

"THIS CITY IS A BATTLEFIELD"

PERANG KOTA



**CLOSING
FILM**
INTERNATIONAL
FILM FESTIVAL
ROTTERDAM
2025



A film by Mouly SURYA

Indonesia, Singapore, Netherlands, France, Norway, Philippines, Cambodia
2025 | Color | 119'



INTERNATIONAL SALES

Maria A. Ruggieri | head of sales | maria@chineseshadows.com
www.asian-shadows.com | contact@chineseshadows.com

PERANG KOTA

LOGLINE

A story of a war in a city as well as a family.

A story of sneaks, cheats and bargains in all its seductive and brutal textures.

An elegant neoclassical romantic wartime drama with a gripping political intrigue.

SYNOPSIS

Indonesia, Jakarta, 1946. After the declaration of independence, Jakarta remained under Dutch control, triggering bloody clashes between the army and the resistance movement. Isa (portrayed by Chicco Jericho), a hero during the war for independence, turned violin teacher, is involved with the resistance with his friend and violin student Hazil (portrayed by Jerome Kurnia), a wealthy, young and handsome man with a fervent fighting spirit. When Isa is asked to operate an underground mission to kill an important Dutch official in the attempt for the resistance to defend Indonesia's independence, Hazil by his side is eager to take on the underground mission, but he is one who is also trying to win Isa's wife, Fatimah (portrayed by Ariel Tatum). A great pianist and a courageous woman who fights to protect her family, Fatimah finds her feelings divided between the two men.

PERANG KOTA

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Indonesia's claim to independence in 1945 always strikes me as a weird story. We were occupied by the Japanese, and when the Japanese lost the war, we claimed our independence. Then, for three years, we were fighting off the Dutch, who colonized us before the Japanese. A country depleted after World War II tried to sneak its way back in. The whole thing strikes me as a story of sneaks, cheats, and bargains, but presented as heroic.

The main character of the book, from which this is adapted, intrigues me. Isa has lost everything that constitutes his role as a man in the war and his marriage, both in their marital bed and as a provider for the family. Then, heroism becomes peer pressure and, later, becomes a job and responsibility in order to put food on the table. Those subtle changes of certain roles in society are explored through other supporting characters, such as Fatimah; someone who is eager to fight, but forced to give into her duty as a mother and wife.

Perang Kota (This City is a Battlefield) is set against a grey area in history in 1946, when everyone greets each other with a celebration of their independence, "Merdeka!" ("Liberty!") but the burning and warring city shows nothing worth celebrating. The president has left the capital and these men are blurring the lines between right and wrong, colonizers and colonized, hero and villain, friend and enemy, man and woman.

Mouly Surya

PERANG KOTA

IN CONVERSATION WITH MOULY SURYA

The film is based on the novel A Road with No End by Mochtar Lubis (1952), and it marks your first adaptation from Book to Screen and your first history-based film. Why this novel?

I have always admired Mochtar Lubis as a writer, he was legendary. When I first read the book, just the first few pages - the massacre at Jaksa Lane, as also happened in the film, he wrote it in such way, moving from one character to the next and playing with the timeline - and also his prose - it painted vivid pictures in my mind that I know I had to film this.

How different is the film PERANG KOTA from the book A ROAD WITH NO END?

As you said, it is my first adaptation and it took a while for me to find my own film in the book. In the first draft. I remember there are some sequences in the first draft that gets questions of its function and meaning from Isabelle Glachant, our French co-producer, when she read it and I could only answer 'it was in the book.' Obviously, that wasn't a good enough reason. It was an uphill battle, the book was written in the 1950s and I wanted to marry it with my perspective of that time and the world we are living in today - so I tried to catch its essences, its anger, its passion.

Kamaruddin with his obsession with more sugar in his tea, lounging and complaining at his porch whilst the massacre is happening outside; his son, Hazil, ran out with a handgun to join the fight. I can't explain why, but I was very much drawn to those images, that scene was my first pull to the book. I can name some others that made it to the film: when Isa and his friends picked up the weapons and found a well with a woman killed inside it. In the book Isa is also proficient with the violin and was described as playing a rendition of Chopin's Heroic Polonaise.

The biggest thing I did, and probably the book fan is going to send me hate messages for it on social media, was that I made a conscious decision to reconstruct the main characters trait, namely Isa and Fatimah. Isa in the book was, to put it simply, a coward who was impotent. It was a devastating experience to follow his thoughts and desperation in the book, but the film needs a contrast. As you see, a book and a two hours film work in a very different way. So I gave Isa combat experience, I exaggerate his flamboyance (he plays Chopin on the violin in book in the first place) and inject Chiccho Jerikho in the role (who could be the most-manly actor you could find in Indonesia) to add more dimension to it and keep the impotence somewhat - I never liked the finality of the word, hence I wrote it into somewhat a spectrum.

PERANG KOTA



How did you construct your female lead character who the resistance heroes want to protect when she obviously could totally be part of their resistant movement?

For Fatimah, in the book she was a housewife who slept with her husband's friend. She went for a bit of transformation as well for the film. She can be seductive and soft like she is in the book but never meek in the film and a woman to represent her time as well. I had memories and stories of women from her generation. I remembered my late mother, my late aunt and my late grandmother. They were strong women. Some of them were as loud as me commanding the house. Some could be said that they were as strong as their husbands, some even stronger even though I had an aunt who couldn't even read despite that. Those times weren't easy for women, the society still basically kept them in a place. Sometimes by the very person who loved them most. It was a very intricate relationship and then during rehearsal, I found out that Ariel Tatum is a proficient piano player. It fits, you know. I always wonder deep down how Isa and Fatimah fell in love, and there you go, divine intervention came and give them music.

PERANG KOTA

What is the importance of that period in today Indonesia? Why did you decide to look back at those 1945 events?

Discovering Indonesia's history was a long journey. I was raised in the New Order era under a 33 years reign of a dictatorship. I memorized dates, heroes, names and events - then I became a filmmaker and see the world. And you compare your country and your society with the rest of the world. Everything that is in the world can be trace back to what happened in WW2. We see so many films about the war back then that it has become its own genre basically. And whenever I watched those films, I always tried to put my own country's history in comparison. You see, both the Allied forces and the Japanese, the hero and the villain of WW2 were our colonizers. It is not so different with the political and economic movements that we see today.

There are bound to be less popular victims. An everyday example for me; my late father can speak both Dutch and Japanese well, injecting words to his everyday sentence every now and then. Not so different with me who basically speaks a mash up language of Indonesian and English. It's still the same world, but we just call it with a different name. I don't feel like I am looking back that much. Definitely it is a contemporary matter. I am no history teacher and I just wanted to tell a story that will resonate to the world we are living.

As a female director was it more difficult to prepare and shoot this action film than the previous one you did in Indonesia?

I got tremendous support to do this film and probably it was the easiest film to finance in comparison to my previous Indonesian films. *MARLINA, THE MURDERER IN FOUR ACTS* was such a force to be reckon with, it opened so many doors and opportunities for me, it's truly incredible. Riding the Marlina's wave, we got basically every funding we applied for and the support of financiers who were also very intrigued with the project. Filming it, is another thing. Rama Adi (the producer) and I had a specific creative standard to achieve that we haven't done yet in our previous films. We certainly couldn't do it without the co-production support that we got, because it doesn't just mean money, it is the creative collaboration we were starving for. We were developing and planning to shoot the film when the pandemic happened. So I guess it was an organic process when we sign with all these international and local partners who were very eager to work with us on this film.

PERANG KOTA



Did your Hollywood debut film, TRIGGER WARNING, starring Jessica Alba, produced and released by Netflix, help you in preparing or shooting PERANG KOTA?

Well, directing is directing. It is inherently the same job regardless of budget constraints. So in that point of view, it is not too different to shoot in Indonesia and US. The pressure and the system are as different as night and day though - and the cultural differences as well in America. Yet I don't think I would be prepared mentally to do *PERANG KOTA* without having the experience of *TRIGGER WARNING*. I called that experience as my second post graduate degree, conducting an American action thriller set, working with an actress with a big of a name such as Jessica Alba, and basically being plucked out of my country and went to the opposite side of the world to do a Netflix film for almost 2 years.

I felt like after *MARLINA*, *THE MURDERER IN FOUR ACTS* I have exploited all skills and resources I have back home. But then with an American production I had realized that I had been setting limits to myself of what I can and cannot do when I wrote or staged a scene. I was never challenged in Indonesia since my second film by my cast and crew. I was one of the best back home, but in *TRIGGER WARNING* I was back like when I was doing my first film but with experience and age. After *TRIGGER WARNING*, I am much more comfortable doing scenes I was never comfortable before it. In a way with *PERANG KOTA* I think I just wanted to make something that is more ambitious, and dare I say more mature and a more complex film than the last one. I used to shy away from films that are too sentimental - loving subtlety too much. In *PERANG KOTA*, I think it is the first time I actually did rewrites on set, responding to the actor's performances and inspirations from interacting with them.

6

PERANG KOTA

Once you had your script, how did you develop this specific film project?

We were finding references of 1940's Jakarta and trying to find a balance. There is a certain tone and style to this time and place in other Indonesian films and I know that wasn't the tone and style I wanted for the film.

About a decade ago I had my first trip to Amsterdam and I remembered how it made a deep impression in me. We have those canals in Jakarta that the Dutch built when they colonized us. Seeing Amsterdam then that was the first time I really understood what they were trying to build. Hence the first piece of the puzzle I was trying to do seems to fit. And the canals, the Dutch buildings, the small alleyways became some sort of anchor when we were deciding on locations. You see, these main characters in the film, most of them are from what you would say upper class at that time. Educated, they speak Dutch well like a second language. So I wanted that tone and colour to portray how they have also been colonized culturally, they wanted to talk like the Dutch, dress like the Dutch whilst they are trying to break away from the Dutch.

You played with genre rules in MARLINA THE MURDER IN FOUR ACTS. How did you approach the resistance historical genre with PERANG KOTA?

The film kind of finds itself in tone with an American classic, there is romance, there is a war, a flamboyant hero - *CASABLANCA* was an influence, but there is also a troubled masculinity and a question to gender roles that are usually elements absent from films in that era. It is not as heavy as the way it was done in *MARLINA, THE MURDERER IN FOUR ACTS*, as I wanted to let the film find its own way.

In PERANG KOTA you worked with Dutch actors who travelled to Indonesia for the shooting. In your previous film you worked with Jessica Alba. How did it go with them? Was it different to work with European, Asian and American casts?

It was different. Culturally we are very different in how we communicate - Americans and Europeans are probably more upfront and expressive whilst in Asia we kinda have to read and guess around what the other person is thinking. Which is not as crazy as it sounds.

PERANG KOTA's Cast includes a very popular cast: Chicco Jerikho as Isa, Ariel Tatum as Fatimah and Jerome Kurnia as Hazil. Why did you choose each of them?

Jerome Kurnia was actually the first actor cast in the role. I saw him first in a supporting role in *THE EARTH OF MANKIND*, he was in the opening sequence and did a whole dialogue in Dutch with the main character and I think I just saw the first glimpse of Hazil in him. He seems very comfortable doing so I was very impressed so I look him up and had coffee with him. A very ambitious and intelligent young actor and he jumps head first for the opportunity. We didn't even have a script back then.

PERANG KOTA



The producer Rama Adi is the one who suggested Ariel Tatum and she sent us an audition tape for Fatimah. She put her hair up and was wearing a traditional ensemble to complete the look. She has the elegance but also the seductiveness we are looking for in the role. The softness but also the strength.

Chicco Jerikho was the last one to board the project. It was a unique choice. I remembered saying that if we are in an American high school, Chicco's stereotype would be the quarterback of the football team whilst Isa is the president of the student council. But by doing that totally opposite characteristic, Chicco brought in a unique dimension to the role and as an actor he has a great flexibility in doing so.

Shooting on location meant recreating the entire sound world of 1945. You worked for this with a French sound designer, Vincent Villa, and French foley artists. How did work on this?

Vincent Villa and I brainstorm a lot of ideas when we were doing the sound. To fill in that space: the city centre, the market, the alleyways... How you can hear echoes of war from their home, but also the neighbours' domestic arguments. Intimate but also intense. And sirens to signify the war that is happening in the city as an everyday occurrence.

PERANG KOTA

You worked with your old partners in Indonesia for the music. You had to balance the music the characters play and the score of your film. How did you handle those layers of music?

First of all, I had to decide what music the characters are playing. If you read the previous drafts, I jumped all over the place for each draft, trying to make the best choice. I'd make playlists and keep listening to them. From the classics to the locals, nothing seems right. I wanted something classical but also that has an edge to it. Until jazz kinda pop up and I am an avid fan of figure skating and saw an ice dance competition and they used Summertime for their program. And I've always loved Gershwin and his *RHAPSODY IN BLUE*. It's familiar, a little overused but, it was a masterpiece and Zeke Khaseli & Yudhi Arfani made a really interesting rendition with the quintet for it. For the score we tried to create an undertone to the drama and resistance that is going on in the film, a tone to place the film in its genre - a context for the audience.



You shot the film in real locations in Indonesia, yet you used extended special effects and VFX made in the USA, Netherlands and Indonesia. How did you balance things?

The balance is decided basically with the budget. We have a supervisor in Indonesia but some of the heavy lifting of the VFX was done by Exodus in the US. It is not all about technical, something that we learnt from *MARLINA, THE MURDERER IN FOUR ACTS* is that VFX is a lot about the creative concept. The main goal is to basically to create the space. The space that tells the story and that is the most difficult.

PERANG KOTA

What was the most difficult for you during the production of PERANG KOTA?

It was a tough production and post production. We had cash flow-problems, I didn't have a 1st AD at the second half of the production. It was quite hell-ish, to be honest. It was almost the death of me. But it was one of the most memorable and beautiful experience.

How do you see the situation of Indonesian Cinema today?

The industry is making a lot of films nowadays. There are a lot of new talents, new filmmakers popping out which was very exciting. Hopefully in the future we would have a systemic development in the industry that we see in other parts of the world. Libraries, art schools, film schools, and workers association.

The World Premiere of PERANG KOTA is taking place in the Netherlands, the country your main characters are fighting in 1945. What does it mean for you to open the film there?

It was the perfect fit for the film. Half of the DNA of the film is Dutch and it feels like the right place and context for the film.

We heard that you just finished the shooting of a new project, can you tell us more about it?

Yes, I have finished filming another film in December and we are currently on Post Production. It is based on a short story from an anthology book. It's a plane crash movie. I have the title in Indonesian but we don't have an English title yet as it isn't a direct translation kind of title.

PERANG KOTA

DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Mouly SURYA

Born in Jakarta, Mouly SURYA is considered one of the most promising female filmmakers in Indonesia. After graduating from Swinburne University, Melbourne with a BA in Media and Literature, Surya obtained an MA in Film and Television from Bond University, Queensland. In addition to making films, she also teaches a directing class in Jakarta.

Her debut film, FIKSI, won numerous awards including Best Director at JIFFEST 2008. It premiered internationally at the 13th Busan International Film Festival.

Her second feature, WHAT THEY DON'T TALK ABOUT WHEN THEY TALK ABOUT LOVE (2013) opened in competition at Sundance, followed by others festivals like the Hawaii FF and Karlovy Vary FF.



The film received the NETPAC Award at the International Film Festival Rotterdam in the Netherlands, was nominated for Best Feature Film at the 2013 Maya Awards, and was also nominated for Favorite Film at the 2014 Indonesian Movie Awards.

MARLINA THE MURDERER IN FOUR ACTS is Surya's first international co-production, including partners from France, Malaysia and Thailand. The film premiered at Cannes Directors' Fortnight in 2017. In 2018, it received 10 Citra Awards, equivalent to the Indonesian Oscars, for **Best Film, Best Director, Best Script, Best Leading Actress, Best Supporting Actress, Best Cinematography, Best Music, Best Sound, Best Art Direction, and Best Editing, and two Awards for Best Cinematography & Best Sound at Asian Academy Creative Awards.** In 2019 the film is Indonesia's official entry for the Best Foreign Language Film category at the 91st Academy Oscars Awards.

Surya was for two times the recipient of the Citra Award for Best Director, in 2008 for her directorial debut for FIKSI and in 2018 for her third film MARLINA THE MURDERER IN FOUR ACTS. She is the first and only woman director to win the Citra Award. In 2023, Surya was the recipient of the Kurosawa Akira Award of the Tokyo International Film Festival, an Award that honors renowned auteur's legacy and ongoing influence.

PERANG KOTA

In June 2024, her American film debut, TRIGGER WARNING, starring Jessica Alba was released by Netflix.

PERANG KOTA - This City Is A Battlefield is her fifth feature film. Adapted from the novel A ROAD WITH NO END by Mochtar Lubis (1952), it's Surya's first adaptation, her first history-based picture and her first feature with a lead male protagonist. It will World Premiere as Closing Film of the 54th International Film Festival Rotterdam.

DIRECTOR'S FILMOGRAPHY

PERANG KOTA THIS CITY IS A BATTLEFIELD

(International Sales: ASIAN SHADOWS)

2025, feature

- International Film Festival Rotterdam, Limelight Closing Film

TRIGGER WARNING

2024, feature

- Netflix Production

MARLINA THE MURDERER IN FOUR ACTS

(International Sales: ASIAN SHADOWS)

2017, feature

- Cannes IFF, Directors' Fortnight

WHAT THEY DON'T TALK ABOUT WHEN THEY TALK ABOUT LOVE

2013, feature

- Sundance Film Festival, 2013

FICTION (FIKSI)

2008, feature

- Busan International Film Festival, 2008

PERANG KOTA

THE MAIN CAST

Chicco Jerikho - Isa

Chicco (40) is an Indonesian Actor Chicco began his career in the entertainment industry in 2003 and quickly made a name for himself through his talent and charm. Over the years, he has been involved in various projects including Garin Nugroho's AACH AKU JATUH CINTA (2016), Joko Anwar's A COPY OF MY MIND (2016) and Angga Dwimas Sasongko's CAHAYA DARI TIMUR: BETA MALUKU (2014), in which he won best Actor at the Festival Film Indonesia. Aside from his acting career, Chicco Jericho has also been known for his philanthropic work and social involvement.

Ariel Tatum – Fatimah

Ariel (28) is an Indonesian actress, singer, and model. She gained recognition for her work in the entertainment industry at a young age. Her engaging performances and charismatic presence have earned her a substantial fan following in Indonesia. Ariel Tatum is known for her dedication to her craft and has become a notable figure in the Indonesian entertainment scene. Her filmography include Garin Nugroho's SEPEDA PRESIDEN (2021), Rudi Sudjarwo's SAYAP-SAYAP PATAH (2022) and Tompi's SELESAI (2021).

Jerome Kurnia – Hazil

Jerome (30) is the hottest new talent in the Indonesian film scene. He began his career in 2019 with Hanung Bramantyo's THIS EARTH OF MANKIND (2019). Following that, he took on a lead role in Wregas Bhanutedja's coming-of-age film, PHOTOCOPIER (2021), earning him the Best Supporting Actor award at the Festival Film Indonesia.

PERANG KOTA

CAST & CREW

	Chicco Jerikho	Isa
	Ariel Tatum	Fatimah
	Jerome Kurnia	Hazil
Writer & director	Mouly Surya	
Director of photography	Roy Lolang	
Production Designer	Frans Paat	
Sound designer	Vincent Villa	
Music composers	Zeke Khaseli & Yudhi Arfani	
Editors	Robert Grigsby Wilson, Natalie Soh	
Casting	Sapto Soetarjo, Rudi Kowek, A.C.I	
Costume	Meutia Pudjowarsito	
Make up	Eba Sheba	
Produced by	Rama Adi	
Producers	Chand Parwez Servia, Fauzan Zidni, TututKolopaking	
Executive Producers	Riza, Willawati, Reza Servia, Mona Surya, Rieza Jusuf, Mithu Nisar, Amrit Dido Servia Raza Servia	
Co-producers	Anthony Chen, Tan Si En, Denis Vaslin, Fleur Knopperts, Isabelle Glachant, Ingrid Lill Høgtun, Marie Fuglestein Lægrid, Linda Bolstad Strønen, Bianca Balbuena, Bradley Liew, Axel Hadiningrat, Giovanni Rahmadeva, Sierra Tamihardja, Loy Te	

Adapted from the novel “**A Road with No End**” by Mochtar Lubis

Produced with the support of

Ministry of Culture of the Republic Indonesia–Dana Indonesiana–Indonesia Endowment Fund for Education,
Singapore Film Commission,
The Netherlands Film Fund + Hubert Bals Fund Co-Production Scheme,
L’aide aux cinémas du monde–Center national du Cinéma et de l’image animée, Institut français, Sørfond–The Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs,
Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy of the Republic of Indonesia,
Film Development Council of the Philippines–Filmphilippines Incentives,
Purin Pictures

Developed with the support of

The Netherlands Film Fund + Hubert Bals Fund Co-Development Scheme
Locarno Film Festival: Open Doors

PERANG KOTA

TECHNICAL DETAILS

Original Title	Perang Kota
English Title:	This City is a Battlefield
Duration:	119 Minutes
Aspect Ratio:	1.33:1
Format:	DCP
Sound:	Dolby Atmos
Year:	2025
Original Languages:	Indonesian/Dutch/English
Countries of production:	Indonesia, Singapore, Netherlands, France, Norway, Philippines, Cambodia
Production Companies:	Cinesurya, Starvision, Kaninga Pictures, Giraffe Pictures, Volya Films, Shasha & Co. Production, DUOFilm AS, Epicmedia, Qun Films, Kongchak Pictures
International Sales:	Asian Shadows

PERANG KOTA

CINESURYA

STARVISION

KANINGA
PICTURES

CHICCO JERIKHO

ARIEL TATUM

JEROME KURNIA

A Film by MOULY SURYA

PERANG KOTA

THIS CITY IS A BATTLEFIELD



CLOSING
FILM

INTERNATIONAL
FILM FESTIVAL
ROTTERDAM
2025

CINESURYA STARVISION KANINGA PICTURES in co-production with GIRAFFE PICTURES VOLYA FILMS SHASHA & CO. PRODUCTION DUOFILM AS EPICMEDIA QUN FILMS KONGCHAK PICTURES
present a film by MOULY SURYA "PERANG KOTA" "THIS CITY IS A BATTLEFIELD" with CHICCO JERIKHO ARIEL TATUM JEROME KURNIA
RUKMAN ROSADI IMELDA THERINNE FAIZ VISHAL ANGGUN PRIAMBODO AR BARRANI LINTANG CHEW KINWAH ALEX ABBAD INDRA BIROWO DEA PANENDRA casting by SAPTO SOETARJO
RUDI KOWEK A.C.I costume by MEUTIA PUDJOWARSITO make up by EBA SHEBA music by ZEKE KHASELI YUDHI ARFANI sound designer VINCENT VILLA edited by ROBERT GROSSBY WILSON NATALIE SOH
production designer FRANS PAAT director of photography ROY LOLANG, I.C.S executive producers RIZA WILLAWATI REZA SERVIA MONA SURYA RIEZA JUSUF MITHU NISAR AMRT DIDD SERVIA RAZA SERVIA
co-producers ANTHONY CHEN TAN SI EN DENIS VASLIN FLEUR KNOPPERS ISABELLE GLACHANT INGRID LILL HOGTUN MARIE FUGLESTEIN L'EGREID LINDA BOLSTAD STRÖMEN
BIANCA BALBUENA BRADLEY LIEW AXEL HADININGRAT GIOVANNI RAHMADEVA SIERA TAMIHARDJA LDY TE producers CHAND PARWEZ SERVIA FAUZAN ZIDNI TUTUT KOLOPAKING produced by RAMA ADI
screenplay by MOULY SURYA adapted from the book "A ROAD WITH NO END" by MOCHTAR LUBIS directed by MOULY SURYA
international sales ASIAN SHADOWS

Asian
Shadows

長界映画製作所
GIRAFFE PICTURES

VOLYA FILMS

Shasha & Co.
Production Co.

DUO
FILM

EPICMEDIA

QUN
FILMS

KONGCHAK
PICTURES

REPUBLIK INDONESIA

INDONESIA

lpdp

FILM FESTIVAL ROTTERDAM

ASIAN SHADOWS

DUO FILM

EPICMEDIA

QUN FILMS

KONGCHAK PICTURES

ASIAN SHADOWS

Hubert Bals Fund
Open Doors

Asian
Shadows

www.asian-shadows.com | contact@chineseshadows.com