

KINO LORBER



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FILIPINANA

a film by RAFAEL MANUEL



Singapore/United Kingdom/Philippines/France/Netherlands | 2026 | 100 minutes | Filipino, English, Ilokano

****WINNER****

Special Jury Award for Creative Vision, Sundance Film Festival 2026

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LOGLINE

This Sundance prize winner, executive-produced by Jia Zhangke, follows a young "tee girl" at a posh golf club outside Manila, whose wanderings reveal troubling truths about the club, her native Philippines, and her own past.

SYNOPSIS

Isabel, a 17-year-old from the rural north of the Philippines, works at a posh country club outside Manila. Amid stifling heat and pervasive drought, she lines up golf balls for powerful men to drive into the carefully manicured verdant horizon. Between shifts, she wanders the immaculate grounds, sampling its luxuries and exploring its liminal spaces. The club's members, including an industrialist and his expatriate niece, the president and his pampered wife, and a slew of Chinese tourists, engage in a complex dance with the doting and subservient staff. But something is rotting beneath the pristine fairways of the elite resort, as Isabel discovers when she tries to return a mislaid golf club to its patriarchal director, Dr. Palanca. The deeper she journeys into its most exclusive corners, the closer she gets to the violent truths of the club, her native Philippines, and her own past.

A CONVERSATION WITH WRITER-DIRECTOR RAFAEL MANUEL

***Filipiñana* opens in the streets of Manila but quickly moves to a remote, verdant setting. Can you elaborate?**

I wanted to introduce the film using images and a setting that audiences around the world are used to seeing in Filipino cinema because a lot of the work my country produces focuses on the urban poverty milieu. But when the title hits the screen, we cut to a golf course — to make the connection that this is a different side of the Philippines.

Golf isn't something one thinks of in conjunction with the Philippines... certainly not with violence.

There are about 30-40 golf courses in and around Manila. To my mind, a golf course is the perfect metaphor for my country — in that it's a very large and fertile plot of land that's toiled and worked on by so many people, but ultimately, enjoyed and profited from by only a privileged few. By setting my story on a golf course, and situating the violence in a more innocuous setting, it becomes more relatable for an outside audience.

There isn't a lot of actual violence shown in your movie. Was this intentional?

There are two kinds of violence, objective and subjective, and if you look at how the news today tends to focus on murder, rape and crime, it's easy for most people to observe from a distance and not feel complicit. But you don't need to be a murderer or a criminal to be complicit in structural violence. It's enough to live silently in an inherently violent system, as Isabel discovers in the movie.

Explain how you cultivate a mood of violence without directly showing acts of violence.

We tried to develop an audio-visual grammar to give shape to this invisible violence. I'm interested in heightened realism in my work, where you can accentuate elements that are already there by heightening them, like the sound of a golf club when it hits a ball... if you bring that sound up by three or six decibels, it sounds like a gunshot.

Your 17-year-old protagonist Isabel is a tee-girl at a country club outside Manila. In the movie, she's described as *Ilokana*. Can you elaborate?

Ilocos is a rural northern region in the Philippines that is of immense political significance — it's where infamous dictator Ferdinand Marcos hails from. And now, less than 40 years after he was ousted from power, his son is the current president of the Philippines. Ilocos is also where Jorrybell Agoto, who plays Isabel, was born.

In the movie the golf course is more than a symbol of masculinity and the patriarchy — it's a dictatorial space.

In many of the locations we shot in, including a golf course called Puerto Azul that was built in the '70s, when Ferdinand Marcos was in power, there existed these presidential rooms, where the dictator at the time would have offices. I came to see a natural connection between administrative power and the golf course, an American phenomenon and export. When you think about how the ruling elite of my country were handed power by the Americans, who also brought golf to the Philippines, you see this natural

chain of connection.

There is a disconnect between the well-manicured landscape of the golf course, and what existed previously on the same land.

There was a sugar plantation in the Philippines where farmers were massacred by the landowners less than 20 years ago, and now it's a golf course. I'm interested in exploring how these manicured environments are able to cover up a violence that is so rampant in my country.

There is no sense of specific time in this movie — there's little technology or temporal cues... is this intentional?

The country club in the film is a place that's stuck between past, present and future. The golf course is another metaphor for that. You could view the film as a period piece if you wanted to. I was very conscious in trying to obscure the temporal setting because people are so quick to discuss post-colonialism in the context of Filipino society — but that doesn't make sense to me, because we are still living in colonialism, especially in the Philippines.

What is your impression of the country club environment in general?

The golf course is such an absurd milieu in itself, but it can be viewed as representative for everything that's happening in the world today. If we're talking about gentrification, a golf course is gentrification of the land; it's taking something wild and cultivating it, manicuring it. The golf course is a perfect metaphor for globalization — on a golf course, you could be anywhere on the planet. While it's very localized to the Philippines in this specific instance, it's universal in terms of the ramifications it has in the rest of the world.

In the movie, you explore the hierarchal and patriarchal structure of these spaces; this is a story of masculinity at the top, and subservience down below.

In the film, the country club members are presented very high in the frame, while the workers are shown very low, looking up. The specific image of Isabel filmed through Dr. Palanca's legs teeing balls while he hits them on a driving range was the genesis of the entire project. If we're talking about the hierarchy of the country club, that's why we chose a 4:3 aspect ratio, because it contradicts what you think about a golf course and its vast, widescreen expanses. What you lose in width, you gain in verticality — by taking out the width, you're using more of that verticality in the frame. And verticality is a good instrument for demonstrating power.

Describe the complicated dynamic between Isabel and Dr. Palanca.

Filipiñana is a coming-of-age story, so I wanted to set it up by focusing on Isabel developing a crush on Dr. Palanca — until she discovers painful truths about him and the club he presides over. But her growing up has a lot to do with her turning inward into her memories, which she has suppressed or long forgotten. As she learns more about the undercurrents of the club, she remembers her past in Ilocos. For me, this is representative of a malaise plaguing my country — we have a short collective memory, represented by the fact that less than 40 years after the Marcos family were ousted, they are now back in power.

Isabel's journey becomes about much more than returning a golf club to the president, in other words...

It becomes a journey of remembering and awakening on Isabel's part — an awakening that inspires action. Because golf is so much a game of inaction — the fewer strokes you take, the better score you receive — that inaction comes to reflect something deeper in the story in terms of its underlying violence: inaction becomes a kind of complicity in itself.

She's not a passive observer. In fact, she's something of a rebel. Can you elaborate?

We wanted to create this quiet and passive world around the golf course so that the things Isabel does over the course of the movie, some of them quiet acts of rebellion, send ripples through the world. Because of her lowly stature in the hierarchy of the club, and the Philippines at large, her verticality and mobility are limited. She can't do big things, but she can do small things, so we focused on the small things — these little acts of rebellion. Revolution starts from these small acts of rebellion.

The character of Clara, in contrast, is an outsider like Isabel, only she has agency. What's her role in the hierarchy?

Clara is a new character who wasn't present in the short film on which the feature is based, but she's important because I wanted to explore the country club milieu from top to bottom, while also expressing a current tendency in my country among the young and mobile (myself included). Clara is an expatriate living in New York, representative of a growing sector of Filipino society that's educated and being groomed to lead the country — but because everything is so difficult in the Philippines, people like Clara leave. In the movie, her Uncle Renato tries to lure her back from abroad to run his golf equipment company.

Clara's Uncle Renato, a crony of Dr. Palanca, tries to lure her back, using the country club as bait...

But even if they accept more female members into this old boys' club, it's just creating more privilege because this kind of space can't exist without a lower class — without the Isabels of the world — and Clara understands this. It's why she's dubious and reluctant about her uncle's proposals.

The Philippines is hot to begin with, but the heat in this movie feels symbolic in its torpor and lethargy. Water in the movie is depicted as replenishing, but ultimately sinister.

When we shot the short film six years ago, the country was going through a water shortage, but when we were doing location scouting, we noticed the sprinklers were always on in these country clubs around Manila because they needed to maintain the greens. In the Philippines, you can't drink the water from the tap, so it's a class distinguisher in itself, which is strange, because there's so much water in the Philippines. But it's privatized.

The movie is rife with phallic symbols — shafts and balls abound...

Phallic symbols represent masculine power, and Isabel and Clara both engage with them over the course of the movie, like when Clara stares at the ylang-ylang tree with two rocks on either side of it, or Isabel carries the golf club around the property looking for Dr. Palanca. There's a lot of patriarchy in the movie, men exerting power over women, but there's also women exploiting women. People exploit people in

this environment. For me, exploitation has no sex.

Your visual style favors long, drawn-out takes, often shot from afar, corresponding with the lethargy of the environment. Who is your cinematographer?

Xenia Patricia is a Swiss D.P. I went to film school with, and she shot my short film. Xenia and I, together with my production designer, Tatjana Fanny Honegger, who was also very influential in developing the aesthetic of the film, travelled to more than 100 golf courses during our location scouting, so they became very familiar with the landscape and visual environment of the country club setting. They helped me handpick the best golf courses in the Philippines, and we wound up shooting at eight different golf courses.

Some of your shots are held for a long time, in the vernacular of slow cinema...

It was important for us to develop a cinematic language that resonated with the themes we were dealing with, including hierarchy, patriarchy, and verticality, or mobility. But the fact that we didn't move the camera had more to do with inaction, another big theme. The golf course is traditionally a slow environment, stuck in its ways, so to speak. The zooming in from long shots to medium shots is something we didn't do in the short film — on a larger canvas, we're thinking more about memory and the past, and seeing more clearly what lies underneath this manicured environment.

You also make time for music and dance interludes. Discuss the importance of these scenes.

My influence for the musical scenes is very much the Filipino people — if you go to my country, you'll notice everyone singing and dancing in the streets — the harder a person works, the more they sing and dance. This sort of escapism is ingrained in the Filipino people. There's a joke that we love karaoke so much that it's a national sport. I'm also influenced by the films of Jacques Tati, who used synchronized movement to illuminate the absurdity of modern life. The movement sequences in the film are an extension of that. Everything is hyper performative in these kinds of spaces, whether it's the country club members and the way they have to behave in polite society, or the workers, who are obligated to appear a certain way in front of the members.

One of the many metaphors on display in this movie is a dying tree. Can you discuss?

The dying tree, which is uprooted and replaced over the course of the movie, is a pine tree, which is not native to the Philippines — the Americans brought them over, like they did the golf course. In the movie, Isabel is forced to move to Manila from her rural town in Ilocos because there are no jobs. Conversely, Clara leaves the Philippines for America — it's all speaking to the globalization of the world.

Your mentor, and an executive producer on the film, is the Chinese director Jia Zhangke, whose big themes are globalization and societal change. How did he become involved with this project?

He was very involved in *Filipiñana* from the treatment phase, developing the script, giving me notes, helping with the financing. For the past 30 years, Jia has been documenting the immense change China has gone through, and he focuses a lot on situating the working people of his country within this change. His movie *Still Life*, in which you have these very small and intimate personal stories taking place while an entire city is being demolished in the background, is a masterpiece. In a single shot of *Still Life*, you can see the present, the future and the past all in one frame. I did a two-year mentorship with Jia and

was on set and in the editing room with him on *Caught by the Tides*.

Aside from his work being influential on your own work, did Jia impart anything specific about the filmmaking process that impacted *Filipinana*?

He came to the Philippines for the first three shooting days, and he gave me this valuable advice: The first few shooting days are for bridging the gap between your imagination and reality — as long as you bridge that gap effectively in that time, the rest of the shoot will go well.

THE CREW

RAFAEL MANUEL (Writer/Director/Editor)

Based in between Amsterdam, London, and Manila, Rafael Manuel's short films have won a Silver Bear at the Berlinale, have screened at Locarno, IFFR, and FIDMarseilles, and are exhibited by ARTE and the Criterion Collection. He is the last film protegee at the Rolex Arts Initiative where he was mentored by Jia Zhang-ke. *Filipiñana* is his debut feature-length film.

XENIA PATRICIA (Director of Photography)

Xenia is a cinematographer working across fiction and documentary. With a background in Modern and Classical Chinese and Korean from SOAS, her approach to image-making is shaped by a deep curiosity for language, culture, and character. She has shot projects around the world, collaborating closely with directors to create visually grounded, emotionally resonant work that serves story and performance.

Xenia's acclaimed short film *Filipiñana* (dir. Rafael Manuel) premiered at Berlinale and went on to screen at numerous international festivals, winning the Silver Bear and, Xenia, the Panalux Award for Outstanding Cinematography. Xenia reunited with the original creative team to shoot the much-anticipated feature-length adaptation of the film.

Other recent feature credits include *The Zodiac Killer Project* (dir. Charlie Shackleton) – a bold, 16 mm documentary-feature that premiered at the Sundance Film Festival in 2025 and Julia Jackman's epic fantasy *100 Nights of Hero* (2025), which closed both Venice and London Film Festivals in 2025.

TATJANA HONEGGER (Production Designer)

Tatjana Fanny Honegger is a Swiss filmmaker, producer and costume & production designer. She has a background in painting and religious studies, the latter which she studied at King's College London, in the UK. She holds a master's degree in Film Creation from Elías Querejeta Zine Eskola in San Sebastián, in the Basque Country. Her interdisciplinary work has been shown at festivals around the world such as International Film Festival Rotterdam, Sundance Film Festival, FIDMarseille, or Visions du Réel. She participated in the Locarno Filmmakers Academy at the 78th Locarno Film Festival. Since 2024, she leads the film department at the Zurich-based production company Cinémamma GmbH, where she develops and produces international projects alongside her own. She is currently directing her newest film, 'Oia Nora'.

CARLA VILLANUEVA (Costume Designer)

Carla Villanueva is a stylist and multidisciplinary creative from Manila with over a decade of experience rooted in editorial styling, media and publishing. Her work has appeared across a range of commercial and independent platforms, where she continues to shape compelling visual narratives. With a strong foundation in fashion and image-making, she has expanded her creative direction into costume design for independent film, as well as visual and sensory storytelling for brands in design, and lifestyle spaces.

Carla's approach often extends beyond the frame—into specialty cakes, food styling, direction, and hands-on recipe development, crafting immersive experiences where aesthetics and atmosphere intersect. She is also the founder of Baúl, a small brand of objets d'art and accessories, best known for its

fashion bags handwoven in prison as part of a social initiative supporting rehabilitation through craft and local community.

VINCENT VILLA (Sound Designer)

Vincent Villa is a French sound designer, based between France and Cambodia.

In 2007, he launched Soundies Studio in Paris, but it was in 2010 that he visited Cambodia for the first time, while working on the documentary “GOLDEN SLUMBERS” directed by Davy Chou. “CAMBODIA 2099”, “DIAMOND ISLAND” and the recent “RETURN TO SEOUL”, all directed by Davy Chou, have allowed him to develop his work on the image-sound relationship, from script development to the final sound mix.

His meeting with filmmakers and producers from Southeast Asia, such as Bianca Balbuena, Bradley Liew, Lee Chatametikool, Weijie Lai, Marie Dubas, Le Bao, Jeremy Chua, Kavich Neang, Antoinette Jadaone, Loeloe Handra Komara and Mouly Surya have allowed him to sound design acclaimed films, such as “THE FOX KING”, “FOUR SEASONS IN JAVA”, “TASTE”, “LAST SHADOW AT FIRST LIGHT”, “WHITE BUILDING”, “TALE OF THE LAND”, “FAN GIRL”.

Vincent Villa is a major collaborator of the films produced by Cambodian production company ANTI-ARCHIVE. In 2018 he met producer Loy Te, and they decided together to create Kongchak Studio, an audio post-production studio certified Dolby Atmos Theatrical Studio. Kongchak Studio has been a partner of the Asian Project Market since 2022.

THE CAST

JORRYBELL AGOTO (“Isabel”)

Jorrybell Agoto is a Filipino actor and a graduate of AB Theatre Arts. She was part of Berlinale Talents in 2024. Her film credits include *Filipiñana* (2026, Sundance – World Cinema Dramatic Competition), *Sisa* (2026), *When This Is All Over* (2023), and *Tether* (2023). She appeared in the short films *Cross My Heart Hope to Die* (2023, in competition at the Venice International Film Festival), *Filipiñana* (2020, winner of the Silver Bear Jury Prize at the Berlin International Film Festival), and *The Slums* (2019, winner at the Busan International Kids and Youth Film Festival). Her approach to acting is rooted in truthful connection and responsiveness, shaped by training focused on authenticity and emotional presence. She believes truth in performance emerges not from display, but from presence, restraint, and what remains unspoken.

CARMEN CASTELLANOS (“Clara”)

Carmen Castellanos was born in Manila, Philippines, and is of Spanish and Filipino descent. She is a Filipino creative whose work is deeply shaped by her Filipino heritage and cultural identity. From the ages of 19 to 24, she worked as a freelance model in Manila, gaining experience across various creative and commercial projects. Her background continues to influence her artistic perspective and professional pursuits. *Filipiñana* is her first foray into acting.

TEROY GUZMAN (“Dr. Palanca”)

Teroy Guzman is a distinguished Filipino actor celebrated for his commanding presence in theater and his nuanced, often chilling performances in independent cinema. Frequently described as a “Shakespearean actor,” he has taken on some of the stage’s most demanding roles, including Othello, Macbeth, and King Lear, and earned critical acclaim for his modern interpretation of Richard III.

In film, Guzman is regarded as a vital figure in Philippine independent cinema. He received a Gawad Urian nomination for Best Supporting Actor for his role in Mike De Leon’s political drama *Citizen Jake* (2018). His notable collaborations include Lav Diaz’s *History of Ha* (2021) and Erik Matti’s *Seklusyon* (2016), where his restrained intensity stood out. His screen work spans a wide range of genres, from psychological drama in *Sunod* (2019) to mainstream television hits such as Ang Probinsyano and Bagman.

From 2025 to 2026, Guzman continues to be part of the country’s most prominent projects. He stars in *Filipiñana* (2026), directed by Rafael Manuel and slated to premiere at the 2026 Sundance Film Festival. His recent appearances include the 2025 series *Ang Happy Homes ni Diane Hilario* and the drama *Happy Crush*. He also played a key role in *Quezon* (2025), the final installment of Jerrold Tarog’s Bayaniverse historical trilogy.

A graduate of Ateneo de Manila University, Guzman has spent decades as a mainstay of the Manila theater scene with Tanghalang Pilipino and Dulaang UP.

CARLITOS SIGUION-REYNA (“Uncle Renato”)

Carlos “Carlitos” Siguion-Reyna is a highly acclaimed Filipino filmmaker, director, actor, and educator whose career spans several decades and has helped shape contemporary Philippine cinema. He is widely recognized for his critically successful films, many of which have earned major national awards and screened at international film festivals.

As a director, Siguion-Reyna has helmed 13 feature films, several produced under Reyna Films. His celebrated works include *Hihintayin Kita sa Langit*, *Ikaw Pa Lang Ang Minahal*, and *Azucena*, films noted for their emotional depth, social insight, and strong audience resonance. These titles have consistently received top honors from major Philippine award-giving bodies and have contributed to the global visibility of Filipino storytelling.

Beyond filmmaking, Siguion-Reyna is a key cultural leader and educator. He holds a Master of Fine Arts in Film from New York University’s Tisch School of the Arts and has taught at its Singapore campus. Since 2015, he has served as head of the Cinemalaya Institute, leading workshops that mentor emerging filmmakers. As of May 2024, he is also chairman of the Cinemalaya Competition and Monitoring Committee, overseeing one of the country’s most influential independent film platforms.

In recent years, Siguion-Reyna has expanded his screen presence as an actor. He appears in the feature film *Filipiñana* (2026), slated to premiere at the 2026 Sundance Film Festival, and has acted in *Five Breakups and a Romance* (2023) and *P77*.

A former three-term president of the Directors’ Guild of the Philippines, Inc., Siguion-Reyna remains a vital force in championing distinct Filipino voices in cinema.

NOUR HOOSHMAND (“Janine”)

Nour Hooshmand, also known as Nourijune, is a Filipina-Iranian actress, filmmaker, and multidisciplinary artist based in the Philippines. She has steadily built a body of work across independent cinema, theater, and music, with performances recognized both locally and internationally.

Nour recently led the short film *Agapito*, which screened at major festivals including Cannes and TIFF, earning multiple citations and awards. She has also appeared in commercial and mainstream projects such as *Love You So Bad* (Star Cinema, MMFF) and *BuyBust 2*, while continuing to pursue character-driven roles that explore identity, grief, resistance, and intimacy.

Beyond acting, Nour is an active creative collaborator, writing, directing staged readings, and developing original works for film and theater. She is currently part of Ricky Lee’s writing workshop, where she continues to deepen her storytelling practice and expand her voice as a writer.

Her work is rooted in stories that center human connection, cultural memory, and the quiet tensions of everyday life. As an artist, Nour is committed to projects that challenge dominant narratives and amplify underrepresented voices, particularly women navigating male-dominated spaces. She continues to balance independent artistry with larger-scale productions, steadily shaping a career defined by intention, depth, and integrity.

Her passion for the arts is inspired by the adventurous spirit of her mother and father, and she is fueled

to keep going by her love for family and the chance to honor them through her work.

ISABEL SICAT (“Ina / Clara’s Caddie”)

Isabel Sicat is an actor, designer, and artist whose work is presented across film, fashion, and contemporary art contexts, often through interdisciplinary and international platforms.

She is the co-founder of TOQA, a Manila-based fashion studio known for creating “uniforms for everyday adventure,” where her Sport Resort aesthetic operates as both a design philosophy and a narrative device.

A graduate of the Brown–RISD Dual Degree Program, Sicat holds a BA in Political Science from Brown University and a BFA from the Rhode Island School of Design. She was named to Forbes Asia’s 30 Under 30 list for Art & Style and shortlisted for the Vogue Singapore x BMW Innovation Prize. Her work has appeared in *Vogue*, *The Face*, *Glamour*, *DANSK*, *CNN*, and *Esquire*.

Sicat’s practice centers on narrative-driven design, using clothing, performance, and moving image to construct character, environment, and story. Her work has been presented through films, performances, and installations commissioned for international exhibitions, including the Manila Biennale (2018), Hawai’i Triennial (2022), and Thailand Biennale (2025). She writes, directs, and costumes films developed for these contexts, working across hybrid formats that collapse cinematic, performative, and site-responsive modes. For the 2019 World Cup, she designed uniforms for the Philippine Women’s Touch Rugby Team.

In film, Sicat works as actor and costume designer, occupying hybrid roles that merge authorship and embodiment. Her screen work includes a performance and costuming role in *Filipinaña* (dir. Rafael Manuel, 2025). She has acted in and designed costumes for Billboard music videos for Jess Connelly and GRAVEDGR.

MICAH MUSA (“Mica”)

Micah Musa is a Filipina actress with a background in theatre and independent cinema. She holds a BA in Communication Arts – Theatre Arts from the University of the Philippines Los Baños and received further acting training with Tanghalang Pilipino. Her theatre credits include Distrito de Molo (UP Playwrights’ Theatre), Faust (Dulaang UP), Happiness Is A Pearl (Artist Playground), Eva Hamok (Fringe Manila 2018), and Manila Notes (Tanghalang Pilipino and Japan Foundation).

Micah received Best Actress honors at the Cineberde Film Festival in 2016 and 2019 for *Secret Menu*, and earned a Best Actress nomination at Cine Mapua 2017 for *Ikalwa*. Her screen credits include *Ang Guro Kong Di Marunong Magbasa*, *General Admission*, *Kung Paano Siya Nawala*, *Ang Sikreto Ng Piso*, *Utopia*, and the short film *Filipiñana*, which was part of a Silver Bear Award–winning entry at the 71st Berlin International Film Festival.

ELLE VELASCO (“Charlie”)

Elle Velasco is a screen and stage actor known for restrained, psychologically precise performances that

reveal emotional depth through stillness and control. Often drawn to characters who hold more than they reveal, she brings a quietly commanding presence shaped by classical theatre training, with emotion emerging through timing, physical economy, and acute responsiveness to her scene partners.

Her stage work spans a wide range of theatrical forms, including a touring one-woman monodrama. In 2019, she received a Gawad Buhay Award nomination for Female Featured Performance in a Play. That theatrical foundation carries into her screen work, where precision, listening, and an ease with silence allow interior tension and moral ambiguity to surface without excess.

Elle's film credits include psychological thrillers, horror, science fiction, and experimental cinema, alongside select work in comedy and drama across local and international productions. She gravitates toward projects with emotional stakes beneath the narrative surface and collaborators who value intention, nuance, and trust in the audience.

Known for her ease on set and ensemble-minded approach, Elle brings focus without friction and intensity without overstatement. She continues to train through workshops and masterclasses, seeking roles that challenge her perspective and expand her range. Comfortable working across cultures and forms, she is drawn to filmmakers who see cinema as a space for reflection, tension, and human connection.

ANGELI BAYANI as ("Beth / Renato's Caddie")

Angeli Bayani is a multi-award-winning actress and educator, widely regarded as one of the most important figures in contemporary Philippine cinema. Renowned director Ang Lee has described her as a "national treasure," a distinction earned through decades of critically acclaimed work across stage, film, and television, both locally and internationally.

Bayani gained global recognition in 2013 with standout performances in two films selected for the Cannes Film Festival: the Singaporean drama *Ilo Ilo*, which won the Caméra d'Or, and Lav Diaz's epic *Norte, the End of History*. Her performance in *Norte* earned her the Gawad Urian for Best Actress in 2014, and in 2021, the Manunuri ng Pelikulang Pilipino named her one of the Gawad Urian Actors of the Decade (2010–2020).

In recent years, Bayani has continued to bridge independent cinema and mainstream storytelling. She stars as Maria Agoncillo in *Quezon* (2025), the final installment of the Bayaniverse historical trilogy, and is set to appear in the feature film *Filipiñana*, scheduled to premiere at the 2026 Sundance Film Festival. Internationally, she was featured in HBO *Asia's Food Lore: Island of Dreams*, earning the Philippines' National Winner for Best Actress at the Asian Academy Creative Awards.

A University of the Philippines graduate and former scholar of CCP's Tanghalang Pilipino, Bayani has appeared in nearly 40 stage productions and over 75 films. She is the founder and head teacher of Meisner Studio Manila, the country's first Designated Meisner Technique program, and remains deeply committed to mentoring emerging actors through partnerships with the Film Development Council of the Philippines.

THE PRODUCTION COMPANIES

POTOCOL

Founded in 2014 by film producer and screenwriter Jeremy Chua, Pōtocol is an independent film company based in Singapore that focuses on the international co-productions of director-driven Asian films. Completed works include *Vagachipani* by Natesh Hegde (Berlinale Forums 2025), *Ma - Cry of Silence* (New Currents Award - Busan 2024), *Pierce* by Nelicia Low (Best Director Crystal Globe - Karlovy Vary 2024), *Last Shadow at First Light* by Nicole Midori Woodford (San Sebastian International Film Festival 2023), *Inside the Yellow Cocoon Shell* by Pham Thien An (Camera D'Or winner, Quinzaine des Cinéastes 2023), *Tomorrow is a long time* by Jow Zhi Wei (Berlinale 2023), *Autobiography* by Makbul Mubarak (FIPRESCI award – Venice Orizzonti 2022), *Glorious Ashes* by Bui Thac Chuyen (Montgolfière d'Or – Nantes 2022), *Rehana Maryam Noor* by Abdullah Mohammad Saad (Cannes Un Certain Regard 2021), *A Family Tour* by

Ying Liang (Opening Film International Competition – Locarno 2018), *A Yellow Bird* by K. Rajagopal (Cannes Critics Week 2016) and *A Lullaby to the Sorrowful Mystery* by Lav Diaz (Silver Bear – Berlinale 2016).

OSSIAN INTERNATIONAL

Ossian International is a BAFTA-winning and four-time BAFTA-nominated production company, founded by the British-Australian film & television producer Alex Polunin.

Headquartered in Scotland and producing internationally, Ossian offers a different perspective on the future of UK cinema – producing the debut features of a wave of some of the next generation's most exciting and urgent new filmmaking voices, including: Olive Nwosu's *LADY* and Rafael Manuel's *FILIPINANA* for Film4, which are both premiering at the Sundance Film Festival in 2026; as well as Sean Robert Dunn's *THE FALL OF SIR DOUGLAS WEATHERFORD* and Rhys Marc Jones' *BLACK CHURCH BAY* for BBC Film, which are both in post-production.

Ossian is now establishing an office in North America to expand internationally, having recently produced its first US picture, *BORGES & ME*, with Oscar-nominated indie studio Big Beach.

EPICMEDIA

Epicmedia Productions Inc. is a Philippine-based film production company, founded in 2011, currently led by Bradley Liew and Bianca Balbuena. Its mission is to create stories that matter by collaborating with fearless filmmakers and discovering the next generation of storytellers.

Epicmedia's notable credits include Truong Minh Quy's 'Viet and Nam' (Cannes Un Certain Regard), 'Directors Factory Philippines' (Cannes Directors' Fortnight), Kenneth Dagatan's 'In My Mother's Skin' (Sundance Midnight Section) which sold to Amazon, Lorcan Finnegan's 'Nocebo' (the first Ireland-UK-Philippines coproduction) starring Eva Green and Mark Strong, 'That Thing Called Tadhana' (one of the highest grossing independent films in Philippine's box office history) and Lav Diaz's 'A Lullaby To The Sorrowful Mystery' (Berlinale Silver Bear Winner), 'Season Of The Devil' (Berlinale Competition), the ARTE supported 'When The Waves Are Gone' (Venice Out of Competition) and 'Essential Truths of

The Lake' (Locarno Competition).

Epicmedia places special focus on collaborations within the Southeast Asian region, co-producing Southeast Asian titles like Pham Ngoc Lan's 'Cu Li Never Cries' (Berlinale Best First Feature), Mouly Surya's Indonesian WW2 epic 'Perang Kota' (IFF Rotterdam Closing Film) and Ananth Subramaniam's 'Bleat!' (Cannes Critics Week) the first ever Malaysian short film in Cannes.

Epicmedia's work in the narrative series realm includes show-running titles such as Astro Malaysia's 'Boo: A Philippine Horror Anthology'; Signal Entertainment's LGBT comedy, 'My Delivery Gurl' and the pandemic set anthology, 'Now Streaming'; detective-noir series, 'The Tapes' (iWant & Netflix); two seasons of the hit Philippine web series, 'Single/Single' and the Malaysian episode of HBO's 'Folklore 2: Ayizah, Ayizah'. Currently, Epicmedia works closely with creating and providing content for Netflix and other major international streamers in the region.

Line Production Servicing is a key focus at Epicmedia. With over 14 years of experience, we've supported international productions filming in the Philippines. These include Japanese commercial dramas, large-scale sci-fi films from Switzerland, U.S.-based crime thrillers, and collaborations with major European studios like the UK's Film4. By providing specialized Filipino crew with global shooting experience, we ensure smooth integration with international partners. This is all enhanced by the Philippines' iconic locations—pristine beaches, lush jungles, stunning natural landscapes, sand dunes and the vibrant city of Manila. These settings have also doubled for places like Beijing, Shanghai, Louisiana, and Indonesia.

EASY RIDERS FILMS

Easy Riders Films is a Paris-based production company launched in May 2019 by Nadia Turincev and Omar El Kadi.

The company is behind internationally acclaimed productions such as *Only Rebels Win* by Danielle Arbid, *Filipiñana* by Rafael Manuel, *Who Is Still Alive* by Nicolas Wadimoff, *Crossing* by Levan Akin, *El Ladrón de Perros* by Vinko Tomičić, *Lost Country* by Vladimir Perisic, *Mariupolis 2* by Mantas Kvedaravicius, and *Runner* by Marian Mathias, which have been presented at Cannes, Venice, Berlinale, Sundance, TIFF, San Sebastián, and Tribeca.

IDLE EYE

Idle Eye is a film production company and artist collective based in Amsterdam. We champion audio-visual experiences that question established norms and encourage contemplative thought.

Idle Eye is directed by Rafael Manuel, Naomi Pacifique, Albert Kuhn & Adela Bottcher. Founded in 2019 our work has been exhibited by The Criterion Collection and ARTE and awarded at festivals such as the Berlinale, Locarno, IFFR, FIDMarseille and San Sebastian.

FILM4

Film4 Productions is Channel 4 Television's feature film division. Publicly owned yet commercially funded,

Film4 develops and co-finances films and is known for working with the most distinctive and innovative talent in UK and international filmmaking, both new and established. Since its inception in 1982 Film4's films have won a collective 43 Oscars® and 97 BAFTAs.

Film4's recent films include Oscar®, BAFTA and Venice Golden Lion winning *Poor Things* (Yorgos Lanthimos); Oscar®, BAFTA and Cannes Grand Prix winning *The Zone of Interest* (Jonathan Glazer); Savannah Leaf's BAFTA winning *Earth Mama*; Molly Manning Walker's Un Certain Regard winning *How to Have Sex*; and Andrew Haigh's BIFA winning *All of Us Strangers*. Recent releases include global box office hits *We Live in Time* (John Crowley), as well as Rose Glass' *Love Lies Bleeding*, Karan Kandhari's *Sister Midnight*, Rebecca Lenkiewicz' *Hot Milk* and Eloise King's *The Shadow Scholars*.

This year's production slate includes debuts by Ashley Walters (Animol) and Alice Birch (Sweetsick) and a new film by Martin McDonagh (Wild Horse Nine). A packed slate of upcoming releases includes Kaouther Ben Hania's *The Voice of Hind Rajab*, which won the Silver Lion Grand Jury Prize at the 82nd Venice Film Festival; Dylan Southern's *The Thing With Feathers*; Oliver Hermanus' *The History of Sound*; Philippa Lowthorpe's *H is for Hawk*, Mark Jenkin's *Rose of Nevada*; Romain Gavras' *Sacrifice* and Thea Gajic's *Surviving Earth*.

Film4 has developed and co-financed many of the most ground-breaking and successful UK films including Yorgos Lanthimos' *The Favourite*; Martin McDonagh's *Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri*; Lenny Abrahamson's *Room*; Asif Kapadia's *Amy*; Steve McQueen's *12 Years a Slave*; Andrea Arnold's *American Honey*; Phyllida Lloyd's *The Iron Lady*, Danny Boyle's *Slumdog Millionaire*; Sarah Gavron's *Rocks*; Pawel Pawlikowski's *Cold War*; Lynne Ramsay's *You Were Never Really Here*; Rungano Nyoni's *I Am Not a Witch*; Chris Morris' *Four Lions*; Shane Meadows' *This is England*; and Jonathan Glazer's *Under the Skin*.

CREDITS

A Potocol, Ossian International, Epicmedia, Easy Riders Films & Idle Eye Production

Writer and Director	Rafael Manuel
Producers	Jeremy Chua, Alex Polunin, Bianca Balbuena, Bradley Liew, Nadia Turincev, Omar El Kadi, Rafael Manuel
Co-Producers	Sam Chua Weishi
Executive Producers	Farhana Bhula, Jia Zhangke, Anthony C. Isais, Grace Mariel M. Isais, Maria Sophia Atayde-Marudo, Jossette C. Atayde, Sebastian Raeuber, Francine Raeuber
Director of Photography	Xenia Patricia
Production Design	Tatjana Fanny Honegger
Costume Design	Carla Villanueva, Tatjana Fanny Honegger
Editor	Rafael Manuel
Sound Design & Mix	Vincent Villa
Colourist	Vlad Barin
Post-Production Supervisor	Eugene Seah
Consulting Producer	Benedikt Maurer
Supervising Producer	Patti Lopus
Associate Producers	Ari Turalba, Marlon Stockinger
Line Producer Annecy	Cherie Bautist
1st Assistant Director	Alyssa Villanueva
2nd Assistant Director	Giselle Lin
Choreographer	Shayna Cua
Unit Production Manager	Lexter Tarriela
Casting Director	Danna Simbre

CAST

Isabel	Jorrybell Agoto
Clara	Carmen Castellanos
Dr. Palanca	Teroy Guzman
Uncle Renato	Carlitos Siguion-Reyna
Ina / Clara's Caddie	Isabel Sicat
Janine	Nour Hooshmand
Charlie	Elle Velasco
Beth / Renato's Caddie	Angeli Bayani
Mica	Micah Musa
Susan	Sunshine Teodoro
Dolly / Tour Guide	Pipay Kipay
Mrs. Palanca	Agot Isidro
Sleeping Waitress	Anna Buquid
Little Girl in Red	Jewel Sotelo

Little Girl's Nanny
Blind Rondella Band Vocalist
Mario
Golfer
Golder
Security Guard
Chinese Golfer
Non-Urinating Man

Thea Marabut
Bullet Dumas
Dela Cruz Roven R. Alejandro
Jong Cuenco
Rodel Dyas Adarlo
James Lomahan
Edward Ngo
Victor Nem Singh