



“Il y a une vraie diversité de talents en Asie. Notamment aux Philippines, où nous avons trouvé un film à la limite du documentaire et de la fiction tourné dans le sud du pays. C'est un film animiste, très proche de la nature, tourné en toute pureté, sans tentative apparente de faire un film pour aller à Cannes...”

“I am thinking about a film we found from Southern Philippines, and that transcends the border between documentary and fiction. The film deals with animism and is very close to nature. It has been shot without any apparent wish to be selected in Cannes...”

Frédéric Boyer

Artistic Director, Directors' Fortnight 2011



# Busong

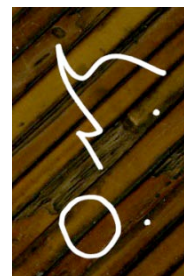
## Palawan Destin / Palawan Fate

### Auraeus Solito

**World premiere**

Feature film / Philippines / 1h35 / couleur / color / **Directors' Fortnight 2011**

*Busong* is the indigenous Palawan concept of Fate or instant Karma. Nature reacts instantly to man's disrespect of nature and other men. Punay was born with wounds on her feet so that she cannot step on the earth. Her brother, Angkadang, carries her on a hammock, as he searches the changing landscape of Palawan hoping to find a healer. Different people help him carry his sister along the way– a woman looking for her husband, a fisherman who lost his boat and a young man who is searching for himself– and each one meets their fate. The first Palawanon indigenous film.





## Auraeus Solito

Auraeus Solito comes from a lineage of Shaman-Kings from the Palawan tribe. He is one of the first born outside of his tribal land. He is one of the leading independent filmmakers from the Philippines. His first feature film "The Blossoming of Maximo Oliveros" won 15 international awards. He is also known as **Kanakan-Balintagos**, his tribal spirit name dreamt by a shaman means "Hunter of Truths".

### Filmography

2011: Busong

2009 : Boy

2008 : Pisay (Philippine Science)

2006 : Tuli

2005 : The Blossoming of Maximo Oliveros

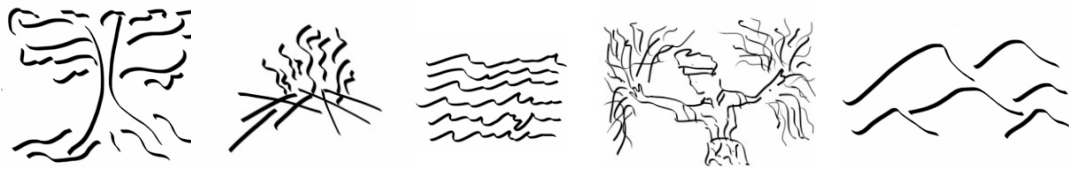
2002 : Basal Banar (The Sacred Ritual of Truth) (doc)

1998 : Impeng Negro (cm / short)

1995 : The Brief Lifespan of Fire, Act2, Scene2: Suring & the Kuk-ok (cm / short)







## Director's statement

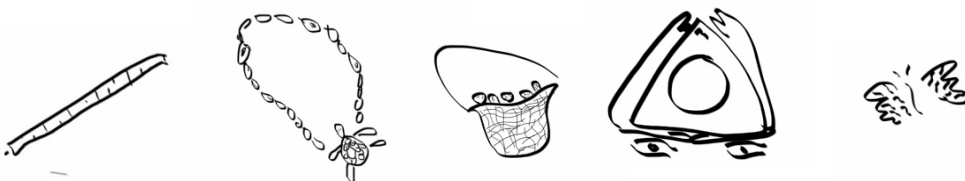
My mother told me stories about her hometown in South Palawan to put me to sleep when I was a child. She spoke of a sacred *Amugis* tree that our Ancestors found through a dream; of the absolute evil demon *Rangkatulang* who almost tickled the fat boy *Pulog-pulog* to death; of a golden turtle that she once saw; of a spell of absolute beauty, and of *Puring*, her pure and enchanted hometown at the end of Palawan island. She told me of our Ancestors' powerful magic—of lethal blowguns that freeze the blood of a ship full of invaders; of our great Shaman-Kings who protected our land. She taught me a simple but effective spell – the secret name of the stonefish, that always protected my feet from the fish' poisonous spines whenever I swam in the great sandbars of Palawan. I heard about a promise to the *Diwata*, the spirit of the islands, that was broken when my mother left for the city. And I learned about the concept of *Busong*, that we should always respect nature and our fellow men, so that we won't get "instant karma".

My mother used to tell me that the *Tultol*, or epic chants that were sung from twilight till dawn, were her "movies". She would imagine each myth in her mind and wait each night for another myth to be retold. Perhaps now, as a modern filmmaker with an ancient lineage, it is my turn to retell these stories and visualize them through film.

Busong is my modern Tultol.

Thank you Mother, for telling me these stories of your motherland.

*Manunga Banar*  
(for Beautiful Truths)

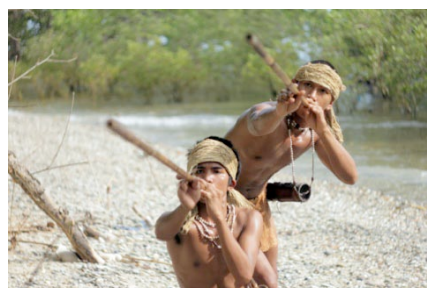


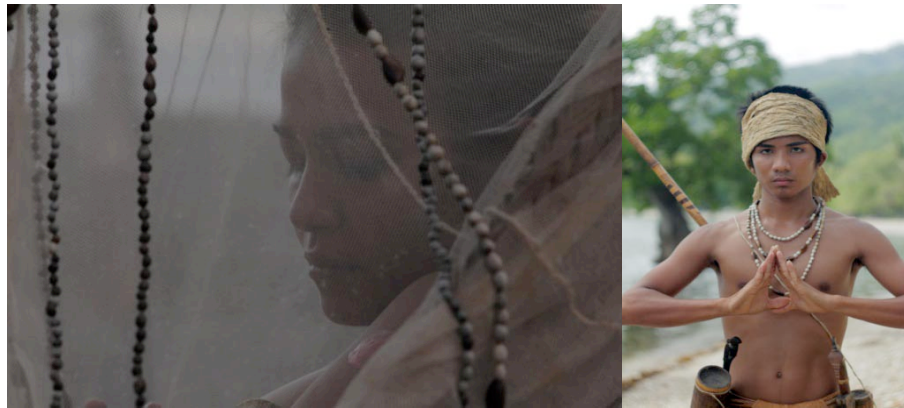


## Palawan, the land and the people

The people of Palawan are also called Palawan. Palawan as a landscape; Palawan as a tribe. The Landscape and the People are one. Man and nature are one. When man is one with nature, Nature respects man. Man respectfully talks to nature, and nature complies. The Palawan landscape is made of pristine islands, sandbars, rainforests, mountains and mangroves surrounded by brackish lakes and the vast sea. That is why the Palawan people developed great magic, to protect the great Palawan landscape.

Palawan is the last frontier of the Philippines yet there is danger that big business may overdevelop the land; mining has already begun destroying its mountains' landscape while pearl farming has disallowed the indigenous Palawan from fishing in their own ancestral fishing grounds. Migrants from other parts of the Philippines have set up illegal logging operations and treat the indigenous people with prejudice and disrespect. "Busong" will serve as a warning. If Filipinos forget what Palawan is all about, its nature and its indigenous people, then the Philippines may end up getting its most tragic "busong!"

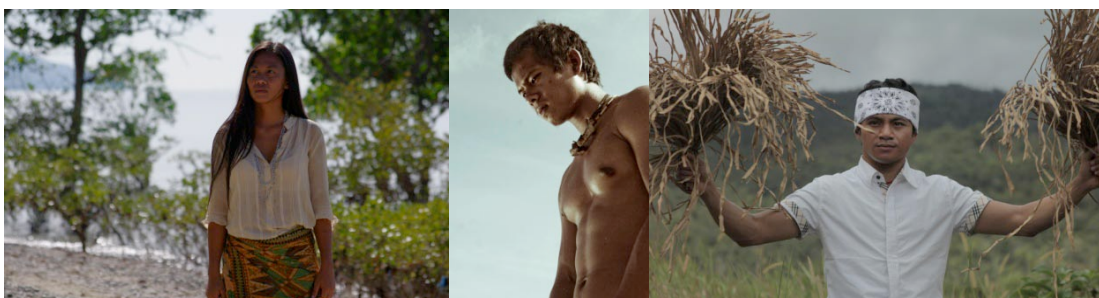




## Busong Cast

The cast is composed of a famous movie actress in the Philippines, a Filipino-American actor, first time actors and a supporting cast of indigenous relatives of the Director.

**Alessandra de Rossi as Punay**, is an award-winning actress in mainstream Filipino film and television. She won a Best Supporting Actress Award in her very first role in “Azucena” when she was only 17 years old. She has since appeared in “Hubog”, “Munting Tinig (Small Voices)”, Raya Martin’s “Independencia,” “Manila” and Singaporean filmmaker Kelvin Tong’s “The Maid.” **Rodrigo Santikan as Angkadang** is an indigenous Palawan who auditioned all the way from the remote island of Sebaring. He is fluent in Palawanon and is adept in hunting with the Palawan blowgun. **Bonivie Budao as Ninita, the wife**, grew up in the mining town of Rio Tuba in South Palawan. She has lived in the capital Puerto Princesa and has won many beauty contests. This is her acting debut. **Dax Alejandro as the fisherman**, has appeared in a string of independent films and also previously acted on stage. **Clifford Banagale as Aris, the shaman’s apprentice**, is familiar to movie audiences for his role as Diesel, opposite Sacha Baron Cohen’s Bruno in *Bruno* (2009). This up and coming multi-talented actor, dancer and singer trained in opera as a young child, and has extensive theatre experience. He returned to the Philippines after 23 years in the US just to act in “Busong.” His character is the Director’s alter ego in the film.



# Press Articles in the Philippines:

## **Auraeus Solito's 'Busong' goes to Cannes**

By Ruben V. Nepales

Philippine Daily Inquirer

First Posted 06:05:00 04/20/2011

Filed Under: Entertainment (general), Cinema

LOS ANGELES – “Busong (Fate),” part of a trilogy that filmmaker Auraeus Solito is planning on Palawan, is off to a spectacular start. The newest film of the director of “Ang Pagdadalaga ni (The Blossoming of) Maximo Oliveros” has been selected for the Directors’ Fortnight section of the Cannes Film Festival next month.

“My hands went cold,” Solito said via email, referring to the moment when he learned that “Busong” was included in the sidebar of what is considered the world’s most prestigious film festival.

“It was such a big surprise. I was expecting the decision to come two weeks later. We submitted the film on a Monday and got the news by Thursday! I ran to my mom (Leonarda Calo Solito) and told her the good news. She was so happy and thanked God. It was one of the happiest moments of my life!”

It’s a dream come true for the director whose other films include “Philippine Science” (originally “Pisay”), “Boy” and “Tuli” (Filipino for circumcise).

Solito remarked: “In my youth, when Lino Brocka became the first Filipino who made it to Cannes through the Directors’ Fortnight with his film ‘Insiang,’ it crossed my mind then – can I also do this someday? Now, my secret dream has been realized. Cannes is every filmmaker’s dream.”

Aside from the late Brocka, Directors’ Fortnight also featured over the years the work of Brillante “Dante” Mendoza, Raya Martin, Mario O’Hara and Mike de Leon. The section also held the first French screenings of the debut works of such filmmakers as Martin Scorsese, Spike Lee, Werner Herzog and Rainer Werner Fassbinder.

“Busong” was inspired by stories that Solito’s mother told him about her native Palawan when he was a child. In an earlier interview, he explained that “Busong” is the indigenous Palawanon concept of fate or instant karma. “What you do to nature, you do to yourself,” he said. “Busong” is set in present Palawan while the other two planned films will tackle the picturesque province’s past, “Delubyo (Deluge),” and future, “Sumbang (Origin).” “Busong” itself is composed of three segments: “Forest,” “Sea” and “Mountain.”

The grateful son shared that Leonarda prayed hard for “Busong” to make it into

Cannes. "She said a novena at the St. Jude Chapel that afternoon, praying for my film," Solito said. "By evening, we were in. There are still miracles in our modern times."

"We had a mini celebration," said the filmmaker who first made a splash internationally in 2006 when "...Maximo Oliveros" was nominated for the grand jury prize in the Sundance Film Festival.

He recounted how "Busong," which features a cameo by Australian actor Chris Haywood, got considered for Directors' Fortnight. "I attended the Hong Kong Asian Film Financing Forum where the Cannes programmers took a peek of my latest work," Solito began. "Some of them said that they haven't seen anything like it before. Then Jeremy, who often goes to Manila to look for potential Filipino film entries, and Frederic Boyer saw the footage. They told me to submit a DVD."

"I only found out later that Frederic is the artistic director of the Directors' Fortnight!" Solito revealed. "He emailed me and said, 'I am so honored to have your unique and wonderful film. Everybody in the selection committee loves your 'Busong.' After we saw it, we sent the invitation to you 10 minutes afterward. We feel good and happy with it and we will celebrate 'Busong' very soon.'"

Solito is grateful to Cinemalaya for providing "the seed money to make this film possible." He said that "...Maximo," which won three awards in the Berlinale, and "Philippine Science" were also made possible by Cinemalaya. "I'm especially thankful to Nes Jardin, Laurice Guillen and Robbie Tan who have been supportive of my art all these years," he added.

After the Cinemalaya Film Festival in July where the movie will make its Philippine premiere, Solito hopes to show "Busong" to his tribe in Palawan.

"The Film Development Council of the Philippines has been doing a tour around the country of good Filipino films through Sineng Pambansa," he said. "The chairman, Briccio Santos, and I talked about the possibility of holding Sineng Pambansa in Palawan after the Cinemalaya festival. That will be my chance to show the film to my tribe."

Asked what he thinks will be "Busong's" appeal in Cannes, he answered, "I asked the same question to Jeremy. He said that all the programmers thought it was 'soothing.' I thought about what he meant by that. When I had a talk with my brilliant cinematographer Louie Quirino, he said, 'That must be the best compliment because it means it's not jarring, it's not disturbing but fresh and new.' I hope the audience in Cannes will feel the same."

Solito is also hoping that his "tribe's story will be enjoyed by an international audience. I hope my mother's tales will enlighten them about Palawan's people and its changing landscape."



## **Auraeus Solito's 'Busong' makes it to Cannes Directors' Fortnight**

### **Hollywood Bulletin**

By JANET SUSAN NEPALES

April 25, 2011, 11:40am

Director Auraeus Solito is in the official selection at the Cannes Directors' Fortnight this year. 'Busong' is described in the program as 'the first Palawanon indigenous film.'

LOS ANGELES – "Naiyak ako nang mabasa ko sa Cannes website ito (I cried when I read this on the Cannes website): 'the first Palawanon indigenous film,'" confessed director Auraeus Solito whose latest movie, "Busong," is the official selection in this year's Cannes Directors' Fortnight.

"Busong," which stars Clifford Banagle, Alessandra de Rossi, Dax Alejandro, Bonivie Budao and Rodrigo Santikan, explores the Palawan concept of fate wherein nature reacts instantly to man's disrespect.

Auraeus, who is well known for his award-winning films like "Ang Pagdadalaga ni Maximo Oliveros" ("The Blossoming of Maximo Oliveros") and "Tuli" ("Circumcision"), revealed that "Busong," which is about present Palawan, is a third of a trilogy he is planning on his beloved Palawan where he lived for several years and where he is from. The other two planned projects are Palawan in the past, "Delubyo (Deluge)" and Palawan in the future, "Sumbang (Origin)."

He explained, "'Busong' is about the indigenous Palawan's concept of fate. It's like instant karma, when you do something bad to nature and your fellow man it comes back to you right away. The inspiration is my mother who is from the Palawan tribe. She told me stories when I was a kid that nobody knew of. It was a world that was magical and pure. It was about her hometown of Puring at the end of Southern Palawan."

The soft-spoken director cast Filipino-American actor, Clifford Banagale whom you may have seen as the boy toy of Sacha Baron Cohen in the movie, "Bruno."

In "Busong," Clifford portrays Aris, a half-indigenous Palawanon who was a failed Shaman's apprentice and who returns to Palawan to look for his soul or self.

"Clifford's need to know his Filipino roots was similar to my need to know my Palawan roots," Auraeus pointed out. "His return to the Philippines after 23 years is a mirror of my return to my tribal land after 20 years. His acting was authentic and embodies the Palawan concept of the 'manunga banar' – the beautiful truths that make us human."

As for casting Alessandra de Rossi, Auraeus revealed, "I have watched Alex's performances since her debut in 'Azucena' by Carlitos Siguion Reyna. She has always been brilliant. At first, it was purely physical. I needed an actress who embodied the morena Filipina. As Punay, she mirrored Palawan itself. Working with her was

fascinating! It was simply uncanny – how precise her acting was and how she somehow captured the essence of Punay, exactly the way I imagined it.”

Doing the film had its challenges as well, Auraeus told us. “The film explores Palawan’s landscape of forest, mountain and sea,” he said. “Nature is nature. You cannot control it. Filming in my homeland taught me to bow down to nature. When the waves were too strong, you cannot command it to stop. When the rain pours and you need the sun, you cannot change the scene. When it is too hot, you cannot direct the sun! I learned to adapt and bow down to what nature gave. In the end, nature gave us what each scene really needed. It’s as if it blessed us with what the scene should be. Palawan itself is the main character of this film and its nature is the co-director.”

He narrated how he found out about “Busong’s” selection at the Cannes Directors’ Fortnight this year. “We sent the DVD of the first rough cut on a Monday,” he revealed. “And got the news by Thursday. I was expecting a possible selection or rejection weeks after. But that afternoon, my mom went to St. Jude chapel and prayed a novena. By evening, I suddenly received an email that my film was selected. The Artistic Director of the Fortnight eventually e-mailed me after I thanked him and he said, ‘I am so honored to have your unique and wonderful film. Everybody in the selection committee loved your ‘Busong.’ We saw it yesterday and sent the invitation 10 minutes after.’”

Auraeus described how he is preparing to go to the Cannes Film Festival. “It is my first time,” he said. “And it’s hard work. There are many technical requirements that we have to meet (French subtitling, HD transfers, final touches, etc). Especially that this film will be projected HD through a DCP (Digital Cinema Package) and we are working on limited funds.”

He is also wearing an Oliver Tolentino barong that Oliver is specifically designing for him. “Thanks to your husband, Ruben, he contacted Oliver to design my barong and Clifford’s for the world premiere. We shall use Palawan piña fabric woven by the Palawan tribe itself through the Rurungan sa Tubod Foundation.”

Auraeus, who credited his mom for inspiring him to do “Busong” explained, “she told me the stories and myths of her homeland when I was a kid. I grew up imagining this world– of shamans and magic; of spells and golden sea turtles, of shape shifters and stick-like demons. I am now happy that I have finally realized some of her images for ‘Busong.’ Also, the world premiere and first screening of the movie is on May 16 which is actually my mom’s birthday, too.”

As for what is going through his mind right now, Auraeus became emotional. He said, “I am teary eyed for I love what the festival director Frederic Boyer said in his interview on the launch of the Cannes Directors’ Fortnight: ‘I am thinking about a film we found from Southern Philippines, and that transcends the border between documentary and fiction. The film deals with animism and is very close to nature. It has been shot without any apparent wish to be selected in Cannes or to be picked by

a co-producer.'

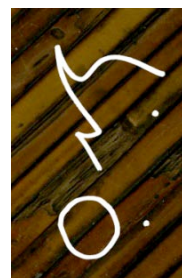
"At first, I didn't quite get the last sentence, it sounded good but not sure of its context. So I asked my Swiss filmmaker friend Sylvie Cachin what he meant. She told me, 'In one sentence: shot with purity; without aim to fit to the big occidental film programmer's taste. Now we expect your film to be original!'"

He added, "I am now contented, for 'Busong' is just the beginning of introducing to the world the Palawan indigenous universe."



"Busong is the first film coming from Palawan (island in the Philippines) and will get an international reception at Cannes. [Auræus Solito](#) comes to the festival for the first time and does so with a film that is already making history while its inclusion in the prestigious Quinzaine des Réalistes is also no small feat..."

ScreenRush, UK website



**For press inquiries, please contact:**

**Emilie Imbert Relations Presse**

+33 (0)6 71 88 27 65

[relationspresse@eimbert.com](mailto:relationspresse@eimbert.com)

[s.lisima@eimbert.com](mailto:s.lisima@eimbert.com)

**Director contact:**

Auraeus Solito

[auraeus\\_solito@yahoo.com](mailto:auraeus_solito@yahoo.com)

**Producer contact:**

Jong de Castro

[jongi1@yahoo.com](mailto:jongi1@yahoo.com)

**Website:**

[www.busongpalawanfate.com](http://www.busongpalawanfate.com)