

The bitter and the sweet of temporary things.

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Travellers Magicians

A Film by Khyentse Norbu

Media Information Kit

ཆང་དུབ་ཐེངས་གཅིག་གི་འབྲུལ་སྒྲུང

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Travellers
Magicians

Written and Directed by
Khyentse Norbu

Produced by Raymond Steiner and Malcolm Watson

Executive Producer Jeremy Thomas

Director of Photography Alan Kozlowski

Edited by John Scott and Lisa-Anne Morris

Travellers & Magicians, Bhutan 2003

Running Time: 108 minutes

Aspect Ratio: 1:1.85

35mm colour, Dolby SR/SRD

Prayer Flag Pictures

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མཁྱེན་བརྗེ་ལོ་རྒྱུ་བརྗེ་མས།

Two men, two women, two journeys are woven into an intricate tapestry of desires as "Travellers and Magicians" takes us on an adventurous emotional tour through the heartland of Bhutanese Buddhist culture.

Set amidst the pristine beauty of the tiny Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan, our story follows the footsteps of Dondup, a handsome young government officer stationed in a rural outpost. But instead of revelling in the dignity of his position, Dondup has attitude. Rather than embracing the kindness and generosity of his village neighbours or appreciating the beauty of his surroundings he's far more excited about 'picking apples in the USA'. He is convinced that leaving Bhutan for the western world will satisfy all that he craves.

When opportunity knocks, it comes with a deadline. Dondup seizes the moment, lies to his senior officer, throws his suitcase out the window and hastily departs - unfortunately a touch too late. He misses his bus to Thimphu and, to his dismay, is left stranded on the road with two other travellers heading in the same direction - a Buddhist monk and a simple apple seller. Dondup's fear of spending a dark night under the stars alone subdues his arrogant display towards his fellow travellers and he joins them for a night around their fire on the roadside.

"Be careful with dreamlands..." the monk tells Dondup upon hearing of his plans to go to America, "...when you wake up, it might be unpleasant."

To pass the night away the good natured monk begins to tell the tale of Tashi, a lazy, disinterested student of sorcery who dreams of distant 'greener pastures' inhabited by beautiful women. One day his younger brother gives Tashi a magic potion that transports him through distant mountains and forests where he is unceremoniously dumped. In blinding rain the exhausted traveller stumbles upon an isolated hut where a cantankerous old man Agay and his beautiful young wife Deki offer him shelter...

The monk's tale continues throughout the journey as they make their way along the majestic mountain roads. Getting a lift for all of them becomes a mission and walking to Thimphu seems to be their destiny. Along the way they meet a series of colourful local characters but it is when Dondup meets a local beauty, Sonam, that his world starts to alter and his footsteps begin to falter. Will the monk's playful teasing change Dondup's view of his 'primitive' homeland, or will it be Sonam's beguiling smile?

...Meanwhile, despite his efforts to return home, Tashi cannot find his way back and is seduced by Deki. Time becomes meaningless as their passion overheats. The rhythmic sound of Deki's loom as she weaves an intricate dress fabric reflects the heartbeat of the two lovers...

Back on the road the travellers are not only sharing meals together but also their lives. The apple seller silently observes the hapless Dondup become smitten with Sonam. Is he blinded by his hopes and schemes, is it lust or love, and what of his 'great American dream'? The mischievous monk stirs the pot even more as he continues his tale.

...Tashi's dream of endless love darkens when Deki reveals she is pregnant. She coerces him into making a poisonous potion to get rid of her husband. As he goes through his death throes Tashi's remorse overwhelms him and he hastily departs. Deki follows him but drowns in the ensuing riverside chase. Tashi, weeping inconsolably, stares at the ripples of his tears in the water as he reflects on what has just happened. He awakens from his drugged state - it was all a dream...

Further down the road Thimphu is near. Dondup wavers - should he leave or should he stay? The monk with the permanent smile knows. With his deadline looming, a ride finally appears but can only take two of the travellers. Dondup chooses to depart with the monk, leaving Sonam behind.

Two men, one chasing love ends up in a dream. The other, chasing a dream, leaves love behind.

Two men, one chasing love
ends up in a dream.
The other, chasing a dream,
leaves love behind.



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མཁྱེན་བརྗེ་འོ་རྩ་བུ་བཟུངས།

About the production

མཁྱེན་བརྗེ་འོ་རྩ་བུ་བཟུངས།



On september 29, 2002, the cameras started to roll on a film that would make cinema history.

More than 108 cast and crew came together – from Bhutan, Australia, Germany, India, Canada and America – to work with award-winning film-maker Khyenste Norbu on the first feature film to be made in his homeland.

The writer/director of The Cup matched experienced international film professionals with Bhutan's own budding film-makers, giving them experience and the inspiration to produce more Bhutanese films.

As the basis for the fictitious shangrila of James Hilton's novel Lost Horizon, Bhutan has long fascinated the world. The country and people have remained delightfully unspoiled, isolated by natural geography and deliberate government policy.

Travellers & Magicians opens a window for the first time on this tiny Buddhist Kingdom nestled in the Himalayas. The Bhutanese have developed a singularly unique approach to life which is beautifully and sensitively portrayed in this feature film.

Bhutan is a country where the King is also the head of the government, the people wear national costume by law and Gross National Happiness is by royal decree, considered more important than Gross National Product.

As in Khyentse Norbu's first film, The Cup, no professional actors were used. The cast is drawn from across the country and include the chief regulator of the country's banking and financial institutions, a colonel in the King's Bodyguard, a monk trained in pure mathematics, a senior researcher with the government strategic planning think tank, employees of the local TV broadcasting corporation, a school principal, school children, farmers and local gomchen (householder practitioners and meditators).

Until the 1960s Bhutan had no financial currency, roads, electricity, telephones, schools, hospitals, a postal service or any visitors from outside. The people enjoyed their

simple life, travelling everywhere by foot or on horseback, bartering goods and remaining blissfully unconnected from the technological changes sweeping the rest of the world.

Only 20 years ago the King decided, that as part of his plan to unify the largely rural country, it would adopt a national language. Of the dozen or so dialects that were spoken he chose Dzongkha, spoken by about a quarter of the population. It was, like all the country's dialects, an oral language only and the government's first step was to create a written form. During shooting of Travellers & Magicians in the home of the casting director, the next step was realised – an official Dzongkha dictionary.

Travellers & Magicians, shot entirely in Dzongkha, is a further ripening of the process.

Few of the cast spoke the 'new' national language and had to be schooled by an on-set dialogue coach.

In keeping with the ways of the country, many major production decisions about the film were determined by mo, an ancient method of divination performed by specially skilled lamas. The mo dictated principal cast, crew and even the first day of shooting. Also in line with director Khyentse Norbu's Buddhist beliefs special religious ceremonies, known as pujas, were performed throughout the production to remove obstacles, quell local demons and increase auspiciousness.

Travellers & Magicians was shot on Kodak colour film using a Super 16mm camera package of an Aaton XTR Prod and an Aaton A-Minima (for steadycam). The negative was processed in Bangkok at its leading laboratory which enabled telecine rushes to be available in good turn-around time for viewing in Bhutan. Post Production was undertaken in Australia and was the country's first fully digitally graded feature film.

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About Khyentse Norbu རྗེ་ཏོ་རྩ་བུ་ས་བཙུ་མས།

Khyentse Norbu was born in a remote area of eastern Bhutan in the Year of the Metal Ox (1961) to a family of poets and yogis. In 1999, his first feature film, *Phörpa (The Cup)*, became an international success. The journey from a small Himalayan Kingdom to Hollywood spans great geographical and intellectual distances.

Raised in strict Buddhist monasteries and institutions in Bhutan and Sikkim, Khyentse Norbu's first encounter with film was as a 19-year-old monk. He was on his way to Rajpur to study at Sakya College when at an Indian railway station, he caught a glimpse of a Bollywood epic on TV. Soon after Raymond Steiner (then directing children's films in India) gave him his first lesson in photography. Khyentse Norbu continued his Buddhist studies, but his interest in film never wavered. He began travelling and teaching, eventually making his way to London's School of Oriental and African Studies. He lectured and studied during the day but it was London's cinema halls that were his true classroom.

In the early 90s, he befriended producer Jeremy Thomas who was in pre-production with Bernardo Bertolucci's *Little Buddha*. Inspired by their conversations, Khyentse Norbu enrolled in a four-week course at the New York Film Academy. Thomas introduced Khyentse Norbu to Bertolucci who enlisted him as a consultant on *Little Buddha* and cast him in a small role. While working on the film, Khyentse Norbu paid keen attention to Bertolucci, absorbing everything the director had to teach. "He's almost like my film guru," said Khyentse Norbu.

Both Bertolucci and Thomas encouraged Khyentse Norbu to make his own films. Thomas was instrumental in raising funds for *The Cup*. "It was incredible he trusted me," recalled Khyentse Norbu. "When I said I was going to make a film, people were surprised. Many thought I was joking, even up to the last minute." This semi-autobiographical tale of monks obsessed with the World Cup soccer final helped humanise the image of Tibetan monks who often are portrayed as one dimensional saints.

A crew of mostly monks and novices, supported by a few crucial professionals, helped make the film a surprise success. The actors were all genuine monks along with several highly-regarded reincarnate lamas. Shooting took place in Bir, a Tibetan refugee colony in the Himalayan foothills of northern India. Although most of the cast had never seen a movie camera and much of the dialogue was improvised, the average scene required only three takes - a tribute, says Khyentse Norbu, to the powers of meditation. As with *Travellers & Magicians*, the director also relied on "mo's" - an ancient Buddhist divination system - to make key decisions such as which type of film stock to use, production schedules and casting. "No matter what we do we still have some kind of superstition necessary," he said.

The Cup was invited to screen in the Cannes Film Festival's prestigious Directors' Fortnight and went on to win critical acclaim and awards at festivals around the world. His double-life as director and guru captivated journalists. The Independent named Khyentse Norbu "Most Inscrutable Film-maker" of the Festival. London's Evening Standard called him "one of the hottest new directorial talents around."

The success of *The Cup* helped pave the way for the much more ambitious project of *Travellers & Magicians*. A greater number of professionals came on board but Khyentse Norbu made a concerted effort to hire a mostly Bhutanese crew to help support the country's budding film industry. "For a nation that doesn't have a film school or any sort of school for media arts, and no access to film equipment or even good films, I must say I am very impressed," he said. "The filmmakers in Bhutan must now remember to create and keep their own style. But they have to work very hard. In many ways there are so many bad films and the blame actually goes to the audience because that's what they want. The audience must demand better."

The extensive film library at Khyentse Norbu's home in Bhutan reveals his eclectic taste. *Natural Born Killers* is filed next to Chinese art film *Warm Water Under Red Bridge*. *Dirty Dancing* is filed next to Kurosawa's *Do De Ska Den*. ▶

"When I said I was going to make a film, people were surprised. Many thought I was joking, even up to the last minute."



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About Khyentse Norbu continued

◀ But his favourites are directors like Tarkovsky, De Sica, Ozu and Satyajit Ray and especially the new school of Iranian filmmakers. He is never without the movie schedule of whichever city he finds himself in.

Filmmaking credentials aside, Khyentse Norbu, also known as His Eminence Dzongsar Jamyang Khyentse Rinpoche is one of the most important incarnate lamas in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition and a member of one of Bhutan's most noble families. He is the son of contemporary Buddhist master Thinley Norbu Rinpoche, and grandson of both tantric yogi Lama Sonam Zangpo and H.H. Dudjom Rinpoche. He was recognised at the age of seven, as the third incarnation of Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo, the non-sectarian saint, scholar and principal lama of Dzongsar Monastery in Tibet.

Dzongsar Monastery was renowned as a centre of non-sectarian scholarship and contemplation, producing many of the greatest Tibetan Buddhist masters, scholars and practitioners of the last century and a half. As the

seat of the *rime* or non-sectarian movement, Dzongsar's monastic college excelled in teaching traditional art and all Tibetan Buddhist schools of thought and practice, including the indigenous Bon.

His previous incarnation Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo had 113 masters, and held transmissions from all lineages of Tibetan Buddhism. His life-long work contributed significantly to the continuity and preservation of many precious teachings of Tibet. Khyentse Norbu was trained by some of the greatest living masters of Tibetan Buddhism. He continued his nonsectarian heritage by founding retreat centers, schools of philosophy and charitable foundations around the world. When not making films, he teaches Buddhist philosophy throughout Asia, North and South America, Europe and Australia.

Khyentse Norbu's primary residence is in Paro, Bhutan, but his work schedule requires constant travel. He spends several months each year in strict meditation retreat.

Films by Khyentse Norbu

The Cup

BHUTAN/AUSTRALIA, 1999

93 minutes

35mm Colour, Dolby SR/SRD

Soccer mad monks in a

Tibetan Buddhist Monastery

Palm Pictures / Coffee Stain Productions

Etto Metto

BHUTAN, 1995

24 minutes

Video Hi-8

A Tagore inspired vignette of village life in Bhutan.

Cinemaya Films: unreleased

The Big Smoke

AUSTRALIA, 1996

6 minutes

BetaCam

Life of a storyteller's story

MayaFilms: unreleased



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Talking with Khyentse Norbu རྣམ་གུས་བརྩམས།

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Q Why do you make films?

A I make films because I love films. I love the whole concept — telling a story with pictures, the framing, the pacing, the sound, the dialogue. I like the fact that you can present what you see in your mind's eye. You look at the whole picture, but your mind has chosen to focus only on one thing - let's say, this person's eyes - and you can demonstrate that choice, that vision within the four corners of film. Film is one of the most powerful mediums that we have today.

Q But don't you do it for the money too?

A First of all I am not that keen on making money. I still consider myself a yet uncorrupted artist. Besides if I want to make money there are many other ways to do so. In fact filmmaking is very risky, especially the films that I have been making where you have no entertainment, no sex, no violence, If I really wanted to make money I would have chosen to make Hollywood, even Bollywood-style films, avoiding the agony of rejection by festivals, not being liked by critics. It doesn't have to be artistic. As long it's entertaining, you make money. Having said all that, in the future I might actually do commercial films because being artistic and commercially successful can be quite challenging.

Q How did you get the money to make this film?

A Because my first film "The Cup" was successful, I had the interest and confidence of international distributors. Based on this I was able to interest investors.

Q What will you do if this film is also successful and you make a lot of money?

A I doubt there will be any financial profit. For me, the mark of success will be if we manage to convince film festivals to show it and if it reaches a large audience. I'd like to remind you that this is a foreign language film, in other words it is an art film. Therefore, it has a very, very limited audience. Most art filmmakers will tell you there isn't much financial

profit involved. The reward comes in the whole experience of filmmaking and expressing what you want to express, how you want to express it. Also for myself, it is an opportunity to build my CV so eventually some crazy financier might want to throw \$100,000,000 dollars at my future projects. I want to make a film based on the life of Buddha. In order to convince producers and financiers, I need certain experiences.

Q Will you make more films in Bhutan?

A Yes. I have several more stories that I have written particularly for Bhutan. One that I hope to make is a simple love story. I notice that many Bollywood and Hollywood films over sensationalise romance and it doesn't necessarily happen like that. It can be a very simple, very ordinary, and at times corny, but at the same time significant like missing someone's presence.

Q Are you putting spiritual messages into your film? Is this a way of teaching dharma?

A People ask "you are a Buddhist lama, why do you make film?" This question is a bit puzzling. It indicates to me that from certain standpoints working in film is viewed as almost sacrilegious, like I am breaking some kind of holy rule. At the same time, I understand. People automatically associate film with money, sex, and violence because there are so many such films coming out of Hollywood and Bollywood. But if only they had access to films by the likes of Ozu, Satyajit Ray, Antonioni, people would understand that filmmaking doesn't have to be like that. In fact it is a tool. Film is a medium and Buddhism is a science. You can be a scientist and at the same time, you can be a filmmaker. ▶

Q Were you happy with your cast's performances?

A Very much. Even though they had never acted they were very dedicated and offered their best.

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◀ Moreover, it's not as if Buddhism, like some other religions, is against idolatry. For centuries Buddhism has adopted the method of statues and artistic representation in order to express messages of compassion, love, wisdom. Film could be seen as a modern day *thangka* [a traditional Buddhist painting]. Having said that, I am not claiming that either of my films are spiritual, though because of my obvious background, you might find a little bit of Buddhist influence in both works.

Q So is this proper behaviour for a Rinpoche?

A I don't know. But first of all, what I can tell you is that between ethics, morality, and wisdom, Buddhism has always put more emphasis on wisdom. Wisdom surpasses behaviour. Some of the more conservative generations might raise their eyebrows at what I do and what I say. But what they have forgotten is that their so-called "right thing to do" and their revered traditions were once upon a time very modern and progressive.

I have often heard that some people feel I am westernised, I guess partly because of my association with westerners, but I totally disagree. I may be slightly modern, this is true. But when it comes to Buddhist teaching itself, I totally oppose people attempting to make Buddhism more adaptable to the west or to the modern world. It is not required. Buddhism has always been up to date. From the moment Buddha taught, the essence of the teachings hasn't changed. And it shouldn't change. For instance the Buddha's teachings that all compounded things are impermanent can never be changed. It's not as if after 2,000 years some compounded things have now become permanent. Anyone who tries to modernise Buddhadharma is making a grave mistake.

It's important to make a distinction between the culture and Buddhism. As the wisdom of Buddha travelled to different countries over different ages, the culture and tradition of each particular time or place became intrinsic to the teaching. Culture is indispensable because without it you cannot interpret the teaching. Dharma is the tea and culture is the cup. For someone who wants to drink tea, tea is more important than the cup. The cup is also necessary but it is not the most essential. Hence, you can say that I try not to be attached to the cup. If necessary, I am ready to change the cup, and for that reason you can say that I have a modern mind.

Q Bhutan has managed to keep its traditional culture nearly intact - from the language to the architecture to the dress. You might say they have a very old, rare cup that hasn't changed for many generations. But it still works. They pride themselves on this exquisite cup and culture hunters pay large sums of money to pay a visit, to take a sip from its precious lip. Does Bhutan have to change its cup?

A Change is inevitable. Bhutanese must realise that. But Bhutan must change with its own character. Modernisation of Bhutan is fine but what I am worried about is that Bhutanese culture could be levelled by its immediate and influential neighbours. While Bhutanese cultural preservationists might spend their time worrying about the invasion by western culture, they don't realise that the Bollywood culture has already insinuated itself into Bhutan. The arrival of ZTV, a sports channel that only shows cricket, Hindi soap operas playing in shops in Thimphu - that worries me. It's easy for a tourist who comes for two weeks to get enchanted because they feel that they're in a medieval time warp but it is very dangerous for Bhutanese to fall into that trap. The tourist doesn't have to stay there but the Bhutanese must go on and face the 22nd century.

Q What do you mean that Bhutan must change with its own character?

A While the Bhutanese live by values which agree, on the most part, with universal systems and morals, there is also a unique set of values, particular to Bhutan that is unlike anything found in other Asian countries. For example, in many parts of Bhutan the subject of sex is not so taboo as it is in China, India or even Tibet. While a puritanical Tibetan, Chinese or Indian might think the Bhutanese are primitive upon seeing phalluses painted on walls and hanging here and there, what they don't realise is that non-existence of such inhibition can be a blessing. Other cultures have lost this sense of freedom or openness, in turn possibly making them into sexually repressed societies. So called sophistication may have made their minds narrow and rigid, depriving them of a source of happiness. Unfortunately, Bhutanese may be learning to have that self-consciousness. ▶

Q How is Travellers & Magicians different from your last film?

A This one has been much more difficult.
Simply this is a much bigger production.

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◀ Q You admire Ozu, Ray, and Antonioni. Those are pretty sophisticated filmmakers. Do you think the average Bhutanese will respond to their films?

A Ozu and Ray are not even widely known in their own native land. This kind of film doesn't appeal to the audience and this is the same in Bhutan. This is unfortunate but the filmmakers have to work very hard. In many ways there are so many bad films and the blame actually goes to the audience because that's what they want. The audience must demand better.

Q What do you think about the Bhutanese films you've seen?

A For a nation that doesn't have a film school or any sort of school for media arts, and no access to film equipment or even good films, I must say I am very impressed. The filmmakers in Bhutan must now remember to create and keep their own style.

Q You are referred to as a Tibetan Buddhist lama, teaching Tibetan Buddhism, but you were born in Bhutan. Can you please clarify?

A I guess the concept of reincarnation and the laws of citizenship and naturalisation don't work together. I am recognised as a reincarnation of one of the great Tibetan masters — although I feel that for the first time in the history of karma, karma made a mistake. Regardless, in this life I am Bhutanese. And in many ways, I am proud of being Bhutanese. But my Buddhist training comes from the Tibetan tradition, so I feel very loyal and sympathetic to Tibetan culture and people. While I am not a Tibetan citizen, I have undertaken the responsibility of several Tibetan monasteries and schools and I've done this for a couple of reasons. First, as a service to the Buddhadharma which, broadly speaking, Tibetans are maintaining at the moment by preserving it as a living system. And secondly, because I am a reincarnation of this Tibetan master, I am entrusted to continue his work.

Q What was it like to work in Bhutan?

A Aside from the actual process of filmmaking, this time there was something else that I really enjoyed. For the first time I had the opportunity to work with the ordinary Bhutanese people - sit together with them, eat with them, travel with them. I have experienced so many things that I have never had the opportunity to before in Bhutan like learning how to put on a *kira*. This has been very important to me.

Q Does this mean you'll spend more time in Bhutan?

A I have been asked jokingly and at times sarcastically by Bhutanese why I am always in the west. Why do lamas like myself go to the west or outside of Bhutan when I should stay in Bhutan and help the Bhutanese. I have been actually thinking about this. I have been thinking about how I could help Bhutan. I could do big public *wang* ceremonies. I could do annual *drupchens*. I could build big monasteries and sit on thrones and wear ceremonial hats and give teachings. But I feel a little reluctant to do that and there are several reasons why. Understand, I am not opposed to doing such ceremonies. They have their own purpose. And I even do them sometimes. But I feel that there are already enough lamas who do that in Bhutan.

I think there are other methods for me to reach people. In the past I have often felt that I am sitting on a big throne and all my so-called students are on the ground looking at me, in awe of me, they dare not ask questions, they dare not express their problems or their feelings. Now, the lamas are supposedly like doctors and the students like patients. But if the patient cannot speak to the doctor freely, the doctor won't know how to diagnose. It's all very well having a beautiful ceremony and all that, but such things can be obstacles in disguise. They create a big gap between me and the people.

In the west students have less of that gap. They express what they want to express, they ask questions, they cry in front of me, they laugh in front of me and I get close to them. They see both my bad side and my good side. And it is important for me to have that kind of relationship.

I remember once when I was in east Bhutan a school invited me to teach and I was very happy to do so. I accepted the invitation but I told the organisers 'let's make it informal.' Upon arrival there was all the usual incense and scarves and the line up of people and even worse I was up on the throne. I felt awkward but I didn't have any choice but to accept these things. After all, they did it with their heart. So there I sat on the throne. The students asked their prearranged questions, trembling to ask me anything at all. This is not how to reach the young Bhutanese. ▶

Q What kind of music do you like? Which singers?

A Billie Holiday. Muddy Waters. John Lee Hooker.
I also like operas, especially sung by countertenors.
Lately I am into techno too.

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Talking with Khyentse Norbu continued

◀ Q What do you want to do?

A I want to teach the young Bhutanese people. I have been told by many Bhutanese that there is an emergence of other religions in the country and I can understand why. Because these missionaries don't sit on a throne. The missionaries are available to talk to, whereas with lamas like myself, apart from the usual habitual blessings (putting my hands over their heads) and audiences, there is little communication and practically no philosophical exchange. I would like to sit next to the Bhutanese young people and let them talk about anything - drugs, sex, money - whatever they want to talk about. This is why I didn't hesitate when I was invited to a nightclub in Thimphu. If it wasn't for the bad music, I would have stayed longer.

Q What do you see in the young Bhutanese people you've met?

A The young Bhutanese are so open and so fresh. Even though they may not have extensive Buddhist education, just the fact that they were born and raised in a Buddhist country means the energy is there. Like in Thailand you see a sort of gentleness that comes from Buddhist influence. Before we lose this I think it is important that they at least have the chance to explore Buddhism, even sceptically analyse it. If they don't choose it after this exploration, that's up to them, of course we can't force them to become Buddhist. But if we don't even give them an opportunity to explore, then we are not doing our job.

Young people are different than they were centuries ago. Times have changed. You cannot convince young people that if they light a butter lamp they will go to heaven. You must give them reasons. When you give them reasons you have to do so according to their emotions and their habits. They are trained to ask questions and that's good because that means they are trained to think, not just copy. And Buddhism, right from the beginning, encourages one to challenge. It's not as if Buddhism doesn't have answers to these modern questions. It does have answers. It stands up to argument, welcomes argument.

Many westerners are becoming Buddhist for that very reason. Young western students have told me that they are attracted to Buddhism because many other popular religions on which they were raised are faith-oriented belief systems that don't offer argument or philosophical analysis. Isn't it ironic that in

Bhutan, a Buddhist country, we are relying on blind faith to attract young people instead of using the very tool we have, the ability to analyse. We are driving our people away from the dharma using what they are trying to escape from.

It is the lamas' fault for isolating ourselves. We've alienated ourselves too much from them. I feel sometimes that I am a prisoner of my own system. I look out from the window from the top of my throne and I see these young people who are wanting direction but no one is giving them any. All they get is symbols and blessing cords. People these days are not satisfied with it and rightfully so. Buddhism is much more than a symbol or touching the head.

Bhutan puts strong emphasis on *diklam nam sha* - proper etiquette and so on. In fact, I have no intention of discouraging etiquette in our culture. I know very well that the etiquette - the politeness and gentleness - is one of the great strengths of Bhutanese culture. But our people must learn the essence of why we should be polite, why we should have *diklam nam sha*. And I believe that if our people gain knowledge of these essential things, the form will come automatically.

Q I have heard that the Royal Government of Bhutan is gearing toward democracy, what do you think about that?

A Personally I am not keen on that. I believe that all these systems are well-intended but I don't believe that one particular system can work for everyone. In fact, I don't believe that every human being on Earth has to learn one particular system. If everyone has to follow one system they may not necessarily get benefit from it. Moreover, having a good system or a philosophy is one thing but to put it into practice is a whole other matter. Human beings are generally selfish and egocentric; people don't care for the masses, for the country, for the environment etc. I just can't imagine every single person becoming a perfect democrat or a perfect communist. It's like Buddhism. It's a wonderful philosophy, it's a wonderful system. But Buddhism is different from Buddhists. Within Buddhist institutions we see downfalls, corruptions. No system has worked thoroughly in this world. ▶

Q Who is your favourite modern writer?

A Milan Kundera and Yukio Mishima.
Gita Mehta's River Sutra is outstanding.

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Talking with Khyentse Norbu continued

◀ Most acclaimed democratic countries are actually dictated by corporations and some of these democratic countries dictate other smaller countries. I am not pro or anti-monarchy but you can say I am pro His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck. He cares for the country.

If Bhutan adopts democracy now, I fear all the trees will be chopped, water will become polluted, crime will increase.

Q What are your favourite movies?

A There are so many. At the moment I like many of the Iranian neo-realistic films. I recently saw a film called The Guru and I liked it very much not so much because of the filmmaking itself but the content. It seemed the Indians were laughing at themselves and that demonstrates to me the maturity and sophistication of that society. As an Asian society we are so shame-oriented and we definitely need to learn to laugh at ourselves publicly.

Q How did you come up with the story?

A Every time I travel from west to east in Bhutan, I see these people waiting for cars. That sight for me is something very sentimental and I've always thought I would write a story about them. The story by a Japanese author Yasunari Kawabata called Izumi Odoriko also gave me some ideas. A big part of the film is actually adapted from a Buddhist fable.

Q What was the hardest part of making this film?

A Everything.

Q What would you have done differently?

A Everything.

Q What is your favourite scene in the film?

A Dondup and the monk's first encounter.

Q Will you ever direct a film set in the west with western actors?

A Yes, if I have the opportunity.

Q Which of the western actors do you like?

A Alec Guinness and Anthony Hopkins.

Q Which western actresses do you admire?

A Kate Winslet because she has the most sexy hips.

Q Who is your favourite philosopher?

A Chandra Kirti because he peels you systematically.

Q So you plan to make more films?

A Yes. I don't see myself changing my profession into filmmaker but I definitely might make a few more films. Making the second film created a lot of pressure because while the first one is kind of a novelty, the second one is where one is tested. I hope people's expectations are not sky high.

Thank you, Rinpoche.

Noa Jones

December 2002

Q Aside from getting to know the Bhutanese, what were some of the highlights?

A A rainbow after a very tough scene.

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Introducing...

Dondup...
played by Tshewang Dendup



Dondup is played by Tshewang Dendup, a producer and reporter for the Bhutan Broadcasting Service (BBS). It seems everyone in Bhutan knows Tshewang. He stands out in a crowd. He certainly stood out the day Khyentse Norbu spotted him amidst 25,000 people while conducting a ceremony in 2001. Tshewang was there not as a worshipper but as part of the BBS crew covering the event. "When he beckoned, I thought he was going to reprimand me because there were nine cameras and it was a spiritual event," he recalled. Instead, Khyentse Norbu said, "Would you like to come for an audition?" Tshewang readily agreed and he became the first person to be cast in the film.

The character of Dondup represents the modernisation of Bhutan and Tshewang truly embodies transition. He has a son living in Toronto, posters of Che Guevara and John Lennon hanging in his living room, and wears a denim *gho* (traditional Bhutanese dress), the only one in existence, which is featured in the film. Yet he also has a deep understanding of his culture and a great respect for his country.

Tshewang was born in the Year of the Iron Dog (1970). His parents are from the eastern Bhutanese town of Radhi but Tshewang was raised in Samtse on the Indian border. Growing up he was exceptional and not just because he preferred to run naked whenever possible. He graduated top of his class and was sent to Sherubtse college, Bhutan's only college that awards degrees, graduating in 1993 to take up a post at BBS. He took leave during the 1999 and 2000 school years to accept a scholarship to UC Berkeley, in California, where he received a Master's Degree in Broadcast Journalism with an emphasis on documentary production. He is currently writing a novel.

Sonam...
played by Sonam Lhamo



Sonam Lhamo was born in the Year of the Earth Dragon (1988) in Gelephu, Bhutan. She is captain of her class at Lungten Zampa Middle Secondary School in Thimphu.

Sonam, the character, represents the unadulterated beauty of Bhutan. "I feel very fortunate and lucky to represent a country like ours," she says. "Some people don't even know Bhutan exists or they look down on it. But this film will certainly show that even Bhutan is something special." Sonam Lhamo is special, herself. She is courteous but not cold, delicate but not fragile, attractive but not overtly, lovely but not aware of her loveliness. And she's smart. One of the brightest students in her class. Khyentse Norbu recalls meeting her for the first time. "She was fresh like a lemon. She was even wearing green."

Acting, meeting new people, and joining impromptu dance parties at the camp, were all part of the fun for the young actress but working with Khyentse Norbu was the highlight. "Because religion plays a very important role in our country and its once in a blue moon that you even get to see lamas and Rinpoches," she says. "I was very fortunate to be acting in his film."

Sonam Lhamo hopes to help Bhutanese women and families by becoming a gynaecologist. ▶

Tashi...played by Lhakpa Dorji



Of all the roles, Tashi was the most demanding to fill. Casting Director Karma Yangki simply couldn't find someone enigmatic, good looking, and sharp enough. A few days before the foreign crew was due in Bhutan she spotted BBS producer Lhakpa at a pay phone in the rain. She chased him up the main street of Thimphu calling out "Tashi."

Lhakpa didn't know much about Khyentse Norbu. "I was told that more than 100 people had auditioned and been rejected for the same role," he said. "But I did it my way and luckily I got it."

He spent much of his three weeks on set drenched to the bone, running through thickets, or eating the same meal take after take. But he never complained.

Lhakpa was born in the Year of the Fire Dragon (1976) He studied in Motithang High School then received his Bachelor of Business Administration from University of Madras in Chennai, India.

Deki...played by Deki Yangzom



Deki Yangzom plays the young wife of Agay. Early in 2002, Deki Yangzom accepted a last-minute invitation to a dinner party held by her cousin Choing Tshomo. She came straight from her day job in the HR department of the Royal Monetary Authority of Bhutan to find herself in the middle of an impromptu casting call. "There were so many beautiful girls there I didn't think I had a chance," she says. "I was so shocked when they called me back." Deki didn't know that Louise Rodd, a tarot card reader from England, had spotted Deki from the crowd and whispered to Khyentse Rinpoche, "she's the one." Rinpoche agreed, Deki's husband and family gave her their blessings and she

accepted the role. "I was extremely happy and overwhelmed," she says. "I had never acted before nor even been to a filming set, I really didn't know what to expect - camera, lights, makeup and so on. And I knew we would be camping."

Deki probably had the shiniest gum boots in camp. Her fastidiousness is reflected also in her acting. She took the roll seriously and applied herself thoroughly. It was challenging. Deki's military father is from Tashigang and her mother from Mongar, both Sharshogkpa speaking easterners. But amongst friends, Deki often speaks English. "Getting down the dialogue in Dzongkha was tough," she admitted.

"The character that I had in the film had nothing really to do with my reality. But suppression and inhibition do exist in such a conservative society." Acting was exciting but, she says, "the most memorable moment was when I received the 'lung' (blessing) of the seven line prayer from Rinpoche at Chelela Camp.

Deki was born in Thimphu in the Year of the Fire Dragon (1976). She studied in Khalingpong and later at Lady Keane College in Shillong, India. She is married and has a two year old daughter.

The Monk... played by Sonam Kinga



Originally contacted by Prayer Flag Pictures in March 2002 to translate Khyentse Norbu's English script into Dzongkha, he was tricked into doing a screen test and soon after was offered the role. Two weeks before filming was to begin, Khyentse Norbu invited him to increase his involvement by staying with the crew for the entire shoot, serving as dialogue coach.

"I naturally enjoyed acting the monk," he said. "To be what you are actually not is exciting. Acting demands thinking, integrating and finally expressing the character of a person you impersonate. It was most challenging, making it most enjoyable."

As a founding member of the National Film Review Board, Sonam Kinga has seen nearly every Bhutanese film. Although he enjoys

film, he says that the stories of 'love entrapment' in the majority of Bhutanese films "often make them tiring and uninspiring. He said the themes, expressed through song, are influenced by Hindi films about love triangles. He said that Khyentse Norbu's film comes at a crucial moment in the Bhutanese film industry. "It will not only show how a Bhutanese film can be made without the Bollywood accoutrements but also show how a film can be Bhutanese in theme, story, setting, environment and of course, in spirit."

Sonam Kinga was born in the Year of the Water Bull (1973) in remote Haa, near the Bhutan-China border but was raised in different parts of the country as his laymonk-turned-soldier father kept moving. He is married and lives in Thimphu.

Despite looking very much at ease in robes, Sonam Kinga is really not a monk but a researcher at the Centre for Bhutan Studies (www.bhutanstudies.org.bt). He is the author and editor of numerous books and reports on Bhutan including "Gross National Happiness" and "Impact of Reforms on Bhutanese Social Organisation." He studied in Canada and Japan and speaks eight languages. His forthcoming *Rinzang Lhaden* is a translation of Sophocles' play *Antigone* from English to Dzongkha.

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Raymond Steiner... Producer
and Production Designer

Mal Watson... Producer
and Production Manager

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Raymond's experience spans film, theatre, design and publishing in America, Australia and the subcontinent. Some of the productions and personalities that he has been involved with include MGMs 2001: A Space Odyssey, Paramount's The Adventurers, Fox's Ferngully...the Last Rainforest, Apple Corp's Sergeant Pepper, His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama, MoMA (NYC), Billy Fields, Fred Weintraub, Apple, Microsoft, and many others. Raymond has been associated with Khyentse Norbu for more than 25 years, meeting him in India when Khyentse Norbu was a student at a Sakya College and Raymond was directing children's TV. He produced and designed the production of his first feature film, The Cup.

Raymond is pictured above with Neten Chokling Rinpoche, another keen filmmaker. After Travellers & Magicians they hope to work together on a feature film on the life of Milarepa.

Mal Watson has worked for Khyentse Norbu full time since 1990, mainly in India, Bhutan and Canada. He was schooled in Architecture and has wide experience in civil engineering, financial and organisational management. Mal has designed and constructed various retreat centers, schools for Buddhist Philosophy and also directs other projects for the various charitable activities of Khyentse Norbu. These skills, and his long association with Khyentse Norbu led Mal to successfully co-produce/manage Khyentse Norbu's last production, The Cup.

Mal (left) is pictured with Tom Lembcke, key grip. ▶



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མཁྱིལ་བརྗེ་ལོ་ལྔ་ལྷུ་སྤྱོད་མཁས།།



ཆང་ཏུབ་ཐེངས་གཅིག་གི་འབྲུལ་སྒྲུང

མཁྱིལ་བརྩེ་ལོ་རྒྱུ་བརྩམས།

Alan Kozlowski...
Director of Photography

John Scott and Lisa-Anne Morris...
Film Editors

མཁྱིལ་བརྩེ་ལོ་རྒྱུ་བརྩམས།

Alan began working as a cinematographer in 1979 and was Director Of Photography on such films as "For Us The Living" and documentaries featuring Jackson Browne, Kenny Loggins, Lionel Richie, Ravi Shankar and many others. In 1982 he developed the technology, filmed and directed a 360-degree, 70mm film for Envirovision Theaters. In 1993 he innovated and filmed a 10-screen presentation on Chinese culture for "Hawpaw Village," a major theme park in Singapore. In 1994, Alan won the ACE Award for Best Music Special of the Year" for the Disney Documentary "Jackson Brown - Going Home." He currently serves as a multi media technology and facilities consultant to Paul Allen's Vulcan Northwest in Seattle and London.

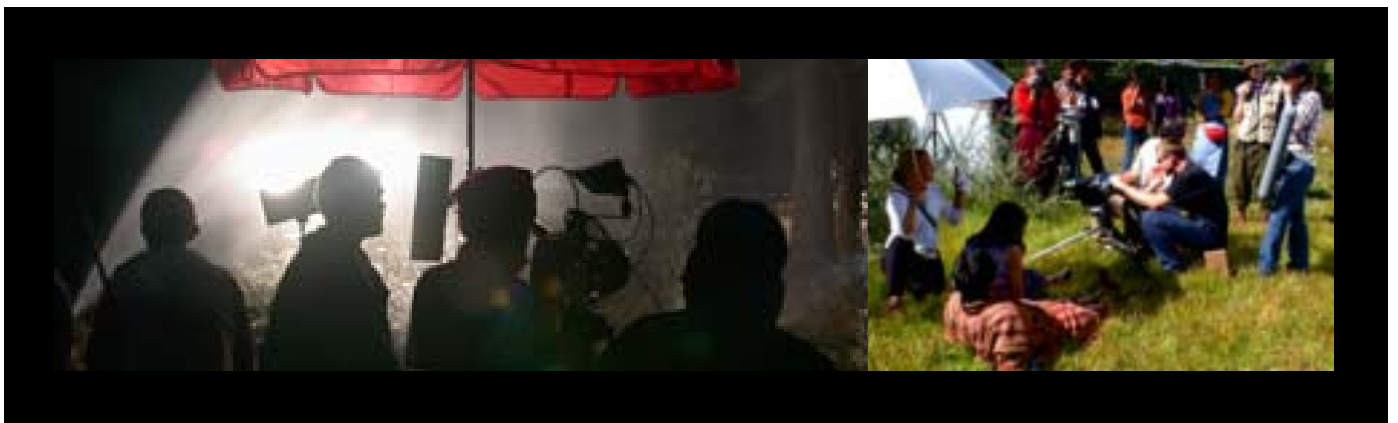
Alan has been a student of Ravi Shankar since 1978 and has performed with him worldwide in such venues as Carnegie Hall and London's Royal Opera House. He co-produced with George Harrison "In Celebration," a four-CD collectors edition of Ravi Shankar's works on Shankar's 75th birthday.

In 1984 Alan founded Visual Eyes, later called Pacific Ocean Post, a film and television post-production facility in Santa Monica, California employing more than 300 special effects, animation, sound and editorial professionals. Under Alan's leadership, Pacific Ocean Post helped bring home the Visual Effect Oscars (tm) for Independence Day (1997), Titanic (1998) and What Dreams May Come (1999).

Alan has travelled throughout Tibet, Nepal and India, where he has filmed and photographed extensively. He presently serves on the boards of Khyentse Norbu's White Lotus Foundation and The Ravi Shankar Foundation.

John Scott has edited a multitude of excellent films over the years including Khyentse Norbu's first feature film, *The Cup*. His latest include Phillip Noyce productions *Rabbit Proof Fence* and *The Quiet American* and Jonathan Glazer's *Sexy Beast*. Having worked with many great Australian directors such as Fred Schepisi and Paul Cox, John has been at the forefront of Australian industry's renaissance over the past twenty-five years. He won the Australian Film Institute's Best Editing Award for Phillip Noyce's *Newsfront* and Vincent Ward's *Navigator*. John has been based in London since 1997 and was "very excited" about returning once again to work on Khyentse Norbu's *Travellers & Magicians*.

After studying History of Art and Fine Arts in England, Lisa-Anne Morris worked as a photographer at Sothebys. She then moved into films in the mid-eighties assisting on such projects as *UnderCover*, produced in Australia. Since then she has worked as editor on many documentaries and dramas most notably *Video Dance*, which won the silver medal Award for best documentary at the New York International Film and Television Festival, and *Not a Bedroom War* which was nominated for AFI, ATOM and Human Rights awards. Her feature film credits have included *The Cup*, *Rabbit Proof Fence* and most recently *The Quiet American* as Visual Effects Editor.



Travellers & Magicians Credits



Written and Directed by Khyentse Norbu
 Produced by Raymond Steiner and Malcolm Watson
 Executive Producer Jeremy Thomas
 Director of Photography Alan Kozlowski
 Edited by John Scott and Lisa-Anne Morris

Cast

(In order of appearance)

Dondup's World

Squinting Man	Gup Kado Duba
Village Head	Lt. Col. Dasho Kado
Bowman	Pema Tshering
Archers	Mani Dorji Jigme Drukpa Nim Gyeltshen Mangi Ap Norbu Pemba Tshering Nim Tashi Pem Dorji Wangchuk
Postmaster	Tshering Dorji
Dondup	Tshewang Dendup
Phunsok	Jigme Drukpa
Post Runner	Gurula
Phallus Singer	Phub Thinley
Phallus Handlers	Sonam Choepel Phuntsho Dolma Dasho Yeshi Dorji & villagers of Chendebji
Village Lady	Tshering Yangchen
Appleman	Ap Dochu
Sedan Driver	Kezang Norbu
Sedan Passenger	Sonam Dorji
The Monk	Sonam Kinga

Tata Truck Driver	Samdrup Dorji
Beetlenut Lady	Ugyen Tshomo
Drunk man	Dechen Dorjee
Sonam	Sonam Lhamo
Sonam's Father	Dasho Adab Sangye
Bus Driver	His Eminence Neten Chokling
Bus Passengers	Lungten Karma Sherub Jigme Wangchuk Pema Wangchuk Ugyen Wangchuk
Tractor Driver	Apa Mindu
Tractor Operator	Tadin Norbu
Tractor Passenger	

The Villagers of Chendebji

Mangi Ap Norbu	Goley Dorji
Kinley Zam	Sumda
Thinley Gyem	Phub Dorji
Kinzang Dem	Phub Sangye
Chhimi Dem	Choki Lahm
Wangchuk Norbu	Thinley Wangmo
Gyem Tenzin	Gyemo
Chhimi Zam	Tandi Zangmo
Phub Rinzin	Sangay Lhamo
Dorji Pem	Sumcho
Thinley Gyep	Sanga Budha
Chogye Sithup	Tenzing Lham
Kinlem	Kencho Wangmo
Lemo	Dorji Budha
Tshering Wangmo	Rinzinla

Head Cooks Yeshe Lama
Rigzin Dorji
Sangye Tenzin

Catering Staff Sangay Wangdi
Tashi Phuntso
Ugyen Dorji
Ngawang
Tun Tun
Tshewang Thinley
Loday Gyeltshen
Lobzang
Ngawang Gyeltshen
Tenzin
Tshering Namgye
Bumpa Zangpo
Ugyen Tshering
Sonam Dorji

Accommodation Manager Dorjee Penjor

Accommodation Assistants Samten Wangdi
Tashi Lekjay
Dumo Chodon
Sangay Pema
Gurula
Dorji Wangdi
Ugyen Dorji

Drivers Lungten
Wangchuk
Neten Dorji
Nima
Dorji
Deepen
Ngyanam
Buddha Kumar Lepcha
Indra Pradhan
Uttam Thapa
Tenzin Thinley
Lal Bdr. Khati
Thinley

Location & Set Security Peljab Dorji
Chuma Yangten
Chuma Tshering
Chuma Sangay Dorji

Post Production Supervisor Raymond Steiner

Avid Editing Facilities Spectrum Films,
Sydney, Australia

Negative Processing Kantana Animation Co., Ltd,
Bangkok, Thailand

Production Manager Pison Santawanpas

Telecine & Avid Sync Oriental Post Co., Ltd,
Bangkok, Thailand

Producer Salisa Attawa-angkul

Project Co-ordinator Kamonthip Tachasakulmas

Supervising Sound Editor Andrew Plain

Dialogue Editor Bronwyn Murphy

Atmos/FX Editor Nada Mikas

Additional FX Editor Lidia Tamplenizza

Assistant Editor Lidia Tamplenizza

Foley Feet 'N Frames Pty Ltd
John Simpson
Adrien Medhurst

ADR Recordist Andrew Wright

Music Editor Linda Murdoch

Sound Mixer Robert Sullivan

Sound Editing Facility Huzzah Sound,
Sydney, Australia

Mix Facility Soundfirm Australia

Negative Extraction Negative Cutting Services,
Sydney, Australia

Additional Time Lapse Sequences Simon Carroll

Digital Intermediate / VFX Rising Sun Pictures,
Sydney , Australia

Digital Intermediate Supervisor Tim Crosbie

Digital Intermediate Producer Edwina Hayes

VFX Artists Will Gammon
Ben Roberts
Bryan Jones
Jason Valler
Kyle Goodsell
Jason Madigan
Adam Paschke
Tim Kings-Lynn
Dan Wills

Titles Evan Shipard

Research and Development Didier Elzinga
Joe Connellan
Dominic Glynn

Technical Supervisors Anthony Menasse
Matthew Aldous

Film Recording Facility Weta Digital Ltd,
Wellington, New Zealand

Film Recording Manager Pete Williams

Film Recording Supervisor Nick Booth

Film Recording Engineer Roman Gadner

Film Recording Technicians Mohan Ramachandran
Jess Cowley

**Digital Intermediate
Colour Grade and Scans** Digital Pictures,
Sydney, Australia

Digital Film Colourist Siggie Ferstl

Executive Producer Jackie Lee

Producer Warwick Boulter

Digital Negative Processing The Film Unit,
Wellington, New Zealand

Dolby Consultant Bruce Emery

Traditional Music Recordist Andrew Belletty



Music

- "Special Times"
written & performed by David Hykes
- "Times to the True"
written & performed by David Hykes
- "Hit the Road"
written & performed by Michal the Girl
- "Hook, Line & Sink Me"
written & performed by Michal the Girl
- "Wake Up"
written by Ben Fink performed by King Clam
- "Yak Song" (Voice) Traditional
performed by Sonam Dorji
- "Yak Song" (Instrumental) Traditional
performed by Jigme Drukpa
- "In This World"
written & performed by Jigme Drukpa
- "Nyi Semki"
written & performed by Dechen Dorjee
- "YakDoof"
written by Ben Fink
performed by Sonam Dorji, Ben Fink & John Napier

Soundtrack out on CD visit: www.travellersandmagicians.com

Subtitling Services Special Broadcasting Service, Sydney, Australia

Subtitling Pema Wangdi
Zosia Hoey

Editor Andrew McCormick

Legal Services, Australia Simpsons Solicitors, Sydney, Australia
Shane Simpson
Anna FitzGerald

Accounting Services, Australia Christopher Coote & Co, Sydney, Australia

Accounting & Legal Services, Hong Kong Chan, Li, Law & Co. , Johnny Li

Production Office, Hong Kong Florence Koh
Lizzy Tam

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Sydney, Australia

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- Deva Shih Chia Chang
- Su-Ching Chou
- Barbara Ma
- Manoel Vidal
- James Nelson (JSP)



Filmed entirely on location in the Kingdom of Bhutan



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ཆང་རྟུབ་ཐེངས་གཅིག་གི་འབྲུལ་སྒྲུང

མཐིན་བརྗེ་འོ་ལྷ་ལྷོ་ལྷོ་བཟུངས།

ཆང་རྟུབ་ཐེངས་གཅིག་གི་འབྲུལ་སྒྲུང

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