Luang Prabang Film Festival
2016 Report
Dear Supporters,

The seventh annual Luang Prabang Film Festival took place from 2-7 December 2016, and was a terrific success, once again. We received incredibly positive feedback from our audiences, our participating filmmakers, and our partners. Please allow me to summarize the highlights of our big event, and some of the activities leading up to it.

**Feature Films**
We showed 32 feature films from across Southeast Asia at this year’s festival—more than ever before. These films, nominated by our trusted Motion Picture Ambassadors (film experts from each of the participating countries) represent the very best of the region’s cinema. Some new Lao films were: *Banana Pancakes and the Children of Sticky Rice*, a documentary by Daan Veldhuizen about a small village in northern Laos; Thavisack Thammavongsa’s romantic comedy, *Louis Loves Baitong; Love Forever*, by Sonexay Keomanivong; and *The River Flows*, a time travel story from Makoto Kumazawa. Other notable titles were Philippine director Brillante Mendoza’s Cannes award-winning film *Ma’ Rosa*; Davy Chou’s stunning Cambodian drama, *Diamond Island*, which also appeared at Cannes; the powerful documentary *Finding Phong*, which follows a Vietnamese transgender woman’s journey; Myanmar-born director Midi Z’s personal documentary, *City of Jade*; and Singaporean directors Tan Bee Thiam and Lei Yuan Bin’s tense drama, *Fundamentally Happy*. 21 one of these feature films had directors, producers, writers, or actors in attendance to present them.

**Spotlight on the Philippines**
In the second year of our “Spotlight” program, we focused on the Philippines, spending an entire day screening films from the country and holding a discussion on the state of Philippine cinema. Film critic Francis “Oggs” Cruz (who serves as our Motion Picture Ambassador for the Philippines) led audiences through screenings of four contemporary films, starting the day alongside Martin Mayuga, discussing *Haze*, a film on which he was a producer. Monster Jimenez also discussed her film, *Apocalypse Child*, which she wrote and produced and which her husband, Mario Cornejo, directed. We then screened the highly acclaimed *Ma’ Rosa*, for which lead actress Jacklyn Jose won Best Actress at Cannes, and then concluded with the romantic comedy, *There’s No Forever*. Each day, we screened a selection of six Philippine short films, with the team from *Outside* in attendance at the festival. More information about the Spotlight on the Philippines program is below in the “Public Discussions” section.

**Short Film Programs**
There were four distinct shorts programs that screened during the festival: selections from the 2016 Vientianale, Viddsee Shortee Winners, the aforementioned Philippine shorts, and a series on architecture called “Structure and Space in Southeast Asia,” which included Aditya Assarat’s “The Scala” and Christopher Rompré’s “The Man Who Built Cambodia.” Rompré and that film’s producer, Haig Balian, were in attendance and gave a Q&A after one of their film’s screenings. These films played every day in our new screening room for short films at our Day Venue, Sofitel Luang Prabang.

**Filmmakers**
We had almost 75 invited international filmmakers, producers, actors, and other film industry insiders in attendance this year. These professionals took part in Q&As after the screenings of their films, public discussions (details below), our Talent Lab (details below), networking events, and facilitated sessions of dialogue about their respective film industries and a cohesive Southeast Asian one.
Public Discussions
We held the following Public Discussions to supplement daytime screenings:

1. **Pitching Your Project**: A good project pitch can make or break a film's chance at securing funding or other forms of support. Led by the Tribeca Film Institute®, panelists offered tips and tricks for project pitching, covering both the proper technique and ideal content for a pitch. Discussion also addressed funding opportunities available within the organizations represented. Panelists included: Bryce Norbitz (Tribeca Film Institute), Jeremy Sim (Aurora Media Capital), Stephane Lambert (Asian Side of the Doc), and Jeffrey Calman (Siam Film Associates, an aggregator for Netflix).

2. **The Rise of Video On Demand**: Is video on demand the future of cinema? The way people consume film has changed significantly in recent years with the rise of several varying modes of video on demand, including the pay-per-screening, subscription-based, and free streaming video models. Panelists discussed the viability of these distribution methods in the future and in the Southeast Asian market more specifically. Panelists included: Ho Jia Jian (Viddsee), Jeffrey Calman (Siam Film Associates, Aggregator for Netflix), and Weerada Sucharitkul (FilmDoo).

3. **Spotlight on the Philippines**: Francis "Oggs" Cruz, LPFF's Motion Picture Ambassador for the Philippines, led us in this daylong glimpse into the film industry in his home country. Cruz used his expertise and experience as a film critic to contextualize the wildly diverse and energetic culture of film production in the Philippines. Discussion accompanied a program of his recommended feature and short films. Panelists included: Francis “Oggs” Cruz (LPFF Motion Picture Ambassador), Monster Jimenez (Apocalypse Child), Martin Mayuga (Haze), and Danielle Chatico (Outside).

4. **Film Commissions**: In partnership with the Asian Film Commissions Network, regional film commissioners discussed their activities that support and promote their national artists. This discussion was particularly relevant for Laos, which is in the process of building its own film commission. Topics discussed included what a commission can do for its filmmakers, why film commissions are useful or necessary for industry growth, and how ASEAN commissions could work together in the future. Panelists included: Azrina Zainal Abidin (FINAS), Cedric Eloy (International Advisor to Film Commissions), Chandara So (Cambodian Film Commission), Liza Dino-Seguerra (Film Development Council of the Philippines), and Vithoun Sundara (Lao PDR’s Department of Cinema).

**Talent Lab**
In an exciting new collaboration with the Tribeca Film Institute® (TFI), TFI's Manager of Artist Programs, Bryce Norbitz, led a full-day Talent Lab for Southeast Asian filmmakers on grant writing and project pitching on the second day of the festival. Ten projects representing eight ASEAN countries participated in the Talent Lab, which was hosted by the Luang Prabang View Hotel. Those projects were:

- **Beastmode**, represented by assistant director/producer Vanessa Amante and writer Mixkaela Villalon (Philippines)
- **Blessed Reunion**, represented by director/screenwriter Lee Thean-jeen (Malaysia)
- **Devoted**, represented by writer/producer Damon Chua (Malaysia)
• The Doctor, represented by producer/director Naruemon Chaingam (Thailand)
• The First Drop of Rain in the Month of May, represented by producer Sheron Dayoc (Philippines)
• On the Other Side, represented by writer/director Anysay Keola (Laos)
• Return of the Owl, represented by director/writer Martika Ramirez Escobar (Philippines)
• The Ring Road, represented by director/producer Tran Phuong Thao (Vietnam)
• The Science of Fictions, represented by director/scriptwriter Yosep Anggi Noen and producer Yulia Evina Bhara (Indonesia)
• White Building, represented by director/writer/producer Kavich Neang (Cambodia)

After sessions of instruction, practice, and a pitch forum with feedback given by a jury composed of Jeffrey Calman (Siam Film Associates), Jeremy Sim (Aurora Media Capital), Stephane Lambert (Asian Side of the Doc), Andrew Chin (HBO Asia), and Choo Mei Lai (HBO Asia), the Philippine documentary project Beastmode was selected as the winner. The Beastmode team will 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 filmmakers through the completion of their project. Each project that participated in the Talent Lab received a gift certificate for script writing software provided by Final Draft.

Performances
After the Opening Ceremony on the first day of the festival, we had a terrific performance at 6pm each day throughout the week. They were: two theater pieces called “Who?” and “Easy Things Don’t Come for Free,” a puppetry performance called “The Little Monkey and the Orphan,” a contemporary dance performance from LED Lightshow, and mini-concerts from Annita, Xtreme, Kop & Thut, Nouan Numtao, and Kai Overdance. We also hosted a performance by Kosal Khiev, a spoken word poet who was the subject of the film Cambodian Son and an actor in Before the Fall, both of which were screened at this year’s festival. Khiev is a Cambodian refugee who grew up in America until he was deported back to Cambodia as an adult, where he now lives and works. He gave a moving performance to a large crowd in the garden of 525 Luang Prabang during one of our festival parties.

Exhibition
“Myanmar’s Vanishing Movie Theaters,” by photographer Philip Jablon of the Southeast Asia Movie Theater Project, was on display throughout the week at the French Institute, and Jablon made a presentation about the project’s progress on the third day of the festival. The exhibition featured Jablon’s third photographic survey of Myanmar’s historic stand-alone cinemas, often juxtaposing photographs from his earlier surveys with photographs of the same locations from this past February and March. From the forlorn appearance of recently shuttered movie palaces, to the effervescent hope filling renovated cinema halls, his series is an odyssey through the past, present and future of Myanmar’s cinema that highlights the magic of moviegoing at its most charming and human scale. The exhibition was so successful that the French Institute asked to keep it on display through the end of the year.

Films Around Town
Ten organizations in Luang Prabang participated in our Films Around Town program. These businesses or projects have chosen film as a medium to convey their message. Whether for dissemination, art, documentation, training, or for promotion, their short films were produced with the intent to share a story via moving image. The organizations were listed in our
printed program, and a sign was placed outside their locations. Visitors were able to watch their films and learn more about their activities. Notably, Events For Good screened Emily Vidal's film *Running Home*, which follows a group of Lao-American women who ran across the country; the Elephant Conservation Center screened *Song of the Lao Elephant*, a film produced and shot locally by Adri Berger for KBS Television in South Korea about the plight of the Asian elephant in Laos; and @ My Library shared the work of their young video students.

**Day Venue**
We used the same space for the Day Venue that we did last year, the meeting room of Sofitel Luang Prabang. We outfitted it with 100 comfortable chairs in theater-style arrangement, heavy black curtains, a large screen, and projector. As we did last year, we set up a free shuttle service with two tuk-tuks to take visitors from the Night Venue in the center of town to the screening space. Almost all of our films screened at full capacity, and for several titles, we had to turn guests away after the room was packed. At this venue, we had many Q&As with directors and producers after their film screenings, which allowed visitors an opportunity to engage with important media makers from around the region.

**Night Venue**
This year, LPFF happily returned to its tradition of using the Handicraft Market as our Night Venue. The space was outfitted with 800 blue chairs, several rows of leather cube stools, and a large array of tables and chairs in the back for those looking to eat and drink while watching. Our main sponsor this year, Lao Brewery Company, outlined the space with booths selling LBC products (Tigerhead, Pepsi, and Beerlao Gold). We also had a well-lit backdrop with a raised platform for taking red carpet photos, which was popular festivalgoers throughout the week, especially when they could take pictures with Lao and Thai celebrities. The large, open space of the Handicraft Market was overflowing with people, and for most screenings it was difficult to find a blue chair to sit in. However, as always, many people stood and watched, or even overflowed onto the hill beside the market square. The tables and stools were likewise well-utilized, making the Night Venue a true public gathering space both during the day and night. Throughout the festival, the number of attendees at our screenings, performances, and activities surpassed our previous estimates of 20,000 people.

**Beerlao Gold Directors Lounge**
This year, LPFF had a Beerlao Gold Directors Lounge on Indigo House’s top floor which served food (provided by Indigo House) and drinks (provided by Lao Brewery Company) to festival VIPs from 9am to 11pm every day of the festival. The top floor, which is an open-air penthouse with a lovely view looking out directly over the Night Venue, was a lovely place for filmmakers and other film industry people to gather. In the Directors Lounge, our VIPs really managed to mingle and get to know each other without feeling separate from the Night Venue and its performances and screenings.

**Hotel Partners and Community Involvement**
Once again, the festival received great support from the local Luang Prabang community for this event. 16 hotels granted us free-of-charge rooms to accommodate our many visiting filmmakers, journalists, and partners. These properties were: Ansara Hotel (Vientiane), The Apsara, Belmond La Residence Phou Vao, Cold River, Kiridara, Le Sen Boutique Hotel, Lotus Villa, Maison Souvannaphoum, Mekong Riverview Hotel, Sanctuary, Sala Prabang, Satri House, Sofitel Luang Prabang, Villa Chitdara, Villa Maly, and Villa Maydou. Many of these hotels also offered special discounts exclusive to visitors of the festival, when booking through our official travel partner Exo Travel.
Networking Events for Filmmakers and Partners

Our private Opening Reception for filmmakers and sponsors (which, with over 300 people in attendance, is the highlight of the Luang Prabang calendar) was made possible due to generous support from the community, most notably the catering provided by L’Elephant Restaurant, in their newly acquired and renovated restaurant, Le Calao. Lao Brewery Company and Aenoteca also contributed generously to the party.

On the second night of the festival, we threw a party at 525 with Richard McDonough, also known as the Mood Therapist, an excellent mixologist from Hanoi, serving up elaborate cocktails. At this same party, there was also aforementioned spoken word performance from the Cambodian poet Kosal Khiev. The packed bar and garden served as a wonderful space for filmmakers, industry professionals, and partners to mingle and network.

The following night, the Mood Therapist returned to mix a five-course flight of cocktails for a more intimate party at Amantaka, served alongside canapés generously provided by the hotel.

On the evening of 5 December, we had a Mekong sunset cruise on the Luang Say with over 45 people in attendance. Filmmakers and guests enjoyed complimentary drinks from Lao Brewery Company and canapés from L’Elephant as we watched the sun set on the river. The cruise was generously sponsored by Siam Film Associates, which had its two partners Jeffrey Calman and David Cluck in attendance.

Finally, on the second-to-last night, we had a soirée at the newly opened Azerai Hotel, right across the street from our Night Venue. Filmmakers and other festival invitees enjoyed conversation over wine and canapés provided by the hotel.

Lao Filmmakers Fund

Founded and operated by the Luang Prabang Film Festival, the Lao Filmmakers Fund is the country’s first and only regular granting system specifically for making film. The Fund is publicly generated, and allows Lao filmmakers to apply for small grants to help make their film projects possible. This year, a $15,000 USD grant from Oxfam allowed more projects to receive funding than ever before. These 2016 grant awardees were announced shortly before this year’s festival:

1. Let’s Love
   Director: Dorn Bouttasing
   A fiction film about Mai, a young woman learning to navigate a society that is not accepting of her sexuality. This film aims to bring attention to the difficulties that LGBTQ people in Laos face. Dorn plans to shoot much of her film in her hometown Xiengkhouang, to show the reality of LGBTQ communities in more remote areas of Laos.

2. A Melody of Change
   Director: Ka Xiong
   A short film about a mysterious woman named Hongfa traveling through a remote village in Northern Laos, and how she uses music to bring together the divided Khmu and Hmong people of the village. As part of the film’s production process, musicians in the region will compose an original soundtrack, using traditional instruments and melodies.
3. **Beyond the Power**  
**Director:** Light Flare Team  
A science fiction film about four teenagers with superpowers who team up to defeat an evil corporation in their plan to create an army of superhumans and start World War III. The Light Flare Team’s productions specialize in CGI effects, and director Palinya Sayyamoungkhoun recently won the Outstanding Technical Achievement award for his short film 300 Seconds at the Mini-Vientianale Film Festival.

4. **An Unlikely Friendship**  
**Director:** The Lao Children’s Workshop  
A narrative film that follows three young friends and the journey they take to their different Khmu, Hmong, and Lao villages. The crew is composed of five young students from the Luang Prabang Orphanage School who recently screened five of their films at the Mini-Vientianale Film Festival’s Short Film Competition.

**Love Laos: Keep it Clean**  
In Laos, awareness about the environmental effects of improper waste disposal is not yet widespread. To address this problem and promote sustainability, The Asia Foundation and LPFF teamed up for a video campaign surrounding waste management in Laos called “Love Laos: Keep it Clean.” We selected the campaign’s 10 finalist videos through a short film competition, for which we received 40 applications of short films in the Lao language made by young Lao filmmakers. These films and public service announcements address waste, litter, and proper disposal in Laos in an effort to encourage the public to develop more sustainable habits. All 10 videos were posted on our Facebook page and in total reached over 3,000,000 people, had over 990,000 views, and received over 123,000 likes, comments, and shares. The top three films from the competition, as well as the film that went the most “viral” on Facebook, was shown on the big screen at the Night Venue in between screenings of feature films. For those interested, all of the shortlisted films from the competition can be viewed on the LPFF Facebook page.

**RED by HBO**  
In an exciting new relationship, LPFF has partnered with RED by HBO to present a new series of specially curated Southeast Asian films on the television network. RED by HBO is a young and dynamic Asian movie channel powered by one of the world’s most prestigious channels—HBO. Home to internationally acclaimed, award-winning and popular movies and series from the region, RED by HBO features local stories from Southeast Asia, Japan, Korea and Greater China, as well as HBO Asia Originals. The three films from previous festivals that we selected for the first series in the program are Anyasay Keola’s *At the Horizon* (Laos), Jason Lai’s *Ms J Contemplates Her Choice* (Singapore), and Tom Waller’s *The Last Executioner* (Thailand). This is a most significant coup for the Lao film industry, which has never had a title on an international cable network before now.

**Filmmaking 101**  
This year, LPFF joined forces with Lao New Wave Cinema to launch a series of videos for its newest educational activity, Filmmaking 101. The program consists of nine short tutorial videos for Lao filmmakers in the Lao language, released on YouTube and Facebook as an ongoing reference for creators of media in Laos. Hosted by Kaewkun Saengphachan (a well-known Lao actor, singer, and filmmaker) and Anyasay Keola (president of Lao New Wave Cinema and writer/director of *At the Horizon* and *Above it All*), each video focuses on a different aspect of film production. Produced at the Lao New Wave Cinema studio in Vientiane,
the videos feature practical shots and detailed explanation regarding numerous skills needed for filmmaking, like how to prepare for a production, ways to achieve certain visual effects, or tips for high-quality editing. In a country with no film schools and a nascent film industry, the videos are designed specifically for filmmakers with little to no budget in order to show how accessible filmmaking can really be. Support for select episodes was granted by The Asia Foundation.

**Sofitel Cinema Swim**

As excitement was building about the upcoming festival, we hosted a free screening in November at Sofitel Luang Prabang—our Hotel Partner and Day Venue host. We screened last year’s Audience Choice Award winner, *The Cambodian Space Project: Not Easy Rock ‘N’ Roll*, by Sofitel’s pool and served free popcorn and canapés, and with other food and beverages available for purchase. The audience laid back on lounge chairs and couches on the pool deck and watched the film reflecting across the water, and the turnout was great. We hope to make this event a series in the future as a way to keep the festival’s visibility up throughout the year and give people more opportunities to watch Southeast Asian cinema.

**Marketing**

This year we had wide-ranging and far-reaching marketing strategy that helped bring in bigger festival crowds than ever before. Lao Brewery Company supplied us with three traditional billboards in high-traffic areas—two in Vientiane and one in Luang Prabang. Guru Ads ran our 30-second teaser four times per hour on five LCD billboards around Vientiane. We also had another digital screen advertising the festival at the international airport in Vientiane, provided by Gold Media. This year we also targeted moviegoers, with two large posters on display and 30-second festival trailers before all films at the Major Platinum Cineplex in Vientiane, and two large posters on display at the Major Cineplex in Pakse. We also focused on print and digital media, taking the back cover of *108 Magazine* for the four issues leading up to the festival and having ongoing promotion on the Lao Facebook pages “Tholakhong” and “Pakaad,” both platforms also advertised the festival on their respective websites. Finally, we covered Vientiane and Luang Prabang with posters in the weeks leading up to the festival, and we distributed 40,000 flyers in Vientiane primarily at the Boat Racing Festival and That Luang Festival, and 20,000 flyers in Luang Prabang. The costs to distribute these flyers were covered by the Lao Brewery Company, in support of helping to expose more people to the festival and its activities.

**Fundraising**

While we fell just shy of our fundraising goal, we did manage to raise more money in 2016 than ever before. With both cash and in-kind contributions (and in some cases, a combination of the two), we had 23 major sponsors representing the corporate sector, embassies, and non-governmental organizations. We also received several private donations from individuals, mostly through the US-based not-for-profit Luang Prabang Fund for Culture and Conservation. Lao Brewery Company bumped up their sponsorship to become our largest sponsor of the year and of all time, with three of their brands offering sponsorship at the Platinum level: Lao Brewery Company, Pepsi, and Tigerhead. Notably, this contribution also represents the largest amount their company has ever given to an external project. The US Embassy raised its amount of funds given, as well. Other major sponsors included Indochina Productions, the Asia Foundation, Bangkok Airways, and Dao Coffee. Chillax Productions joined us once again as the technical producers of the festival, controlling all screenings and performances, in cooperation with the Department of Cinema’s projection team and Khompanya Entertainment, our event organizers.
Press
The film festival received a great amount of positive press again this year. Notably, the festival was featured on the cover of Oh! Magazine, with several articles dedicated to the festival and Southeast Asian cinema within the issue, and the Asia Times put out one titled: “Sundance of the Southeast gives little voices a forum.” Myanmar Times published a lovely article about the festival along with an interview with filmmaker Midi Z about his film City of Jade, which wowed audiences at this year’s festival. Bangkok 101 also ran an article called “Northern Lights” promoting the festival. Stories about the festival were also published in M le magazine du Monde, Bangkok Post, BK Magazine, The Vientiane Times, The Laotian Times, and The Philippine Daily Inquirer. There were radio pieces on "Vous m’en direz des nouvelles" on Radio France International, and CJ Johnson’s Australian Broadcasting Company Podcast “Movieland.” Several television news programs also recapped the festival on air.

Festival Coordinators
In August, the LPFF team gained two new members: Jessica Arce and Eliza Mott. Both Jessica and Eliza are working for LPFF through the Princeton in Asia fellowship program, a highly competitive fellowship that matches up Americans with job opportunities all across Asia.

Jessica graduated from Temple College with a degree in Film and Media Arts and brings her expertise in film production, graphic design, and media education to the LPFF team. She has media experience ranging from directing documentaries, to facilitating youth media production, to working the corporate cable television industry. Since her arrival in Luang Prabang in August, she has been essential to creating video and graphic content for the festival, boosting online engagement and developing a visual aesthetic for LPFF’s social media channels. She has also been working with Lao New Wave Cinema to produce our “Filmmaking 101” series, and helped organize and run our first ever Talent Lab.

Eliza graduated from Princeton University with a degree in the History of Art and Creative Writing, and she brings valuable arts-related press, communications, and writing experience to the festival team. Before joining the LPFF team, she worked as an intern at the Peggy Guggenheim Collection in Venice, as a press intern at MoMA PS1, and as a social media manager for the Princeton University Communications Department. Since moving to Luang Prabang, Eliza has helped to boost press, sponsorship, and social media following.

2017 Festival
Pending official approval from the Ministry of Information, Culture, and Tourism, we plan to hold our eighth festival in the beginning of December 2017. We have some fantastic new sponsors already on board, and we are looking forward to expanding the relationships we have with several existing ones. As always, we will work to grow our network, creating more and more opportunities for regional filmmakers to connect and exchange, while also continuing to develop the capacity of the Lao film industry.

Thank you very much for your support!

Gabriel Kuperman
Founder and Director