21ST ANNUAL SAN DIEGO ASIAN FILM FESTIVAL / OCT 23—31 2020
PRESENTED BY PACIFIC ARTS MOVEMENT

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125 FILMS
50 Q&AS
34 LANGUAGES
24 COUNTRIES

OCTOBER 23—31

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About the design: 2020 is the year of eyes. That’s all we see of anybody, whether peering over masks. Or from the protests in HK and US, masses of people looking back hard at our leaders. Or staring at screens for school, work, and now, the worlds of film. This year’s kinetic graphics are inspired by the “dazzle camouflage” used on boats in WWI to create visual confusion through hypervisibility, a strategy later adopted by modern day activists to deter facial recognition. Lastly, on our print publications is ZXX, an anti-surveillance typeface designed by Sang Mun as a call-to-action to raise questions about our online privacy. This typeface purposefully misdirects information and confuses text scanning software. Honoring this weird, disruptive, and pivotal year, SDAFF 2020’s identity beckons like an online nickelodeon of playfulness, while its DNA whispers “You can’t ignore us. And you will see us, but on our terms.”

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Copyright © 2020 by Pacific Arts Movement. All rights reserved.
On behalf of all of us at Pacific Arts Movement, welcome to the 21st edition of the San Diego Asian Film Festival.

2020 has challenged us all in profound ways—shaping our experiences as individuals, as organizations, and as entire communities as we navigate ongoing waves of the pandemic, combat increased racism and xenophobia, demand justice and equity for all marginalized communities, and even bear witness to the growing impacts of climate change.

On our 20th anniversary, we celebrated two decades of building stronger and more compassionate communities. Today, we shift to a virtual environment—not as an obstacle, but as an urgent reminder that beyond the big screens, the glitz, and the glamour, SDAFF has always been about the people (artists, audiences, members and volunteers alike) and the stories which bind us all together. With over 125 films, 50 Q&As, and the premiere of our virtual Reel Voices Class of 2020—the stories remain as plentiful and as relevant as ever.

While SDAFF turning 21 would typically entail celebrations over stiff drinks (which we still need anyways), this year is a sobering reminder that our work serves a far greater purpose beyond providing “art and entertainment.” In sharing stories and voices from around the world, we continue our movement together in seeing, envisioning, and creating a more just and equitable world.

Most importantly, we thank YOU for supporting our efforts in one of the most critical moments of our existence. SDAFF would not be possible without each and every one of you and we remain proud to serve and be served by you. Cheers to the 21st San Diego Asian Film Festival!

— Kent Lee, Executive Director
I can safely say that these are not all the best Asian films completed in 2020. There are more. They’re in the can, but aren’t ready for a world too volatile and a market too unforgiving. Like so many film industries, those in Asia are in a holding pattern, navigating shifting release dates, virtual platforms, and public health predictions. We’ll see them soon. Watch this space.

But I can safely say that the films in this year’s San Diego Asian Film Festival are the boldest Asian films of 2020. These are the ones that analyzed the treacherous marketplace and dove in regardless. That’s because they might also be the most urgent films of 2020. Documentaries like WE HAVE BOOTS, about Hong Kong demonstrations of the past four years, or A THOUSAND CUTS, about journalist heroes in the Philippines. These are living stories whose subjects have been arrested since the films’ premieres and thus demand to be seen and discussed, even under improvised circumstances. Films like THERE IS NO EVIL by Mohammad Rasoulof or 76 DAYS by Hao Wu, Weixi Chen, and their anonymous co-director were lucky to be made at all. Even a family dramedy like Sujata Day’s tender DEFINITION PLEASE or Lynn Chen’s bittersweet I WILL MAKE YOU MINE are defiant interventions by artists who are done waiting for Hollywood. If not now, then when? These are the quintessential 2020 films, refusing to be silenced, refusing to be imperiled, refusing to wait for normal.

Brian Hu, Artistic Director
The feature presentations of this year’s San Diego Asian Film Festival examine the deep reserves of humanity, ingenuity, and resilience called for during this singular year.
76 DAYS

DIRECTORS: Hao Wu, Weixi Chen, Anonymous
COUNTRY: USA
LANGUAGE: Mandarin
YEAR: 2020
RUNTIME: 93 min

Official Selection, 2020 Toronto International Film Festival

2020 has thrown us mayhem. But it’s also gifted us 76 DAYS. This is Hao Wu, Weixi Chen, and Anonymous’ on-the-ground documentary set in Wuhan hospitals after the city was locked down on January 23. Sick patients and their families pound on hospital doors seeking attention, while doctors hold court with unthinkable poise. The streets outside are eerily empty, but within the hospital gates is a mad-dash with few breaks: front-of-line workers inspecting monitors, holding patients’ hands, and scurrying through hallways herding the lost and senile back into their rooms. Decked-out in head-to-toe PPE, the doctors are faceless miracle-makers whose easy movements bring calm, and whose soft consolations bring hope.

As we observe with floods of empathy, we start to recognize key characters. There is the woman who collects the cell phones and ID cards of the recently deceased. Or the Shanghai doctor who drove 500 miles to Wuhan to serve as reinforcement. On the other side is a pesky 70-something patient who, quite understandably, doesn’t know what’s going on. Or the young couple unable to see their newborn baby because of COVID fears. As the weeks pass, the tension subsides as hospitals find a rhythm and develop a system for mutual care. Every boxed lunch is a gift from the community, every gown and glove a canvas on which to draw words of love.

76 DAYS is not just a momentous feat of cinematography, sound, and editing. It’s an artifact for the future, so that years, generations, centuries later we’ll have a record of how human beings and their capacity to heal improvised solutions and managed an unimaginable crisis. For those of us still in 2020, for whom the pandemic is not past tense, 76 DAYS is the promise of light, if we promise to take care of each other.

—Brian Hu

SPONSORED BY: Qualcomm
In November 2014, Akai Gurley, an unarmed Black man, was killed by Peter Liang, a Chinese American police officer, in a Brooklyn stairwell. The killing mobilized a community demanding justice for yet another innocent dead at the hands of the NYPD. But it surprisingly also awakened another faction: Chinese Americans who claimed that Liang was a convenient scapegoat because he was Asian.

On the surface, there are two sides. But what makes DOWN A DARK STAIRWELL such a captivating, muscle-tensing, soul-testing, powerfully compassionate, and even hopeful experience, are the moments the sides crack just enough for invigorated political energies to converge as solidarity. In the crevices are the Asian American activists, mostly younger, who march for Black lives. Or the seasoned Chinatown defenders who grapple with defining Asian American political agency without diminishing the tragedy of a murder. Or the Black activist who argues against the use of “model minority” language to criticize Chinese American protesters on the other side. These moments imagine solidarity at a critical moment when the Black community is invisible to many Asian Americans, and the Asian community is invisible to African Americans, to say nothing of their collective diminishing by white supremacy. And in these moments, solidarity stops being a slogan and is revealed as work: tough, contentious, spirit-flexing work.

With that same dedication, Ursula Liang (9-Man, SDAFF ‘14) balances these gargantuan forces, while never shying away from the political stakes of justice for Gurley and the Black community. The film is quintessentially 2020, but it’s also the most important and agenda-setting Asian American documentary since Who Killed Vincent Chin?, confronting the fact that the answer to invisibility is not merely presence, but working with others whose humanity has also been made invisible, so we can show up together and collectively be impossible to ignore.

—Brian Hu
MOGUL MOWGLI

**DIRECTOR:** Bassam Tariq

**COUNTRY:** UK, USA

**LANGUAGES:** English, Urdu

**YEAR:** 2020

**RUNTIME:** 90 min

**CAST:** Riz Ahmed, Alyy Khan, Sudha Buchar, Sabhaan Rizwan

**WEST COAST PREMIERE**

FIPRESCI Award, Panorama, 2020 Berlin International Film Festival

I tried to stand up for my blood...

Zed’s body is attacking itself. And Zed fights back, eager to heal in time for the tour, but not listening to his body and the partitions within. Director Bassam Tariq (These Birds Walk) concocts a brilliant soundscape and impressionistic field of night terrors and cultural breakages, a centripetal swirl collapsing onto a rapper stepping into a cypher with his soul. Riz Ahmed—known not only for his Emmy-winning performance in The Night Of, but also as MC of the Swet Shop Boys—fires up the mic with emotional aplomb and musical dexterity, and delivers a knockout physical performance of face, body, and voice. Together, Tariq and Ahmed respond to the insecurities of love and identity with a powerful tribute to communal legacies, diasporic brotherhood, and the binding embrace of family.

—Brian Hu

Preceded by: **THANK YOU, COME AGAIN**

Nirav Bhakta | USA | Gujarati, English | 2020 | 11 min

An undocumented Indian American crashes through layers of subconscious reality and imagination, as he confronts memories of his father’s fate in a convenience store.
The best of Asian American cinema in all of its colors—from stories of musical ambition and kung-fu revisited to tales of hustle and humor.
BE WATER

**DIRECTOR:** Bao Nguyen  
**COUNTRY:** USA  
**LANGUAGE:** English  
**YEAR:** 2020  
**RUNTIME:** 104 min

*Official Selection, 2020 Sundance Film Festival  
*Official Selection, 2020 Cannes Film Festival*

For decades after his passing, Bruce Lee left behind a legacy that shaped the image of all Asian Americans—for better and for worse—that still reverberates today. But Lee wasn’t just an icon, a master of his craft who exploded overnight. Unlike other tributes that cover familiar ground—glorifying his mastery and his crossover into the American mainstream—Bao Nguyen’s BE WATER fills an important gap, delivering a fascinating and specifically Asian American take on Lee’s importance. For this, BE WATER is easily the most well-rounded and relevant documentary about Bruce Lee today.

With new interviews and archival footage, Nguyen (Julian, SDAFF ‘12) is less focused on the martial arts and more on Lee’s offscreen battles. Bullying as a child. Learning to survive as a newly-arrived teenager in Seattle. Angling for Hollywood roles, failing, and eventually creating his own cinematic platform in Hong Kong. This is the biographical why behind Lee’s famous philosophies such as “Be water.” And the how behind Lee’s guru-like impact on folks from regular joe’s to movie stars.

Nguyen anchors these stories within a social and historical context that depicts an America that found it hard to embrace Bruce Lee, as well as the Asian Americans who came before him to build the American West. This is Bruce outside the action, sans yellow jumpsuit, as told by his wife, his daughter, his peers, and even an NBA legend. Nguyen goes further than Bruce Lee, the actor and the fighter, and delivers Bruce Lee, the man, for the culture.

—Erwin Mendoza

THE CELINE ARCHIVE

**DIRECTOR:** Celine Parreñas Shimizu  
**COUNTRY:** USA  
**LANGUAGE:** English  
**YEAR:** 2020  
**RUNTIME:** 69 min

How do you tell the history of a ghost? In 1932 Stockton, a young mother named Celine Navarro was killed by her peers. When her body was dug up, they found dirt under her nails. She had been buried alive. Such was the legend that circulated in the Filipino American community and amongst Navarro’s own descendants. And such are the spectral remains of a sister and mother in an immigrant enclave that ghosts women’s stories.

This isn’t the first telling of the Celine tale. Contemporary newspaper articles screamed scandal in a “barbaric” Asian cult. Family members have constructed histories out of artifacts and whispers. Students fascinated by true crime have dived into the archive. But what makes THE CELINE ARCHIVE an invaluable reflection is not the truth it uncovers about an enigmatic figure, but the questions it asks about legacies blemished by silence and murder. What does it mean to be descendants of violence? How can women heal and make families whole? Directed uncannily by another Celine—filmmaker-scholar Celine Parreñas Shimizu—this elegant documentary is a séance for the buried history of Filipino Americans and an act of love to generations who have held Celine in the heart.

—Brian Hu

Preceded by:

**RADICAL CARE: THE AUNTIE SEWING SQUAD**  
Valerie Soe | USA | English | 2020 | 8 min

Armed with sewing machines, a squad bands together to “rage sew” thousands of masks.
CURTAIN UP!

**DIRECTORS:** Hui Tong, Kelly Ng  
**COUNTRY:** USA  
**LANGUAGES:** English, Mandarin  
**YEAR:** 2020  
**RUNTIME:** 69 min

If you’ve wondered how our children have fared growing up in an increasingly scary and hostile world, CURTAIN UP! is proof that they have a lot to sing about, and are ready to dish insights into life as a new generation of Asian Americans. In a renowned New York City Chinatown theater club, a group of elementary-aged Chinese American kids live out theater dreams unfathomable to their adult counterparts. In this club—which mounts condensed adaptations of popular Disney Broadway hits—Chinese students have the opportunity to play Anna, Kristoff, and Queen Elsa, belting “Let It Go” in the pilot production of Disney’s *Frozen KIDS*.

The talent featured is exceeded only by the students’ impressive self-reflection while discussing race in America, parental expectations, and career possibilities as they prepare for escape from their elementary school bubble into the unknown world of middle school. Co-directors Hui Tong and Kelly Ng create a scenario of freedom from shame and expectation, allowing these children to express themselves onstage and off. These are kids keenly aware of participating in a predominately white industry and larger world they will soon be entering. Through tears, laughter, and perseverance, they unleash unbottled performance chops. All we can do is behold the possibilities and build a world that allows them to shine on the stage they deserve.

—James Paguyo

DEATH OF NINTENDO

**DIRECTOR:** Raya Martin  
**COUNTRY:** Philippines, USA  
**LANGUAGE:** Tagalog  
**YEAR:** 2020  
**RUNTIME:** 99 min  
**CAST:** Kim Chloe Oquendo, Noel Comia Jr.

Get your butterfly clips and Reebok pumps ready. 8-bit wonders echo throughout this vibrant and colorful coming of age story from director Raya Martin (*How to Disappear Completely*, SDAFF ’13). *DEATH OF NINTENDO* chronicles the crusades of Paolo, Mimaw, Kachi, and Gilligan as they navigate growing up during the 1990s in a post-Marcos Manila. The film is painted with the delightful nostalgia of an era that extends across the Pacific and into our hearts.

During one sizzling summer with the Mt. Pinatubo eruption imminent, competitive spirit and pop culture take hold and things start to heat up for this rag-tag group of friends. Fil-Am writer-producer Valerie Castillo Martinez takes inspiration from her Filipino childhood, not simply to indulge in innocent nostalgia, but to confront the terms of growing up in a global Philippines. Surely, there are also antics and tween trouble: crossing paths with first crushes (and heartbreak), American expat bullies, and even ghosts? But the specter of the United States casts an unshakeable spell, setting the stage for unique—and mischievous—journeys of self-discovery.

—Carmela Prudencio

Preceded by: A CHILDHOOD STORY 童年小事

*Tianyi Lu | USA | Mandarin | 2020 | 8 min*

To honor the death of her grandfather, her family plans to cook braised rabbit, his favorite meal, but Tian has other plans for her new companion.
DEFINITION PLEASE

**DIRECTOR:** Sujata Day  
**COUNTRY:** USA  
**LANGUAGE:** English  
**YEAR:** 2020  
**CAST:** Sujata Day, Ritesh Rajan, Anna Khaja, Jake Choi

*Official Selection, 2020 Bentonville Film Festival*

Der·e·lic·tion (*noun*): the shameful failure to fulfill one’s duties or obligations. It could describe Monica Choudry, former Scripps National Spelling Bee champion. Unlike other past winners who have gone on to prestigious careers, Monica hasn’t strayed far in the 15 years since she nabbed first place with “opsimath.” Instead, she still lives with her mother, spending her days getting high on her way to tutor young Indian American spelling bee hopefuls and getting busted having sex in the driveway.

Ask Monica, though, and she would tell you a different story. To her, she’s a dutiful daughter, declining a dream research job in Cleveland to stay home to care for a sick mother. “You can’t keep taking care of everyone else,” her best friend tells her. It’s only when her brother, Ritesh, comes home with his own type of illness, that the possibilities of moving on and self-definition come into focus.

This rich family dramedy is also a radical act of self-definition by director-writer-producer-actress Sujata Day, a long-time collaborator of *Insecure*’s Issa Rae. As Monica, Day brings steadfast honesty and genuine comedic chops in depicting the friendly fire between siblings. And as director, she aims poignantly at millennial success and the family silences around mental illness. Proudly Indian American and proudly Greensburg, PA, *DEFINITION PLEASE* follows the heart from home to the world, and back again.

—Yang Jiang

THE DONUT KING

**DIRECTOR:** Alice Gu  
**COUNTRY:** USA  
**LANGUAGES:** Khmer, Mandarin, English  
**YEAR:** 2020  
**RANGE:** 90 min

*Special Jury Prize (documentary feature), 2020 SXSW Film Festival*  
*Grand Jury Prize (documentary feature), 2020 Bentonville Film Festival*

Twitter will divide along foodie fault lines, but there are few things that remain as enduring and universally loved as the donut. Behind the quintessentially American pastry is the story of Cambodian American resilience, entrepreneurship, and networks. A delectable feature debut by director Alice Gu, *THE DONUT KING* introduces audiences to Ted Ngoy, the man behind the pink box, who is almost single-handedly responsible for the fact that nearly 80% of donut shops in the Los Angeles area are owned by Cambodian Americans.

“Uncle Ted,” as he’s affectionately known, arrived in the US in 1975 as a refugee, and within 10 years, his chain of donut shops burgeoned into a multi-million dollar empire that locked Dunkin Donuts out of the West Coast market for decades. As business boomed, Uncle Ted sponsored over a hundred Cambodian families to resettle in California and trained many of them to replicate his business model across the state.

Following along as the future generation revitalizes the mom-and-pop shop, bringing ingenuity and hustle full circle, *THE DONUT KING* gives visibility to immigrant tales and reminds us that refugees have fed and sweetened America for generations and will continue to do so for years to come.

—Malou Amparo Robas

Preceded by: *FELT LOVE*  
**Arlene Bongco, Angeline Vu | USA | English | 2020 | 7 min**

A heartfelt portrait of mutual love between a kid who feels invisible when a mom works all night as a seamstress.
“A man can have multiple wives, but a woman cannot marry twice,” wrote Zhao Ban, a prominent Han Dynasty intellectual, in her book Lessons for Women. Centuries later, divorced women in China still face hardships with social acceptance and remarriage. Motivated by the desire for true love and economic security for their children, some women have begun to look for husbands overseas, where the stigma is lower and the chance for a better life seemingly higher.

EXPORT MY LOVE begins in Boston with Jany Murphy scouting Match.com for American men for her clients: divorced or widowed women in China. Jany is the international love realtor, a modern day Cyrano de Bergerac, strategizing and even composing WeChat texts to incubate romance despite different love languages. For Jany, the work is personal. Four-times married across two countries, and fabulously adept at new media romance, Jany uses her experience with both the light and dark sides of foreign marriage to help three Chinese divorcees find American husbands and ultimately, love.

With intimacy and realism, director Jinglin Li catalogues the hopes, disappointments, moments of connection, and cultural barriers that each woman faces in her search for partnership. The women are lively and uniquely different, and give voice to a part of Chinese society that is often forced to remain silent for fear of gossip. The result is a film that honors the courage of modern, transcontinental relationship pioneers.

—Yang Jiang
GYOPO

**Distributor:** Samuel Kiehoon Lee

**Country:** South Korea, Canada

**Languages:** English, Korean

**Year:** 2019

**Runtime:** 96 min

**Cast:** Bobby Choy, Sally Yoo, Paul Hwangbo

**International Premiere**

*Sleepless in Seoul* could be an alternate title for Samuel Kiehoon Lee’s feature debut, *GYOPO*, whose motley mix of Korean expats strut and skitter about in the thrum of the city’s famously bustling streetscapes in expressive black and white. Break apart the sociological fictions that come with the title’s diasporic grouping and what’s left are the young and the restless whose sometimes awkward, sometimes touching hopes, dreams, whims, and angst are set loose on a place that can cast a spell and break it not so gently at the same time.

With an improvisational rhythm whose every narrative trip keeps landing somewhere else, *GYOPO* moves in free association from side hustles to hookups to high concept performance art with equal aplomb, paying close attention to the weird loneliness that comes from looking for apartments and dealing with bureaucracy and getting cross-faded at the park with people whose names you can only half-remember. There are no roots to be found or sown here, no grand epiphanies about “identity” or “culture” to be made.

Recipe for a *gyopo*? Mashup a ‘60s French New Wave aesthetic with a killer Korean psychedelic rock soundtrack, throw in a lot of soju and some really bad sex, and it’s a long day’s journey into night followed by a long night’s 1-cha, 2-cha, 3-cha towards morning. To be *gyopo* in Lee’s space-time continuum is really not to be.

—Anthony Yooshin Kim

MU AND THE VANISHING WORLD

**Directors:** Paco Beltrán, Jessica W. Leung

**Country:** USA

**Languages:** Kayan, Karen, English, Burmese

**Year:** 2020

**Runtime:** 86 min

**West Coast Premiere**

Ten years in the making, *MU AND THE VANISHING WORLD* is the story of one remarkable woman’s journey from living as a tourist spectacle in Thailand to leaving everything behind to become an independent single mother in Bowling Green, Kentucky. At the outset of the film, Mu, a young Kayan refugee mother who fled Myanmar as a child, lives with other women who wear traditional brass neck coils in a fabricated “Long Neck Women” village set up by the Thai government. Although she is one of 150,000 people living in nine refugee camps along the Thai-Myanmar border in 2008, Mu pushes back against the traditions of her elders and the dissatisfaction of being a novelty to tourists. When an opening in a UN resettlement plan offers a chance to start a new life in the US, her curiosity and determination to forge her own path prompts her to cut the cord from her tribe and leave everything and everyone behind.

Once Mu arrives in Kentucky, the film follows her struggles adapting to a new country and the new community she must build to survive. Despite the real challenges of refugee resettlement, *MU AND THE VANISHING WORLD* is ultimately a portrait of true resilience: to give her son a better future, to find out where her true identity lies, and ultimately, to reclaim authorship over her own destiny.

—Carmela Prudencio

Preceded by: *FAR FROM KAWTHOOLEI*

Brian Myers | USA | English, Karen | 2020 | 20 min

A San Diego refugee center instills the Karen language, culture, and legacy of the people with the youth.
Kung fu comedy mixes with coming-of-(middle)-age gut punches in Bao Tran's THE PAPER TIGERS. In the late ‘80s, teenagers Danny, Hing, and Jim were kung fu prodigies. Under the tutelage of a legendary sifu, they never lost a challenge to anyone, anywhere, anytime. But flash forward 30 years, and now they are three grown uncles (Alain Uy, Mulan's Ron Yuan, and Undisputed III's Mykel Shannon Jenkins) with tight hamstrings and lives far removed from kung fu. With the sudden and suspicious passing of their master, they reunite to uncover sinister forces and mend their broken friendships (and bones) along the way.

Mentored by legendary choreographer Corey Yuen, Tran serves high octane martial arts with a rich cast of foes, including a hilarious Cobra Kai’esque rival, a squad of young bottle-bleached challengers, and the ever-yoked Yoshi and Peter Sudarso. But instead of B-movie villain monologues or fortune cookie wisdom, THE PAPER TIGERS is ultimately a feel-good underdog story with a cast of comeback-dads. The film playfully takes on the martial arts genre, while serving the wholesome vibes of Saturday morning kung fu flicks. And let’s not forget the satisfaction of watching three guys who peaked in high school get their arrogance kicked out of them in their ‘40s.

—Erwin Mendoza
SAN DIEGO ASIAN FILM FESTIVAL 2020

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SURROGATE VALENTINE TRilogy

Director Lynn Chen rounds out the nine-year cinematic journey of singer-songwriter Goh Nakamura and his friends, lovers, and everyone in between. Playing that line between fact and fiction like an old guitar, these three instant-classic comedies show Asian Americans at their bumbling bests: creating, romancing, glowing under the California sun.

SURROGATE VALENTINE

**Director:** Dave Boyle  
**Country:** USA  
**Language:** English  
**Year:** 2011  
**Runtime:** 74 min  
**Cast:** Goh Nakamura, Chadd Stoops, Lynn Chen, Parry Shen

Director Dave Boyle kept running into musician Goh Nakamura, touring from city to city. The filmmaker was a fan, and Boyle offered Goh the role to play himself in SURROGATE VALENTINE. The romantic comedy follows Goh as he scrapes by playing gigs. When he reluctantly agrees to teach guitar to TV star Danny Turner for a film, Danny tags along with Goh on a comical road trip, helping Goh’s career and maybe even his love life when high school crush Rachel shows up. Boyle’s first film in the trilogy is a cinematic valentine for the romantics, the skeptics, and most of all, the artists everywhere struggling to do what they love.

—Mye Hoang

DAYLIGHT SAVINGS

**Director:** Dave Boyle  
**Country:** USA  
**Language:** English  
**Year:** 2012  
**Runtime:** 72 min  
**Cast:** Goh Nakamura, Yea-Ming Chen, Michael Aki, Lynn Chen, Ayako Fujitani

Surrogate Valentine ended in bittersweet limbo. With DAYLIGHT SAVINGS, musician Goh Nakamura has gotten over his longtime crush and is in a loving relationship—until his girlfriend breaks things off, sending Goh into a spiraling funk. To lift his spirits, Goh heads to a party and clicks with Yea-Ming, lead singer of Dreamdate. Goh is love-struck, and Yea-Ming leaves their next meeting up to fate. Egged on by his cousin, Goh road trips to Vegas to put both old and new relationships to the test. DAYLIGHT SAVINGS expands Dave Boyle’s universe, while Goh and Yea-ming deliver lovable, effortless performances. Appearances from the hilarious Michael Aki and charming Lynn Chen mean the next installment can’t come soon enough.

—I Will Make You Mine

**Director:** Lynn Chen  
**Country:** USA  
**Language:** English  
**Year:** 2020  
**Runtime:** 80 min  
**Cast:** Lynn Chen, Yea-Ming Chen, Ayako Fujitani, Goh Nakamura, Joy Osmandski, Mike Faia, Tamlyn Tomita

Official Selection, 2020 SXSW Film Festival

The third and final chapter of the beloved Surrogate Valentine trilogy may have felt inevitable. However, it was anything but. It took the vision and talent of one of its stars, Lynn Chen, to close out a nine-year cinematic trilogy, all while starting what promises to be a flourishing directorial career. Aptly described as a semi-sequel, I WILL MAKE YOU MINE rightfully shifts focus to the three women featured in the previous two films. Set six years after the events of Daylight Savings, Rachel (Lynn Chen), Yea-Ming (Yea-Ming Chen), and Erika (Ayako Fujitani) are in varying degrees of dissatisfaction with their personal and professional lives, when indie singer-songwriter Goh (Goh Nakamura) returns to Los Angeles and into their DMs. As they stumble around rekindled feelings, the three must confront what to make of Goh, and reevaluate how awkward crushes, romantic friendships, and ghosts of past selves mesh with their visions for the future.

Where the first two films contained a stripped-down subtlety specific to Goh’s demeanor, I WILL MAKE YOU MINE’s perspective shift finally allows access to the female characters we’ve grown to care about, this time deepening our connection without Goh around. To Yea-Ming Chen and Goh Nakamura’s perfect pop soundtrack is a series of encounters and reflections, a dreamy and swoon-worthy soundscape to follow life’s curveballs. While Goh’s return comes with a hope for clarity and the inevitability of moving on, luckily for us, we can experience the characters and world of Surrogate Valentine one last time before that happens.

—James Paguyo
Films to make you laugh, cry, and cheer, featuring accidental assassins, beauty queen hideouts, and giant robot dreams.
ASSASSINS

**DIRECTOR:** Ryan White  
**COUNTRY:** USA  
**LANGUAGES:** English, Malay, Indonesian, Vietnamese  
**YEAR:** 2020  
**RUNTIME:** 104 min

**WEST COAST PREMIERE**

*Official Selection, 2020 Sundance Film Festival*

In 2017, fuzzy images from the Kuala Lumpur International Airport shocked the world. Not just because they captured the murder of Kim Jong-nam, best known as Kim Jong-un’s estranged half-brother. It was rather the nonchalant manner of the assassins: two young women (one dressed in an “LOL” sweater!) snuck up behind the unsuspecting traveler and wiped a mystery toxin on his face before disappearing into the airport crowd. Were they the perfect killers? Pawns of the Hermit Kingdom? Or, as they later professed, told they were making a funny viral video but tricked into committing murder?

And just as profoundly: who are Doan Thi Huong and Siti Aisyah, and what does this most bizarre political hit tell us about the lives of Southeast Asian migrant women within the sticky web of post-Cold War geopolitics? With a narrative that spans five countries, ASSASSINS delves into such questions with the aplomb of a real-life spy film with larger-than-life characters. There are jealous despots, aspiring actresses, plainclothes spies, diligent researchers, a watchful journalist, a CIA agent, and a mystery man known only as “Mr. Y.” Malaysia’s judicial intrigue will meet global YouTube superstardom. Whether political collateral damage or the most cunning femmes fatales, two women face the death penalty as the world watches.

—Brian Hu

DRAMA QUEEN

SẮC ĐẸP DỞI TRÁ

**DIRECTOR:** Kay Nguyen  
**COUNTRY:** Vietnam  
**LANGUAGES:** Vietnamese  
**YEAR:** 2020  
**RUNTIME:** 91 min  
**CAST:** Huong Giang, Tuan Tran, Puka, Phat La, Kim Xuan

**NORTH AMERICAN PREMIERE**

*Official Selection, 2020 Seoul International Pride Film Festival*

We all deserve to be seen and validated for who we are. But sometimes we need a friendly push to make that reality possible. Like witnessing a murder and being hunted by assassins! That’s the fate of Hang Duong (pop star Nguyễn Huong Giang) who has always identified as a woman, but never had the funds to pay for gender-affirming surgery. After stumbling upon a killing, she scrounges up the money to move forward with surgery, allowing her to achieve her dream while also hiding from the local gang. A beauty pageant presents the perfect opportunity to repay her debts while hiding safely—that is, until the gang enters their own contestant into the competition to find her!

Equal parts beauty contest romp and affirmation of transgender visibility, DRAMA QUEEN is always two steps ahead of a world mired in bigotry and ignorance. It’s also a colorful star vehicle for Huong Giang, one of Asia’s biggest trans idols, who plays Hang Duong with an effervescent growing self-confidence that honors a lifetime of hiding in her own skin, and the conviction to stand on stage and tell the world who she is.

—James Paguyo
GET THE HELL OUT
逃出立法院

**DIRECTOR:** Wang I-Fan  
**COUNTRY:** Taiwan  
**LANGUAGE:** Mandarin  
**YEAR:** 2020  
**RUNTIME:** 95 min  
**CAST:** Bruce Ho, Megan Lai

**WEST COAST PREMIERE**

*Official Selection, 2020 Toronto International Film Festival*  
*Official Selection, 2020 Taipei Film Festival*

The political gets personal in this horror comedy that takes place in one of the scariest spaces of all time—the government. A zombie outbreak unleashes mayhem on a chaotic political arena known more for fistfights than diplomacy. With a lime green power suit and a killer round-house, Hsiung (Megan Lai of *Fagara*, SDAFF '19) is a Member of Parliament who’s hellbent on stopping a chemical plant from coming to her hometown, especially since she’s sure it’s releasing a rabies virus. When her temper gets the best of her, she’s forced to resign and recruits Wang, a childhood friend with a rare blood disease, to fight against the opposition—a neon-clad gangster MP with a penchant for corruption and a lust for power.

Unbeknownst to everyone, the very assemblyroom where politicians and press gather is also Ground Zero for zombies! As the infection widens, power plays get rabid, rapidly. Filled with spurting neck juice and jaws of fury, director Wang I-Fan makes a splash with this relentlessly wacky directorial debut. The film’s vigorously cartoonish editing paired with its stylish slapstick delivers grindhouse and video game frenzy as a ragtag team of government employees must bodyslam their way out of hell. As our heroes cut through the blood-red tape, one of them holds the secret to stopping the virus from triggering a pandemic. The country’s fate lies in their bloodstained hands.

—Carmela Prudencio

IT FEELS SO GOOD
火口のふたり

**DIRECTOR:** Haruhiko Arai  
**COUNTRY:** Japan  
**LANGUAGE:** Japanese  
**YEAR:** 2019  
**RUNTIME:** 115 min  
**CAST:** Tasuku Emoto, Kumi Takiuchi

**WEST COAST PREMIERE**

*Best Film, Best Actress, 2019 Kinema Junpo Awards*  
*Best Film, 2020 Yokohama Film Festival*

Ken’s just minding his own business, content enough as a part-time security guard fishing the day away, when he gets an unexpected phone call. His ex-girlfriend Naoko is getting married and he’s invited to the wedding. With nothing better to do, Ken goes back to his hometown early and has a fateful run-in with his ex. They’re childhood companions, tethered by memories growing up in old Tohoku homes, and coming of age through a short-lived sexual relationship remembered through sensuous photos and the un-displaceable highs of semi-public lovemaking. With less than two weeks until the wedding, and a fiancé out of town, Ken and Naoko dip their toes into the licentious limbo of a more carefree past.

What begins as a nostalgic bedroom tryst becomes a lament for a world lost to an earthquake/tsunami and an unfulfilling adulthood. Sex becomes a figment of freedom, a tease that conceals the truth that perhaps they were never free to begin with. Acclaimed screenwriter Haruhiko Arai directs their reunion like a steamy *Before Sunset*, with extended conversations—Ken and Naoko are essentially the only two characters in the film—reflecting on the lost feeling of desiring somebody, and innately knowing a body. For all the demons they conjure, the two lose themselves in the rare, delicate embrace of naked familiarity as saccharine as a ‘90s rock ballad, and as sublime as the end of days.

—Brian Hu

**SPONSORED BY:**

[Image of sponsors]
KIM JI-YOUNG, BORN 1982
82년생 김지영

Official Selection, 2019 Hong Kong Asian Film Festival

Director: Kim Do-young
Country: South Korea
Language: Korean
Year: 2019
Runtime: 118 min
Cast: Jung Yu-Mi, Gong Yoo

Is there a word for Kim Ji-Young’s malady? Her family—a doting husband, a caustic mother-in-law—focuses on her verbal outbursts, during which she lashes out against an aggressor that may or may not be there, while referring to a Kim Ji-Young in the third person. Some say she’s crazy. Some wonder if she might be possessed. But since we’re with her while others are working, we see another side, at once anxious and undeterred, private and curious about other dimensions of the self. Flashbacks peel back the years of growing alienation for a woman with a literature degree and a budding marketing career, now a stay-at-home mom with an itch to do more.

In a stunning directorial debut, Kim Do-Young adapts Cho Nam-Joo’s best-selling novel as an engrossing psychic mystery. As family and former co-workers intervene, the puzzle thickens, especially as a mesmerizing Jung Yu-Mi in the lead role fleshes out a rationale for Ji-Young’s behavior without forcing an explanation. Ji-Young defies words. But for Kim Do-Young’s film there can be many: courageous, revelatory, eloquent.

—Brian Hu

MEMORIES TO CHOKE ON, DRINKS TO WASH THEM DOWN
夜香‧鴛鴦‧深水埗

Official Selection, 2020 International Film Festival Rotterdam

Directors: Leung Ming Kai, Kate Reilly
Country: Hong Kong
Languages: Cantonese, English
Year: 2019
Runtime: 77 min
Cast: Cheok Mei Leong, Mia Mungil, Zeno Koo, Yiu Sing Lam, Gregory Wong, Kate Reilly, Jessica Lam

WEST COAST PREMIERE

A young immigrant humorously listens to an elderly woman’s same old stories as they take a short trip to the city. Two brothers reminisce about growing up in the aisles of their family toy store. Two teachers—one local, the other American—spend their days exploring culinary delights and flirting across professional and cultural lines. A barista decides to run for election against a slate of conservative candidates.

Leung Ming-kai and Kate Reilly’s film brings all of these people together in a jovial embrace with this lively anthology that captures the current historical moment as Hong Kong struggles to break free from its past and take control of its future. As it progresses from a sense of nostalgia to the hunger of a new generation’s desire for change, MEMORIES TO CHOKE ON, DRINKS TO WASH THEM DOWN reminds us that the old are here to help us remember, and the young are here to help us dream.

—Yang Jiang

SPONSORED BY: Korean Cultural Center Los Angeles
MY PRINCE EDWARD
金都

DIRECTOR: Norris Wong
COUNTRY: Hong Kong
LANGUAGES: Cantonese, Mandarin
YEAR: 2019
RUNTIME: 88 min
CAST: Stephy Tang, Chu Pak Hong, Jin Kaijie

Best New Director, 2020 Hong Kong Film Awards
Film of Merit, 2020 Hong Kong Film Critics Society Awards

Fong’s got a big secret. Years ago, she had a sham marriage to get some quick cash and help a mainlander come to Hong Kong. Trouble is, her longtime boyfriend Edward finally(!) proposes, and the fake marriage is still on the books. Now, Fong must secretly locate and divorce her first husband in order to marry her second. Even worse, Shuwei the Fake Husband won’t cut the marital cord until she helps him get travel papers. No big deal, except some-thing about free spirited Shuwei has Fong questioning everything. Her man-child boyfriend, who clips his toenails in bed. Hong Kong’s sky high rents. A future mother-in-law with a key to their apartment. Her job working with Edward in a one-stop-shop for cheap wedding supplies. Fong just can’t seem to shake the feeling that they may be pros at weddings, but probably not at love.

Shot in 18 days on a shoestring budget of $400,000, MY PRINCE EDWARD’s depiction of the stifling pressures faced by modern women breathes fresh contemporary air into Hong Kong independent cinema. With superstar Stephy Tang, director Norris Wong’s debut playfully unspools the micro-compressions of runaway real estate, elder relationships, and the male spotlight, while also flipping the typical script on Hong Kong-China conservatism. Finding freedom from an entangled domestic situation seems especially fraught material in today’s climate. However, in a time when Hong Kong’s film industry has shrunk beyond anyone’s wildest imagination, MY PRINCE EDWARD and last year’s Fagara prove the potential of small films about complicated women to win over audiences worldwide.

—Christina Ree

PROJECT DREAMS – HOW TO BUILD MAZINGER Z’S HANGER
前田建設ファンタジー営業部

DIRECTOR: Tsutomu Hanabusa
COUNTRY: Japan
LANGUAGE: Japanese
YEAR: 2020
RUNTIME: 115 min
CAST: Mahiro Takasugi, Hiroaki Ogi, Yusuke Kamiji, Yukino Kishii

US PREMIERE
Official Selection, 2020 Fantasia International Film Festival

Filled with corporate parody and frenzied energy, PROJECT DREAMS – HOW TO BUILD MAZINGER Z’S HANGER is workplace comedy meets mecha anime looking to literally break the 4th wall. The Fantasy Marketing department of engineering company Maeda Corporation has one mission—to increase page visits to their website. Only building a “Fantasy World Communication Device” can make it happen. When the overzealous marketing director Asegawa comes up with a plan to construct the iconic hangar of classic anime Mazinger Z, the PR team gets roped into a wild ride to achieve the ultimate pipe dream.

The project gets complicated as they try to produce as canon a hangar as possible to appease the clients... who happen to be devoted fans of the show. With zero budget, they must make sense of technological minutiae that should only exist in anime. As the infectious spirit of Asegawa spreads, one by one, the skeptical PR team goes all in. Team members start to nerd out on the mechanics, an otaku manifests his fanaticism in the workplace, a love story grounded in bedrock and snack metaphors emerges, and all come together to try to achieve the impossible—make a giant super robot fantasy into a reality.

—Carmela Prudencio

SPONSORED BY: Sycuan CASINO RESORT
WILD SWORDS
无名狂

DIRECTOR: Li Yunbo
COUNTRY: China
LANGUAGE: Mandarin
YEAR: 2019
RUNTIME: 92 min
CAST: Zhang Xiaochen, Liu Yongxi, Sui Yongliang, Shang Bai

NORTH AMERICAN PREMIERE

Official Selection, 2019 Pingyao International Film Festival
Official Selection, 2020 Hong Kong International Film Festival

No matter how hard you try, you can never leave the jiang hu. In the ravishing and contemplative WILD SWORDS, a shadowy body-slicer is in pursuit of the swordsman Chang, who in a legendary massacre, left two bitterly dueling sects without heirs or survivors. Then, the swordsman disappears. After capturing Chang's loyal friend as bait, an underground world of bounty hunters and grudge-holders close in on a landscape of smoky shadows and green thickness, swirling fight sequences, shifting stories, and a thrillingly tense showdown with only one possible outcome.

Director Li Yunbo bucks the epic heroism of the genre and takes jiang hu's ivy entanglements of loyalty and rootlessness as fuel for a moody and intimate revenge triangle. This is the tortured fade-out of the jiang hu, of bloody scores to settle even at the cost of happy endings. And yet despite its stylized intimacy, this is still a wuxia film, and Li offers all its familiar pleasures, now spun with a fresh indie take and breathtaking lushness. A cat and mouse hunt on remote borderlands. Fight sequences that whisper famous wuxia setpieces. A pantheon of unforgettable archenemies from an icy trans assassin to a faceless foe, drawing as much from globalized Asian culture as it might from animation. And along the way, bystanders remind us with knowing eyes that have seen the inevitable, “what the jiang hu says...”

—Christina Ree
Fresh from Venice, Busan, and other prestigious international film festivals, these are premiere works by the world’s best directors.
AFTER MY HOMECOMING
有村架純の撮休

**DIRECTOR:** Hirokazu Kore-eda  
**COUNTRY:** Japan  
**LANGUAGE:** Japanese  
**YEAR:** 2020  
**RUNTIME:** 42 min  
**CAST:** Kasumi Arimura, Jun Fubuki, Shinnosuke Mitsushima

**NORTH AMERICAN PREMIERE**
Official Selection, 2020 BFI London Film Festival

Every episode of the TV series *A Day-Off of Kasumi Arimura* starts with real-life actress Kasumi Arimura, playing a fictionalized version of herself, being told on set that filming for the day has been called off. In this first episode, directed by Hirokazu Kore-eda, Kasumi takes the rare chance to pay her mother a visit at home, where she finds herself reckoning with the celebrity status that her well-intentioned mother can’t resist showing off, as well as the many changes that have taken place at home during her time away. Still coming to terms with her widowed mother’s new life, Kasumi’s visit is interrupted by an unexpected guest from her deceased father’s past, and complicated feelings of resentment and grief come to the fore.

Making his return to TV, the master of hard-hitting family drama has opted for a lighthearted slice of local life—especially after his Cannes-winning *Shoplifters* (SDAFF ’18) and France-set *The Truth*. Without betraying his acute observations of home, Kore-eda and writer Sakura Higa take a simple premise about famous actors’ personal lives, and inflect a humanity and organic charm into the imagined interiority of an actress as she sheds her celebrity exterior and rediscovers being a daughter.

—Justin Nguyen

ALL THE THINGS WE NEVER SAID
生きちゃった

**DIRECTOR:** Yuya Ishii  
**COUNTRY:** Japan  
**LANGUAGE:** Japanese  
**YEAR:** 2020  
**RUNTIME:** 91 min  
**CAST:** Nakano Taiga, Wakaba Ryuya

**NORTH AMERICAN PREMIERE**
Official Selection, 2020 Busan International Film Festival

In the opening scenes of Yuya Ishii’s *ALL THE THINGS WE NEVER SAID*, Yamada Atsuhisa tiptoes along the white lines on a road, arms stretched for balance, a cautious treading that symbolizes his stifled existence. During the day as a librarian, he moves soundlessly through the stacks; at night as a father, he sits on the couch, staring wordlessly at the television. His only respite is his childhood friend Takeda, who together shared dreams of stardom and love for the same woman. Only in their shared English classes, Atsuhisa (Nakano Taiga) dreams out loud of a house with a garden and dog for his family.

His life seems destined to remain unnoticed, until one day, he comes home to find his wife, Natsumi (Yuko Oshima, from idol group AKB48), with another man. Hyperventilating, blood pounding, Atsuhisa flees until a series of violent tragedies force him to finally speak, strangled and gasping, to fight for his daughter, Suzu. Along the way, Takeda remains a testament to the power of friendship to bear witness to our most courageous moments.

One of six prominent Asian entries in The Hong Kong International Film Festival Society’s B2B (“Back to Basics”) initiative, Ishii’s *ALL THE THINGS WE NEVER SAID* returns to his enduring interest in language, modern isolation, and oddballs whose heroism lies in the deeply difficult challenge of connecting with another human being, even if sometimes that means screaming out loud.

—Yang Jiang
CHASING DREAM

我的拳王男友

**DIRECTOR:** Johnnie To  
**COUNTRY:** China, Hong Kong  
**LANGUAGE:** Cantonese  
**YEAR:** 2019  
**Runtime:** 118 min  
**CAST:** Jacky Heung, Keru Wang

**WEST COAST PREMIERE**

Zip up that muscle suit and fire up that pole dance. The ever-devilish Johnnie To is back with the action and ballad-packed CHASING DREAM, a film reveling in genre mayhem and the cinematic feat of twisting two familiar storylines into one, the likes of which we’ve seen (but absolutely never seen) before. This is *Rocky* meets *A Star is Born* (meets ghosts of To’s filmography). Then throw in MMA, mando-pop, gangsters, fantasy musical numbers, and hot pot. This is pure To, letting us know in one glorious movie that there’s no genre he can’t do, undo, and outdo... all at the same time.

Shredded MMA fighter and human exclamation point, Tiger exuberantly wins bloody MMA bouts at night, despite a body clock ticking its way to blindness and death. Cuckoo is a ringside girl with a wimpy voice, determined to appear on a TV singing show to wreak havoc on a celebrity judge. Turns out the judge is an ex-boyfriend who stole her songs and became a huge star, earning him the slyly boring title: “The King of Originality.” As each must battle “one last time,” Tiger and Cuckoo’s cheering for each other becomes To’s irresistible karmic force, culminating in one of the strangest cinematic palimpsests of all time.

To’s fascination with China’s entertainment culture fills the frame, from a wonderland’ish set to the macabre possibilities of “following your dream.” But CHASING DREAM also plays with second chances, redoublings, and the politics of mashups—all part of To’s whirl of weird and his irrepressible Hong Kong signature. And after his three-year hiatus, we couldn’t be happier to relinquish to yet another mutant wonder.

—Christina Ree

DAYS

日子

**DIRECTOR:** Tsai Ming-liang  
**COUNTRY:** Taiwan  
**LANGUAGE:**  
**YEAR:** 2020  
**Runtime:** 127 min  
**CAST:** Lee Kang-sheng, Anong Houngheuangsy

**WEST COAST PREMIERE**

Teddy Jury Award, 2020 Berlin International Film Festival

There are few words in Tsai Ming-liang’s DAYS, and when there are, they go unsubtitled.

One could say DAYS is about two lonely people from different worlds brought together for one single night. Or DAYS is a love letter to Tsai’s muse of 30 years, Lee Kang-sheng, whose face is now middle-aged but his eyes remain pensive as ever. Or DAYS is a documentary about newcomer Anong Houngheuangsy, a Laotian migrant worker in Thailand who prays, cooks, works, and sleeps. Or DAYS is about trees reflected in a windowpane during a rainstorm, or the washing of vegetables and fish in preparation for a meal, or a cat wandering from one side of a building to the other, or a shared look in bed, or a shared meal together, or the tinkling of a sentimental Charlie Chaplin tune in a music box that becomes the only trace of an encounter.

Words, as DAYS reveals, are too much and never enough.

Late capitalism makes familiar strangers of us all, but DAYS redeems the generous pace of physical experience and revives our powers of observation. The beauty of Tsai’s cinema is not in events unfolding: it’s in the unyielding patience and wondrous attunement to the minor details that make up the stuff of our everyday lives.

—Anthony Yooshin Kim
GENUS PAN
LAHI, HAYOP

DIRECTOR: Lav Diaz
COUNTRY: Philippines
LANGUAGE: Tagalog
YEAR: 2020
RUNTIME: 156 min
CAST: Nanding Josef, Bart Guingona, DMs Boongaling, Hazel Orencio

NORTH AMERICAN PREMIERE

Best Director, Orrizonti, 2020 Venice Film Festival

 Spirits are said to roam the dense tropical forest terrain of Hugaw Island, an impoverished Filipino enclave whose citizenry believes deeply in the legends and curses of old. But in Lav Diaz’s scathing new allegory GENUS PAN, local superstition and supernatural torment are revealed to be just another tool for controlling the masses. Spanish and Japanese colonizers once weaponized such fear-mongering tactics to gain a powerful stranglehold over the collective, and their modern incarnations (corrupt civil servants, murderous thieves, Duterte stand-ins) have only perfected these misinformation campaigns further.

Diaz’s latest clocks in at a brisk (for him anyway) 157 minutes, nearly every one of which features a static camera watching three local miners as they travel back to their rural island community after spending months working abroad. Trekking through thick, mystical foliage, each step brings these men closer to an inevitable confrontation with personal ghosts, but also the larger historical traumas permeating doubt and cruelty through their small village community.

In this modern-day purgatory, Diaz (Norte, the End of History, SDAFF ’13; From What is Before, SDAFF ’14) depicts a swirl of competing philosophies (Catholicism, greed, indigenous myths, fascism) eroding at the very fabric of emotional connection and trust that make us human in the first place. It is a purposefully bleak and rewarding exploration of moral rot, beautifully shot in stark black-and-white to amplify the contrasting shades between shifting natural light and our own self-destructive impulses.

—Glenn Heath Jr.

LOVE AND DEATH IN MONTMARTRE
蒙馬特之愛與死

DIRECTOR: Evans Chan
COUNTRY: Hong Kong
LANGUAGES: Mandarin, English
YEAR: 2019
RUNTIME: 105 min

US PREMIERE

Part literary documentary, part fantasy romance, LOVE AND DEATH IN MONTMARTRE explores the life and work of lesbian Taiwanese writer Qiu Miaojin, whose suicide at age 26 devastated a generation of queer youth and whose ardent claim to her own right to love accelerated the movement for queer rights in Taiwan. Largely told through Qiu’s own words, we are shown a young woman’s longing not just for another’s love but for herself. In the face of a society’s suppression of sapphism, she writes and lives furiously.

In contrast to the monstrous apparition with which she self-identifies in her debut novel, interviews with her close friends, former teachers, and contemporary admirers reveal the radiant residue of a fluttering human spirit. Qiu’s irrepressible desire to be seen, held, and remembered is as touching as it is haunting. Evans Chan’s sumptuous filmmaking, which bridges historical documentary and evocative performance, is a fitting tribute to the cosmopolitan longings of a literary goddess.

—Emily Liu

SPONSORED BY: 臺灣旅發委員會 Ministry of Culture, Republic of China (Taiwan)
MEKONG 2030

DIRECTORS: Anocha Suwichakornpong, Pham Ngoc Lan, Kulikar Sotho, Anysay Keola, Sai Naw Kham
COUNTRY: Laos, Cambodia, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam
LANGUAGES: Khmer, Lao, Akha, Thai, Vietnamese
YEAR: 2020
RUNTIME: 93 min

An extensive water network that spans borders and nation-states, the Mekong River Delta has been a vital life-sustaining resource for its Indigenous populations for centuries. As the world continues to be brought to its knees by climate change, the river is experiencing its own crisis. In recent years, the cumulative ecological effects of sand mining, hydropower projects, and overfishing have yielded prolonged drought and dramatic declines in biodiversity, with fluctuating water levels displacing hundreds of thousands of people. It’s under such conditions that the five filmmakers of MEKONG 2030 speculate the future ten years from now along this shared body of water.

Examinations of past and future, these films embody an Indigenous spirit of relating to land and water, one that is at fundamental odds with the ruthless expanse of capitalist modernity.

Opening the anthology in Cambodia, Kulikar Sotho’s Soul River explores the precarity that characterizes the lives of two men affected by the Mekong’s torrential waters. In Laos, a global pandemic tears an impoverished family apart when their mother’s blood becomes a valuable commodity, in Anysay Keola’s The Che Brother. Sai Naw Kham’s The Forgotten Voices begins the anthology’s reincription of faith onto the Mekong, as a mining project threatens the health of a Burmese village as well as its spiritual relation to the river. Renowned Thai director Anocha Suwichakornpong’s entry, The Line, presents a marked shift away from the realist social dramas of the first half, toward something more abstract and intangible: an art exhibit theorized around animism and the Mekong as ontological subject. Pham Ngoc Lan closes the anthology with the stirring The Unseen River, composed of two simultaneous journeys, upstream and downstream, a dreamlike meditation on temporality and water.

—Justin Nguyen

THERE IS NO EVIL

DIRECTOR: Mohammad Rasoulof
COUNTRY: Germany, Czech Republic, Iran
LANGUAGE: Persian
RUNTIME: 150 min
YEAR: 2020
CAST: Ehsan Mirhosseini, Shaghayegh Shourian, Kaveh Ahangar

Golden Bear, 2020 Berlin International Film Festival

Over the course of his two-decade career, Iranian filmmaker Mohammad Rasoulof has proven adept at maneuvering between genres and tones. Still, no matter the format, be it allegorical (The White Meadows, SDAFF ‘11) or bluntly topical (Manuscripts Don’t Burn), his scathing indictment of state-sanctioned oppression has remained steadfast. Not surprisingly, the Iranian government has spent 10 years trying to silence him. Thankfully, Rasoulof has never allowed the regime’s intimidation tactics to deter him from making art.

The filmmaker’s latest work, THERE IS NO EVIL, once again takes aim at the inhumane policies that force everyday Iranians into crises of principle. Constructed of four separate but thematically connected stories, THERE IS NO EVIL runs the gamut in style and substance. The first section follows a middle-class government worker going about the daily routine preceding a most unexpected night shift. Part two uses a dialogue-heavy, theatrical set piece a la 12 Angry Men to preface a pulse-pounding, cinematic escape from a maximum-security prison. The third and fourth vignettes, both about soldiers of different ages coming to grips with the consequences of their moral failures, reveal how the destructive ripples of autocratic institutions transcend generations and borders.

As a complete piece, THERE IS NO EVIL suggests that despite the crippling social constraints placed upon the Iranian people by their government, expressions of protest and freedom can still burst from the seams of society. No amount of pressure or terror can prove otherwise.

—Glenn Heath Jr.
A documentary on journalist Maria Ressa better be tough as hell, and Ramona Diaz’s blistering new work sure is. The cameras are always on—in newsrooms, hotel rooms, under the lectern lights—following the Rappler editor-in-chief and 2018 Time Person of the Year as she leads a brilliant team of reporters standing up against an authoritarian government set out to lock up the fourth estate. Ressa and her crew are on the front lines, asking critical questions of President Duterte’s extrajudicial killings of the poor, while fending off threats of virtual, verbal, and even physical violence from Duterte’s followers.

Diaz’s film captures that work, showing how behind-the-scenes of journalism is often the main stage of political warfare. One-by-one, the film introduces players on all sides, especially women who refuse to be underestimated, capturing an escalating tension that spreads from the palace to the streets. Unfolding with the drama are cross-cuts to an early interview Ressa did with a budding Duterte, an interview that takes on new meanings with each cut, meanings that testify to the courage and persistence of the Rappler team, as well as the fact that Philippine politics are indeed global politics.

—Brian Hu

Released from prison for a thirteen-year murder sentence, former yakuza member Mikami Madao (Koji Yakusho) is set on becoming a reformed citizen. Of course, re-adapting into society while branded as a criminal with scarce social support is no easy task. Past middle-age, limited in his skill set, and emotionally volatile from a neglected childhood and years in the yakuza, the odds are stacked against any possibility for redemption. Yet Mikami persists, exhausting every opportunity that he finds (including an exploitative reality tv stunt to find his birth mother) with a lovable clumsiness, made even more endearing by a tour-de-force performance from veteran Yakusho (Shall We Dance, 13 Assassins). With a visible sorrow furrowed deep into the wrinkles on his face, the magnetic Yakusho pulls off an act of brilliant nuance, imparting an enfeebled sense of youthful hope that feels nothing short of magical.

In her follow-up to The Long Excuse (SDAFF ‘17 Spring Showcase), director Miwa Nishikawa shows once again her incisive eye for the rhythms of everyday life, in each scene striking a balance between the brutality of social and economic life in contemporary Japan and the tenderness found in networks of care. Imbued with an immense empathy and comic sensibility, her latest is an emotionally honest portrait of a life lived and a complex examination of the value in human relationships.

—Justin Nguyen

Sponsored by: AT&T
WE HAVE BOOTS
我們有雨靴

**DIRECTOR:** Evans Chan  
**COUNTRY:** USA, Hong Kong  
**LANGUAGES:** Cantonese, English

**YEAR:** 2020  
**RUNTIME:** 125 min

**WEST COAST PREMIERE**

*Official Selection, 2020 International Film Festival Rotterdam*

Electric and analytical, WE HAVE BOOTS marches through the last six years of activism in Hong Kong, the first draft of a history that may just as quickly be suppressed. It’s a history told in paintball shells and improvised tactics, in subways, airports, and campuses, capturing young and old in an existential standoff. Evans Chan’s essential documentary covers the events of Occupy Central and the Umbrella Movement in 2014 and the anti-extradition protests that shook the streets in 2019. But what makes WE HAVE BOOTS such a critical work is that it gives equal attention to what happened in between those bookends, when teenage protesters became the political vanguard, and when veteran scholars became enemies of the state. In those years of eerie apprehension, the protest shifted into the legislature, the realm of street art, and the conflict over free speech and the wealth gap.

Interviewing key participants—Ray Wong, Agnes Chow, Benny Tai, Shiu Ka-chun, Chan Kin-man, and others—Chan complements the shocking and sublime on-the-ground documentation with insights into the consequences of speaking out and the adjustments in philosophy and strategy required to maneuver around an increasingly bloodthirsty bear. The film has an epilogue too—2020 has more curveballs in store—and some of the participants have been arrested or terminated since the filming. But WE HAVE BOOTS is as much about renewing passions as it is about police brutality, and so prepares us for the prospect that this historical chapter is far from complete.

—Brian Hu

THE WOMAN WHO RAN
도망친 여자

**DIRECTOR:** Hong Sang-soo  
**COUNTRY:** South Korea  
**LANGUAGE:** Korean

**YEAR:** 2020  
**RUNTIME:** 77 min  
**CAST:** Kim Minhee, Seo Younghwa, Song Seonmi, Kim Saebyuk, Lee Eunmi

**WEST COAST PREMIERE**

*Best Director, 2020 Berlin International Film Festival*

In Hong Sang-soo’s films, female characters are often forced to listen as listless, drunken men endlessly whine about their failures. These grand displays are crucial to Hong's exploration of Korean masculinity in crisis, and often hilarious for how they mine the depths of pathetic groveling.

For THE WOMAN WHO RAN, Hong flips the script, focusing on a trio of conversations between women. Gamhee (Kim Minhee) travels the outskirts of Seoul visiting old friends, engaging in small talk and gossip that mask wounds that haven’t altogether healed. The women’s polite dance around confrontation is a thing of selfless beauty that doesn’t come without cost. Yet, these characters rarely produce the anxious energy found in the director’s masterpieces like *Right Now, Wrong Then* (SDAFF ’16 Spring Showcase). Favoring breezy, dialogue-heavy interior scenes, each segment gets disrupted by a disgruntled man clamoring for underserved respect. Most of the time, their faces are obscured, positioning the viewer squarely in the shoes of women who have undoubtedly spent countless moments humoring humorless men.

Still, THE WOMAN WHO RAN doesn’t dwell on these distractions. Instead, it finds loving respite from the exhaustion they produce. In a beautiful final scene, Gamhee avoids rehashing old heartbreak and ventures back into a movie theater to enjoy the tranquil ending of a film she’s just finished. Sometimes cinema truly is the only escape.

—Glenn Heath Jr.
SAN DIEGO ASIAN FILM FESTIVAL 2020

JIA ZHANG-KE
ARTIST TRILOGY

With the new SWIMMING OUT TILL THE SEA TURNS BLUE, director Jia Zhang-ke completes a trilogy of documentaries about artists in China. The films encompass fashion, painting, and literature, but also the tectonic turns of a modern China and the would-be freedoms of artists and their essential ties to Chinese society.

DONG 东

**DIRECTOR:** Jia Zhang-ke  
**COUNTRY:** China  
**LANGUAGES:** Mandarin, Thai  
**YEAR:** 2006  
**RUNTIME:** 71 min

DONG double-times as part of Jia Zhang-ke’s Artist trilogy and as a fascinating companion piece to Jia’s monumental Still Life, which was shot at the same time with overlapping characters and scenes. DONG joins friend and artist Liu Xiaodong, “painting from life” a group of near-naked laborers in Fengjie who are demolishing their hometown in the midst of a large scale flooding engineered by the Three Gorges Dam project. As painting transforms them into languorous models for enormous tableaux, DONG poses Jia’s defining question: what does it mean to be an artist for a disappearing world? Almost as response, DONG follows Liu to Thailand where he paints sex workers, while Jia wanders after another character, letting his cinematic free verse test the waters for blending narrative into documentary as effortlessly as paint on a canvas.

—Christina Ree

USELESS 无用

**DIRECTOR:** Jia Zhang-ke  
**COUNTRY:** China  
**LANGUAGES:** Cantonese, Mandarin, Shanxi, French, English  
**YEAR:** 2007  
**RUNTIME:** 81 min

Jia Zhang-ke’s ode to fashion in China is an awe-inspiring documentary triptych: a textile factory that is a microcosm of labor, a fashion designer taking Chinese haute couture to Paris, a tailor who outfits a mining town. The three sections are woven together with the tender thread of Jia’s signature roaming camera, a visual rhyme as politically astute as it is a tender tribute to the ordinary folks under the stitches, the frills, and the patches. Whether avant-garde or kitschy, local or global, useless or life-affirming, fashion according to Jia is always ready to surprise and unsettle, especially in a China where nothing is ever as it seems.

—Brian Hu

SWIMMING OUT TILL THE SEA TURNS BLUE
一直游到海水变蓝

**DIRECTOR:** Jia Zhang-ke  
**COUNTRY:** China  
**LANGUAGE:** Mandarin  
**YEAR:** 2020  
**RUNTIME:** 112 min

Jia Zhang-ke’s latest film is presumably a documentary about modern China’s literary greats. But, as in his previous documentary I Wish I Knew, Jia’s view on storied Chinese institutions never takes the well-trodden path, instead veering in from the side and back. For one, his interviews with famed authors Jia Pingwa, Yu Hua, and Liang Hong, or the memories of rural writer Ma Feng, are so rarely about writing. Rather, they focus—or rather muse—on their embeddedness in the ordinary crests and dips in a turbulent recent history. The film’s chapter titles aren’t signposts of literary achievement, but placards for the mundane: eating, love, disease, returning home.

And as in his most acclaimed works such as Still Life and The World, Jia and his regular cinematographer Yu Lik-wai reserve moments for everyday people, elegantly lensed in soft tracking shots. Jia is a master of blending fact and fiction, and here he juxtaposes literary histories with the lived modern city, and blurs celluloid images from his own past films with contemporary tourists taking selfies. It’s always too late for nostalgia in Jia’s films, even as he allows authors to opine about their rural roots. Instead, the silent unflappability of the ordinary Shanxi resident represents a history drifting forward like a ship at sea. Jia’s treatise on literature is a tribute to the ships’ captains, forging their own way around the literary giants before them and through the landscapes and faces that enliven their work.

—Brian Hu
From Asia’s most innovative and thought-provoking filmmakers come new stories and new ways of telling them.
BLACk miLK
SCHWARZE MILCH

**Director:** Uisenma Borchu  
**Country:** Mongolia, Germany  
**Languages:** Mongolian, German  
**Year:** 2020  
**Runtime:** 91 min  
**Cast:** Uisenma Borchu, Gunsmaa Tsogzol

**NORTH AMERICAN PREMIERE**

*Official Selection, 2020 Berlin International Film Festival*

A Mongolian nomad on the barren Gobi Desert slits a clean hole in a goat belly, reaches deep inside, and extinguishes life with his fist. It’s an act of killing that is violent and violating, sexual and somehow utterly humane. It’s also one remarkable scene in BLACK MILK, and the stew of contradictions Mongolian writer, director, and star Uisenma Borchu fingers and mounts in her second film.

Part sexual dreamstate, part cagey family reckoning, BLACK MILK dares to look at the wilderness of displaced selfhood, amidst a spare Mongolian desert scored only by neverending wind.

Drawing from the personal, Borchu plays German-Mongolian Wessi, who abandons a shitty and possessive German boyfriend to answer a deep-seated urge to visit her wary sister Ossi, far away in a Mongolian yurt. A series of encounters draw Wessi deeper into unknown territory that entangles the two sisters—from a taboo attraction to a mysterious older man to a sexual assault that Wessi subverts with a mix of curse and fantasy. These are messy and deeply interior ruptures, which Borchu echoes with little filmic slips, missing frames that periodically snap our attention like the softest slap in the face.

Wessi might be sexually radical by any standard, and the independent Ossi lives a traditional Mongolian life. And yet, BLACK MILK doesn’t bother with a boring binary of traditional vs. liberated. Rather, the two women are estranged possibilities, staring at each other with curiosity and critique, a windscatched mirror with the perennial diasporic question: *What if I had stayed? What if I had left?* hanging in the air.

—Christina Ree

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GAmaK GHAR

**Director:** Achal Mishra  
**Country:** India  
**Language:** Maithili  
**Year:** 2019  
**Runtime:** 91 min  
**Cast:** Abhinav Jha, Mira Jha

*New Voices in India Cinema Award, 2019 Mumbai International Film Festival  
Best Director, 2020 New York Indian Film Festival*

“One may live anywhere, but the village is where the roots are,” considers one member of the family depicted in GAMAK GHAR, Achal Mishra’s debut feature set in a patriarch’s village home in East India. This rumination opens the second of three acts: a sunny 1998, a cloudy 2010, and a foggy 2019. In the sun, roots grow strong: the film opens with the extended family gathering to celebrate the birth of a child. Over the course of a generation, the children that once knew one another so well have children of their own, and these children grow up far from their ancestral home and family. Time and floods and emptiness transform the house into a ruin. Far away, the nation changes, too, but this change is only felt through absence.

The central family drama is that moving around is difficult, but staying in one place is impossible in these times of mobility and urbanization. Still, if no one stays in the house, the house will fall into disrepair or be abandoned, and if there’s no house, the family can’t gather together. But for all the irreversible closure, GAMAK GHAR is a glorious, dreamlike tribute to a house and a home. The film’s narrative arc is but an ambient backbeat to more meditative and melancholic observations of memories, meals, festivals, fireworks, and songs, a tuning fork that allows the viewer to immerse themselves in the sensory realm that’s being lost. Slowly, mementos of the family patriarch are carried away: novels, journals, photographs, until no memory of the family remains in its origin.

—Kim-Anh Schreiber
LOST LOTUS
未見蓮華

**DIRECTOR:** Liu Shu  
**COUNTRY:** Hong Kong, Netherlands  
**LANGUAGE:** Mandarin  
**YEAR:** 2019  
**RUNTIME:** 82 min  
**CAST:** Yan Wensi, Zhao Xuan, Yuan Liguo

**NORTH AMERICAN PREMIERE**

*Official Selection, 2019 Tallinn Black Nights Film Festival*

Wu Yu’s life is overturned after her mother is suddenly killed in a hit-and-run. The inexplicable and unsolved death has the previously secular schoolteacher Wu Yu diving into her mother’s Buddhist temple, searching for answers larger than clues. Meanwhile, she sets off on a solitary mission to find her mother’s killer. The compounding pressures of spiritual questioning, a crumbling marriage, and her beleaguered fight for justice whittle Wu Yu to a sharp and dangerous edge, just as she realizes the killer might be too powerful to bring down legally. In Hollywood this could be a superhero origin story, but in LOST LOTUS an overwhelming sense of grief, isolation, and the struggle for forgiveness undercuts simplistic revenge fantasies.

Chinese Canadian actress Yan Wensi layers spirituality, heartache, and bravery into her portrayal of Wu Yu, while the filmmaking by Liu Shu keeps us locked in the tensions and contradictions of everyday city life. Alongside her acclaimed 2012 debut Lotus, LOST LOTUS marks Liu as a powerful chronicler of smart, steadfast women in contemporary China.

—Lev Kalman

ME AND THE CULT LEADER
悪の陳腐さの新たな報告

**DIRECTOR:** Atsushi Sakahara  
**COUNTRY:** Japan  
**LANGUAGE:** Japanese  
**YEAR:** 2020  
**RUNTIME:** 114 min

**NORTH AMERICAN PREMIERE**

*Official Selection, 2020 Sheffield Doc/Fest*

ME AND THE CULT LEADER is a portrait of the unlikeliest of camaraderies, two souls coexisting for a day or two on film. What brings them together is one of the deadliest terror attacks in Japan’s history: the 1995 sarin attack on five subway trains in Tokyo that killed 13 people and injured over 6,000 in a matter of minutes. Atsushi Sakahara is a victim. By his side is Hiroshi Araki, leader of Aum, the still-active cult responsible for the attack.

A survivor with permanent damage, writer Sakahara has spent his life chronicling the incident. In ME AND THE CULT LEADER, they meet 25 years later, as Sakahara convinces Araki to travel with him to their shared hometown. With the disarming charm of Michael Moore and the asceticism of Spock, these almost-friends debate religion, unspool Araki’s traumas, and even poke fun at bad Aum recruitment slogans. Their sincerity warms at an unhurried pace, then suddenly mutes when Sakahara gently mentions the elephant in the room: “Do you see me? Do you feel sorry?”

Sakahara’s brotherly questions shape the hope of the film—coaxing Araki toward atonement. Yet in two electric moments—a tense meal with Sakahara’s parents and a visit to a Tokyo subway station amidst a media frenzy—Araki’s blankness never fills in. Instead, Araki’s persistent emptiness shifts from thoughtful to ultimately maddening. Stripped of sensationalism and structured like a pilgrimage, Sakahara’s quest for understanding instead becomes a close encounter with the fog of renunciation itself.

—Christina Ree
NOBODY
有鬼
DIRECTOR: Lin Chun-Hua
COUNTRY: Taiwan
LANGUAGES: Taiwanese, Mandarin
YEAR: 2020
RUNTIME: 83 min
CAST: Jian fu-sang, Wu Ya-ruo, Huang Jie-fe

WEST COAST PREMIERE
The protagonist of NOBODY might be classified by some as a menace to society. Referred to only as “Weirdo,” an elderly tailor (referred to as “he”) follows the same routine day after day, wandering through the city, spitting loogies wherever and whenever. Weirdo (Jian Fu Sang) slowly befriends an uncouth girl, ZhenZhen (Wu Ya Ruo) who breaks into his apartment with the aim of spying on her cheating father through his window, and exposing her father’s infidelity to her overprotective housewife mother. As their unique friendship develops, with ZhenZhen tagging along Weirdo’s spit-filled bus rides, they befall the gaze and judgement of curious onlookers who suspect their relationship to be of a predatory nature.

NOBODY offers a sensitive, humanist examination of public and private lives, and the easy gaps in perception that occur when boundaries become blurred. With each character living with their own set of secrets that transgress interior and exterior, it isn’t long before things boil to the surface, exposing deeply held traumas and bringing disparate worlds together in unexpected ways. In her feature debut, director Lin Chun-hua has produced a work that both urges sympathy and understanding, and complicates recent narratives of Taiwan’s remarkable progress in attitudes towards queer sex, gender, and kinship.
—Justin Nguyen

THE REASON WHY I’M HOME.
回家的理由
DIRECTOR: Chang Ming Yu
COUNTRY: Taiwan
LANGUAGES: Mandarin, Taiwanese
YEAR: 2019
RUNTIME: 75 min

NORTH AMERICAN PREMIERE
First Runner-up, Chinese Doc Competition, 2019 Hong Kong International Documentary Festival

Chen-yun returns home for the first time in five years. The reason: to deal with the fallout of her estranged mother’s deep involvement in a cult responsible for her younger brother’s violent death. It’s a premise that could easily be shrugged off for its sensationalist true crime proclivities, yet first-time filmmaker and Chen-yun’s art school classmate, Chang Ming Yu, has produced a work of remarkable grace and sensibility that confronts its tragic subject matter with profound empathy and a surprising levity.

With the trial and sentencing of her mother coinciding with the birth of Chen-yun’s first child, the film peers into the flows of life and death, and the curious and imperceptible ways in which we find space to heal and forgive. Present only through his calm, disembodied voice, Chang blurs the distinctions between filmmaker and friend, offering a sincere kinship and sense of care that sees Chen-yun through interrupted grief—subjected to the imposing eye of a vulturine news media and a messy court case—and the marvelous joy of birthing new life. Following the family during the brief intermediate period before the mother’s imprisonment, THE REASON WHY I’M HOME. manages to capture the gut-wrenching rawness of loss and the process of finding light in times of immense darkness.
—Justin Nguyen

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MINISTRY OF CULTURE REPUBLIC OF CHINA (TAIWAN)

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MINISTRY OF CULTURE REPUBLIC OF CHINA (TAIWAN)
STRAY

**DIRECTOR:** Elizabeth Lo  
**COUNTRY:** USA  
**LANGUAGE:** Turkish  
**YEAR:** 2020  
**RUNTIME:** 72 min  
**CAST:** Zeytin, Nazar, Kartal

**WEST COAST PREMIERE**

*Best International Feature,*  
2020 Hot Docs International Film Festival  
Official Selection, 2020 Tribeca Film Festival

Diogenes, born in what’s now called Turkey, was known for imitating dogs, even pissing in the streets whenever he pleased. His philosophy, cynicism (roughly “dog-thinking”), was a way of being totally engaged in the city, claiming nothing outside of its social thrum. STRAY finds his spirit in the incredible stray dogs of urban Istanbul, documented over the course of two years by Elizabeth Lo.

Our guide through the busy streets and hidden paths of the city is Zeytin, a charismatic mutt who mixes gentleness and openness with a streetwise knowledge of when to fight and when to show her belly. The network of humans and animals she maintains—for food, protection and friendship—is a rich, ever-changing map of Istanbul’s overlooked and invisible. Perhaps her closest friends are a group of homeless refugee teens, who resort to stealing a dog from a construction site in order to find the comfort and intimacy that a canine companion brings. As the film suggests, they too are spiritual descendents of Diogenes.

Elizabeth Lo’s previous films *Hotel 22, Bisonhead,* and *Mother’s Day* (Best Documentary Short, SDAFF ’17) considered the lives of homeless, displaced, and imprisoned people in the US. She brings all this empathy, intelligence, and skill to STRAY—up to and including the film’s heart-stoppingly beautiful final shot.

And in case you’re worried (I know I was), rest assured: all the dogs make it through okay.

—Lev Kalman
SAN DIEGO ASIAN FILM FESTIVAL 2020

For the 9th straight year, SDAFF presents the Taiwan Film Showcase, the largest annual spotlight on Taiwan cinema in North America.

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TO WATCH THESE FILMS, VISIT SDAFF.ORG.

DRIVE-IN SCREENINGS

GET THE HELL OUT Sat, Oct 24 at Zion Market Parking Lot

BE WATER Sun, Oct 25 at Zion Market Parking Lot

6PM Arrival / 7PM Screening
The decay of celluloid is especially harsh in Asia and the Pacific Islands, where humidity runs high and the aftermarkets for old treasures are dim. And so SDAFF pays tribute to the archivists, the preservationists, and digital and analog surgeons who bring cultural artifacts—and breathtaking sights and sounds—back to life.
ARCHIVING TIME
數電影的人

**DIRECTOR:** Lu Yuan-chi
**COUNTRY:** Taiwan
**LANGUAGE:** Mandarin
**YEAR:** 2019
**RUNTIME:** 63 min

US PREMIERE

Some movie superheroes save movies. They lug dollies of film reels up and down elevators. They crack open canisters adhered through decades of chemical synthesis. They have the uncanny nose for the smell of vinegar—that olfactory sign of expiration lurking beneath the celluloid corner.

They are film archivists, protectors of cultural legacies. But as depicted in ARCHIVING TIME, which follows preservationists and restorationists at the Taiwan Film Institute, they are also workers of physical agility, laser-quick thinking, and historical conscience, poring through decades-old 16mm and 35mm reels. Lu Yuan-chi’s documentary follows reels rescued from humid Hong Kong storage, as they go through a labyrinth of celluloid makeover magic. From inspection and cleaning, to projection and scanning, to the painstaking process of removing every speck and pop, these films sparkle anew with 21st century light. Very few are classics by auteurs like King Hu or Lee Hsing. Most are faintly-remembered features screened occasionally at a village fair, or newsreels produced by a nationalist government, or curios bearing titles like “The Infertility Girl” or “Monkeys Will Be Monkeys.” Some will be restored for future events and future scholarship. Some, unfortunately, arrive D.O.A.

Through it all, our heroes—like archive veteran Allen Chung or digital ace Chang Yi-chen—press on with determination and a modest feeling of accomplishment. This is thankless work. But in capturing the mundane churn of mouse clicks, celluloid surgery, and box lunches, ARCHIVING TIME offers the deepest gratitude.

—Brian Hu

THE CHESS GAME OF THE WIND
شطرنج باد

**DIRECTOR:** Mohammad Reza Aslani
**COUNTRY:** Iran
**LANGUAGE:** Persian
**YEAR:** 1976
**RUNTIME:** 93 min

CAST: Shohreh Aghdashloo, Mohamad Ali Keshavarz, Fakhri Khorvash

WEST COAST PREMIERE

Official Selection, 2020 Cannes Classics
Official Selection, 2020 New York Film Festival
RESTORED IN 2020 BY CINETECA DI BOLOGNA AND THE FILM FOUNDATION

In the final gasp of the Qajar dynasty, the passing of a wealthy matriarch leaves conniving would-be heirs jockeying for power. The ambitious spew verbal poison and the hopeful inspect the jewels, all while the deceased’s daughter, the scorned Lady Aghdas, looking like she stepped out of a Klimt painting and into a cold sweat, rolls in her creaky wheelchair, the queen of a chess game that promises no winners. Their magnificent mansion, full of hanging aquariums, giant gramophones, and other monstrous objects of expired glory, envelops the emboldened kin, whose toxicity is so old it’s seeped into the walls.

The house and its exquisite staging, setting, and atmosphere steal the show at every turn. In his breathtaking debut, director Mohammad Reza Aslani crafts an unforgettable gilded bordello of decaying wealth. The cinematography conjures the stench of dust and the bowels of aristocracy, especially in the film’s sinister final act. The impeccable musical score drives the film’s slow, menacing march toward death. History would soon turn the pages on the film too. THE CHESS GAME OF THE WIND screened only once before the Iranian Revolution, after which it was forced underground until the negatives were discovered in a Tehran antique shop in 2015, primed for restoration and rediscovery.

—Brian Hu

SPONSORED BY: 台灣書院  MINISTRY OF CULTURE
THE HUSBAND’S SECRET

丈夫的秘密

**DIRECTOR:** Lin Tuan-chiu  
**COUNTRY:** Taiwan  
**LANGUAGE:** Taiwanese  
**YEAR:** 1960  
**RUNTIME:** 102 min  
**CAST:** Chang Mei-Yao, Chang Pan-Yang, Wu Li-Fen

**RESTORED IN 2018 BY THE TAIWAN FILM INSTITUTE**

In a love triangle, it takes two to keep a secret. When Tshiu-bi comes home with news that she ran into an old classmate, Le-hun, her husband Siu-gi is struck by the thunder of guilt, regret, and repressed desire. What his wife doesn’t know is that Le-hun and her husband are former lovers. And when Tshiu-bi invites the homeless Le-hun into their home, that thunder becomes a typhoon of heart-pounding restraint. Le-hun can’t say a word either. Not to her old friend. Not in front of her four-year-old son who Siu-gi suspects might be his.

This is melodrama of the tallest order, the kind that straddles the innocence of domesticity and the qipao-ripping salaciousness of the nightclub film. It’s also Taiwanese-language cinema delightfully unbridled, with questions of class answered through secrets and tears. Director Lin Tuan-chiu’s background in Japan shows, from the Naruse-esque dive into the inner worlds of women, to the soundtrack’s flair for jazz and classical. Lin infuses Taiwan locales with a sense of innovation: frames-within-frames, flashbacks-within-flashbacks. He exhibits a sexual frankness that shows Taiwanese-language cinema to be far more daring than its upright Mandarin cousins. In other words, this new restoration is a major re-discovery for Taiwanese cinema, a secret no more.

—Brian Hu

LETTER TO AN ANGEL

SURAT UNTUK BIDADARI

**DIRECTOR:** Garin Nugroho  
**COUNTRY:** Indonesia  
**LANGUAGES:** Indonesian, Sumbanese  
**YEAR:** 1994  
**RUNTIME:** 118 min  
**CAST:** Nurul Arifin, Adi Kurdi, Viva Westi

**Gold Prize, Young Cinema Competition, 1994 Tokyo International Film Festival**  
**Best Feature Film, 1994 Taormina International Film Festival**  
**RESTORED IN 2019 BY THE ASIAN FILM ARCHIVE**

A stubborn kid, a quiet widow, and an Elvis impersonator clash in LETTER TO AN ANGEL, the first feature shot on the Indonesian island of Sumba, and an early work of Garin Nugroho, soon to rise to prominence. A post-modern fable of globalization, the film evokes the timeless while winking about the present, in which the young boy, Lewa, spends his hours roving a village featuring an abandoned truck splashed by a Madonna poster, and a beached plane that may as well be a spaceship. Lewa gets pulled into a fashion shoot in search of “exotic” characters, but when he’s gifted a Polaroid camera, he becomes the master of the gaze—until his photos spark trouble on the island.

Passing the camera shapes much of the film, including local rituals performed by non-professional actors. Steeped in 1990s approaches to ethnography that would later evolve into Nugroho’s breakthroughs *Opera Jawa* and *Memories of My Body* (SDAFF ’19 Spring Showcase), LETTER TO AN ANGEL is a rebuke of National Geographic pleasures. Conflicts between tradition and modernity aren’t played for gags, but stage uneasy acts of self-definition. LETTER TO AN ANGEL is a savvy work of visual and pop cultural reverie unafraid of jarring twists of narrative and shocking twists of the knife.

—Brian Hu

Preceded by:  
**SONATA OF THE BRICK VILLAGE**  
*Riri Riza | Indonesia | Indonesian | 1993 | 14 min*

A village boy dreams of play, while a carousel of sounds—creaking, rain, crickets, music—swirl around him.
MAURI

DIRECTOR: Merata Mita
COUNTRY: Aotearoa, New Zealand
LANGUAGES: English, Te Reo Māori
YEAR: 1988
RUNTIME: 99 min
CAST: Anzac Wallace, Eva Rickard, Susan Paul, James Heyward

Official Selection, 2019 Venice Film Festival

RESTORED IN 2019 BY THE NEW ZEALAND FILM COMMISSION

There’s a lot of watching in Merata Mita’s landmark MAURI. It’s the 1950s and there’s a storm coming to a once-thriving Māori settlement. Rewi, holding on to an unsettled past, watches the woman he loves (and who loves him back) slip into the arms of a white man. Kara, the town’s matriarch, is stirred by the change in the air, of birthrights trembling and a land falling captive. And then there’s Awatea, a girl watching from the circumference of this simmering circle, staring not out of tragedy but of awe, at a Māori life-force re-shuffling off the rippling coasts of the North Island.

Heralded as the first narrative feature directed by an indigenous woman, MAURI should be read as not only a first, but a continuation. Off the heels of her controversial documentary Patu!, which followed indigenous protests against police violence, director Merata Mita complements her non-fiction work with a dense spiritual tale of community and the cosmic. Eschewing the rip-roaring sensation and sentiment so prominent in white colonial films about the Māori, Mita lingers on pre-colonial histories preserved in oral traditions, in tokens of birth, and in the watchful eyes of older and younger generations. Once critiqued for its confounding narrative, MAURI is instead a patchwork story with no single center, a community story made for a community, not the Pakeha mainstream Māta built a career resisting. The result, immortalized in this stunning new restoration, is a work fellow Māori director Barry Barclay has called “the world’s first truly indigenous film.”
—Brian Hu

MISTERYO SA TUWA

DIRECTOR: Abbo Q. Dela Cruz
COUNTRY: Philippines
LANGUAGE: Tagalog
YEAR: 1984
RUNTIME: 117 min
CAST: Tony Santos, Johnny Delgado, Ronnie Lazaro, Ama Quiambao

100 Greatest Pinoy Films of All Time, 2013 Pinoy Rebyu Poll
RESTORED IN 2019 BY ABS-CBN

Abbo Dela Cruz’s MISTERYO SA TUWA opens with a child’s baptism and the celebratory feasting, drinking, and dancing in the remote, rural town of Lucban, Quezon. Suddenly, the villagers’ uninhibited revelry is interrupted by a plane crash in the nearby mountains. As they rush to the crash site to loot the wreckage, three men (Ronnie Lazaro, Johnny Delgado, and Tony Santos, Sr.) run off with a suitcase they later discover to contain a large sum of cash. After the suitcase is reported missing, the city mayor conspires with his subordinates to steal the money from the townsmen.

MISTERYO SA TUWA (“joyful mystery”) is far from the happy tale the title might suggest. Its suitcase of money becomes a powerful macguffin setting off cycles of deception and violence. The moment of the film’s digital restoration by ABS-CBN invites another layer of meaning: a critique of capitalism and power when viewed in the current context of law and order politics and extrajudicial violence in a nation crippled by poverty. The immutable presence of greed and how much—or rather, little—trust people have in those who wield power is a familiar story regardless of the year or province.
—Malou Amparo Robas

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BE/LONGING  101 MIN
Shorts that probe the soft spots of belonging-to and longing-for a place in the world.

STANDING ABOVE THE CLOUDS
Jalena Keane-Lee | USA | English, Hawai’ian | 2019 | 15 min
Matriarchal power shines in this fascinating doc featuring elder women and the next generation resisting the building of a telescope on the sacred Mauna Kea.

KAPAEMAHU
Hinaleimoana Wong-Kalu, Dean Hamer, Joe Wilson | USA | Hawai’ian | 2020 | 8 min
Hinaleimoana Wong-Kalu chronicles the discovery of four stones in Waikiki, stones who are also mahu, third gender healers brought to Hawai‘i from Tahiti. Told in Olelo Niihau, the only form of Hawaiian continuously spoken since prior to the arrival of foreigners.

ALIENATED  외계생명
Seok-Young Yang | USA, South Korea | English, Korean | 2020 | 7 min
A Korean undergrad in California explores body issues and their entanglement with being a student abroad.

THE MOURNING PAPERS
Negin Farsad | USA | English, Farsi | 2020 | 11 min
Niloo and Elham are undocumented Iranian American sisters living in New York City who hilariously grapple with how to grieve for a dad they have never known.

BIG HAPPINESS
Da Hee Kim | USA, South Korea | English | 2020 | 14 min
The uncanniness of adoption from the POVs of the filmmaker, an adult Korean adoptee, navigating awkward dinner table conversations and the labor of finding yourself in uncharted personal territory.

FORGET ALBERTO FOR NOW
Beina Xu | Germany | Arabic, French, English | 2020 | 19 min
Alberto keeps getting refused refugee status. Alberto also keeps refusing to participate in this film (about refugees).

HEADING SOUTH  雁南飞
Yuan Yuan | China, USA | Mongolian, Mandarin | 2020 | 12 min
Young Chasuna travels from the grasslands of Mongolia to the big city to visit her father for his birthday. To her surprise, her father is remarried to a Chinese woman which makes for a very uncomfortable party.

KAMA‘ÄINA (CHILD OF THE LAND)
Kimi Howl Lee | USA | English | 2020 | 17 min
Mahina, a queer Native Hawaiian teenager is unhoused and navigates a life on the streets. That is, until she meets Auntie Twinkle and the radical miracle of Pu‘uhonua o Wai‘anae, a Hawai‘i unlike anything we have seen.
ECHOPLEX 106 MIN
Inventive films that change the format and spin the artifacts, annals, and echoes of all that’s left behind.

THE BOAT PEOPLE
Tuan Andrew Nguyen | Philippines | Tagalog, English | 2020 | 19 min

Set in an unspecified future, children on an island named Bataan collect an unknown past from the ruins of war, and encounter a deity buried in the sand with more questions than they ever imagined.

NO CRYING AT THE DINNER TABLE
Carol Nguyen | Canada | Vietnamese, English | 2019 | 16 min
A filmmaker cuts deep into silently kept regrets in recorded interviews with her family, and replays them all at the dinner table.

STREET ANGEL
Michelle Sui | USA | English, Mandarin | 2020 | 23 min
Decked in cheongsam, a wandering songstress unfolds history, memory, and cultural imagination onto a rapidly changing Chinatown.

BLAST BURN
Steve Nguyen, Jonathan Patrick Thomas | USA | English | 2020 | 10 min
With an unusual mix of animation and live sequences, the director tells a personal journey from pain to the healing offered by beekeeping and the landscape of the Louisiana Bayou.

PROVIDENCE
Daniel Lee | South Korea | English, Korean | 2020 | 11 min
It’s about history seeping into the story of a family. It’s about reaching for the stars and California. It’s about ruin at the end of the day.

A BRIGHT SUMMER DIARY 公园日记
Lei Lei | China, USA | Mandarin | 2020 | 27 min
A romance film loops in a cinema in Lushan, a souvenir photo is trapped behind glass, and sound and vision decay in these haunting memories of a summer not long after the Cultural Revolution.

HORMONAL DREAM 94 MIN
Shorts that swim in body chemistry.

BEER! BEER!
Popo Fan | Germany | English | 2019 | 17 min
In this mischievous anti-romance, it’s after hours in Berlin, and clubgoer Tao has attracted Sebastian, a semi-fetishizing vegan suitor who walks with Tao into the wee morning hours.

ZOE AND HANH
Kim Tran | USA | English, Vietnamese | 2020 | 9 min
Zoe’s sex life is exposed when her conservative mother tracks her whereabouts in this awkward raunchy culture clash not even yogurt can cure.

NIGHTCAP
Nicole De Meneses | USA | English, Czech | 2019 | 4 min
A delightfully over-the-top queer vampire film aged 34 years, full-bodied, with a smooth finish.

SIXTEEN
Nahyeon Lee | New Zealand | English, Korean | 2020 | 12 min
With an unplanned pregnancy and a strained relationship with her mother, life is not the K-pop fantasy Yaejin dreams of.
THE CHICKEN
Neo Sora | USA | English, Japanese | 2020 | 14 min
Japanese immigrant Hiro wanders New York with his cousin, preparing to butcher a live chicken for dinner and unaware of the personal reckoning before them. Based on Naoya Shiga’s “An Afternoon on November Third.”

LA GLORIA
Mary Evangelista | USA | English, Spanish | 2020 | 15 min
So much of Gloria is hidden away—their suicide attempt, their queerness. But in their dreams, they’re able to envision what is meant to be uncovered.

KKUM 꿈
Kangmin Kim | South Korea, USA | Korean | 2020 | 9 min
Styrofoam in its millions of plastic textures sparkle, crumble, and melt as one mom’s superstitious dreams mix with prayer to weave a powerful protective shell around her grown son.

MIZUKO (WATER CHILD)
Kira Dane, Katelyn Rebelo | USA, Japan | English, Japanese | 2019 | 15 min
Through Super8, watercolor, and stop-motion animation, the concept of “mizuko” (water child), a special name in Japan for the children that never make it to birth, is explored in this meditation on the aftermath of an abortion.

HUMAN RESOURCES
92 MIN
Heroic feats, chilling power plays, and surreal misbehaviors while on the job.

YAI NIN ยายิน
Champ Ensminger | Thailand | Thai | 2020 | 13 min
Under a halo of hairspray and feminine swagger, Nin is not your everyday sausage tycoon.

EXCUSE ME, MISS, MISS, MISS
Sonny Calvento | Philippines | Tagalog, English | 2019 | 16 min
Vangie turns “mamsir” drudgery into surrealist conspiracy in this hilariously odd department store dystopia.

CÔI
Anh La | Vietnam | Vietnamese | 2020 | 15 min
A lonely graveyard worker is invited into a (nec)romance with a man’s dead daughter.

BASURERO
Eileen Cabiling | Philippines | Tagalog | 2019 | 17 min
Under cover of night, Filipino fisherman Bong has a side hustle dumping trash into the ocean—except this is no ordinary job. His cargo are the victims of Duterte’s war on drugs.

TIGER AND OX
Seunghee Kim | South Korea | Korean | 2020 | 8 min
With lively narration, a daughter’s memory of growing up comes up against her mother’s story of running a restaurant and raising a child alone.

WE NEED TO TALK ABOUT HER 비 내리는 날의 양자강
Cha Jeong-yoon | South Korea | Korean | 2019 | 23 min
In a quiet Korean town, tensions come to a muted boil in a scarcely frequented restaurant and the brothel upstairs.
MALL RAT 107 MIN
Inhale the smell of teen spirit from Michelle Kwan fandom, bank robberies, and monsters-in-the-making.

MICHELLE
Kenya Gillespie | USA | English | 2020 | 10 min
Olympic skater Michelle Kwan helps Mao resist neighborhood bullies and build an inner world of pure joy.

LOGAN LEE & THE RISE OF THE PURPLE DAWN
Raymond C. Lai | USA | English | 2020 | 9 min
DJ Logan Lee tries to win back his ex but discovers she’s with an evil alien who can only be seen with “Purple Dawn,” a mysterious strain of pot. Could this also explain the appearance of Randall Park, Lyrics Born, and Dan the Automator?

VALLEY
Allan Zhang Tran | USA | English, Mandarin, Cantonese | 2020 | 21 min
It’s ditch day in the San Gabriel Valley as two high school seniors realize they might be on very different paths.

RED LADIES
Parida Tantiwasadakran | USA | English | 2020 | 10 min
Somewhere deep in Orange County, a daughter hilariously tries to sabotage her mother’s campaign to become the first Asian American Republican assemblywoman.

THE 90 DAY PLAN
Gabriela Garcia Medina | USA | English | 2020 | 9 min
How will Lorena, a high school girl (obsessed with heist movies), and her bff (obsessed with butt implants) prevent eviction? Three words: rob a bank.

THE ROSE OF MANILA
Alex Westfall | USA, Philippines | Tagalog, English | 2020 | 12 min
Archival footage and reenactment evoke a formative moment in the life of young Imelda Marcos, the infamous wife of Philippines dictator Ferdinand Marcos.

NOVENA
Nolan Valerio | USA | English, Tagalog | 2020 | 15 min
Teresa comes to terms with her father’s death while reconciling “losing her religion” and her desire to escape from her younger brother and religious mother.

OVERACHIEVERS
Sam Mohney | USA | English | 2020 | 20 min
A campus heist becomes a business student’s escape from a soulless corporate future, as he convinces two friends to steal the “Golden Spike”, the spike that completed the Transcontinental Railroad, to get rich quick.

HAJUN BLOOMS
Ji Yoon Kim | USA | English | 2020 | 4 min
Evoking queer films of the 40s–90s, repressed queer desire confronts the dark heart of the Church.

NEGATIVE TWO
Micaela Durand, Daniel Chew | USA | English | 2019 | 28 min
Endless Grindr. Cruising an empty theater. Gym bodies and mirrors. As young architect Devin wades in a stream of screens, has queer experience ever felt so isolating?

RED ANINSRI; OR, TIPTOEING ON THE STILL TREMBLING BERLIN WALL ยืนยงกรงรัก
Ratchapoom Boonbunchacho | Thailand | Thai | 2020 | 30 min
In a cinematic world where heroes sound heroic and villains sound villainous, Jit teaches Ang to find her voice in this espionage romance that delightfully queers the dub.
REEL VOICES 66 MIN
Nine filmmakers, nine stories exploring filmmaking from the teen perspective. From our Reel Voices documentary filmmaking program.

LIMITLESS
Alan Ding | USA | English | 2020 | 8 min

Riding a skateboard is more than just a sport. These interviews reveal what may be hidden from the casual observer.

THE GOLD MOUNTAIN
Brandon Mah | USA | English | 2020 | 6 min

After World War II, young Chinese immigrant John Woo moves to California to find success in this mysterious foreign land.

DANCING WITH MYSELF
Ciera Millard | USA | English | 2020 | 6 min

Dedicated Dance Dance Revolution players share their love of the community. During an unprecedented time, they persevere and thrive online.

JUNIPERO SERRA
Reagan Pendarvis | USA | English | 2020 | 5 min

Students share opinions about the potential name change happening at Junipero Serra High School.

SELF LOVE
Jaeden Laroza | USA | English | 2020 | 9 min

Words of experience and advice about how to cure sadness and find the key to self love.

POWAY "UNIFIED"
Hailey Jose | USA | English | 2020 | 8 min

BIPOC students share their experiences and struggles of living as a minority on a "white" campus.

UNITED
Isabella Kwon | USA | English, Korean | 2020 | 11 min

Korean American Christians speak on the LGBTQ debate that risks tearing their community apart.

SNAIL MAIL
Andrea Baek | USA | English | 2020 | 6 min

Pairs of pen pals share their sides of the letters: what they’ve learned, why they write, and what makes pen palling special.

INCHES FROM COVID
Angela Rodriguez | USA | English | 2020 | 7 min

A close look at two workers in the VA San Diego Healthcare System and how coronavirus affects their personal and professional lives.
TAIWAN <-> AMERICA 68 MIN

Americans in Taiwan, Taiwanese in America, and all the messy, awkward, and sentimental combinations of familial and cinematic border-crossing at the intersection of ABTs and ah-ma’s.

THE GRANDDAUGHTER DETECTIVE 孫女偵探
YuHui (Judie) Yang | Taiwan | Taiwanese, Mandarin, Japanese, English | 2019 | 11 min
Judie’s visit to her grandmother sparks a conversation about language barriers, generational gaps, and the resilience of familial love.

AHMA & ALAN 阿嬤與阿倫
James Y. Shih | USA, Taiwan | Taiwanese, Mandarin, English | 2020 | 23 min
When Alan, an American teacher working at a kindergarten in Taiwan, is taken in by law enforcement, his grandmother must come to his rescue.

HELLO FROM TAIWAN 你好 從台灣來的
Tiffany Frances | USA | English, Mandarin, Taiwanese | 2020 | 16 min
Three young girls have to learn to get along when their family is unsettled by their parents’ marital discord and a mysterious earthquake.

SMILING BUDDHA 微笑彌勒
Yu Chu Chang | USA | Mandarin, Taiwanese | 2020 | 19 min
A young woman struggles to balance her autonomy with her love for her grandma, whose fading memory creates a chasm between them.

TIGHT QUARTERS 91 MIN

When social distance becomes social compression, these narratives find a way out.

HOW WE’RE GONNA MAKE IT THROUGH TILL THE MORNING SUN
Mackie Mallison | USA | English, Spanish | 2019 | 15 min
Shot in fresh, inventive style, Mari and Ezekiel try to stay up all night to avoid night terrors and other threats, in a nocturnal world of mattresses, drawings, and playing pretend.

THERE WERE FOUR OF US
Cassie Shao | USA, China | English | 2019 | 7 min
Peel through layers of dreams, explosions of color, and kinetic mixed media in an animation unlike any other.

EXAM EMTEHAN
Sonia K. Hadad | Iran | Persian | 2019 | 15 min
An adrenaline-soaked ride as a teen girl in Iran runs drugs for her family, but gets stuck with a bag check at school.

OUT OF PLACE
Peier “Tracy” Shen | USA | Mandarin, English, Spanish | 2020 | 20 min
Parallel stories of two lonely neighbors living side-by-side. Hui studies piano and grapples with her own inadequacy, while Chamo lives with friends while avoiding a fractured marriage.

NO MORE PARTIES
Natalie Murao | Canada | English, Cantonese | 2020 | 15 min
Rose awkwardly hobbles through a night of karaoke with her friends… well, make that “friends”… only to stumble upon another lonely young woman crooning in Chinese.

LATCHKEYS
E.C. Timmer | USA | English, Korean | 2020 | 19 min
A sweet portrait of optimism amidst loneliness, Jenny spends hours at home alone, practicing dance routines to show her dad while he works late hours.
WE ARE IN A DIGITAL HELL 93 MIN
Shorts that can only exist in the recesses of the remix and the weird underbelly of the digital.

DIGITAL FUNERAL: BETA VERSION
Sorayos Prapapan | Thailand | English | 2020 | 6 min
Within a 360 loop from the center of a cluttered bedroom, a filmmaker prepares for his funeral.

WE STILL HAVE TO CLOSE OUR EYES
John Torres | Philippines | English | 2019 | 13 min
Outtakes from behind the scenes of Filipino productions (including those of Lav Diaz and Erik Matti) are recut to make a dystopian and urgent world of human avatars controlled by apps.

CARNIVAL
Lia Wang | USA | | 2020 | 3 min
A lush, techno, sci-fi horizon shimmers with the unknown for a blind woman and her seeing eye dog.

AGARI-FIGHTER (MOUTH & MOUTH FIGHTER)
아가리파이터
Ga hyeon Seo | South Korea | Korean | 2019 | 22 min
In the land of ASMR and mukbang, Starfish becomes an online celebrity through her addiction to eating inanimate objects triggering a fierce showdown with a villainous competitor.

I BOUGHT A TIME MACHINE
Yeon Park | USA | Korean, English | 2020 | 15 min
A young woman buys a time machine for her father off of eBay, and enters the odd world of internet mysticism, revisiting old memories, and the very real question of what we would do differently if given the chance.

CAN’T JUDGE~CORONA AND THE JAPANESE GOVERNMENT 20XX VERSION~
Yuri Sasamoto | Japan | Japanese, English | 2020 | 11 min
Slapdash and irrational, an absurd low-fi/sci-fi short about a hapless bureaucrat complicit in a fascist invasion... with a musical number.

POROSITY VALLEY 2: TRICKSTERS’ PLOT
Ayoung Kim | South Korea | English, Korean, Arabic | 2019 | 23 min
In a retro-digital future, Petra Genetix is a migrating data cluster who threatens to infect the system.
FESTIVAL JURORS

VICCI HO has worked in festival programming since 2006, including as Director of the Hong Kong Lesbian and Gay Film Festival, Assistant Director of the San Francisco International Asian American Film Festival (now CAAMFest), Programming Associate for the Toronto International Film Festival, and as Asian film consultant for festivals in North America and Europe. She is currently programmer for Chinese and East Asian cinema for the New Zealand International Film Festival, and is a co-creator of the upcoming tabletop game “Battle of the Boy Bands.”

GINA MARCHETTI is Professor of Comparative Literature at Hong Kong University, and is the author of the books Romance and the “Yellow Peril”: Race, Sex and Discursive Strategies in Hollywood Fiction, From Tian’anmen to Times Square: Transnational China and the Chinese Diaspora on Global Screens, The Chinese Diaspora on American Screens: Race, Sex, and Cinema, Andrew Lau and Alan Mak’s INFERNAL AFFAIRS—The Trilogy, and Citing China: Politics, Postmodernism, and World Cinema.

OMME-SALMA RAHEMTULLAH has spent the last 15 years in community media programming, most recently as the Assistant Director of Programming at a nonprofit arthouse theatre in Columbia, SC, where she curated film through a community-informed programming imperative that brought community members, activists, and academics into the film programming process. She is currently teaching Film Programming at the University of South Carolina and working in Impact Producing with Impact Media Partners. Omme is a 2020/2021 South Asian American Digital Archive (SAADA) Archival Creators Fellow.

HAM TRAN is a two-time Student Academy Award finalist and the director of Journey from the Fall, which premiered at the Sundance Film Festival, went on to win 16 international festival awards for Best Feature Film, was the first Vietnamese film released by Netflix, and was listed by the LA Times as one of the best 20 Asian American films of the last 20 years. He is also the director of the romantic comedy How to Fight in Six-Inch Heels, which won a Golden Kite Award, and Bitcoin Heist, which was released by Well Go USA.
GEORGE C. LIN
EMERGING FILMMAKER AWARD

George Lin was a fierce advocate for indie film, indie music, and the right to eat greasy food and ice-cold boba. Slightly awkward and downright fearless, George never turned down a conversation or a chance to meet a new friend.

He founded the DC APA Film Festival in 2000, and later joined the San Diego Asian Film Foundation (now Pacific Arts Movement) as its Programming Director. At SDAFF, he helped launch a number of initiatives such as Blowfish (a live music showcase), Reel in the Vote (voter awareness campaign through media arts), and even the ridiculous idea of purchasing used bread trucks to drive around town and project films (which SDAFF eventually realized as Drive-By Cinema).

After a long fight with cancer, George passed away on October 14, 2008.

Each year since his passing, Pacific Arts Movement has proudly presented an Emerging Filmmaker Award in honor of George Lin. Selected by the SDAFF programming team, winners are presented to first-time feature filmmakers and other promising new voices.

2019 MIKO REVEREZA
director of NO DATA PLAN

2018 CHRISTOPHER MAKOTO YOGI
director of AUGUST AT AKIKO’S

2017 ANAHITA GHAZVINIZADEH
director of THEY

2016 ANDREW AHN
director of SPA NIGHT

2015 TAKESHI FUKUNAGA
director of OUT OF MY HAND

2014 VERA BRUNNER-SUNG
director of BELLA VISTA

2013 LESLIE TAI
director of GRAVE GOODS & SUPERIOR LIFE CLASSROOM

2012 ERNIE PARK
director of LATE SUMMER

2011 PATRICK WANG
director of IN THE FAMILY

2010 NADINE TRUONG,
director of EGG BABY & SHADOWMAN

2009 MARK TRAN,
director of ALL ABOUT DAD
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As inventors of breakthrough technologies, we are all for inspiring positive change in the world. That’s why we’re pleased to support Pacific Arts Movement in presenting Asian and Asian American Pacific Islander media arts to San Diego residents and visitors in order to entertain and support a more compassionate society.

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ABOUT PACIFIC ARTS MOVEMENT
Pacific Arts Movement (Pac Arts) is one of the largest media arts organizations in North America that focuses on Asian and Asian American cinema. Our mission is to present Pan Asian media arts to San Diego residents and visitors in order to inspire, entertain, and support a more compassionate society.

OUR PROGRAMS
Pac Arts is committed to sharing powerful stories with audiences year-round through the San Diego Asian Film Festival, Spring Showcase, Spotlight Screenings, and Outdoor Screenings. From our award-winning high school documentary program Reel Voices to Youth Days at the festival, we are also dedicated to educating and nurturing a new generation of creative leaders and storytellers.

SPRING SHOWCASE, COMING SPRING 2021
An eight-day presentation of the best of Asian and Asian American cinema on the other side of the calendar year.

YOUTH DAYS
Two days of free youth-oriented film screenings to educate, enlighten, and enhance local students’ film and cultural literacy.

REEL VOICES
A 10-week summer documentary program training local high school students to become socially-conscious digital storytellers. Since 2005, Reel Voices empowers high school youth to learn the art of documentary filmmaking and to tell stories that are both personal and deeply relevant to the broader San Diego community.

OUTDOOR CINEMA
Pac Arts presents year-round film programs such as Spotlight and Outdoor Screenings throughout San Diego County.

Learn how you can support our programs at pacarts.org/donate
BECOME A MEMBER AT PACIFIC ARTS MOVEMENT!

STARTING AT ONLY $60, when you join as a member, you’ll not only receive member benefits and insider access to all of our films and events, but you also help to strengthen our mission to inspire, entertain, and support a more compassionate society.

ALL MEMBERS RECEIVE THE FOLLOWING BENEFITS:

• Discounted tickets and passes to advanced screenings, special events, festival merchandise, and film festivals
• Presale access to our ticketed events before the general public
• Subscription to the Pac Arts membership e-newsletter
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chan@goodmovемedia.com

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wy.workrecord@gmail.com

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msuarez@greenwichentertainment.com

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nelleke@ninefilm.com

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curtainupfilm@gmail.com

**Daylight Savings** 15
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**Days** 24
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bob@icarusfilms.com

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jose@loganindustry.com

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Gyopo 13
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**The Husband’s Secret** 38
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I Will Make You Mine 15
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It Feels So Good 18
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Kim Ji-Young, Born 1982 19
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Letter to an Angel 38
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Love and Death in Montmartre 25
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Mogul Mowgli 7

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Nobody 33
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The Paper Tigers 14
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**Project Dreams - How to Build Mazinger Z's Hangar** 20
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**The Reason Why I’m Home.** 33
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Stray 34
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Surrogate Valentine 15
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Swimming Out Till The Sea Turns Blue 29
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There Is No Evil 20
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**A Thousand Cuts** 27
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We Have Boots 28
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The Woman Who Ran 28
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Agari-Fighter (Mouth & Mouth Fighter) 47
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**Beer! Beer!** 42
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Big Happiness 41
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Blast Burn 42
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“About the design: 2020 is the year of eyes. That’s all we see of anybody, whether peering over masks, or from the protests in HK and US, masses of people looking back hard at our leaders. Or staring at screens for school, work, and now, the worlds of film. This year’s kinetic graphics are inspired by the “dazzle camouflage” used on boats in WWI to create visual confusion through hypervisibility, a strategy later adopted by modern day activists to deter facial recognition. Lastly, on our print publications is ZXX, an anti-surveillance typeface designed by Sang Mun as a call-to-action to raise questions about our online privacy. This typeface purposefully misdirects information and confuses text scanning software. Honoring this weird, disruptive, and pivotal year, SDAFF 2020’s identity beckons like an online nickelodeon of playfulness, while its DNA whispers “You can’t ignore us. And you will see us, but on our terms.”
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