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PRESS RELEASE

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The Luang Prabang Film Festival (LPFF) concluded its seventh annual event this week in the UNESCO World Heritage town of Luang Prabang, Laos. The festival, which has the mission of celebrating Southeast Asian cinema, ran through Wednesday, 7 December. In addition to screening 32 feature films and four programs of short films, LPFF put on four public discussions and several performances.

Official selections are made by experts and critics from across Southeast Asia referred to as “Motion Picture Ambassadors,” and represent a carefully chosen collection of what they believe to be the finest contemporary films from their respective countries. By identifying great curators with inside understanding of their community's film scene, LPFF is able to produce a unique program that ensures in the inclusion of the strongest voices from across Southeast Asia.

Not only is LPFF a celebration of the finest Southeast Asian cinema, it has become well known as a unique forum for regional film professionals to network internationally and to exchange diverse ideas and experiences.

LPFF's four programs of short films included: a collection of recent architecture-themed titles including *The Man Who Built Cambodia* by Christopher Rompre and Haig Balian, and Aditya Assarat's *La Scala*; a selection from the 2016 Vientiane Short Film Competition that showcased budding talent in Laos; Philippine shorts to compliment the festival's SPOTLIGHT (see below); and recent award winners on Vidsee, an online video platform featuring short films from across Asia.

There were also several major public discussions this year for visitors of the festival, including a discussion on online programming and video-on-demand, featuring Jeffrey Calman of Siam Film Associates, an aggregator for Netflix; Weerada Sucharitkul, co-founder of FilmDoo, a TVOD service with films from over 125 countries; and Ho Jia Jian, co-founder of Vidsee, a website that streams Asian shorts. This year's SPOTLIGHT program was on the Philippines, with a full day of programming devoted to screenings and discussion of Philippine features and shorts, showcasing the nation's exciting and rapid development in film production. This program was hosted by Francis “Oggs” Cruz, LPFF's Motion Picture Ambassador for the Philippines.

In an exciting new collaboration, on the second day of the festival Bryce Norbitz from Tribeca Film Institute® (TFI) led a Talent Lab for Southeast Asian filmmakers on grant writing and project pitching with 10 participating film projects from 8 ASEAN nations. After sessions of instruction, practice, and a pitch forum with feedback given by various industry professionals, co-producer Vanessa Amante and writer Mixkaela Villalon's Philippine documentary project *Beastmode* was selected by TFI to attend the TFI Network market, which will take place in New York City at the 2017 Tribeca Film Festival®. There, TFI will arrange meetings for the filmmakers with editors, distributors, and financiers. TFI will then mentor the *Beastmode* team through the completion of the project. *Beastmode* is a documentary based on a social experiment that paints a picture of Philippine society and culture that is heavily enthralled with the spectacle of violence.

21 of the festival's films had their directors, producers, or actors in attendance. These filmmakers participated in numerous festival events, including post-screening Q&As at the LPFF Day Venue located at Sofitel Luang Prabang.

LFFF offered five live evening performances on its main stage before headline screenings at its Night Venue, the Handicraft Market at the main intersection in town. Performances included theater pieces, a puppetry performance, a contemporary dance performance by LED Light Show, and concerts by several popular Lao musicians.

On display was an exhibition of photographs from Myanmar from the lauded Southeast Asia Movie Theater Project, accompanied by a presentation by the initiative's founder, Philip Jablon. As a reprise to his trip there over five years ago, Jablon spent February and March of this year researching and photographing movie theaters in Myanmar, a nation experiencing an overall rebirth of cinema-going. Included in the exhibition were images from both research trips.

All screenings and activities of the festival were free and open to the public.

The festival's biggest sponsor this year was the Lao Brewery Company with three of their brands: Beerlao Gold, Pepsi, and Tigerhead. The amount of funds LBC invested is the largest the Luang Prabang Film Festival has ever received from a single company. It is also the largest amount that LBC has ever given to an external project in its history.

This year, Oxfam International supported LFFF's Lao Filmmakers Fund, a publicly-generated fund that allows filmmakers in Laos to apply for grants to help realize their film projects. Oxfam's donation allowed local filmmakers to apply for grants of up to \$10,000 USD per project. This year's winning projects are *Let's Love* by Dorn Bouttasing, *A Melody of Change* by Ka Xiong, *Beyond the Power* by Light Flare Team, and *An Unlikely Friendship* by the Lao Children's Workshop.

Other supporters of the 2016 festival include the US Embassy Vientiane, The Asia Foundation, Exo Travel, Chillax Productions, Dao Coffee, Sofitel Luang Prabang, the Nam Theun 2 Power Company, Indochina Productions, l'Eléphant, DK Lao, Theun-Hinboun Power Company, EQHO, Aenoteca, NP Service & Design, and Final Draft.

For more information on the festival, visit lfffilmfest.org or stay up to date at facebook.com/lfffilmfest.

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