

# It Gets Better

Thailand, 2012, 99 mins, Drama, 16x9, (Not rated)

Dir: Tanwarin Sukkhapisit

FVFS panel voted 3.5 stars (Out of 5)

IMDb score 7.6.

See trailer at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=97jz1slGdE>

At first sight this film comes across as four separate stories about four separate people, and unrelated stories about men questioning their gender or living a transgender life.

Into this mix comes Tonmai (Phanuphong Waraeksiri), a young man returning from America to attend to his father's affairs on the occasion of his untimely death. The father owned and operated a successful nightclub (The Fountain) in the city.

However, the stories are not independent. They all relate to the father – the owner of the nightclub – over several very different chapters of his life. While you might not wish to read what amounts to a plot reveal, I believe it is helpful to understand from the outset the relationship between the stories rather than wait until the very end and even then wonder how they fitted together!

So with this belief, here is the outline of the intertwined stories.

Din (Pavich Saprunroj) is a teenage boy caught by his father dancing around the house whilst wearing his mother's clothes. To rid him of his desires Din is placed in a monastery, where he finds an immediate attraction to the senior monk. In these sequences the film has some of the most visual stunning night photography in and around the monastery.

In a shorter sequence, almost overlooked by most reviewers, Din is again caught prancing around the house in women's clothes, but this time by his pregnant wife. She states it would be best for the child that Din move away, never to be seen or to be known by the child. Din owns up to his transgender desires, despite truly loving his wife, but agrees to go away and promises to send money home to raise the child.

In the main storyline of the film Tonmai returns from America on the death of his father – that he has never met, nor even knew existed – to take over the management of the nightclub, or otherwise sell it off. It transpires that Tonmai is the unborn son in the previous story.

The second major storyline of the film concerns itself with Saitarn (Penpak Sirikul) a successful middle-aged woman in an expensive car who we eventually discover is looking for her father that she has not seen since for many years. Yes, this is Din, who has had a transgender operation and became a successful nightclub owner. He/she is the unseen father to Tonmai. She does find her aged father, but arrives at his house at the same time as an armed robbery is occurring and in protecting her father is mortally wounded by a second gunman. It is unclear whether the second gunman is another robber or a neighbour who mistakenly thinks Saitarn is attacking the father.

Portraying the story as I have done above, it all seems straightforward, but by intertwining all stories so they are told in parallel, with no clear indication of their

relationship with each other or their time separation it is very confusing and this confusion stands in the way of being able to relate to the characters.

Overall I found the cinematography good, but hampered by visions of cloudy skies and murky seas.

The transgender and transvestite cast members of the nightclub did not come over as real people. And that includes one “ladyboy” with a goatee beard! Were they overacting, or is that a real portrayal of these nightclub cast members? I don’t mix in these circles so I am not sure.

Initially, I was not too enamoured by this film because I did not relate to most of the people portrayed, but once I thought about it and became to understand their backgrounds I got much more from it.

By revealing the plot lines, I am sure the viewer will get a lot more out of the film – like someone coming back for a second view. For this reason I feel perfectly justified in revealing more than just my thoughts on the film.

Ian Davidson



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