

CONTACT

Tanya Leverault, ITVS
Adrianna Paidas

415-356-8383
646-762-8704

tanya.leverault@itvs.org
adrianna.paidas@beckmedia.com

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INDEPENDENT LENS SERVES UP A SWEET TREAT WITH *THE DONUT KING*, PREMIERING ON PBS AND THE PBS VIDEO APP MAY 24, 2021

Award-Winning Documentary Traces the Rags-to-Riches Story of a Cambodian Refugee Who Built a Donut Empire in California



(San Francisco, CA), April 9, 2021 – An immigrant story unlike any other, Alice Gu's *The Donut King* follows the twisty, unexpected journey of Cambodia refugee Ted Ngoy, who arrived in California in the 1970s and, through a mixture of diligence and luck, built a multi-million dollar donut empire up and down the west coast. A co-presentation by ITVS and the Center for Asian American Media (CAAM), *The Donut King* will make its broadcast premiere on PBS's *Independent Lens* on May 24, 2021 at 10:00 p.m. ET ([check local listings](#)) and will also be available to stream on the PBS Video app.

In 1975, Ted Ngoy escaped the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia, arriving in America via Camp Pendleton, California. Starting his new life in America as a church custodian, he parlayed opportunity and hard work into the purchase of his first donut shop, in Orange County, California – which quickly led to another donut shop, and another. Christy's Donuts continued to expand and opened new locations,

giving Ngoy the ability to lend a helping hand to his former countrymen and women. Over the next decade, Ngoy sponsored hundreds of visas for incoming Cambodian refugees offering them steady employment in his shops.

By the mid-1980s, Ngoy was living his version of the American Dream: owner of multiple homes, driving expensive cars, taking lavish vacations, and becoming an American citizen. But great rise often comes with a great fall, and Ngoy saw a reversal of fortune ultimately losing everything he built.

Through interviews with Ngoy and his family, and archival footage from Cambodia and California, *The Donut King* peels back the complexed layers on a story about immigration, assimilation, prejudice, who gets access to the American Dream—and what happens when it is achieved. The award-winning film also explores how The Dream gets handed down and evolves from one generation to the next, taking a look at the current generation of Cambodian donut shop owners and the ways they have been inspired by and diverged from their parents and grandparents before them.

“Ted’s story instantly fascinated me, but I never could have anticipated the complex and beautiful layers that would unfold as we filmed,” said Gu. “The film offers both a history lesson and a relatable emotional journey of someone pursuing the American Dream. So often refugee stories are told through the lens of tragedy and suffering, we hear only the narratives focused on their tragic plight and suffering, but rarely do we hear the stories about someone being given a chance and what can happen when they are. I’m looking forward to the film’s broadcast on PBS and hope that audiences will be inspired by—and perhaps see themselves in—Ted’s story.”

The Donut King made its premiere in competition at SXSW 2020, and also played at numerous other festivals including the Los Angeles Asian Pacific Film Festival, Asian American International Film Festival, Philadelphia Asian American Film Festival, and more. It will also play at this year’s upcoming CAAMFest, the nation’s largest Asian American film festival, in May 2021.

Visit [The Donut King](#) page on *Independent Lens* for more information about the film.

About the Filmmakers

Alice Gu

A Los Angeles native, Alice began her career as a Director of Photography, working with renowned directors Werner Herzog, Stacy Peralta, and Rory Kennedy, among others. Her commercial clients for print and live action include TBWA/ Chiat Day, Media Arts Lab, Deutsche, Edelman, Berlin Cameron, Cole & Weber, Pereira & O’Dell, Doremus, Publicis, Beats by Dre, Laird Hamilton, ESPN, FIFA, NFL, NHL, NBA, the WSL, Apple, Peta, and the American Humane Association. *Take Every Wave: the Life of Laird Hamilton* made its premiere at the Sundance Film Festival in 2017, a documentary film directed by Academy Award nominated director, Rory Kennedy, and lensed by Alice Gu. *The Donut King*, Alice’s feature directorial debut, was slated to premiere at the canceled 2020 SXSW film festival. Despite the cancellation, the film won the Special Jury Prize for Excellence in Documentary Storytelling, as well as the One in a Million Award at the 2020 Sun Valley Film Festival and the Grand Jury Prize at the Bentonville Film Festival. Alice is following up her directorial debut with a comedic scripted feature as well as a music documentary.

CREDITS

Director	Alice Gu
Producers	José I. Nuñez Farhad Amid Alice Gu
Executive Producers	Tom Moran Sally Jo Fifer Jonny Hwang Frieda Lee Mock



Director of Photography

Juliana Lemus
Andrés Rosillo
Ridley Scott
Lois Vossen
Alice Gu

ABOUT *INDEPENDENT LENS*

Independent Lens is an Emmy® Award-winning weekly series airing on PBS Monday nights at 10:00 PM. The acclaimed series, with Lois Vossen as executive producer, features documentaries united by the creative freedom, artistic achievement, and unflinching visions of independent filmmakers. Presented by ITVS, the series is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a private corporation funded by the American people, with additional funding from PBS, Acton Family Giving, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Wyncote Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts. For more visit pbs.org/independentlens. Join the conversation: facebook.com/independentlens and on Twitter [@IndependentLens](https://twitter.com/IndependentLens).

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1435 Folsom Street
San Francisco CA 94103
T. 415 356 8383
F. 415 356 8391
pbs.org/independentlens