

The Golden Voice of Srey Thy

a singer on a mission with **The Cambodian Space Project**



SreyThy was born into poverty and famine around the time the Khmer Rouge were finally driven from power by the invading Vietnamese ‘liberators’. Srey Thy’s father then a tank driver lives today in the same impoverished village in Prey Veng province (Cambodia’s poorest) where he proudly points to a faded photo, hanging from the flimsy wall of the family’s thatched hut, of a handsome young officer in 70’s flares and sunglasses, standing next to a naked baby girl, both listening attentively to a transistor radio and in the background a huge tank frames the young soldier and his baby daughter Srey Thy.

Five years ago, Srey Thy fled poverty and a violent husband and moved to Phnom Penh to seek out work as a Karaoke singer. Since arriving in Phnom Penh where she has struggled to make a living but by working for less than \$100 a month, she supports her entire family with the little money she sends back home. Srey Thy has worked all the Cambodian singing bars in Phnom Penh and has a repertoire of hundreds of songs but has often been cheated out of the small fees for her work and at times felt like quitting the city and returning to life in the village.

Late last year, Srey Thy had all but given up working as a singer and had just begun working in a bar, with her very limited English, entertaining foreigners “hello... you like...eat drink one more beer?” It was around this time she met Australian musician Julien Poulson (The Green Mist) who was in Phnom Penh to create music and film and looking for Cambodian musicians to work with. Poulson heard Srey Thy sing a Pan Ron song and was instantly taken by Srey Thy’s voice as well as her obvious passion for the singers from pre-war times. But Poulson was about to leave Cambodia and had to make made a promise to return sometime to work on a music project with Thy, perhaps exposing her voice to a wider audience and coming up with an interesting cross-culture rock band in the process.

Now, The Cambodian Space Project is ready for lift-off. It’s all ready been described as “a tripped-out, cosmic mix of space rock coupled with the deliciously golden voice of Srey Thy...” For Srey Thy, the opportunity of working with a band mixed with foreigners and Khmers playing to create exciting new music, is not only fun but is truly a life changing experience. For the band, the thrill of offering audiences something new as part of Phnom Penh’s flourishing music scene while embarking on a truly cosmic space odyssey, is where’s it’s at.

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