

**SWIFT Productions**

in association with Centerstage Productions

present



**VENEZIA 2009**  
Competition

# LOLA

A film by  
**Brillante Mendoza**

## SYNOPSIS

*Lola Sepa's grandson has been killed by a cell phone snatcher. Despite being devastated by the sudden violence, she must bear the burden of making the funeral arrangements. She and her family are poor, and there is not enough money for the coffin nor the legal pursuit against the suspected murderer. But the elderly woman is ready to even seek a bank loan to assure both a proper burial and justice for her beloved grandson.*

*Lola Puring is committed to getting her grandson Mateo out of jail, although he has been accused of senselessly murdering Lola Sepa's grandson. But the poor aged woman doesn't have the bail money. Each time she visits her grandson in prison to bring him proper meals, it breaks her heart to see him wasting away behind bars with countless others.*

*At the first court hearing, the two grandmothers must face one another. Both frail and poor, each is determined to do everything necessary for her grandson. The future of the case is dependent on grandmotherly love...*



## FILMOGRAPHY

- 2009 LOLA
- 2009 KINATAY
- 2008 SERBIS (SERVICE)
- 2007 TIRADOR (SLINGSHOT)
- 2007 FOSTER CHILD
- 2006 MANORO (THE TEACHER)
- 2006 KALELDO (SUMMER HEAT)
- 2005 MSAHISTA (THE MASSEUR)

## BRILLANTE MENDOZA (Director)

**LOLA** is director BRILLANTE MENDOZA's second film produced in 2009. His **KINATAY** was presented at the Cannes Film Festival, winning for Mendoza the prestigious Best Director award.

**LOLA** is the first Filipino film in the Venice Film Festival competition since 1985. Mendoza previously made history in 2008 when his film **SERBIS** became his country's first film in the Cannes Film Festival official competition since 1984.

Brillante Mendoza was born in San Fernando, Philippines. He studied fine arts and advertising at Manila's University of Santo Tomas. Before directing, he worked as an acclaimed production designer in films, commercials and theater.

## DIDIER COSTET (Executive Producer)

DIDIER COSTET created the Paris-based SWIFT Productions in 1992 with the goal of specializing in the acquisition, production and distribution of quality original motion pictures. He released Brillante Mendoza's **THE MASSEUR**, **SLINGSHOT** and **SERBIS** in France through his distribution company EQUATION.

**LOLA** is the third Brillante Mendoza film that he produced after **SERBIS**, which was the first Filipino film selected for the Cannes official competition since 1984, and **KINATAY** (Cannes Best Director Prize in 2009).





# COMMENTS FROM BRILLANTE MENDOZA

Our humanity can be weighed and balanced on the scales of justice. In **LOLA**, a crime tests the strengths and frailties of two elderly women. One proves herself to be weak, the other strong. The balance of humanity is kept, and as in nature, the fittest survive. But human worth is governed by social status.

## LOLA

Lola means grandmother in Tagalog. Filipinos are very respectful of their elders, especially grandparents. Respect for the elderly is something the Filipinos can be proud of today and for many years to come. Grandparents play a major role in every Filipino family. Filipinos are known to have close family ties. When the parents are not around, the children are always left living with their grandparents. They often treat their grandchildren better than their own children. A lot of times grandparents have been known to go beyond the limits to the point of spoiling their grandchildren.

## THE GRANDMOTHERS

In **LOLA**, both grandmothers are played by professional actresses. I already had both actresses in mind when the writer and I conceived the story two years ago. Anita Linda who plays Lola Sepa is 84 years old and Rustica Carpio who plays Lola Puring is 79 years old. It's always a joy to work with professionals like them. They never complained during the shoot, despite the difficult logistics.

## FLOODED COMMUNITIES

The film was shot in Malabon, in the greater Manila area. It's about 45 minutes away from downtown. That community is flooded all year round. The water goes up or down depending on the downpour of the rain. The people who live in that

community decided to stay in the flooded area because they don't have any other home or place to reside in greater Manila. I decided to shoot in that area of Manila to show the living conditions of the people residing there and how they cope up with their daily existence and how they have adapted to such an environment. As shown in **LOLA**, Despite their living conditions, they still manage to survive and at the same time find solutions to the problems of their loved ones.

## THE RAINY SEASON

I shot the film last June during the rainy season. I specifically wanted an overcast atmosphere to evoke the pain that the grandmothers are going through in the film. The rain and wind effects are all set up. We couldn't depend on real rain because the camera and lighting equipment would get wet. It's also too dangerous to have cables all over the place while it is raining.

Water is also a symbol in **LOLA**. Water is our source of life, but it can also be the source of stagnation and filth. We can also float along in water, but we can also drown in it.

## THE FUNERAL PROCESSION

The funeral procession shown in **LOLA** is typical for flooded areas. Similarly, there are famous fluvial parades in parts of the Philippines during celebrations for the rainy seasons. The person seen falling into the water at the beginning of the funeral procession scene was secretly set up by my assistant director and I. We wanted to surprise the extras. It turns out they all laughed at him and it broke the silence and solemnity of the scene.

## REAL EVENTS

The film was based on a real events like one grandson killing the other grandson. I situated this story during the rainy season not only to show how hard it is to live in that flooded

part of Manila, but also because I wanted to have a more gloomy mood and atmosphere to complement the feelings of the struggling lead characters. Filipinos are basically survivors. They look at hardships as a part of life, but they remain hopeful. They tend to find solace and peace through prayer.

## PRISON

The jail and prison scenes were all shot in a real prison. All of the people seen inside are actually real prisoners and guards, except for the masseur, who is actually my assistant director.

## RED TAPE AND BUREAUCRACY

Modern life in the Philippines, like in any industrialized nation, can be complicated especially for old people. City life is fast and hectic. Most of the time old people are considered to be a nuisance and useless because they are slow and old-fashioned. Nowadays, we can have everything with just the click of a finger, but in a developing country things can still be especially hard for old people because of red tape and bureaucracy.

## CELL PHONE THEFT AND MONEY

Cell phone theft is highlighted in **LOLA**. In the Philippines, the bail for cell phone theft is higher than for other items because of rampant snatching of cell phones, especially among rich kids. Expensive cell phones have become a very important status symbol among teenagers.

The film starts on a close-up of money, and money plays an important part in the film's conclusion. Money is indeed the root of all evil. In **LOLA**, the humanity of the two grandmothers is put to the test because of the needs of their loved ones, but not necessarily their own needs.

The expenses of life and death depend on one's status in life. The richer you are, the more expensive it can be to die. But if you're poor, life can be negotiable as seen in **LOLA**.



## MAIN CAST

**ANITA LINDA** ..... Lola Sepa  
**RUSTICA CARPIO** ..... Lola Puring (Mateo's Grandmother)  
**TANYA GOMEZ** ..... Ditas  
**JHONG HILARIO** ..... Bebong (Mateo's Brother)  
**KETCHUP EUSEBIO** .... Mateo (the Suspected Murderer)

110 mn • 35 mm • Color • 1.77 • Stereo • in tagalog  
2009 • France / Philippines.

## MAIN CREW

Director ..... **BRILLANTE MENDOZA**  
Executive Producer ..... **DIDIER COSTET**  
Producer ..... **FERDINAND LAPUZ**  
Screenplay ..... **LINDA CASIMIRO**  
Cinematographer ..... **ODYSSEY FLORES**  
Production Designer ..... **DANTE MENDOZA**  
Film Editor ..... **KATS SERRAON**  
Music ..... **TERESA BARROZO**  
Sound ..... **ALBERT MICHAEL IDIOMA, ADDISS TABONG**

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