Can we celebrate yet? A year after we cancelled the 2020 SDAFF Spring Showcase as the country sank into shelter, our spirits could use a major jolt. Our eyes and ears could use some cinematic sparkle. How about a Taiwanese rom-com about our missing days? Or a peppy documentary about high school students triumphing over the toughest year of their lives? Why stop at movies altogether? These past 12 months, TV and movies blurred into one long binge, so let’s see what one of world cinema’s most unnerving directors can do with a ten-episode series.

Yes, let’s celebrate. Now, more than ever, let’s celebrate Asian American elders with a retrospective of classics unavailable on any streaming service. Let’s salute pioneers like documentarians Puhipau and Joan Lander who fought for Hawaiian cultural, economic, and political sovereignty with their cameras.

It’s 2021. We still have many battles to fight and comrades to support. But a year in the trenches have sharpened our resolve and our hunger for stories and images of Asians and Pacific Islanders on our own terms. So grab your Chromecasts and HDMI cables, gather your bubble buddies and vaccinated family, and get ready to let out a long-gestating cheer. The 10th SDAFF Spring Showcase is finally here.

BRIAN HU, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

The SDAFF Spring Showcase includes a variety of live and pre-recorded filmmaker Q&As. All Live Q&As are free and will be available to view via multiple platforms including the official Facebook, Twitch, and YouTube accounts for Pacific Arts Movement. Pre-recorded Q&A’s for select films will be included with the purchase of a screening ticket and will immediately follow the feature film. The Live Q&A schedule as well as the listing of films with Pre-Recorded Q&As can be found at sdaff.org.
THE WAY WE KEEP DANCING

DIRECTOR: ADAM WONG In 2013, the low-budget surprise The Way We Dance (SDAFF ’13) took street dancing to the Hong Kong mainstream. The buoyant choreography and fresh faces had audiences demanding a sequel. Hip-hop may romanticize the streets, but in 2020 Hong Kong, is the romance over? Director Adam Wong answers with a brilliant conceit: rather than a sequel, why not imagine the fallout from replicating one’s breakthrough? The stars are on the cusp of YouTube stardom, dance studio success, and a rap career, and the city bureaucrats and gentrifiers take notice, asking “how about hip-hop branded real estate?” and “Why not use graffiti to raise the rents?”

The artists in THE WAY WE KEEP DANCING pop and lock with nervous intentions in this new corporate reality, and the film builds a tense momentum towards an outcome that is neither obvious nor inevitable, least of all in a Hong Kong where the aspiration to keep doing anything the way it’s been done is a radical sentiment. To keep dancing is to keep the city from predators, to keep the spirit of Hong Kong moving through the body and the lyrics, winding past food stalls and underpasses, tracing a city that refuses to die.

TRY HARDER!

DIRECTOR: DEBBIE LUM “Kids at Lowell are pretty amazing,” says one Lowell student, nervously. “Amazing” is what sets them apart: these are specially-selected students in San Francisco’s top high school, a fabled institution that produces college-ready superstars. But “amazing” is also a high bar to live up to: against their peers in silent competition, to their parents’ explicit and implicit expectations of immigrant success, but importantly, to their own inchoate standards of personal value. Furthermore, most of the students at Lowell are Asian American, which comes with a different set of biases about being merely “A.P. machines,” especially in the eyes of Ivy Leagues trying to maintain their white country club reputations, as one Lowell teacher bluntly warns.

The five students we get to know in Debbie Lum’s peppy, nerve-racking, and joyous TRY HARDER! are anything but machines. They are not-so-secret dancers and ice cream scoopers. They exude genuine love for each other, their parents, and teachers. Set across their senior year, Lum follows them from an autumn scrambling to submit college applications, to a bittersweet graduation anticipating the next chapter of trying harder and being amazing.
CANE FIRE
DIRECTOR: ANTHONY BANUA-SIMON
Film history is also colonial history in Anthony Banua-Simon’s riveting documentary about the construction of Hawai'i as a South Seas fantasy. In a stream of archival footage, Elvis Presley excerpts, and interviews with ordinary folks and family members, Banua-Simon shows how corporate distortions of aloha have for decades justified the development of Kaua‘i into a modern plantation and displaced indigenous populations and Asian migrant labor as mere background players onscreen and off.

DEAR TENANT
親愛的房客
DIRECTOR: CHENG YU-CHIEH
Lin is not just a tenant, but the caretaker of his ailing landlord, who also happens to be the mother of his late partner, Li Wei. Her sudden passing incites an inheritance battle between Lin and Li Wei’s brother who refuses to acknowledge Li Wei’s past relationship with a man. DEAR TENANT is courtroom drama and tender romance, and a story of unbreakable bonds that test the limits of acceptance even after Taiwan’s landmark legalization of same-sex marriage.

FAN GIRL
DIRECTOR: ANTOINETTE JADAONE
A fanatical teenage girl is rudely awakened when her fantasies of her idol are shattered during one memorable night. Diving into the psyche of a fangirl is infinitely more gripping with filmmaker Antoinette Jadaone at the helm.

MY MISSING VALENTINE
消失的情人節
DIRECTOR: CHEN YU-HSUN
On February 15th, Yang Hsiao-chi awakens to discover she’s lost both her Valentine’s Day and her Valentine’s date! The authorities are no help, so our zany heroine is left to discover how a missing day, a mysterious sunburn, and the wisdoms of a crotchety-dream gecko are all fragments of a sweeping love story.

DEAR TENANT
Taiwan ◊ 2020 ◊ 119 MIN
FAN GIRL
Philippines ◊ 2020 ◊ 100 MIN
MY MISSING VALENTINE
Taiwan ◊ 2020 ◊ 107 MIN
HAWAII ◊ 2020 ◊ 90 MIN
THE REAL THING
本気のしるし
DIRECTOR: KOJI FUKADA
After Kazumichi rescues the awkward Ukiyo from a near-death accident, he can’t help but get sucked back into the mysterious life of a woman who has been anything but saved. In ten bingeable 23-minute episodes, director Koji Fukada (Harmonium, SDAFF ’16) luxuriates in the engrossing psychologies of two strangers who infiltrate each other’s lives in seemingly irreversible ways.

SUN CHILDREN
خورشید
DIRECTOR: MAJID MAJIDI
12-year-old Ali and friends prowl the streets of Tehran, swiping parts off Mercedes and making a modest living in a parent-less world. The city’s leering adult crooks see in Ali and his team some big-time ambition and small-human sizes, and thus enlist them on a secret mission: to enroll in a boys’ school, dig into its underground lair, and capture buried treasure. Oscar-nominated Majid Majidi directs a thrilling Iranian heist.

For too many, our Asian elders are inscrutable faces and frail street crawlers. For us, they are keepers of desires and memories. Here are some of their stories, hidden in plain sight in the annals of Asian American cinema.

THE WASH
Michael Toshiyuki Uno ◆ USA ◆ 1988 ◆ 94 min
Three legends (Mako, Nobu McCarthy, Sab Shimono) headline this rare 1988 drama about love after separation.

COSMOPOLITAN
Nisha Ganatra ◆ USA ◆ 2003 ◆ 53 min
After his family leaves him, a recent retiree takes an interest in leftover Cosmo magazines and an intriguing neighbor.

AND THEREAFTER
Hosup Lee ◆ USA, South Korea ◆ 2004 ◆ 56 min
Hosup Lee’s award-winning documentary about a Korean woman who marries an American GI and ends up an outsider in New Jersey.
MAUNA KEA – TEMPLE UNDER SIEGE

“Great science. Wrong mountain.”

For Native Hawaiians, Mauna Kea is a kūpuna, an ancestor central to their culture. For astronomers, Mauna Kea is the ideal site for telescopes. Protectors of the land face off against the academy in this acclaimed document of Native claims to indigenous knowledge.

THE TRIBUNAL

Since 1974, videomakers Puhipau and Joan Lander have operated as Nā Maka o ka 'Āina ("the eyes of the land"). A documentary collective that saw in media production a means of anti-colonial knowledge-making, their films on the cultures and ecologies of Hawai‘i and the Pacific redeem native practices for native livelihood, and their monumental political documentaries imagine a sovereign Hawai‘i only possible by recovering the history of the oppressed. Their videography of over 100 documentaries is unparalleled, an archive as explosive as ever and an essential contribution to global indigenous cinema.

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Sovereignty includes the right to tell one's own history. That means laying bare the events and circumstances leading up to the 1893 coup, backed by armed American troops, to topple the Hawaiian kingdom.

THE TRIBUNAL

The Peoples' International Tribunal Hawai'i 1993, during which the United States and the State of Hawai‘i were put on trial for crimes against native people, and the state of Hawai‘i, were put on trial for crimes against the unification of the Hawaiian nation.

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A fascinating legal study of justice under occupation.
WE’RE NOT JUST A DEMOGRAPHIC.
Help us amplify and cultivate leadership to build a more inclusive and equitable San Diego.

JOIN US AT: sdapicoalition.org

The San Diego Asian Pacific Islander (API) Coalition is a group of San Diego API organizations that operates under the fiscal sponsorship of Pacific Arts Movement, a 501(c)3 organization.

FROM 3/19/20 TO 12/31/20, THE SAN DIEGO COUNTY RECEIVED 42 REPORTS OF DISCRIMINATION.

To report a hate incident and for more information, please visit STOPAAPIHATE.ORG

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• Presale access to ticketed events before the general public
• Subscription to the Pac Arts membership e-newsletter
• Invitations to member-only events (i.e. Mixers and Film Forums)
SAVE THE DATE! SDAFF IS COMING FALL 2021