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Asian American International Film Festival Announces 2016 Program

NEW YORK, NY - The 39th Asian American International Film Festival (AAIFF), presented by Asian CineVision, announces the schedule of screenings to be held from July 21 to July 30 at various venues in Manhattan and Flushing, Queens. AAIFF 2016 celebrates the variety of Asian and Asian American films and artists by presenting ten days of events. As the nation's oldest and longest running Asian interest film festival, AAIFF 2016 is proud to present 23 feature films and 40 short films in 7 shorts programs to represent 18 countries, as well as the diversity in cast and themes in this field.

OPENING NIGHT: SPA NIGHT

In his feature debut, director Andrew Ahn shares the Korean-American immigration story with homage to Korean spas, which often serve as a meeting place and bridge between cross-generations of immigrant families. Following the lives of one struggling family, SPA NIGHT explores the complexities and realities when personal desire, disillusionment, and sense of tradition overlap with one another.

SPA NIGHT will screen on Thursday, July 21st at 7:00pm at Asia Society.

CENTERPIECE PRESENTATION: A TALE OF THREE CITIES

Based on the true story of Jackie Chan's parents and brought to the screen by two of Asia's biggest stars, Sean Lau (MY NAME IS FAME, LIFE WITHOUT PRINCIPLE, OVERHEARD 3) and Tang Wei (LUST, CAUTION; FINDING MR. RIGHT; THE GOLDEN ERA; BLACKHAT), director Mabel Cheung tells a story about love that reflects a generation's strength in a time of despair, and a country's hope for a brighter future.

A TALE OF THREE CITIES will screen on Saturday, July 23rd at 3:00pm at Village Cinema East.

CLOSING NIGHT: FRONT COVER

FRONT COVER tells the story of Ryan Fu, a gay Chinese-American who has learnt to suppress his Chinese heritage to climb up the social ladder as a fashion stylist. Ryan gets assigned to Ning, an actor from Beijing and their egos and opinions clash, resulting in a difficult working relationship. Soon enough, however, a mutual attraction begins to develop. As they fall in love, a Chinese tabloid magazine exposes Ning as gay. Ryan must now decide whether to help Ning or stay true to himself. Directed by Ray Yeung (CUT SLEEVE BOYS), FRONT COVER is a "bittersweet dramatic comedy that looks at the Asian American experience with humor, irony, and insight."

FRONT COVER will screen on Saturday, July 30th at 8:00 pm at the Museum of Moving Image.

AAIFF IN FLUSHING

For the second year in a row, AAIFF 2016 is returning to Flushing to celebrate one of New York's fastest-growing and vibrant Asian American communities. This year, AAIFF will be showing PEOPLE ARE THE SKY on Tuesday, July 26th; BRIGHT SUN MANSION on Wednesday, July 27th; and BIG TROUBLE IN LITTLE CHINA on Thursday, July 28th at Flushing Town Hall.

NEW YORK CITY PREMIERES

AAIFF 2016 is proud to present the following films as New York premieres.

BREATHIN': THE EDDY ZHENG STORY

Arrested at 16 and tried as an adult for kidnapping and robbery, Eddy Zheng served over 20 years in California prisons and jails. Ben Wang's BREATHIN': THE EDDY ZHENG STORY paints an intimate portrait of Eddy—the prisoner, the immigrant, the son, the activist—on his journey to freedom, rehabilitation and redemption.

DAZE OF JUSTICE

Born in Cambodia in 1975 during the bloody regime of Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge, filmmaker Mike Siv and his mother barely escaped the infamous "killing fields." Growing up as a refugee in America, Mike has been haunted by the ghosts of memory ever since. "Our parents don't want to talk about the past, and the next generation inherits the scars of their silence." Thirty-five years later, Mike is given the opportunity to film a small group of Cambodian Americans who are civil parties in an historic trial against the Khmer Rouge. Given the opportunity to face the very criminals who forever changed their lives, the survivors are joined by an unexpected guest who happens to be the son of one of their most hated enemies. Mike Siv is undertaking DAZE OF JUSTICE as a culminating project through which he will establish himself as an independent documentary filmmaker.

PAINTED NAILS

PAINTED NAILS brings us unprecedented insight into the personal nature of the political movement to regulate one of the fastest growing industries in the U.S. The documentary follows Van Nguyen, a Vietnamese nail salon owner and worker in the Mission District of San Francisco, who serves an ethnically diverse group of working class women with acrylic nails and intricate airbrush designs. However, lack of oversight has allowed the cosmetics industry to pour unregulated amounts of toxic chemicals into nail products, some of which are known to cause reproductive harm, cancer, and respiratory illness. After learning that her near-daily exposure to these chemicals has caused her life-threatening health problems, Van becomes a resolute activist in the fight to regulate chemicals in personal care products, advocating for the safety of nail salon workers and their clientele. Providing a unique glimpse into the world of women, their nails, and the people who paint them, PAINTED NAILS takes us from the simple pleasures of manicures to Van and her family's fulfilling transformation.

TYRUS

TYRUS is about the unlikely and untold story of 105-year old Chinese-American artist Tyrus Wong, who overcame poverty and racism to become a celebrated modernist painter, Hollywood sketch artist, and 'Disney Legend' for his groundbreaking work on the classic animated film, Bambi. Tyrus's incredible rise to acclaim shines against a common backdrop in the story of Chinese-Americans in the 20th century.

THE DOG

Director Lam Can-zhao leads a small film crew as they shoot a film about a stray dog in the streets of Guangzhou, leading the viewer into an unpredictable, peculiar and incredible journey. Shot documentary-style while employing characteristics of hybrid cinema, THE DOG's low-tech, casual style reveals a wealth of stories that reflects both the authenticity and occasional absurdity of the living situations of migrant workers and of those who otherwise live "below the line." As the debut feature film directed by Lam, THE DOG reads more like a lonely rebel's exploration and revelation to the world.

JOLIN

Dongguan is simultaneously the manufacturing hub and inadvertent sex capital of China; it is home to 1.7 million female factory workers, 300,000 of which comprised of former factory girls turned sex workers. It is here that 22-year-old country girl, Jolin, has worked for the past five years, and where her story begins. JOLIN is a documentary that focuses on a former factory girl, 22-year-old Jolin, who is the only child of her family and has found work as a stripper in Dongguan. She undergoes risky plastic surgery to look more 'sexy' and tries to find her estranged father for reasons that go beyond healing her fractured family. She hopes to leave Dongguan behind and become a famous actress in Shanghai. Jolin's story depicts a young girl's "Chinese Dream" and the sadness of China's loneliest generation.

TPE-TICS

Huang Dawang is an eccentric musician, noise performer, music aficionado, and a pillar of Taiwan's underground music scene but also denies himself as an artist and refuses to define what art is. TPE-TICS is an intimate look into his way of life – incredibly different from the norm, largely incompatible with society. As links between Huang's past trauma and present creations are revealed, his psychological anxiety is at once enlightening and heartbreaking. Despite his bouts of depression, Huang's humour and witty introspection relieves the melancholy. More than merely music, the film examines human experiences and nuanced values that are precious yet rarely accessible.

TOTO

TOTO is about a young Filipino hotel room service attendant who is determined to obtain a U.S. visa by any means. But when his schemes put the lives of his loved ones in danger, he is forced to question the extremity of his actions and reevaluate the cost of fulfilling his dream. The film is directed by John Paul "JP" Su, who won the Directors Guild of America's Best Asian-American Student Filmmaker Award for his short film PAGPAG (The Refuse). He is a Disney/ABC-DGA

Directing Program alumnus, and currently one of the selected directors of NBCUniversal's Emerging Directors Program. TOTO is his debut feature film.

NORTH AMERICA PREMIERE

1000 HANDS OF GURU

The Kingdom of Bhutan is the only remaining Vajrayana Buddhist country in the world today. The major difference between Vajrayana Buddhism and other Buddhist sects is the incorporation of the thangka, intricately painted scrolls that act as a form of spiritual and historical storytelling, in mediation. Because of decades of neglect, thousands of ancient masterpieces and the rich cultural heritage embedded in every scroll, are on the brink of being lost forever. By a twist of fate, an American art conservation master courses paths with four monks and a royal scholar, thus embarking on a lifelong journey to restore thee holy relics to their former glory. 1000 HANDS OF GURU follows the Conservation Workshop team over the course of three years as they race against a mass extinction of their living culture, and learn the art of letting go along the way.

INTERNATIONAL PREMIERE

SINGAPORE MINSTREL

Roy Payamal is the wildest busker of a country ranked the world's most emotionless society. An old-time pioneer of the local scene, dubbed 'Silver Man', he creates mind-boggling acts, taking his undermined profession as a serious art- but is his faith impossible idealism or an admirable conviction? Unraveling the nation's bureaucratic reaches, a discourse on culture and expression plays out, co-starring Roy's eccentric street colleagues. Flowing kaleidoscopically from interviews and fantasy sequences, to Roy's handphone footage of his everyday life, SINGAPORE MINSTREL is an invitation into his beautiful mind, a magical, trying universe where art and life dialogue in a tropical dream.

SPECIAL SCREENINGS

From creator Steven Zaillian and Richard Price, THE NIGHT OF is an eight part limited series that delves into the intricate story of a fictitious murder case in New York City. The series follows the police investigation and legal proceedings, all while examining the criminal justice system and the purgatory of Rikers Island, where the accused, Nasir Khan (RIZ AHMED) a Pakistani-American, awaits his trial.

THE NIGHT OF stars John Turturro and Riz Ahmed. It is executive produced by Zaillian, Price, Jane Tranter, James Gandolfini, and Peter Moffat; co-executive produced by Garrett Basch, Nancy Sanders and Mark Armstrong. This series is based on BBC's CRIMINAL JUSTICE by Peter Moffat. It is filmed entirely in New York.

SHORT FILM PROGRAMS

Cinema can reveal the beauty and grace of people through their stories, aspirations, and vulnerabilities. The WE ARE BEAUTIFUL short programs features several such revelations, from working class dreams in rural China to cross-dressing rebelling in urban Tokyo.

FOR YOUTH BY YOUTH program celebrates the newest generations of media makers under 21. By exploring complex themes of natural disaster, disease, war, job security, gender inequality, and religious conflict, the films seek to educate and inspire, in the hope of achieving a more compassionate world.

This year, we are thrilled to present the ROOTS: REMOVAL AND RETURNS short program. It pays homage and tribute to the loved ones that keep us grounded.

In the city that never sleeps, a story lurks in every corner. From experimental narrative to stories of friendship and love while featuring a diverse array genre, voices, and perspectives, the shorts in the MADE IN NY program showcase a rare energy that can only be found in New York City.

The films in the LGBTQ shorts programs explore the myriad of ways in which the LGBTQ+ community and the Asian American community intersect and work together.

Love comes in all shapes and forms, yet sometimes it is the hardest thing to find. The films in FINDING LOVE program are equally heartwarming as they are chilling, proving that love is a heady potion and sometimes, its demons cannot be controlled.

For a copy of the press kits please contact Nicole Bae at press@asiancinevision.org

To learn more about the full schedule of events, visit <http://aaiff.org/2016>.

Festival Ticket Information

Tickets for general admission are \$15.00. Tickets for seniors (65+), students and handicapped (must present valid ID) are \$11.00. Tickets for ACV members and Community Partners are \$11.00. Tickets are available for purchase on AAIFF's website. For Opening, Centerpiece, and Closing Night Events, please check website for ticket details.

General Festival Information

The Asian American International Film Festival (AAIFF) is a presentation of Asian CineVision. The festival is a celebration of inspiring Asian and Asian American works in film and video from innovative artists around the world. AAIFF 2016 takes place July 21- July 30, 2016 in Manhattan and Queens. Manhattan venues include: Village Cinema East (181-189 2nd Avenue); Asia Society (725 Park Avenue); Museum of Chinese in America (215 Centre Street); and the Writers Guild of America (250 Hudson Street) Queens venues include: Museum of the Moving Image (36-01 35th Ave, Astoria); and Flushing Town Hall (13735 Northern Boulevard, Flushing).

About Asian CineVision:

Asian CineVision (ACV) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit media arts organization devoted to the development, exhibition, promotion, and preservation of Asian and Asian American film and video.

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