Cultural Daily

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Dare to Dance in Public Winning Films: Sunrise on Red

Sarah Elgart · Wednesday, February 19th, 2020

When **Dare to Dance in Public Film Festival** had its first public screening at REDCAT this January, one of the many audience favorites was Lam Nguyen's **Sunrise on Red.** Part of the joy in doing **D2D** is meeting and/or interfacing with all these screen dance filmmakers from around the world and we were so fortunate that Lam is now living in Los Angeles and was able to attend in person!

Lam moved to LA a few years ago from his home country of Vietnam, where he was the winner of So You Think You Can Dance Season 3. He began studying popping at age 9 and studied additional styles of street dance before joining UDG (Urban Dance Group) Vietnam where he trained in jazz and contemporary. Until he moved to LA, street dance was still his main focus, but then he began studying at El Camino College where the world exploded for him… he developed a whole new perspective on dance in general and began discovering and honing his own style, mixing all of the above and more. **Sunrise on Red** is definitely an outcome of that exploration which makes it so appropriate that our amazing panel of judges awarded Lam with the prize for **Most Original Movement**!

One of the things I love so much about this film is how Lam adds color and beauty to some otherwise rather ugly strip malls and streets of LA that are riddled with fast food restaurants and drab industrial buildings, not to mention the constant flow of traffic that Lam dares to dance amidst. His movement is just *so nimble and unique!*

I asked Lam about his own process of discovery in making **Sunrise on Red**:

SE: How did you first hear about **Dare to Dance in Public Film Festival** and what appealed to you about it?

LN: *I heard about **Dare to Dance in Public Film Festival** by chance through Instagram. The name of the film festival itself is already strong enough that it caught my attention.*

SE: Was your film created specifically for the festival and/or did you have a particular urge to make a film in the public realm and if so why and where was it made?

LN: *"Sunrise on Red" was made specifically for the festival. It was a period of time that I was doing a solo project… improving the relationship between myself as a human being, and my art. I*

*decided to constantly be putting out content – either pictures or videos without much consideration but simply to feel comfortable about putting my art out there. Then I saw the post about **D2D** and a beam of an idea got into my head. I thought about the "Ao Dai" (Vietnamese traditional shirt) that my mom gave my not too long ago and I always wanted to do something special with it. **D2D** was the answer to the idea of "doing something with it" by "dancing in the public wearing it."*

SE: What were you inspired by and/or exploring in making your film?

LN: *I was inspired by the dynamic of the environment I was in. It was so many things… energy, movement, sounds that were happening at the same time plus my very intentional appearance in the "Ao Dai." Looking at the picture from the high view is just so interesting to me. It challenged me to constantly listen and be aware of the environment but at the same time to really tune into my feelings to say what I wanted to say. It's a fun playground that never stops moving.*

SE: What were the biggest challenges you faced in making the film?

LN: *One of the biggest challenges but also the thing that keep me working in this project is that I have no idea how finished product will look like. There was only one thing my head that made me start at the first place was "I have to make a film because I like the image of me wearing the Ao Dai (traditional Vietnamese outfit) dancing in the middle of the street" and that's obviously not enough… but the unexpected factor of what will happen during the process was so fun to discover. And it all happened just by responding to the moment.*

SE: How did you raise the funds for making your film?

LN: *Luckily, my friend and DP Keith Nguyen and I were both down to collaborate and make my vision come true. Also the video is very simple and didn't required expensive equipment. The functional chaotic of the street and traffic is what we wanted the most and it's free.*

SE: Who/what was your biggest collaborator and/or influence in making your film, and what did you learn from the filmmaking process from or as a result of them?

LN: *Daniel Cloud Campus is one of my biggest inspirations in the new generation of filmmakers. His way of story telling and the unexpected moment with perfect timing are admirable. However, this project has zero relationship to what Cloud does in his films… it's just all my flavor. Like I said, I really want to strengthen the relationship between me and my art, and by doing that I have to allow myself to trust in my own vision, just to see where I am at.*

SE: What are you craving to do next?

LN: *Exploring the unknown world inside out of myself. Open to everything that the universe might offer me.*

You can follow Lam on Instagram at @_bimotion_

And I hope you will take 3.5 minutes to view **Sunrise on Red**, one of Lam's beautiful explorations of that world.

Enjoy!

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