

Service (Serbis)

Brillante MENDOZA



Genre: Drama
Format: 35mm
Estimated Running Time: 90 min.

Budget:
US\$350,000
(HK\$2,730,000)

Funds Secured:
US\$6,000
(HK\$46,800)

Producer:
Ferdinand LAPUZ

Writing Credits:
Armando LAO (screenplay)
Boots PASTOR (screenplay)

Production Company:
Centerstage Productions Inc.

HAF Goal:
Funds

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INTRODUCTION

The setting for this story is a movie house showing pornographic films. This is the place where the characters in the film earn their living, lead their lives and are disappointed by their loved ones. The characters experience life as all of us do, yet activities happen there that are what we generally know as "immoral". This is the source of irony that Philippino director Brillante Mendoza is going to mine in *Service*. Immorality has become a way of life as dictated or demanded by our need to survive.

SYNOPSIS

Service tackles a day in the life of a down-and-out movie house showing second run sex movies in the provinces. The story focuses on the members of the family who have made this rundown movie theater their home, as well as focusing on the customers who come to the theater every day.

Nanay Flor, 58, along with her immediate family, operate the theater and the film follows them as they go through the routine of their everyday life, trying to survive on the theater's meager earnings and turning a blind eye to the regulars who mostly engage in sex inside the theater. The patrons are serbis (service) boys and gay hustlers, all on the prowl for customers.

Things kick off one Wednesday (the day for the novena to the Mother of Perpetual Help) in October (month-long feast of Our Lady of the Rosary). Nayda, daughter of Nanay Flor, is manning the theater because Nanay Flor has gone to the nearby town where she filed a polygamy case in court two years ago against her husband, Tatay Edwin, and today, the verdict is going to be announced. Meanwhile, on the double bill at the theater, one of the films, *Natasha*, is about a young woman who, spurned by her suitor because she engages in sex with a rich man's son, leaves for Manila where she ends up as a go-go dancer/prostitute in a girlie joint.

Nayda carries out her daily routine, preparing the menu for the movie house canteen, dealing with the laundrywoman, and making sure the lobby displays for the day's screenings are mounted. She argues with her husband, Lando, about money that has to be deposited in their checking account because the soft drink supplier will be cashing a check that afternoon. The money is not there, however, and she reluctantly agrees when Lando suggests they withdraw the necessary amount from the personal bank account of their son.

It has already past 12:30 pm. The daily screenings have started and the regular patrons are streaming in. Among the normal crowd of serbis boys and hustlers there is a subdued jostling as they size up potential customers. Jennelyn, one of the serbis gays, usually spends his time at the movie house. Greg, on the other hand, earns extra money from the patrons by selling perfume on an installment plan.

Nanay Flor arrives. She lost her case and blames her lawyer for not doing his job. Her depression only increases when the film broker drops by and tells her

that there has been an increase in the film rentals. Nayda tries her best to console Nanay Flor, sending her upstairs to take a nap. Meanwhile, Allan, the porter, and his girlfriend Merly follow Nanay Flor upstairs and announce that Merly is pregnant. She tells them they have to get married, and readily accepts the role as the broker between the parents of the two, promising to call on both parties on the designated day.

The customers mingle and the family drama continues, each one bleeding into and commenting on the other. Inside the movie house, while Natasha gyrates on the screen in her skimpy bikini, the sex trade among the serbis boys and willing patrons gains momentum and upstairs Nanay Flor's youngest son Jerome, who testified against her in the court case, arrives to try to assuage his guilt.

Finally, Nanay Flor comes downstairs and takes up her post in the ticket booth. Suddenly, a purse-snatcher appears, seeking refuge inside the movie house. In hot pursuit are two policemen. The screening is stopped and the lights are turned on in an attempt to flush out the fugitive — much to the surprise of the serbis boys and customers engaged in sex, who are suddenly caught off guard.

The snatcher is apprehended and hauled off. It takes a few moments before order is reestablished among the moviegoers and the screening is resumed.

When everything is normal again, Nanay Flor admits a new patron. And life at the theater goes on.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

This story is closely based on real life, hence the treatment of the material will be in the cinema verite style, like my other films *Slingshot* (2007), *Foster Child* (2007) and *The Masseur* (2005). The events unfold as they happen in real life, seen from the various points of view of the characters involved: Nanay Flor, the proprietor of the movie house; her daughter who takes over the movie house while she is away; the various trade boys and hustlers and even the purse snatcher who seeks refuge in the movie house from pursuing policemen.

There is an irony implicit in our lives. What is deemed immoral by the law is mostly lived and practiced freely by normal people, hence immorality has become a way of life as dictated or demanded by our need to survive.

DIRECTOR

Brillante Mendoza was born in 1960 in the Philippines. His first feature film *The Masseur* (2005) won the Golden Leopard Award at the Locarno International Film Festival, the Interfaith Jury Award at Brisbane International Film Festival and the Audience Award at the Torino Film Festival. His other four feature films have won numerous awards as well, including the NETPAC Award at the Jeonju Film Festival for *Summer Heat* in 2006; Best Film and Best Director for *The Aeta Teacher* at the Cinemanila Festival in 2006; *Foster Child* was an official selection of Directors' Fortnight at the Cannes Film Festival in 2007 and *Slingshots* (2007) was an official selection of the Pusan, the Toronto and the Berlin International Film Festivals.

PRODUCER

Ferdinand Lapuz has executive-produced several films by Brillante Mendoza including *The Aeta Teacher* (2006) and *Slingshot* (2007). He has also worked as sales agent for a number of independent features in the Philippines, including *Magnifico* (2004), *The Blossoming of Maximo Oliveros* (2005) and *Foster Child* (2007).

PRODUCTION COMPANY

Centerstage Productions Inc. is a group of independent filmmakers who have brought honors to the Philippines through their films which have won awards at many major international film festivals. Its projects include *The Aeta Teacher* (2006), *Summer Heat* (2006) and *The Masseur* (2005). Its latest production is *Slingshot* (2007) which offers social commentary on the lives of the underprivileged urban poor in Manila and was shot during Holy Week as well as during the country's last presidential election.