



# fest ches ence ce



Hong Kong-Singapore production *Bugs Street Redux* (1995, top) by director Yanfan will be screened in the Classics section. Also to be screened is *The Last Moose Of Aoluguya* (2013, above) by Chinese documentary-maker Gu Tao. PHOTOS: SINGAPORE INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

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Last year saw the revival of the festival after a three-year hiatus and, with it, a new acronym, SIGIFF (it was formerly known as SIFF).

Mr Zhang says that judging from audience feedback, it was a hit, requiring only minor tweaks.

"We might now start weekday screenings at 7pm, instead of 7.30pm," he says. He was speaking at a press conference yesterday at the ArtScience Museum at Marina Bay Sands.

And instead of the traditional closing film, the last day of the festival will have screenings of the winners of the Audience Choice and other awards.

Otherwise, the numbers this year are largely the same as those last year. The festival, running from Nov 26 to Dec 6, will screen 146 features and short films from more

About 100 artists will be here to give talks after screenings. Visiting international celebrities this year include Malaysian actress Michelle Yeoh, British actor Dev Patel, Hong Kong actress Josie Ho and South Korean actor Choi Woo Shik.

Talks by American-Hong Kong producer Terence Chang, Thai film-maker Apichatpong Weerasethakul and Iranian director Mohsen Makhmalbaf are also scheduled.

The venues remain the National Museum of Singapore, The Arts House, Marina Bay Sands, Shaw Lido, The Projector, plus the new venue, National Gallery Singapore.

Programme highlights include opening film Panay, a Taiwanese drama about the plight of the island's indigenous people.

Eric Khoo's much-anticipated erotic drama, *In The Room*, will feature in the Special Presentation section, while in the Singapore

Chinese folk music movement, *The Songs We Sang*, will be screened.

A restored high-definition version of Kho's groundbreaking 1995 drama, *Mee Pok Man*, will be given a screening in the Classics section to honour the film's 20th anniversary.

Also to be honoured in that section is Hong Kong-Singapore production *Bugs Street Redux*, also from 1995, by director Yanfan.

In the Cinema Today section, there will be a focus on the surging field of Mexican cinema, which will include a panel discussion featuring four directors from the country.

The other special section this year will look at the new wave of China-based documentary-makers. To be named *Visible And Invisible: Alternative Vision Of Chinese Independent Documentary*, the section will feature works from film-makers willing to risk working outside state-approved boundaries.

## Let's watch some trash

There is a trash gap in Singapore and one group hopes to fill it.

"Trash" cinema – a broad category that includes low-budget horror, action movies and thrillers – is almost non-existent here, says Mr Anthony Chiam.

At cinemas and festivals, film fans find just two kinds of entertainment: Mass appeal movies or high-brow art movies.

Mr Chiam says: "We enjoy crazier, B-grade horror and exploitation stuff. That is not available here."

The 42-year-old co-founded the Society for Cult and Underground Movies, shortened to Scum, with his pal, Mr Herman Ho, 39.

After a few years mulling over the idea of a trash film appreciation society, the two friends held the first Scum screening in 2013.

On its blog, the connoisseurs of cult cinema say they want to focus on "the bizarre and the weird in real life, from horror to humour... nothing is taboo." They have kept their word: Their events, held every other month or so, have included screenings of titles such as the Hong Kong martial arts flick *Riki-Oh* (1991), noteworthy for its over-the-top violence, as well as an obscure slice of Mexican cheesiness, *Santo And The Blue Demon Vs Dracula And The Wolf Man* (1973), in which wrestlers fight monsters.

After two years of well-received screenings, most of them funded by donations, the group has reached a goal with its first film festival, *ScumScope*, timed for Halloween.

"Holding a festival is a milestone that we had in mind when we started," says Mr Chiam, who prefers to state "media professional" as his full-time job.

ScumScope's three-event roster kicked off last week with a screening of *Dark Star* (2014), a documentary on Swiss artist H.R. Giger, who designed the toothy extra-terrestrial and its vessel in Ridley Scott's *Alien* (1979).

On Friday, there is a doublebill of two classic works of weirdness, *Basketcase* (1982), a body-horror work, and *Without Warning* (1980), about an alien invasion of Earth.

ScumScope closes next Thursday with *Damnationland*, an anthology of seven short horror and suspense films made by film-makers from Maine in the United States.

Each year since 2010, a new *Damnationland* collection has been produced and screened in theatres in Maine during the Halloween period. The title is a play on Maine's official slogan, Vacationland.

Mr Eddy Bolz, 36, co-founder of the project, spoke to *Life* on the telephone from his home in Portland, Maine's largest city.

"Every year, we ask different film-makers to participate, including artists outside the horror genre, so we get something unique," he says. Directors' budgets are gathered from ticket sales and Internet crowdfunding.

Last year's compilation to be screened here will be the first time the films have been exhibited outside the United States, says Mr Bolz.

He cites the short film *Sui Generis* (Latin for "in a category of its own") as an example of the wide scope found in the collection. In it, a woman wakes up convinced she is not who people around her say she is. She has to determine if she has lost her mind or if there is a conspiracy.

"It's not horror, but it has suspense and good storytelling," he says.

John Lui

• Films of the ScumScope festival will be screened at The Arts House Screening Room and The Projector. Till Oct 29. Tickets from \$10. Go to [scumcinema.com](http://scumcinema.com) for schedule and to book.



*Damnationland* features *Tackle*, one of seven horror