



“LUCKY”

by Avie Luthra

A 20 minute short film written and directed by Avie Luthra

For further information please contact Avie Luthra Films

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One line synopsis

LUCKY is a South African AIDS orphan who learns about life through an unlikely bond with a racist Indian woman.

Short synopsis

Lucky is an Aids orphan desperate to leave his rural Zulu village for the bright lights of Durban. He is full of excitement and hope but Lucky has to learn about life the hard way, not through school or education...but through an unlikely bond with a racist Indian neighbour.

Key Screenings

Screened/accepted at over 50 festivals to date including the Edinburgh International Film Festival 2005, London Film Festival 2005, American Film Institute Festival Los Angeles 2005, Brief Encounters 2005, Clermont Ferrand 2006, The Berlin International Film Festival 2006, Cinequest San Jose 2006, Aspen shorts fest 2006, San Francisco International 2006, Milan International 2006. Due to screen, Phoenix, Nashville, Newport Beach, Cracow, Melbourne, Huesca, Canadian Worldwide and many others.

Awards/accolades to date

- *Nominated: BAFTA Best Short Film 2006*
- *Winner Film Council Completion Fund 2005*
- *Winner: Special Mention AFI Fest LA 2005*
- *Winner Special Mention Clermont Ferrand 2006*
- *Winner Best Narrative Short Cinequest San Jose 2006 (Oscar eligible)*
- *Winner Best College Short Nashville Film Fest 2006 (Oscar eligible)*
- *Winner Best Narrative Short Athens Ohio Film Fest 2006 (Oscar eligible)*
- *Winner Best Short Film Bradford International FFest 2006*
- *Winner Best Short Film (Youth Jury) Milan African/Asian/Latin FFest 2006*
- *Winner Best Short Film Aspen Shortsfest 2006 (Youth Jury Award)*
- *Winner Best Short Film (audience award), Indian Film Festival of LA 2006*
- *Winner Platinum REMI award Houston WorldFest 2006*
- *Winner SENSIS award Honorable Mention Milan AAL FFest 2006*
- *Winner ISMU Special Mention Milan AAL FFest 2006*
- *Winner Honorable Mention IndieProducer Awards, LA 2006*
- *Winner Honorable mention for Best performance by a child Aspen 2006*
- *Nominated: Best Student Film MethodFest LA 2006*
- *Nominated Best Foreign Film San Fernando Valley Film Fest 2006*
- *Nominated: BFI Satyajit Ray award 2006*

Production Notes

The aim of the film was to dramatise the effects of HIV on children in South Africa, whilst looking at African/Indian relationships. The film was shot in and around Durban in Natal, where HIV is estimated at around 40%. The story is taken from real life accounts and research of AIDS orphans and the difficulties they face. The tape idea comes from the practice of dying mothers creating memory boxes for their children. This currently very much part of HIV death in Natal.

All the actors in LUCKY were either non-professional or semi-professional. They all originated from the Durban area and for many of them this was their first film. The crew were a mixture of people mostly from Durban. Again, for most of them this was their first film and so the training component of this production was very high. The racial mix of the crew was around 50% black/Asian, 50% white.

The shooting was funded 90% by myself with some small contributions from Working Title2, Heyday Films and World Productions. The UK FILM COUNCIL kindly agreed to support the post-production as part of the Completion Fund through Maya Vision International.

LUCKY was researched in 2003 whilst I was living in South Africa. My wife was running a medical research project defining the amount of HIV in Natal and so I came into contact with many ideas around the issue. I was struck by the plight of AIDS orphans and the abandonment they experience in a society that has no infrastructure to deal with their situation. And so I felt I needed to make a film about them, especially looking at how close they come to being street-children.

My starting point was to tell a simple fairy-tale about a boy and an old woman. I also wanted to explore an idea I observed to be prevalent within the Asian community which is that Indian people feel they can't touch black people. This obviously has its roots in the caste system, but it seemed that in South Africa there was a peculiar version of this at play. And so an Indian woman seemed to be the best character to fit the old woman in the fairy-tale as this would create an interesting tension with the boy.

Initially I spoke to members of the Indian community in Durban, especially playwrights and performers. I wanted to make sure my idea about the caste system had some emotional truth to it. I tested the rudimentary story and it seemed to work. I also wanted to be certain that there was an experienced actor in South Africa who could play the old woman. Having made several films with older Indian women I knew how hard they are to find. This seemed to be the case – she was in Pretoria - and so I felt I could start writing.

I started with treatments. I showed these to people I knew in London, writing one version from the boy's POV and one from the old woman's POV. I settled on the boy's story as instinctually this made sense. Having collected some feedback from these film-makers I then went back to South Africa and wrote a script. This took a week of solid work to get a first draft. I showed it to a few more people and made some minor changes but then went with a second draft. This ended up being the shooting script and final version.

Once the script was done, I sent it out to anyone and everyone in the South African film industry. I needed to find a local producer who could help make it happen. Bex Hopkins was very active in the UK and would run post-production but was busy during the shoot.

I used contacts from the UK and eventually found a Durban based documentary producer called Junaid Ahmed who had made award-winning documentaries for SABC. He was a maverick and very involved with the ANC and this project was right up his street. Junaid agreed to help put the film together in exchange for a credit. The script also led to a decent casting director (the only one in Durban!) and a designer who were willing to work for nothing. Again, the good will was based on the fact it was a short and they'd learn something, but also the subject matter and the story.

Pre-production and the shoot took place over a 20 day period from the end of November till the 20th December 2003. Both were difficult given the limited resources. I worked with an excellent production manager called Kevin Travaskis who made the whole thing happen and also 1st ADed the shoot.

I felt strongly that I needed a DoP from the UK called John Pardue whose work I admired and who was experienced in shooting in South Africa. He also like the script and agreed to work for nothing. A week before the shoot, he flew over and we prepped together. He helped sort out problems and we storyboarded heavily to speed up communication. We knew we were shooting in a town that was not used to film shoots, with a crew that was non-professional, and resources that were limited, so the more we could talk the better.

The shoot was tough. We were beset by problems from day one. Every day involved major rescheduling and organisation because of unpredictable factors such as the lead actor being sick, accidents on set, weather etc. As I had the most experience of running a shoot out of all our crew members (which shows how inexperienced we were!) I was waking up every morning with new problems to sort out. After all it was my money we were spending! After 5 days shooting however we got into the groove and actually started enjoying it. The shoot took seven long days with myself and the DoP John, often going out at night to grab extra shots.

We came back to the UK with the digibeta rushes in April 2004. I then paired up with Liz Roe, an editor friend of my DoP's. I had seen her work and liked it and she was highly recommended by other friends. And so we started cutting slowly at weekends. We had 2 screenings at the NFTS showing it to various respected tutors and film-makers to get feedback and some perspective. And then we locked off in August 2004 and waited till October 2004 to submit it to the completion fund. This was a deliberate choice as we needed more money to complete. So far we had been supported by Working Title (£1000), World Productions (£200) and HeyDay films (£100). The rest for the shoot (£15000 or so) had come from my wife mortgaging her house. We had been doing this labour of love for over a year. It was time to get a little extra help. By Jan 2005 we heard about the completion fund and were very pleased to be accepted. The backing helped us put together the rest of the process (releasing the negative, grading, mixing and music). And given the sort of response we were getting, I decided to fund a print for the film festivals, especially the AFI in Hollywood. Now the film is going out to festivals and we picked up several prestigious awards. We will be sending it out to as many festivals as possible, partly to give the film the best life, but mostly to make sure that as many people as possible see this story about these forgotten children.

Crew Biographies

Avie Luthra – Writer/Director

Avie Luthra has directed a number of award winning short films over the last ten years. He also works as a writer and won BBC's Dennis Potter Award in 2001 and Channel 4's Northern Soul Award in 2000. His writing credits include an episode for the high profile BBC series, The Canterbury Tales (2003) and a BBC film, Indian Dream (2003). In 2004 Avie Luthra was listed as a 'Star of Tomorrow' by Screen International magazine and has recently directed films for Granada and the BBC, he has also just completed a feature film screenplay based on his Radio 4 play, A- (2004).

Bex Hopkins - Producer

Bex has produced 13 short films including Avie Luthra's 'Cross My Heart' (2002) for FilmFour. In 2003 she Line Produced 'Nits' (2004) written and directed by Harry Wootliff, which screened as part of the Director's Fortnight at Cannes Film Festival 2005 and won the Turner Classic Film – Classic Shorts 1st Prize award and Kodak Film Award amongst others.

Junaid Ahmed - Producer

Junaid has produced and directed short films for Channel 4 and the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC). He has also produced and directed a number of award winning documentaries over the past ten years for the Discovery Channel, Arte (Europe), SABC and e-tv in South Africa. During the past year he has also been production manager on the feature, 'Gandhi My Father' currently in post production in India and is presently in pre-production on his first feature as director 'The Wedding'. Junaid and his production company Fineline Productions is based in Durban, South Africa.

John Pardue – Director of Photography

John is a top commercials DoP but his drama CV is littered with award winning short films, features and TV drama films including the feature film 'The Bunker' nominated Best Film at the Portugese Santo Porto and Raindance Film Festivals and closing film at the Toronto Film Festival. John worked closely with director, Andrew Pulver on their award winning short film 'Fever In The Blood' which won the Kodak/BAFTA Short Film Showcase and premiered at the London Film Festival.

Kevin Trevaskis - Line Producer. 1st AD

Kevin Trevaskis has line produced and production managed a number of commercials and short film projects in Kwazulu-Natal. Kevin is part of a growing number of film professionals working in Kwazulu-Natal, a region fast become a sought after shooting location for international productions. Kevin is currently in development of another short film to be shot in Durban mid 2006.

Bradley Miles - Composer

Bradley has completed projects for the BBC, ITV and Channel 4 and is about to embark on a 30 episode animation series for British and European television. His latest work has involved orchestrating and arranging scores for Hollywood features such as Ridley Scott's "Kingdom of Heaven" and Nick Park's "Wallace and Gromit: The Curse of the Were-Rabbit" and consequently has had the pleasure of working with some of the finest musicians in the world!

Liz Roe - Film Editor

Liz has worked with Avie on his previous film 'TORN' which Avie wrote for BBC (2004), she also edited the Kodak Best Short film 2002 'Fever in the Blood' directed by Andrew Pulver and based on a short story by Ethan Coen.

She has edited 10 films including the feature film "Londinium" for Sunlite Burt-B Productions (1999) directed by Mike Binder and starring Mariel Hemingway, Colin Firth, Irene Jacob, Stephen Fry, and Jack Dee.

Liz also works on top end TV series for Talkback Productions and Wall to Wall including 'Grand Designs' and 'A Place in the Sun'.

Credits

Cast

Lucky
Uncle
Padma
Lindiwe
Mother/mother's song:
Mother's voice on tape:
Man 1
Man 2
Woman 1
Bakkie Passengers

Bakkie Drivers

Extras Flats:

Street Kids:

Threatening Driver

Joy Mwandla
Thami Selby Sikhosana
Muthal Naidoo
Mbali Ndebele
Nellie Rushualang
Nellie Rushualang
Siyanda Duma
Bhekani Biyela
Nokulunga P. Vilakazi
Bongekile Gumede
Brian Hlophe
Sihle Njakazi
Siphiwe Msomi
Ephraim Zondi
Martin Gumbi
Fathima Khan
Kathija Khan
Sbonela Ndlovu
Nkosi Mbele
Andile Luthuli
Cyril Vezi
Zamani Simamane

South African crew

Producer:
Line Producer:
Production Assistants:

1st Assistant Director:
2nd Assistant Director:

DoP:
Focus/Loader:
Camera Assistant:
Gaffer:
Sparks:
Spark Trainees:

Grip:
Grip Assistant:

Junaid Ahmed
Kevin Travaskis
Laine Redpath,
Chris Green,
Nikki Stamatis
Kevin Travaskis
Chris Green

John Pardue
John Evans
Zonke
Colin Rambani
Villy Nkoana,
Kwazi Kumalo
Siphiwe Msomi
Marius Swart
David Louw

Sound recordist/Boom op:	Stuart Heslop Chris Parten
Locations: Chaperones:	Laine Redpath Martin Gumbi Catrine Veer
Security:	Antonio Garcia Dawood Fouche Dominic Herrendorfer
Catering:	Hollywood and Vine
Designer: Design Assistants:	Chantal Carter Carla Machen Stef Barbeau Simon Joyner
Wardrobe: Make Up:	Carla Carter Caroline Argyle
Flights: Van Rental: Labs: Camera/lights/sound equipment:	Turner Travel, Durban Avis, Durban. The Refinery, Cape Town. Media Film Services, Cape Town

UK crew

Editing Suite thanks to Sound Design/Dubbing Mixer: Neg Cutter: Soho Colourist: Online editor: Design:	Evolutions Television Ian Grant, Triangle TV Veronica Marcano at ComputaMatch Jasper Taylor Condor Post Production Doug Shannon Fifty Design
Digital Intermediate DI Producer	Men From Mars Alex Panton
Special thanks to:	Ronnie Govender, Gowrie Naidoo, Darren Murray, Carola Mostert, Dalene Schrikker, Jasmine, K.G.Khan, Prakash Bhagwan, Reeltime Films, Lisa Aziz, Helena Spring and Anant Singh, Jim O'Brien
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Heyday Films, UK
World Productions, UK
Working Title Films, UK.

Composer:	Bradley Miles
Editor:	Liz Roe
DoP:	John Pardue
Story by:	Tanya Welz and Avie Luthra
Producer:	Bex Hopkins
Writer, Producer, Director:	Avie Luthra

An Avie Luthra Production

National Film & TV School 2005-11-05

“Made with the support of the UK Film Council’s New Cinema Fund”

Completion Fund Executive: Sally Thomas, Maya Vision International

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Notes About the Cast

Joy Mwandla - LUCKY

Joy was pointed out to me in 2003 after he was a big hit on the film-shoot of 'Sunflower', a feature shot in Durban in the summer of that year. He was 11 at the time and was at a top private school in Pietermaritzburg. The son of dress-makers, he gained a place via scholarship and is keen to become a medical doctor. Acting is merely a hobby for him. He was stunning from the first audition and was perfect for LUCKY and was certainly one of the reasons I made the film. And during the shoot, he only got better.

Thami Selby Sikhosana - UNCLE

Thami is a well known local theatre actor in Durban. I saw him in a musical in town where he played the lead. He was very good and had the right sort of look and energy for the part of the uncle. He continues to tread the boards in Durban and is looking for further film and TV roles.

Muthal Naidoo - PADMA

Muthal is probably one of the best known Indian South African actors around. She teaches acting in a college in Venda and in Pretoria, and has extensive experience of teaching in Durban. She has worked in film (A Chip of Glass Ruby 1984) and theatre as well as having published plays and other texts. She flew over from Pretoria to do the shoot.

Nellie Rushualang – MOTHER

Nellie is a trained singer and one of South Africa's top contemporary dancers. This was her first acting role. She was chosen partly because of her look and partly because of her singing. She performed the 'Tula Tula' song in the audition and I wrote this into the film because of her. She continues to work as a dancer and singer and is pursuing her acting career.