



THE SENTRY

James Bond meets Cambodian ghost story in this action-packed, darkly comic short about who really gets to tell their story.



World Premiere: SXSW 2025

- **Genre-bending spy comedy**
- **Spotlights Cambodia's rising film industry**
- **From the director of KARMALINK (Venice Critics Week)**

18 minutes | Khmer & English with English subtitles

Cambodia/USA/Norway | 2024

For interview requests, screeners, or additional materials, please contact:

Jake Wachtel

Director, The Sentry

thesentry@walktellmedia.com

QUICK REFERENCE

Festival Information:

- 1. SXSW 2025 World Premiere**
- 2. Regard - Saguenay International Short Film Festival 2025
International Premiere (Canada)**
- 3. Aspen Shortsfest**

Key Links:

Film Website: thesentryfilm.com

Press Stills: thesentryfilm.com/stills

Trailer: thesentryfilm.com/trailer

Instagram: @thesentryfilm, @jakewachtel.director,

Technical Information:

Runtime: 18 minutes

Format: Digital (ProRes 4444/ DCP)

Languages: Khmer, English

Resolution: 4K

Aspect Ratio: Mixed - 2.39:1, 1.85:1

Subtitles: English

Shooting Location: Cambodia

Production Companies: Walktell Media (USA), 802 AD (Cambodia), Tannhauser Gate (Norway)

ABOUT THE FILM

LOGLINE: A suave spy's routine mission in Cambodia gets derailed when a persistent local guard makes him face the human cost of his James Bond lifestyle.

SYNOPSIS: In this subversive twist on the spy thriller, a suave Western agent's mission goes off the rails when a Cambodian security guard refuses to become just another casualty. What begins as a throwback to classic espionage fun soon unravels into an unexpectedly heartfelt road trip across Cambodia's misty jungles, exploring privilege, accountability, and the unseen lives at the margins of Western adventure stories.

Key Themes:

- *Challenging spy-movie tropes to humanize side characters*
- *Showcasing the depth and beauty of contemporary Cambodia*
- *Exploring how Western entertainment stereotypes overlook local perspectives*
- *Genre-blending: Spy thriller/ buddy comedy /ghost story /social commentary*



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT - JAKE WACHTEL

For over half a century, **James Bond** has eliminated enough anonymous henchmen to populate a small town. But what if we followed one of those guards? What if he had unfinished business before the credits rolled?

Living in Cambodia for ten years, I've met **countless people with incredible stories—far richer than the stock characters often reduced to background roles in Western adventure films. The Sentry flips the spy genre on its head, forcing its “hero” to confront the human cost of his clean-cut world of intrigue.**

At its core, this film is about **perspective—who gets to be the main character, and who's left as a footnote. By blending spy thriller, buddy comedy, and social commentary, I wanted to challenge the conventions we take for granted. Because sometimes, the people we're trained to ignore have the best stories to tell—especially when you can't get them to shut up.**



From KARMALINK to THE SENTRY

After exploring Buddhist concepts through science fiction in **KARMALINK** (Venice Critics' Week Opening Film), director **Jake Wachtel** returns to Cambodia with another genre-bending tale. This new work maintains his commitment to **telling stories that challenge Western perspectives while celebrating Cambodia's complexity.**

As with **KARMALINK**, which combined Buddhist philosophy with sci-fi elements, **THE SENTRY** blends familiar genre elements—in this case, **spy thriller and buddy comedy—with something more surprising and culturally specific.**

PRODUCTION NOTES: BRINGING THE SENTRY TO LIFE

The Cambodian Connection

What appears on screen as a seamless action-comedy actually required **intricate coordination between international and local talent**, with about **80% of the crew coming from Cambodia**. From jury-rigging a remorque into a process trailer to complex fight choreography, **the film showcases the depth of Cambodia's film industry talent**.

The Art of Bokator

The film's fight scenes were choreographed in a **traditional bokator gym** in Phnom Penh, where actor **Dara Phang, himself a celebrated bokator practitioner**, worked with fight coordinator Dara Our to incorporate this ancient Khmer martial art. **Dating back to the armies of Angkor**, bokator is experiencing a revival among Cambodia's youth, with masters passing down techniques that nearly vanished during the Khmer Rouge era.

Building The Lair

Under the supervision of French-Khmer production designer **Anne-Sorya Fitte**, local craftsmen built the film's **centerpiece set in a Phnom Penh woodshop** before transporting and reconstructing it on the atmospheric Bokor Mountain. This feat of **logistics and craftsmanship** exemplifies the film's blend of **international production standards with local expertise**.

The "Toilet Paper" Moment: A Humorous Detail With Deeper Roots

One of the film's recurring gags highlights a small but telling **cultural contrast: Cambodia's "bum gun" bidet versus Western toilet paper**. After a year in Cambodia, I returned to the U.S. and found myself **missing the bidet**. This joke isn't just for laughs—it subtly reflects the film's deeper themes of **perspective and the assumptions we bring into different cultures**.



PRODUCER'S STATEMENT - SOK VISAL

Too often, **Cambodia is depicted through a narrow lens of tragedy or poverty. The Sentry challenges that narrative, presenting a vibrant, confident Cambodia rarely seen on screen.**

From the **misty landscapes of Bokor Mountain to a family home adorned with an artist's touch**, the film showcases **the country's depth and beauty—both visually and culturally**. Instead of focusing on past traumas, it highlights **contemporary Cambodia's humor, resilience, and talent**, with a **majority-local crew bringing the story to life**.

This is **exactly the kind of story Cambodia needs right now: one that acknowledges our history while showing a present full of life, creativity, and unexpected heroes.**

CAST & CREW

JAKE WACHTEL (Director/Writer/Producer)

American filmmaker Jake Wachtel is **the director of Karmalink, Cambodia's first sci-fi film, which opened Venice Critics' Week to critical acclaim**. Variety praised it as “fresh and highly entertaining,” and it went on to win multiple international festival awards. Originally from Silicon Valley, Wachtel studied Psychology at Stanford before setting off to explore cultures beyond that privileged bubble. He began directing short documentaries for nonprofits in the Global South and **moved to Cambodia in 2015 to teach filmmaking through Filmmakers Without Borders**. Developed in Phnom Penh with a majority Cambodian cast and crew—including his former students—Karmalink marked the beginning of his genre-fluid storytelling, which continues to push cultural and cinematic boundaries. Now based in Cambodia, he is developing **new projects that merge social consciousness with wildly entertaining genre explorations**.

SOK VISAL (Producer)

A French-Cambodian filmmaker, Sok Visal founded 802 Films and co-directed Cambodia's Oscar submission **IN THE LIFE OF MUSIC**. A champion of Khmer storytelling, he also co-produced **KARMALINK**, further elevating Cambodian cinema on the global stage.

ALAN R. MILLIGAN (Producer)

An Oslo-based producer, Milligan's films have won Best Film at Cannes and Venice. He is passionate about merging cinematic storytelling with technological innovation and environmental sustainability.

DANIEL RAYMONT (The Spy / “Agent Blackwood”)

An actor known for his chameleonic roles, Daniel Raymont has appeared in **The Mosquito Coast (Apple TV)**, **Instructions Not Included**, and **Rough Night** alongside Scarlett Johansson.

DARA PHANG (The Sentry / “Termite”)

A rising Cambodian actor and martial artist, Phang gained recognition in **JAILBREAK**, showcasing the Khmer martial art of Bokator. He is now expanding into directing.

KARL ERIK BRØNDBO (Cinematographer)

A Norwegian DP whose work includes the Oscar-nominated **TUBA ATLANTIC** and multiple award-winning features. His visuals bring both intimacy and epic scale to the film.

CLEMENT & ANGEL IGNACE (Post Sound & Composing)

Co-founders of Aurae Studios, this Saigon-Paris duo blends Eastern and Western sonic traditions, with recent work on **Silent City Driver**, Grand Prix winner at Tallinn Black Nights.

ANNE-SORYA FITTE (Production Designer)

French-Khmer designer behind **WHITE BUILDING (Venice '21)**, she fuses European training with Cambodian heritage to create immersive cinematic worlds.

MAYOU TRIKERIOTI (Costume Designer)

An award-winning designer, Trikerioti’s work spans theater and film, with credits including **Crimes of the Future (David Cronenberg)** and **Drift (Anthony Chen)**.

