seen before in Filipino cinema.

With this new project *Kamera Obskura*, I have set out to do an impressionistic representation of present-day Filipino life, digging into the recesses of the Filipino psyche, and trying to study the 'what's and 'why's of our supposedly damaged culture. The story will dwell on the complex machinations within Filipino politics, as well as its ties with "show business".

With the vision of a painter and experimental filmmaker, I wish to present this in a graphic visual film language, reminiscent of old silent films, with an obvious longing and wishful desire for Filipino "expressionist" films that obviously never existed then. The film is representational and abstract, melancholic and nostalgic, but has a foothold in the present. Done in the tradition of dystopian retro-futuristic films, it somewhat ironically dreams of both a better past and a positive future.

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