

We will tell you some inside stories about and super short reviews to the films to be exhibited at our film festival.

For any information on the film festival, please visit our official website.

<http://www.focus-on-asia.com/en/>

## New and Much Talked About Films from Asia

### “Tehran: City of Love”

2019 / Iran, UK, Netherlands / 102 min.

Directed by Ali Jaberansari

**Super Short Review:** A silent bodybuilding trainer, a plump beauty clinic receptionist and a spiritless religious singer. Two men and a woman hunger for love. Could there be a premonition that love is in the air?

**Inside story:** The film director was born in Tehran but moved to Canada in his teens. He returns to Tehran to take a workshop course given by Abbas Kiarostami but ultimately goes to the UK to study at the London Film School. He resides in the UK. The film, which so casually interweaves what is considered romantic taboo in an Islamic country, can only be presented by someone like the film director who works from outside his country. The symbol for being masculine in Iran is to be “macho” but the number of men concerned about their physical beauty, seems to be increasing.

### “Night God”

2018 / Kazakhstan / 110 min.

Directed by Adilkhan Yerzhanov

**Super Short Review:** A town taken over by darkness that feels like the end of the world is coming.

In a world turned into chaos where even the concept of God and right over wrong is forgotten, a father and daughter encounter an unbearable amount of absurdity and violence.

**Inside Story:** The red tail of a comet brings an eerie atmosphere as it lightens up the night sky. Here and there, you can see street corners decaying. Inside a room, it is cold but damp...Most of the scenes are filmed in an elaborately crafted set. The story is unfolded indifferently. Yet it is full of tension making you feel you're watching a theatrical play. You will be overpowered by the film's artistic visual world making you feel that "if Federico Fellini ever depicted a nightmare, this is what it would look like."

### **"Sivaranjani and Two Other Women"**

2018 / India / 123 min.

Directed by Vasanth S. Sai

**Super Short Review:** Depicting three episodes of women from the south of India in the 1980s, 1990s and 2007, the film shows the never changing reality behind female discrimination in the country.

**Inside Story:** Traditionally, Indian women have had household chores forced upon them at the expense of winning social independence. Based on three stories written by well-known Tamil writers, the film depicts the ever-continuing face of household female discrimination transcending time and women who maintain their strength despite this disadvantage. The film won Best Film in the Asia Cinema Competition at the Bengaluru International Film Festival and a Special Mention Oxfam Award for Best Film on Gender Equality from the Mumbai Film Festival.

### **"Demons"**

2018 / Singapore / 83 min.

Directed by Daniel Hui

**Super Short Review:** An aspiring actress and a stage director... What is the identity of this sensation and hallucination that eats away people? An extraordinary type of horror film that

depicts the terror of hidden violence that permeates itself into society.

**Inside Story:** The person acting in the role of Daniel in the film is Glen Goei, a noted film director and stage director from Singapore. He also directed the dance action film “Forever Fever” (1998), released in Japan in 2000, which used “Saturday Night Fever” for its motif. Also, YANG Yanxuan Vicki, who appears in this film, also stars in the film director’s previous motion picture “Snakeskin” (2014). A friend of the film director, she is also active as a writer.

### **“Ten Seconds Before Sunrise”**

2018 / Indonesia / 82 min

Directed by Teddy Soeriaatmadja

**Super Short Review:** Southeast Asia’s biggest “Rave” event. The protagonist and those around him who are bad company, a drug dealer and DJ and other women, all scurry to the one-night wild party, which brings them an unexpected ending.

**Inside Story:** The film director was born as the son of a diplomat stationed in Tokyo and lived there until he was five years-old. He then was raised all over the world in Australia, the United States, Indonesia and the U.K. For your information, we did exhibit “Something in the Way” by the film director during our Film Festival in 2013. Besides the powerful live scene of the music event “DWP”, the film is packed with footage of Jakarta’s youth culture, such as its music and fashion. Don’t miss the cast of the film, full of handsome men and beautiful women.

### **“Manta Ray”**

2018 / Thailand, France, China / 105 min.

Directed by Phutti Phong Aroonpheng

**Super Short Review:**

A Thai village near the Myanmar border. A young fisherman saves a man down on the ground in a forest. The fisherman calls the man “Thongchai” and the two start a strange life together...

**Inside Story:** As a matter of fact, the film director does have ties to Fukuoka. He participated in the Fukuoka Asian Art Museum Artist in Residency Program where he made short films. He then got the assistance of the Nippon Foundation, a fellowship organization, to enable him to stay at the same museum for about a year where he made two short films including one filmed in Itoshima. Thereafter, he got financial assistance from the Busan International Film Festival in order to complete this motion picture. The film went on to become the first Thai motion picture to win the Orizzonti Prize at the Venice International Film Festival. For your information the Orizzonti introduces new trends in motion pictures.

**“Alpha, The Right to Kill”**

**2018 / Philippines / 94 min.**

**Directed by Brillante Ma. Mendoza**

**Super Short Review:** Ordered to eradicate the Abel organization, a major illicit drug syndicate, police officer Espino, after receiving information from an informant, moves in with a SWAT team to the scene of the drug transaction.

**Inside Story:**

Brillante Ma. Mendoza, with a unique style of hand-held camerawork, often directs his focus on a wide range of minorities living in the Philippines. Known as a leader of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Golden Age of Philippine Cinema, Brillante Ma. Mendoza, who began directing films at the age of 45, has placed his films in competition at the top three international film festivals of the world (Berlin, Cannes and Venice) in just 7 years. This film took the Special Jury Prize at the San Sebastian Film Festival. On our Film Festival’s special “Master Class” taught by Brillante Ma. Mendoza, who is also putting his strength behind fostering young, new talent in the Philippines, please access our official website.

**“Lakbayan (Journey)”**

**2018 / Philippines / 118 min.**

**Directed by Brillante Ma. Mendoza, Lav Diaz, Kidlat Tahimik**

**Super Short Review:** This is an omnibus film directed by 3 film masters of Philippine Art Cinema,

made in commemoration of the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Filipino films. The films carry a common theme of “journey.”

**Inside Story:** A feature of this motion picture allows you to enjoy worldly views of three internationally recognized masters of film, namely Lav Diaz of “The Woman Who Left” (2016), Brillante Ma. Mendoza of “Ma’ Rosa” (2016) and Kidlat Tahimik of “Who Invited the Yoyo? Who Invented the Moon Buggy” (1981). This is a precious film if you consider you can enjoy a Lav Diaz experience, known for its extremely lengthy motion pictures, in just 40 minutes. Kidlat Tahimik, who is referred to as the “father of independent films in Asia” was a laureate to the Fukuoka Prize in 2012.

### **“Markado: The Moon Devourer”**

2018 / Philippines / 90 min.

Directed by Joe Bacus

**Super Short Review:** After a typhoon causes flooding, atrocious crime, such as theft and murder, increases. The protagonist of the film, a woman, transports illicit drugs for a living, in order to pay for her grandmother’s hospital bills. The grandmother is her only surviving member of her family.

**Inside Story:** The combination of actual footage and stop motion animation using figure dolls, is a novelty. The balance between the abrupt switching of the actual footage and animation creates a superb form of tension. This direction was a creation of irony as the idea came up only after the production took too long, with the budget exhausted leaving no one around, not even one staff member or a member of the cast. The figure dolls belong to the film director and the costumes and set were totally hand-made. Here you have it. Unpredictable entertainment!

### **“Jinpa”**

2018 / China / 87 min.

Directed by Pema Tsenden

**Super Short Review:** Jinpa, a truck driver, accidentally runs over and kills a sheep. He gives a man who is also named Jinpa, a lift. The second Jinpa tells the first, he is going to seek revenge on the

man who killed his father.

**Inside Story:** The two Jinpas meet in the vast Tibetan plains. The depiction of hardly any buildings and only clouds of dust dancing in a wasteland with a post town bustling with people, gives us the impression of a near-future science fiction world as seen in “Mad Max” or “Blade Runner.” Quite understandable that Wong Kar-wai produced this film. The overpowering visual imagery is a spectacle to see. A main point to note is the poem that appears at the very end. You may want to read the poem over again. Then this may make you want to see the film again.

### “A Family Tour”

2018 / Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia / 107 min.

Directed by Ying Liang

**Super Short Review:** Yang, a film director, must seek exile in Hong Kong over a film she made 5 years ago. To see her cancer-stricken mother who remains in China, Yang’s husband arranges a reunion through a family trip to Taiwan.

**Inside Story:** The protagonist deciding to live in Hong Kong to protect her freedom of speech, is depicting the film director’s own experience in life. The “Umbrella Revolution”, which is referred to in the film, as well as Hong Kong’s large-scale demonstrations taken up by the media, are public outcries to protect Hong Kong’s “high grade autonomy” from China. The other day, the Chinese government issued a halt, for the time being, of personal travel to Taiwan. The film, presented in a timely manner, is a family drama about the complex relationship between China, Hong Kong and Taiwan.

### “Fukuoka”

2019 / Korea / 86 min.

Directed by Zhang Lu

**Super Short Review:** Jea-moon, owner of a second-hand bookstore, travels to Fukuoka at the invitation of So-dam, a regular customer who frequents his store. There in Fukuoka, he meets

Hae-hyo, an upperclassman during their university days. The two haven't seen each other since getting into a discourse at the university.

**Inside Story:**

Zhang Lu, the film director, apparently made the move to make "Fukuoka" after seeing a sign that read "Gyeongju", the name of his motion picture we exhibited at our Film Festival in 2014. With the movie lines and story development virtually created through improvisation, the film does piece together the image of how the film director feels about "Fukuoka." Park So-Dam, who plays the role of the go-between trying to get two complicated middle-age men together in the film "Fukuoka", is an actress drawing much attention these days, having appeared in "Parasite" directed by Bong Joon Ho, which won Korea's first Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival this year.

**Special Feature: Going Regional in Southeast Asia**

**"To Be Regional"**

**"Humba Dreams"**

2019 / Indonesia / 75 min.

Directed by Riri Riza

**Super Short Review:** This is a road movie where the protagonist travels across the island of Humba, his home, in search of chemicals to develop a 16mm roll of film his late father left him. His travels ultimately turn into a journey to find himself.

**Inside Story:**

Riri Riza is a noted Indonesian film director known to our festival through such films as "The Rainbow Troops" (2008). Made up of more than 13,000 islands, Indonesia is home to a wide range of ethnic groups. The film director who states that "it's our mission to pursue the uncertainty of who we really are", has made many films focusing on ethnic groups and regional locale. This film projects the film director's memories from when he visited Humba (Sumba), an island in the east of Indonesia.

### **“Other Man’ s Wife”**

2018 / Indonesia / 99 min.

Directed by Dirmawan Hatta

**Super Short Review:** A girl is brought up obeying men in a society where women are treated as “male property.” She then feels for the very first time in her life that she really wants to love a man “out of her own will”, but can she?

#### **Inside Story:**

Having been brought up in an Islamic family, the protagonist, even before she can graduate from high school, is married off to the son of a rancher who will succeed his father. The marriage is totally arranged by her father and the father of her new husband. In an age where an increasing number of young people in her own generation are rebelling against such old customs, the protagonist puts up with and accepts the system. However, the love for a man and the only hobby that allows her to express herself, silently brings about a change in her. The film is an outstanding motion picture, which depicts through its visual imagery, the detailed emotional chemistry of the protagonist’ s inner self.

### **“The Wall”**

2018 / Thailand / 95 min.

Directed by Boonsong Nakphoo

**Super Short Review:** As a boy, the protagonist chose to pursue motion pictures over being a priest. To make a film about his younger days, he now visits his home in the countryside with his staff looking for a filming site. There, he would come face to face with himself from the past.

**Inside Story:** This is an autobiographical film that depicts with realism, the film director’ s passion towards filmmaking and the harsh environment he faces making independent motion pictures. The film totally exposes the inside story of the low budget film industry by addressing such issues as raising money to fund a film, negotiating with staff on their pay and even depicting what an



assistant, aspiring to become a film director, has to say about theory on how to make a film that could win an award at Cannes. In addition to appearing in this film, the film director is an active by-player in many motion pictures and drama productions where he displays his individualistic character.

## **Special Feature on ZHANG Lu Commemorating the Film “Fukuoka”**

### **“Ode to the Goose”**

2018 / Korea / 121 min.

Directed by Zhang Lu

**Super Short Review:** An amateur poet and an elderly woman visit the regional city of Gunsan in Korea, which still retains its image from when it was under Japanese rule. The two stay at a residence taking lodgers where the owner, a widower, lives with his autistic daughter.

### **Inside Story:**

This film, made after “Gyeongju”, is sprinkled with hints on the film director’s future film, “Fukuoka.” The film composition of starting at the middle of the story and returning to the beginning at the end of the motion picture, is excellent. The film stars Park Hae-il and Moon So-Ri with Jung Jin-young as the owner of the residence, Park So-Dam as his daughter and Moon Sook as the female owner of the cafeteria, The film also has appearances by Yoon Jea-moon of “Fukuoka” and Han Ye-Ri of “A Quiet Dream.” The luxurious cast in this film is also a point to note.

### **“Desert Dream”**

2006/Mongolia-Korea-France/125 min.

Film Director: Zhang Lu

**Super Short Review:** A desert village near the border of China and Mongolia. Many leave the village unable to bear the harsh environment. The film is about a man who stays in his home environment

and a woman and child who come to the village, fleeing from North Korea.

**Inside Story:** The film director was born in Yanbian City of the Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture within Jilin Province in China. He is of Korean ethnicity holding Chinese citizenship. This film was completed the year after his motion picture “Grain in Ear”, caught the attention of the world. The film director heard about the story from a North Korean living in Mongolia. Thinking about how long and harsh such a journey would take, convinced the film director to press ahead with filming the motion picture in undeveloped Mongolia.

### **“Dooman River”**

**2010/ China-Korea-France/ 92 min.**

**Film Director: Zhang Lu**

**Super Short Review:** The Dooman River runs along the border of China and North Korea. In a village that sees conflicts between its villagers and those fleeing from North Korea, the protagonist, a boy, meets a North Korean youth who crosses the river for food and returns home.

**Inside Story:** Zhang Lu graduated from the Department of Chinese Literature at Yanbian University in China. After graduating, he taught at the university and was also active as a novelist. After his feature film debut as a film director, he again began teaching at Yonsei University in Korea where his activities made him travel between Seoul and Beijing. In 2008, he shot “Iri” in Korea. The following year, he would complete “Dooman River”, which received raving reviews at film festivals around the world. Thereafter, his films would fall into a pattern featuring Korean actors and actresses he got to know personally at film festivals.