



ASOG

Starring real Filipino climate disaster survivors.

Rey Aclao | Arnel Pablo | Ricky Gacho Jr.
Amelia Dela | Cruz Raul Ramos



Canada Council
for the Arts

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du Canada



REY is a non-binary Filipino comedian who survived Super typhoon Haiyan. However, the disaster destroyed the TV studio where they hosted their local talk show.

ASOG follows Rey on a road trip to a drag pageant where they hope to find fame.

Along the way they encounter Filipinos enduring the impacts of climate change, including residents of Sicogon Island whose land was stolen in the aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan.

When Rey discovers the pageant is being hosted at a resort built on the stolen land, they must decide whether to perform at the event or stand with the dispossessed villagers.

ASOG is a feature-length docufiction hybrid starring real Filipino climate disaster survivors. The film employs the familiar genre of the road trip comedy to illuminate the human impact of the climate crisis on the people of this region of the Philippines.

The film follows the story of a 40-year-old non-binary school teacher named Rey. During the day Rey teaches high school students, by night they perform at bars as a proudly gay comedian named JAYA. When Rey embarks on a road trip to compete in a drag pageant, they encounter one of their students, ARNEL. The struggling teenager is mourning the death of his Mother and traveling in search of his estranged Father.



As they travel together they meet a series of fellow climate disaster survivors.

When they arrive at their destination Rey learns that the pageant is being held at a resort with a dark history. The hotel was built on land stolen from impoverished seaside villagers. 7 years ago Super Typhoon Haiyan forced the entire community to evacuate and in the midst of this emergency, private developers seized their land and demolished their homes.



100% of the people on camera in ASOG are real impoverished Filipino climate survivors representing their own experiences.

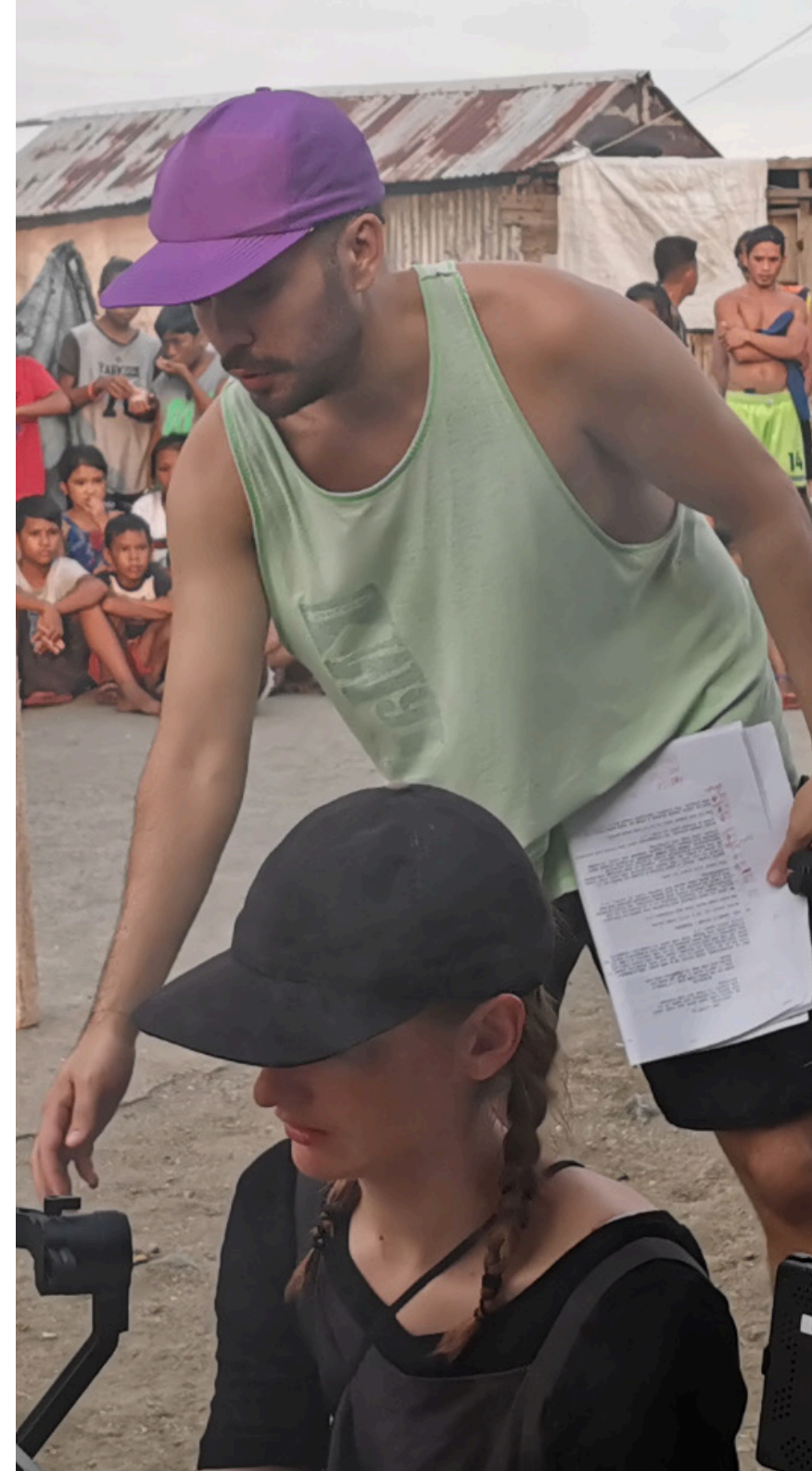
The third feature film from Filipino-Canadian writer/director/comedian Seán Devlin 叶世民 Asog is a prefigurative film that has improved the economic quality of life for the climate disaster survivors that star in the film.

The film was produced with the generous support of The Canada Council for the Arts, The Doc Society UK, and Creative BC.

Typhoon Haiyan devastated Leyte Island in the Philippines, where my Mother was born and raised. In the aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan I started producing films in the seaside Barangay of Anibong, the poorest neighbourhood in Tacloban City (the Eastern Visayas only highly urbanized center). Anibong was declared a “No Build Zone” post-Haiyan, threatening more than 10,000 seaside residents with eviction and demolition.

ASOG is my second documentary hybrid feature starring actual Filipino climate disaster survivors in a tragicomedy. The Globe & Mail called my last film “Uncomfortable and unforgettable.” while adding, “Devlin immerses the comedians in this very real tragedy, where they interact with real victims and give the audience some laughs. It sounds bonkers – but it works.”

ASOG continues my adherence to the Indigenous Filipino protocol that calls on us to treat stories as one would the remains of a loved one. In doing so we are forced to ask the following questions: What right do I have to tell this story? What are my intentions in doing so?





In order to maintain a uniformed authenticity in the performances approximately 90% of the dialogue was improvised. The reliance on improvisation allowed our cast of climate survivors to naturally re-enact some of their own experiences in the local dialects (Waray, Tagalog and Illongo). My trust in the improvisational process was based on nearly two decades of experience using collaborative improvisation in the writing and directing of live and filmed performances.

ASOG is a work of cultural revitalization. The erasure of pre-colonial non-binary gender cultural traditions in Leyte is significant because “Asogs” were often spiritual leaders and healers. This film was designed to elevate and accentuate Rey/Jaya’s lived experience while connecting to these pre-colonial traditions in order to foster healing in the era of climate grief.

“I strongly feel that Sean is an exceptional filmmaker who has extraordinary abilities and is in fact at the forefront of innovating new forms.”

- *Adam Mckay*

Seán Devlin 叶世民 , Writer, Director, Producer - Canada

Seán is a first generation Filipino-Chinese-Irish Canadian comedian and filmmaker. He worked as a Consulting Producer on the Oscar nominated Borat: Subsequent Moviefilm; winner of the Golden Globe for Best Picture - Comedy or Musical. He wrote and directed When The Storm Fades (2018) which is currently streaming on Amazon Prime via 1091 Pictures. For that film The Director's Guild of Canada presented Sean the Emerging Canadian Director prize at the 37th VIFF, he also earned two international jury prizes for Best Director at festivals in Liverpool and Mumbai. The film won Best Canadian Film at the 19th Gimli Film Festival and two Vancouver Film Critics' Awards for actors in supporting roles. His debut stand-up album AIRPORTS, ANIMALS. was released by Arts & Crafts Records in July 2021. Devlin is the first comedian ever added to the artist roster at the beloved indie label which introduced the world to the work of Canadian musicians such as Feist and Broken Social Scene. The album was nominated for the 2022 JUNO award for "Best Comedy Album" Toronto's Now Magazine named it one of the five best Canadian comedy albums of 2021. Paste Magazine (USA) called it "One of the best comedy albums of the year" and raved: "Devlin breaks apart Western society's racist, capitalist structure with the elegant precision of a Michelin star chef cracking open an egg... His debut ranks among the most thought-provoking and thoroughly funny comedy releases of the year."

Anna MacDonald, Cinematographer - UK

Anna is a Canadian-American cinematographer based in London, England shooting across fiction & documentaries films. Anna studied cinematography at NFTS where her graduation film 'Come Out Of The Woods' won the Panalux Award for Cinematography. Her latest short "Good Thanks, You?" screened at Cannes 2020 and is nominated for a BIFA.

Marissa Cabaljao, Consulting Producer

Marissa was a peasant leader on the Philippine island of Samar, eventually serving as the Barangay Secretary (local government leader) for Magdawat Pinabacdao. Typhoon Haiyan/Yolanda made landfall while she was serving this role in her community. The disaster opened her eyes to the failure of nation states to respond to the climate crisis. As a result she became a spokesperson for farmers in Samar working with The People Surge (the country's largest, broadest alliance of storm survivors). She now serves full time as the Secretary General for the People Surge while raising her children. Marissa worked as a consultant on *When the Storm Fades*, contributing to the film from the early research phase and played herself in the film. Her work at the People Surge makes her an ideal person to speak on behalf of the millions of people affected by climate change in the Philippines. In February 2020 Marissa and her 1-year-old baby along with 4 other human rights defenders were unjustly arrested by the Philippine National Police and red tagged by the government. Tragically, several of Marissa's comrades have been assassinated in extrajudicial killings involving the Philippine Military. Marissa's baby was released from jail and Marissa made bail. She has been in hiding ever since.

Cecilia R. Mejia, Impact Producer, (attached) - USA

Cecilia was born and raised in Brooklyn, a first-generation Filipino-American. Cecilia teaches Impact Producing at NYU Tisch School of the Arts and was recently featured in Forbes Magazine for their work. Cecilia served as impact producer on Isabel Sandoval's LINGUA FRANCA (2019) as well as PJ Raval's CALL HER GANDA (2018), two of the most prominent films about Filipino trans life made by diaspora artists. Cecilia has worked in development for several non-profit organizations, including NGOs affiliated with the United Nations. She attended the State University of New York at Buffalo. They have a master's degree in Public Administration and Affairs; and also completed the Columbia Business School's Emerging Non-Profit Leaders Program. Cecilia has worked with several grassroots organizations focusing on underrepresented communities. They've produced a number of short films focusing on critical social impact issues like mental health and gender inequality. Cecilia is combining their love of film with the goal of focusing on social impact stories that inspire change, most specifically with under-resourced youth through their non-profit organization Art of Me as the Creative Director, helping students turn their stories into high-quality short films.