



70
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70^e Internationale
Filmfestspiele
Berlin
Competition

Catherine Dussart Production presents
in coproduction with Anupheap Production & in association with France Télévisions

IRRADIATED

[Irradiés]

A FILM BY RITHY PANH

France-Cambodia / 88 Min. / Scope

INTERNATIONAL SALES

PLAYTIME

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Synopsis

Being a survivor cannot be put into words.
But you need to live and approach that irradiation
that may be without any cause,
any knowledge, any possible protection.
You need to, for the cause of mankind,
experience and understand the various forms
of evil –from trenches to atolls,
from camps to silence.
Evil irradiates.
It hurts including future generations.
But innocence lies beyond.

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Rithy Panh

Director's Statement

Sometimes at night, in the silence and the vastness of night, I can feel an ocean of anguish building up inside, its waves sucking me up and engulfing me...

I struggle, gasping for air, and surface again, but although I escaped drowning, the black stone of melancholy crystallises deep inside me, heavy as sorrow.

Facing the unspeakable is like a scream. But not everything can be understood. My head hurts.

Surviving genocide makes you feel like being some leftovers of the killers' macabre feast, some waste. Eluding the vigilance of the killers. Like in the bad joke "They could have finished the job!" The scum left from the massacre. A fault in the system. Like these oxen branded for slaughter, who would sometimes manage to escape the slaughterhouse in La Villette and run wild, desperate, through the streets of Paris...

The obsessive fear of being sucked into the void. Of words choking in your throat. For life to be a mere leftover.

I carry that pain. It is heavy but it also makes sense. It is part of me and it gives intensity to my vision of the world. It expresses itself through everything I do, everything I create, with the dread of forgetting and the anxiety of betraying.

I have experienced the temptation of silence and withdrawing into oneself. Embracing despair, darkly.

A dizzying dive into isolation.

Where humans can only be evil.

Silence did not help me find my dead, or live.

Extreme and complete violence affects individuals in the deepest recesses of their being, in their souls. And that poison is passed on from one generation to the next.

I feel like I am irradiated.

We have to learn, tell and love over and over again...

No longer being an object. Stop being that leftover, that waste. Saying "I".

In spite of that odd presence of death in your heart.

Can the story be heard? Nothing is certain.

An idea occurred to me, about a film on the (atomic) bomb and devastation.

Did we take stock of the destructive follies of the 20th century? Not really.

What did we learn about our capacity to annihilate ourselves? Close to nothing.



I wanted to mention the bombs as a drastic human destructive power. The relentless violence of bombings during the Vietnam War, Hiroshima atomic disaster, and the Cambodian genocide, which was like a bomb fragmenting the soul.

Note: some of the survivors who wrote on Hiroshima ended up killing themselves, as well as other witnesses having written on other disasters (Haraguchi Kikuya, Hara Tamiki... Primo Levi, Jean Améry, etc.).

A living testimony, and then...

I would say they chose to die with dignity, not betraying the dead. Die with dignity and not surrender to the pain and tragedy of history.

On a stone memorial in Hiroshima,
you can read a poem by Toge Sankichi:

*Give me back my father. Give back my mother.
Give me back the old people.
Give me back the children.
Give me back myself. And all those people
Joined to me, give them back
Give me back mankind.*

*Give me peace.
A peace that will not shatter
As long as man, man is in the world.*

Albert Camus

The world is
what it is,
which is to say,
nothing much.

"The destructive power of that new bomb spreads over a wide area in which people, whether in the streets or in the countryside, are burnt alive by the heat generated by the explosion, while those who are at home are crushed by buildings collapsing (A. P.)."
in *Le Monde*, August 10, 1945.

From the first millionth of a second, heat energy is released into the air and turns into a fireball of about 0.6 mile in diameter and reaching temperatures of several millions of degrees. On the ground, the temperature rises to several thousands of degrees at the point of impact. In a 0.6-mile radius all is instantly scorched and burnt to ashes. Up to 2.5 miles away, buildings and humans spontaneously combust. People within a 5-mile radius suffer third-degree burns.

Following the heat, the impact of the shock wave is also devastating, created by the tremendous pressure resulting from the expanding cloud of hot gas. It travels at an average speed of 620 mph, looking like a wall of solid air. The shock wave turns everything to dust within a 1.2-mile radius. Out of the 90,000 buildings in the city, 62,000 are completely destroyed.

The third impact, still largely unknown in 1945, is that of the nuclear explosion. It is the most specific to the bomb but also the most deadly, causing all kinds of fatal diseases. It is all the more terrifying since its effects only become apparent days, months or even years following the explosion.

Hiroshima was completely destroyed.

The world is what it is, which is to say, nothing much. This is what everyone learned yesterday, thanks to the formidable concert of opinion coming from radios, newspapers, and information agencies. Indeed we are told, in the midst of hundreds of enthusiastic commentaries, that any average city can be wiped out by a bomb the size of a football. American, English, and French newspapers are filled with eloquent essays on the future, the past, the inventors, the cost, the peaceful incentives, the military advantages, and even the life-of-its-own character of the atom bomb.

We can sum it up in one sentence: Our technical civilisation has just reached its greatest level of savagery. We will have to choose, in the more or less near future, between collective suicide and the intelligent use of our scientific conquests.

Even before the bomb, one did not breathe too easily in this tortured world. Now we are given a new source of anguish; it has all the promise of being our greatest anguish ever. There can be no doubt that humanity is being offered its last chance.

Before the terrifying prospects now available to humanity, we see even more clearly that peace is the only goal worth struggling for. This is no longer a prayer but a demand to be made by all peoples to their governments — a demand to choose definitively between hell and reason.



I wanted to use investigation footage (manufacturing facilities, planes, military demonstrations); recent stock footage (army, NGO, scientific projects, propaganda images); historical films (for the very idea of the bomb, in the sense of massive deaths, dates back to 1915). But like I did in my latest films, I also work on the depiction itself: how to show the industrial and creative death factory? To that end I try my hands at bold formats so that everyone can experience what it is to feel through images.

Bomb is like a concept. It is not about the bomb but a bomb, and an infinity. It is a proliferation issue – hard to share by nature – that I want to address.

Moreover, the bomb cannot be dissociated from youth. Using it is going back to the youth of the world, and its end. Observing it is like observing a hesitant, radiant young boy: one last moment, a trembling of the eyes, a gesture, like in *La Jetée* – this last moment is the first. Beyond that, nobody knows.

Bomb is man himself... There are no bombs in nature or in the sky. But in the history of men, yes.

As Paracelsus the alchemist once said, "All is poison, nothing is poison". The bomb is the use, and the use of human intelligence. Evil is a bomb; evil is the bomb. Both perfectly human. Impossible to know (and to film as such), impossible not to use.

Man has granted himself the power to annihilate all life forms. And in a timeframe that seems military to us, I want to tell you about the bomb, as an experience and a phenomenon, so that the audience can feel with their hands and eyes. I want them to be disturbed, to be run through. No excitement, no submission – but the need and the desire to know what can break us.

*Bomb is man himself... There are no bombs in nature or in the sky.
But in the history of men, yes.*



Appendix 1955: Russell-Einstein Manifesto

In the tragic situation which confronts humanity, we feel that scientists should assemble in conference to appraise the perils that have arisen as a result of the development of weapons of mass destruction, and to discuss a resolution in the spirit of the appended draft.

We are speaking on this occasion, not as members of this or that nation, continent, or creed, but as human beings, members of the species Man, whose continued existence is in doubt. The world is full of conflicts ...

Almost everybody who is politically conscious has strong feelings about one or more of these issues; but we want you, if you can, to set aside such feelings and consider yourselves only as members of a biological species which has had a remarkable history, and whose disappearance none of us can desire.

We shall try to say no single word which should appeal to one group rather than to another. All, equally, are in peril, and, if the peril is understood, there is hope that they may collectively avert it. We have to learn to think in a new way. We have to learn to ask ourselves, not what steps can be taken to give military victory to whatever group we prefer, for there no longer are such steps; the question we have to ask ourselves is: what steps can be taken to prevent a military contest of which the issue must be disastrous to all parties?

The general public, and even many men in positions of authority, have not realised what would be involved in a war with nuclear

bombs. The general public still thinks in terms of the obliteration of cities. It is understood that the new bombs are more powerful than the old, and that, while one A-bomb could obliterate Hiroshima, one H-bomb could obliterate the largest cities, such as London, New York, and Moscow.

No doubt in an H-bomb war great cities would be obliterated. But this is one of the minor disasters that would have to be faced. If everybody in London, New York, and Moscow were exterminated, the world might, in the course of a few centuries, recover from the blow. But we now know, especially since the Bikini test, that nuclear bombs can gradually spread destruction over a very much wider area than had been supposed.

It is stated on very good authority that a bomb can now be manufactured which will be 2,500 times as powerful as that which destroyed Hiroshima. Such a bomb, if exploded near the ground or under water, sends radioactive particles into the upper air. They sink gradually and reach the surface of the earth in the form of a deadly dust or rain. It was this dust which infected the Japanese fishermen and their catch of fish.

No one knows how widely such lethal radioactive particles might be diffused, but the best authorities are unanimous in saying that a war with H-bombs might possibly put an end to the human race. It is feared that if many H-bombs are used there will be universal death, sudden only for a minority, but for the majority a slow torture of disease and disintegration.



Suite
1955:
**Russell-Einstein
Manifesto**

Many warnings have been uttered by eminent men of science and by authorities in military strategy. None of them will say that the worst results are certain. What they do say is that these results are possible, and no one can be sure that they will not be realised. We have not yet found that the views of experts on this question depend in any degree upon their politics or prejudices. They depend only, so far as our researches have revealed, upon the extent of the particular expert's knowledge. We have found that the men who know most are the most gloomy.

Here, then, is the problem which we present to you, stark and dreadful and inescapable: Shall we put an end to the human race; or shall mankind renounce war? People will not face this alternative because it is so difficult to abolish war.

The abolition of war will demand distasteful limitations of national sovereignty. But what perhaps impedes understanding of the situation more than anything else is that the term "mankind" feels vague and abstract. People scarcely realise in imagination that the danger is to themselves and their children and their grandchildren, and not only to a dimly apprehended humanity. They can scarcely bring themselves to grasp that they, individually, and those whom they love are in imminent danger of perishing agonizingly. And so they hope that perhaps war may be allowed to continue provided modern weapons are prohibited.

This hope is illusory. Whatever agreements not to use H-bombs had been reached in time of peace, they would no longer be considered binding in time of war, and both sides would set to

work to manufacture H-bombs as soon as war broke out, for, if one side manufactured the bombs and the other did not, the side that manufactured them would inevitably be victorious.

Although an agreement to renounce nuclear weapons as part of a general reduction of armaments would not afford an ultimate solution, it would serve certain important purposes. First, any agreement between East and West is to the good in so far as it tends to diminish tension. Second, the abolition of thermo-nuclear weapons, if each side believed that the other had carried it out sincerely, would lessen the fear of a sudden attack in the style of Pearl Harbour, which at present keeps both sides in a state of nervous apprehension. We should, therefore, welcome such an agreement though only as a first step.

Most of us are not neutral in feeling, but, as human beings, we have to remember that, if the issues between East and West are to be decided in any manner that can give any possible satisfaction to anybody, whether Communist or anti-Communist, whether Asian or European or American, whether White or Black, then these issues must not be decided by war. We should wish this to be understood, both in the East and in the West.

There lies before us, if we choose, continual progress in happiness, knowledge, and wisdom. Shall we, instead, choose death, because we cannot forget our quarrels? We appeal as human beings to human beings: Remember your humanity, and forget the rest. If you can do so, the way lies open to a new Paradise; if you cannot, there lies before you the risk of universal death.



Rithy Panh

Born in Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

Graduated from IDHEC

(now known as La Fémis) in Paris.

BOOKS

2007

Paper cannot wrap up embers
Grasset - with Louise Lorentz

2009

S21: The Khmer Rouge Killing Machine,
Flammarion - with Christine Chaumeau

2011

The Elimination
Grasset - with Christophe Bataille

2020

Peace with the deads
Grasset - with Christophe Bataille

1989 SITE 2
1990 SOULEYMANE CISSÉ
1991 CAMBODGE, ENTRE GUERRE ET PAIX
1994 RICE PEOPLE [NEAK SRE, LES GENS DE LA RIZIÈRE]
1995 THE TAN'S FAMILY
1996 BOPHANA, A CAMBODIAN TRAGEDY
1997 ONE EVENING AFTER THE WAR [UN SOI R APRÈS LA GUERRE]
1997 LUMIÈRES SUR UN MASSACRE - 10 FILMS AGAINST 110 000 000 LAND MINES
1998 50 ANS ET UN MONDE: VAN CHAN, A CAMBODIAN DANCER
1999 THE LAND OF WANDERING SOULS [LA TERRE DES ÂMES ERRANTES]
2000 QUE LA BARQUE SE BRISE, QUE LA JONQUE S'ENTROUVRE
2002 S21: THE KHMER ROUGE KILLING MACHINE
2003 THE PEOPLE OF ANGKOR [LES GENS D'ANGKO R]
2005 THE BURNT THEATER [LES ARTISTES DU THÉÂTRE BRÛLÉ]
2006 PAPER CANNOT WRAP UP EMBERS [LE PAPIER NE PEUT PAS ENVELOPPER LA BRAISE]
2008 THE SEA WALL [UN BARRAGE CO NTRE LE PACIFIQUE]
2010 DUCH, MASTER OF THE FORGES OF HELL
2011 SHIIKU [GIBIER D'ÉLEVAGE]
2013 THE MISSING PICTURE [L'IMAGE MANQUANTE]
2013 Cannes Un Certain Regard Award
2014 Oscar® Nominated Film – Best Foreign Language Film
FRANCE IS OUR MOTHER COUNTRY [LA FRANCE EST NOTRE PATRIE]
2016 EXILE [EXIL]
2018 GRAVES WITHOUT A NAME [LES TOMBEAUX SANS NOMS]
2018 Giornate Degli Autori – Opening Film
2018 TIFF Docs
2018 Telluride Film Festival



Credits

Director	Rithy Panh
Authors	Rithy Panh, Agnès Sénémaud, Christophe Bataille
Cinematography	Prum Mesa
Editing	Rithy Panh
Music	Marc Marder
Sound Design	Eric Tisserand
Assistant Director	Socheat Cheng
Producer	Catherine Dussart
Production	CDP
Co-producers	Rithy Panh, Emmanuel Migeot, Clémence Coppey
Co-production	Anupheap Production (Phnom Penh), France 3 (Paris)
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With the support of	Centre National du Cinéma et de l'Image Animée PROCIREP & Société des Producteurs de l'ANGOIA
International Sales	Playtime

Cast

Bion	Buto Artist
André Wilms	Voice Over
Rebecca Marder	Voice Over