



## NEWS RELEASE

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

Featuring director Wayne Wang's *PRINCESS OF NEBRASKA* as Opening Night Presentation and director Jessica Yu's narrative feature debut *PING PONG PLAYA*

May 28, 2008 (New York, NY)—Sponsored by Toyota Matrix and presented by Asian CineVision with Asia Society, New York's Asian American International Film Festival (AAIFF) today announced that its 31st season will open on July 10, 2008, with the East Coast debut of *PRINCESS OF NEBRASKA*, a new feature film from acclaimed director Wayne Wang. Closing this year's AAIFF festival on July 19 will be the New York (East Coast) Premiere of *PING PONG PLAYA*, directed by Academy Award winner Jessica Yu.

Debuting a new interdisciplinary program in 2008, Asian CineVision will also present *New Landscapes: Media and Its Adaptations*, a series of panels examining issues relevant to Asia and Asian diasporas, including the environmental impact of China's rapid development, the experiences of Asian female documentary filmmakers and a conversation about Asian aesthetics.

"The 2008 festival offers a diverse range of perspectives, styles and topics," says John Woo, Acting Director of Asian CineVision. "In the spirit of innovation, AAIFF is excited to present films which represent radical artistic departures for talented directors like Wayne Wang and Jessica Yu."

### Opening Night Presentation

#### **PRINCESS OF NEBRASKA (Thu 7.10 | 700P)**

Director Wayne Wang (*CHAN IS MISSING*, *CENTER OF THE WORLD*, *MAID IN MANHATTAN*) returns to indie filmmaking with *PRINCESS OF NEBRASKA*, a complex drama about the conflicted emotional landscape of a young woman at a crossroads. The film is based on a short story by award-winning writer Yiyun Li.

Newcomer Li Ling makes a stunning debut as Sasha, a pregnant teen who travels alone from Omaha to San Francisco for an abortion. Ethically ambivalent and fiercely independent, Sasha is neither ingénue nor fallen woman. In a story which unfolds over the course of 24 hours, she shifts from recklessness to vulnerability and back again. Defiantly seeking autonomy yet drawn to the comfort of companionship, Sasha forges an intimate friendship with a karaoke hostess (Pamelyn Chee) and begins to consider the many paths her life might take.

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Wang and his co-director Rich Wong (OPTION 3, COLMA: THE MUSICAL) work to shape a new future for Asian American film, which sees its potential as a fiercely independent, rather than mainstream, genre that is both complicated and uncertain.

### **Closing Night Presentation**

#### **PING PONG PLAYA (Sat 7.19 | 700P)**

PING PONG PLAYA is 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 the more serious fare Yu has become known for, 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. Blaming genetics for his failure to make the NBA, C-dub lives at home, works a dead-end job, and squirms in the shadow of his older brother, Michael, a doctor and ping pong champion.

C-dub remains generally disinterested in ping pong, though the Wang family livelihood revolves around it—his mom teaches the sport and runs a store devoted to 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 Wang family dynasty. In this charming slapstick comedy spiked with wicked banter and visual puns, Yu remains devoted to the pursuit of pure fun while tapping the contemporary culture of Asian American youth.

### **NEW LANDSCAPES: MEDIA AND ITS ADAPTATIONS**

Asian CineVision with Asia Society and in partnership with NYU's Asian/Pacific/American Institute proudly announces *New Landscapes: Media and its Adaptations*, an inaugural interdisciplinary series of panels, discussions and events exploring new visions in Asian and Asian American media, culture and politics. Topics include:

#### **China and the Environment (Sat 7.12 | 615P)**

As the 2008 Summer Olympics convene in Beijing, this diverse panel will discuss the environmental and human health consequences of industrial growth, and how film and cultural representations can build awareness and possibly lead to global change. With panelists Orville Schell (Arthur Ross Director of the Center for U.S.-China Relations, Asia Society), Michael Zhao (Asia Society Center for U.S.-China Relations), moderated by Julie Sze (associate professor, environmental studies, UC Davis)

#### **New York Geographies (Sat 7.12 | 100P)**

The intimate and tightly-woven geography of New York City has long served as inspiration for filmmakers from Woody Allen to Michael Kang. How do filmmakers navigate its multiple, overlapping communities? With panelists Ed Radtke (director, THE SPEED OF LIFE, AAIF08), Karin Chien (producer, SANTA MESA, AAIF08), Paul Lee (location scout), moderated by Ron Simon (curator, Paley Center for Media—Museum of Radio & Television).

#### **Documentary Subjects, Female Gaze (Thu 7.17 | 645P)**

Women have innovated and galvanized the field of documentary filmmaking, turning an astute and unflinching eye on their subjects. This year, AAIF08 will present different documentaries exploring politics and humanity: from artists working amidst political unrest in Peru to Japanese kamikaze pilots coping with a complex past. These women filmmakers take their cameras abroad to portray the difficulties of confronting political and social distress, specifically how politics play out in interconnected notions of masculinity, nationalism and resistance. With panelists Risa Morimoto (WINGS OF DEFEAT), Ann Kaneko (AGAINST THE GRAIN: AN ARTIST'S SURVIVAL GUIDE TO PERÚ), moderated by Anne del Castillo (director of development and special projects,

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P.O.V/American Documentary).

### **One On One with Jessica Yu (Sat 7.19 | 345P)**

Oscar-winner Jessica Yu entered filmmaking through the world of documentaries with award-winning projects such as BREATHING LESSONS, PROTAGAINST and IN THE REALMS OF THE UNREAL. She has also extended her directorial vision to television and commercial spots. This year, Yu makes her narrative feature debut with the hilarious comedy PING PONG PLAYA. Yu will discuss her transition from films dealing with disability, outsider artists and extremists, to a light-hearted comedy. She will explore the ability of film to be simultaneously socially conscientious, commercial, critical and above all, fun.

### **On Asian/American Aesthetics (Sat 7.12 | 345P)**

As cultural borders contest geopolitical borders, this panel grapples with the question of Asian aesthetics. As Asian cinema and the Asian art garners attention globally for its innovation, it remains in dispute whether and how it challenges and rethinks assumptions of Asian aesthetics and culture. This panel brings together filmmakers, curators and artists to address how Asian aesthetics plays out in artistic and film practice. With panelist Wayne Wang (director, PRINCESS OF NEBRASKA and SMOKE), moderated by Dennis Lim (film critic). More panelists to be announced.

### **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 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, AAIFF 85), 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 director Christine Choy, Danny Yung and Peter Chow, ACV began as a media activism organization. The organization 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 [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 [scion.com](http://scion.com).

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