

Silk Screen film festival transports moviegoers around the globe

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By Barbara Vancheri, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette



Global Film Initiative

In "Adrift," a steamy Hanoi summer provides the backdrop for a meditative piece about longing, desire and changing social mores in modern Vietnam.

The Silk Screen film festival takes the concept of "around the world in 80 days" and does it one better. It will transport moviegoers around the world in 10 days, courtesy of a dozen and a half movies from India, China, Sri Lanka, the United States and other countries.

The fifth annual event opens Friday with "Cooking With Stella" along with a red-carpet gala at the Omni William Penn featuring ethnic food and entertainment.

Since its launch in May 2006 by filmmaker Harish Saluja, the Asian American festival has never shied away from competing against Hollywood summer blockbusters. That first year, it opened on the heels of "Mission: Impossible III," on the same day as "Poseidon" and a week before "The Da Vinci Code."

This year, it bumps up against "Iron Man 2" with counterprogramming that makes "Babies" (also arriving in theaters Friday) look like, well, child's play.

The 2010 lineup includes a film set in a poor mining town in China, a raunchy romcom about a woman trying to figure out her baby's paternity, and a special sneak preview of "For Real," Sona Jain's award-winning directorial debut about a 6-year-old who is convinced there is an alien impostor in her home.

Jain has called subjecting a child to an unhappy home environment "abusive." She tells her story through the eyes of an imaginative girl who only wants to see her mother happy.

Movies will screen at the three Pittsburgh Filmmakers venues: Regent Square Theater, 1035 S. Braddock Ave. in Edgewood; Harris Theater, 809 Liberty Ave., Downtown; and Melwood Screening Room at Filmmakers' headquarters, 477 Melwood Ave., Oakland.

Admission is \$9 for adults, \$5 for students with valid IDs. An eight-film pass also is available for \$50. Special price of \$15 applies for the opening night film, with tickets for the gala, \$120 (movie extra).

On Mother's Day, mothers will be admitted free, with an additional ticket purchase.

Visiting directors, including "Bombay Summer" writer-director Joseph Mathew and "The Mountain Thief" filmmaker Gerry Balasta, and others will hold question-and-answer sessions after selected movies.

For tickets, visit the box offices of the venues before showtime. For more information, opening night tickets or last-minute changes, www.silkscreenfestival.org.

The lineup:

"Cooking With Stella" (India/Canada) -- A guileless Canadian diplomat and her husband get more than they bargained for when posted to Delhi and so does Stella, their conniving cook. Opening night feature. 7 p.m. Friday and 7 p.m. Sunday, both at Harris.

"About Elly" (Iran) -- A weekend getaway to the Caspian Sea, and amateur attempt at matchmaking, take unexpected and catastrophic turns in this tension-filled movie. 9:30 p.m. May 13 and 7 p.m. May 15, both at Regent Square.

"Adrift" (Vietnam) -- A steamy Hanoi summer provides the backdrop for a meditative piece about longing, desire and changing social mores in modern Vietnam. Contains explicit sexual content. 7:30 p.m. May 12 and 7:30 p.m. May 16, both at Melwood.

"Barah Aana" (India) -- Comedy, set in Mumbai, revolving around a driver, a watchman and waiter who accidentally stumble into a crime and then realize it's not a bad business. 3 p.m. Sunday at Regent Square and 4:30 p.m. May 15 at Melwood.

"Between Two Worlds" (Sri Lanka) -- Director and symbolist Vimukthi Jayasundara doesn't set out to explain Sri Lanka's civil conflict but to illuminate it in this film. 7:30 p.m. Saturday at Harris and 8 p.m. May 11 at Regent Square.

"Bombay Summer" (India) -- Modern tale of self-discovery about three young artists who become close friends over the course of a single teeming Bombay summer. 3:30 p.m. Saturday and 8 p.m. Monday, both at Regent Square.

"A Brand New Life" (South Korea) -- First-time writer-director Ounie Lecomte draws on her childhood experience for this well-received story of a 9-year-old girl abruptly abandoned by her father at a Catholic orphanage in the mid-1970s. 6 p.m. Sunday and 7 p.m. May 14, both at Melwood.

"Fog" (Hong Kong) -- A young man suffering from amnesia must figure out who he was, to decide the kind of man he will be. Pointedly set against the 10th anniversary of Hong Kong's hand-over from Britain to China. 7:30 p.m. May 13 and 9:30 p.m. May 15, both at Regent Square.

"For Real" (India/UK) -- Special sneak preview of the story of an unhappy home through the eyes of an imaginative 6-year-old. She believes her real mother has been sent to the Orion galaxy and the mother at home is an alien. 6 p.m. Saturday at Regent Square.

"The Harimaya Bridge" (Japan) -- A man is forced to reconcile his prejudices when his estranged son dies in a traffic accident in Japan. Executive producer Danny Glover seen in cameo. 6:30 p.m. May 15 and 3 p.m. May 16, both at Melwood.

"Heiran" (Iran) -- A high school girl who lives with her family on a farm in northern Iran falls for an illegal Afghan worker. When they wed and try to make a new life for themselves in Tehran, their challenges multiply. 5:30 p.m. Saturday at Harris and 3 p.m. May 15 at Regent Square.

"Make Yourself at Home" (South Korea) -- "Vertigo" meets "Fatal Attraction" and Korean art-house horror in this story of a newlywed who covets her neighbor's life. 8 p.m. Sunday and 9 p.m. May 15, both at Melwood.

"The Mountain Thief" (Philippines) -- A father and son living in the real-life slums of Payatas find themselves at the center of a village scandal. 5 p.m. May 15 and 3 p.m. May 16, both at Regent Square.

"The People I've Slept With" (USA) -- A free-spirited, libidinous Los Angeles woman finds herself pregnant and asking, "Who's the daddy?" Contains explicit sexual content. 7 p.m. May 14 and 5 p.m. May 16, both at Regent Square.

"The Road From Elephant Pass" (Sri Lanka) -- Sri Lankan's submission for Academy Award for best foreign film. Based on the novel by the late Nihal de Silva, it's a wartime road movie set in the shadow of the Sri Lankan civil conflict. 9:30 Saturday at Harris.

"The Shaft" (China) -- In a poor mining town in western China, the stories of a father and his two children intersect and intertwine, illuminating complicated relationships hidden beneath the community's hardened exterior. 5 p.m. Sunday at Harris and 9 p.m. May 14 at Melwood.

"**The Taqwacores**" (USA) --When this movie played the 2010 Sundance Film Festival, Variety called it a "low-budget, high-energy translation of Michael Muhammad Knight's 2003 cult novel about a Buffalo, N.Y., household of Muslim punk rockers." Contains explicit sexual content and some violence. 8 p.m. May 12 and 9 p.m. May 14, both at Regent Square.

"**Vacation**" (Japan) -- Story of two men whose fates are connected. One is a condemned prisoner, the other a middle-age guard who can earn time off -- for his honeymoon -- for assisting in the execution. 8 p.m. Saturday at Regent Square and 7:30 p.m. May 13 at Melwood.

"**Walking to School**" (China) -- Walking miles in the snow is nothing like using a rusty zip line over a treacherous gorge to get there, as in this story of Chinese siblings. A girl's younger brother tries to follow, with serious consequences. 5:30 p.m. Sunday at Regent Square and 5:30 p.m. May 16 at Melwood.

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