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Asian Film Archive, with its partnering schools, Presents
Southeast Asian Digital Cinema: Cineodeon

Singapore, 7 August 2007 – With the launch of *Southeast Asian Digital Cinema*, the Asian Film Archive presents the landmark *Cineodeon*, an informal cinema chain run by its partnering schools. This pioneering model will be utilised at film screenings of works by the five acclaimed Southeast Asian digital filmmaking groups that the event showcases.

Executive Director of Asian Film Archive, Tan Bee Thiam explains: “It is all about nurturing a film culture in Singapore...About twenty years ago there was an Odeon theatre where film was for the masses, where film was priced at one dollar. We are looking to bring that back.” The thrust of *Cineodeon* is to open up new spaces for independent filmmakers to screen their works which otherwise are not seen or distributed, as well as to train a new generation of students and film aficionados to be proactive to connect to these filmmakers and screen these films to even more people.

This spirit of film activism looks set to take off with the recruitment of nine partnering schools ranging from secondary schools to tertiary educations supplying over forty students to each establish a screening venue in their respective zones. Hwa Chong Institution (College) Film Wing student Li Kwang Li feels “motivated” and finds that: “It’s not like a usual school project where you have set requirements.” His group members, Benjamin Chow and Hoo Kai Jun add: “It’s a wonderful chance for us...a balance between appreciation of film and exercising your creativity...very novel [and] it sounds like it’s going to be very fun and challenging at the same time.”

Besides exposing the students to acclaimed digital films from the region that are alternative to their main staple of film consumption, mentors from the Singapore film industry have been roped in to coach these students on film marketing and programming. Nicholas Chee, founder of OriginAsian Pictures and a filmmaker himself, thinks it “gives students an opportunity to

try something that would otherwise only happen in the real world” and “may even spark some entrepreneurs [who] might think of extending it beyond even after this programme is over”.

At the very least, students “can actually use that as experience” and “get a little bit of cultivation of films from Southeast Asia [which they] probably will not have a chance to watch”, notes Lau Chee Nien, a director/producer and fellow mentor for *Cineodeon*. This sentiment is in line with another level of nurturing the Asian Film Archive already provides through outreach: film literacy, so audiences analyse and appreciate films on a more critical level than simply liking or disliking them.

Cineodeon spells change for the local film industry as well. “*Cineodeon* provides the platform to showcase these [films] which include Made-by-Singapore content. This has a two-pronged effect of nurturing our nascent but promising film industry by stimulating consumer demand and hence, creating a market, while allowing Singaporeans to appreciate a wider repertoire of films which in turn, increases their film literacy,” says Pam Hu, Director (International & Community Relations) of Media Development Authority.

Mr Lau points out: “If it succeeds then it’s going to be a wonderful model on how you can actually train a new group of film programmers, film marketers because we really, really lack in that area.” Mr Chee elaborates: “It will force the commercial cinema operators to rethink their business model and possibly consider showing Singapore-made short films or Southeast Asian short films on a regular basis. What is...important is that the audience recognise the need to give these films a chance to be screened.”

But however *Cineodeon* fares, one thing is clear to him – “All it takes is one person to believe and to spread the belief, and I think we can be part of this revolution.”

Cineodeon screenings run alongside roundtable talks, dialogue sessions and two-day filmmaking workshops for each featured film group in five bi-weekly series from August to October. These culminate in a student symposium in December where the Best Student Group of *Cineodeon* will be awarded amongst others. Screenings are open to the public and priced at a dollar each.

Please look out for *Asian Film Archive* publicity material or visit the *Southeast Asian Digital Cinema* Official Website (www.asianfilmarchive.org/seadc/) from mid-August onwards for listings of films to be screened and the respective times and venues. All proceeds from ticket sales will benefit the film group in focus.

About the Filmmakers and Film Groups (Please refer to **Annex A**)

Timeline and Venues of Events (Please refer to **Annex B**)

The Asian Film Archive thanks you deeply for your kind attention and participation in our event. We also greatly appreciate our featured film groups and filmmakers, others whose generous efforts and support have made *Southeast Asian Digital Cinema* possible, and holds in especial regard, our sponsors and partners:

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Puttnam School of Film, LASALLE College of the Arts

School of Art, Design & Media, Nanyang Technological University

School of Technology for the Arts, Republic Polytechnic

Singapore Chinese Girls' School

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About Asian Film Archive

The Asian Film Archive (www.asianfilmarchive.org) is a non-governmental organisation founded to preserve the rich film heritage of Singapore and Asian Cinema to encourage scholarly research on film, to promote a wider critical appreciation of this art form and to build cultural value of Asian films. Amongst other things, we do outreach programmes through our Moving Minds Project and carry out film preservation with our Reel Emergency Project. As an important nexus, we bring together the various segments of the Asian film community in order to open and enrich new intellectual, educational, and creative spaces.

The Asian Film Archive has built up social capital and a large network linking important Asian filmmakers and scholars. We are governed by an independent board of directors and advised by an international board. The Asian Film Archive is an affiliate of the prestigious International Federation of Film Archives (FIAPF) and a member of the Southeast Asia-Pacific Audio Visual Archives Association (SEAPAVAA). Our collection includes works by some of the most renowned Asian filmmakers in the region.

About Asian Film Archive Presents Southeast Asian Digital Cinema

The advent of the digital cinema new wave is here. At its helm are people closer to us than we think – filmmakers from Southeast Asia who have garnered accolades at film festivals regionally and abroad. The *Asian Film Archive Presents Southeast Asian Digital Cinema*.

Over a ten-week period from August to October, five acclaimed filmmaking groups from Southeast Asian nations will be showcased. Filmmakers representing these digital film groups will be the focus in a bi-weekly series of events. Programmes to be held in each series comprise screenings of works by the group in focus, and a *Round Table* talk, an *In Conversation* session and a filmmaking workshop by the representatives from the group. These will culminate in a symposium at the end of the year with all five of the featured film representatives.

Annex A

About the Filmmakers and Film Groups

The Philippines: Khavn de la Cruz of Filmless Films

“For a few years now, Philippines had its own answer to the Dogma manifesto. It was called Filmless Films. Its leader is Khavn. He has been tireless in organizing events, screening showcases and festivals to promote Filipino digital cinema. Filipino digital cinema has come of age.”

– Philip Cheah, Festival Director, Singapore International Film Festival, Singapore

“The wild, funny, subversive no-budget video of the Philippine punk rebel Khavn is a discovery in the emphasis to the cinema of Southeast Asia.”

– Christoph Huber, Film Critic, Die Presse, Austria

Lauded as the “Che Guevara of the Digital Revolution” and “enfant terrible of Philippine Cinema”, “Renaissance man” **Khavn** is “one of the underground digital cinema’s best-kept secrets”. This prolific and accomplished filmmaker with 16 features and over 60 short films to his name has won awards and been showcased in Europe, Asia and diverse parts of the world. He is the Creative and Managing Director of Filmless Films, his independent digital film company, Oracafe Multimedia Arts Company and Avant-Pop Music, and festival director since 2002 of the .MOV International Digital Film Festival, Philippines’ first digital film festival. In alliance with other Filipino film professionals, he founded the Philippine Independent Filmmakers Multi-Purpose Cooperative (Indie Coop) and has served on the jury of the prestigious Clermont-Ferrand International Short Film Festival (France), Jihlava International Documentary Film Festival (Czech Republic), and Jeonju International Digital Film Festival (Korea). **Khavn** also fronts The Brockas as a singer, songwriter and pianist and his other pursuits include having taught at his alma mater, Ateneo De Manila University, won prizes for his poetry and fiction from the Palanca National Literary Awards, published various writings, and written and composed two rock operas and assorted songs.

Selected Filmography:

Feature Films

- *Squatterpunk* (2006)
- *The Family That Eats Soil* (2005)
- *Headless [Pugot]* (2004)
- *Greaseman* (2001)
- *The Twelve* (2000)

Short Films

- *Literature* (2007)
- *Rugby Boyz* (2006)
- *Can & Slippers* (2005)
- *Amen* (2005)
- *Barong Brothers* (2003)

Awards

- *Squatterpunk*, Grand Jury Prize at Cinemania International Film Festival, 2006
- *Rugby Boyz*, Best Documentary, 16th Rio De Janeiro International Short Film Festival & Special Mention Prize, 52nd International Short Film Festival Oberhausen, 2006
- *Greaseman*, Winner, Experimental Video Category, 15th Gawad-CCP Alternative Film Festival, 2002
- *The Twelve*, Special Award for Best Full-Length Indie Feature, 14th Gawad-CCP Alternative Film Festival, 2000
- *Amen*, Winner, Short Feature Film Category, 12th Gawad-CCP Alternative Film Festival, 1999 & Winner-Recipient, 1998 Young Cinema Production Grant, National commission for Culture and the Arts, Mowelfund Film Institute, Philippine Information Agency, and Kodak Philippines, 1998

Malaysia: Tan Chui Mui of Da Huang Pictures

“As many filmmakers you probably don’t know, you succeed to play with time – and time passing and waitings – to express inner feelings. Many shots are still in my memory...I feel you are filmmaking with a great sensitiveness and a personal point of view on human beings.”

- Philippe Avril, Producer, CEO and International Department Director, Unifrance, France

“Malaysia’s most promising young director.”

- Shelly Kraicer, Editor, Chinese Cinema Digest, Canada

Amir Muhammad, James Lee, **Tan Chui Mui** and Liew Seng Tat established Da Huang Pictures in 2004. It is a film collective based in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, with the aim of making films as the director envisions. **Chui Mui** has been actively involved in the Malaysian independent film industry, working as producer, editor, scriptwriter and occasionally, actress, besides directing her own films and television programmes. She has completed 2 features and 7 short films to date, which have mostly shown at international film festivals in Europe and Asia. Beginning her career as a columnist in local newspapers and magazines, she showed talent in Chinese writing from a young age, and graduated in Film and Animation from the Multimedia University in Cyberjaya, Malaysia where she tutored. In 2007, she garnered the coveted Tiger Award from the 36th International Film Festival Rotterdam with her debut feature film *Love Conquers All*. The film went on to sweep other fêted awards and won her much acclaim in the worldwide scene. Her latest film project *Living Quietly* received the French CNC Script Development Award. **Chui Mui** is currently in Paris with the 14th session Cinefondation Cannes Residency.

Selected Filmography:

Feature Films

- *Living Quietly* (2007)
- *Love Conquers All* (2006)

Short Films

- *Company of Mushrooms* [蘑菇兄弟们] (2006)
- *A Tree in Tanjung Malim* [丹绒马林有棵树] (2005)
- *Esperando Por Felicidad* [乍然相见] (2003)
- *Hometown* [流逝] (2003)
- *There is Treasure Everywhere* [爸爸的金银岛] (2000)

Awards

- Cannes Filmmaker in Residence (2007)
- *Love Conquers All*, Fipresci Award & New Currents Award, 11th Pusan International Film Festival, 2006
- *Company of Mushrooms*, In Competition, 35th International Film Festival Rotterdam, 2006
- *A Tree in Tanjung Malim*, Principal Prize, 51st Oberhausen International Short Film Festival Oberhausen, 2005
- *Esperando Por Felicidad*, Winner, Fly By Night Video Challenge, Singapore, 2003

Thailand: Thunskas Pansittivorakul of Thaiindie

“Beyond [Thunskas] potential for selecting clips and editing them into his film that is able to fascinate the audience into discovering and following “the reality”, ...his...work [is] also outstanding at expressing the emotion and hidden points that would last long in audience’s feelings...This is what many other feature films can’t even succeed [at].”

- Tida Palitpolkarnpim, Film Critic and Editor, Bioscope Magazine, Thailand

“I truly admire Thunskas dedication to films. He is the youngest of the filmmakers in Thailand, a newcomer full of energy. His works mostly represent only one or two characters. But their action and conversations always reflect the wider state of Thai society.”

- Apichatpong Weerasethakul, Director, Thailand

Thaiindie is a non-profit group comprising 25 Thai independent filmmakers formed in late 2004 with the aim of being the center of Thai independent filmmakers whose films are unique and different from most mainstream and formulaic themes. The emphasis on the group is on more creative and innovative works that can show personal artistic expressions, which the group helps promote and distribute, both locally and abroad. They also cooperate with other art communities, organising activities and workshops to groom young filmmakers. **Thunskas** is the founder of www.thaiindie.com, a website for non-mainstream Thai filmmakers with distinct styles and has made 2 features and 11 shorts that have screened in festivals in Asia and Europe, with several more films and documentaries in the lineup. He graduated with a degree from Art Education from Chulalongkorn University and is a columnist for several magazines including Thai Film Quarterly, Hamburger, Movie Time Weekly, and Cinemag.

Selected Filmography:

Feature Films

- *Happy Berry* (2004)
- *Voodoo Girls* (2002)

Short Films

- *Heartbreak Pavilion* (2008)
- *Life Show* (2005)
- *Vous Vous Souviens De Moi?* (2005)
- *Unseen Bangkok* (2004)
- *Private Life* (2000)

Awards

- Scent of Thai Male: Forbidden Lovers (Thunskas Retrospective), InDblue, Hong Kong, 2006
- *Vous Vous Souviens De Moi?*, Nominee, Tiger Cub Competition, 35th International Film Festival Rotterdam, 2006
- *Heartbreak Pavilion*, Pusan Top Award, Pusan Promotion Plan, 10th Pusan International Film Festival, 2005
- *Life Show*, Best of DIBA programme, Baumann Short Film Festival, Spain, 2005
- *Happy Berry*, Grand Prize in Asian Vision, 4th Taiwan International Documentary Festival, Taipei, Taiwan, 2004

Indonesia: Riri Riza of Miles Films

“Riri Riza, the most celebrated figure in the local industry, whose films, whether his involvement was in direction or in producing, have been milestones for their quality.”

- Hera Diani, The Jakarta Post, Jakarta

“On a variety of visceral and aesthetic levels, Riza’s tightly-budgeted, fourteen-day, one-camera production elegantly out-maneuvers anything going on in American independent cinema today...As Riri and his generation of filmmakers are some of the most successful and active in Indonesia today, some might call them the closest thing the industry has to an Establishment.”

- Joanne Sharpe, Honours Student, University of New South Wales, Australia

Miles Films, established in 1995, is a fully owned production company currently headed by Mira Lesmana and **Riri Riza**. They have also initiated the I Sinema film movement with other Indonesian independent filmmakers. Although it started out specialising in documentary and television films production with the provision of a training ground for young talents by producing music videos and television commercials, it has since branched out into digital films and feature film production and managed to garner staying power despite the initial skepticism about its success. Miles Films has even been credited with bringing young Indonesian audiences back to cinemas. **Riri** directs the bulk of its films, producing and writing them as well. He is a household name in Indonesia and has gained international renown. He graduated from the Jakarta Arts Institute with a major in film directing.

Selected Filmography:

Feature Films

- *3 Hari Untuk Selamanya (Three Days to Forever)* (2007)
- *GIE* (2005)
- *Eliana, Eliana* (2002)
- *Petualangan Sherina (Sherina’s Adventure)* (1999)
- *Kuldesak* (1999)

Short Film

- *Sonata Kampung Bata* (1993)

Awards

- *GIE*, Special Jury Prize, Singapore International Film Festival & 51st Asian Pacific Film Festival, 2006 & Winner, Most Promising Project from Hubert Bals Fund, Pusan Promotion Plan, Pusan International Film Festival, 2002
- *Eliana, Eliana*, Best Young Cinema & NETPAC/FIPRESCI Award, Singapore International Film Festival & Special Mention, Dragon & Tigers Award, Vancouver International Film Festival, 2002
- *Petualangan Sherina (Sherina’s Adventure)*, Special Jury Award, 45th Asia-Pacific Film Festival, 2000
- *Kuldesak*, Nominee, Best Asian Feature Film, Silver Screen Award, Singapore International Film Festival, 1999
- *Sonata Kampung Bata*, Third Place, Oberhausen Short Film Festival, 1994

Singapore: Local Documentarians

“To allow for your subject’s slow unfolding, as a director, to take the back seat to what the matter is on its own accord, this is no small achievement, a laudable and rare exercise in humility.”

- Matthias Ortmann, Reviewer, Sinema.sg, Singapore on James Leong & Lynn Lee

“...Shot and directed to throw light in the darkest places.”

- Tony Rayns, Film Critic-Curator, England on James Leong & Lynn Lee

Amongst the burgeoning group of local documentarians that have debuted to critical success like Chan Kah Mei, Joycelyn Khoo, Li Xiuqi and Mirabelle Ang, are filmmaking husband and wife duo James Leong and Lynn Lee. As one of the key figures on the rising Singapore documentary circuit, their three feature-length documentaries have received nominations at celebrated film festivals including Paris, Berlin and Kuala Lumpur. Based in Asia, they have an interest in “finding unusual stories and telling them well” and have established themselves as documentarians dedicated to portraying the truth in a sensitive manner. Lynn was invited by the United Nations-backed Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation to document the “Truth Hearings” and to help set up East Timor’s first national television station.

Featured Films

- *Aki Ra’s Boys* (2007) by James Leong & Lynn Lee
- *Passabe* (2006) by James Leong & Lynn Lee
- *I Love Malaya* (2006) by Chan Kah Mei, Ho Choon Hiong & Eunice Lau
- *Match Made* (2006) by Mirabelle Ang
- *Seletar Airbase: Singapore’s Secret Garden* (2006) by Li Xiuqi
- *Singapore Standard Time* (2006) by Joycelyn Khoo & Serene Ng

Awards

- *Aki Ra’s Boys*, Official Selection, Cinema du Reel, Singapore International Film Festival & Thessaloniki International Film Festival, 2007
- *Passabe*, Winner, Humanitarian Award for Documentaries, Hong Kong International Film Festival, 2006

Annex B

Timeline and Venues of Events

*All programmes are open to the public except for filmmaking workshops.

*Asian Film Archive Presents Philippines – **Filmless Films: Khavn de la Cruz***

20-24 August Screenings
24 August Round Table @ Asia Research Institute
25 August Directing Asia: In Conversation @ library@esplanade
27-28 August Filmmaking Workshop @ NTU ADM

*Asian Film Archive Presents Malaysia – **Da Huang Pictures: Tan Chui Mui***

2-7 September Screenings
7 September Round Table @ Asia Research Institute
8 September Directing Asia: In Conversation @ library@esplanade
6-7 September Filmmaking Workshop @ RP STA

*Asian Film Archive Presents Thailand – **Thaiindie: Thunskas Pansittivorakul***

17-21 September Screenings
21 September Round Table @ Asia Research Institute
22 September Directing Asia: In Conversation @ library@esplanade
24-25 September Filmmaking Workshop @ NUS CFA

*Asian Film Archive Presents Indonesia – **Miles Films: Riri Riza***

1-5 October Screenings
5 October Round Table @ Asia Research Institute
6 October Directing Asia: In Conversation @ library@esplanade
8-9 October Filmmaking Workshop @ LASALLE PFS

*Asian Film Archive Presents Singapore – **Local Documentarians***

15-19 October Screenings
19 October Round Table @ Asia Research Institute
21 October Directing Asia: In Conversation @ library@esplanade

5-9 November Screenings

10-11 December Symposium @ National Library

Please visit the *Southeast Asian Digital Cinema* Official Website (www.asianfilmarchive.org/seadc/) from mid-August onwards for listings of screened films and specific times and venues.