

How to Make Millions Before Grandma Dies [12A]

2024 Thailand 125 mins

UK released **26 December 2024**

Director **Pat Boonitipat**

Screenplay **Pat Boonitipat; Thodsapon Thiptinnakorn**

Cinematography **Boonyanuch Kraithong**

Music **Jaithep Raroengjai**

Cast **Putthipong "Billkin" Assaratanakul (M); Usha "Taew" Seamkhum (Mengju); Sarinrat "Jear" Thomas (Sew); Sanya "Duu" Kunakorn (Kiang); Pongsatorn "Phuak" Jongwilas (Soei); Tontawan "Tu" Tantivejakul (Mui); Duangporn Oapirat (Pinn); Himawari Tajiri (Rainbow)**

Pat Boonitipat's touching debut feature is an irresistible tearjerker, championing family ties and the notion that anything worthwhile requires time and commitment.

The central characters and their defining attitudes are swiftly established at an initial Qingming holiday, when family members gather to remember and honour the dead. The elderly Amah (Usha Seamkhum) likes traditions to be observed and everything done properly. Her young grandson M (Putthipong Assaratanakul) is glued to his phone and mostly indifferent to the importance of the day.

After a fall, Amah is taken to a hospital emergency department where an examination reveals that she has stage four cancer. Her three children must decide how to care for her. M becomes more interested in her fate once he meets his cousin Mui (Tontawan Tantivejakul). She has been caring for her grandfather and is eventually bequeathed his house. M starts to realise that the elderly might not feel quite so inconvenient when seen as a potential meal ticket.

How To Make Millions appears to be heading in a predictable direction as we anticipate the mercenary M melting in the face of his grandmother's

vulnerability and failing health. The shrewd Amah knows exactly what her grandson is up to, but still appreciates his company, and the generation gap allows for a more honest relationship between the pair. Amah's children want to protect her from the news of her cancer diagnosis but M respects her enough to tell her the truth.

Boonnitipat allows the story room to breathe as the barriers between grandmother and grandson break down. There is also time to address the complexities of a family in which money, rivalry and the hopes of inheritance have all played a part in poisoning the well of tender loving care. Amah's son Soei (Pongsatorn Jongwilas) is eternally debt-ridden and prepared to exploit her. Her other son Kiang (Sanya Kunakorn) rarely visits her home whilst M's mother Sew (Sarinrat Thomas) has gone unappreciated in a society that favours sons over daughters.

How To Make Millions creates a world and a family that are genuine and recognisable, making our emotional engagement all the more secure. The gentle lilting score by Jaithep Raroengjai pulls on the heart strings, but the two main performances avoid sentimentality.

Chinese Thai singer and actor Assaratanakul (known as Billkin) is nicely understated and thoughtful as a young man who learns to appreciate that the riches of life don't necessarily lie in wealth or property. Making her feature debut, the remarkable Seamkhum makes Amah a wise and gracious figure – not a typical cuddly grandma but someone canny, realistic and determined to make the most of her days.

Allan Hunter, *Screen Daily*, 12 September 2024 (abridged).

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