



Choking Man

Directed by Steve Barron



USA/ 2006/Drama/ English/ 83 Min.

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SYNOPSIS

Choking Man is an intense blend of psychological drama and magical realism that encapsulates the contemporary immigrant experience in America.

Jorge (Octavio Gomez Berrios) is a morbidly shy Ecuadorian dishwasher toiling away in a shabby Jamaica, Queens, New York diner run by Rick (Mandy Patinkin). He works all day long in the shadow of the ever-present Heimlich maneuver instruction poster which hangs in the diner kitchen. From his solitary kitchen corner, Jorge mutely pines for a bond with Amy (Eugenia Yuan), the newly hired Chinese waitress and even though she tries to reciprocate, the gulf that separates them may be too large. On the job he is continually tormented by his coworker Jerry (Aaron Paul) and at home in his Harlem boarding, under the psychological control of his domineering "roommate," he battles his inner demons.

Set in the vicinity of JFK airport, the most culturally diverse neighborhood in the world, Choking Man captures the feeling of claustrophobia and almost literal asphyxiation newcomers to America experience as they struggle to find a place and purpose in this strange land.

FESTIVALS AND AWARDS

OFFICIAL SELECTION- Tribeca Film Festival
OFFICIAL SELECTION- Miami Int'l Film Festival
OFFICIAL SELECTION –Deauville Film Festival

WINNER- Best Film Not Shown in a Theater Near You, **Gotham Awards 2007**
WINNER- Best Director, **Ibiza International Film Awards 2007**
WINNER- Best Newcomers, **Ibiza International Film Awards 2007**
WINNER- Best Soundtrack, **Ibiza International Film Awards 2007**
WINNER- Special Jury Award, **Ibiza International Film Awards 2007**

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

"This film marks the first time in fifteen years that I sat down with a blank page to write my own concept to direct, and the first time it wasn't for a Music Video. Having control of the projects origins created a greater opportunity to be unusual, layered and brave. In those years directing other people's work my son grew up, and has now helped me conceive this basic new idea. We sat in a Long Island diner, chatting about how anonymous the Heimlich Maneuver poster must be to the citizens of New York, and a light bulb went on.

Some months later, inspired by the cavalier spirit of New York independent movies like 'Station Agent' and 'Raising Victor Vargas' , the blank page was filled with 'Choking Man'. The tale centers on one of the thousands of immigrant kitchen workers in America who feel they no more belong to where they came from than where they live now. Jorge is as anonymous to the people around him as that constant Government Issue graphic that lingers three feet in front of his face. This is the character you usually don't make a film about. This is the invisible man that gives you few clues as to what is going on inside his impenetrable mind. Where does he disappear to when he enters his lonely home? What happens when someone does actually 'see' him? How far can he be moved from 'who' he is? What is his breaking point? These are the questions I wanted to explore with 'Choking Man'.

Jamaica in Queens felt like an apt setting for this story. It is, according to the New York Times, the most multi-cultural place on the planet with 140 different languages spoken. Jorge doesn't seem to speak any one of them; his is the language of 'shy'."

- Steve Barron

DIRECTOR BIOGRAPHY

Born in Dublin Ireland, Steve Barron started in films as a camera assistant on epic productions such as Richard Donner's SUPERMAN, Richard Attenborough's A BRIDGE TOO FAR and Ridley Scott's THE DUELIST.

A pioneer of the music video industry, Steve got his start directing such influential bands as the "The Jam", "Human League", and "Adam and the Ants." Eventually, he would go on to direct some of the popular videos in history, including the award winning videos 'Billie-Jean' by Michael Jackson, Dire Straits' 'Money for Nothing' and A-Ha's 'Take On Me' among others.

His first feature film ELECTRIC DREAMS was released in 1984 which he followed with a number of years directing television in the US and UK. Steve's second feature stunned the movie industry by becoming the first independent feature to break the 100 million-dollar theatrical barrier in the U.S. TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES

In 1993 Steve directed the Dan Ackroyd feature CONEHEADS for Paramount and was Executive Producer on the Sylvester Stallone, Sharon Stone picture THE SPECIALIST, and the highly successful WHILE YOU WERE SLEEPING.

In autumn 1998, Steve directed "Merlin," a \$30 million television mini-series produced by Hallmark for NBC in America. Merlin attracted a great cast including Sam Neill, Helena Bonham-Carter, Miranda Richardson, Isabella Rossellini, Martin Short and Rutger Hauer. Following the mini-series Steve went on to direct "Arabian Nights" on ABC network. Photographed in Turkey and Morocco it stars Mili Avital, Alan Bates, Jason Scott Lee, John Leguizamo and Rufus Sewell. This project brought Steve 5 more Emmy nominations and a US national television critics nomination.

In October 2000 Steve's feature RAT had its theatrical release from Universal in the UK to rave reviews. Steve's next comedy was MIKE BASSETT: ENGLAND MANAGER a spoof documentary feature film starring Ricky Tomlinson as the national soccer coach. The film had a wide UK theatrical release in November 2001, earning \$6m and charting at number three in its first four weeks.

Summer 2002 was spent shooting a \$24m American Indian mini-series epic for ABC and Hallmark. 'Dreamkeeper' is the first high-profile, big scale attempt to bring to life the myths and legends of the Native American people. Tribes all across the United States were consulted and ninety-five speaking roles all cast with Native people. The production won Steve a Gold Award for directorial achievement at the Chicago International TV Festival and an Emmy for best visual effects.

CAST BIOGRAPHIES

Octavio Gómez Berríos - JORGE

Octavio Gómez Berríos was born in León, Nicaragua, where he spent most of his childhood. In 1993, Octavio and his entire family emigrated to the United States and eventually settled in the Bronx.

Octavio has had the wonderful experience of working with respected directors and artists including Sidney Lumet, Bruno Kirby and Griffin Dunne. While living in Los Angeles, Octavio was part of The Actor's Gym, a theater company moderated by Bobby Moresco who counted among its members, CRASH director Paul Haggis. Octavio is currently shooting CHE directed by Steven Soderbergh.

CHOKING MAN marks his first lead in a motion picture.

Eugenia Yuan – AMY

Eugenia won a Hong Kong Oscar for her first film, THREE: GOING HOME. She was also recently selected as the Rising Star of Tomorrow at the Hamptons International Film Festival for her work in MAIL ORDER WIFE.

Eugenia Yuan is the daughter of Cheng Pei Pei, one of Hong Kong's reigning queens of kung fu film. She was raised in the United States and trained as a rhythm gymnast for the U.S. Olympic Team. Having grown up watching and admiring her mother on the big screen, Yuan finally took up acting herself in 1996.

She has appeared in several television series in the U.S. including "Beverly Hills 90210," "Baywatch," "NYPD Blue," and Sammo Hung's "Martial Law." Although Eugenia is creating a name for herself in America, She recently co-starred with her mother in FLYING DRAGON, LEAPING TIGER, alongside Sammo Hung.

Aaron Paul – JERRY

A native of Boise, Idaho, Aaron Paul moved to Hollywood in 1998. After studying with an ensemble of acting coaches in Los Angeles, he landed a series of national commercials with Kellogg's Corn Pops, Pepsi and Pizza Hut, among others.

A casting director for NBC saw the talented Paul and cast him on "Costello." Prior to his appearance on the half-hour sitcom, he guest-starred on the popular television series "Suddenly Susan," "3rd Rock from the Sun," "Melrose Place" and "Beverly Hills 90210."

An active theater performer, Paul has starred in "Hoodwinked" at the Coronet Theater, "The Wedding Party" and "Love, Death & The Prom." He currently lives in Los Angeles

Mandy Patinkin – RICK

Mandy Patinkin recently starred in the Showtime series "Dead Like Me", which premiered during the Summer of 2003. His feature film credits include PINERO, THE ADVENTURES OF ELMO IN GROUCHLAND, MEN WITH GUNS, LULU ON THE BRIDGE, THE PRINCESS BRIDE, YENTLE, THE MUSIC OF CHANCE. DANIEL, RAGTIME, IMPROMPTU, THE DOCTOR, ALIEN NATION, DICK TRACY, THE HOUSE ON CAROLL STREET, TRUE COLORS, MAXIE and SQUANTO: INDIAN WARRIOR.

Mandy won a 1995 Emmy Award for his critically acclaimed performance in the CBS series, "Chicago Hope". Other television appearances include the Showtime film "Strange Justice," playing Quasimodo opposite Richard Harris in the TNT film presentation of "The Hunchback," a film version of Arthur Miller's "Broken Glass" and special appearances in the series "Law & Order", "Touched by An Angel" and "Boston Public".

CREDITS

CREW

STEVE BARRON

Writer/Director

JOSHUA ZEMAN
ZACHARY MORTENSEN
STEVE BARRON

Producers

ANTOINE VIVAS-DENISOV

Director of Photography

TODD WILLIAMS

Editor

JON GRIGGS

Casting Director

MARIA NELSON
ELLYN MARSHALL

Production Designer

ETHAN TOBMAN

Costume Designer

REBECCA HOFHERR

Key Hair & Make-Up

LEO WON

Line Producer

CHRISTIAN BROCKEY

Production Coordinator

CAST

OCTAVIO GÓMEZ BERRIOS	Jorge
EUGENIA YUAN	Amy
MANDY PATINKIN	Rick
AARON PAUL	Jerry
KATE BUDDEKE	Teri
PHILIPPE BRENNINKMEYER	Germanic Man
RUPAK GINN	Din
AL ROFFE	Chef
MANDO ALVARADO	Stand-In Chef
PAOLO ANDINO	Choking Man
RUSSELL G. JONES	Subway Man
PHILIP LEVY	Middle-Aged Customer
JOHN ANTHONY FERRARA	Spoiled Brat
RUTH JAFFE	Female Diner
MITCHELL GREENBERG	Gene
STEWART STEINBERG	Gruff Thrift Helper
JOAN KAUFER	Religious Woman
RUDY ROBERSON	Kenny
OLIVER BARRON	Construction Worker
JAIME TIRELLI	Priest
IRMA ST. PAUL	Female Diner's Mother
MARIKA DACIUK	Rick's Wife