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BURNING BIRDS

a film by
Sanjeewa Pushpakumara

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FESTIVAL DE CANNES

Sanjeewa Pushpakumara

E-mail: Sapushpa@gmail.com
Skype: pelanwattagespushpakumara
Website: sanjeewafilm.com
Mobile: + 82 (0) 10-8050 4083 (South Korea)
+ 94 (0) 712 042 095 (Sri Lanka)

Résidence du Festival Festival de Cannes

3, rue Amélie, F-75007 Paris
Tel. 33 (0) 1 53 59 61 20
Fax 33 (0) 1 53 59 61 24
E-mail:
residence@festival-cannes.fr
www.festival-cannes.org

Since 2000, the Festival Residence has provided each year accommodation and support to twelve selected young directors in order to help them prepare their first or second feature film. A jury presided by a film director sits twice a year, selecting these young filmmakers on the basis of their short films, or even first

feature film, and the merits of their feature film project. During their 4-and-a-half-month stay in Paris, they work on the writing of their feature film project, have meetings with professionals and try, with the support of the Cannes Film Festival, to bring their project to co-production status.

Technical Information

Working title: Burning Birds
Director: Sanjeewa Pushpakumara
Screenplay by: Sanjeewa Pushpakumara
Nationality: Sri Lanka
Genre: Drama
Format: Digital
Length: 85 min.
Shooting Location: Sri Lanka

Production:
Sanjeewa Pushpakumara / Vijitha Herath
Partners:
Sapushpa Expressions (Pvt) Ltd
Ravindra Guruge (TVT (Pvt) Ltd)

Director's Filmography

Flying Fish (*Igillena Maluwo*), 2011, 119 min.

Awards and Nominations:

- **Best Director Award**, New Territories Competition / St Petersburg International Film Festival – Kinoforum
- **Best Asian Film**, 4th Bengaluru International Film Festival
- **Blue Chameleon Award**, 5th Cinema Digital International Film Festival, Seoul, South Korea
- **Special Jury Mention, Red Chameleon Award**, 5th Cinema Digital International Film Festival, Seoul, South Korea
- **Critic's Choice Award**, 5th New Jersey South Asian Film Festival, USA
- Best Asian Cinematographer (Nominated), Asian Film Awards, Hong Kong
- Tiger Award (Nominated) / 40th International Film Festival Rotterdam
- New Directors Award (Nominated) / 37th Seattle International Film Festival
- Lino Miociche Award (Nominated) / 47th Pesaro International Film Festival
- Best Film (Nominated) Tokyo FILMEX IFF
- Golden Montgolfier Award (Nominated), 34th 3 Continents IFF



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LA RÉSIDENCE



SYNOPSIS

1989. A small village in Eastern Sri Lanka. After her husband is abducted, tortured and murdered by government soldiers, Kusum has a struggle on her hands to look after her eight children and mother-in-law all by herself. After a series of unsuccessful odd jobs, in which she is constantly abused both physically and sexually, Kusum falls into prostitution. She is soon arrested in a brothel, by the police. When news of what has befallen their mother reaches school, the children are expelled. From then on, it is the family as a whole that has to fight to survive the tragedy.

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

When I was nine years old, government soldiers killed my maths teacher before burning the body on tyres. That was in 1987. I cannot forget how the whole school, teachers and students alike, was aghast and worried.

A year later, when I was 10, government soldiers dragged my young uncle outside and shot him in the head against the back wall of the house. That death impoverished his family and left them distraught.

One year later, my father died unexpectedly. I was just 11. He left behind my mother, me and seven sisters and brothers to fend for ourselves. My mother had to struggle hard to raise us. We were often hungry. At times, I wonder how my mother managed to feed us at all.

Burning Birds is a film that came out scratching my heart. It looks at myself, my mother, and my country, through a microscope.

SYNOPSIS

1989. Un petit village à l'Est du Sri Lanka. Suite à l'arrestation, la torture et le meurtre de son mari par l'armée nationale, Kusum doit seule, faire face aux besoins de ses 8 enfants et de sa belle-mère. Après avoir écumé nombre de petits boulots où elle est en permanence abusée physiquement et sexuellement, elle n'a d'autre solution que la prostitution. Alors qu'elle travaille dans un bordel, la police l'arrête. Suite à cet incident, les enfants sont renvoyés de l'école. Chaque membre de la famille va tenter alors de survivre à cette tragédie.

NOTE D'INTENTION

J'avais 9 ans, quand l'Armée Nationale a tué mon professeur de maths et l'a immolé sur des pneus. C'était en 1987. Je n'ai jamais oublié le trouble et la panique que toute l'école, enseignants compris, a ressentis.

Un an plus tard, mon oncle a été exécuté par l'armée d'une balle dans la tête à l'arrière de sa maison. Sa mort a entraîné sa famille dans une grande précarité et détresse.

L'année suivante, mon père meurt brutalement. J'avais tout juste 11 ans. Ma mère s'est retrouvée seule avec ses 8 enfants. Elle a dû faire énormément de sacrifices pour nous élever. J'ai connu la faim, nous avons parfois passé plusieurs jours sans manger. Je me demande encore comment elle a pu tous nous nourrir.

Je dois tourner *Burning Birds*, c'est un film qui sort directement de mon cœur et de mes tripes, un regard à la loupe sur moi-même, ma mère et mon pays.

