

Nailed It



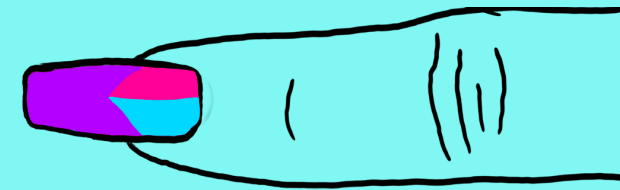
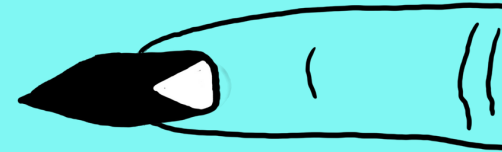
A Feature Length Documentary by
Adele Free Pham



The Story

A fortuitous encounter with 20 Vietnamese refugee women and The Birds actress Tippi Hedren in 1975, sparks the Asian nail salon as we know it. In this hour long documentary, Nailed It presents a lineage of legacy moments in nails, like Mantrap, the first nail salon chain to cater to Black women in the hood. The democratization of the manicure fans the fire of Vietnamese “discount” nail salons blazing across the country.

Through the international journey embarked upon by Nailed It director Adele Pham, this unique film captures an unforgettable and often hilarious saga born of tragedy, charting the rise, struggle, stereotypes, and steady hold Vietnamese Americans have on today’s \$8 billion dollar nail industry.







Director's Statement

My vision for Nailed It changed over the course of production. What I didn't expect was the effect exploring the history of the Vietnamese salon would have on me. As a mixed race, second generation Vietnamese-American woman, there was always a disconnect from my culture, which I inadvertently found a place within by documenting the definitive history of the Vietnamese nail salon.

Although politically it feels like America is more fractured by identity than ever before, it's also never been so culturally and genetically mixed. This new demographic is hungry for thoughtful, humorous articulation of diverse communities, and where these underrepresented groups intersect. I consider this transcultural space to be the hallmark of my growing body of work—including this documentary about Vietnamese in America via nail salons, and their impact.

- **Adele Free Pham**, Director



Characters



Thuan Le

Thuan arrived in America in April 1975 as Saigon was falling, part of the first wave of Vietnamese war refugees. Incredibly she and 19 other refugee women would come to be known as “The First 20” Vietnamese manicurists in America, under the tutelage of actress Tippi Hedren. Today Thuan is semi-retired but still works a few days a week to manicure long time clients and friends, many of whom are octogenarians.



Olivett Robinson

Although she left the salon in the early 90s, Olivett’s contribution to the Vietnamese nail industry is monumental. In the early 80s she started Mantrap Nails with friend and business partner Charlie Vo, an entrepreneurial Vietnamese refugee. Together the duo rode the meteoric rise of the nail salon, opening nine locations at their height, demonstrating a small business model that was copied so frequently it became a part of Vietnamese culture—and the American standard for Asian nail salons in black neighborhoods.



Kelvin Saint Pham

Co-producer and one of the main characters in *Nailed It*, Kelvin is a dyed-in-the-wool member of the Vietnamese nail industry for over thirty years. Like many of his brethren, Kelvin got started at Mantrap and broke off to open his own salon. Turning the stereotype of the typical Vietnamese manicurist on its head, Kelvin is part stand-up comedian and nail guru, with resonant relationships with his long-time clients, some of whom we meet in the film. After 25 years running his eponymous Saint K Nail Salon, Kelvin has closed the doors to work full time as an educational sales rep and Vietnamese brand ambassador for Gelish, where he traverses the country and globe, connecting with the extended Vietnamese nail diaspora.



Kenneth Vo aka @nailsbykenny


Part of the millennial generation who have followed their parents into the nail industry, Kenny represents a new wave of Vietnamese nail artists with one foot in the OG Vietnamese salon, and the other in the future of a more inclusive, fashion forward nail salon aesthetic. An established influencer, published nail artist, and busy single dad, Kenny boasts over 130K Instagram followers and travels the country as an educator and brand ambassador for Bio Seaweed Gel among other endeavors.



MANTRAP

NAIL & HAIR

673-6890



**“WITH STEREOTYPE
NARRATIVES ABOUT
IMMIGRANTS AND IMMIGRANT
COMMUNITIES DOMINATING
PUBLIC DISCOURSE, THE FILM’S
INSIGHT INTO INTERCULTURAL
RELATIONSHIPS, FEMALE
ENTREPRENEURIAL PIONEERS,
AND THE UNDERLYING
REFUGEE EXPERIENCE, IS THE
SPOTLIGHT WE NEED NOW
MORE THAN EVER TO REMIND
US ALL THAT WE ARE ONE
NATION OF IMMIGRANTS.”**

Julia Liou, MPH, Co-founder & Director of the
California Healthy Nail Salon Collaborative

The Crew



Adele Free Pham
Director/DP

Adele Free Pham is a mixed race Vietnamese American documentary filmmaker with experience in all aspects of documentary production, including cinematography, editing, and direction. Apart from directing and producing independent projects she has also edited, produced, and DP'd feature documentaries for fellow directors, such as "The Prep School Negro," "The Throwaways," "Rebirth: New Orleans," and "The Forgotten Occupation." Her next feature film is about the legacy of exclusion laws and hate crimes committed in the liberal white bastion of Portland, OR, her hometown. You can learn more about Adele's current projects and become a Patron, here: patreon.com/adelefreepham



Jessica Windt
Editor

Dedicated to work that informs public policy and the understanding of the human experience, Jessica Lee Salas first met Nailed It director Adele Pham in the edit room of "The Prep School Negro", a feature documentary directed by Andre Robert Lee and aired on PBS in 2013. Jessica also produced "Resilience" an award winning feature documentary about the impact of international adoption, and edited "Rebirth: New Orleans" a feature doc chronicles the rebuilding of New Orleans' public school system after Hurricane Katrina.



Kelvin Saint Pham
Co-Producer

Kelvin Saint Pham, is the creator and producer of VietNAIL.TV, the first Vietnamese nail TV show dedicated to elevating the Vietnamese-American nail community. He has been in the nail industry for 20 years and is a well-known nail professional, salon owner, educator, and consultant. He is also owner and operator of St. K Nail Salon in Los Angeles, CA, which he founded in 1992. Kelvin has traveled the world teaching and sharing his passion for the nail industry to other nail professionals.



Lewis Erskine
Consulting Editor

Lewis Erskine is an Emmy Award winning editor with many years of experience and outstanding documentary films to his credits, including American Experience: Freedom Riders, Jonestown: The Life and Death of Peoples Temple, American Experience: The Murder of Emmett Till, Ken Burns' Jazz, and most recently Ken Burns' Jackie Robinson. He is currently teaching editing at Tisch School of the Arts at NYU and actively advising filmmaker Adele Pham on her feature length edit of Nailed It.

THANK YOU





Naileditdoc.com / adelepham@gmail.com