



presents

**THE BLOSSOMING OF
MAXIMO OLIVEROS**
(ANG PAGDADALAGA NI MAXIMO OLIVEROS)

Written by Michiko Yamamoto
Produced by Raymond Lee
Directed by Auraeus Solito

OFFICIAL PHILIPPINE ENTRY, 2007 ACADEMY AWARDS®

- BEST FOREIGN LANGUAGE FILM -

2007 SPIRIT AWARDS® NOMINEE
BEST FOREIGN LANGUAGE FILM

SYNOPSIS

THE BLOSSOMING OF MAXIMO OLIVEROS tells the story of Maxi (Nathan Lopez) a gay, pre-teen growing up in the slums of Manila, who is deeply loyal to his family of petty thieves. His world revolves around his father and two brothers, who love and protect him in return for Maxi's devotion to completing domestic chores and covering their tracks when they commit crimes. When Maxi meets Victor (JR Valentin) a well-meaning, handsome policeman, the two become fast friends and Maxi begins to learn that he can have a better life, which soon incurs the ire and disapproval of Maxi's family.

OFFICIAL SELECTION 2006

World Cinema Section – 2006 Sundance Film Festival, U.S. Premiere
MoMA and Lincoln Center's New Directors / New Films NY (Opening Night Film)
San Francisco International Film Festival
Seattle International Film Festival
VC (Visual Communications) Film Festival, Los Angeles
Vancouver International Film Festival
Newfest NY ; 2006 Outfest LA
Message Sticks Film Festival – Sydney (Opening Night)
Brisbane International Film Festival; New Zealand International Film Festival
Melbourne International Film Festival
Hong Kong International Film Festival; Taipei International Film Festival
Osian CineFan – India; Jerusalem Cinematheque - Israel,
Santiago II International Film Festival (SANFIC)– Chile; Tokyo Filmex; Verzaubert 2006
Tallinn Black Nights International Film Festival; Gay & Lesbian Film Festival – Slovenia
iF Istanbul Film Festival! – Turkey, Febiofest 2007 – Prague, Queer Film Festival – South Yarra, Australia

WINNER

International Jury Grand Prize for Best Feature – Kinderfilmfest, Berlinale 2006
Teddy Bear for Best Feature – Berlinale 2006
Children's Jury Special Mention – Kinderfilmfest, Berlinale 2006
Grand Prize, Best Picture – Cine Festival Las Palmas, Grand Canary Islands, Spain, 2006
Best Actor (Nathan Lopez) – Cine Festival Las Palmas, Grand Canary Islands, Spain, 2006
Audience Award for Best Picture – Cine Festival Las Palmas, Grand Canary Islands, Spain, 2006
Best Picture - Turin International Gay and Lesbian Film Festival 2006
Best Film - Asian 1st Films Festival, Singapore
Best Asian Film, NETPAC Jury Award - Rotterdam Film Festival
Best Picture - ImagiNative Film Fest (Toronto)
Golden Zenith Award (Best First Feature) - Montreal World Film Festival
Special Jury Prize - Cinemalaya Independent Film Festival 2005, Manila
Balanghai Trophy for Production Design - Cinemalaya Independent Film Festival 2005, Manila

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

by Auraeus Solito

After close to seven years of rediscovering my indigenous roots in the land of my Ancestors, the islands of Palawan in the southern Philippines....

swimming its seas...

walking its earth under a full moon...

documenting our endangered people's lives...

and dancing in an ancient sacred ritual of truth...

I returned to modern Manila, the city where I was born, filmed Maximo Oliveros' made-up life in the neighborhood where I grew up, and showed more truths about our society.

The recognition of this film has empowered and will inspire digital filmmakers from the Philippines. Digital filmmaking has equalized the expressions of Third World countries with First World countries. We are poor, but not in spirit.

THE CAST

Nathan Lopez	Maxi
Soliman Cruz	Paco
JR Valentin	Victor
Neil Ryan Sese	Boy
Ping Medina	Bogs
Bodjie Pascua	Police Chief

The other Policemen:

Elmo Redrico	Sarge
Ivan Camacho	Art
Lucito Lopez	Policeman

Maxi's Friends:

Sir Jett Desalesa	Leslie
Anastacio Cruz	Nar
Roychell Torre	Monique
Peter Anthony Tumbaga	Peter

The Neighbors:

Edwin Pamanian	Isko
Rodney Luengu	Mang Axel
Claudine Najera	Janet
Rebecca Padilla	Lolet
Arnold Cruz	Onnie
Julius Ray Caringal	Erik
Buck Harold Pago	Rey
Remedios Calinangan	Aling Sally
Pepe Smith	Drunken Pianist

and the residents of Guipit Street, Sampaloc, Manila

PRODUCTION CREDITS/ THE CREW

Director	Auraeus Solito
Screenwriter	Michiko Yamamoto
Producer	Raymond Lee
Cinematographer	Nap Jamir
Original Music	Pepe Smith
Production Designers	Christina Dy, Clint Catalan and Lily Esquillon
Editor	Kanakan Balintagos and Clang Sison
Assistant Director	Marinette Lusanta
Production Manager	Marinette Lusanta
Choreographer	Paul Morales
Assistant Production Manager	Hai Balbuena
Second Assistant Director	Tony Silvestre
Story Concept	Emmanuel Dela Cruz, Jade Castro, Michiko Yamamoto, Ned Trespeces and Raymond Lee
Sound Designer/Asst. Editor	JD Domingo
Sound Engineer	Tad Ermitaño
Colorist	Luis Quirino
Nathan Lopez's Acting Coach	Soliman Cruz
Soundman	Vener Ariston
Assistant Soundman	Harry Cainoy
Additional Cinematography by	Albert Banzon
Gaffers	Armin Collado, Nor Domingo, Paolo Orendain
Wardrobe	Cila Aventura, Laarni Foronda, Jheck Cogama
Maxi's Outfits by	Her Bench
Props	Lhal Calina, Julius Ray Caringal
Production Assistants	Rose Beltran, Chic Castañeda
Love Theme by	Mike Villegas and Bayang Barrios

Special Thanks to Yoyoy Villame for allowing his song, "My Country, My Philippines" to be used in the film

BIOS / THE FILMMAKERS

AURAEUS SOLITO, Director

Auraeus Solito is a man of two worlds—the ancient universe of his tribal ancestors, and the modern concrete civilization of Manila. He grew up in the heart of Manila, in the Sampaloc district where “The Blossoming of Maximo Oliveros” is set. In college, he discovered his indigenous roots in the southern islands of Palawan, Philippines. It was after his immersion in the time-honored culture and rituals of his tribe that Auraeus, who started out writing and directing for the theatre, decided that he needed a broader canvas with which to tell the story of his people. He then shifted to film.

Auraeus has won many awards for his short films, documentaries, and music videos. He is working on a multi-part film on the myths and rituals of Palawan. It was during a hiatus in the filming of his tribal documentary that he was asked to direct “Maximo.” After some hesitation—he wanted the Palawan film to be his first feature—he agreed. “Maximo” was shot in his old neighborhood, which is a perfect example of the socio-economic disparities in the Philippines. Auraeus’ parents were prosperous government employees, so they had a nice house. Across the street were the slums. “We’ve always had a beautiful relationship with our neighbors,” he says. “They are poor, but not in spirit.”

“I’ve always wanted to direct a progressive gay film,” Auraeus adds. “In the history of Philippine Cinema, gay people have always been portrayed as the oppressed, or the oppressors. In the 70s, gay films always had this theme of guilt at being homosexual. Then in the 80s, gay people were always portrayed as the exploiters of handsome Filipino boys who would then become exotic dancers or call boys. Worse, queer folk are still the butt of jokes in Filipino movies and TV shows.”

“I wanted to make a film in which the gay character is happy for being who he is, and accepted for who he is. His being gay is just incidental to the story, or part of the film’s main theme.”

Currently, Auraeus Solito is in Okinawa, Japan on an Asian Public Intellectual Fellowship.

MICHIKO YAMAMOTO, screenwriter

Michiko Sy Yamamoto was born—and raised in Manila—to a Chinese mother and a Japanese father. She attended the scriptwriting workshop of the Film Development Foundation of the Philippines, then went to work for the Manila production companies Viva and Star Cinema. In 2003, her screenplay “Magnifico” won a screenwriting contest and was produced by Violett Films. “Magnifico” went on to win dozens of local and international awards. Michiko wrote “Maximo” with the help of producer Raymond Lee.

RAYMOND LEE, producer

Raymond Lee has co-written some of the biggest blockbusters in Philippine cinema, including “Anak” (Child), “Tanging Yaman” (The Only Treasure), and “Milan.” He also shares screenwriting credit for the digital films “Taxi ni Pilo” (Pilo’s Taxi) and “Ang Pagdadalaga ni Maximo Oliveros” (The Blossoming of Maximo Oliveros).

NAP JAMIR, director of photography

Nap C. Jamir II has worked in advertising since the 1980s as a photographer, and later as a cinematographer and director. He was the Director of Photography for the Cultural Center of the Philippines’ production of “Noli Me Tangere,” a film adaptation of the novel by the Filipino national hero, Jose Rizal. Nap’s film credits include “Rizal in Dapitan” by Tikoy Aguiluz and “Bridal Shower” by Jeffrey Jeturian.

JOEY “Pepe” Smith, composer

Joey “Pepe” Smith is a rock and roll icon in the Philippines. He came to the “Maximo Oliveros” shoot to visit his ex-wife and ended up writing the musical score. He also plays the drunken piano player in the film.

BIOS/ THE CAST

NATHAN LOPEZ, Maximo “Maxi” Oliveros

Nathan Lopez, 14, accompanied his friend to the auditions and ended up being cast in the lead role. He had never acted before. Nathan is one of a pair of identical twins. He is a high school freshman in Manila. An excellent dancer, he now wants to excel as a film actor.

SOLIMAN CRUZ, Maxi’s father Mang Paco

Soliman Cruz was a 15 year old student at the Philippine High School for the Arts when he made his stage debut in “Kanser,” an adaptation of Noli Me Tangere by the Philippine national hero, Jose Rizal. Today, he is one of the most respected theater actors in the Philippines. His riveting performance in “Maximo” has introduced him to the larger filmgoing public. Sol also directs children’s theatre, and has written and staged plays for educational institutions in Manila. For this movie, he became the acting coach of Nathan Lopez who makes his debut in his feature.

JR VALENTIN, policeman Victor Perez

JR Valentin is a well-known commercial model in Manila. He won the Body Shots modeling competition in 2000, and is now a familiar figure on Manila’s catwalks and in print advertisements. He made his film debut in Jeffrey Jeturian’s “Bridal Shower” in 2003. His most recent film appearance was in Joel Lamangan’s “Mano Po IV” (With Due Respect, Part 4)

NEIL RYAN SESE, Maxi’s brother Boy

Neil Ryan Sese got into acting for purely practical reasons: he wanted to go to the University of the Philippines, and there were openings in its Theater Arts department. Since then, Neil, 26 years old, has appeared in dozens of stage productions. He played Benkei in the Kabuki play “Kanjincho,” and was subsequently cast as a Japanese soldier in two Filipino films set in World War II. His next role is that of a pious hustler in the film “Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.”

PING MEDINA, Maxi’s brother Bogs

At 22, Ping Medina is an acting veteran, having appeared in student films, independent features, music videos, TV dramas, and big-budget studio films like Marilou Diaz-Abaya’s “Jose Rizal.” Ping, whose full name is Crispin Medina II, also writes for magazines in Manila and dabbles in photography. He plays guitar and is currently trying to start a band. Visit his blog at: <http://www.livejournal.com/users/pinggoy>. Since appearing in “Maximo,” he has been followed by throngs of screaming college girls.

AWARDS

WINNER, International Jury Prize, Best Feature, Kinderfilmfest, Berlinale 2006
WINNER, Teddy Bear for Best Gay Feature, Berlinale 2006
WINNER, Special Mention, Children's Jury Prize, Kinderfilmfest, Berlinale 2006
WINNER, Netpac Jury Prize, Rotterdam International Film Festival WINNER, Grand Prize, Best Picture,
Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Spain 2006
WINNER, Best Actor (Nathan Lopez), Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Spain 2006
WINNER, Audience Award, Best Picture, Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Spain 2006
WINNER, Best Picture, Turin International Gay and Lesbian Film Festival 2006
WINNER, Grand Prize, Best Film, Asian Festival of First Films, Singapore, 2006
WINNER, Best Picture, imagineNative Film Fest Toronto 2005
WINNER, Golden Zenith Award (Best First Feature), Montreal World Film Festival WINNER, Special Jury
Prize, Cinemalaya Independent Film Festival 2005, Manila WINNER, Best Picture, Urian Awards
(National Film Critics Society, Philippines) WINNER, Best Independent Film, Star Awards, Philippines

OFFICIAL SELECTION

Sundance Film Festival, U.S. Premiere, World Section 2006
New Directors/New Films Festival, NY, Opening Night Film 2006
Berlin International Film Festival 2006
Rotterdam International Film Festival 2006
Montreal World Film Festival
Vancouver International Film Festival
San Francisco International Film Festival
Seattle International Film Festival
VC Film Festival, Los Angeles
Provincetown International Film Festival
Maryland International Film Festival
Vail Film Festival, Colorado
Turin International Gay and Lesbian Film Festival
Asian Festival of First Films, Singapore
Hong Kong International Film Festival
Message Sticks Film Festival, Opening Night Film
Brisbane International Film Festival
Melbourne International Film Festival
Taipei International Film Festival
Osian CineFan Film Festival
Cinematheque Jerusalem Film Festival
Tokyo Filmex Festival
Santiago International Film Festival, Chile
San Diego Asian American International Film Festival
New York Newfest
LA Outfest
Miami Gay & Lesbian Film Festival
Philadelphia Gay & Lesbian Film Festival
Boston Gay & Lesbian Film Festival
Milwaukee Gay & Lesbian Film Festival
Houston Gay & Lesbian Film Festival