

## HAF 02 Chantou



**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN:** Australia

**GENRE | FORMAT | LANGUAGE | RUNNING TIME:** Drama | HD | English, Khmer | 100 mins

**DIRECTOR:**

Grant SCICLUNA

**PRODUCER:**

Jannine BARNES

**HAF GOALS:**

Funds, Co-producers, Sales agents, Pre-sales

**BUDGET:**

US\$1,200,000

**SECURED BUDGET:**

US\$340,000

**DIRECTOR'S FILMOGRAPHY**

2015 *Downriver*

## ONE-SENTENCE SYNOPSIS

Harry and James confront their own morality when they discover their adopted child is a victim of human trafficking.

## SYNOPSIS

Same-sex couple Harry and James are parents to their young Cambodian adopted daughter, Lucy. When Lucy turns five, they discover that she was a victim of child trafficking, making her adoption illegitimate. They also discover her birth mother has been searching for her relentlessly for the past three years. Coerced by James, Harry reluctantly agrees to fly to Cambodia with Lucy to meet her mother. Tensions surface as each is asked to decide Lucy's fate – to return to Australia with them or to begin a life in Cambodia with her birth mother. As their differences are laid bare, a connection between the Eastern and Western worlds is formed.

## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Ben's script *Chantou* really moved me. It is a melancholic yet joyous work. He demonstrates in this first draft that he is a writer with deeply human concerns. The script wrestles with ethical issues and reveals the writer's world view.

There is not a shred of cynicism in Ben. He believes the world can be better. *Chantou* shows promise where many projects I read fall down.

It has a beating heart. It has something to say. About parenting. Adoption. International and interpersonal responsibility. About love. About family. The writer feels a burning compulsion to tell us a story. And the story is relevant.

The grander concerns of our international responsibility to the oppressed is playing out in our politics and newspapers every day with the refugee response. I think Ben handles these questions with a deft touch by wrestling with their complexities.

Jannine, Ben and I are all excited about a national cinema that looks outwards as well as inwards. This project looks to Asia and culminates in Ben's concern with finding bridges between the East and the West. It's a very topical concern as we have been so preoccupied with allies that are not on our doorstep that we often forget we are an Asian country.

For me, the reason why I want to do anything is because it gives the opportunity for that remarkable creature – the actor – to move us. That opportunity only comes when a script excites a performer and gives them something to work with. To that end, *Chantou* delivers, setting a fire burning in my belly. I look forward to seeing where Ben takes it.

## DIRECTOR

### Grant SCICLUNA

Grant Scicluna is the award-winning writer director of *Downriver* (2015), a mystery starring Reef Ireland, Kerry Fox, Robert Taylor and Thom Green. After its sell-out premiere at the Melbourne International Film Festival 2015, *Downriver* (2015) was selected for the 2015 Toronto International Film Festival's "Discovery" section ahead of its release in Australian cinemas in early 2016.

Grant's short films include *Neon Skin* (2009), *Golden Girl* (2011), *The Wilding* (2012) and *Hurt's Rescue* (2014). *Neon Skin* won the NFSA Orlando Award for Best Queer Australian Short 2011. *The Wilding* (2012) premiered at the Berlin Film Festival, won the Iris Prize 2012 and the MQFF City of Melbourne Award 2012 for Best Australian Short Queer Film.

## PRODUCER

### Jannine BARNES

Jannine Barnes has worked in the Australian Film Industry for over 15 years in various guises including production manager and production accountant on many well known Australian feature films and broadcast documentaries. She has always had the ambition and passion for feature film and *Downriver* (2015) was the debut film for both her and her production company Happening Films. Jannine has previously produced 14 short films including the Screen Australia Springboard short film *The Wilding*, which premiered in 2012 at the 62<sup>nd</sup> Berlin International Film Festival. Jannine actively works to promote the industry and is often invited onto panels and has twice mentored a group of film makers complete their first film for the Melbourne Queer Film Festival and Beyond Blue. She recently attended the 65<sup>th</sup> Berlinale Film Festival as a participant in the highly-regarded Talents program and was named by Screen International as a "Future Leader 2015".

## PRODUCTION COMPANY

### Happening Films Pty. Ltd.

Happening Films is a Melbourne based, international facing, independent film company. Through our commitment to innovative and original storytelling, we work to develop films and documentaries with impact.

Our previous work includes the Screen Australia Springboard short film *The Wilding* (2012), which premiered in 2012 at the 62<sup>nd</sup> Berlin International Film Festival. *The Wilding* (2012) has since screened at a number of prestigious film festivals including Palm Springs and Sydney where it was nominated for a Dendy Award. It won the Iris Prize for Best Queer Short and has screened on SBS as well as being broadcast in the UK, Germany, Belgium and France. In 2012 the film was awarded the Showtime Talent Assist Award at the SPA Conference. This is the second time Jannine has been recognised by her peers having previously been named an Emerging Producer of the Year.