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## 'Cure': A Film on the Fly

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By Dean Napolitano



Raphael Fournier

In his directorial debut, Hong Kong filmmaker Bill Yip is also executive producer, scriptwriter and film editor.

When Thailand's film board denied Bill Yip a permit to shoot his movie in the country, that didn't stop him.

Just as the Hong Kong director was set to begin filming a family drama in southern Thailand, authorities rejected the script and issued a warning letter: He faced prosecution if he proceeded with the film.

So he hightailed it out of town.

With his small crew and a camera, the 47-year-old independent director began shooting an unscripted film — a series of unconnected scenes and improvised dialogue — while driving on the roads through northern Thailand.



Ox Workshop

A still from "Cure," Bill Yip's first feature-length film.

For a less-experienced filmmaker, the rejection would have meant a death sentence for the project. But Mr. Yip — who has more than 20 years in the Hong Kong film industry under his belt, though he's never made a full-length feature — turned things around.

Mr. Yip, who studied film at Hong Kong Baptist University, has worked as an assistant director, scriptwriter and production manager in the Hong Kong film industry. He also ran his own production house — which made television shows, commercials and

documentaries — but closed it down in order to devote more time to making films.

While other independent directors are known for their improvisational approach to filmmaking — the late American director John Cassavetes, for instance — it's unusual for a film to start shooting without first knowing where it might lead. But Mr. Yip had little choice.

"We discussed ignoring the [Thai film censors,]" he says. But with the prospect of looming legal action, he decided to "throw the script out and start anew."

Two weeks later, he had a solution. "I thought: 'Why don't we do a road movie without a script and without actors,'" he recalls.

**Yip:** Unfortunately the script was disapproved by the Thai authorities just before the shooting was to begin, so the plan had to be dropped.

The Thai officials never expressed any concerns over our original script, not until a week before the actual shooting did they come to me and say that because the story involved child prostitution it would jeopardize the image of Thailand as a country and that I should make amendments to it.

My script has no particular emphasis on this issue, but I do believe that this is an essential element of the story.

In the end I decided to shoot a different story. I did not wish to sacrifice the autonomy of my work, hence the eventual production of "Cure."

### **CNNGo:** "Cure" is a road movie. Do you have a special affection for this genre?

**Yip:** I have always liked road movies. When the Thai authorities requested me to rewrite the script, all that I had in mind was that I could not compromise.

However, seeing that the crew has already booked air tickets and hotel accommodation, despite the absence of a new script, I decided to take the trip to Thailand first and take it from there.

Though at the time we were in lack of a script, a cast and sets, the filming crew of nine traveled with me anyway just with the hope shooting an improvised road movie.

The entire shooting process was full of unexpected elements. When arriving in a village, the people or events would always inspire me.

Buildings such as train stations and hotels are not only sets for the film, but they also become instrumental in determining the development of the plot.

My shooting process is like the road movie itself, on the arrival at each new village, the local characteristics of a place would inspire a new chapter of the story.

### **CNNGo:** That must have been a tough journey.

Yes it was not easy. So we started from Bangkok and proceeded to the north. When we were shooting in Bangkok, it so happened that the anti-government red shirts were demonstrating and rioting.

We immediately had to pack up and leave the city right away, avoiding being trapped in Bangkok by the curfews.

In Myanmar, we couldn't even get across the border, we had to bribe one of the guards. I had to give them my passport while I was there.

Bill Yip, Weigo Lee and 81 others recommend this. Undo



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