

A man with a mustache, wearing a light blue long-sleeved shirt, olive green cargo pants, and a brown hat, is climbing a tall, weathered wooden utility pole. He is positioned on the right side of the pole, looking towards the camera. The pole is made of two vertical wooden beams joined at the top. Several power lines are strung across the pole. The background is a clear, bright blue sky. The title 'THE LIGHT THIEF' is written in large, white, glowing letters across the upper part of the image.

THE LIGHT THIEF

A FILM BY AKTAN ARYM KUBAT

QUINZAINÉ
DIRECTORS' FORTNIGHT
CANNES 2010



WRITER AND DIRECTOR AKTAN ARYM KUBAT

Aktan gained international attention for his work, winning the Golden Leopard of the Future at Locarno in 1993 for *THE SWING* and the Silver Leopard for *THE ADOPTED SON* in 1998. In 2001, he was nominated for the European Film Academy (EFA) Discovery Award. His films have been screened at various international film festivals and have received multiple awards. Aktan was born in 1957 in Kyrgyzstan and graduated from the Art Academy in Bishkek (formerly Frunze). He started working as a production designer in the 1980s, writing his first screenplay in 1995. He has been working as a director since 1990.

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY

2010 *THE MOTHER'S HEAVEN* / feature film (in production)
2010 *THE LIGHT THIEF* / feature film
2001 *THE CHIMP (MAIMIL)* / feature film
1998 *THE ADOPTED SON (BESHKEMPIR)* / feature film
1997 *HASSAN HUSSEN* / short film
1995 *BUS STOP (BEKET)* / short film
1993 *THE SWING* / 48 minutes feature
1992 *WHERE'S YOUR HOME, SNAIL?*
(GDE TVOY DOM, ULITKA?) / feature film
1990 *THE DOG THAT RAN (BEZHALA SOBAKA)* / short film



GEOPOLITICAL BACKGROUND

The entire Kyrgyz industrial system was a part of the Soviet Union's huge military and industrial complex. The collapse of the USSR brought about the collapse of this system as well, and in its act of independence the young Kyrgyz Republic lost its only financier of all its production output. The plants and factories, which were only specialized in making small parts of complete products, lost all sense of their existence and in that one moment, a whole nation became unemployed.

The story is set in a village in the south of the republic that is situated near a huge creation of the Soviet industry, the Toktogul hydroelectric power station. Once a modern construction, it became a paradox after the collapse of the USSR due to its unique situation: According to law, everything that was located on the territories of the republics, from nails to nuclear systems, automatically belonged to the republics after the breakdown of the USSR. The central part of the Kyrgyz Toktogul water power plant, its central governing organ, is however situated further downwards the Naryn River on Uzbekistan ground.

In other words: The Kyrgyz Republic, an independent and sovereign state with inexhaustible waterpower resources, has become a hostage of the former system of integral management. This has created a trail of insolvable economic and political problems.



SYNOPSIS

They call him “Svet-ake” (“Mr. Light”). The electrician is responsible for bringing more than just light to the people around him. Like moths, everybody is drawn to his kindness: those with short circuits in their electricity, and those with short circuits in their marriage, those who have taken all the power in the city, and those who have given up the will to live. He helps everyone and is everywhere. He doesn’t even shy from breaking the law, rewinding an old and lonely pensioner’s electricity meter so that he doesn’t owe the State, but rather the State owes him.

The economic devastation of the country has had an enormous impact on the working people and yet despite the upheaval they have not lost the ability to love, to suffer, to share their lives with friends, and enjoy what they have... in particular our resilient electrician who possesses a wonderful and open heart. He not only brings electric light (which is often out) to the lives of the inhabitants of this village, but he also spreads the light of love, loyalty, life, and most of all, lots of laughter. He only has two dreams: to someday have a son and to provide people with cheaper energy through wind power.

The country is the midst of a revolution. Power lies in the hands of greed-driven people, obsessed with their personal enrichment. “Svet-ake” is a resistance against this dark madness. He who brings the light, takes it away, leaving the darkness in the dark. Only the light of the dream remains glowing in the night; a candle of a very delicate hope.



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Creation is the act of overcoming inferiority complexes. While I was working on the autobiographical trilogy KURAK (A PATCHWORK QUILT), consisting of THE SWING, THE ADOPTED SON and THE CHIMP, I tried to tell about my destiny, memories and feelings in a confessional manner. I attempted to capture the atmosphere of my childhood, adolescence and youth. This “patchwork quilt” is created from memory fragments of my sensations.

I am convinced that every creative work is unique and every creative method is individual. During all this time, I realized that all of my screenplays played in some way the role of bait for potential financiers, but as soon as the camera was on, a dictatorship of real life quickly established itself on set.

I don't shoot my films strictly according to the screenplay, but rely on my intuition, casual foresight and some inexplicable miracle to happen. Live streams of life sometimes dictate such plots that can't be thought out in an office and real people behave in a certain manner that can't be played by highly professional actors. These moments can't be reconstructed, they only can be captured. The crew, equipped with everything necessary, goes into the heart of commonness, where the film's heroes become those who are an integral part of being.

This film is not about a documentary description of people with real destinies and problems, it is a full-fledged fiction film with the fictitious stories, characters and dramaturgic lines of the heroes. Life, organized by artistic means, is “woven” from the threads of life itself. Striving to capture something fleeting and to give it an artistic form – this is my dream.

The destiny of every person is full of beauty, adventure and dramatic moments.





CAST AND CREW

Svet-ake: Aktan Arym Kubat
Bermet: Taalaikan Abazova
Bekzat: Askat Sulaimanov
Esen: Asan Amanov
Mansur: Stanbek Toichubayev

Director: Aktan Arym Kubat
Screenplay: Aktan Arym Kubat,
Talip Ibraimov
Director of Photography: Hassan
Kydyraliyev
Sound: Bakyt Niyazaliev
Production Design: Talgat Asyrankulov
Editor: Petar Markovic
Music: Andre Matthias
Costume Design: Inara Abdieva
Make-Up: Tolkyng Asylbekova

Producer: Altynai Koichumanova,
Cedomir Kolar, Thanassis Karathanos,
Marc Baschet, Karl Baumgartner,
Denis Vaslin
Produced by: Pallas Film, A.S.A.P Films,
Volya Films, Oy Art
In Co-production with: ZDF / Arte
With the support of: Mitteldeutsche
Medienförderung, Fonds Sud Cinéma,
World Cinema Fund, Hubert Bals Fund,
The Netherlands Film Fund

TECHNICAL DATA

35 mm / 1:1,85 / 80 mins / Dolby Digital /
Colour / Kyrgyz with English and French
Subtitles



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