



MOSTRA INTERNAZIONALE
D'ARTE CINEMATOGRAFICA
LA BIENNALE DI VENEZIA
Official Selection

1932 **90^o** 2022

OUT OF COMPETITION



WHEN THE WAVES ARE GONE

A FILM BY LAV DIAZ



WHEN THE WAVES ARE GONE

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Philippines/France/Portugal/Denmark - Drama - 1.67 - 187 min

Shot in 16mm

INTERNATIONAL PRESS

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SYNOPSIS

Lieutenant Hermes Papauran, one of the best investigators of the Philippines, is in a deep moral crossroad. As a member of the police forces, he is a first-hand witness of the murderous anti-drug campaign that his institution is implementing with dedication. The atrocities are corroding Hermes physically and spiritually, causing him a severe skin disease resulting from anxiety and guilt. As he tries to heal, a dark past haunts him and has eventually come back for a reckoning.

CREW

Written, directed,
edited, and designed by

Lav Diaz

Produced by

Bianca Balbuena
Bradley Liew
Jean-Christophe Simon
Joaquim Sapinho
Marta Alves

Co-produced by

Mikkel Jersin
Katrin Pors
Eva Jakobsen

Executive producers

Jeremiah Oh
Kang Xin Ying

Cinematographer

Larry Manda

Sound mixers

Emmanuel Croset
Xavier Thieulin

Sound designer

Hugo Leitão

Assistant director & production manager

Hazel Orencio

Production coordinator

Pierre-Yves Bezat

Associate producers

Annecy Marie Bautista
Stelle Laguda

Supervising producer

Patti Lopus

CAST

John Lloyd Cruz

Ronnie Lazaro

Shamaine Centenera-Buencamino

Dms Boongaling

Danilo Ledesma

Aryanne Gollena

Roel Laguerta

Neil Alvin Delas Alas

Ronaliza Jintalan

Hermes Papauran

Primo Macabantay

Nerissa Papauran

Raffy Lerma

Homeless Man

Vendor

Lalaki

Esperidion Tamano

Ricarda Lim



INTERVIEW WITH LAV DIAZ

WHEN THE WAVES ARE GONE seems to be by far your most political film. Could you tell us a bit more about the subject of the film in general as well as about the two main characters who seems to be two opposite parts of the same paradigm?

I intended to work on the law enforcer culture. Fundamental to this sector's ethos, besides its traditional penchant for sartorial discomfort, is its twisted perspective on discipline, which is to obey an order or command, and not necessarily to obey the law. Simply, law enforcement is not about enforcing the law but more on following an order, a command. On that alone, it's problematic and that it's so contrary to the very basic understanding of the law. Often heard are the accepted general truth—no one is above the law; or the adage—*Dura lex, sed lex* (*The law may be harsh, but it is the law*). Police culture, in reality, is often founded on the faulty reasoning "The order is harsh, but it is the order. Obey first, before you complain!" But what kind of an order?! I am not generalizing, of course. There are good officers and there are still laudable practices within the system.

In the film, the two main protagonists are both believers and victims of this faulty culture, albeit with varying degrees of acceptance. Just the same, on both, the dangerous effects are systematic corrosion of character, will and independence. Oftentimes, these effects are more pronounced on the subordinates; while those in the higher echelons of the bureaucracy, who were once the ones who had struggled to grapple with the moral fracture of their system are now the hardened imposers. President Rodrigo Duterte's war on drugs (the subject of the film) is a classic example of this. The moment he became president in 2016, one of his very first acts was giving a marching order to the police to kill those involved in illegal drugs—users, pushers, drug lords. Extra-judicial killings were synonymous to his six-year tenure, and most of the victims were the helpless and poorest sector of Philippine society. By police admittance, the number reached 8,663 deaths, while human rights groups, the media, The United Nations, and the International Criminal Court estimate could reach up to 30,000 plus deaths.

But the film is not just about police culture, and it's not agitprop. It discourses more on the fragility of humanity. The film indicts all of us on the crimes against humanity.

What was your intention to shoot the film and what inspired you to bring this story to life?

What happens when an agency task at protecting the citizenry and ensuring that the duly constituted laws of the land are adhered to become the enforcer of human rights violations (in the case of the Philippines, the police becoming the Grim Reaper himself)?

The populist persona and demeanor of Philippine president Rodrigo Duterte catapulted him to such popularity unheard of in Philippine politics that everything he does, even unconstitutional and unconscionable acts like the extra-judicial killings done by the police, has semblance of entitlement, attributed mostly to the masses' imprimatur and approval. But his approval doesn't just come from the 'ignorant' masses but also from the intellectuals, the artists, the educated.

The suffering of Lt. Hermes Papauran in the film is the suffering of the Filipino soul, the human soul

A big inspiration of the film is the work of Filipino photojournalist, Raffy Lerma. He witnessed the madness. He was there at the frontlines when President Rodrigo Duterte's killings started. His lens captured the truth. His photo of a woman cuddling her just-murdered partner, which made the headlines all over the world, including The New York Times, became the image and symbol of the darkness of the Duterte folly. The photo, known now as "Pieta," and his other photos on the war on drugs were used in the film. I tried hard to have him in the film, to talk, to act as himself, but he is a very shy person. In the end his part was played by an actor.

Please, tell us something about the production and the shooting itself (in times of Covid19).

A few days after Taal Volcano erupted on January 12, 2020, my small crew entered part of the affected zone and started shooting using 16mm. The original plan was to shoot in an island in another region of the country but when the news of Taal's devastations broke, I told the group to immediately get ready and we went there. And then, by March, Covid lockdowns were imposed worldwide, and we stopped. From November 2020 to early January of 2021, I went location hunting alone in Sorsogon, in the southern part of Luzon Island.

Two months alone in the wilderness, I was, in fact, hunting for my soul.

By February, we resumed the shoot, albeit Covid restrictions were still being imposed. Around the second quarter of the year, we relocated to Lisbon to shoot additional parts there. Ultimately, in my edit, I just used the Sorsogon shoot. The Taal and Lisbon shoots are substantial enough for a part two.



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

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The suffering of Lt. Hermes Papauran in the film is the suffering of the Filipino soul, the human soul. The very current shocking Ukraine invasion by Russia and the resultant brutality seems unheard of but it is just a magnification of the human malady that has been with us forever—how humanity has become so accepting to a form of psychosis in approving evil leadership, how humanity has become so helpless to a wall of petrified ignorance. Putin, Duterte, Assad, Trump... they've been with us forever, The Grim Reapers of the world.

Lav Diaz



DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Lavrente Indico Diaz aka Lav Diaz is a filmmaker from the Philippines born on 1958. He is especially notable for the length of his work, his films not being governed by time but by space and nature. His work mostly deals with the social and political struggles of his motherland.

Since 1998 he has directed eighteen films, and won numerous international awards including the Locarno Golden Leopard (FROM WHAT IS BEFORE, 2014), the Berlinale Alfred Bauer Silver Bear (A LULLABY TO THE SORROWFUL MYSTERY, 2016) and the Venice Golden Lion (THE WOMAN WHO LEFT, 2016).

DIRECTOR'S FILMOGRAPHY

- 2022** **WHEN THE WAVES ARE GONE** (Kapag Wala Nang Mga Alon)
Venice Film Festival, Out of Competition
- 2020** **GENUS PAN** (Lahi, hayop)
Venice Orrizonti Award winner, BFI London Film Festival
- 2019** **THE HALT** (Ang Hupa)
Directors' Fortnight Cannes Film Festival
- 2018** **SEASON OF THE DEVIL** (Ang Panahon Ng Halimaw)
Berlinale, Competition
- 2016** **THE WOMAN WHO LEFT** (Ang Babaeng Humayo)
Golden Lion winner Venice International Film Festival
- 2016** **A LULLABY TO THE SORROWFUL MYSTERY** (Hele Sa Hiwagang Hapis)
Silver Bear winner (Alfred Bauer award) Berlinale
- 2014** **FROM WHAT IS BEFORE** (Mula sa Kung Ano ang Noon)
Golden Leopard winner Locarno Film Festival, Film Independent Spirit Awards, Toronto International Film Festival, International Film Festival Rotterdam
- 2013** **NORTE, THE END OF HISTORY** (Norte, hangganan ng kasaysayan)
Un Certain Regard Cannes International Film Festival, Karlovy Vary International Film Festival
- 2012** **FLORENTINA HUBALDO, CTE**
Toronto International Film Festival, Rotterdam International Film Festival
- 2011** **CENTURY OF BIRTHING**
Venice Film Festival Grand Jury Prize, Rotterdam International Film Festival

- 2011** **WOMAN OF THE WIND** (Babae ng Hangin)
International Film Festival Rotterdam
- 2008** **MELANCHOLIA**
*Orizzonti **Grand Prize** Venice Film Festival, Rotterdam International Film Festival
Thessaloniki International Film Festival*
- 2007** **DEATH IN THE LAND OF ENCANTOS**
(Kagadanan Sa Banwaan Ning Mga Engkanto)
*Venice Orizzonti **Special Mention** Award Venice Film Festival,
Toronto International Film Festival, Rotterdam International Film Festival*
- 2006** **HEREMIAS, BOOK ONE: THE LEGEND OF THE LIZARD PRINCESS**
(Heremias, Unang Aklat: Ang Alamat ng Prinsesang Bayawak)
***Special Jury Prize** (Fribourg International Film Festival), Cinemanila IFF*
- 2004** **EVOLUTION OF A FILIPINO FAMILY** (Ebolusyon ng Isang Pamilyang Pilipino)
*Toronto International Film Festival, International Film Festival Rotterdam,
Hong Kong International Film Festival, Vienna International Film Festival*
- 2002** **JESUS, REVOLUTIONNARY** (Hesus Rebolusyunaryo)
CPHDOX Festival
- 2002** **WEST SIDE KID** (Batang West Side)
Hong Kong IFF, Karlovy Vary IFF, Raindance Film Festival
- 1999** **NAKED UNDER THE MOON** (Hubad sa Ilalim ng Buwan)
Berlin International Film Festival, Singapore International Film Festival
- 1999** **BURGER BOYS**
- 1998** **CRIMINAL OF BARRIO CONCEPCION**
(Serafin Geronimo: Kriminal ng Barrio Concepcion)
*Toronto International Film Festival, Chicago International Film Festival,
Busan International Film Festival*



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