

## Satu: Year of the Rabbit [PG]

2024 Laos/UK 93 mins

UK released **22 June 2024**

Director **Joshua Trigg**

Screenplay **Joshua Trigg**

Cinematography **James Chegwyn**

Music **Joshua Szweda**

Cast **Itthiphone Sonepho** (Satu); **Vanthiva Saysana** (Bo); **Athit Sylavong** (Khuba Danay), **Sonedala Sihavong** (Dara), **Bau Vun** (Head of the Village).

The Laos location adds considerable appeal to *Satu – Year Of The Rabbit*, the feature debut from British writer-director Joshua Trigg. This story of an abandoned child in search of his long-absent mother blossoms into a sweet ode to friendship and understanding, underpinned by the beauty of the country’s lush vegetation and lofty, mist-covered peaks. The film has enough unpretentious appeal to secure a share of the audience who were charmed by such foreign-language titles as *Lunana: A Yak In The Classroom* (2019) or *If Only I Could Hibernate* (2023).

Trigg has previously directed a number of shorts as well as music videos and commercial campaigns, and has been working largely across Asia for the last decade. His feature debut is shot on 16mm by British cinematographer James Chegwyn, and uses a significantly local crew and non-professional actors.

*Satu* begins in Dickensian mode as Dara (Sonedala Sihavong) leaves her baby on the steps of the Pha Tang Temple, believing that the monks will give the boy a better life than she ever could. Years later, the second strand of the story focuses on Bo (Vanthiva Saysana), a 17 year-old Laotian who wants to study journalism at the University of Hanoi. Entry to the course requires her to provide a story that illustrates skill as both writer and photographer. Fleeing her drunken, feckless father, she heads deeper into Laos seeking “a story worthy of a place in Hanoi”.

Inevitably, Bo arrives at the Pha Tang Temple where she meets Satu (Itthiphone Sonepho), a young boy who has become a ward of the monks and

their leader Danay (Athit Sylavong). He yearns to learn more about the mother who abandoned him years earlier. It appears that Bo has found her story, and the couple head north to Muang Ngoy village to discover what happened to Dara. Satu then becomes a road movie, with the duo accompanied by a grey rabbit called Jeobong. Along the way, they discover common ground, gain a more nuanced understanding of the importance of family and learn important life lessons on love, death, compassion and friendship.

Shooting on location in January 2022, cinematographer and co-producer Chegwyn captures a Laos where the swaying palms and golden temples pop with the vibrancy of a Steve Curry photograph. The storytelling, however, has a tendency towards the simplistic and sentimental; a little more unexpected is the question mark hanging over the future of the temple, as constant floods have washed away the soil revealing unexploded bombs that surround the building.

Trigg manages to invest the central relationship with a sincerity that helps to balance out some of the more predictable plot developments. The casting of non-professional actors helps in this regard, and both lead performers bring an understated quality to their roles. Saysana instils Bo with a sense of resilience and determination, whilst Sonepho wins us over to the quest of the earnest, wise-beyond his years Satu. Our investment in their emotional journey helps Trigg to steer the film towards a poignant conclusion.

**Allan Hunter**, *Screen Daily*, 22 June 2024 (abridged)

### Coming soon....

Monday 07/04: *I Am Martin Parr*

Monday 14/04: *I Am Still Here*

[For details and more – visit our website](#)

Scan to get a weekly email about what's next



[www.buxtonfilm.org.uk](http://www.buxtonfilm.org.uk)



Buxton Film is a Registered Charity no. 1165040

[admin@buxtonfilm.org.uk](mailto:admin@buxtonfilm.org.uk)



[@buxtonfilm.bsky.social](https://bsky.app/profile/buxtonfilm.org.uk)