



Lucky

A film by Avie Luthra

"An emotionally resonant portrait of contemporary South Africa...delicate and real...extraordinarily touching"-Variety

"A simple but profoundly moving portrait of humanity...a wonderful little gem"-BBC



Narrative / South Africa / 100 min. / Drama / English

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SYNOPSIS

How could a recently orphaned, 10-year old homeless South African boy ever be called Lucky? Over the grave of his dead mother, Lucky makes a promise to make something of himself. Leaving the security of his remote Zulu village for the big city with the hope of going to school, he arrives on the doorstep of an uncle who has no use for him. Lucky then falls in with Padme, an elderly Indian woman with an inherent fear of Africans, who takes him in as she would a stray dog. Together, unable to speak each other's language, they develop an unlikely bond. Through an odyssey marked by greed, violence, and, ultimately, belonging, *Lucky* shows how a child's spirit can bring out decency, humility and even love in adults struggling to survive in the new South Africa.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

In 2003 I was living in rural Natal, where the HIV prevalence was close to 40%. Driving around at weekends, you would see coffins loaded onto bakkies (trucks), as funerals took place around the province. It was at one of these funerals I saw a small 10-year-old boy weeping into the grave of his recently buried mother. The moment was as casual as a child playing with a toy. It was nothing but a brief glimpse into his pain and then it was gone. But the future of that boy struck me deeply and made me wonder how he links into all the street children and homeless boys you see at traffic lights in South African cities. That, and my experience in post-apartheid Durban witnessing the clear tensions between Africans and Indians who were finally mixing after decades of legal and economic segregation, made me realize there was a story to tell. What would happen to an elderly, timeworn racist Indian, if he or she had to confront this new South African presence head on?

So the original short was born (originates from the short of the same name completed in 2005.), it made its noise and pushed out further into a bigger story. I wrote the feature script on spec, and once completed I set out to raise the budget. Fortune played a big part in putting How Town Films and Out of Africa Entertainment together and needless to say, I was pretty lucky. The rest was hard graft, the sheer business of reworking the story and directing the movie to meet the demands of production. Of course there were compromises. The biggest was shooting in Johannesburg rather than Durban for budget reasons. My producers convinced me 'Jo'berg' could offer as much as Durban and more. And in the end I believe they were right. The shoot was 26 days. We had an excellent cast and my approach was to ignore the script and open out scenes with as much improvisation as possible. I wanted scenes to feel energized and real and so set them up with big headers and long tails, always keeping an eye on what I wanted. The shooting style matched this. It was all hand-held, often walking, sometimes running, and invariably falling. My cameraman and designer set up a sense of chaos and looseness that was exhilarating at times.

Once wrapped, we edited for close to six months, mostly because we had no assistants or other support. It was just me and the editor doing a final-cut pro job in my house, as the kids played in the next room. Slow and painstaking, but we both got to know the rushes very well. The last creative stages were done in South Africa with a meticulous sound team who were foley artists one day and mixers the next. And of course the music, a beautiful score written exclusively for African instruments. The final film is a remix of the short but bigger, more energetic and more painful. It was a big sacrifice for all involved, done on little money with never enough time. And as I say, for all the cast and crew and everyone else, it was a true labor of love.

FESTIVALS AND AWARDS

WINNER of the **Best Film Award**
Bengaluru International Film Festival

WINNER of the **Best Actress Award** for Jayashree Basavaraj
Abu Dhabi Film Festival

WINNER of a **Remi Award**
WorldFest-Houston International Film & Video Festival

WINNER of the **Best Crossover Film**
London Asian Film Festival

WINNER of the **Special Mention Award**
Cape Winelands Film Festival

OFFICIAL SELECTION

TORONTO Int'l Film Festival

HONG KONG Int'l Film Festival

SEATTLE Int'l Film Festival

ABOUT THE FILMMAKER

Avie Luthra

Avie Luthra is an award winning writer and director who has worked in short films, features, TV drama, documentaries and radio. Avie resides in London, UK and is a 2002 graduate of the Director's Course at the National Film and Television School in the UK. In 2003, he wrote an episode for the high-profile BBC series, *Canterbury Tales* and won the BBC's Dennis Potter Award for his 60 minute BBC film, *Indian Dreams*. In 2004, he was listed in Screen International's 'Stars of Tomorrow'. In 2006, he was nominated for a BAFTA for his short film *Lucky*, which was also short-listed for an Oscar in 2007. In 2009, he completed his first feature film *Mad, Sad and Bad*, which premiered at the British Gala, Edinburgh Film Festival 2009 and was released in cinemas that year. **Lucky** is Avie Luthra's second feature length film, which he wrote and directed after overwhelming success with the short-subject film *Lucky* (2006); having won 43 international film festival awards. He is currently developing several projects for TV and film. Avie is also a licensed Forensic Psychiatrist in London, and is passionate about both psychiatry and filmmaking.

Filmography

MAD SAD AND BAD (2009) Writer/Director

LUCKY (2011) Writer/Director

ABOUT THE CAST

Shile Dlamini as Lucky

12-year old Sihle makes his debut in his first lead role with convincing emotion. "Sihle is a natural. After five minutes, we knew we had to have him", says director Avie Luthra.

Discovered after an extensive search of townships around Johannesburg, Sihle was asked to play OJ in Khalo Matabane's movie "STATE OF VIOLENCE", in November 2009. It was a non-speaking role that ultimately was cut from the final film, but Sihle gave a beautiful performance for a first timer. Casting director Moonyeenn Lee was so impressed with his performance that she told him next time he'd play a lead. It wasn't long before auditions for **Lucky** began in December of the same year, and Sihle indeed got the lead.

Sihle was born in the rural township of Ratanda, near Heidelberg, in Gauteng, South Africa. Sihle became interested in acting when a talent scout came to his home town looking for young actors to cast for a small role in a film being shot in Johannesburg. He auditioned and was told he had great talent. Sihle looks up to fellow actor Vusi Kunene as a role model.

Jayashree Basavaraj as Padme

Renowned throughout her home country of India, Jayashree is the grand-daughter of the Indian theatre icon Gubbi Veeranna, and has been performing on stage and screen since the age of four. She graduated from the National School of Drama in 1973.

She is so highly respected that in 2010 the Indian government made her a member of parliament (Rajya Sabha), with the main purpose of representing Indian arts and theatre. In addition to acting, Jayashree is also famous for her singing voice, and is regarded as the best stage singer in India.

Jayashree (also known as B. Jayashree in India) has acted in several movies in the Kannada Language. She won Best Supporting Actress for *Nadamandala* (1997). She has starred in several Indian films including, *Care of Footpath* (2009), *Alemaari* (2001), *Deveeri* (1999), *Kadamba* (1982).

She has been the Creative Director for the famed Kannada Theater Group Spandana in Bangalor, India since 1976, and has directed and acted in more than 50 Spandana plays. Jayashree was conferred an Honorary Doctorate for her achievements in the field of culture by the Karnataka Mysore Open University in 2009, giving her the title of Dr. B. Jayashree. She has worked on projects with theatre workshops in Edinburgh, to commemorate 50 years of India's Independence, and has been the choreographer for the Festival of India in Sweden. Jayashree is a recipient of several prestigious theatrical awards, including the Safdar Hashmi Award, Central Sangeet Natak Academy Award, Sandesh Award, B.V. Karanth Smriti Puraskaar and the Rajyotsava Award.

James Ngcobo as Jabulani

Having begun his career on stage in the Loft Theater Company in Durban, South Africa, James Ngcobo transitioned to acting in numerous TV and film productions in Johannesburg; appearing in such films as *Red Dust* (2004), *I Dreamed of Africa* (2000), *Man to Man* (2005), Zola Maseko's *A Drink in Passage* (2002) and the TV series: *The Philanthropist* (2009), *90 Plein Street* (2007), *Jozi Streets* (2004), *Stokvel* (2002) and *Saints, Sinner and Settlers* (1999).

Vusi Kunene as Dumisani

Vusi has enjoyed tremendous acting success in over 14 films, such as *The Bang Bang Club* (2010), *State of Violence* (2010), *Mrs. Mandela* (2010 - TV Movie), *The First Grader* (2010), *Diamond Cut Diamond* (2004), *The Final Solution* (2001), *The King is Alive* (2000), *A Reasonable Man* (1999), *Kini and Adams* (1997), *Running Wild* (1995). He has appeared in over 10 TV programs, in both leading and supporting roles, such as *The No. 1 Detective Agency* (2008-09), *Diamond Hunters* (2001) and *Justice for All* (1998). Viewers will enjoy his singing talent in **Lucky**.

ABOUT THE CREW

Willie Nel, Director of Photography

Willie Nel studied at the South-African Film and Drama Academy (AFDA) and finished his four-year honors degree in 2003 at the top of his class. He has shot over 200 music videos and more than 100 commercial films and numerous TV commercials, TV dramas and feature films. He has been the Director of Photography for the films *Hopeville* (2010), *White Wedding* (2009), *Land of Thirst* (2008 - TV Movie), *Crossroads* (2006 - TV Movie) and the short films: *Superheros* (2009), *Sibahle* (2006) and *Kofifi* (2004). Willie is currently working on a new Bioskope film called "Sleepers Wake" with director Barry Berk.

Willie Nel is passionate about filmmaking, and has a unique approach to storytelling. With an abundance of creative energy and unlimited passion, he has certainly made his mark on the South-African film industry as an innovative and respected D.O.P.

"I loved working with Avie. He is a fantastic collaborator and a brilliant storyteller," Nel says. "We looked at tons of visual references together and worked on the shot list until the very last minute, but when we began principle photography we left the list at the door, and followed our instincts. I found this to be a very enriching and creative process.

"The visual approach for *Lucky* relied on creating a sense of freedom between the characters and the camera. We shot most of the film with a hand-held feel, which was a huge challenge but allowed for a great amount of immediacy. It gave the film a strong sense of reality and authenticity. We wanted to strike a balance between documenting the story moments, and creating an intimate connection with our characters."

Chantel Carter, Production Designer

Chantel Carter is one of South Africa's up and coming young designers. Her design career started off by designing the beautiful, highly textured sets for Avie Luthra's 2005 award winning short-subject film version of *Lucky*.

With 12 years' experience in the Art Department and an honors in Fine Arts, Chantel's hands on approach to design is dedicated to a deep responsibility to honesty and texture in all the layers involved in filmmaking.

Chantel describes Avie's vision as precise and his direction and dedication as inspiring. She found a great respect for Avie's acute sensitivity and understanding of the reality of life in South Africa. South Africa is complex even for those who have grown up there, and although *Lucky* touches on a few sensitive subjects for the character, the ethos of change which is so prevalent in South Africa today is also encompassed in *Lucky*. Avie and Chantel having had the experience of making the short together, had an already established goal and understanding, which shines through in this film. From location, to treatment, to story, the layers are cohesive. Chantel draws inspiration from having worked with some extremely talented designers and DOP's. To mention a few: Donal

Woods on *To The Ends of the Earth* (2005) as well as *Diamonds* (2008), Anthony Dod Mantle on *My Black Little Heart* (2006), Maria Djurkovic on *Man to Man* (2005), Lance Gewer on *Otelo Burning* (2010) and many more.

Josh Levinsky Editor

Josh makes his full-feature film editing debut with *Lucky*. He has previously edited several short films and documentaries. Josh studied at the National Film and TV school in London.

Lance Samuels Producer

Lance Samuels first entered the Film industry in 1991. He quickly advanced through the ranks to become South Africa's most experienced and sought after Assistant Director, working on all major productions shot in South Africa. In 2000, Lance joined New Africa Media Films (NAM Films) to head up development and facilitation. During this time, NAM Films produced the horror film *Slash* which was sold to Universal Pictures and First Look Media. In 2004, Lance founded Out of Africa Entertainment, in order to better service and produce both local and International productions. Out of Africa Entertainment is now the premier Production company in South Africa, with offices in Johannesburg and Cape Town. Currently over 80 hours of International television series, and 3 to 4 features every year are being produced by Out of Africa.

Lance was featured as the leader of the SA film Industry in the top 50 entrepreneurs in Southern Africa. He has recently produced *The Bang Bang Club*, which saw its World Premiere at Tribeca in April 2011 and *Schuks Shabalala's Survival to 2010*, which is South Africa's highest grossing film of all time. He also co-produced *The Runaway*, *Wild at Heart* and *Beaver Falls*. Lance is proud to head up a dynamic team that reflects a new generation of internationally recognized South African filmmakers.

Christopher J. Wilmot Executive Producer

Christopher has previously co-produced two Hollywood features: *Lost* (2004) and *Jam* (2006). Chris' passion for the subject matter and strong belief in Avie Luthra led him to his expanded role as Executive Producer on this project. Chris, who resides in Rochester, New York, is an entrepreneur focusing on entertainment, professional sports & marketing ventures. Christopher served as an elected official in the position of County Legislator for 10 years in Rochester, New York (1996-2005). Additionally, he is a principal journalist/co-publisher for the online political watchdog publication the SmugtownBeacon.com.

CREDITS

CAST

Lucky	SIHLE DLAMINI
Padma	JAYASHREE BASAVARAJ
Jabulani	JAMES NGCOBO
Dumisani	VUSI KUNENE
Lindwiwe	BRENDA NGXOLI
Dudu	MARY TWALA
Bongile	MDUDUZI MABASO
Sindile	JABU TSHABALALA
Moli	RONNIE NYAKALE
Zulu Singer	SUTHAKAZI AROSI
Sangoma	SIBONGILE NGUBANE

CREW

Director	AVIE LUTHRA
Producers	LANCE SAMUELS CHRISTOPHER J. WILMOT
Casting	MOONYEENN LEE
Director of Photography	WILLIE NEL
Film Editor	JOSH LEVINSKY
Production Design	CHANTEL CARTER
Costume Design	ZURETA SCHULZ
Sound	ARTHUR KOUNDOURIS

Music Score	PHILLIP MILLER
Make-up	DIANNE ALLEN
Story	AVIE LUTHRA
Screenplay	AVIE LUTHRATA TANYA WELZ
Associate Producers	ELLIOT BORKUM Borkum KWEKU AMAUAH MANDELA THABO MOTLOUNG
Co-Executive Producers	STEPHEN BROWN AMY BROWN KATHLEEN GOLL AVIE LUTHRA
Line Producer	DARREN CAMERON
Production Coordinator	SEBA PILANE