

BYSTANDING: THE BEGINNING OF AN AMERICAN LIFETIME

Genre: Narrative / Spoken Word Video

Festival Categories: Music Video
Short Film

Running Time: 5 minutes

Shooting Format: Digital Video (Mini DV 24P)

Exhibition Format: DVD, Digibeta, Beta SP

Color: Black & White

Sound: Stereo

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LOGLINE: A convergence of the music video style of in-camera performance and the spoken word poetry of acclaimed artist Kelly Tsai, “Bystanding” captures the powerful words of this anti-war poem against a backdrop of charged New York City images.

CAST:

Spoken Word Artist: Kelly Zen-Yie Tsai

FILMMAKERS:

Director: Karen Lin

Producer: Karin Chien

Director of Photography: Jeffrey Kim

Editor: Tommy Park

Sound Designer: Michael Babcock

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT:

"Bystanding" is the collision of two worlds I know: my creative work as a writer/director and my experience as a music video producer. When I first saw Kelly Tsai live, her fierce performance inspired the idea to fuse the visual dynamics of the music video format with the explosive delivery style of spoken word poetry.

The idea posed two interesting challenges - it hadn't been done before, and poetry wasn't typically a performance or visually driven art form. As I began to really sit with the poem I knew pretty quickly that the video needed a big city backdrop. There are direct references to 9/11, but the majority of the poem actually takes place in the artist's hometown of Chicago. Her experiences as captured in her poetry, though, are universal, and I wanted to convey that through the quintessential American urban landscape – the crowds, the people young and old, the buildings, and the bustling street life and energy that, for me, could only be New York City.

In planning for the shoot on the streets of New York City, I was particularly interested in capturing portraits of people, as inspired by the gorgeous photography in Mark Romanek's "99 Problems" video for Jay-Z. Real people, real life. And, I knew finishing in black & white would give the piece a timelessness and classic finish, while addressing the limitations of the miniDV format in daylight exteriors.

ARTIST'S STATEMENT:

In 2003, I was asked to perform at the Not In Our Name Rally in Chicago, which over 4000 people ultimately attended. I felt moved and compelled to write a poem at the most human level that spoke to the existence of war throughout our lives even in times of so-called peace. My hope was to tear ourselves away from polemics and rhetoric to understand at a fundamental level that war affects us all and that for every one person that suffers at our hands whether near or far, we all bear the consequences as we deprive each other and ourselves from the essential human right to peace that gives us the opportunity to live our lives however we choose. Unfortunately nearly 4 years later, the message is still relevant today.

BIOGRAPHIES



Karen Lin / ZuZu Films (Director)

Award winning director of the short film PERFECTION starring actress Ming-Na (ER, Joy Luck Club), KAREN LIN has been working in Hollywood for over a decade. After graduating with a Masters in Public Policy from UC Berkeley, she headed straight to Hollywood to pursue her dreams of directing. She began her career working as an assistant to such notables as actor Nicolas Cage (*Face/Off*, *City of Angels*), and director Roger Donaldson (*Thirteen Days*). Five years ago she made the leap into music videos and is currently a freelance music video producer for companies like Black Dog Films/RSA Films and Alchemy Pictures. Her feature film debut "Love Tour" is in development and slated for late 2007. Karen's personal goal is to bring more Asian American faces to the silver screen.

50-word bio:

Award-winning director of the short *PERFECTION*, starring Ming-Na (*ER*), KAREN LIN has worked the last decade in Hollywood, starting as an assistant to Nicolas Cage. She currently produces music videos for artists as Keith Urban and the Yeah Yeah Yeahs. Karen is also in active development on feature film projects.



Kelly Zen-Yie Tsai (Spoken Word Poet)

KELLY ZEN-YIE TSAI is a Chinese/Taiwanese American full-time spoken word artist who has been featured at over 180 performances across the country including venues like the Nuyorican Poets Café, the House of Blues, the Apollo Theater, and three seasons of “HBO Def Poetry.” Based in New York, she tours the country extensively as a solo artist as well as a performer for “We Got Issues!” civic transformation and performance project. She has been published in numerous journals and anthologies, and her first full-length play was excerpted at Chicago’s first Hip Hop Theater Festival. She has collaborated with notable dance companies Urban Bush Women, InSpirit, VTDance, and Ase Dance Collective and recently completed her debut spoken word album, “Infinity Breaks.” For more info, www.yellowgurl.com or myspace.com/yellowgurl_poetry.

50-word bio:

KELLY ZEN-YIE TSAI is a Chicago-born, Brooklyn-based, Chinese Taiwanese American spoken word artist who has featured at over 200 performances worldwide including three seasons of HBO’s award-winning “Russell Simmons’ Def Poetry.” Current projects include her recently released CD “Infinity Breaks” and her solo show “The Grieving Room.” For more info, www.yellowgurl.com, www.myspace.com/yellowgurl_poetry



Karin Chien (Producer)

KARIN CHIEN is an independent film producer based in New York City and Los Angeles. Ms. Chien recently premiered the feature film *UNDOING* at the 2006 Los Angeles Film Festival, and is currently in post-production on *SANTA MESA*, which filmed in the Philippines in Fall 2005. Ms. Chien also produced *THE MOTEL* (winner of the Sundance/NHK Filmmakers Award, the Humanitas Prize, and 3 Best Narrative Feature Film Festival Awards), released by Palm Pictures. Ms. Chien has produced the feature-length films *MVP*, which premiered at the 2004 Sundance Film Festival, and *ROBOT STORIES*, winner of 35 film festival awards and self-distributed theatrically

to over 50 cities nationwide. Ms. Chien has also served on the Project Involve and Narrative Rough Cut Lab advisory boards for IFP/New York.

50-word bio:

KARIN CHIEN is an independent feature film producer. Karin has produced five features: *SANTA MESA* (in post-production), *UNDOING* (2006 LA Film Festival premiere), *THE MOTEL* (released by Palm Pictures, 2005 Sundance premiere), *MVP* (2004 Sundance premiere), and *ROBOT STORIES* (winner of 35 festival awards, 2003 Hamptons Film Festival premiere).

FESTIVALS, SCREENINGS & AWARDS

Chicago Asian American International Film Festival

VC Filmfest (Los Angeles Asian American Film Festival)

Media that Matters Film Festival

- *War & Peace Award sponsored by Netflix*

H20 Hip Hop Odyssey

Urbanworld Vibe Film Festival

- *Honorable Mention, Narrative Short*

Asian Cinevision (NY Asian American Film Festival)