



## NEWS RELEASE



Asian CineVision with Asia Society presents the Asian American International Film Festival '08, July 10–19, 2008

Announcing Documentary and Narrative Features line-up and AAIFF08 Juried Award Nominees...

### Asian American International Film Festival

**Tickets** Members of Asian CineVision, Asia Society & valid NYU ID-holders | \$7  
Students, Seniors & Partner Organizations | \$9 (limit 1 per ID)  
General | \$11

Opening Night Presentation: THE PRINCESS OF NEBRASKA + Gala  
General Admission \$60 | Members \$40 | Gala only \$35

Centerpiece Presentation: THE SPEED OF LIFE  
General Admission \$15 | Members \$12

Closing Night Presentation: PING PONG PLAYA + Awards Ceremony  
General Admission \$30 | Members \$20

**Box Office:** 212.327.9385 / asiancinevision.org

June 10, 2008 (New York, NY) – Presented by Asian CineVision with Asia Society and sponsored by Toyota Matrix, the Asian American International Film Festival '08 (AAIFF) today announced its groundbreaking line-up of programming and events for 2008. Representing the latest and best in Asian and Asian American filmmaking, AAIFF will run from July 10–19, 2008, at the Asia Society (725 Park Avenue at 70th Street).

This year's outstanding lineup includes one world premiere, two U.S. premieres, six East Coast premieres, and seven New York premieres. Debuting a new interdisciplinary program in 2008, Asian CineVision also presents *New Landscapes: Media and Its Adaptations*, a series of panels examining issues relevant to Asia and Asian diasporas.

The Festival will open on Thursday, July 10 at 7:30PM with **PRINCESS OF NEBRASKA**, marking acclaimed director Wayne Wang's return to indie filmmaking. Making its East Coast debut at AAIFF, **PRINCESS OF NEBRASKA** stars newcomer Li Ling in a stunning performance as Sasha, a pregnant teenager who travels to San Francisco from Omaha seeking an abortion. Shot through the kinetic lens of cinematographer and co-director Richard Wong, Sasha's vanity and recklessness is portrayed

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with great intimacy, but she remains emotionally aloof and unpredictable. For director Wang, this paradox is the hallmark of a new generation of post-Tiananmen Square Chinese youth—endlessly self-documenting with cell phones and computers, while embracing a sense of historical amnesia and emotional instability. Based on a short story by Yiyun Li, the film observes the conflicted emotional landscape of a young woman at a crossroads. Sasha is neither an ingénue nor a fallen woman, but a fiercely independent creature. A gala reception will follow the screening. Director Wang will also be participating on a panel, **“On Asian/American Aesthetics”** moderated by film critic Dennis Lim and invited panelists architect Billie Tsien and artist Paul Pfeiffer on Saturday, July 12 at 3:45PM.

The Centerpiece Presentation will be on Thursday, July 17 at 6:30PM with the U.S. premiere of **THE SPEED OF LIFE**, directed by Ed Radtke. The film focuses on Sam, a 13-year-old boy, who escapes the streets of New York City by stealing video cameras from tourists. While his friends are content with simply pawning the stolen goods for spending money, Sam secretly keeps the tapes. He watches the footage, fascinated by far away places and seemingly happy lives. Wavering between fantasy and the harsh reality of life in Brooklyn, he soon discovers that cameras can fly—even if people cannot. Originally titled **SUPERHEROES**, **THE SPEED OF LIFE** builds around the idea of ordinary people in extraordinary circumstances. Elements of fantasy and gritty realism interplay while multiple shooting formats and layered narratives altogether create an engrossing story with a distinctly “indie” feel.

The Festival will close on Saturday, July 19 at 7:00PM with **PING PONG PLAYA**, the first narrative feature film from director Jessica Yu, whose **BREATHING LESSONS: THE LIFE AND WORK OF MARK O'BRIEN** won the 1997 Academy Award for Best Documentary Short. A departure from Yu's more serious fare, **PING PONG PLAYA** is a lighthearted comedy following a young man's efforts to protect his family's table tennis empire. Christopher "C-dub" Wang (Jimmy Tsai) is a suburbanite who sports an urban swagger, waxes political on all things Asian American, and clings to pipe dreams of a career in pro basketball. He remains disinterested in ping pong, though his family's livelihood revolves around it. But when a car accident injures his mom and brother, C-dub is forced to teach a ping pong class of misfits, defend his brother's title in a National Tournament, and protect the family dynasty. In this charming slapstick comedy spiked with wicked banter and visual puns, Yu remains devoted to the pursuit of fun while tapping the contemporary culture of Asian American youth. The filmmaker discusses her creative process in an intimate **“One On One with Jessica Yu,”** Saturday, July 19 at 1:45PM.

At the Closing Night ceremony on July 19, AAIFF will present awards in seven categories: a juried award for Emerging Director, both Narrative and Documentary; Audience Awards for both Narrative and Documentary; a juried award for Excellence in Short Filmmaking; a One to Watch Award, open to all youth-made films in the For Youth By Youth program; and juried Screenplay Competition. Nominees for the Emerging Director Award for Narrative include: director Kenneth Bi for **THE DRUMMER**, director Liew Seng Tat for **FLOWER IN THE POCKET**, director Li Lin Wee for **GONE SHOPPING**, director Jennifer Phang for **HALF-LIFE**, and director Ron Morales for **SANTA MESA**. Nominees for the Emerging Director Award for Documentary include: director Ann Kaneko for **AGAINST THE GRAIN: AN ARTIST'S SURVIVAL GUIDE TO PERÚ**, director Derek Shimoda for **THE KILLING OF A CHINESE COOKIE**, and director Risa Morimoto for **WINGS OF DEFEAT**.

AAIFF's 2008 line-up will also include the following Feature Film selections:

**NARRATIVE:**

- **ALWAYS BE BOYZ** (East Coast premiere), directed by John Kwon. In his debut feature, John Kwon brings a vibrant and stylized look to Korean b-boy culture. Seven is the leader of a breakdance crew looking to compete at the Battle of the Year tournament, but the lack of a corporate sponsorship and his team members' injuries seem to impede on his dreams. Can Seven still make his goal? *Fri 7.11 | 645P*
- **THE DRUMMER**, directed by Kenneth Bi. Part spiritual journey and part gangster drama, THE DRUMMER follows Sid, a smart-mouthed youth who's brash ego always manages to get him in trouble. When he gets mixed up in the business of a powerful triad boss, his father pulls him from the fast-paced city life of Hong Kong and sends him to Taiwan, where he discovers Zen drumming and rediscovers himself. *Sat 7.19 | 415P*
- **FLOWER IN THE POCKET** (East Coast premiere), directed by Liew Seng Tat. Ma Lih Ahh and Ma Lih Ohm roam the streets after school, delighting in small adventures and befriending bossy tomboy Ayu. Meanwhile, their father loses himself among the broken mannequins he repairs. He is helpless to close the gulf between himself and his children. *Sun 7.13 | 915P*
- **GONE SHOPPING** (U.S. premiere), directed by Li Lin Wee. Sprawling megastructures of glass and steel, shopping malls represent modernity and wealth in Singapore. For Clara, a 40-year-old tai tai, or wife of leisure, shopping is a way of life; for 23-year-old Aaron, it is an escape from the monotony of corporate life. Meanwhile, a lost eight-year-old terrorizes a security guard while waiting for her parents. These lonely figures occasionally cross paths, but it is with some difficulty that they form any real connections. *Wed 7.16 | 930P*
- **HALF-LIFE**, directed by Jennifer Phang. The visually mesmerizing HALF-LIFE explores a complacent suburban community's struggle to adapt to a changing world where global crises threaten to alter life as they know it. In the face of catastrophe, Pam and her brother Timothy must take control of the chaos around them. *Sat 7.12 | 915P*
- **KISSING COUSINS** (New York premiere), directed by Aryn Kaderali. As a "relationship termination specialist," 29-year-old Amir zips around Los Angeles doing his clients' dirty work for them in exchange for a fee. Just when his friends tire of his bachelor antics, Amir's cousin Zara helps relieve his reputation as a romantic pariah. *Wed 7.16 | 630P*
- **OPTION 3** (East Coast premiere), directed by Richard Wong. Sam's girlfriend, Jessica, has mysteriously disappeared. An ominous caller instructs Sam to complete a series of tasks in order to secure Jessica's safety. OPTION 3 explores the desperation of loss, and the elation of rediscovery. *Fri 7.11 | 930P*
- **PRETTY TO THINK SO** (East Coast Premiere), directed by Steve Hahn and Frances Hsueh. Hanna returns to New York only to discover that she has been laid off from her job as an analyst at an investment banking firm. Listless and lonely, she meets Jiwon, a handsome and ambitious lawyer. Through him, she reconnects with a childhood friend and soon finds herself living between past and present, old love and new. *Fri 7.18 | 915P*

- **SLINGSHOT**, directed by Brillante Mendoza. In the urgent, digital-video style of Paul Greengrass's *BOURNE ULTIMATUM*, director Brillante Mendoza steps squarely into the slums of Manila. This atmospheric film flows with thieves, junkies, and locals, who steal, cheat, and lie to survive. Unfortunately, their desperation carries a cost. *Sat 7.12 | 345P*

#### DOCUMENTARY:

- **AGAINST THE GRAIN: AN ARTIST'S SURVIVAL GUIDE TO PERÚ** (East Coast premiere), directed by Ann Kaneko. From 1990 to 2000, the controversial President Alberto Fujimori ruled Peru with an iron fist. For every artist, the need to create and be heard is as basic as food and shelter. But in a country where the state clamps down on free thinkers, artists live in fear, often suffering the greatest blows. *Thu 7.17 | 915P*
- **BEYOND FEAR** (New York premiere), directed by Michael Perlman. Nwang, a nun, and Bagdro, a monk, are just two of many imprisoned and tortured for seeking a free Tibet. They are among the few who survived to recount the story. This film will be screened with **WOMEN OF TIBET: A QUIET REVOLUTION** (East Coast premiere), directed by Rosemary Rawcliffe. More than 15,000 Tibetan nuns participated in a 1959 nonviolent protest of China's rule over Tibet. The few who survive recall the event, almost fifty years later. *Sat 7.19 | 100P*
- **GRANDMOTHER'S FLOWER**, directed by Jeong-hyun Mun. Jeong-hyun Mun fulfills his mother's wish with this film about his ailing grandmother, Soon-rae. Along the way, he discovers painful family secrets and a hidden chapter of Korean history. Supporters of democracy from the Korean War are regaled, but little is known of those who backed socialism. Mun's documentary investigates a complex history linking the repercussions of Japanese colonialism and the Korean War to his family memories. *Sun 7.13 | 330P*
- **THE KILLING OF A CHINESE COOKIE** (New York premiere), directed by Derek Shimoda. By examining the roots of the fortune cookie and its role in American pop culture, this documentary reveals a history of Chinese American and Japanese American communities in Southern California. *Sat 7.12 | 100P, Mon 7.14 | 730P at Maysles Cinema*
- **LONG STORY SHORT** (New York premiere), directed by Christine Choy. Weaving a story about her family's struggles as Asian Americans and performers, Jodi Long documents her parents' careers in American show business. She touches on what it means to perform racial identity, and what it means to be an Asian American performer. *Sun 7.13 | 630P*
- **MEGUMI** (New York premiere), directed by Mirjam van Veelen. On November 15, 1977, Megumi Yokota was snatched from the coast of Japan and taken to North Korea to be used as part of a North Korean espionage plan. The fate of other kidnapping victims has recently been revealed, but that of Megumi remains a mystery. The North Korean government insists she is dead, but Megumi's family believes this is a lie. Powerful and moving interviews give evidence that Megumi may very well be alive. *Fri 7.18 | 630P*
- **WINGS OF DEFEAT**, directed by Risa Morimoto. Through close interviews, archival footage, and animation, director Risa Morimoto complicates the image of the kamikaze as fanatical patriots, revealing that hundreds of kamikaze pilots in fact survived their missions. Their stories provide a poignant look at the desperation of a

nation which sent its youth on suicide missions. Interweaving personal experiences with the larger historical narrative, Morimoto examines the moral decisions these men were grappled with. *Tue 7.15 | 700P*

- **WINGS OF DEFEAT: ANOTHER JOURNEY**, directed by Risa Morimoto. As an epilogue to her engrossing feature documentary *WINGS OF DEFEAT*, director Risa Morimoto brings two U.S. Navy veterans, Fred Mitchell and Gene Brick, to meet their former enemies—Japanese kamikaze pilots. In August 2007, Morimoto traveled to Japan with Fred and Gene, introducing them to three former kamikaze pilots, filming their historic encounters. The American and Japanese veterans, now in their 80s, sit down to ask each other tough questions, resulting in a new-found mutual respect. *Tue 7.15 | 915P*

### **ABOUT THE ASIAN AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL (AAIFF)**

Since 1978, the Asian American International Film Festival (AAIFF) has introduced new works by Asian and Asian American filmmakers to a sophisticated and curious audience of cultural enthusiasts. Premiering the works of then unknown directors such as Mira Nair (*SO FAR FROM INDIA*, AAIFF83), Ang Lee (*FINE LINE*, AAIFF85), Wayne Wang (*CHAN IS MISSING*, AAIFF82), Park Chan-wook (*JSA*, AAIFF01), and Justin Lin (*FINISHING THE GAME*, AAIFF07), the AAIFF was the nation's first annual festival dedicated to screening works by media artists of Asian descent and films about the Asian community. It continues to be a leading showcase for independent Asian and Asian American film and video. For more information visit us online at [asiancinevision.org](http://asiancinevision.org).

### **ABOUT ASIAN CINEVISION (ACV)**

Asian CineVision, Inc (ACV) is a not-for-profit national media arts organization dedicated to the development, promotion and preservation of film and video arts by and about people of Asian descent. Founded in 1976 by Hong Kong cinema legend Tsui Hark (*ONCE UPON A TIME IN CHINA*), Oscar-nominated documentary director Christine Choy, Danny Yung, and Peter Chow, ACV began as a media activism organization. It continues to serve the Asian American community by promoting the works of Asian and Asian American filmmakers, and providing a window to the diverse experiences and livelihoods of the Asian diaspora. For more information visit us online at [asiancinevision.org](http://asiancinevision.org)

### **ABOUT ASIA SOCIETY**

Asia Society is the leading global and pan-Asian organization working to strengthen relationships and promote understanding among the people, leaders and institutions of the United States and Asia. Founded in 1956 by John D. Rockefeller III, the Society reaches audiences around the world through its headquarters in New York and centers in Houston, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Washington, DC, Hong Kong, Manila, Melbourne, Mumbai, Seoul, and Shanghai. For more information, visit [asiasociety.org](http://asiasociety.org).

### **ABOUT TOYOTA MOTOR SALES, U.S.A., INC.**

Toyota Motor Sales (TMS), U.S.A., Inc. is the marketing, sales, distribution and customer service arm of Toyota, Lexus and Scion. Established in 1957, TMS markets products and services through a network of more than 1,400 Toyota, Lexus, and Scion dealers. Toyota directly employs over 36,000 people in the U.S. and sold more than 2.6 million vehicles in 2007. For more information about our company, please visit [toyota.com](http://toyota.com), [lexus.com](http://lexus.com), and

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