

Nang Phi / Nang Sayong Khwan / Horror

Title: *The Screen at Kamchanod / Phi Chang Nang*

Director: Songsak Mongkolthong

Studio: Five Star Production

Year: 2008

With *The Screen at Kamchanod* Songsak Mongkolthong, assistant director on the Pang Brothers' *Bangkok Dangerous* (2000), makes his debut as an author-director with a noteworthy Thai ghost movie, later going on to direct the romantic comedy *My Valentine* (2010).

The film is reputedly based on "true events" from 1987, in which, according to a newspaper report, four projectionists were hired by an anonymous client to screen a film in the Kamchanod forest in Udon Thani province. Much to the projectionists' astonishment, no audience arrived for the screening until the end, when a group of people emerged out of the darkness and lined up in front of the screen, before disappearing without trace. Eighteen years later, young doctor Yut (Achita Pramoj Na Ayudhya), who is obsessed with the mystery behind the screening, locates the very same film reels and identifies the exact location of the screening. Yut, his nurse girlfriend Aon (Pakkaramai Potranan), two journalist friends, and Roj (Namo Tongkumnerd), a homeless boy who dotes on Aon, set out to the remote forest to re-enact the screening. Yut aims to draw out the ghosts again and unveil the truth behind the spooky event. In the wilderness of Udon Thani, the Bangkokians are exposed to a never ending series of terrifying encounters with ghosts, finally resulting in homicide and suicide. Despite the macabre turn of events and the casualties caused by his obsessive quest, Yut remains determined to go on. In the end, Yut realizes that

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the ghostly audience he was looking for are, in fact, him and his companions. During the flickery screening in the forest, their images merge with those of the projected film, which eventually rips. To recall the famous line from Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, the actors become "spirits, and are melted into air, into thin air." This is, however, only one possible interpretation, as Mongkolthong offers the audience no clear or explicit answers.

The Screen was released during the boom period of Thai horror. The film uses typical genre techniques, primarily lots of scary scenes, to create an intense atmosphere of dreadful horror. The skillful employment of sound effects, camera angles, and editing make it a useful example in film courses to demonstrate how dread and horror can be generated. The plot is less convincing; while the basic idea of film as a bridge to the realm of the deceased has its potential, the narrative and the inner life of the characters are poorly realized. Until the end, both Yut's obsessiveness and Aon's odd behavior remain unexplained. As with the motivations of the protagonists, the many twists in the story remain enigmatic and illogical. To resume the plot coherently and in detail is almost impossible and the finale is likewise vague, leaving the viewer with more questions than satisfactory answers.

Peter Braeunlein