

Luminous Velocity Releasing presents

a Shining Moon Production

A Film By Neten Chokling
MILAREPA

90 minutes – Color – 35mm – Dolby SR/SRD – 1.85
In Tibetan with English Subtitles

Rated PG for Some Violence, Disturbing Images,
and Thematic Elements

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“Milarepa: Magician, Murderer, Saint” has gained glowing reviews in every city where it has opened across the USA. But behind the scenes, perhaps even more remarkable, is that Neten Chokling Rinpoche, an unassuming Buddhist monk who had never directed a film before, took the reins of a film that brought over 60 monks to film in a stark, desolate Himalayan plateau that is almost inaccessible to most locals, much less film crews, caterers, wardrobe trucks and hair and makeup trailers. That he was able to achieve what the Hollywood Reporter called, "a powerful revenge drama," in the most challenging of environments (and within a limited budget and time frame) is a story filled with enough drama, adventure, humor and suspense to be a movie in itself.

"Subordinates Western-style filmmaking to Eastern Wisdom with modest unforced charm and narrative thrift" -The New York Sun

"An intriguing mixture of spiritual didacticism and old-school historical entertainment" -New York Magazine

"Rugged backdrops that John Ford would have killed for" -The New Yorker

FILMMAKERS

Directed by
Neten Chokling

Written by
Neten Chokling & Tenzing Choyang Gyari

Produced by
Raymond Steiner

Executive Producer
Gregory Kruglak

Co-Producer
Norbu Wangmo Gyari

Director of Photography
Paul J. Warren

Edited by
Suzy Elmiger, ACE

Music by
Joel Diamond

Art Director
Orgyen Tobgyal

Soundtrack available through
Lakeshore Records

CAST

(In order of appearance)

MESSENGER Jampel Dorje

ATTENDANT Tsewang Kalsang

MILA Tenpa Choephel

NGODUP Tsendup

DAWA Tsering Gyaltzen

MILAREPA (INFANT) Tenzing Gyalpo

PARTY SINGER Karga

KARGYEN Kelsang Chukie Tethong

LHAMO Pema Choedon

GOSSIPING WOMEN Khargi

Dechen Wangmo

Dolkhar

MILAREPA (AGE 7) Dechen Wangmo (child)

PETA (AGE 4) Ngawang Tsomo

ZESAY (AGE 6) Tenzing Ngoudop

LOBSANG Khenrab Drawutsang

DHONDUP Palden Gyaltsso

UNCLE GYALTSEN Gonpo

AUNT PEYDON Tsamchoe

MILAREPA (AGE 16) Jamyang Lodro

PETA (AGE 13) Tashi Lhamo

JAMYANG Dawang

DORJE Jamyang Dorjee

PEMA Thupten Lodro

MILAREPA'S FRIENDS Pema Tsundue

Ugyen Tsering

Lhawang

Abo Rinchen

ZESAY (AGE 15) Tashi Choedon Gyari

MILAREPA (ADULT) Jamyang Lodro
BONPO Godi Lama
FIELD MAN Tseten Choepel
WANDERING MONK Tulku Pema Wangchen
DHARMA WANGCHUK Jamyang Nyima
HORSEMEN Garab Sangpo, Nawang Sonam, Thupten Lodeo
PALTSO Tashi Paltso
YUNGTON TROGYEL Orgyen Tobgyal
SORCERY STUDENTS Tenzing Choepel
Kalsang Dorjee
Pema Yeshe
Pema Sherab
Lodeo Rabten
YONTEN GYATSO Wanga Dhapka
OLD WOMAN Dorje Dolma
THREATENING VILLAGERS Wangchen Damdul
Ngawang Tashi
OLD MONK Khenpo Lobsang Tenzing Rinpoche
CRYING WOMEN Karma Dolma
Tenzing Lhamo
Sonzom
Dolma Lhamo
Dechen Dolkar

SYNOPSIS

“Milarepa: Magician, Murderer, Saint” is a story about greed and vengeance, of demons, magic, murder—and redemption. It is an ancient tale that bears a timeless message about the futility of revenge.

Nine hundred years after his death, Milarepa remains Tibet’s greatest visionary, sorcerer, saint, poet and mystic. Yet his youthful rage and black magic brought death and destruction upon his enemies and suffering to his family.

Born into a wealthy merchant family, Milarepa lives a life of privilege in a small village until his father falls deathly ill. To preserve his heritage and care for his family, his father entrusts the family estate to his own unscrupulous brother, who promises to maintain it and pass it back to Milarepa once he marries.

However, immediately following the father’s death, the ruthless uncle seizes the family fortune for his own. Penniless and without protection, Milarepa along with his mother and younger sister, live enslaved by his uncle for nine years, subsisting on scraps of food, toiling in barren fields. As a last resort, his mother invites the villagers to a meager party, where she announces that Milarepa is now of age to marry his childhood sweetheart and take control of their family estate. When the uncle claims that there never was an estate, she finds no support among the villagers who had been her friends: not one person will stand up to him.

Milarepa and his mother are forced to accept their cruel fate. Humiliated and desperate, his mother plots to avenge this injustice. In the youthful Milarepa she finds not only a devoted son, but also a ready instrument of revenge. Selling the last of the family’s possessions, she instructs him to seek out the master sorcerer Yongten Trogyal to learn the skills needed to destroy his uncle’s family and supporters.

Milarepa’s journey takes him to Yongten’s mountain fortress, where he diligently studies and masters the black arts. Armed with the necessary powers and assisted by demons, he invokes a spell to crush and destroy his uncle’s home and much of the surrounding village. In the process, his three cousins and many of the guests gathered at a family wedding also are killed. Almost immediately, an angry mob gathers to stop him; in order to escape certain death, he uses a secret mantra to dislodge a massive boulder, setting off an avalanche and scattering the pursuing villagers.

While revenge brings his mother great joy, the blood on his hands offers him no peace. Fleeing the wrath of the vengeful villagers, and haunted by the sight of the innocent dead, he hides away in a small Buddhist temple. He confesses to the guardian of the temple, an old monk, that his “enemies are endless.” It is then that he receives this life-changing advice:

*Enemies arise from your own mind;
To conquer them,
Cease negative actions,
Cultivate positive ones,
And tame your mind.*

Stunned by the suffering caused by own vengeful actions, the memory and voices of his victims cause tidal waves of regret, tearing his mind apart. Victory over his enemies brings him neither vindication nor peace. Instead, it teaches him the futility of revenge and propels him on another journey – this time to find a spiritual teacher who can deliver him from the suffering that arose as a result of his negative deeds.

ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

From the Producer of **“Travelers & Magicians”** and **“The Cup”** comes a story brimming with spectacular scenery, adventure, revenge, magic, and mystery.

“Milarepa: Magician, Murderer, Saint” is the debut feature film for the young Tibetan lama Neten Chokling. Filmed on location in the remote and beautiful Spiti Valley on the Indo-Tibetan border, **“Milarepa: Magician, Murderer, Saint”** was shot on Super16 mm with a cast of actors plucked from Tibetan communities around India. The crew of 108 consisted of a handful of professionals from Australia, India, and the United States and over 50 monks from the Pema Ewam Chogar Gyurme Ling Monastery in northern India. The monks made up the majority of the cast and crew, including the film’s star, the supporting cast, and even the Unit Manager and Boom Operator.

Although the villages of Spiti have changed little in the past thousand years, recreating 11th century Tibet in one of the most isolated regions of the Indian Himalayas provided a serious challenge for art director and eminent historian Orgyen Tobgyal Rinpoche. To ensure the film’s authenticity, he borrowed props and costumes from local monasteries and villagers’ homes, resulting in the impressive collection of Tibetan antiquities and treasures seen throughout the film.

Ancient Buddhist texts describe the film’s period as a time in Tibet’s history when sorcerers roamed the hills and yogis were seen flying through the sky. Such a magical and mystical environment initially was hard to conceive, but the production team soon found it permeating the set and becoming part of the film’s own mythology. For example, when the crew’s two cameras broke down for no apparent reason during the second week of production, the art director performed a series of divinations, which revealed that certain negative forces were trying to impede the film’s success. A team of monks and lamas quickly was assembled to perform numerous sacred rituals in order to pacify all negativity and remove the obstacles. In fact, all of the film’s important production decisions were made through a process of divination (“Mo” in Tibetan), including start dates, cast and crew choices, film stocks, and shooting locations.

Following the successful completion of the film’s principal photography, the producers had to regroup to raise funds to finish the picture. Concurrently, an impressive post-production team was assembled on the east coast of the United States. Suzy Elmiger served as the film’s editor, and Robert Hein (Sound One) joined the team as the sound designer. **“Milarepa: Magician, Murderer, Saint”** used a fully digital post path and Digital Intermediate to complete the film. Assembled at Post Works in New York, and aided by the special effects work of John Nugent’s Academy Award™ winning team at Sandbox Films, the magic of **“Milarepa: Magician, Murderer, Saint”** was brought vividly to life. The musical score, composed by Joel Diamond, consists of lyrics from “The Hundred Thousand Songs of Milarepa”. Sung by the film’s leading actress, Kelsang Chukie Tethong, along with Tibetan nun Ani Choying Drölma, whose recordings with Steve Tibbetts have brought her international acclaim, the music is both enchanting and hypnotic. The soundtrack is available from Lakeshore Records.

ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

H.E. Neten Chokling Rinpoche was born in 1973 into a farming family from central Bhutan. At the age of two, he was recognized by many of the living masters as the reincarnation of a great Tibetan yogi, Chokgyur Lingpa. Upon his recognition he was taken to his ancestral monastery, Pema Ewam Chogar Gyurme Ling Monastery in Bir, India, and enthroned as the fourth incarnation of this great master. In the very monastery that he had built in a previous life, he received his formal Buddhist training and grew to become an accomplished and renowned meditation practitioner and spiritual leader.

In previous incarnations, Neten Chokling Rinpoche was known for his many great accomplishments in association with Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo (1820–1892), a Buddhist master who played a pivotal role in revitalizing and preserving Buddhism in Tibet. Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo's present incarnation is Dzongsar Jamyang Khyentse Rinpoche, also known as Khyentse Norbu, the critically acclaimed director of **"The Cup"** and **"Travelers & Magicians"**. A colleague of Norbu, Neten Chokling Rinpoche, was a principal actor in **"The Cup"** (shot at Neten's monastery) and worked on Khyentse Norbu's latest production, **"Travelers & Magicians"**, as second unit director, acting coach, and occasional stuntman. This remarkable creative relationship between Neten Chokling Rinpoche and Khyentse Norbu, dating back many centuries, is alive and well and flourishing in this century.

Fascinated with the power of cinematic art and the emotional impact of storytelling through sound and moving pictures, Neten Chokling Rinpoche's first exposure to cinema direction came with his participation in Bernardo Bertolucci's **"Little Buddha"**. His cinematic studies continued in conjunction with Khyentse Norbu's **"The Cup"**, with Neten Chokling involved from pre-production to the final sound mix in Australia. He has made several short films, but credits most of his cinema education to his admiration for and numerous viewings of films by Akira Kurosawa. Neten Chokling's rigorous training in the Buddhist classical tradition, combined with a deep interest in the film medium, make him one of this generation's most innovative interpreters of Himalayan Buddhism. **"Milarepa: Magician, Murderer, Saint"** is his debut feature film.

THE STORY BEHIND THE PRODUCTION– OR, HOW TO SUPPORT A CONTEMPORARY MONASTERY

In addition to being a filmmaker, Neten Chokling is the spiritual head of an important Tibetan Buddhist lineage, with a monastery of 150 monks in the Indian Himalayan foothills, and an ancient monastery in Tibet housing another 100 monks. He recently started taking in poor and orphaned children from Nepal, victims of the civil and political unrest there. Following completion of the film, he returned to his monastery to oversee the care of the children. In the process, he discovered that one of his adopted little “boys” actually was a diminutive and sick 5 year-old girl. The monks had hidden her, fearing that she would not be allowed to stay at the monastery. Far from expelling her, Neten Chokling worried about her health, noting that her chest was “turned in like a little bird” and that she suffered from frequent nosebleeds. He arranged for her to be examined by specialists in New Delhi – an overnight journey from his monastery. All of the children, currently numbering 40, are cared for by the monks and are being fed, clothed and housed by the monastery, as well as receiving a valuable monastic education. Asked if he plans to take in any more orphans, Neten Chokling reflects for a moment and says, “We don’t have any more space or money to take care of them, but how can I say no? I could never turn away someone in need, and most particularly young children with no other place to go.”

With Tibet’s traditional patronage system that historically supported the monastics increasingly becoming an anachronism in the modern world, the challenge of raising funds sufficient to support Neten Chokling’s monastery and his new young monks can seem insurmountable. With this in mind, lama Neten Chokling hopes that the film will succeed based on the merits of the story and thus accomplish two goals: to bring the story of Milarepa to large audiences throughout the world, and to provide a more modern means of generating revenue for his monastery and young monks. While traditional training and compassionate activity will continue to be Neten Chokling’s core mission, he hopes to share his vision on the big screen, bringing a powerful ancient tradition to the modern medium of film.

INTERVIEW WITH THE DIRECTOR

About Being A Lama

Where were you born?

I was born near Thimphu, the capital of Bhutan, in 1973. Bhutan is in between India and Tibet. Tibet is actually under China right now, so we should say between China and India is a small country called Bhutan.

In a big city?

In a big city? How do I describe it? It has one street, but this is the biggest street in Bhutan [laughs].

People call you Rinpoche. What does Rinpoche mean?

A direct translation is “precious”, like precious jewels, precious things, like diamonds; whatever is precious is “rinpoche.” However, in Tibetan, Rinpoche is usually reserved for an important teacher, thus it would appear that the teacher must be very significant for Tibetan Buddhism.

When and how were you recognized as a Rinpoche?

I actually was recognized before I was born, but they came to search for me in Bhutan and they found me when I was maybe two years old.

Where is your monastery?

One is in Tibet, one in India.

Do you split your time between them?

I've been to Tibet only once. Because of the political situation between Tibet and China, I actually am not allowed to go to Tibet. Thus most of the time I live in my monastery in the town of Bir in the Himalayas in India.

So what do you do at a monastery?

My main job in the monastery is to educate all the monks and to help them become accomplished practitioners of the Buddha's teachings. This is done by helping them cultivate compassion and the desire to help other people. Those who graduate from the monastery are trying to follow the words of the Buddha, who taught about universal love and universal responsibility. By finding our own inner peace, we attempt to live a sane and ethical life with the intention to benefit others so that we all may contribute to a more peaceful world.

About Movies

When did you watch your first movie?

I watched my first movie I was about twelve years old. I had gone to Bhutan from India to receive teachings from His Holiness Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche. We didn't have any TVs at my monastery at that time, but I happened to see part of a film in town, on a small TV, in a shop, but I had never seen a big film. So when I got to Bhutan, they said, "Let's go watch a movie." I thought it was going to be on a TV, so then I watched the movie and it was so BIG, I was so amazed.

Do you remember what that movie was?

I remember very clearly, because it was a Bruce Lee movie, though I don't actually remember the name.

Seeing that movie for the first time, did you have some inspiration or thought that one day you would make a movie?

No, no, I hadn't even thought about making a movie at this time, but I thought they were really cool, very effective in communicating a message to a large number of people. So after that, I just kept watching movies whenever I got a chance.

What kinds of films do you like and why?

Mmmm... Of course there are many great filmmakers in this world, but mostly I like Japanese movies – Kurosawa and Ozu, because of how they shoot, how they tell the story. They are really artistic and different.

What films have you seen lately?

When I have the opportunity to visit the United States, I get to see many Hollywood movies, like "**War of the Worlds**". I also saw "**40-Year-Old Virgin**".

You saw that one? Was it good?

Yeah, it's a real Hollywood movie. I also recently saw "**Kung Fu Hustle**".

What did you like about it?

It was really funny. I think they've done a good job, really funny and the special effects are technically really well done. Good comedy.

About Milarepa: Magician, Murderer, Saint

What is your film about?

My movie is about the life of Milarepa, primarily about the first part of his life. He was an eleventh-century Tibetan yogi who first started off as a sorcerer but later renounced his deadly ways to devote his life to dharma (Buddhist) practice. The main characters are also the stars of “**The Cup**”, but we also have new faces this time.

Was it difficult filming in India? How did your cast and crew hold up?

We shot in the valley of Spiti. The high altitude and the cold weather were definitely obstacles. We had to use portable heaters to keep the room warm, but that would suck up a lot of power so sometimes we had to stay in a dimly lit room but with the heater on. It was basically a choice between a fairly warm room (not really all that warm even with that heater) with very dim lights or a brightly lit room with no heat! Some of us even had to sleep with hats on. But the filming was made easier thanks to the local people of Spiti. Apparently, Spiti was once part of the Tibetan kingdom, so due to our similar backgrounds, like religion and our very similar language, we had no problems. The locals were really accommodating. As with every film, there are always issues on the set among the crew. Basically, our cast was easy to deal with. However, O.T. Rinpoche – who not only is my monasteries’ Abbot, our Art Director but also was a lead actor – he was his own director! Thank goodness he is so good at that! I was very grateful that O.T. Rinpoche was a part of this film – he was both an inspiration and a great support throughout the entire process of making this film.

I heard you had a unique way to make decisions, is this true?

That depended on the decisions one is talking about. When it came to weather problems, like when we should leave the valley due to the snow, and other dates, most of the decisions were made by the “Mo” (a Tibetan divination process). The other decisions which were required on the set, I made them after talking with the involved people.

Was it hard to make your film? What were your major challenges?

It was difficult and challenging for so many reasons. Securing financing for a new director is extremely difficult. Also, as a first-time director, I was learning some things as I went along. However, I was determined to give to the world the story of an inspiring character. Even though I was familiar with Milarepa’s story before I made this film, the ups and downs of my journey to finish this film made me more inspired by his life. What we went through in this film is nothing compared to his journey, and the obstacles we encountered and overcame made completion of this film even more rewarding.

About Being a Director

Do your peers find it funny that you, a Rinpoche, are making movies?

Actually, my real work as a rinpoche is to help all living beings. The Buddha always said, "Help according to the time and in that moment, whichever way is the best way to help." In his generation, of course they didn't have movies or anything like that to reach people and help them learn about Buddhism. Now we do. We have this incredible way to reach many people in a way that is both informative and entertaining, with the possibility of making a real emotional connection. So when seen in this light, I think my peers understand completely the value of my making this kind of film.

This being your first film, did you learn very much about the whole filmmaking process?

I learned a lot from making this movie; actually this movie has been a very good film school!

Do you have any particular aspirations for this film?

The story of Milarepa itself is beautifully inspiring with lots of wonderful teachings. This film tells the story of his early life; we hope to follow with a film about his later life, which is more poetic and contains the most important part of his life.

We chose to tell only this part of the story in the first film to emphasize the importance of starting a spiritual path based on one's own raw experience of suffering. There's got to be some grit behind your intention to study meditation; it can't be with the hope that it's all about magic and beautiful experiences; that approach won't last. What makes you sincere is how grounded you are in the truths of life.

If this film inspires just a single person to become more compassionate, tolerant and patient towards others, I will be more than happy. From a Buddhist point of view, this is the most precious gift that we can offer to the world.

ABOUT THE CAST

Jamyang Lodro (as *Milarepa*)

Tibetan monk Jamyang Lodro is back on the big screen as the young man who, after killing his uncle's family in an act of revenge, grows up to become Milarepa, Tibet's greatest saint.

In 1999 Jamyang Lodro won critical acclaim for his role as the mischievous, kind-hearted, and football-obsessed young monk in director Khyentse Norbu's "**The Cup**". According to *The New York Times*, "Mr. Tobgyal and Mr. Lodro (his son and a monk), have flawless comic timing. If he were not pledged to a higher calling, Mr. Lodro could become an international child movie star." Similarly, *CineScene* states, "I don't know where Norbu found him [Lodro], but in my book he was born to be a star." And the *Gentle Voice* newsletter writes of Jamyang Lodro at the Cannes Film Festival that he was "an instant hit. He was as cheeky as ever and somewhat embarrassed when he was asked by young French girls for autographs."

Among his peers at the Chokling Monastery School of Buddhist Studies he is most famous for convincing a lama (director Khyentse Norbu) to take him to Disneyland in exchange for his acting services in "**The Cup**". Born and raised in a Tibetan refugee settlement, he studies at Mindrolling Monastery in Dehradun, India.

Orgyen Tobgyal (as *Yongten Trogyal*)

Orgyen Tobgyal takes on the role of Yongten Trogyal, the powerful sorcerer who teaches Milarepa black magic in his quest to avenge the injustice done to his family. "**Milarepa: Magician, Murderer, Saint**" marks the Tibetan Abbot's return to acting in his follow-up to "**The Cup**", his highly acclaimed cinematic debut, in which he played the Gecko, or disciplinarian. Producer Raymond Steiner considers him "a Tibetan Marlon Brando" for the gravitas he brings to a role. During production, his nickname "O.T." Rinpoche took on new meaning, as "One Take" Rinpoche, for his astonishing performances that needed only one take. Born into an illustrious family of Buddhist gurus and yogis, Orgyen Tobgyal was recognized as an incarnate lama from the Chokling Tersar tradition.

Known for his encyclopedic knowledge of Buddhist history and practices, as well as his mastery of sacred rituals, Orgyen Tobgyal was the "Mo" diviner/consultant for the film – as well as its art director. Many young lamas consider Orgyen Tobgyal to be one of the true bridges between the old and new generations of Tibetan Buddhist culture. In his work as chief preceptor of Chokling Monastery, he represents the paradoxical tensions in contemporary Tibetan society – strongly traditional in some matters, and surprisingly liberal – even radical – in others.

Kelsang Chukie Tethong (as *Kargyen*)

Kelsang Chukie Tethong plays Kargyen, Milarepa's revenge-obsessed mother. Born in Nepal, she was raised in a musical family who sent her to the Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts (TIPA) in Dharamsala, India. Tethong spent eleven years at TIPA training as a classical Tibetan vocalist and contemporary songwriter. She gave her first international concert in Holland in 1996, and since then she has performed solo in concerts in Europe, Asia, and the United States, including the two Freedom Concerts organized by Milarepa Fund and the Beastie Boys in New York and Washington, D.C. Chukie has performed at several celebrations for His Holiness the Dalai Lama, including the celebration of the 60th anniversary of his enthronement; the Caravan World Rhythm Society in Vancouver, Canada; the Tibet House India International Center, New Delhi; and the Conference on International Buddhist Women at National Taiwan University, Taipei. She co-founded Gangchenpa, whose *Voices from Tibet* album was released in 2000, and in Taiwan she recorded *Voices from Tara* for PBC, which was released in 2002. Chukie has recently completed a tour with Ngawang Khechog, the well-known Tibetan flutist, to Korea, Japan, and Taiwan.

ABOUT THE CREW

Raymond Steiner (*Producer*)

Raymond Steiner's experience spans the film, theater, design, and publishing arenas in the United States, Europe, Asia, and Australia. Some of the productions and personalities that he has been involved with include MGM's "**2001: A Space Odyssey**", Paramount's "**The Adventurers**", Fox's "**FernGully: The Last Rainforest**", Apple Corp's "**Sergeant Pepper**", the 14th Dalai Lama, Woody Allen, MOMA (NYC), Apple, Microsoft, and many others. Mr. Steiner has been associated with Khyentse Norbu for more than 20 years, and produced and art directed his two feature films, "**The Cup**" (Winner of the Pusan International Film Festival FIPRESCI Prize and the Toronto International Film Festival People's Choice Award, second place) and "**Travelers & Magicians**" (Winner of the Telluride Mountain Film Festival and the Deauville Asian Film Festival, Audience Award).

Gregory Kruglak (*Executive Producer*)

Gregory Kruglak, is the President of the Conservancy for Tibetan Art and Culture, an organization dedicated to preserving Tibet's rich history through art, performance, and multimedia. Kruglak also is the co-founder of the Autumn Moon Film Fund, a capital group dedicated to supporting Buddhist themed cinema; and Chairman of The Bridge Fund, one of the largest non-governmental organizations working on the Tibetan plateau. Kruglak has a Ph.D. in International Relations with minors in International Economics and International Law. He is the founder of the privately held Global Voices Fund.

Paul J. Warren (*Director of Photography*)

During his illustrious career in feature films, short films, and documentaries, Paul J. Warren has traveled the world, from Bhutan to India, Antarctica, and Costa Rica. His film credits include the portrayal of artists and their need to paint dreamtime stories in "**Beyond the Dreamtime**", mythical pigs and surfers off the Sumatran coast in "**The Golden Pig**", and "**Antarctica**" for National Geographic. He was director of photography for Khyentse Norbu's feature film "**The Cup**", which was shot in the remote town of Bir, India, in the foothills of the Himalayas. Mr. Warren's ability to bridge the gap between the different demands of features and documentaries gives him a rare and versatile approach to the multitude of methods available in finding appropriate visual dialog for the story at hand. His other works include "**The Making of 'The Matrix' 1, 2, and 3**", "**Good Luck Jeffrey Brown**", "**The Story of Rosie Dock**", "**Australia Take a Bow**", "**Tales from a Suitcase-Series One**", "**Tropic Gothic**", and "**Poles Apart**".

Suzy Elmiger (*Editor*)

A native of New York, Suzy Elmiger started off in the documentary arena and moved into the narrative feature-editing world with Robert Altman's groundbreaking film "**Short Cuts**". She continued to work with Mr. Altman on the Golden Globe nominated films "**Ready to Wear**" and "**Mrs. Parker and the Vicious Circle**", which Altman produced for Alan Rudolph. She went on to edit "**Afterglow**" and "**Breakfast of Champions**" for Rudolph, and has cut Stanley Tucci's acclaimed films "**Big Night**", "**The Impostors**", and "**Joe Gould's Secret**". More recently she has edited "**People I Know**", starring Al Pacino, "**House of D**" for director David Duchovny, and James Toback's "**Harvard Man**" and "**When Will I be Loved**". On "**Milarepa: Magician, Murderer, Saint**", she brought her appreciation for the east and her patient and skillful timing of human interactions to shape the story of the Tibetan saint.

Robert Hein (*Supervising Sound Editor*)

Robert Hein, a native of New York, is one of the most eminent sound designers working today. He has been the chief sound designer on many of Woody Allen's films, including "**Match Point**", "**Deconstructing Harry**", "**Alice**", "**Bullets Over Broadway**", and "**Mighty Aphrodite**", as well as on "**The Royal Tenenbaums**", "**Practical Magic**", "**Secret Window**", "**Broken Flowers**", "**Ghost Dog**", "**Dead Man**", "**Before Night Falls**", "**Crooklyn**", "**Eight Men Out**", and "**Radio Days**" (for which he was nominated for a BAFTA). Mr. Hein's work on "**Milarepa: Magician, Murderer, Saint**" has given a fresh vision to the mysterious and stark Himalayan soundscape.

Joel Diamond (*Composer*)

Joel Diamond is a composer, arranger, producer, and performer of both "serious" and contemporary music. Selected by *Variety* as one of "Twenty Creatives to Watch," Mr. Diamond created the score for the immensely powerful film "**The Believer**", written and directed by Henry Bean and Winner of Sundance Film Festival in 2001. The film was singled out by *Rolling Stone's* Peter Travers for "Joel Diamond's haunting score." The *Hollywood Reporter* noted, "The craftsmanship is first-rate – especially a moody and edgy score by Joel Diamond." Mr. Diamond's recent works include "**Dissident: Oswaldo Paya and the Varela Project**", "**The Junction**", directed by Ilan Ziv, which won first prize at the Haifa Film Festival; and "**Stalin's Wife**", directed by Slava Tsukerman. Other scores include "**The Suicide Club**", "**Heart of the Garden**", "**Anima**", and "**The Dogwalker**". An experienced studio producer and musician, Mr. Diamond produced the scores for Todd Solonz's "**Welcome to the Dollhouse**" and David Mamet's "**Oleanna**". He has performed extensively as a studio and touring musician with a wide range of performers, including Mick Taylor, Graham Parker, and Jane Olivor.

John P. Nugent (*Visual Effects Supervisor*)

John Nugent is best known for his work on the visionary films of "**The Lord of the Rings**" trilogy. He worked as the 2D visual effects supervisor on "**Fellowship of the Rings**" and "**The Two Towers**" and as the visual effects supervisor on "**Return of the King**". Mr. Nugent and his team of talented artists at Sandbox Pictures brought to life "**Terminator 3: Rise of the Machines**" and "**The Celestine Prophecy**", serving as their VFX supervisors. John has also worked on groundbreaking films such as "**The Matrix**", "**What Dreams May Come**", "**Starship Troopers**" and "**Judge Dredd**". On "**Milarepa: Magician, Murderer, Saint**", Mr. Nugent and his group at Sandbox brought to life the magic and mysticism of eleventh century Tibet and the supernatural powers of its hero, Milarepa.

Reviews

The Hollywood Reporter
Milarepa: Magician, Murderer, Saint
Bottom Line: An exciting story.
Richard James Havis
Sep 10, 2007

"Milarepa: Magician, Murderer, Saint", a movie about Tibet's most venerated lama, certainly lives up to its title. There's plenty of murder and magic as well as a touch of saintliness at the end. Those expecting a reflective Buddhist piece will be surprised. First-time director Neten Chokling's film actually is a powerful revenge drama. Despite the film's low budget, there's also spectacle, courtesy of the Himalayan locations.

There's always a niche for films about Tibet, but **"Milarepa's"** appeal could be wider if marketing stresses that it's an exciting story in its own right.

In 11th century Tibet, Milarepa's father on his deathbed bequeaths his wealth to his son when he comes of age. His uncle ignores this request and takes everything for himself. This leaves Milarepa (played as an adult by Jamyang Lodro) and his mother almost destitute.

At his mother's request, Milarepa heads into the mountains to study sorcery so that he can avenge himself by murdering the usurper. He succeeds but then realizes that he has to mend his ways because suffering can only lead to more suffering.

The script by Chokling and Tenzing Choyang Gyari is beautifully simple and sticks solidly to the main theme throughout. Milarepa's transformation from a murderous, if thoughtful, sorcerer to a compassionate individual is nuanced and understated. The drama comes in the big scenes where Milarepa invokes the power of the elements to gain his revenge. The special effects here are passable, though the mountainous locations are awe-inspiring enough.

Tibetan religious references and the sorcery mean that it would have been impossible to shoot this film in Tibet. Chinese authorities still forbid the depiction of superstition in films. So the film was shot on the Indian side of the Himalayas, where Chokling -- who's a lama himself -- heads a monastery.

The Los Angeles Times
Special to The Times
Milarepa: Magician, Murderer, Saint
Director Neten Chokling tells the tale of the 11th century mystic.
John Anderson
September 14, 2007

It's impossible to know whether Milarepa, the real-life, 11th century mystic at the center of director Neten Chokling's "Milarepa: Magician, Murderer, Saint," ever met the director -- Chokling has been recognized by some as the reincarnation of Tibetan yogi Chokgyur Lingpa, and his past lives allegedly go back centuries. What's usually a pretty sure thing, though, is that when an acolyte of any stripe makes a movie about his beliefs and religion, the results are safe as yak milk. Not so here.

The story of Milarepa is one of persecution, revenge and spiritual redemption, fairly standard in the inspirational biopic but hardly what we associate with Tibetan Buddhism. And while the tale is told in broad-stroke acting and a soberly respectful script, the elements of the case are pure romanticism.

Born into a well-to-do merchant family, to a father who was a leader of his people, the boy who would become the revered writer Milarepa was suddenly thrust into poverty via envy, lies and deceit. His father, Mila (Tenpa Choephel), knowing death is near, entrusts his fortune and his family to his brother Gyaltsen (Gonpo) and Gyaltsen's wife, Peydon (Tsamchoe), who promise to fulfill Mila's wish to give the fortune back to Milarepa upon his marriage. Mila apparently didn't know them very well: The uncle and aunt subject Milarepa and his mother, Kargyen (Kelsang Chukie Tethong), to a kind of slavery and near-starvation. When Milarepa comes of age and his mother throws a party to announce it is time for him to get his fortune, she is told there is none. The villagers show her no support. She plots her revenge.

Her son will study with the master sorcerer Yongten Trogyel (Orgyen Tobgyal) and return to smite his oppressors. And so Milarepa sets out to find his future master, with the blackest of intentions.

Director Chokling, a rinpoche who has had experience in filmmaking via his monastery's involvement with Bernardo Bertolucci's "Little Buddha" and then as an actor in Khyentse Norbu's "The Cup," shot his movie in the Spiti Valley, a wind-swept spot on the Indian-Tibetan border, and makes tremendous use of landscapes, the backdrop of the Himalayas and the rawness of the terrain. All suggest a suspension of time and endow the film with an appropriately mythic quality, embellished by Chokling's deft handling of the film's magical-realist aspects, and its most violent episode: Milarepa will bring on an avalanche that kills his uncle and his supporters. But he finds revenge less than sweet and returns to his master to learn a new way.

Jamyang Lodro brings to the role of Milarepa the seriousness of a true seeker and callow youth. He, too is a Tibetan monk, although like many of his peers, he doesn't live in the land of his culture, which is being not-so-slowly strangled by China. It's doubtful "Milarepa" will be opening in Beijing any time soon; all the more reason it deserves a look.

MPAA rating: PG for some violence/disturbing images and thematic elements. In Tibetan with English subtitles. Running time: 1 hour, 30 minutes. At Landmark's Nuart, 11272 Santa Monica Blvd., West L.A. (310) 281-8223; Regency South Coast Village 3, 1561 W. Sunflower Ave., Santa Ana, (714) 557-5701.

Reel.com
Milarepa (2006)
Tim Knight

Essentially cut off from most of the world until the 1960s, the tiny Southeast Asian country of Bhutan has so far managed to embrace western media and preserve its unique cultural heritage. In 2003, Bhutanese nobleman/director Khyentse Norbu effectively put his country on the cinematic map with his utterly charming seriocomic fantasy "**Travelers and Magicians**", the first feature film ever shot in Bhutan. Now, one of the stars of Norbu's "**The Cup**" (1999), Neten Chokling, makes an auspicious feature filmmaking debut with "**Milarepa: Magician, Murderer, Saint**", a transcendently beautiful and moving account of the 11th century Tibetan saint.

Written and directed with graceful assurance by Chokling, a young Tibetan lama revered as the fourth incarnation of the 19th century Buddhist meditation master Chogyur Lingpa, "**Milarepa**" focuses on the early years of the title character, born to a life of comparative privilege in a Himalayan village. Then known as Thöpaga, he can do little but watch helplessly when his wealthy merchant father dies, entrusting the family estate to his greedy brother, Gyaltsen (Gonpo). Over the next several years, Thöpaga (Jamyang Lodro), his mother Kargyen (Kelsang Chukie Tethong), and little sister Peta suffer undue hardship at the hands of Gyaltsen and his selfish wife, who treat them like slaves.

Furious at her in-laws for seizing her late husband's fortune, Kargyen makes a last-ditch effort to regain control of the family estate, but her appeal to her fellow villagers for help falls on deaf ears. Although devastated, she nonetheless vows to seek revenge on Gyaltsen and his family—through Thöpaga, whom she sends away to learn the black arts from the sorcerer, Yongsten Trogyal (Orgyen Tobgyal). Yet as Thöpaga ultimately learns, exacting revenge brings no satisfaction, only greater suffering and remorse. Renouncing the black arts, he takes spiritual refuge in a Buddhist temple, where he'll find lasting peace as Milarepa.

Filmed under arduous conditions in India's remote Spiti Valley, "**Milarepa**" is a captivating fable, told with heartfelt eloquence and restraint. The stark, unearthly landscape forms the ideal backdrop for Milarepa, which features naturalistic performances by a cast of non-professional actors. If there's anything wrong per se with Chokling's film, it's that Milarepa ends too abruptly; there's a frustrating, truncated quality to the narrative that undermines the emotional power of the conclusion. That aside, "**Milarepa: Magician, Murderer, Saint**" casts such a potent spell, you can see why it won the audience award at the 2006 National Geographic All Roads Film Festival.

The Orange County Register
Monk brings tale of 'the sinner's saint' to screen
Milarepa, the murderer-turned-Buddhist saint, focus of film that opens
Sept. 21
Gwendolyn Driscoll
September 19, 2007

Filmmakers rarely enjoy a reputation for saintliness. Neten Chokling may be the exception. The 33-year-old Buddhist lama, or teacher, heads a monastery in India and is said by some to be the reincarnation of a renowned Tibetan yogi.

His first film, "Milarepa: Magician, Murderer, Saint" brings to life the tale of Jetsun Milarepa, an 11th-century murderer who ultimately repented of his ways and became one of Buddhism's most venerated saints. The film was shot on an ascetic budget of \$1.5 million using a cast of mostly amateur actors including one of Chokling's fellow lamas.

Chokling will speak and show excerpts from the film, which has garnered praise from national media, at a special event Sept. 23 in Westminster. The film opens Sept. 21 in Orange County and runs for one week at South Coast Village Theater in Santa Ana.

Chokling spoke to the Register with translation assistance from his executive producer, Greg Kruglak.

Q: How did you get interested in filmmaking?

Neten Chokling: I grew up in a monastery in India. Forget about films – we didn't even have a TV to watch. (The monks) did not let me watch the movies because they thought it was very wild and very bad. The first movie I ever saw was a Bruce Lee movie when I was 12 years old. I was traveling from India to Bhutan and (sneaked out) with a friend to see it. It was very interesting and very exciting. So I started watching movies whenever I got a chance.

(Then) this movie ("The Cup") was shot in the monastery and the director is my friend. I acted in this movie...from this I had a little bit of experience and interest in movies. I became interested in making a movie.

Q: As a monk and adherent of Milarepa's teaching, was it difficult not to use the movie as an opportunity to preach?

Chokling: We didn't do anything purposely (to preach) but to tell this universal message. I was really just following the story which is kind of an entertaining story in itself.

Q: Was it physically challenging to film?

Chokling: We recruited about 50 monks from my monastery. It was filmed in this really remote place in India – the Spiti Valley – this was Tibetan territory in the past. It was very authentic but very remote. Very high altitude and very dusty and no facilities whatsoever so it was very challenging.

Q: Who will this movie appeal to?

Chokling: People who feel kind of hopeless because of (mistakes they've made) in their lives. The key is that (Milarepa) was so ordinary and that he stuck to this path. He was completely determined to make a huge amount of progress. To prove that the worst person like him can (become) enlightened. That there is no one who is beyond redemption.

Q: Is there a reason you decided to tell this story now?

Chokling: (Current events) were very much on my mind. The violence that we're in – the wars. Milarepa really had something to say about that. Basically harming others and revenge is not going to solve problems, its going to create more problems. That's why (Milarepa) changed his path into a compassionate person.

Q: You have been recognized by some as the reincarnation of Tibetan yogi Chokgyur Lingpa. Do you believe you are?

Chokling: I don't remember anything from my past lives, but I believe in those who recognize me as a reincarnation, so I think that I have no choice but to believe that I (am).

Q: What's your next project?

Chokling: We are trying to finish Milerepa's story in a second movie and then we'll see. I've seen so many Bruce Lee movies and of course I've also seen Jackie Chan. I would direct (a martial arts movie) if there was a chance.

Q: But don't martial arts conflict with the Buddhist message of tolerance?

Chokling: Martial arts if you really use your anger and your negative emotion – that's no good. Otherwise if you're just playing (make believe)... then its OK. Especially recently I saw the movie called Kung Fu Hustle and this is actually a martial arts movie but with a quite good message showing forgiveness.