

Acropolis Cinema and MUBI present



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## STORM CHILDREN, BOOK ONE

A Grasshopper Film Release

In celebration of the launch of MUBI's exclusive retrospective  
**It's About Time: The Cinema of Lav Diaz**

October 11, 2016 - Veggie Cloud

## STORM CHILDREN, BOOK ONE

143 min // Philippines // 2014

With striking black & white photography, this critically-acclaimed observational documentary from Filipino master Lav Diaz (whose newest film, *The Woman Who Left*, recently won the Golden Lion at the Venice Film Festival) takes stock of the devastation wrought by typhoon Yolanda (Haiyan) on the Philippine coastal town of Tacloban. The film, which follows three children as they cope with the disaster—scavenging for food, telling stories, playing amid looming ships run aground on the town’s main street, and diving from others that still sit in the sea—is a moving reflection on climate change and human resilience.



## LONG STORY LONG: AN INTRODUCTION TO LAV DIAZ

*The following is an edited excerpt from an article originally published in the Notebook*

Filmmaker Lavrente Indico Diaz was born on December 30, 1958 in the Southern Philippines. The son of a fervently Catholic woman and a Socialist intellectual who, firmly believing that education is the key to improve Man’s condition, devoted their lives to schooling peasants in the poorest, remotest Maguindanao villages, Diaz has always had an utilitarian conception of culture and, by extension, of all forms of artistic expression. To Diaz, art should not be an end to itself, a purely formalist exercise, but—to paraphrase a Shakespearean play extensively quoted in his latest short *The Day Before the End* (2016)—it must hold the mirror up to society. Specifically, art must spur people to reflect on “the fundamentals of existence: why am I in this condition? Why are we in this condition? What am I doing here? What are we doing here?”

Why all the suffering? Why all the violence?”

Diaz’s films thus tackle the question of what does it mean to be a Filipino today: “We [Filipinos] need to confront all these things, all the traumas, all these unexamined parts of our history, of our struggle, so that [we] can move forward. It’s a kind of, you know, cure.”

“Why is the movie so long?” is what Diaz has been asked for fifteen years now by his spectators, ever since he made the five-hour *Batang West Side* (2001) on film and ten-hour-forty-three-minute *Evolution of a Filipino Family* (2005) with a MiniDV camera. Another frequently asked question concerns the most striking aesthetic feature of his cinema: the use of black-and-white, extremely lengthy shots, often with no camera movement whatsoever: “What is the rationale behind massively long, generally immobile takes?”

The answer is threefold. Firstly, such a strategy is a declaration of artistic independence: requiring a great deal of patience and dedication from its spectator, Diaz’s cinema has nothing to do with the dominant film industry conventions that impose the production of



eighty-to-one-hundred-and-twenty-minute audiovisual entertainment to be purchased by the widest possible audience for mindless consumption in one’s own spare time. Secondly, this reaction against the commodification of the seventh art goes hand in hand with the desire to reclaim Filipinos’ ancestral Malay identity, whose disinterest in the monetary value of time has been almost completely forgotten these days after centuries of exploitation at the hand of Spanish colonialists and American capitalists. Thirdly, since duration is an affirmation of importance in cinema, Diaz’s predominantly immobile, extremely lengthy takes adding up to enormous running times are meant to physically confront the audience with the burden of centuries of suffering endured by the Filipino people.

As the filmmaker said about *Evolution of a Filipino Family* in general, and about the four-shot, twenty-one-minute sequence of poor man Kadyo's bleeding to death in a deserted Manila alley in particular:

"I am capturing real time. I am trying to experience what these people are experiencing. They walk. I must experience their walk. I must experience their boredom and sorrows. [...] I want people to experience our agony."

## IT'S ABOUT TIME: THE CINEMA OF LAV DIAZ

*Curated online cinema MUBI is now presenting an exclusive, one-year retrospective of the work of Lav Diaz. They will release a new film each month from the award-winning auteur. The full retrospective will include:*

**EVOLUTION OF A FILIPINO FAMILY** (2005)  
**HEREMIAS** (2006)  
**MELANCHOLIA** (2008)  
**ELEGY TO THE VISITOR FROM THE REVOLUTION** (2011)

**CENTURY OF BIRTHING** (2011)  
**FLORENTINA HUBALDO, CTE** (2012)

**AN INVESTIGATION ON THE NIGHT THAT WON'T FORGET** (2012)  
**FROM WHAT IS BEFORE** (2014)  
**STORM CHILDREN** (2014)  
**THE DAY BEFORE THE END** (Short, 2016)

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