



PRESS RELEASE

Singapore International Film Festival Announces *Unlucky Plaza* as Opening Film, and Egyptian Ahmad Abdalla as Filmmaker in Focus

2 October 2014, SINGAPORE – The Singapore International Film Festival (SGIFF) today announced that it has set Ken Kwek's *Unlucky Plaza* (2014) as the film that will open the festival on 4 December 2014, a first for a Singaporean film.

Unlucky Plaza is a story about one man's financial woes that spiral into a harrowing crisis. When he is further outdone by a financial scam, he takes a group of people hostage in a millionaire's bungalow and the crisis, captured on video, sparks an international outcry. A multi-character thriller from one of Asia's most exciting young filmmakers, *Unlucky Plaza* navigates among three narrative threads in order to create a dramatic statement about the things we do for money.

It stars Filipino actor Epy Quizon in the lead role. The other parts are taken by local veteran stage and screen actors Adrian Pang, Judee Tan, Shane Mardjuki, Janice Koh, Pamela Oei, who is Kwek's wife, and television host and actor Guo Liang. The film's title is a play on Lucky Plaza, the Orchard Road mall known for its businesses serving Filipino residents.

Ken Kwek was born in Singapore and attended Cambridge University. He has written and directed the shorts anthology *Sex.Violence.FamilyValues*. *Unlucky Plaza* is his first feature, which debuted in the Discovery section at the recent Toronto International Film Festival.

SGIFF Makes a Bold Comeback

SGIFF returns this year after a two-year hiatus, with an entirely new team that is set on making this year's festival a truly stimulating one. The festival celebrates its 25th anniversary this year, and will be held from December 4 to 14. With a focus on groundbreaking Asian cinema and discovering new film talents from Southeast Asia, SGIFF is known for its dynamic film programming and commitment to the development of a vibrant local film culture.

It will screen over 100 feature and short films, of all genres, from 50 countries, across 10 sections - Opening and Closing Films; Special Presentation; Silver Screen Awards; Filmmaker in Focus; Singapore Panorama; Asian Vision; Cinema Today; Documentary; Classics; and A Tribute. The festival will take place at multiple screening venues including



Marina Bay Sands, Shaw Theatres Lido, National Museum of Singapore, The Projector (formerly Golden Theatre) and The Arts House.

Yuni Hadi, Executive Director of SGIFF said: "The return of the Singapore International Film Festival in our 25th year is significant in so many ways, one of which is to celebrate how far we've come in Singapore cinema. To open with Ken Kwek's *Unlucky Plaza* marks SGIFF's commitment to the Singapore film community and our wider role within the industry. We're honoured to have the film kick off the festival, and play our part in promoting a Singapore film that we can all be proud of. We hope that as we continue to grow with our industry, an occasion like this will not be a rarity."

Audiences can also look forward to Nuri Bilge Ceylan's (Turkey) *Winter Sleep* (2014), a story set in Anatolia that examines the significant divide between the rich and poor, as well as the powerful and powerless in Turkey. At the 2014 Cannes Film Festival, the film won the Palme d'Or and the FIPRESCI Prize. The film has also been selected as the Turkish entry for the Best Foreign Language Film at the 87th Academy Awards.

Also in the line-up are *Red Amnesia* (2014) by acclaimed Chinese filmmaker Wang Xiaoshuai (China) (*Beijing Bicycle, In Love We Trust*), and *From What Is Before* (2014) by SGIFF regular Lav Diaz (Philippines).

Red Amnesia is a disturbing thriller about a retired widow, who has her daily routine disrupted when she starts receiving mysterious, anonymous phone calls. It is set in the ever-changing world of contemporary China, and brings powerful political urgency to the telling of its suspenseful tale. A renowned auteur, Wang is regarded as one of China's "Sixth Generation" filmmakers, along with names like Zhang Yuan and Jia Zhangke.

Meanwhile, *From What Is Before* follows a remote town in the Philippines under Marcos' dictatorship in the 1970s. The film had its world premiere in the Philippines in July this year, and won the Golden Leopard at the 2014 Locarno International Film Festival. It recently had its North American premiere at the 2014 Toronto International Film Festival, under the Wavelengths section.



Filmmaker in Focus

In keeping with the festival's spirit of unearthing new talent, 36-year-old Ahmad Abdalla El Sayed Abdelkader, an Egyptian film director, editor and screenwriter, has been confirmed as this year's Filmmaker in Focus.

SGIFF will feature his latest film *Décor* (2014), a psychological drama set in Cairo about a woman struggling to know what she wants, and have her own choices in life. The main character is obsessed with old Egyptian films, which she keeps playing on VHS. In keeping with the classic theme, the entire film is played out in black and white, the first Egyptian film to use this format since Mohamed Fadel's 1996 drama *Nasser 56*, about the late Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser. *Décor* will have its world premiere at the BFI London Film Festival next month, and its Asian premiere at SGIFF in December.

Zhang Wenjie, Festival Director of SGIFF said: "Ahmad Abdalla is one of the most exciting young filmmakers working in Egyptian cinema today. In a few short years, he has created an impressive body of work that passionately and eloquently articulates the changes and issues affecting Egyptian society today, especially concerning the younger generation. What sets Abdalla apart is his adroitness in adopting new forms and methods in his filmmaking, so that each new film from him is an exciting and unexpected fresh discovery. His latest film *Décor*, which pays homage to the rich heritage of Egyptian cinema is no exception, and we are proud to have him as our Filmmaker In Focus, and showcase his outstanding works."

Originally a musician who learned to play the viola, Ahmad Abdalla has three highly acclaimed feature films under his belt – *Heliopolis* (2009), *Microphone* (2011) and *Rags and Tatters* (2013) – and awards from the Carthage Film Festival, Montpellier Mediterranean Film Festival and Istanbul International Film Festival.

He later began working as a film editor in 1999, then moved to feature-length films in 2002, and began doubling as a visual effects supervisor and credits designer.

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About the Singapore International Film Festival (4 to 14 December 2014)

The Singapore International Film Festival (SGIFF) is the largest and longest-running film event in Singapore. Founded in 1987, the festival has become an iconic event in the Singapore arts calendar that is widely attended by international film critics, and recognized worldwide for its focus on Asian filmmakers and the promotion of Southeast Asian films. The SGIFF is committed to nurture and champion Singaporean talents in the art of filmmaking and brings to the city, the highest standard for the enrichment of cultural life in Singapore. The festival serves as a catalyst — igniting public interest in the arts and encouraging artistic dialogue and cultural exchange. The SGIFF is organized by the Singapore International Film Festival Ltd, a non-profit organization and holds the Institution of a Public Character (IPC) status. For more information, please visit www.sgiff.com.

About the Singapore Media Festival

The Singapore Media Festival is set to become one of Asia's leading international media events, where the industry meets to discover the latest trends, talent and content in Asia for Film and TV. It brings together four complementary events - Asia TV Forum & Market (ATF) and ScreenSingapore (SS), Asian Television Awards (ATA) and Singapore International Film Festival (SGIFF), which will take place from 4 to 14 December 2014. The Singapore Media Festival is hosted by the Media Development Authority of Singapore, and organised by Reed Exhibitions, Contineo Media and SGIFF Ltd.

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