

Luang Prabang lights up for Southeast Asia's premier film festival

Luang Prabang, 9 December 2017 -- Luang Prabang was lined in red carpet last night for the kickoff of the eighth Luang Prabang Film Festival.

Normally known as a sleepy town steeped in local tradition, a more cosmopolitan crowd descended upon Luang Prabang for the festival's opening. Filmmakers from all across Southeast Asia and abroad have flocked to this UNESCO World Heritage site to celebrate Southeast Asian cinema for six days and nights.

22 of this edition's 32 feature films have directors, producers, writers, or actors in attendance, all of whom will participate in Q&A sessions after the screenings of their films. Plus, the festival's intimate and casual ambiance makes it so that audiences can chat one-on-one with their favorite filmmakers between screenings.

The night started off with a bang with a lively opening ceremony at the festival's night venue at the Handicraft Market in the center of town, filled with Lao music and dance, as well as speeches from Festival Director Gabriel Kuperman and the Governor of Luang Prabang.

Following the ceremony was a screening of the new Lao film, "The Anniversary." Directed by Chilasack "Jojo" Saysanith, the film had a successful commercial run in cinemas across the country upon its release in March of this year.

After the film, a melange of the international film crowd and the who's-who of Laos headed across the street to party on the lush grounds of the swanky new hotel, Azerai--the first location in a new venture from Adrian Zecha of Aman Resorts fame.

In addition to the filmmakers representing their features, a bevy of directors, writers, and producers from the ASEAN region, Europe, and the United States also showed up to walk the red carpet, develop film industry contacts, and check out the regional talent.

Over a dozen young filmmakers are in town for the 2017 LPFF Talent Lab, led by the Tribeca Film Institute, where they will pitch their film projects to a jury who will award one film a trip to the Tribeca Network Market at the 2018 Tribeca Film Festival. In attendance from Tribeca are Bryce Norbitz and Molly O'Keefe, who will lead the Talent Lab fellows in a pitch workshop. Also spotted at Azerai was Jeremy Sim from the Singapore-based film fund Aurora Media Holdings, which will be awarding one of the Talent Lab projects the Aurora Producing Award for \$10,000 USD.

A slew of Thai and Lao stars milled about, posing for photos with fans and new friends. Festival host and Lao pop star Touly looked elegant in traditional dress, while *The Anniversary* star Vena Boupoua stunned in an elegant gown.

Ananda Everingham, the Lao-Australian actor who has found fame through his work in Thai cinema, is back in Luang Prabang to attend the festival as he has in previous years. Thai film is

also well-represented, with over a dozen Thai filmmakers, producers, actors attending along with representatives from the Royal Thai Embassy.

The festival will continue until 13 December, with screenings, public discussions, and performances occurring throughout the week. In keeping with LPFF's commitment to accessibility, all events are free and open to the public.

To read more about the Luang Prabang Film Festival, visit www.lpfilmfest.org.

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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.