

Past Love

Thailand / USA

Lee CHATAMETIKOOL



Genre: Drama
Format: HD
Estimated Running Time: 90 min.

Budget:
US\$ 400,000 (HK\$ 3,120,000)
Funds Secured:
US\$ 125,000 (HK\$ 975,000)

Producer:
Anocha SUWICHAKORNPONG

Writing Credit:
Lee CHATAMETIKOOL

Production Companies:
Electric Eel Films
Houdini Studio

HAF Goals:
Funds, Co-producers,
Sales agents, Pre-sales

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INTRODUCTION

Kicking off in 1997 when the Thai government was forced to float the baht in order to save the economy, *Past Love* is about flight, both real and imagined, in a nation at the center of the Asian Financial Crisis. Burdened with debt, many Thai investors chose to “fly”, hurling themselves off buildings when the crisis was at its worst. This film is about the lives of four people impacted by one of these suicides. Flashing back to 1985, when Thailand started its transformation from an agricultural backwater into a newly industrialized country, *Past Love* draws on the director’s extensive experience as an editor, presenting its scenes and characters as fragments of found footage assembled into a narrative, depicting the wild extremes of hope and despair that tore Thailand apart between 1985 and 1997.

SYNOPSIS

A businessman, crushed by debt, jumps off a building in 1997.

He is the father of Mutt, a half-Thai/half-American man in his late 20’s, and Nic, his 18-year-old brother. *Past Love* then flashes back to 1985 when Thailand began its economic transformation, when Mutt graduated from high school and moved to America, leaving behind his girlfriend, Sai. In the US he became a currency trader on Wall Street, stuck in a series of dead-end relationships, while Sai gave up her modeling career and started a successful market research firm. Using his dad’s suicide as an excuse, Mutt moves back to Thailand and into the house where he grew up. His relationship with his brother, Nic, is cold and distant, but the two work together in silence to pack up the now-empty house.

While packing, Mutt discovers a box of recorded love letters Sai sent him on cassette while he was in the US. Overwhelmed by nostalgia, he listens to them while, from the other room, Nic listens too. Nic’s only escape is spying on his neighbors in a new condo building from the roof of his house, and he mostly loves watching Poupee, a new tenant living in a furnished room while attending the University of Bangkok. Every night she sings 80’s karaoke alone in her room, and Nic starts to imagine the two of them strolling in karaoke videos together.

Meanwhile, Sai’s life is not as successful as it looks. She appears on talk shows during the day to talk about her company’s bold future and to extol her belief that consumerism is the highest form of democracy and a leveling force for women’s rights. But at night she goes home to a luxury condo she can’t even afford to furnish. The bank is moving to foreclose, and her loan agent will only renegotiate the mortgage if she goes out to dinner with him. Pushed to the breaking point, she has consumerist dreams, fantasizing that her condo is finally fully furnished.

Past Love shows four “heroes” dealing with crisis in the only way they know how and with the only tools they have: karaoke videos, television commercials and American pop songs. The characters are trapped in a world of constructed images and while they may at first try to escape and face reality, in the end they can only seek shelter in their imaginations.

DIRECTOR’S STATEMENT

If 1985 was Thailand’s first love, then the 1997 crash was its first broken heart. This film is about the nation’s love affair with American capitalism played out through the lives of its half-Thai/half-American protagonists. Instead of focusing on a linear narrative, *Past Love* will incorporate the “plot” as just another element alongside interviews, music videos, rock ballads, news footage and television commercials. Through this layered approach, I hope to find a way to tell the complex story of this period in Thai history, and in Mutt and Sai’s romance, without reverting to nostalgia.

Past Love is about the choices we make and the diminishing pool of options that remain as we get older. 18 represents a time of hope, when everything seems possible. 30 marks the point of no return, when the rest of our lives have been determined. I chose to overlap these personal stories with the nation’s history as I see 1985 and 1997 as Thailand at ages 18 and 30. Today, our country is dealing with the repercussions of choices it made in its youth, but it’s too late to turn back the clock.

DIRECTOR

Lee CHATAMETIKOOL has worked as a film editor and a post-production producer in New York and Bangkok while also producing his own short films. His 2000 short, *Miami Strips, Hollywood Dream*, was runner-up for the Ratana Pestanji Award for Best Thai Short Film and has screened at numerous festivals around the world. In 2001, he moved from New York to Bangkok to work on Apichatpong WEERASETHAKUL’s first narrative feature, *Blissfully Yours*. Since then he has edited many of the most significant Thai films of the last ten years including Aditya ASSARAT’s *Wonderful Town*, Kongdej JATURANRASMEE’s *Midnight, My Love* and several films for Apichatpong WEERASETHAKUL including *Tropical Malady, Blissfully Yours* and *Syndromes and a Century* for which he won Best Editor at the Asian Film Awards.

PRODUCER

Born in Thailand in 1976, Anocha SUWICHAKORNPONG graduated from the MFA film program at Columbia University in 2006 and her thesis film, *Graceland*, became the first Thai short film to be included as an Official Selection of the Cannes Film Festival (Cin fondation). She also directed *Lunch*, as part of the *Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner* trilogy, co-directed by three Asian female directors from China, Thailand, and Singapore, which is scheduled for a release in 2010. SUWICHAKORNPONG’s first feature, *Mundane History* (original title *The Sparrow*), was presented at HAF in 2007 and received support from the Hubert Bals Fund at the International Film Festival of Rotterdam. Recently, she has been active as a producer, producing three short films directed by up-and-coming Thai directors.

PRODUCTION COMPANY

Electric Eel Films is a production company based in Bangkok, Thailand. Founded in 2006 by a group of up-and-coming independent filmmakers, it is a small but high quality production house specializing in independent films and working with a network of filmmakers including Anocha SUWICHAKORNPONG (screenwriter/director), Soros SUKHUM (producer) and LEUNG Ming-kai (director/cinematographer).

Houdini Studio opened in 2002 to meet the needs of Thailand’s growing independent film community. Starting as a bedroom studio with one editing system, it has since grown into a full-service post-production facility offering picture editing, sound design and color correction. Starting with *Mundane History* and now *Past Love*, it is venturing into producing independent films for the first time.