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***BEASTMODE*, RISK-TAKING PHILIPPINE DOCUMENTARY PROJECT, MAKES ITS MARK DURING THE 2017 TRIBECA FILM FESTIVAL®**

Luang Prabang, 31 May 2017 -- Just last month, filmmakers from the Filipino documentary project *BEASTMODE* returned from the Tribeca Film Festival with major connections and the prospect of releasing their film for American audiences. Vanessa Amante and Mixkaela Villalon, the film's producer and writer, pitched their project to a range of interested parties at the AT&T Presents TFI Network market in New York City on April 19-21, where they successfully brought on Alana Maiello as the film's American producer. Maiello is a freelance producer who has worked with clients such as HBO and Blue Fever.

BEASTMODE follows a 2016 altercation between Filipino actors Baron Geisler and Kiko Matos, which quickly went viral after being recorded and uploaded on social media. However, unbeknownst to the public and the news media widely covering the event, the fight was secretly staged as a social media experiment. With an eye towards the changing Filipino political climate and President Rodrigo Duterte's hardline stance on drugs and criminality, *BEASTMODE* explores the country's fascination with the spectacle of violence.

And as they look outside of the Philippines for support and potential viewership, the *BEASTMODE* team sees this story as highly relevant for international audiences in light of the global political climate. Amante sees a "pressing need" for artists to create work that "connects with the global struggle against ignorance and the recent rise of populism."

"By focusing the lens on the Philippine experience, we want *BEASTMODE* to be a case study that looks closely at how populism operates at its most opportune event: a presidential election," Amante said. "And by starting a 'fake news' item, the team assumed a hypothetical devil's advocate role in the hope that we will end up with a film that serves as a mirror. A mirror that reflects not only what is happening in our own country, but the world over."

A filmmaker/industry market hosted annually at the Tribeca Film Festival by Tribeca Film Institute (TFI), AT&T Presents TFI Network gives filmmakers the opportunity to build connections with a wide range of industry insiders who can potentially help them advance their projects.

"AT&T Presents TFI Network at the Tribeca Film Festival hosts more than 1,800 meetings in just two days to connect filmmakers to every corner of the industry needed to complete their films," said TFI's Manager of Artist Programs Bryce Norbitz. "After a day of 'pitch preparation,' filmmakers discuss their projects with distributors, financiers, agents, producers, festivals and others. For international filmmakers it is an especially immersive introduction to the U.S. independent film industry."

The films selected to participate in TFI Network include grantees from many of TFI's various funds, as well as film projects chosen both through partnerships and an application pool.

BEASTMODE falls into the partnership category, having been chosen to attend through participation in last year's LPFF Talent Lab--TFI's first collaborative project with the Luang Prabang Film Festival (LPFF), an annual celebration of Southeast Asian cinema held in the UNESCO World Heritage town of Luang Prabang, Lao PDR.

At the Talent Lab, held in December 2016 at LPFF's seventh annual festival, Norbitz led a workshop in grant writing and project pitching for representatives from 10 Southeast Asian film projects. Afterwards, participants pitched their projects to a jury of regional film industry professionals. *BEASTMODE* was selected as the winner, giving Amante and Villalon the opportunity and funding to attend AT&T Presents TFI Network and receive mentorship from TFI through their project's completion.

The Talent Lab, which was the first activity in an ongoing collaboration between LPFF and TFI, is demonstration of TFI's interest in emerging film industries, particularly that of Southeast Asia, as part of its mission to support underrepresented storytellers from around the world.

"The Southeast Asian film industry is a key market for TFI to watch and support as it grows each year in scope and commands attention at film festivals worldwide," Norbitz said. "It contains a vast array of talented storytellers creating diverse, rich and globally relevant content. After just one year of partnering with LPFF, it has become apparent that the quality and breadth of both documentary and fiction filmmaking in Southeast Asia is remarkable and TFI believes these stories need to be shared with audiences in the U.S. and beyond as part of our mission."

And TFI's interest in this particularly boundary-pushing Southeast Asian film comes as no surprise. Film critic and curator of LPFF's films from the Philippines, Francis "Oggs" Cruz describes *BEASTMODE* as an audacious project, one that "thrives on risk" and stands out from a Philippine film industry that, conversely, "hesitates to take risks."

"With *BEASTMODE*'s participation in the LPFF Talent Lab and the AT&T Presents TFI Network market, more filmmakers will be emboldened to take the risks that the industry itself will not commit," Cruz said. "Perhaps when these kinds of films get made and get shown in theaters in the Philippines, the industry will take notice, and perhaps be more open to financing themselves films that are more adventurous in concept and crafting,"

And *BEASTMODE*'s success, Cruz hopes, could lead to better exposure for other daring documentaries.

"In the Philippines, documentaries are still treated as second class citizens to feature length films," Cruz said. "Hopefully, with a film like *BEASTMODE* that has garnered enough traction because of the ruckus created by the filmmakers' daring experimentation, documentaries that endeavor to be out of the box will be noticed."

And *BEASTMODE*, according to TFI, will not have trouble getting noticed.

"*BEASTMODE* has a dynamic and sharp energy that immediately draws a viewer into its fast-paced world," said Norbitz. "For an audience outside Southeast Asia it will likely be a brand new story that is almost unbelievable in scope. These filmmakers created a cultural sensation and are now sharing their work with a personal connection that feels extremely rare."

To read more about the *BEASTMODE* team, the project, and other participants from the AT&T Presents TFI Network market, visit TFI's [website](#).

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LPFF Background:

Founded in 2009, the Luang Prabang Film Festival (LPFF) is an annual celebration of Southeast Asian cinema held every December in the UNESCO World Heritage town of Luang Prabang, Lao PDR. LPFF is

a not-for-profit project that fosters cross-cultural dialogue within the region and supports the burgeoning film industry in Laos. Throughout the year, LPFF organizes a range of cultural events and educational activities, from film screenings to workshops for amateur Lao filmmakers. LPFF also manages the Lao Filmmakers Fund, a publicly-generated granting system that helps local artists realize their film projects.