

## HAF 10 9 Temples to Heaven



**REGION:** Thailand

**GENRE | FORMAT | LANGUAGE | RUNNING TIME:** Drama | Digital Format | Thai | 120mins

**DIRECTOR:**

Sompot CHIDGASORNPONGSE

**PRODUCER:**

Apichatpong WEERASETHAKUL

Kissada KAMYOUNG

**HAF GOALS:**

Funding, Co-Producers, Sales Agent

**BUDGET:** US\$ 500,000

**SECURED BUDGET:** US\$ 36,000

**DIRECTOR'S FILMOGRAPHY**

2016 *Railway Sleepers*

**ONE-SENTENCE SYNOPSIS**

A family of 9 takes their grandmother on a merit-making trip to 9 temples in 1 day, hoping to prolong her life. But their trip takes an unexpected turn.

## SYNOPSIS

In Thailand, many Buddhists believe that making offerings to monks at 9 temples in 1 day can bring you to the highest state of karma, ultimate good fortune, and maximum longevity. When a seer tells Sakol that his mother might be dying soon, Sakol decides to take his mother, along with other family members, on a 9-temple merit trip, hoping to prolong her life. As the Pali scriptures are recited repeatedly, the 9 family members embark on this 1-day pilgrimage with different agendas. Like other temple visitors, they are reaching out to higher realms, wishing for the sacred powers to bless, cure, and protect them. Tension arises when Sakol's mother feels too tired to perform the rituals, but Sakol keeps insisting that she continues. Not everyone in the family agrees; some do not even believe in collecting merit in the first place. From dawn until dusk, amidst a breezy atmosphere with a touch of humour, where temple architecture features prominently, the family members' dynamics, beliefs, and complex relationships emerge along the way.

## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

I was born a Buddhist, like 95 percent of the population in Thailand. And like many in my generation, I view Buddhism as a philosophy to lead a good life. But Thai Buddhism is more than that, with its intermingling of scientific ideas, Hinduism, Animism, and many other ideologies. It has also been constructed to become one of the core, unquestionable, and wealthy pillars of Thai society. The 9-temple merit tour is the ultimate manifestation of all these features combined. The film is the reimagining of my personal experiences going on these trips with my family over the years. We view ourselves as modern and progressive, but our religious practices breathe new life into the past customs. We embark on our journey not to let go, but to accumulate merit for good fortune, like making a deposit at a bank, and to alleviate suffering. This is what our modern lives are like, amid the push and pull between old and new beliefs. With this film, I hope to create a compassionate tribute to the Thai family and to families everywhere living with religion and other larger institutional powers that influence them.

## DIRECTOR

### Sompot CHIDGASORNPONGSE

Sompot Chidgasornpongse has a bachelor's degree in architecture from Chulalongkorn University and an MFA in Film/Video from California Institute of the Arts (CalArts). His short films have screened at Rotterdam, Oberhausen, Vienna, Visions du Réel and Indielisboa. His feature documentary, *Railway Sleepers* (2016), had its world premiere in competition at Busan, and European premiere at the Berlinale. The film then went to True/False, Sheffield Doc/Fest, Melbourne, RIDM, and TIDF. Sompot has worked with Apichatpong Weerasethakul as assistant director on many films, including *Tropical Malady* (2004), *Syndromes and a Century* (2006), *Cemetery of Splendour* (2015), and most recently *Memoria* (2020).

## PRODUCER

### **Apichatpong WEERASETHAKUL**

Apichatpong Weerasethakul subtly addresses personal politics and social issues through his often non-linear works. They have won him widespread recognition and numerous festival prizes, including the Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival for *Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives* (2010). He also produces works by new filmmakers with strong visions, including Sompot Chidgasornpongse's *Railway Sleepers* (2016).

### **Kissada KAMYOUNG**

Kissada Kamyong is a university researcher on Southeast Asian literature and cinema. He worked as a production manager on Sompot Chidgasornpongse's *Railway Sleepers* (2016), and now focuses on producing regional works that deal with space, time, and modern life.

## PRODUCTION COMPANY

### **Kick The Machine Films**

Founded in 1999, it is a studio of artist and filmmaker Apichatpong Weerasethakul. Working independently of the Thai commercial film industry, he has been active in promoting experimental and hybrid narrative filmmaking. The company also produces works by other filmmakers of strong vision.

### **At A Time Pictures**

At A Time Pictures is independent production company based in Bangkok. Founded by Sompot Chidgasornpongse in 2015, the company aims to produce innovative fiction and non-fiction works that push and broaden cinematic aesthetics, while addressing new and deeper looks on social and political issues in Southeast Asia.