

# HOTEL VLADIVOSTOK



## Canada, 2006

English, 35 minutes  
35mm, Colour, Stereo

Production Company: pUNK Films Inc.  
Contact: Ingrid Veninger  
49 Pears Avenue, Toronto, Ontario Canada M4M 3P1  
t. 416-737-9939 e. [punkfilms@gmail.com](mailto:punkfilms@gmail.com)

## **HOTEL VLADIVOSTOK** **SYNOPSIS**

Why do we remember the past and not the future?

In a hotel overlooking the Sea of Japan, six disparate vignettes inter-connect giving time a shape, like a series of liquid transparencies, one laid on top of another.

Murder, sacrifice, betrayal, longing and regret weave into a tapestry of souls remembering and forgetting.

The Process:

7 Directors

From different parts of the world

Met for the first time

At a film festival in Russia

Together, they decided to make a movie

5 Actors were invited to play multiple roles

Each director had 2 to 4 hours to shoot a vignette

1 camera rotated from room to room

Total 24 hours of Production

No script

No rules

1 hotel

## **BIOGRAPHIES**

**PRODUCER:** Ingrid Veninger

**FILMMAKERS:** Ingrid Veninger (Canada), Charles Officer (Canada), Aaron Wilson (Australia), Zia Mandviwalla (New Zealand), Ellery Ngiam (Singapore), Ravi Bharwani (Indonesia) and Royston Tan (Singapore).

**FEATURING PERFORMANCES BY:** Chris Haywood (Australia), Ria Irawan (Indonesia), Sakai Shozo (Japan), Ingrid Veninger (Canada), Ivan Isyanov (Russia).

### **INGRID VENINGER: CANADA**

Born in Bratislava, Slovakia, Ingrid Veninger has worked extensively in film, television and theatre since 1978. In addition to over 50 acting credits working alongside Holly Hunter, Vincent D'Onofrio, Meryl Streep, and Gena Rowlands, Ingrid has collaborated with Canada's most established and emerging filmmakers including: Jeremy Podeswa (STANDANRDS), Julia Kwan (THREE SISTERS ON MOON LAKE), Anais Granofsky (ON THEIR KNEES), Boris Mojsovski (NEIL) and Peter Mettler (GAMBLING, GODS and LSD). A graduate of Norman Jewison's Canadian Film Centre, Ingrid created pUNK FILMS INC. in 2005 to produce fiercely original artist driven features. She recently co-wrote, produced and starred in THE LIMB SALESMAN (distributed by THINKFilm) and is in pre-production with NURSE.FIGHTER.BOY. Currently, Ingrid is among 20 Canadian filmmaker's selected to participate in the Toronto International Film Festival Talent Lab with Michael Ondaatje, Sally Potter, Jan Chapman, Paul Haggis, and Brian DePalma as governing mentors.

### **CHARLES OFFICER: CANADA**

Born in Toronto, Canada. Charles Officer's debut film, WHEN MORNING COMES premiered at the 2000 Toronto International Film Festival to wide acclaim. In 2001 Charles completed the Directors' Lab at the Canadian Film Centre and completed his second short film; SHORT HYMN\_SILENT WAR. The film premiered at (TIFF '02) received a Special Jury Citation for Best Canadian Short, screened at the Sundance Film Festival and was nominated for a Genie Award in 2004. HOTEL BABYLON, a one hour dramatic pilot for Vision TV was completed in 2004 and broadcast nationally in 2005. Recently completed is STRUGGLIN', a music video collaboration with Somali recording artist K'Naan. Slated for production in 2006 is NURSE.FIGHTER.BOY, Charles' 1st feature length film to be produced by Ingrid Veninger.

### **AARON WILSON: AUSTRALIA**

Aaron was born in 1976 in rural Australia, and now resides in Melbourne. He has directed, acted in and production designed various theatrical, film, television and short films. Aaron's recent short films include: RENDEZVOUS (2003), TEN FEET TALL (2005) and FAUX PAS (2005). He is currently directing television commercials and developing a feature film, an inter-generational story about the rural Australian family.

### **ZIA MANDVIWALLA: NEW ZEALAND**

Born in India in 1978 to a Parsi family. Grew up in the Middle East. Studied English Literature at the University of Auckland. Zia is currently living and working in New Zealand. She has written, directed and produced several shorts. Her current short, EATING SAUSAGE (2004) is screening at festivals around the world and recently won best short film script at the Screen Director's Guild Awards in New Zealand. In addition to filmmaking, she makes a living as an actor, freelance writer and editor.

### **ELLERY NGIAM: SINGAPORE**

Having graduated from New York University's Tisch School of Arts, Ellery has written and directed several short films, including CRAMMED, JIA FU (FAMILY PORTRAIT) and DANCE OF A MODERN MARRIAGE, which were funded by the Singapore Film Commission. Currently, he is developing his debut feature, FORGOTTEN TEARS, which has received several screenplay awards including "Best Screenplay" at the Asian American International Film Festival in New York City. This same script was selected to attend the prestigious Produire Au Sud at the Festival of 3 Continents in Nantes, France.

### **RAVI BHARWANI: INDONESIA**

Ravi completed his studies of cinematography in the Jakarta Institute of the Arts (IKJ) in 1990. He was later involved in a number of commercials, documentaries, short films and a tele-movie. His first feature film, *THE RAINMAKER* premiered in official competition at the 9th Pusan International Film Festival and has since screened at several festivals including: Bangkok, Rotterdam and Barcelona, winning "Best Film" in the Asia new talent award in Shanghai 2004.

### **ROYSTON TAN: SINGAPORE**

The 28-year-old Tan has been heralded as Singapore's most promising young filmmaker and the latest cult icon for Singapore. He has collected over 41 international and local film awards for his short films, documentaries and recently his feature film. In 2001, he was conferred ASEAN "Director of the Year". In 2002, the Singapore National Arts Council named him "Young Artist of the Year". Tan's first full-length feature film "15" won the Netpac Fipresci World critic award at the 16th Singapore International film festival and was the first ever Singaporean Film to be invited for competition at Venice for the "Lion of the Future Award". His retrospective show "0104", a showcase featuring all his celebrated shorts over the last 10 years have traveled to ICA London, Chicago, Japan and Singapore. Royston Tan's second feature film "4:30" became the first Singapore film to be funded and co-produced by NHK Japan and is currently screening at festivals around the world.

### **PRODUCTION NOTES by INGRID VENINGER**

In September 2005, I was invited to present *THE LIMB SALESMAN* at The Vladivostok International Film Festival. The director of *THE LIMB SALESMAN*, Anais Granofsky, could not attend because she was expecting her second baby. As producer, co-writer and lead actor, I was the next in line. Tickets were booked; visas were underway...but wait! It was a 25-hour journey and I had no idea what would meet me on the other side. So I asked if my co-star, Charles Officer, could come to Vladivostok and they said, 'yes.'

#### Vladivostok Facts:

- Ø Founded in 1860, Vladivostok means "Lord of the East."
- Ø Set on the Pacific, just North of Korea, hours from Japan and China.
- Ø Home to the Russian Pacific Fleet, which put Vladivostok off limits to all foreigners (and most Russians) until 1992.

Over the past five years, Charles and I have traveled all over the world with a Canadian play called, *RECENT EXPERIENCES*. Our tours have taken us to: Belgium, Austria, Germany, Australia and China. We always bring a video camera, and sometimes end up shooting a film.

For the most part our trip to Russia started out the same as every other trip, but as soon as we landed...still on the tarmac...the Executive Director of the festival, Alexander Doluda, greeted us with hugs and vodka. Within minutes we were whisked to the opening "blue carpet" ceremony at the Ocean Theatre, after which were performances from "Chicago", "Cabaret", "Phantom of the Opera" (in Russian); plus flamenco, tango, belly dancing. Traditional Russian musicals took us through the night and into dawn...oh, and did I mention there were fireworks?

DAY #1 - After some interviews and borscht, Charles was recruited to play "football". His measurements were taken and a BMW sat, waiting. On arriving at the stadium (yes, Stadium), Charles was flanked with reporters and young kids asking if he knew "The

Black Eyed Peas.” After the game, we set off to shoot our short movie. I put on my hot-pink mini dress, and found a translator to drive us into the Vladivostok core (for final results see: MAMA 3 ½ minutes). After shooting, we were pumped! We went for lunch and met with filmmakers from different parts of the world, who were screening their films at the festival. Later that evening, we found ourselves sitting around a big table with the very same filmmakers...and that’s when it happened!

Prior to the festival, Charles and I had talked about making an experimental-style, improv-based movie in a hotel. Here was our chance. We had a camera and DV stock. The festival offered us full access to the hotel, which overlooked the Sea of Japan, and around our table sat brilliant filmmakers and actors. So, we took the plunge.

DAY #2 – While on a sea cruise aboard the ‘Pallada,’ we developed shooting parameters and a schedule: 1 camera would rotate from room to room; each director would get 1 DV tape, and 2 to 4 hours to shoot their idea; 5 actors would play multiple roles; the entire shoot would take place within 24 hours. No scripts. No rules. No one spoke about contracts or recoupment; it was art for art’s sake. And no one knew what anyone else was shooting, there wasn’t time. Excitement raced through the festival. Pre-Production was in full swing.

10:00pm - After the evening’s screening and ceremony, we geared ourselves to shoot. Aaron Wilson from Australia was up first. His actors were Chris Haywood from Australia, Ria Irawan from Indonesia and Paul Cox (yes, “the” Paul Cox) in a cameo role!

Next, Zia Mandiwalla from New Zealand. She asked me to act in her piece and I was honored. The core idea was that a woman would step into a room, open the curtains, and see the Sea for the first time. Everything beyond that was improvised and constructed in post-production. In our first cut, I recorded a narrative voice-over in Slovak, but in the end we settled on simple sub-titles, which were taken from a Jane Siberry song called ‘In the Blue Light.’ Original music was composed in New Zealand. I posted several cuts online and Zia made suggestions. Shaping and distillation continued for months.

Ellery Ngiam from Singapore was third. He also used Chris Haywood as his lead actor. At the end of the process, Ellery didn’t have time to assemble his footage, so our Canadian editor, Jim Blokland, cut it together. The content of the voices behind the wall became the subject of much experimentation.

Royston Tan, also from Singapore, had Ria Irawan as his lead. But, he wanted an ‘encounter’ in the hallway. I volunteered and later learned that a ‘dance’ lives in every Royston Tan movie...sort of a trademark. Additionally, Charles and I shot some improvised footage of me in the shower. We cut it into Roy’s piece and it fit. We emailed Roy the assembly and he liked it. Oftentimes, the stories evolved in post-production. A cross cultural – cross continental collaboration.

Ravi Bharwani, from Indonesia wanted to work with Sakai Shozo, who spoke no English. So, a translator came aboard. In every other scenario, the director shot his/her own piece, but Ravi preferred to work with a DOP and brought Australian director/dop Aaron Wilson aboard. After the festival, Ravi did his own assembly and sent us a cut. In editing,

aside from a few trims and some reversing effects, we didn't change a thing. Ravi's piece was the toughest to find music for. We played around with several tracks, including an original composition from Shanghai. Finally, a friend linked us to several 'myspace' sites and we discovered the U.K. based Inklein Quartet.

Last, came the piece I created with Charles Officer. We built this story as we went along. We had met a gentleman with a clown tattoo, at the football game on Day #1. His name was Ivan Isyanov. With the help of a translator, the essence of our narrative was communicated (a woman and man have an affair and conceive a child. After many years, they meet and she offers him child support money, but he refuses)...that was it. Ivan had spent many years performing at The Gorky Theatre; this was going to be his first film.

The material at the beginning and end of the movie, with me on the plane, was all shot en route to Vladivostok. The reverse footage at the very end of the movie was actually our first moments of dis-boarding the plane. Little did we know, what would meet us on the other side.

After the festival, it was agreed that every director would go home with their 1 DV tape and make a 5-10 minute assembly. All the assemblies and raw material would then be sent to me in Toronto. Of course, this was more complicated than I imagined because everyone went back to their lives and became busy with other projects.

Editor, Jim Blokland and I spent three months experimenting with how everything would fit together. Before deciding on the final shape, we played with many different structures and story combinations. I remained in constant email contact with every director and posted various cuts online for feedback throughout post-production. This process of weaving the stories together to maintain the integrity of each filmmaker's intention, while building a cohesive whole was...challenging.

Interacting with people in Vladivostok was more intense than at any other festival I have ever been to. The spontaneous collision of ideas, which formed this film, was the inevitable result of being an outsider in a surreal place. Just as in hotels all over the world people lose themselves in the waking dream of traveling. HOTEL VLADIVOSTOK exists because of the intensely unique, sometimes fleeting connections formed at film festivals away from home. The most exciting thing about this project was the opportunity to develop ideas with International artists, both in front and behind the camera. I hope our adventure inspires filmmakers at festivals around the globe to collaborate in unfamiliar ways.

pUNK FILMS PRESENTS

An International Collaboration

HOTEL VLADIVOSTOK

Directed by

CHARLES OFFICER (Canada)  
AARON WILSON (Australia)  
ZIA MANDVIWALLA (New Zealand)  
ELLERY NGIAM (Singapore)  
ROYSTON TAN (Singapore)  
RAVI BHARWANI (Indonesia)  
INGRID VENINGER (Canada)

Featuring Performances by

CHRIS HAYWOOD (Australia)  
RIA IRAWAN (Indonesia)  
INGRID VENINGER (Canada)  
SAKAI SHOZO (Japan)  
IVAN ISYANOV (Russia)

Edited by

JIM BLOKLAND

Produced by

INGRID VENINGER

Conceived and Initiated

INGRID VENINGER & CHARLES OFFICER

Voice of Young Boy

JACOB SWITZER

Voice of Russian Lover

YURI TSEVI

Voice-over Recordist

JOHN SWITZER

Sound Designer

GARRETT KERR

Re-recording Mixer

MARTIN LEE

Sound Editor

JIM BLOKLAND

Transfer to 35mm  
SOHO DIGITAL FILM

Final Mix  
TATTERSALL SOUND & PICTURE

Extraordinary Thank-you  
ALEXANDER DOLUDA  
NATALIA SHAKHNAZAROVA  
NATALIA TIMOFEEVA  
and  
ANNA PONOMARENKO

Daniel H. Byun  
David Rittey  
JAY FIELD  
TOSHI  
PAUL COX

All on-screen text and voice-over written by  
INGRID VENINGER  
Except, Story #2 Sub-titles, co-written with  
JANE SIBERRY

Opening Music  
Composed by ANA COUTINHO, Canada

Story #2 "By the Sea" Music  
Composed by CHRISTOPHER PRYOR, New Zealand

Hallway Dance and End Music  
Composed by ALBERT YU, China

Special Thank-you  
ROCK BRYNNER  
ANTON BUBNOVSKIY  
OLIVIER GABERSEK  
YURI GONCHAROV  
DAVID GUENETTE  
MOM AND DAD  
VALERIY NIKOLAEV  
GRIVANOV ROMAN  
RISHAD SHAFI  
DIMITRY SHEVTSOV  
SERGEI TUZHIK  
ALEXANDRA ROCKINGHAM GILL  
and  
THE STAFF OF THE VLADIVOSTOK HOTEL