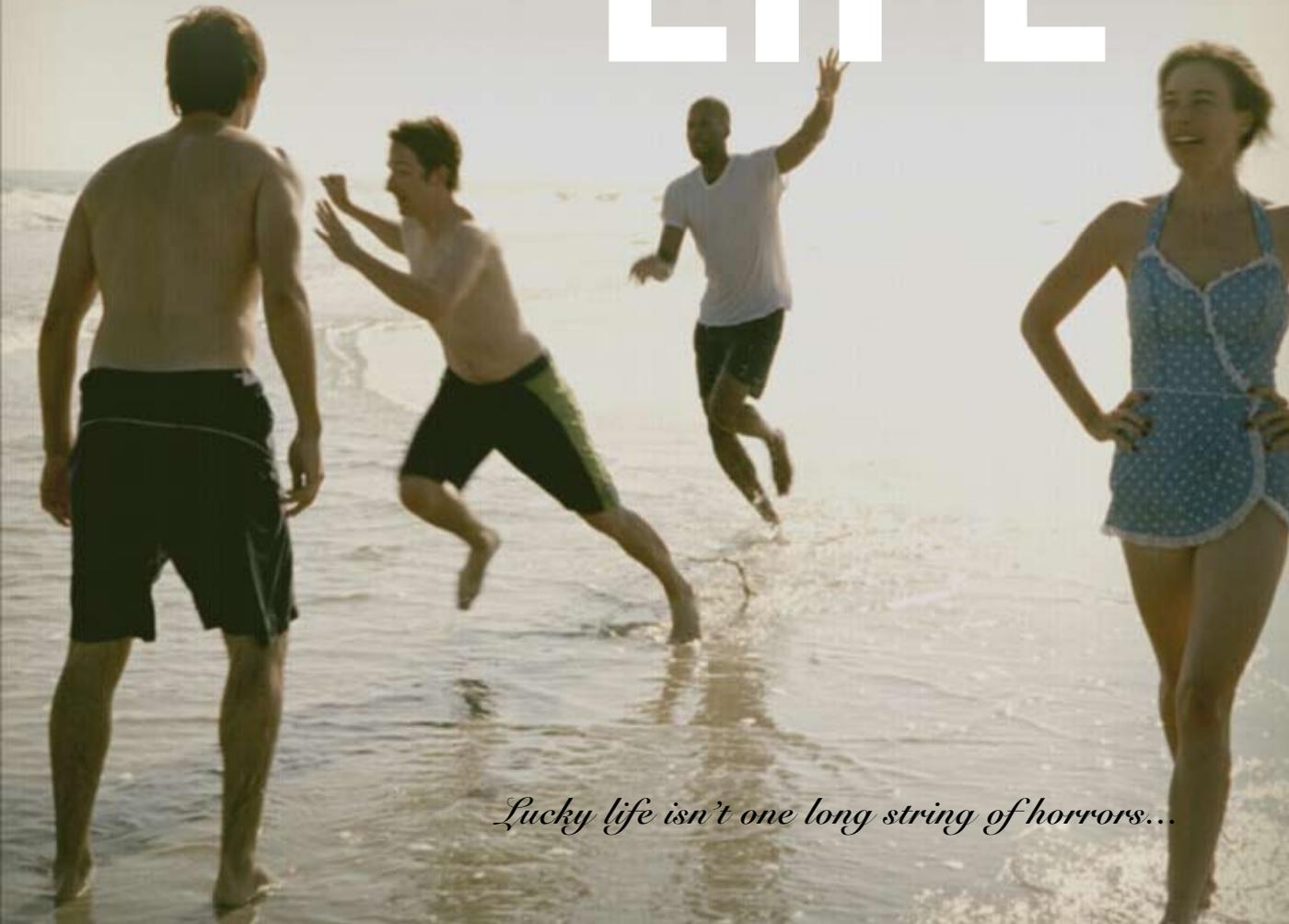


LUCKY LIFE

A film by LEE ISAAC CHUNG



Lucky life isn't one long string of horrors...

Inspired by the poetry
of Gerald Stern.

From the director of the award-winning *Munyurangabo*.

Synopsis

A group of friends travels to the beach to encourage Jason, recently diagnosed with terminal cancer. The journey is rooted in nostalgia and desire for a meaningful farewell, although the friends avoid the subject of Jason's illness. Some time later, as Mark and Karen plan to have a child, the beach trip lingers as a haunting memory in their new phase of life ...



Director's Notes

I marvel at the absurdity of memory, the haphazard assortment of souvenirs retained as time passes mercilessly. I remember very little of my first trip to the ocean, for instance, while seemingly inconsequential moments remain very clear to me. Although such loss of clarity is shameful, I long for the rare moments of epiphany when even the most negligible memories combine to resonate a new meaning like the arrival of a wild guest.

I created *Lucky Life* out of this longing, straying from traditional narrative devices and wishing to reflect the processes of memory and lived experience. This meant that the production itself should be organic. We filmed on the beaches of North Carolina while two tropical storms passed, and every production day was an improvised response and adaptation to nature. We worked with an informal script for most of the scenes and relied on available light to dictate camera placement and framing.

Samuel Anderson and I wrote and prepared the film during a time in which we each experienced personal tragedies. I found some shelter in reading poetry, the most important being Gerald Stern's 1977 collection, *Lucky Life*, for which this film is named. Stern himself is the collector of epiphanies, a scourer of memories and everyday occurrences that others would abandon – he redeems what is lost to forgetting and leads us to the hallowed words, "O lucky, lucky life." Should redemption for the world come, poets of memory will ring its church bells.



Lucky life by Gerald Stern

Lucky life isn't one long string of horrors
and there are moments of peace, and pleasure, as I lie in
between the blows.

Lucky I don't have to wake up in Phillipsburg, New Jersey,
on the hill overlooking Union Square or the hill overlooking
Kuebler Brewery or the hill overlooking SS. Philip and James
but have my own hills and my own vistas to come back to.

Each year I go down to the island I add
one more year to the darkness;
and though I sit up with my dear friends
trying to separate the one year from the other,
this one from the last, that one from the former,
another from another,
after a while they all get lumped together,
the year we walked to Holgate,
the year our shoes got washed away,
the year it rained,
the year my tooth brought misery to us all.

This year was a crisis. I knew it when we pulled
the car onto the sand and looked for the key.
I knew it when we walked up the outside steps
and opened the hot icebox and began the struggle
with swollen drawers and I knew it when we laid out
the sheets and separated the clothes into piles
and I knew it when we made our first rush onto
the beach and I knew it when we finally sat
on the porch with coffee cups shaking in our hands.

My dream is I'm walking through Phillipsburg, New Jersey,
and I'm lost on South Main Street. I am trying to tell,
by memory, which statue of Christopher Columbus
I have to look for, the one with him slumped over
and lost in weariness or the one with him
vaguely guiding the way with a cross and globe in
one hand and a compass in the other.

My dream is I'm in the Eagle Hotel on Chamber Street
sitting at the oak bar, listening to two
obese veterans discussing Hawaii in 1942,
and reading the funny signs over the bottles.
My dream is I sleep upstairs over the honey locust
and sit on the side porch overlooking the stone culvert
with a whole new set of friends, mostly old and humorless.

Dear waves, what will you do for me this year?
Will you drown out my scream?
Will you let me rise through the fog?
Will you fill me with that old salt feeling?
Will you let me take my long steps in the cold sand?
Will you let me lie on the white bedspread and study
the black clouds with the blue holes in them?
Will you let me see the rusty trees and the old monoplanes
one more year?
Will you still let me draw my sacred figures
and move the kites and the birds around with my dark mind?

Lucky life is like this. Lucky there is an ocean to come to.
Lucky you can judge yourself in this water.
Lucky you can be purified over and over again.
Lucky there is the same cleanliness for everyone.
Lucky life is like that. Lucky life. Oh lucky life.
Oh lucky lucky life. Lucky life.

Director's Biography

Lee Isaac Chung Producer and Director

Lee Isaac Chung grew up on a small farm in rural Arkansas and then attended Yale University to study Biology. At Yale, with exposure to art cinema in his senior year, he dropped his plans for medical school and pursued filmmaking. His first feature, *Munyurangabo* premiered at Cannes 2007 (Un Certain Regard). He resides in New York with his wife Valerie and manages Almond Tree Films, a production company he founded with his collaborators, Samuel Anderson and Jenny Lund.

Filmography

Munyurangabo (2007 – 97')

- Cannes Film Festival – Un Certain Regard – 2007
- Toronto Film Festival – 2007
- AFI Film Festival – Grand Jury Prize – 2007
- Rotterdam Film Festival – 2008
- Berlin Film Festival – 2008



Samuel Gray Anderson Producer

Jenny Lund, Lee Isaac Chung, and Samuel Gray Anderson co-founded Almond Tree Films in 2006, to support the film *Munyurangabo* (Cannes 2007 – Un Certain Regard). The company's goal is to promote and participate in work that expands the boundaries of narrative cinema. After *Munyurangabo*, it began work to establish a film school in Kigali, Rwanda.

Samuel Gray Anderson was born in 1981 in Latrobe, Pennsylvania. He studied English Literature at Yale University and is now based in New York City. He co-wrote and co-produced *Munyurangabo*. In addition to co-writing and producing *Lucky Life*, he is currently writing and developing a number of future Almond Tree projects.”



Cast and Crew

Kenyon Adams

Daniel O'Keefe

Megan McKenna

Richard Harvell

Nancy Huse

Yohei Kawamata

Stephanie Skaff

Nancia Patterson

Kyoko Shakagori

Jason

Mark

Karen

Alex

Ceramic Artist

Yo

Lilian

Cashier

Kyoko

Director, Editor, Writer, Producer

Producer, Writer

Producer

Director of Photography

Art Director

Associate Producer

Consulting Producer

Composer

Sound Design, Supervising Sound Editor,
and Production Sound Mixer:

Additional Music

1st Assistant Director

Key Grip

1st Assistant Camera

Boom Operator

Production Assistants

Re-Recording Engineer

Colorist

Graphics

Lee Isaac Chung

Samuel Gray Anderson

Richard Lormand

Jenny Lund and Koji Otsuka

Valerie Chu

Yohei Kawamata

Hanna Lee

Bryan Senti

Greg Sextro

Matthew Croasmun

Amanda Stoddard

Pablo Thomas

Douglas Seok

Mike Juarez

Gideon Ang and Christina Fichter

Georgia Hilton MPSE CAS

Scot Olive

Susan Springer Anderson





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