

# FILM IN THAILAND

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## Introduction- Monthly Report

**GREETINGS from Thailand and WELCOME to our new monthly e-magazine.**

In an ever increasing competitive market and a media world which emphasizes the negative, the Thailand Film Office, (Thailand's Film Commission) under the Office of Tourism Development, Ministry of Tourism and Sports, recognizes the need to provide factual, up-to-date information about Thailand as a filming destination.

**Why?** The answer is simple, like hundreds of other Film Commissions around the world, we recognize that filming in Thailand creates revenue for the country. In fact, in 2008 Thailand's international film location revenue increased approximately 88% over the same period in 2007 (US \$57.8 million vs. \$30.63 million).

In 2007, we saw 523 films produced in Thailand while in 2008 526 were produced. So far, in 2009, 119 productions have taken place (productions include features, documentaries, music videos, commercials, and TV series).

### **So why are we telling you this?**

Because we want you to know that Thailand is "Open for Business" and the problems of the past are – problems of the past.

**Our democracy is a young 76 years and problems you hear about and read about, how are they different than government changes in Italy or union strikes in France or in other nations?**

They are different in that the backbone of political change here in Thailand has always been democratic.

**So whatever you hear, check with us first, we'll tell you what's really going on!**

One last thing, our government has set 2008 – 2009 as Thailand Investment Year. They outlined new incentives for international investors in several different industrial areas, including tourism and filmmaking. These areas of investment are still not quite clear but you can be sure the Thailand Film



Office will announce this information to the international film community when appropriate.

In the meantime, we urge you, when thinking about filming on location, think of Thailand.

Our genuine warm hospitality and value for money economy can, depending on the project, be as much as 20 - 30% savings from filming on your home turf.

### **WELCOME TO THAILAND!**

#### **What people are saying about filming in Thailand?**

When asked what he thinks of Thai production services, Academy Award winning actor William Hurt, who concluded shooting "Shadows" in Thailand in early March said, "They were phenomenal!"

Hong Kong based Pulse Films director/producer, Patrice Paujal, described the atmosphere in Asia among film makers as "pulsating". "There is a buzz happening all over Asia", he said.

As for Thailand, answering the question of why he likes to shoot here, Patrice said, "Thailand is a tapestry. You have everything here – Bangkok itself is like a movie set".

Tom Waller, director of Bangkok based -De Warrenne Pictures who did location work for "The Prince and Me 4", works closely with Hollywood based Millennium Films and Nu Image Productions.

Tom said that these two companies like Thailand because "As long as productions can be brought in on schedule and under budget - they are happy. You can do that filming in Thailand."

# Meet Our Staff

**Every month in an attempt to have you learn more about our office and our staff**, we will introduce a staff member from our office or the Ministry. This month it is our privilege to have interviewed the director of the Thailand Film Office, Ms. Wanasiri Morakul.



*Ms. Wanasiri Morakul*

**Film in Thailand (FIT):** Has the Thai government initiated any new developments to support Thailand as a Filming location?

**Ms Morakul (WM):** The government is considering a number of measures to make Thailand more competitive in line with other popular film location destinations. While the cost of filming in Thailand is cost effective compared to other countries, the Cabinet has assigned relevant agencies including the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Tourism and Sports to establish a set of appropriate measures which create incentives such as tax returns, etc.

**FIT:** Please tell us something about yourself.

**WM:** Well let's see, I have a Master of Arts in Mass Communication from Chulalongkorn University. My first professional position was in 1982 at the Radio Thailand, National Public Relations Policy and Planning Division and the Thailand Film Office which was then in the Government Public Relations Office.

In 2002, the Thailand Film Office came under the Office of Tourism Development, Ministry of Tourism and Sports where I was named Chief of Film Business Promotions. In 2006, I became the director of the Thailand Film Office .

I guess you can say I have seen the Office evolve/grow over the years.

As for hobbies, I am afraid they are all work related, watching movies and spending time on-line.

**FIT:** Tell us something about your staff (how many, broken into what departments, etc.)

**WM:** We have a staff of 13 people. They are divided into 4 work groups

1. General Affairs Section
2. Cooperation and Special Affairs Section
3. Film Business Promotion Section
4. Shooting Permit Consideration Section

But of course, filmmakers will hardly interact individually with staff behind the scenes as they will interface first with our "One Stop Office" where all information about filming in Thailand can be found.

**FIT:** Does the Film Office have any plans for staying competitive during the world economic slowdown?

**WM:** The competitive nature of our business is such that we need to constantly watch trends and advance our location. It is not only during the economic slowdown.

We do plan on being more visible at international film festivals, exhibitions and film markets.

I think the very liberal attitude the government is taking on investment into the film industry here in Thailand is good in that it will allow for a greater number of facilities to be established throughout the country, especially outside of Bangkok in other heavily filmed areas such as Phuket and Chiang Mai.

As well, we want to build confidence in our location destination. We know that everyone knows Thailand. But we want everyone to know that we have highly trained crews, modern equipment and a hospitable culture that welcomes foreigners. We will be working on ways to provide quantifiable information to those that wish to film in Thailand proving we are value for money.

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# What's Up Private Sector ?

Recently **Mustard Films** (J Dejprasert - topp.mf@gmail.com) assisted Japan's EPOS Visa credit card commercial. Created by Japanese advertising agency Enjin, shot in Bangkok by Mustard Films and Kirameki Inc and directed by Cannes finalist F with special effects and done at CG house foret-bleue with post assistance from Bangkok's Oriental Post.



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Those of you in the USA, watch the Travel Channel this Spring for "Bridget's Sexiest Beaches" which in February 2009, filmed in Phuket Thailand with the assistance of **Persona Travel Ltd.** (persona@phuket.ksc.co.th) based in Phuket. The series covers the most beautiful beaches in the world.



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**Legend Films** (Mutita Na Songkla - air@legendfilms-thai.com) provided full production services for Three Needles, Rambo IV and Street Fighter: The Legend of Chun Li.

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Full service post production facility **Technicolor Bangkok** (Dusit Kananond - Dusit.Kananond@technicolor.com) launched its new Digital Imaging department in Bangkok March 19, 2009 providing digital intermediate (DI), HD mastering and restoration services.



(l to r) Special guest Academy Award winning actor William Hurt, Mrs. Sophia John, US Ambassador to Thailand, Eric G. John, Secretary General of the Thailand Board of Investment Ms. Atchaka Brimble representing the Thai Prime Minister's Office, Paul Stambaugh, managing director of Technicolor Bangkok.

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In April 2009, **China International** (Eric Chu - cipathai@gmail.com) worked on a documentary drama about a fishing village in Ranong, which is in the southern part of Thailand.

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# Film Me

Many of you have been to Thailand before and know our most filmed locations (Bangkok, Phuket, Chiang Mai, and Ayutthaya). Each month, our “Film Me” section will try and focus on a new, interesting and attractive location for filming.

For example, in this edition, we would like to briefly mention a couple of railroad shoot opportunities.

In April, Thailand-Lao opened the first railway service linking the Thai border and the Lao border – an interesting opportunity for filming over or along the Mekong River.



And speaking of trains, filming a “Who Done It” murder mystery or a turn-of-the-century love story, or want to relive life in the late 19th century? Don't miss the Eastern & Oriental Express which runs throughout the region from Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand to Vientiane in Lao. ([http://www.orient-express.com/web/eoe/eoe\\_a2a\\_home.jsp](http://www.orient-express.com/web/eoe/eoe_a2a_home.jsp))



Eastern & Oriental Express over River Kwai



Turn of the century atmosphere on the Eastern & Oriental Express

This year, The Thailand Film Office will introduce new film locations in the North-Eastern part of Thailand including Nakhon Ratchasima, Khon Kaen, Nong Khai, Udon Thani and Ubon Ratchathani since there are a variety of historic, natural and man-made sites in these areas.

Some of the areas are not well-known by tourists and sparsely populated making it easy for crews to shoot, especially with modern vans available for transport of equipment and crews.

Apart from the benefit of the locations themselves working in these rural areas is worthwhile as expenditures are less than Bangkok and the hospitality of rural people is so much like the Thailand of yesteryear.

Watch for our May issue as we introduce Thailand's own “Moon Scape” in Kaeng Tana National Park north of Udon. (picture courtesy of Tourism Authority of Thailand [www.tatnews.org](http://www.tatnews.org))



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# Pitch It to Me

**In this section of our e-magazine every month, we will get a little creative.** Since this publication is going out to screen & TV writers as well as film directors and producers from around the world, we want to offer up positive story lines about Thailand and things Thai.

Whenever we turn on the TV or watch a movie and Thailand is the subject, the story line is undoubtedly about prostitution, pornography, pedophilia or drugs. No one denies that these things exist here. BUT no more here than anywhere else. Why always write about the negative, why not the positive?

As a matter of fact, Thailand has a very conservative culture where the above mentioned 3 "p's" and a "d" are unlawful.

So, accentuating the positive may we suggest the following story lines:

1. Instead of sending out for Chinese food, Thai food, we know, is as popular. Pad Thai (Thai fried noodles), Tom Yum Goon (Spicy shrimp soup), Khao Pad Boo (Fried Rice with Crab) are all popular, filling dishes that make as much sense eating with your partner or family in front of the "tube" as any you see on TV.



Tom Yum Goong



Khao Pad Boo

And hey, all Orientals DO NOT look alike. Having a Chinese person play Thai, even if they speak the language – don't you think we can't tell the difference. It's like having a person raised in UK trying to play someone from New York.

2. Did you know that insurance companies in Europe and the USA are now paying people to have operations done here in Thailand? Yes, medical tourism is quite popular here, to the point that all major hospitals have international patient departments where hospital service personnel speak several languages.

So, why not a visiting intern from Thailand in the ER honing up on latest technology and skills? Or a story about a heart patient that will soon be transferred to Thailand for a heart operation or a young heart transplant patient that received the transplant from a Thai. Could the calm, peaceful, tranquil life he/she now leads be the result of their donor's strict Buddhist lifestyle?

**Please Film Thailand but also please include Thailand in your scripts.**

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Pad Thai

Know someone that would like to receive this monthly e-newsmagazine? Have them send us an email at [thailandfilmoffice@gmail.com](mailto:thailandfilmoffice@gmail.com)

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