

INTERVIEW WITH THE CAST

An excerpt from an interview with Didi Petet and Yuyu AW Unru.
On the characters Johan and Bandi and the 'Jermal' shooting experience.

Didi:

I was first approached for this role in 2006. When I heard the title, "Jermal," I said yes, even though I didn't know the story yet. To me, jermal is something significant. I was absolutely sure this film was going to be something significant, an experience, an ambition. I didn't even know I was to play the lead role. For me, it doesn't matter if I play a big or small role. It turned out, I had a big, serious role in this film.

I think Johan is a coward, he ran away from reality. He wasn't able to lead a good married life, until an incident happened. When he is at the jermal, he underwent changes – such as the arrival of his son – that made him go back to his true self, he became braver.

I can play this role because there are many people like that in real life around me, that I can model my performance on. So I had no problems playing him.

Yuyu:

I was cast mainly because of my close relationship with Didi. I've worked with him, primarily on pantomime theater, for 26 years (Didi and Yuyu belong to the group Sena and Didi Mime). So we can easily reflect the closeness between Bandi and Johan. It was Didi who suggested the filmmakers that I'm the right actor for this role. I don't act in a lot of films, usually I'm in films that some friends are already cast in, and they take me along. Didi told me, the filmmakers would call me about a role in "Jermal." I didn't know a lot about jermals. I saw something about it once on TV, it said that jermals are in the middle of the sea.

Didi:

Before this film, I knew so little about jermals. Some of the actual jermal children were cast as extras in this film. I got to know them, know about how they live. They became what they are because of their economic situations. But actually they are nice kids, they just happen to be living in a rough, harsh condition.

I'm impressed with Iqbal (who played Jaya). He's an accomplished actor, he doesn't need any guidance anymore. All the kids are wonderful performers. Each of them has a unique style and they can all entertain us, make us laugh.

In the film, the jermal seems stable. Actually it constantly rocked back and forth because of the sea waves. At first, we thought there was an earthquake. But later on, we discovered, it was the daily reality at the jermal. After shooting all day on a rocking

jermal, we would go back to our hotel at land in the evening, and we felt the hotel was rocking back and forth.

For the shoot, we went everyday from the hotel to the jermal on a boat.

Yayu:

I was rather scared doing this movie because I can't swim. Every day, for the shoot, we had to take a one-hour trip on the boat from land to the jermal. It was really scary, because of the big waves. Dangerous. And every time we mounted the platform poles, going up to the jermal from the boat, we risked getting injured, we could get a concussion or have our limbs dismembered, because as we went up the ladder, the jermal was rocking to-and-fro. If we weren't really careful, we could get smashed on the poles.

Didi:

There wasn't much space on the jermal. If the camera was shooting a scene on one side of the jermal, everybody who was not on the scene had to scurry off to another side of the jermal. We have special places on the jermal that earned nicknames from us.

Yayu:

He's talking about "properties" that got nicknames like apartement complexes in Jakarta. It was the sound recordist Handi Ilfat who first came up with the nicknames, as a joke. I don't remember what the precise nicknames were, but, for instance, "Didi this afternoon is napping at Terrace View." Or, "when the camera is shooting at Terrace View, everyone not in the scene must move over to River Park."

Didi:

One of the nice memories of making this film is: everyday at 4 p.m., when we had a break, we would all get our pocket cameras out and take pictures of anything. We got really cool pictures. We took pictures of anything, the sunset, ships, the sky, the jermal itself. Initially we were aiming at the sunset, but later on, as the 4 p.m. picture-taking became habitual, we took pictures of anything. Again, it was Handi Ilfat who initiated this ritual. We just did the same and gradually, it became a daily activity.

None of us felt repressed or bored, not especially when we have Handi and Tino (Saroengallo, the production supervisor), who are kings of comedy. We enjoyed the shoot, we had a great time.